STATEMENT

From **Assoc. Prof. Violeta Kotseva, PhD**,

Department of Ethnology, Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”

for the PhD thesis of **Assya Valentinova Valceva** full-time PhD student in the Department "Ethnology" - Faculty of History,

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

in a professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Science,

titeled: **"The Teacher – Mediator between Tradition and Modernity 20th – 21st century (Ethnological research)"**, with supervisor **Prof. Dr. Mira Markova**

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

The PhD thesis of Assya Valcheva is devoted to the analysis of the role of the teacher in modern times and his function as mediator between traditional values and attitudes and modern technological progress, caused as a result of social processes on a global and Bulgarian level. The topic is particularly relevant to the background of the active public debate about the role, importance and results in Bulgarian education. The devaluation of the symbolic value of the profession of the teacher in the years of transition cannot yet be erased, despite attempts at the state level to turn it into an attractive professional niche and restore its prestige. The various number of problems in Bulgarian education (students dropping out of the educational system, need to introduce educational methods and approaches that correspond to the multicultural situation in the country, the need to rejuvenate the teaching stuff, preparation for increasing the socio-cultural and technological competence of teachers etc.) show the importance of the teacher in modern society, imputing him to be, on the one hand, the heir of those tradition from the period of national Renaissance that maid him one of its most significant figures, but on the other hand, to be adequate to modern technological progress, shortening the generational distance between him and students. All this strongly argues the timely appearance of Assya Valcheva`s dissertation topic about the teacher in his role as mediator in the modern education system in the Republic of Bulgaria.

PhD candidate Assya Valcheva completed the bachelor`s program in “Ethnology” at the Departmenet of Ethnology of the Faculty of History at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” with a specialization in “European Ethnology” and has got a teaching qualifacation. The PhD candidate received her master`s degree at the MP “Historical Models of National Security” at the Faculty of History. Since 2019, he has been a full time Phd student at the Department of Ethnology. The Phd candidate submit her work within the legally established deadlines.

Asya Valcheva's dissertation submitted for consideration follows the established structure of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliographic reference and appendices, with the conclusions drawn up in a separate part. The dissertation has a volume of 240 pages. The bibliographic reference shows knowledge of the main literature on the issue, as well as the normative base related to the topic of the study. In addition, the PhD student also uses a large set of online sources that complement the theoretical basis of the work. Included in the appendices are the author's diagnostic procedure questionnaires and surveys, which I found particularly helpful. The ethnographic approach, chosen by the author, allows to go into the depth of the researched problem. It is the ethnographic methodology in the study of a problem from the educational sphere that is innovative and interdisciplinary in the dissertation thesis, which increases the quality of the research.

In the introductory part, the doctoral student clearly states the purpose of her research, namely *to outline the dynamic problems of education in the 21st century, as well as to analyze the role of the teacher in upholding timeless educational and universal human values* (p. 3). The main tasks for the PhD student are also dedicated to the purpose of the research - from analysis of European and national normative documents, through content analysis of the available literature to empirical research, carried out with ethnographic qualitative and quantitative methods, which aims to outline the main attitudes and prejudices, encountered among teachers regarding the introduction of innovative education. It is important to emphasize that surveys can only establish the presence or absence of prejudices and specific attitudes regarding a given topic, and in-depth and qualitative ethnographic research will outline the reasons for the results obtained. This makes the work methodologically sound, as the methodology used corresponds to the set goals and objectives.

Chapter One bears the general title Mediation and Education. In it, the PhD student consistently presents the logic of her research, placing her theses between the dynamics of the social, cultural and educational environment in the conditions of globalization, on the one hand, and on the other - traditions in education as a means of upgrading and stabilizing shared moral-ethical and Family values. The author dwells on the role of the teacher as a balancer between the teaching of the so-called professions of the future and pan-European values. As far as the text makes clear, the PhD student positions Bulgarian values in the contact zone between European and Far-Eastern values. Although they indeed have points of intersection, the Bulgarian socially shared value system has its own uniqueness, and it, in my opinion, should also be taken into account in the course of the text. This would contribute to a clearer vision of the author's thesis about the teacher as a mediator between tradition and modernity in the specific conditions of Bulgarian society at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

The focus of the second chapter of the dissertation is the modernization of the educational institution, with the author paying primary attention to STEM educational policies as a required path to a modern and corresponding to the new technological generations of education, which also meets the needs of modern society. A second chapter would benefit if it included other necessary directions in the development of the educational institution. The latter, called to overcome the ethnocentric approaches in education accumulated in the previous decades and emphasizing on reflexive and value-oriented models in the educational process.

The analysis in the third chapter is devoted to the role of the teacher. The author consistently traces its functions in traditional, socialist and post-socialist society. The ethnographic research, conducted using a structured questionnaire with representatives of the teaching profession regarding their ideas about the role of the modern teacher, is particularly helpful. The results of this ethnographic study show the challenges facing Bulgarian teachers and could serve as a basis for building adequate models for teacher training, according to the specific environment. In the future, the study could be expanded to include educational institutions not only in the big city, but also in the periphery and villages, and thus account for similarities and differences and give importance to local markers that reflect on the educational environment. I consider the attached quotations to be unreasonably long and in my opinion that putting them below the line would lighten the text. Nevertheless, the chapter makes clear the imposed change in the role of teachers during the socialist and post-socialist period. Tables and diagrams in the text complement it and facilitate the reader.

The author makes the main conclusions in the final part of her work, emphasizing them, bringing them out in a separate paragraph.

The dissertation presents the PhD student as a well-prepared researcher, with a perspective for new interesting and contributing research in the field of Ethnopedagogy, the role of the pedagogical specialist in the educational process and the transformations of the educational system in the age of (g)localization. Proof of this is the author's publications on the topic of the dissertation research, which correspond to the number required by law. The abstract corresponds to the dissertation by correctly reflecting its content. Incorrect citations and plagiarism are not detected. The text is a contributing study in the field of Ethnology, Ethnopedagogy, Ethnology of post-socialism, etc.

The procedure corresponds to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its Application, as well as the internal Rules for the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and for occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". Therefore, expressing my categorical positive opinion, I propose to the respected Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Assya Valentinova Valcheva for the dissertation research on the topic "The teacher - mediator between tradition and modernity XX - XXI centuries" (Ethnological study) and I will vote for this.

18. 09. 2023 Violeta Kotseva

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