



## REVIEW STATEMENT

This review statement provides feedback on the PhD dissertation entitled *Pedagogical supervision in Poland and Portugal: A qualitative study of discourses and practices in teacher development*, which was written by Wiktor Bernad (MA) to obtain a doctoral degree in Education, specialization in Teacher Education and Supervision. This dissertation was developed under the supervision of Professor Maria João Mogarro and Professor Hana Cervinkova both at the Institute of Education of the University of Lisbon and the University of Lower Silesia in Wroclaw and it is part of the European Doctorate in Teacher Education and Supervision (EDiTE) project.

### **Global appreciation of the dissertation and the candidate's skills**

The document written by the PhD candidate shows an interesting viewpoint and interpretation on pedagogical supervision. It emphasizes the importance of pedagogical supervision for teachers' lifelong learning, distinguishing this kind of supervision from the idea of inspection, which is the most common and widespread perception of the concept within the European educational community (particularly among teachers). This dissertation is an original and relevant contribution to the field of Teacher Education and Supervision as it draws on an innovative research project that considers pedagogical supervision as a valuable and meaningful way to transform teachers' professional practice, thus, impacting teachers' professional identity and contributing to their professional development.

The empirical study was conducted in two countries: Portugal and Poland. Throughout the dissertation, the candidate makes a very interesting comparison between both their educational policies and their implementation of pedagogical supervision projects in school settings. This comparison is a valuable part of the dissertation. On the one hand, it shows the need to review educational policies according to teachers' needs in order to create the necessary working conditions to support and stimulate teachers to willingly invest in their lifelong learning. On the other hand, it draws on the importance of school leadership to provide a supportive environment and stimulate an active participation of teachers in pedagogical supervision projects that will greatly contribute to their professional development.

In his research, the candidate firstly studied an ongoing supervision project in a school cluster in Portugal. Afterwards, based on his findings, he developed a similar pilot project, adapted to the Polish reality, and implemented it in a Polish school. This demonstrates both his comprehension of the field of study and his competence to conduct research within the scientific domain of Teacher Education and Supervision. It also expresses his capability to conceive, design, adapt and implement a significant study in multiple languages according to current academic standards.

### **Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation**

In the following paragraphs I will assess the structure and content of the candidate's dissertation. I will highlight the issues that, in my opinion, represent the strengths and limitations of his work. I will start by making a global assessment of the dissertation. This will be followed by a more comprehensive assessment of its particular parts.

The manuscript follows the usual structure of academic dissertations: introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, research findings and conclusions. Overall, the dissertation is well written and the vast majority of the conveyed ideas are easily understood.

The introduction is well structured. The candidate starts by introducing his study and explaining the different understandings of pedagogical supervision. He clearly explains the aims of his research and outlines the framework where the study is set. Although it is underlying his discourse, I would like to have seen the undoubted mention of the innovative contribution of the research to the Teacher Education and Supervision field of knowledge in the dissertation.

The conceptual framework is divided in two major areas, the research context and the theory and practice of pedagogical supervision. In the research context, Wiktor Bernad sets the scene where pedagogical supervision is played by explaining the challenges of the teaching profession within the European context and the importance of teacher professionalism and professional development. Here he also describes the organization of the Portuguese and Polish educational system. In the second part of the conceptual framework, the candidate explains the concept of supervision and draws attention to some important details of pedagogical supervision projects. Overall, the conceptual framework is appropriate. It is based on 107 references from English, Polish and Portuguese authors. Therefore, I believe it is worth appraising the candidate's ability to handle information in three languages. Adding to the quoted publications, I would like to have seen other relevant references (both authors and points of view) on professionalism (such as Evans, 2014; Flores, 2011; Schratz, 2014). This would add to the overall quality and consistency of the dissertation.

The concept of supervision is defined using different relevant authors. Some of them mention the same ideas, but the candidate does not confront them. I do miss a greater articulation between the mobilized authors (e.g., between Alarcão & Canha, 2013, and the authors mentioned on the first paragraph of p. 45). Moreover, I would like the candidate to have undoubtedly summarized and expressed beforehand, in the theoretical framework, the view of supervision he has adopted in his research.

Still in the theoretical framework, there are some key legal documents that are mentioned when addressing the Polish educational system, such as the Polish Educational Act and the Polish Constitution. I found myself wondering why not mention the equivalent documents (Portuguese Educational Act and Portuguese Constitution) when addressing the Portuguese educational system. I know the candidate did not intend to make a comparative study. However, these are important documents in both countries and, therefore, in my opinion, are worth mentioning when explaining a country's educational system.

In the empirical part of the dissertation, the candidate presents the research questions and aims of the study, the methodology and research results. The collected data are very rich and the sources of information are diverse. There are some concepts that emerge from the main goals of the study – leadership and professional identity (p. 59) – that are not defined in the theoretical framework. In my opinion, the clarification of these concepts would have been relevant considering the aims and scope of this research.

