

## **REVIEW**

by

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Professional field 3.2. Psychology

**Regarding:** the application of the following candidates for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in Professional Field 3.2. Psychology (Developmental Psychology of Children and Adolescents), announced in the State Gazette, Issue , Issue 65 dated 16.08.2019

**Candidates:** Senior Lecturer Camelia Dontcheva Hancheva Ph.D.

Senior Lecturer Manol Nikolov Manolov Ph.D.

## **1. Evaluation of the compliance with the Minimal National Requirements**

After reviewing the materials presented I confirm that the scientific activities of Camelia Hancheva and Manol Manolov are in full compliance with the Minimal National Requirements for the academic position of associate professor in Professional Field 3.2. Psychology as formulated in the Rules for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB).

## **2. Evaluation of the scientific activities and the contributions of the candidates**

### **2.1. Evaluation of Camelia Hancheva**

#### **2.1.1. Information from the professional CV**

Camelia Hancheva graduated with a Master degree in Psychology from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in 1996. She has specialized in Clinical and Consulting Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Organizational Psychology. In 2013 she defended her PhD in Professional Field 3.2. Psychology (Developmental and Educational Psychology) at the same university.

She completed training in palliative care at the Medical University in Posnan, Poland, in 1996. She qualified as a family and marriage therapist from the New Bulgarian University (1998-2002) and as a psychodrama therapist, supervisor and trainer from the Foundation Psychotherapy 2000 (1995-2007).

She worked as a clinical psychologist at the National Center for Oncology from 1996 to 2002. Furthermore she worked as a consultant for battered women at the Animus Association; she also was a supervisor and a consultant at the Functional Laboratory for Children, Adolescents and Families at the Master program of Child, Adolescent and School Psychology (diagnostics and counseling) at Sofia University, a supervisor at a Montessori Kindergarten and School and a consultant for the Early Child Development Program within a Project for the Evaluation of the Effectiveness of a Social Care Program in the Region of Sliven supported by UNICEF Sofia. She also worked as a judicial expert.

She is fluent in both written and spoken English and has basic knowledge in both written and spoken German, Italian and Serbian.

#### **2.1.2. Evaluation of the monograph, including the scientific and the applied scientific contributions of the author**

In support of her application Camelia Hancheva has presented the monograph “Mentalization and the Early Stages of the Socio-Emotional Development” (Sofia University Press, 2019) plus thirteen other publications, including the monograph based on her defended PhD dissertation (under the title “The Child, the Family and the Internal World: Relational Developmental Theories in Psychoanalysis”, VBB

Publishers, 2019), four book chapters in English (she is also an editor of one of these books) published by Routledge as well as eight articles in peer reviewed journals and collective monographs (including three articles in English). All the above mentioned publications are correspondent to or compatible with the requirements for this academic position.

The monograph “Mentalization and the Early Stages of the Socio-Emotional Development” consists of 312 pages and contains a preface, fifteen chapters, about 440 references (420 in English and 20 in Bulgarian) as well as a subject index. The aim of the book is to make an argument for the importance of the theory of mentalization for understanding normal and pathological child development. Mentalization can be conceived as a concept on the border of and connecting several disciplines: psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, neuropsychology and neuropsychology and also philosophy (insofar as it has points of contact with the Theory of mind).

The author`s thesis is that from the viewpoint of mentalization the development of the child can be understood as a product of interaction with the parental figures. In this way the importance of the mutual influences between the parents and the child for the development of the child`s capacity to better understand their own motives and the motives of other people can be better recognized..

