

## **REVIEW**

from Professor Vaska Stancheva-Popkostadinova, MD, PhD,  
South-West University “Neofit Rilski”  
of the materials submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of  
PROFESSOR in professional field 3.4. Social activities (Methods of social work.  
Gerontological social work), announced by Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in the State  
Gazette, Issue no 105/11.12.2020  
Candidate : Assoc. Professor Ginka Andonova Mehandzhiyska, PhD

### **Professional biography**

Ginka Mehandzhiyska was born on March 4, 1970, in the town of Kaspichan, Bulgaria.  
She is a graduate of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ", where he successively  
acquired the specialty“ Pedagogy ”, specialization“ Social pedagogy ”(1993), graduated with a  
master's degree in Pedagogy (1993) and a master's degree in Psychology (1997). In 2004 she  
defended his dissertation: "Television and education of adolescents with deviant behavior." In  
2009 she habilitated and held the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Theory of  
Education and Didactics (Methods of social work and supervision in social work) in the  
Department of Social Work at the Faculty of Pedagogy at Sofia University "St. Kliment  
Ohridski ", where she still works. She speaks French, English and Russian.

### **Assessment for compliance with the minimal national requirements and the requirements of Sofia University“St. Kliment Ohridski”**

The materials presented by Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska, Ph.D., for participation  
in the competition for the academic position “Professor” in professional field 3.4. Social  
activities in department “Social Work”, area of higher education 3. Social, economic, and legal  
sciences, comply with the requirements in the Annex to Art. 1a, para. 1 of Regulations for  
application of the Law/ the Act for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of  
Bulgaria and the Regulations for the conditions and the order for acquiring scientific degrees and  
holding academic positions in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski ”.

### **Scientific work and results**

For participation in the competition Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska presented 41  
publications, distributed as follows:

- Habilitation work – monograph „Social work with individual clients“ (2019);
- Monograph „About the nature and classifications of methods of social work“(2021);
- one article published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information;
- 28 publications in non-peer reviewed/non-refereed journals with a scientific review
- 3 chapters from books;
- 4 studios;
- 2 textbooks and 1 manual (co-authored).

Of the presented publications, 39 are independent, and in two of them, the candidate is the first and third author. The publications are written in Bulgarian (33), English (4), Russian (2), Polish (1) and Czech (1).

The presented scientific production corresponds to the thematic direction of the competition.

The habilitation work "Social work with individual clients" is 311 pages long and contains 15 chapters, divided into three logically connected parts.

Based on her longlasting teaching and research experience, Asoc. Prof. Mehandzhijka presents deep systematic review and analysis of social work with individual clients, and delineate its conceptual basis (part one). The methods of working with individual clients in social practice are presented in detail (second part). The main focus is on working with the individual without neglecting "the close environment, family environment, living conditions in their relationship with individual needs and problems" (1:9). Methodological models, approaches, steps, procedures aimed at understanding the general and specific aspects of the method are presented. Based on the results of the analysis in the first two parts of monograph, a representative study was planned and conducted among social workers on the practice of applying the individual approach in social work. The study involved 256 social workers from the main sectors in social practice: social services, child protection and social assistance. A comprehensive theoretical-methodical and applied study of social work with individual clients is presented, which serves as a basis for the formation of flexible general methodological competence of social workers. The monograph offers a model for professional help and support of the individual client - through the individual approach to the client, the methodical individualization of interventions and help and

the value attitude to the personality of the individual client, projected in personalized social work (1:12).

The monograph "On the nature and classifications of methods of social work" is the first of its kind theoretical systematic study of methods of social work in the context of their nature and classifications. Based on systematic analysis and meta-analysis, the main characteristics and dimensions of the models, scope, criteria and principles for classification of the methods of social work are presented, emphasizing their specificity and applicability. A system-structural and integrative approach to the classifications of the methods is proposed, as they are presented in terms of process and phases of assistance; system-structural levels; scope-person, environment, problems, needs (2:101). Special attention is paid to the application of classifications in the preparation of educational documentation (curricula and programs) on methodological training in social work education. (2: 130). Exemplary models of teaching by Methods of social work in different universities are presented (in a general course and as separate subjects: social case work, family social work, group work, community work). The results of the overall study mark guidelines for practice related to the modeling of social services, models of social work curricula, the design of research on methodological issues, emphasizing that the method is considered "through its place, relationships and connections in the ranks or the hierarchies of the relevant classification system " (2:100).

