

R E V I E W

for selection procedure for open academic position Professor of Social Work (Methods of social work, Gerontological social work)

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for the needs of the Faculty of Education

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rossitsa Simeonova

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Selection procedure overview

The selection procedure for the open academic position Professor was initiated by Department of Social Work at the Faculty of Education. Selection scientific committee was appointed with rector’s decree No RD-38-8/7.01.2021. Application for the open position has been submitted by one candidate – Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ginka Andonova Mehandzhiyska.

Professional resume of the candidate

Ginka Mehandzhiyska is a lecturer at the Faculty of Education since 1998 and Associate Professor since 2009. She has been teaching several compulsory and elective courses to bachelor and master student in Social work – Methods in social work, Gerontological social work, Interviewing techniques in social work, Supervision in social work, Social work with groups and group therapy and others – and those courses are fundamental part of education of future social workers. She was a supervisor of two PhD students in Methods of social work and is a respected member of the editorial boards of the Annual of Sofia University, Social work volumes and Social work journal. Since 2010 г. she has been manager of research teams of four project funded by the Scientific research fund of Sofia University and has been member of research teams of numerous other projects, including international. The candidate has impressive professional career as expert and consultant to state, municipal and non-governmental institutions for social work in the process of development of legislative and methodological documents, as member of expert groups in National agency for evaluation and accreditation, as supervisor and educator in social work organizations.

Publications and academic achievements

During her professional career Ginka Mehandzhiyska has published 90 publications in total, 12 of them are monographs and textbooks. For this selection procedure the candidate has presented 41 publications, including 2 monographs, 3 book chapters (1 in foreign language), 3 textbooks and handbooks (1 co-authored), 5 articles in annual books, 29 articles in scientific journals and volumes (1 references and indexed in Web of Science and 8 in foreign language). All 41 publications are related to the profile of the open academic position for Professor and has been reviewed.

Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska has presented report for 161 citations of her publications which is representative for their qualities and recognition by the academic community.

Scientific publications of the candidate are rich both as quantity and quality of achievements and contributions. Presented and reviewed publications could be sorted in the following thematic groups:

1. Methodology and methods of social work

Main part of the publications of Dr. Mehandzhiyska are related to that topic and is representative for her long lasting research interest toward that important for the theory and practice of social work theme and is in tune with the courses she teaches in Social work program at the Faculty of Education. Publications relevant to this thematic group are the following: the habilitation monograph Social work with individual clients, the monograph On the core and classifications of the social work methods, the Methodology of home visits in social work: handbook in education and practice, part 2 of Life in community: handbook for professionals in organizations for psychosocial rehabilitation, book chapters No 3 and 4, article in volumes No 9 and articles No 14, 16, 21, 22, 25, 33, 34, 35 included in publications' list.

The monography Social work with individual clients is a thorough theoretical-empirical study on a fundamental aspect of the methodology of social work and is a contribution to the Bulgarian scientific specialized literature on the topic. In theoretical aspect with relevant structure and clear logic of the research interest main aspects of this theme are analyzed: conceptualization of social work with individual clients (dimensions, approaches, and models); casework as a basic method in practice with individual clients – characteristics, phases of implementation, professional skills and work relations, methods for assessment and gathering information, evaluation, contracting, planning, activities in the work phase, monitoring, closure, individual

consulting. Theoretical analysis is based on impressive list of relevant publications, mainly in foreign language. The implemented empirical research on the topic complements and concretizes the theoretical synthesis done, the research variables are based on theoretical-methodological analysis, and are studied with adequate methods. This research presents valuable data and conclusions about the practice of social workers in Bulgaria - how they apply individual approach and personalized social work with individual clients, as well about the factors, barriers and limitations in their implementation. In this monographic study the professional reflection and experience of the author in analysis, synthesis, and interpretation of theoretical and empirical dimensions of the researched theme are clearly evident.

The monograph On the core and classifications of the social work methods is a valuable contribution to the theory of social work in Bulgaria regarding classification of variety of methods through analytical systematization of divers approaches, paradigms and criteria, including through meta-analysis of possible applications of those classifications in the social work practice and for education purposes.

Methodology of home visits in social work is a valuable handbook to developing and practicing important competences of helping professionals, for understanding the specifics, different approaches and procedures of home visits in the helping process. The handbook features theoretical justification and practical applicability of proposed tips, procedures, and instruments for home visits in social work.

Methods of social work in mental health are systemized and classified in part 2 of Life in community: handbook for professionals in organizations for psychosocial rehabilitation. Fundamental for the social work practice techniques and instruments for assessment of psychosocial needs of this group of clients are presented and approaches to planning social work with people with mental disorders are discussed, as well as their individual and family consulting, the characteristics of social work with people with mental disorders in different types of groups, and guidance for developing work programs for such groups are proposed. Well-structured and synthesized this publication contributes to the formation of professional competences of helping professionals in their work with this specific social service users.

Significant methodological aspects of social work with individual clients are addressed in the book chapters Social worker and the client – the helping relations and The client and the environment – the client in helping environment of the social services establishment. Here the

author presents methodological guidelines for establishing fruitful work relations between the social worker and the client and for constructing and maintaining specific type of heling environment in social services.