The book offers a review of the important theoretical perspectives towards mentalization highlighting those that are based on Bowlby`s attachment theory as well as those based on early child development research (“baby research”). The cognitive, relational and neurobiological approaches towards the development of the capacity to mentalize are analyzed and juxtaposed. The connections between mentalization and affect regulation are clarified. The conceptions of parental influence in classical psychoanalysis, in the object relations theories and in attachment theory are compared from the viewpoint of clarifying the interrelations between intrapsychic (representational) and behavioral (systems of child care) phenomena. One part of the book is dedicated to the processes playing an important role for understanding the interactions in the parent-child system: the contingency, the social referencing, the affect attunement, the competence of the child, the mirroring, the epistemic trust and the interpersonal interpretative mechanism. The state of the art research of the neurobiological basis of mentalization and intersubjectivity – the mirror neurons and the neurobiology of secure attachment and of the development of the Self – are presented.

In my opinion the main contribution of this monograph is that based on the analysis of a whole research area convincing conclusions are drawn about the role of mentalization in early child development bridging the research on unconscious psychic functioning and the development of the personality. From this perspective psychic functioning can be viewed in its complexity.

The author shows convincingly that the newest developments in mentalization theory – the concepts of the interpersonal interpretative mechanism, of natural pedagogy and of epistemic trust – draw on older and well established concepts in psychoanalysis and social psychology like those of identity and psychosocial development introduced by Erik H. Erikson. At the same time these new concept create a

new perspective to the importance of secure attachment, showing that “the development of the capacity to mentalize is a more important predictor for pathology in adult age than the quality of attachment” (p. 263). Another new concept – “instinct of communication” (ibid) – seen in the same light shows that the mentalization approach is situated within the broader theoretical framework of the General Systems Theory whose importance for practical psychology and psychotherapy has been shown long ago by theoreticians of systemic family therapy like e.g. Paul Watzlawick et al

Another important contribution of the monograph is that in a period of rapid growth in number of research publications in the disciplines mentioned above it joins the few attempt to make generalizations and to conceptualize the data with regard to their importance for the psychological practice. I am sure that Camelia Hancheva`s book can be a gate for the Bulgarian psychologists and psychotherapists to the latest research in the field of early child development. In the same vein the book is very helpful because of its constant focusing on the applied aspects of the respective theoretical developments and on the supporting empirical research.

The book is written in an excellent style and in a language that is very appropriate for a scientific text and at the same time accessible and understandable for a lay reader. The narrative is logically well connected and structured in a precise way. The metaphors used to introduce the different viewpoints to the material are stimulating the reader`s imagination and make it easier to grasp the meaning of the text. There is no doubt that the author is well acquainted not only with the theories but also with the connections between them and with their broader scientific and applied context as well as with their importance for child psychology and developmental psychology in general. The good knowledge of the theories is evidenced by her ability to present their most essential features and to juxtapose them in a convincing and understandable way.

What in my opinion is complicating the reading of the text to some extent is the striving of the author to encompass as much research as possible and at the same review the theories from different viewpoints. These efforts result sometimes in repeating some similar theses in different parts of the book which maybe are better avoided.

The author has a very good knowledge of the research methodologies in the respective field too and she is capable of making meaningful comparisons between them. By virtue of that the reader is provided with a state of the art text about the latest achievements of developmental psychology.

In my opinion the book could have benefitted from paying more attention to other viewpoints towards mentalization which are more closely related to traditional metapsychology on the one hand and to contemporary cognitive science on the other like those of the Canadian scholars Serge Lecours and Marc-Andre Bouchard and of Wilma Bucci from the USA and if the relations to other theories of the development of identity and the Self were like those of Erik H. Erikson and Heinz Kohut were more thoroughly analyzed. It is of course the author`s choice to select what she considers important to defend

her thesis and it is not my intention to allege that the omissions I mentioned have a negative impact on the importance of the monograph.

### 2.1.3. Evaluation of the contributions of the other publications presented

The monograph based on the defended PhD dissertation - the book “The Child, the Family and the Internal World: Relational Developmental Theories in Psychoanalysis” – contains a description of an empirical study conducted by the author of a sample of 251 persons including 104 children aged 6 to 15. The aim of the research was to study the relations between the adaptive functioning of children and the coping strategies of their parents. The main hypothesis was that the development and the organization of personality structures are strongly influenced by “the way the relationships between the parents and the child are internalized by the child” (p. 169). The instruments applied were one projective test and six self-evaluation questionnaires. Based on the interpretation of the results several models of mutual influences between the variables are suggested.