The scientific production presented for review is characterized by competence, depth and precision. The publications are in a wide range of social work, the result of in-depth and systematic theoretical research and empirical research, divided into the following areas: methodology and methods of social work (3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 16, 21, 22, 25, 33, 34, 35), gerontological social work (5,10, 11,12, 15, 18,24, 26,27. 38, 39, 40, 41), education in social work, clinical social work (13, 15 , 28, 38, 40), occupational therapy and recreational therapy (7, 20, 24, 41). The field of methodology of social work includes publications related to general methodological training, specifics of social work, methods of social work in various fields: clinical social work, gerontological social work, mental health and community services, work with children and families. A reconceptualization of case work in the modern applied perspective of social work is presented, as well as the specifics of helping relationships.

*Most of the publications are in the field of work with elderly.* Various aspects of old age are considered: psychosocial problems (violence, depression), loneliness, needs, functional

autonomy, social adaptation, as well as methodological aspects specific to social work with the elderly. Models of education and supervision, model of curricula with definition of specific knowledge, skills and values are presented. The specifics of gerontological social work are outlined and the conceptual and content aspects of different models of competence are presented. Emphasis is placed on the role of practical experience and on the need for a reflexive approach in training for working with the elderly. Labour and occupational therapy are presented and argued as methods to support activity and life satisfaction in the elderly. Evaluation tools and models, recreational profile, occupational therapy plan and other elements of occupational therapy have been developed and tested in practice. The importance of building an understanding of the role and distribution of functions in teamwork in the application of occupational therapy activities is emphasized. Important for the practice and training in social work are the presented teaching and methodological manuals (6,7,8): methodology for home visits, psychosocial therapy, occupational and recreational therapy, methods of social work in the field of mental health.

The candidate presented 161 citations:

- 5 citations or reviews in scientific publication, referenced and indexed in the world known databases of scientific information (Scopus, Web of Science);
- 52 citations in monographs and collective peer-reviewed volumes.
- 78 citations in unreferred journals with scientific review;
- 26 other citations .

### **Participation in scientific and educational projects**

Assoc.Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska participates in 11 educational and research projects (4 university, 4 national and 3 international), in four of them she is a coordinator and in six she is a member of the research team. Thematically, the projects are entirely related to the areas of scientific and teaching interest of the candidate and the results are applied in social practice.

### *Scientific guidance of doctoral students*

The candidate has been a research supervisor of two PhD students, successfully defended their dissertations (2014,2019) and 12 students in bachelor and master degree programs of Social work .

### *Membership in editorial boards*

Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiysk has been a member of the editorial board of the journal "Social Work" since 2013, and since 2016 - of the Yearbook of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ", book Social activities. She participates in the work of two research laboratories: in social and pedagogical research on refugee issues and "Center for interdisciplinary research and innovation in non-formal education" at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski ”.

### **Evaluation of educational and teaching activity**

Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska has many years of rich teaching experience. She has given lecture courses in the field of social work within the bachelor's and master's programs in professional field 3.4. Social activities and within postgraduate qualification. She is teaching main disciplines for social work: Methods of social work (general course and individual elements), Supervision in social work, Social work in the community, Social work with groups, Social work with unemployed, Field practice, Practicum on methods of social work.

She has taught in French in 2 courses: Gerontological social work (Erasmus program - for incoming students) and Autobiographical work with elderly people (at the University of Applied Sciences, St. Gallen, Switzerland, Swiss-European Mobility Programme, 2015/16).

Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska has been actively participating in the organization and implementation of various types of practices for Social work students .

