

## OPINION

**By:** assoc. prof. Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, Institute for Population and Human Studies

**Regarding:** The application of the following candidates for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in Area of Higher Education 3.2. Psychology (Developmental Psychology) at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The procedure has been announced in the State Gazette issue 65 dated 16 August 2019.

**Candidates:** Assit. Prof. Kamelia Doncheva Hancheva, PhD

Assit. Prof. Manol Nikolov Manolov, PhD

### **Evaluation of the scientific contribution of the candidates**

#### **1. Evaluation of the appropriateness to the national minimum requirements and to the internal rules and requirements of The Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski".**

This opinion has been prepared on the basis of documents submitted by Dr. Hancheva for the procedure, announced in the State Gazette, issue. 65 / 16.08.2019 and on the website of Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski". The documents submitted are in compliance with all the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Rules for its implementation, including the Habilitation Procedure and Internal Rules for Acquisition of Academic Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" from January 23, 2019 regarding procedure.

The candidate Kamelia Doncheva Hancheva received her PhD degree in the area of Higher education 3.2. Psychology (Developmental Psychology), with a thesis "Defensive Mechanisms and Strategies for Parenting and Adaptive Functioning of the Child" defended on 1.11. 2013. She has presented as a habilitation work a monograph that does not repeat the theme and the content of her doctoral thesis. With the publications and quotations presented for the procedure, Assit. Prof. Kamelia Doncheva Hancheva, PhD in Psychology, meets the national minimum requirements for occupying the position of associate professor in the Area of higher

education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, with a total of 432.6 points (by group of indicators A, B, G, and D) to 400 required. The requirements of the mandatory bibliographic description of publications and citations have been met.

The candidate assist. prof. Manol Nikolov Manolov holds a PhD degree, has held the position of "assistant" for at least two years and has presented as a habilitation work a monograph, which does not repeat his thesis, submitted for obtaining a PhD degree.

With the publications and quotations, presented for this procedure, Mr. Manol Nikolov Manolov, PhD in Psychology, fulfills the minimum national requirements for occupying the position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 3. "Social, business and legal sciences", professional field 3.2." Psychology" with a total of 477.5 points to 400 required.

According to the requirements of the RAPRSPRB, for the academic position of Associate Professor, the score is formed by the indicators included in groups A, B,G and D. Although not included in the overall assessment, I would like to emphasize that Assist. Prof. K. Hancheva has great experience in the projects - 6 international and 6 national.

## **2. Research activity and scientific achievements**

Assist. Prof. Kamelia Hancheva, PhD, has applied for the academic position of Associate Professor with a scientific production, comprising a total of 15 titles, of which: 1 habilitation work - scientific monograph; 1 published book on the basis of a doctoral thesis; 5 book chapters; 8 articles in non-refereed journals with scientific review; 8 abstracts in conference proceedings;

In the 14 years period after her election as Assistant Professor, Dr. K. Hristova systematically organized and conducted her scientific work, with the publications clearly outlining her research interests in the field of the relational psychoanalysis, research on mentalization, its place and role in the social and the emotional development of the child. She has been gradually involving new topics of interest into her area of research with the aim of better understanding of the complexity of the developmental dynamics.

The presented monograph work of Assist. Professor K. Hancheva "Mentalization and early stages of socio-emotional development" (ISBN 978-954-07-4767-5) comprises 312 pages, with a bibliography of Bulgarian and foreign sources in English. It has been reviewed by two reviewers. Both the habilitation work and the dissertation thesis of Assist. Prof. Hancheva demonstrate the consistency of her scientific interest in the field of developmental psychology.

The book includes four sections, comprising 15 chapters. Throughout the breadth and the scope of the various theories and positions presented in the monograph, a well-organized and consistent framework for representation of the construct "mentalization" has been created, providing strong arguments for its role in the dynamics of developmental processes.

The emergent patterns of the child's interaction with the world and their reflection and comprehension through his/her own experience are at the focus of explanatory schemes. One of the scientific contributions of the monograph consists in the fact that it provides a coherent theoretical framework for this multilayered construct. The integration of extensive theoretical material and the empirical data is an extremely difficult task, not only because of the diversity of explanatory models, but also because of the pace at which numerous new scientific studies on this topic are emerging. Their deeper scientific understanding and integration in support of the proposed paradigm reveal the great explanatory resource of the theory of mentalization for a thorough and more comprehensive understanding of the socio-emotional development of the child, who discovers and recognizes both the world of objects, and the more complex system of social interactions of subjects.

The theoretical tenets of psychoanalysis, the theory of attachment and their projection in the explanation of the early parent-child relationships are discussed in detail, and supported by the arguments of the modern neuroscience. The various statements of attachment theory are presented, with special attention to the prerequisites for building a sense of security in the child. The monograph presented here is commendable not only for its content, but also for the author's skills to present this complexly organized matter with multiple arguments in an excellent text with rich vocabulary and accurate definition of the scientific concepts.

