

## REVIEW

*Regarding opening of tenure track, full-time academic position “Associate professor”, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Educational Sociology, Social adaptation and disadaptation), published in the State Gazette/16.03.2021 for the purposes of the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Education*

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Julieta ( Zhulieta) Ivanova Savova.

**Academic reasons for opening a tenure track position:** The competition is based on the current and required workload of the candidate as a part of competition’s profile. In the specific case of the current candidate required disciplines, along with the electives, exceed the required academic workload for such a position: Educational Sociology lectures for part-time students in Pedagogy; “Society and Education” lectures and seminars for both full- and part-time students in Informal Education; “Society and Education” lectures and seminars for both full- and part-time students in Social Work; Social Adaptation and Disadaptation lectures and seminars for both full- and part-time students in both Non-formal Education and Pedagogy. The above listed required courses are part of the Bachelor degrees programs for part- and full-time students in Pedagogy, Non-formal Education, Social Work, and guarantee a full workload of the candidate.

Chief Assistant Professor, Dr. S. Varbanova leads lectures and seminars in master’s degree programs as well: lectures and seminars in Education and Society master’s degree program; MSONO and CEINNE programs, along with lectures and seminars in Stress Management in professional (educational) environment for the purposes of Master’s degree program in Educational Management. The competition has been announced in a compliance with the Law regulations; the Ordinance of the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”, and all academic requirements and norms, the necessary documentation is attached.

### **Profile of the prospective candidates**

In the competition only one candidate is participating –Chief assistant, Dr. SilviaVarbanova Varbanova. The candidate had completed her secondary education with a golden medal for excellency. Her sustainable growth continues during the academic training at the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”. As a student in Pedagogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sofia she is awarded with a golden badge for excellency. S. Varbanova is a graduate from Bachelor and Master’s degree programs in Pedagogy (Education) with qualification “Pedagogue and qualified teacher” (1977-1981).

After her outstanding graduation she works as a lecturer of Child and Educational Psychology at a higher education institute for primary school teachers “Dr. Peter Beron” in the city of Shumen (1981-82), and during the year of 1983, after her success in a competition she is hired as an Assistant Professor at the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”. S. Varbanova develops successively through the positions of assistant, senior and chief assistant and continues working for the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”

without any interruptions up until the point of announcing the tenure track full-time position of Associate Professor.

The defended PhD dissertation (thesis) on “Socio-pedagogical projections of the differentiation in the secondary education” in 2005 leads to PhD diploma (Diploma №30738, awarded by the Supreme Attestation Commission on the 31.07.2006). The integrative character of the dissertation allowed her to outline some meaningful conclusions for interconnected fields as well as to pinpoint new challenging areas and benchmarks of future research and publications.

The educational, pedagogical and scientific achievements of the Chief assistant Dr. S. Varbanova are characterised with exceptional levels of commitment, coherency of work and dedication to the chosen field of development. The inexhaustible creative energy and achievements have made her internationally recognised in the chosen teaching and research field. In her professional biography (CV), she modestly describes herself as “cooperative, an outstanding problem-solver, with great communicative abilities, sense of humour, ability to establish creative atmosphere in the workplace, negotiation skills, and teamwork abilities”, and these are just a fraction of the skill set, that could at least partially explain the glorious achievements and knowledge of the candidate. In addition to the above, the candidate is known for the depth of her personal and professional interests, aspiration for self-improvement, high-ranking levels of motivation for achievements, diligence in the workplace and dedication to the students, and assiduousness. Her courage to be herself, combined with her self-determination for future development and change, the drive to compare herself with the best role models and to create own role models, assists her professional growth while she maintains in a sustainable way a position of “the best of the best”. She would not have achieved so much without the strength of her heart and mind. They are at the core of the joy, commitment and loyalty towards the chosen workplace, scientific field, and the people around her. The unique harmony in her life and workplace allows S. Varbanova to find satisfaction and need to continue with her professional career. The mutual attraction between her job and her personality, explains why she has left a deep trace in former and current students’ path of development as graduates and alumni, in her colleagues and other social and professional communities. Her magnetism is a measurement for the so-called full compliance in its positive connotation (the right person at/for the right place and role). This is probably the right place to express my appreciation for the candidate’s abilities – professional and personal.

#### **Evaluation of the scientific production:**

The overall publishing activity of the Chief assistant Dr. S. Varbanova consists of 35 scientific publications, including: 2 monographs, 5 scientific publications in the University of Sofia Yearbooks Annual with scientific reviewing; 10 articles in scientifically reviewed publications, 3 of which released in internationally accredited publications in Latin; 4 handbooks/manuals with clearly indicated parts of authorship of the candidate, including 1 published in an international source, and 14 articles and reports in paperwork collections – 1 in Latin.