In the article in an annual book *Individual plans in social work – methodological questions* and in articles No 14, 16, 21, 22, 25, 33, 34, 35 of publications' list more detailed research interest of the author is focused on particular aspects of methodology and practice of social work: the nature and content of the individual plans for support, methodological requirements for their creation and planning in individual casework; how social work methods could provide support and catalyze change in the individual and further in his/her social relations; social support in client-centered social work; subject, criteria and methods for monitoring in case management in social work; role of contracting in the process of social work, its functions, subject and varieties; specifics and characteristics of casework method – review of traditional understanding and contemporary social work practice; approaches and interventions in social work with families; empirical research of methodological orientations of social workers.

2. Gerontological social work

Significant part of Dr. Mehandzhiyska research is focused on this area of social work and with these publications she is recognized in academia and among social work practitioners. Gerontological social work is defined and conceptualized in publication No 37 *Integration of gerontological knowledge in social work* . Particular aspects of studying social work with older people are visible in 3 articles in annual books and 16 articles, and in particular: individual plans in social work; psychosocial support in groups of older people; occupational and recreational therapy in gerontological practice; functional autonomy in old age – assessment and planning of care and support; the needs of the clients in gerontological social work; autobiographical method in gerontological social work.; clinical supervision in gerontological social work: reflections on the practice in Bulgaria; needs of older people for communication, activity and intimacy in terms of work with groups of occupational and recreational therapy at residential settings; influence of new technologies and methods on gerontological social work.

Special attention in the research of the candidate are the models for education and supervision in gerontological social work and the modeling in higher education of competences for gerontological social work.

Dr. Mehandzhiyska has implemented series of interesting and valuable empirical researches related to gerontological social work practice: relationship between depression and social functioning in older adults – users of social services; relationships between the level of social adaptation and functioning of older people and their opportunities for independent living; loneliness and life satisfaction in older adults – users of social services; correlational research of the relations between the health satisfactions of older adults - users of social services and a bunch of psychosocial variables; the attitudes of social work students toward aging and old age and for professional realization in the gerontological social work.

3. Other publications

Psychosocial occupational therapy

The book Psychosocial occupational and recreational therapy in clinical social work contributes to the specialized scientific literature in Bulgaria and outlines the understanding of application of occupational therapy as part of complex psychosocial interventions in clinical social services settings, as well the nature, characteristics and goals of psychosocial occupational and recreational therapy and its applications in clinical social work are analyzed. Models, methodological guidelines, instruments, techniques and forms for evaluation, plans and programs for occupational therapy are also presented in the book. Researches on that topic are presented also in few other publications (No 20, 24, 41).

Some of the candidate's publications enrich the research related to *social work education* (publications No 13, 15, 23, 38, 40).

All publications of Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska have features of depth, precision, professional reflection and applicability for the purposes of social work education, and continuous education and professional development of social workers.

I agree with the original scientific contributions of Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska presented in report No 14 and would like to outline the following most important achievements and contributions of the candidate for professorship:

- Theoretical contribution to the scientific definition and classification of social work methods (monography No 2). Theoretical review and synthesis of paradigms and conceptualization of the methodology and methods of social work are demonstrated and studied in more details, including empirically in relation to particular social work methods

and groups of clients – individual casework, families, people with mental disorders, third age people.

- Theoretical input into the study of social work with individual clients. The presented monography under the same title contributes to the specialized scientific literature in Bulgaria as it achieves comprehensiveness and at the same time detailedness of the analysis and in-depth reflection on the topic.
- Theoretical and practical input to the gerontological social work – conceptualization, empirical research of methodological and practical projections of social work with older people which serve as a basis for constructing and testing numerous diagnostic instruments (publications No 10, 11, 27, 32) known and used by practitioners as well.
- The book Psychosocial occupational and recreational therapy in clinical social work contributes to the scientific research on the topic in Bulgaria with theoretical systematization and methodological applicability of the proposed instruments.
- Justifying and constructing various methodologies for social work practice – for individual planning (publication No 9), for home visits (publication No 6) – and also diagnostical instruments for older people in particular (publications No 10, 11, 27, 32), which social workers apply in their practice.
- Contribution to social work education by developed and taught higher education course Gerontological social work, based on Dr. Mehandzhiyska's theoretical and empirical research and rich professional experience in supervision, consulting and testing methodological and diagnostical instruments.
- Significant achievement of the candidate for professorship is the balance and symbiosis between theoretical conceptualization of important areas of social work, and empirical research and reflection of her own professional experience – all fully integrated in her teaching and expertise.

Conclusion

With all her publications and expertise Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska is known as established scholar, researcher, and lecturer in social work with distinct input to Bulgarian scientific literature related to social work methods and gerontological social work. She contributed to creation and adaptation of various methodics and instruments for diagnostics and direct work

with social services users, and is recognized expert and respected member of the academic community.

All said above about the qualities of her publications, contributions and achievements and her qualities as established scholar and lecturer are my arguments to vote positively so that Dr. Ginka Mehandzhiyska to be promoted and appointed as Professor in Social work at the Faculty of education, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Sofia,
20.04.2021

Reviewer:
(Rossitsa Simeonova)