The study described in this book is based on the new intersubjective and relational theories in psychoanalysis. The theoretical part contains an analysis of the psychic development theories at the intersection of biological predispositions and relational factors and of the mechanisms of psychic structuring as a consequence of interpersonal relations: most of all the learning by different kinds of identifications. As in the other monograph presented above the author`s aim is to reconsider the role of the interpersonal relationships in early life for the development of the child`s psyche, In my opinion the main contribution of this monograph is the acquisition of new empirical data to support assumptions based on the latest theoretical developments in psychoanalysis.

The majority of the articles presented by Camelia Hancheva in support of her application are related to the same research field as the monographs. I am impressed by the number of psychological instruments standardized for Bulgaria by the author, among them three scales to measure mentalization and scales for empathy and systematization in adolescence.

The four chapters in collective monographs published in English are dedicated to the topic of psychic trauma and its occurrence in refugee children. Of particular value I find the study of narratives of Bulgarian families through a semi-structured interview revealing their specific mechanisms of working through the trauma.

### 2.1.4. Citations by other authors

Camelia Hancheva has been cited 7 times in Web of Sciences and once in JStore. One of her publications is indexed in EBSCO and 28 are registered in library catalogues, 2 of them Bulgarian and 4 from other countries.

### 2.1.5. Evaluation of results obtained through participation in research projects and of the practical application of these results

Camelia Hancheva has participated in 9 scientific projects. 6 of these projects have been realized in collaboration with universities from several European countries. In this projects she has acted as a Bulgarian and Sofia University representative, as a coordinator of the international Master course “Social Trauma” and as an editor and co-author of scientific collective monographs. The practical results of her participation in projects include the Bulgarian adaptations of research instruments; the planning, organization and realization of the international course “Social Trauma”, the engagement of Bulgarian students and teachers in these projects as well as the editing of scientific monographs and the authorship of articles included in these monographs.

### 2.1.6. Teaching activities

Camelia Hancheva was an assistant at the Department of General, Experimental and Genetic Psychology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” from 1999 to 2005. Since 2005 she has been a Senior Lecturer at the same department (now Department of General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology). She is teaching 16 courses including 10 courses in the field of Child, Adolescent and School Psychology and she meets the requirements for the work-load of the academic position of an Associate Professor. Two of the courses thought by her are in English.

Between 2013 and 2018 Camelia Hancheva was a part-time lecturer at the International Psychoanalytic University in Berlin, Germany. There she taught Master courses on Developmental psychology and Social Trauma.

## ***2.2. Evaluation of Manol Manolov***

### 2.2.1. Information from the professional CV

Manol Manolov graduated from the Bachelor program in Psychology of Plovdiv University “Paisi Chilendarski”. He has a Master in Psychology from the same university. In 2018 he defended his PhD in the field of Social Psychology at the University of Veliko Tarnovo.

He worked as a psychologist at the Family Type Residence Center (Halfway House) for Disabled Children and Adolescents in Assenovgrad. He consulted children, thought courses and was a court expert. During the last five years he was the chair of Association Serendipity – 2014 in Plovdiv with administrative and organizational functions including project preparation and implementation. At present he works as a public childcare worker at the Joint Committee for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency in Plovdiv fulfilling methodological and educational functions; he also works as a court expert.

Manol Manolov has participated in different training courses for working with children and families. He has basic training in the method Positive psychotherapy and personal experience with Psychodrama.

He has good command of English and basic knowledge of Greek language.

### 2.2.2. Evaluation of the monograph, including the scientific and the applied scientific contributions of the author

In support of his application Manol Manolov has presented the monograph “Self-Discrimination” plus two other monographs in co-authorship and five scientific articles; he is the single author of two of them, three others are co-authored. Four articles are in English.

