

# REVIEW

by Prof. Bozhidar Angelov

of the materials presented by Assoc. Prof. Danail Danov, applicant to the competition for the academic position of "professor", Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy (Media pedagogy); announcement published in the State Gazette, issue 27 of 28.07.2020

Mr. Danail Danov is the only candidate in the above defined competition. He graduated as follows: 1988, MA degree in Turkic Studies, Sofia University, passed with distinction; MA degree in "Society and Politics", Central European University, 1992 – passed with distinction; MA in "Area Studies, SOAS, University of London, 1994 passed with distinction.

Danail Danov has postgraduate specializations from the National Academy of Radio and Television of the Netherlands, 2002 and the Fulbright Foundation, Reagan- Fascell scholarship, 2012.

During the period 1990-2001 Danail Danov worked as a journalist: reporter (Bulgarian National Radio), editor – anchor of news and weekly round-up program, deputy-editor in chief. Editor in chief (Radio Express), producer (BBC World Services), executive director, deputy Director General, and acting Director General (Bulgarian National Radio). Between 2001 and 2014 he worked as Program Director of the Media Development Center, Sofia and Executive Director of the Communications and Human Resources Development Center, Sofia.

At the end of 2011 Danail Danov defended his doctoral dissertation in pedagogy on "New technologies as an alternative to traditional education" at Sofia University; during the period 2012-2014 he was a part-time assistant-professor at the Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education, Sofia University. In 2014, after winning a competition for a senior assistant professor at the same faculty he started working at Sofia University "Kl. Ohridski".

Only two years later, Danail Danov was elected Associate Professor of Media Pedagogy, Media Studies and Multimedia, and in 2019 he became a Doctor of Science (D.Litt.) in 1.2. Pedagogy after the defense of a dissertation on "Media literacy - genesis, development of the idea, challenges and future prospects."

During the eight years that Danail Danov has been teaching at Sofia University, he has developed 30 lecture courses aimed at bachelors, masters and doctoral students, which he offers at three different faculties of Sofia University – Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, and Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology. Along with that he has developed two programs for postgraduate qualification of students; he has also supervised the diploma theses of over 50 students. Over the last four years he is actively involved in the academic development of five PhD students, one of whom has already successfully defended his doctoral dissertation. Danail Danov has lectured as a visiting professor at twenty-five universities, of which more than 10 are foreign. He has published 8 monographs, 2 studies and over 80 articles in various scientific journals in the country and around the world. He has translated 15 books from English into Bulgarian.

The candidate takes part in this competition with two author's monographs, namely "Digitalization and Education: Innovation, Creativity and Interculturalism" and "Media Literacy - Rethinking Experience"; with a collective monograph, entitled "Theoretical aspects and applied research in media pedagogy"; with one study "European Media Coach Initiative as a Tool for the Development of Media Literacy in Bulgaria" and with nine other articles. All these publications were published in 2020 and all of them are directly related to the main directions of D. Danov's teaching and research activities, namely media pedagogy, media and digital literacy, development of education and training in the conditions of rapid technological development, digital pedagogy and application of modern information and communication technologies in education, pedagogical interaction, training in various areas (including foreign language teaching) and lifelong learning. It is in these directions that the main scientific contributions of the candidate are situated - theoretical, research, teaching and project-based.

The analysis of the monographs proposed for the competition shows that in all of them the central place is given to the growing importance of the new type of skills and competencies of students as part of the essence of education in the 21st century. Improving them as a goal is increasingly becoming a key component of the work of researchers, social theorists, IT professionals and politicians around the world in their efforts to ensure people's ability to participate more fully in all areas of modern life.

In this sense, Danail Danov's publications are part of the public discussion about the new type of education, the successful implementation of which

requires clarity about the nature, trends and opportunities it reveals, as well as the of the models by which this education can and should be applied. According to the revealed parameters of the relationship between media, communications and multimedia in the socio-cultural environment, whose numerous and diverse aspects the candidate considers in his works, he offers a kind of research orientation, which includes building a model of the audience; rich information about the various multimedia products and the possibilities for their application in education. Danov analyses also the communication behavior of the users along with the various media effects resulting from the use of the media, including when working with multimedia products in kindergarten and school. Issues such as the activity of users of different ages in relation to different types of communication, the peculiarities in the formation of media competence, the specifics of the development of media literacy are covered in detail in the offered research subject of Danov's publications. Last but not least he has proposed a new typology of activities that bring about effective media literacy-oriented education.

