

Review
by Prof. Ph.D. Rumen Ivanov Stamatov
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by competition for the academic position "docent"
at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"

In the competition for "associate professor", announced in SG No. 24 of 17 03 2023 for the needs of the department of "General, experimental, developmental and health psychology", at the FF of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" as the only candidate participated Dr. Aneta Atanasova. I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of the competition for the academic position "docent" in /area of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.2. Psychology. The references and scientific publications presented by Dr. Aneta Atanasova make it possible to assess both her professional work and her main scientific interests. The set of materials is in accordance with the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". The candidate has submitted a habilitation thesis, a book, studies and articles published in the academic press, as well as reports from participation in prestigious scientific conferences, issued after the defense of the educational and scientific degree "doctor". The work of the candidate was highly appreciated by the professional board. Citations on them are also indicated. Dr. Aneta Atanasova completed a master's program in Psychology in 1992. Followed by a specialization in clinical and counseling psychology and a specialization in developmental, educational and cultural psychology. He defended his doctoral thesis in psychology on the topic "Identification of specific disorders of the ability to learn in primary school age". The professional biography of Dr. Aneta Atanasova is serious: consultant to UNICEF, psychologist on support and protection for refugee children, in a project implemented by the Bulgarian Red Cross, consultant to the Center for Inclusive Education, academic mentor on the "Student Practices" project, trainer at RAABE, supervisor and trainer at SONIK "Start", trainer at PAMB, trainer at EBK, psychologist at the Center for Social Rehabilitation and Adaptation of Persons with Autistic Spectrum Problems. The lectures and exercises he gives are in the field of Experimental Psychology, Psychological Measurement, Integration of Children

with Special Educational Needs, Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs, Diagnosis and Therapy of Specific Learning Disabilities.

Focusing essentially on the materials submitted for participation in the competition, I will start with the habilitation thesis - "Diagnosis and evaluation of disorders of the autism spectrum. Sofia: University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", ISBN: 978-954-07-4444-5, 469". In terms of its design and implementation, the research focuses on the problems of assessing autism spectrum disorders and the possibilities for effective organization of the therapeutic and educational process. The work is divided into thirteen chapters and concluding remarks, which are divided into three structural parts. The first of them - notes the manifestations and essence of autism spectrum disorders, indicating the specific features, through detailed tracking of cognitive, emotional and behavioral manifestations, the specificity of social interactions, self-regulation and autonomy, which are also tracked in the context of development in the life cycle . A distinctive feature of the description of the specifics of autism is that it combines in an interesting way the results of scientific discoveries systematized in various reference books and scientific studies with examples from life and experience. Descriptions of autism are based on authors of unquestionable authority and reflective insight. Here, Dr. Aneta Atanasova, starting from the in-depth reading of autism spectrum disorders, synthetically presents the grounds for their evaluation and overcoming the problems in the process of the diagnosis itself as well as in the organization of the therapeutic process, relying on the accumulated research and national and foreign practices . Drawing on accumulated research, this part analytically presents the genetic and structural features of autism spectrum disorders with detailed precision. Thus, the research reaches the richness of empirical analyses, which reveals its significance for practice. The second part is dedicated to the evaluation and diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders and covers numerous analyzes that trace the requirements for the evaluation procedures themselves, the ways of organizing and conducting the evaluations, the areas of evaluation, the challenges to the evaluation depending on the use of the different instruments, which concludes with a detailed description of existing assessment tools and again attests to the practical value of the study. The third part is a natural continuation of the first two parts and presents again a detailed analysis of the main therapeutic approaches in dealing with autism, it affects the coordination between specialists, the experiences of the family related to the course of life together with persons suffering from autism spectrum disorders. I find particularly valuable the

shared experience of the effects of the various interventions, as well as a progressive and coherent discussion of many of the challenges associated with participation in the therapeutic process as well as in the learning process. I would like to note the academically transparent language of the text and the marked correctness in references and density of thought. I highlight the analytical competence of Aneta Atanasova, behind which are many years of acquired experience and professional insight. I agree with the author's assessment of the study as unique in its scale for Bulgaria, as an attempt to systematically present theoretical and practical aspects in this current and significant field.

I would also like to point out the monographic study "Specific Learning Disabilities", which is a kind of expansion of the research in the field of income diagnosis and the preparation of instruments for the assessment of children with specific disabilities and learning ability.

The scientific articles proposed by Dr. Aneta Atanasova are focused on the diagnosis of various disorders, as well as on the understanding of the problems related to learning and teachers' attitudes towards new technologies. The articles advance the notion of searches that, in various ways, deepen understanding of autism spectrum disorders and issues related to diagnosis, education, family support, and various interventions. And here, too, Dr. Aneta Atanasova's inherent scientific virtue is manifested: before saying "her own", she must consider "other people's" - opinions, approaches, critical analyses.

Grouped together, the studies noted aim to clarify understandings of autism spectrum disorders, behind which one finds a preoccupation with the diagnosis of these disorders, with experiencing the first encounters with their "meeting", which poses a serious challenge to the meaning of life, to making sense of a different world and the burden of realizing one's own humanity. This concern is found in the exposure of one's own rich practical experience and the indication of the effectiveness of individual therapeutic approaches and interventions. Returning to "Diagnosis and Assessment of Autism Spectrum Disorders", I would also like to note that this is a kind of attempt to continue enriching diagnostic methods and their use in an educational and therapeutic context.

Another reference point for Aneta Atanasova's performances is her rich teaching experience, behind which one finds expert knowledge from accumulated professional experience in the field of inclusive education, diagnosis and therapy of autism spectrum disorders. I would like to emphasize this combination of

teaching and professional experience, as well as theoretical knowledge and expertise, which is a condition for adaptively meeting educational requirements. Therefore, in summary, I will note that Aneta Atanasova meets all the academic requirements addressed to a university teacher for building the professional competence and identity of students who will seek realization in the field of psychology and education.

In conclusion - reading Aneta Atanasova's proposal for participation in the competition forms a definite impression of a colleague with solid professional experience and undoubted research capabilities. That is why, as a member of the Scientific Jury, I am convinced to vote for Aneta Atanasova to occupy the academic position of "associate professor" in professional direction 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, specialty 3.2. Psychology.

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prepared the review:

(Prof. Rumen Stamatov, Ph.D.)