

REVIEW

by professor Dora Levterova – Gadjalova, DSc
from the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”
of the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic position of "professor" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski”
in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences
professional field 1.2. Education (Special education)

1. Procedure

In the competition for "professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 74 of August 21, 2020, The only candidate in the competition is Assoc. prof. Neda Balkanska, PhD from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” with a total of 31 scientific papers, of which 2 are monographs; 1 methodology (co-authored); 1 paper; 17 scientific articles; 4 textbooks used in the school network (co-authored); 2 books for teachers (one of which is an independent development and the other is co-authored); 4 notebooks, which go with the textbooks (co-authored). All of them were developed and published after acquiring the academic position of "Associate Professor". Of the 31 publications presented, 14 are co-authored, and separation protocols are attached for the co-authored publications. Distribution of scientific papers by headings: language of publication and publication in the country and abroad is as follows, 17 of the articles are published in Bulgarian scientific journals, 1 study in a foreign language. There is a publication in Web of Science. Monographs and articles have full text content and are with certified publication.

2. Minimum number of points for a professor

In relation with the minimum requirements for holding the academic position of "professor", the following facts have been established for the candidate:

Group indicators	Minimum number of points for a professor	Actual number of points of the candidate
Group indicators A	50 points	50 points
Group indicators B	100 points	-
Group indicators C	100 points	100 points
Group indicators G	200 points	297,5 points
Group indicators D	100 points	620 точки

Group indicators E	100 points	258 points
Total	550 points	1445,5 points

It is evident that the scientific production of the candidate Assoc. prof. Neda Balkanska significantly exceeds the minimum requirements for the academic position of "professor".

3. General characteristics of the candidate's activity

The candidate submits a certificate of work experience and professional employment on a basic employment contract at Sofia University. The teaching and pedagogical activity of Assoc. Prof. Balkanska exceeds the required for Sofia University, evident from the presented author's reference for classroom and extracurricular employment. She is the titular of 13 academic disciplines in bachelor's and master's degrees in the specialty "Special Pedagogy" and "Speech Therapy" (full-time and part-time education), 10 of which are mandatory and 3 electives. In the same author's report, a self-assessment of the work in classroom and extracurricular employment was made.

In the referenced author's reference the 8 doctoral students managed so far are reflected, as well as a list of the topics of the doctoral students, of which Assoc. Prof. Balkanska is the scientific supervisor. There are three successfully defended doctoral students and five doctoral students who are in the process of training.

The participation in scientific juries for obtaining the educational degree of doctor and growing in academic positions - chief assistant, associate professor and professor are 30. A report is presented.

According to the attached reference for the research activity of Assoc. Prof. Balkanska, it is evident that she has taken part in 8 scientific or educational projects, 3 of which she is the manager. There are seven participations in creative teams, working groups at the Ministry of Education and Science, participation in legislative and creative activities and development of methodological manuals.

Participates in editorial boards of the Yearbook of FNOI and the magazine Special Pedagogy and Speech Therapy. She is a reviewer of 4 monographs and a collection.

A review was presented by the National Association of Resource Teachers for active work as a co-organizer of a conference, participant and motivator of pedagogical research, participant in the methodological trainings of new resource teachers, trainer of more than 200 resource teachers to the organization.

It is evident from the attached documents that Assoc. Prof. Neda Balkanska has a serious teaching career, engagement with project and administrative activities for providing and updating curricula and study plans.

4. Scientific and scientifically applied activity

The scientific and scientifically applied activity of Assoc. Prof. Balkanska, derived in self-assessment, could be specified in the following main scientific spaces in the field of special pedagogy and inclusive education:

- scientific and practical experience in the field of language training and therapy in children with hearing impairment.
- tools for diagnostics of the linguistic, communicative and motor sphere (as part of a comprehensive Methodology for assessment of the individual needs of children and students with multiple disabilities).
- the language abilities (in particular – grammar) of deaf children, on the basis of which a diagnostic package is developed, which answers not only whether the child with hearing impairment masters or not a certain grammatical category, but also to what extent it is mastered.
- author's methods for mastering specific language categories, which have been tested in practice and subjected to in-depth research in students with hearing impairments.
- reading competence in children with hearing impairment and special attention is paid to those with cochlear implantation. Research in this direction is very scarce, and at the same time children with cochlear encounter serious difficulties in developing reading comprehension skills. Along with the features of students with hearing impairments (including those with cochlear implantation), practical strategies for overcoming the registered difficulties are offered.
- alternative literacy methods tailored to sensitive periods, according to Maria Montessori's classification, which differ significantly from the approaches applied in the traditional education system.
- models for integrating hearing-impaired children.
- the differentiated approach in education with a view of involving all children in the educational process. In this direction, the thesis of multiple intelligence and learning styles is presented, which requires knowledge and consideration of the individual characteristics of children in presenting the learning content. Various forms and aids are offered that provide access to educational information for each child.
- models for application of manual means (Sign language and dactyl speech) in the inclusive educational environment.
- the peculiarities of the different groups of students with special educational needs, the barriers they encounter in education and strategies for overcoming them.