The analysis of the European documents (pp. 90-92) is very interesting. The candidate clearly shows that the notion of pedagogical supervision exists under a different terminology and he also acknowledges leadership as an important component of pedagogical supervision. He also demonstrates the importance of initial teacher education for the education of highly motivated teachers that value peer-collaboration as an important tool for professional development and lifelong learning.

The description of access to the field, both in Portugal and Poland, is included under the title "Results from field research" (pp. 93-95 and 140-143). The information is relevant and necessary, contributing to the validity of the research. However, in my opinion this information could be elsewhere (for instance under the title 5.4 – "Research process and empirical data") because it is not an actual research finding.

The research results are relevant and noteworthy. The candidate empathizes negative cases and triangulates his data, providing credibility to the study. The inferences he makes are supported by the interview excerpts he quotes. Sometimes the candidate shows his surprise (e.g., p. 107,

109, 113, among others) about the findings or attributes value judgments to them (e.g., p. 118). From my personal standpoint, the abstention from these comments would provide a more academic view of the research results.

With the exception of pages 114 and 161, where there is a clear and interesting relation between research findings and literature review, there is not an explicit connection between theoretical concepts and research results. This is also missing in the discussion and conclusion section of the dissertation (chapter 7). I believe that this discussion would add value to the dissertation.

The conclusion section of the dissertation is coherent with the research results. In this section the candidate summarizes his major findings. However, he does not make clear connections with all his research questions. In page 194 he returns to his third research question and answers it, but the other two questions are not resumed. I think that this is an important part of a dissertation because closing arguments harmonize the research as a whole. Therefore, revisiting and clearly answering all research questions would reinforce the study's findings and further enrich the document.

Still in the conclusions, the candidate clearly addresses some limitations of his research. Notwithstanding, he does not mention his influence as researcher here. I would like to have seen some reflection over this fact, since Polish participants clearly acknowledge Wiktor Bernad as being an important influence on both the project implementation and their involvement in the project itself.

Throughout the research results and conclusion sections, there is a clear and very interesting comparison between the realities studied in the two countries. I found myself wondering why the candidate chose to strongly underline that his research was not a comparative study (pp. 12 and 61). I expect the public defense will provide answers to this and other questions, such as:

- Which of the teachers' contemporary roles and didactic capacities (listed on pages 16 and 21) are most in need of (or would be greatly benefited by) pedagogical supervision in Portugal and Poland? How do they contribute to teacher professional development? How do they relate to the specific competences of a European teacher?
- How has this experience with the pedagogical supervision project influenced the participants' and researcher's professional identity?
- How could a massive and consistent implementation of this kind of pedagogical supervision projects could/would contribute to the development of a European teacher professional identity?

- What would be the candidate's recommendations for Portuguese and Polish policy makers regarding pedagogical supervision?

It is also worth mentioning that I found some minor gaffes on Table 2 (p. 33) and Table 9 (p. 102). Also, the ideas expressed in some sentences could be clearer (e.g., p. 140 and p. 152) and some minor incongruences need revision (e.g., p. 125 and 139). APA style is not accurately and consistently used throughout the dissertation (including in the reference list). There are also some repetitions in the manuscript (e.g., p. 26, p. 36 and 83, p. 37 and 84, p. 66) and some references are missing in the reference list (e.g., Schratz, 2010, mentioned in p. 26). The revision of the aforementioned issues would add to the global quality of the dissertation.

### **Final remarks**

As it is emphasized by the candidate, European official policy documents lack the conception of pedagogical supervision and there is still a long way to go to stress the importance of this kind of supervision, distancing it from the classical understanding of the concept, where supervision is an inspection process. The dissertation presented by Wiktor Bernad is a step forward in this direction as it privileged the study and active implementation of innovative and significant practices of pedagogical supervision in compliance with the scientific principles of academic research and ethics, thus, contributing to the demystification and clarification of the concept. Hence, the dissertation addresses original and socially relevant issues, such as professional development and lifelong learning. According to the Higher Education Act (Decree-Law no. 115/2013, article 28) and the regulations of the University of Lisbon for graduate degrees (Dispatch no. 7024/2017, article 24), the candidate's provisional document meets the overall criteria for doctoral dissertations. Therefore, considering all of the above, I am of the opinion that it can proceed to public defense, in accordance with the guidelines of the EDiTE doctoral program. The revision of the issues outlined in the previous section would contribute to refine the overall dissertation, contributing to further enhance its already existing quality. Therefore, I recommend that such amendments be made before submitting the final version, after the public defense.

ISCE – Instituto Superior de Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, January 31<sup>st</sup> of 2022,