The monograph “Self-discrimination” was published by IVIS Publishers in Veliko Tarnovo in 2019. The aim of the book is to introduce the concept of self-discrimination denoting a kind of behavior that is a consequence of prejudices and to delineate it from another concept with a similar genesis – the concept of discrimination. The author is making a comparison between self-discriminative behavior (although according to the description offered it is an attitude rather than behavior) with an autoimmune process in the organism having the same name in medicine and related to the ability of the organism to differentiate between proper and alien bodies. The author conceives of psychic self-discrimination as related to social identity and leading to “social unrecognizability”, i.e. “the impossibility to see and define yourself via the Other”.

The author refers the concept he introduces to the field of Social psychology and he thinks that his work might be useful in the context of Social, Political and Organizational Psychology. I agree with him and would like to point out that this monograph is not related to the field of child and adolescents Developmental Psychology and therefore is not correspondent to the scientific field of the aspired academic position.

The monograph consists of 198 pages. About 70 references have been cited including 15 in English. However, 5 of them are chapters from one single Handbook of prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination; there is only one article from a scientific journal in the field of Social Psychology. It seems that the author is making an attempt to introduce a new concept into the field of Social Psychology without a preceding thorough analysis of the relevant literature. It is also remarkable that in the chapter dedicated to the concept of social identity only one article in English has been mentioned and that this article only cursorily touches upon the topic of social identity.

Without pretending to make an in-depth evaluation of the monograph - which would exceed the target of this review – I would only like to point out that beside the insufficient exploration of the relevant research and theory offered in the scientific literature we face an attempt by the author to give reasons for the utility of a psychological concept based primarily on the analysis of historical events (e.g. the whole Chapter Three is dedicated to a review of the Insurrection of Assen and Petar) which is unconvincing from the point of view of methodology and casts doubt on the overall success of the monograph.

### 2.2.3. Evaluation of the contributions of the other publications presented

The second monograph presented by Manol Manolov is called “The Many Faces of the Self (the Self Concept in the Contemporarily Reality)”. It was published by Colbis Publishers, Sofia, in 2019 (the year of publishing is not indicated in the book). The monograph consists of 238 pages; it is co-authored and according to the Protocol of division of labor 104 pages were written by Manol Manolov. The book presents the results of several projects studying the self image of adolescents and young people. Based on the research findings recommendations for practical work were made. The monograph can be placed in the field of applied Social Psychology with some points of contact with Developmental Psychology.

The third monograph is titled “Psychology of Parental Styles in the Field of Meaning of Life” and is co-authored by Ivan Stoyanov. Because a Protocol of division of labor is absent it is impossible to know how many pages were written by Manol Manolov. The monograph consists of 202 pages and was published by The University of Veliko Tarnovo Press in 2018. It contains a description of a study using 2 questionnaires for parental style with a Bulgarian sample aiming to find out whether the ideas about the meaning of life of the parents have an impact on their parenting styles. The authors claim to have found evidence for the main hypothesis that parents who find their lives meaningful develop parental styles that are more oriented towards the child and towards the development of the personality of the child. According to the authors their research belongs to the field of Social Psychology.

The scientific articles written in English, also the co-authored ones, are dedicated to the problem of consciousness: one of them is a study report on the perception of categories by young people that have an impact on their conscious thinking, and the second one looks at consciousness from a philosophical rather than psychological point of view. The article about “the social inheritance in the context of psychology” is a report on the theoretical frame of a study that according to the author belongs to the fields of sociology and economics. The publication in Bulgarian is part of a collective monograph on psychopathology and describes a circumscribed syndrome.

To summarize: the contributions of Manol Manolov`s publications can be related to Social Psychology and its applied aspects with some points of contact to Developmental Psychology on the one side and to disciplines bordering psychology – like sociology and economics – on the other.

### 2.2.4. Citations by other authors

The scientific works presented by Manol Manolov in support of his application have been cited 7 times by Bulgarian authors. Two of his articles are indexed in Web of Science and one – in CiteFactor.