Danail Danov applies enough data to the extensive experience gained over the past ten to fifteen years in the field of application of digital technologies, which, although they intersect with the goals of skills, implying knowledge and widespread use of computer technologies and platforms - does not seek the future of modern education only within the development of high-tech competencies. For him, the availability of such skills, in addition to empowering users to create, store, disseminate and exchange information of

any type, requires the formation of personal interaction skills, problem solving and high degree of initiative, a growing internal need for all civic activities. This, and especially the latter, leads to the formation of values and attitudes, which, as Danail Danov notes, technologies alone are not able to generate.

Probably for this reason, in the works proposed for the competition, Danail Danov clearly expresses his view that digital literacy is a combination of competencies required for full participation in the information society. It is about knowledge, skills and behavior involving the effective use of devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and computers for communication, public expression, collaboration. Danail Danov cites many successful examples of how civic engagement is best mobilized today through the technologies of a digital society in which authors and consumers are constantly merging and where, unlike pre-digital times, there are no prominent leaders and clearly formed structures.

Whereas only ten or fifteen years ago, such participation would have been the result mainly of the purposeful efforts of institutions and organizations competing to attract more like-minded people to their cause. In this regard, Danail Danov constantly shows convincingly how the new interactive media constructs such as the Internet and its applications: blogs, websites, platforms, cyber-societies of various kinds, as well as mobile phones, present a huge media change. Here, the key word is “change”, because D. Danov unequivocally proves in his work the need and the reality of changing a certain paradigm.

However, the practical implementation of all these changes would be unthinkable if we omit their connection with teaching and education and

especially the differences in their nature in terms of their means of implementation in the 20th and 21st centuries, the author argues. Societies, according to Danail Danov, are motivated to a large extent by the socio-cultural values shared by the subjects of education, which in the context of the current realities of the 21st century, has seriously transcended to a new type of virtual reality.

Because, if for most "digital immigrants" such as teachers and lecturers, the educational paradigm of the 20th century is a natural circumstance, normal environment in which they themselves were formed and developed upwards according to their characteristics, for the "digital natives" i.e. students, this 20<sup>th</sup> c. paradigm and educational environment are not only "unnatural", but mostly "inoperable", "unfair" and "ineffective". This change is related to the positioning of a resource for rapid response, allowing the participation of recipients in media or communication processes by connecting with these processes, placing activities at the center of modern communication culture.

A strong impression in the publications proposed for the competition is made by the philosophical interpretation of the author, who dwells on certain trends, in my opinion, mainly in the field of social psychology. "The introduction and application of the new paradigm is necessary precisely due to the fact that today not the teacher, but the students are already in the center of education, pedagogical interaction and training. This leads us to believe that education, which is already needed, should be in line with the philosophies of constructivism and connectivism. Which both outline the parameters of the new educational paradigm, "according to D. Danov.

Thus, on all these issues in different parts of the world, researchers have expressed opinions and hypotheses, there are many studies exploring the philosophies of both constructivism and connectivism. In this respect, Vygotsky's theses presented in his work "Thinking and Speech" (Vygotsky, 1983), which determines the connection between language and thinking, can be considered fundamental. Piaget also sees the connection between connectivism and constructivism in his own way in his work "Success of Understanding" (Piaget, 1974). What both authors see, in fact, as pointed out in the above quoted books, is that learning is the search or construction of meanings; that in the process of learning starting from a meaning, learners are constantly provoked and motivated to try and construct new meanings. This connection allows Danail Danov to raise his theoretical analysis to a completely different level compared to his works produced prior to the defense of his doctoral thesis, entitled "Media literacy - genesis, development of the idea, challenges and prospects" (2019), with which I allow to say, I am very well acquainted.

But what is this other, or the definitely higher level, which presupposes the relevant conclusions in the direction, drawn out by Danov's book "Digitalization and education: innovation, creativity and interculturalism"?

I will be concise. Kurt Levin is considered the first researcher of group communication, by studying group communication and its dynamics. He has conducted world-renowned scientific experiments related to the study of group communication and its dynamics. The aim of his research was to determine

whether and what is the dependence of persuasion on influence in a social group.