The scientific activity of the candidate is supplemented by significant expert activity at different levels (state institutions, municipal structures, social service establishments, non-governmental organizations):

- Ministry of Labor and Social Policy: expert in a working commission for preparation of a National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Promotion of Social Inclusion (2012),
- Social Assistance Agency – update of the Methodological Guide for Terms and Conditions for Provision of Social Service “Center for Social Rehabilitation and Integration” (2013),
- Preparation of changes in the Rules for the implementation of the Social Assistance Act (2013-2015),
- preparation of the Law on Social Services (2015-2019)
- CCBPPMN at the Council of Ministers (2012-2020);

- participation in a working group at the Ministry of Health – Strategic guidelines for diagnosis, prevention, treatment and care of people with dementia; BRC and NGO "Humanity" – expert, consultant, trainer;
- member of expert committees at NEAA for accreditations professional field 3.4. Social activities; member of scientific juries (2016-2021).

From 2009 to 2020 Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska has actively participated as an expert and lecturer in seminars, supervision and other activities at municipal administrations and institutions for social services in many municipalities in the country. She is a preferred lecturer and expert in specialized trainings for practicing social workers, based on “her principledness, strictness and accuracy, high professional expertise and individual approach to each participant in the trainings (15.14, review).

### **Contributions**

The candidate's contributions are in the development of new methods and fulfillment of existing knowledge in the field of theory, practice and training in social work. They have a scientific and applied nature. Some of the contributions were presented in the considered monographs and thematic areas of scientific production, but I would like to add the following:

- A systematic analysis of the conceptual foundations and methodology of social work is presented with an emphasis on specific features and outlining the professional identity and guidelines for practice (1,2,3,4,6,8).
- A comprehensive theoretical and methodological conceptualization of social work with individual clients has been developed (1).
- The first of its kind classification of methods in social work is presented with specific references and guidelines for practice regarding the modeling of social services; design of educational documentation on social work, areas of necessary research (2).
- Based on theoretical analyzes and own research on patterns in the process of aging and social functioning of the elderly, the specifics of gerontological social work are outlined (10,18,27,31).

- Own tools for assessing social functioning and quality of life for the elderly have been developed: a scale for social activity with quantitative and qualitative subscales (10) and a scale for satisfaction with the quality of life (27).
- Developed, tested and implemented in practice is "Individual plan for support and care of users of services in gerontological social work" (32).
- A methodology for home visits in social work has been developed with attached guidance for its implementation (6).
- Own tools for assessment of social functioning and quality of life for the elderly have been created: a scale for social activity with quantitative and qualitative subscales (10) and a scale for satisfaction with the quality of life (7).
- An "Individual plan for support and care of users of services in gerontological social work" has been developed and implemented in practice (7,24).
- The peculiarities and approaches of the individual plans in the social case work of planning are presented, mainly in the context of the methodologies of the social services (9).
- A program for gerontological social work has been developed - with formulated key aspects and competencies derived from studies of the overall functioning and needs of the elderly (15,28,38,40).
- The tools and approaches for practical training for students in social work have been enriched.
- Recommendations have been made on the structure and content of social work curricula, based on the results of a nationally representative survey of social workers and students (1, 13).
- Monographs and articles use original scientific approaches and formulate recommendations based on scientific evidence.

### **Notes and recommendations**

I would like to specially note that the set of documents and materials for participation in the competition is prepared very precisely in technical and content terms and is presented on electronic and paper media (monographs, teaching and methodological aids).

I recommend Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ginka Mehandjiiska to publish the results of her research in specialized scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information, as well as to increase her work with doctoral students in the field of social work.

### **Conclusion**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ginka Mehandjiiska is a well-known scientist, with excellent professional qualification, rich experience as a lecturer and expert, interesting scientific ideas and achievements in the social work theory and practice.

After the analysis of the materials and scientific works presented in the competition and on the basis of their significance and contribution, holistic teaching and expert work, I confirm that the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its application and the Regulations for development of academic staff of the Sofia University for the academic position of "professor" Professional Field 3.4. Social activities

Given the above, I recommend the members of the esteemed scientific jury to vote positively for the award of the academic position "Professor" in the professional field 3.4. Social activities (Methods of social work. Gerontological social work), field of higher education 3. Economic, social and legal sciences,

21. 04. 2021  
Blagoevgrad

Reviewer:  
(Prof. Vaska Stancheva-Popkostadinova, MD, PhD)