### 2.2.5. Evaluation of results obtained through participation in research projects and of the practical application of these results

At present Manol Manolov is the director of a project concerning young scholars and doctoral students sponsored by the Scientific Research Fund at the University of Veliko Tarnovo under the title “Conceptualization of Different Forms of Social Inheritance by Children aged 3 to 8”. In the past during his term of office at the Association Serendipity – 2014 he participated in three projects related to working with children as well as in several educational projects.

### 2.2.6. Teaching Activities

Since 2017 Manol Manolov has been teaching courses at the University of Veliko Tarnovo in different areas of psychology: social and ethnic conflicts, ethnopsychology, social and business psychology. He has been leading exercises in 8 different areas of psychology.

## **3. Summary. Recommendations and remarks concerning the activities of the candidates**

Camelia Hancheva has been teaching at the Department of General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” for over 20 years. The majority of the courses she has been teaching are in the field of Developmental Psychology. Besides, she has been teaching at universities in Germany and other countries.

Camelia Hancheva has proven her outstanding competence in scientific research by numerous publications, including book chapters published by prestigious international publishing houses, by adapting a number of research instruments for Bulgaria and by participating in advanced international projects including projects financed by the European Union. The longstanding collaboration with scientists from other European universities working on the same research questions shows this candidate`s endeavor to keep up with the latest achievements in her field.

Furthermore Camelia Hancheva has an experience of over 20 years in Clinical Psychology: she worked at a hospital, she qualified in two different psychotherapeutic approaches and she works with patients with mental health problems. She was a supervisor of other professionals working in schools and kindergartens. So she is both a researcher and a practical psychologist. The psychological practice is an important way to accumulate knowledge about the different aspects of psychic development and functioning of children and adolescents and about the relationships between parents and children. The combination of research experience and practical experience is a foundation for the integral approach to the phenomena of psychic development. Moreover, she has an academic experience as a compiler, editor and translator of scientific literature. Her proficiency in several foreign languages makes her capable of participating in the international scientific exchange and being a teacher of foreign students.

To summarize: Camelia Hancheva combines the skills of a teacher, a researcher and a practitioner acquired in a longstanding professional carrier. It is important to point out that her professional carrier has been connected with the Department of General, Experimental, Developmental and Health Psychology of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” all along, which means that she is closely familiar with the requirements of the University, the Faculty and the Department and that she has already established working relationships with her colleagues. All the above mentioned can be regarded as an excellent basis for her to fulfill her academic duties in accordance with the academic position she has applied for.

Manol Manolov stands in the beginning of his professional carrier. He has been teaching for 2 years now. His teaching experiences have not been focused on any specific field of psychology and certainly not on Developmental Psychology. It is impressive that he managed to published three monographs reflecting his work and research, but no one of them either is related to the scientific filed that the aspired academic position belongs to. His practical experiences consist primarily in the participation in projects and consulting activities and seem not to have offered possibilities for gaining systematic insight into the problems of child and adolescent psychology. And although he has made his first steps in systematic self reflection (self-experience through psychodrama) – a very important activity for the professional psychologist – he still stands in the beginning of a very long road.

I would recommend to Camelia Hancheva to continue deepening her investigation of the crossing points between the different theoretical approaches to psychic development and broadening the space for the mutual enrichment between her teaching research and therapeutic activities.

I would recommend to Manol Manolov to continue searching for the focus of his scientific and applied activities, to engage into a deeper study of the international scientific exchange in his chosen field and to keep moving forward on the road to self-understanding.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the above considerations I assume that Senior Lecturer Camelia Hancheva is the candidate that is in possession to a high degree of the qualities necessary for fulfilling the duties inherent in the academic position of an Associate Professor in Professional Field 3.2. Psychology (Developmental Psychology of Children and Adolescents), and I recommend to the honorable Scientific Jury to make a proposal to the Faculty Council to elect her for this position.

Date: 20.12.2019

Signature .....

(Nikola Atanassov PhD, Associate Professor)