In addition to this in-depth theoretical work, Dr. K. Hancheva also conducted empirical studies in order to test the Bulgarian versions of the scales for mentalization; she investigated its reliability, convergent validity and reported similar results in relation to the underlying factor structure as well as good psychometric properties of the scales.

A considerable part of Dr. Hancheva publications is dedicated to the issues of high social importance and concern- that of migration. She analysed the psychological impact of forced migration on children and the traumatic experience of refugees, stressing on the necessity of protective factors for guiding and accompanying the process of their integration.

The candidate areas of research fully correspond to the specific requirements of the current procedure.

The candidate assist. prof. Manol Nikolov Manolov holds a PhD degree, has held the position of "assistant" for at least two years and has presented as a habilitation work a monograph, which does not repeat his thesis, submitted for obtaining a PhD degree.

With the publications and quotations, presented for this procedure, Mr. Manol Nikolov Manolov, PhD in Psychology, fulfills the minimum national requirements for occupying the position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 3. "Social, business and legal sciences", professional field 3.2." Psychology" with a total of 477.5 points to 400 required.

The presented monograph work of Dr. M. Manolov "Self-Discrimination" (ISBN 978-619-205-112-9) consists of 198 pages, with a bibliography, including Bulgarian and foreign sources in English, as well as reports of two scientific reviewers. Both Dr. Manolov's habilitation and dissertation work on "Interaction Models for Reducing the Social Isolation of Non-Standard Groups" show the consistency of his scientific interest in the field of social psychology. The presented monograph, organized in 3 Chapters, Introduction and Conclusion, examines the self-discrimination in a socio-psychological context.

The focus of this work is mainly in the field of the ethno-psychology and the social psychology, and although the topic may be addressed in the field of developmental changes, these aspects remain outside its scope. Undoubtedly, Dr. Manolov's interests in this topic testify for the ability of the scientist to identify the scientific problems and issues, which has not been sufficiently studied and thus need more extensive scientific research for their understanding. Perhaps because of the overall broad framework that the scientist sets, the work does not achieve the necessary depth of a contemporary socio-psychological study, which requires a well-constructed theoretical model with a strict operationalization of the construct, aiming at adequate methodological choices.

The orientation to the historical processes in the past, for which it is impossible to achieve satisfactory and straight interpretation, searching for support of the theses, is not the best way for achievement of the stated goals.

In addition to the habilitation work, the candidate submitted also two more collective monographs in which he participated, one article in a refereed edition and three articles in non-refereed journals.

Based on these monographs it seems that (mainly on their experimental part) the interesting scientific productions have not received the necessary empirical support, mainly due to the lack of good operationalization, and the presented statistical analysis is far from achieving

its proof and meaning.

At the same time, the data obtained could be a good basis for future expansion, or a revised edition with greater precision, since it contains interesting ideas that determine the potential of the work.

### **3. Teaching experience**

The teaching experience of Assit. Prof. K. Hancheva as a full-time lecturer expanded from 1999 until now. In the period 2013-2018 she was a part-time lecturer at the International Psychoanalytic University - Berlin, (IPU-Berlin), Germany. Her academic and professional career is consistently affiliated with Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The teaching activity of Asisst. Prof. K. Hancheva is carried out in a bachelor program in psychology, as well as in several master's and doctoral programs. The topics of the courses, including General and Developmental Psychology, Child Psychology, Developmental Psychology of Childhood-and Adolescence, Family Counseling, Trauma in Development, Palliative Care and Chronic Illness, Baby in Relationship System - Mental Development and Health, etc., are within the scope of the topic of the procedure - Developmental Psychology.

Many of the courses are specially prepared in English for the purposes of Erasmus mobile programs.

The achieved high quality in the academic work is evidenced by two positive evaluations by the Attestation Committee on the basis of the indicators and achievement in teaching, research and service at the university.

A distinctive feature of K. Hancheva's academic work is the active involvement of students in research and experimental work - she was the scientific supervisor of 14 master thesis of students.

The teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. K. Hancheva fully correspond to the requirements of the current procedure.

Dr. Manolov's teaching activities started on 20.02.2017 and includes courses that are relevant to Dr. Manolov's research interests and expertise. Lecture activity is mainly in the field of social psychology (social and ethnic conflicts, ethno-psychology, social psychology, business psychology). Only one seminar course on the Child-adolescent psychology is mentioned.

The impressions about the candidate I get from the publications and from the activities covered in his CV, are of one very active young scientist, oriented towards contemporary problems in our society and practice, looking for the socio-psychological meaning and contribution of his topics of his interest.

**Conclusions:**

The career profile, the teaching experience and the academic activities, as well as the scientific achievements of Assistant Professor Kamelia Hancheva, are the strong arguments that she meet the mandatory requirements and scientific criteria for the academic position of "Associate Professor". Taking into account the high level achievements, and expertise, the rich experience in the field of developmental psychology she possesses, I would like to strongly recommend Dr. Hancheva for the academic position of Associate Professor.

19. 12. 2019

assoc. prof. Maria Trifonova, PhD