- models for training students with special educational needs (such as universal design) in combination with adequate resources for distance learning for the different disorders

- the key role of the family for the development, education and therapy of children with special educational needs. The importance of the parents in the first years of the child's life - for his overall development and the formation of a mature, stable and free personality - is thoroughly analyzed and described.

- classification of the parents of children with special educational needs, which will help the specialists in building partnerships with the families and their inclusion in the therapeutic process and training.

- the attitudes of the parents of children with cochlear implantation. The realistic expectations of the parents for the effect after implantation are important for the quality of their participation in the postoperative rehabilitation and in general - for the result of the therapeutic activities.

- the attitude of parents and specialists to the alternative means of education and communication (Sign language, Baby sign language, dactyl speech, reading) in children with hearing impairment.

- textbooks and exercise books for the special subjects Speech Development (first, second and third grade) and Pronunciation (first grade), which are developed on the basis of practical experience and the language teaching methodologies created on this basis.

- development of "Teacher's Books" for the relevant classes and subjects for students with hearing impairments.

5. Scientific contributions

The main research interests and scientific achievements of Assoc. Prof. Neda Balkanskava in the targeted scientific fields the following contribution models can be derived:

- creation of tools for diagnostics and methodology for language learning in children with special educational needs (HT1; HT21; HT3; HT5; HT9; HT10; HT13; HT15; HT18; HT19; HT20).

- studying different aspects of resource support for children and students with special educational needs and inclusive education (HT1; HT2; HT4; HT5; HT6; HT11; HT12).

- the optimization of the educational environment for students with special educational needs in higher education institutions (HT7; HT8).

- research and study of the early impact and interaction with the parents of children with special educational needs (HT1; HT2; HT14; HT17).

- development of methodological manuals, textbooks and teaching aids for the school network (special schools for students with hearing impairments) (HT22; HT23; HT24; HT25; HT26; HT27; HT28; HT29; HT30; HT31).

6. Citation

In the attached materials for the competition, Assoc. Prof. Neda Balkanska, PhD has precisely presented evidence regarding citations of own publications in scientific works of other authors. The citations cover a long period of time, with the predominant ones being from the last few years. The number of cited notes is 64, but it is quite possible that there are more. The citations are mainly from colleagues working in the field of special pedagogical knowledge and inclusive education. A fact that speaks eloquently about the high recognition of Assoc. Prof. Balkanska and the popularity of her scientific production in the professional community.

Critical remarks and recommendations

Assoc. Prof. Balkanska's publications clearly highlight innovative and original aspects related to the inclusive education of students with special educational needs, and in particular students with hearing impairments, which can be developed continuously with successful scientific, theoretical and practical applicability.

8. Personal impressions

I know Assoc. Prof. Balkanska, PhD as a valuable and respected lecturer by students and colleagues, as a precise and original author with independent monographs and with separate self-developed parts and chapters in joint editions of textbooks and teaching aids, as a correct colleague and specialist with a high image in the special pedagogical guild. I have been a reviewer of her research papers and I can confidently say that she manages to interpret in depth, with scientific skill and practical orientation the problems of children and students with special educational needs in the process of inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Assoc. Prof. Neda Balkanska, PhD meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The candidate in the competition has submitted a sufficient number of scientific papers published after the materials used in the defense of PhD and "Doctor of Science". In the candidates work there are original scientific and applied contributions, which have received international recognition, as well as a part of them had been published in journals and

scientific journals published by international academic publishers. Her theoretical developments have practical applicability, as some of them are directly oriented to the educational work. The scientific and teaching qualification of Assoc. Prof. Neda Balkanska is undoubtful.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific papers presented in the competition, as well as analysing their significance and the contained in them scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty. Council of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and the Arts at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the election of Assoc. Prof. Neda Balkanska, PhD at the academic position "Professor" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in professional field 1.2. Education (Special education).

23.11. 2020

Reviewer:

(prof. Dora Levterova – Gadjalova, DSc)