Therefore, for Danail Danov, the established transformations in almost all spheres of society, as well as the transformations in group and individual plan, presuppose a reassessment of the paradigm for social action, as well as a new concept in the direction of communication perspectives. An essential feature in this case is that Kurt Levin builds his model of the "society-personality" relationship, paying attention not so much to the subject-object relations as to the subject-subject ones. In fact, an analogue of this model is the group, which already assumes a socio-psychological point of view in solving the problems that have arisen.

The transformation of social action into communicative action in almost all sections, in activities related to the implementation of everyday tasks, relationships with institutions, culture, science, education, etc., raises its importance in the analysis of Danail Danov. For him, the new digital media draw a special line between them and their previous means of communication and causes a break in the history of communications and media. Once again, there are grounds for labeling the media as old and new, traditional and modern, modern and postmodern. The Internet-based media, usually referred to as non-traditional or means of postmodern communications, initiate and impose, as Danov argues, a new type of media predestination in society. Along with the already traditional media, they provoke different types of consequences, many of which are ambiguous. The separate spheres of the society are already based on a new media-determined trajectory, acquire media metamorphoses, impose

the new type of communication. Communication is becoming more and more media-bound and more and more multi-layered.

If we have to answer the question of what is happening as a result of the continuous dynamics and restructuring of media-determined communications, it is both the simultaneous universalization and identification of new media and their almost ubiquitous presence and interchangeability in education.

In summary, it can be clarified that digitalization as a process of mass and global use of computer technology by individual users, organizations and businesses, together with the various sociocultural consequences of the entry of digital platforms in all areas of life, requires training and education of a new type, based on new type of skills and competencies capable of adequately meeting the societal needs of the 21st century and the pursuit of upward development. As a central among these competencies Danail Danov considers (digital) media literacy understood both as a bridge and a means to the education of the future. Thus, traditional interpersonal communication in its direct face-to-face or indirect version narrows its perimeter in the general structure of communications both in volume and form. I can say that in this way Danail Danov proves in his works that in addition to the relative reduction of the share of interpersonal (face to face) communication in the general structure of communications, changes also occur in media-mediated communications. Thus, interactivity is gradually increasing its share in traditional media, which is extremely important for the "media-education" relationship.

I mentioned above that the publications with which Danail Danov participates in the competition mark as a key word "change" because they unequivocally

prove the need and the reality of changing a certain paradigm regarding the relationship "digitalization and education: innovation, creativity and interculturalism ". And importantly, they give a clear answer as to why the previous education paradigm no longer works effectively.

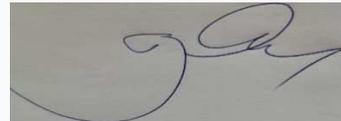
Danail Danov's research activity goes hand in hand with his active participation in numerous - national and international projects - related to the development and application of digital technologies in education.

Danail Danov takes in an international team, involved in the development of a methodology for practical training in media literacy, a project entitled European Media Coach Initiative; he is also working on an innovative project of the European Commission, called the European Safe Online Initiative, directly exploring the opportunities for parents and families to support the safe use of the Internet by children. Danov participates in a national project on "Training through digital media literacy", especially relevant in the current crisis caused by the pandemic COVID-19.

For a couple of years now Danail Danov is involved in all the projects, conducted within the framework of the National Academic Research Fund. Among them a special attention deserves his project, called "Applied research in the field of media literacy", which resulted in the publication of the collective monograph "Theoretical aspects and applied research in media pedagogy". The book which brings together the work of PhD students and renown specialists in the field is the first of this kind produced within the framework of the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts. All projects in which Danov got involved have allowed the constant renewal and update of the various disciplines that he

teaches at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", as well as the active involvement of students and young researchers in the academic space.

Based on all the above, I can categorically state that Assoc. Prof. Danail Danov, as the only candidate in the competition for a professor in a professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Media Pedagogy) at the Department of Preschool Media Pedagogy at the Faculty of Science, Education and Arts, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", meets all the necessary requirements for holding this academic position and I strongly recommend his election for the academic position of Professor.



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Prof. Bozhidar Angelov