For promotion from her present rank position of Chief Assistant Professor to tenure track position of Associate Professor, full-time Dr. S. Varbanova participates with 20 publications, including:

**2 books (monographs)**

Varbanova, S. (2021). The Individuality in the mirror of the postmodern time. Sofia: University press " St. Kliment Ohridski". ISBN 978- 954-07- 5192-4 monography – promotion/habilitation publication; reviewers: Prof. DPS Yana Merdzhanova, Prof Dr. Boncho Gospodinov, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bistra Mizova.

Varbanova, S. (2008). Different and (un)equal in education. Sofia: Farago. ISBN 978-954-8641-4 (The book is published based on a defended PhD thesis (dissertation))

**3 publications/studios, scientifically reviewed and published papers.**

Varbanova, S. (2016). The process of identity formation. – University of Sofia Annual, Book Pedagogy, vol. 109, Sofia: Sofia University press.

Varbanova, S. (2014). Adolescents and the control strategy of their parents. – University of Sofia Annual, Book Pedagogy, edition 107, Sofia: Sofia University press.

Varbanova, S. (2013). Origin and Dynamics of Educational Inequalities. – Sofia University Annual, Book Social Work, vol. 106, Sofia University Press.

**3 articles published in scientific works, indexed and referred to in international databases with scientific information, 1 written autonomously and 2 written as a collaborative work. The collaboratively written papers are part of international publications in Latin.**

Varbanova, S. (2018). Non-formal and formal education – effects from connectivity. – Pedagogy, 1, 10-26.

Zeleeva, V., A. Bykova, S. Varbanova. (2016). Psychological and Pedagogical Support for Students' Adaptation to Learning Activity in High Science School. – International Journal of Environmental and Science Education. – Vol. 11, № 3, pp 151-161.

Gerganov, E., S. Varbanova, H. Kyuchukov. (2005). School Adaptation of Roma Children – Intercultural Education, Vol. 16, No. 15, December, pp. 495-511.

**9 articles and report, scientifically reviewed and published in journals, or scientifically reviewed and published in collectively written volumes: 8 of which are solely written by the candidate, 2 of which in Latin, and the others - in a collaboration.**

Varbanova, S. (2018). Hidden Curriculum or the Power of the Side Effects in School Education. – KNOWLEDGE – International Journal, Vol. 26 (2), pp 447-451.

Varbanova, S. (2016). Digital culture and socialization. – in: The digitally oriented education in universities. Collection of scientific reports – 6<sup>th</sup> national conference, Kiten 2-5<sup>th</sup> of June, Sofia: Sofia University press.

Varbanova, S. (2018). When learning is exciting– In: The child and pedagogy. Anniversary report honoring the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Professor Emiliya Vasileva. Sofia: Prosveta -Sofia Ltd.

Varbanova, S (2014 ) EDP- based documentation, evaluation and quality assurance in institutions for children and youth care. In: Current hardships for the science of pedagogy, Sofia: Sofia University press.

Varbanova, S. (2013). Equality and Quality in Education. – In: Education between Tradition and Modernity, International Scientific Symposium, Skopje: University “SS. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Pedagogy.

Varbanova, S. (2013). Parents’ strategy for children’s control and social adaptation. – IN: the child in the focus of the pedagogical interaction and social work, Sofia: Sofia University press.

Varbanova, S. (2010). Cognitive skills, noncognitive traits and social context influence the school achievements.– In: The contemporary training between theory and practice, Sofia: University press “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Varbanova, S. (2008). Training managers in institutions and organizations for social care for children and youth. In: Training, professional realisation and social status of the social worker. Sofia: University press “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Varbanova, S., Koseva, M., Yotova, S. (2004). Self-Esteem and Social Perception as School Failure Factors. In: Prevention of aggression amongst children. Sofia.

### **3 handbooks/manuals**

Varbanova, S. (2011). “Burnout” – how to identify it? How to protect ourselves from it? – In: Successful human resources management, Practical journal for schools and kindergartens’ principals, Sofia: Raabe publishing.

Aerts, G., Varbanova, S., Hoka, H., Zam, M., C. Banfalvy (2007) Training and Exchange of knowledge for managers in Central and Eastern Europe. International Course. Handbook, FICE.

Chapter, developed by Silvia Varbanova, Project Management pp. 13-18• Overcoming Job Burnout pp. 32-37

Gyurova, V., Dermedzhieva, G., Bozhilova V., Varbanova, S. (2006). Education as an adventure. Handbook for lecturers. Sofia: Europress.

Chapters, developed by Silvia Varbanova: Chapter 1, article 3: Learning styles pp. 47-56; chapter 3: The lecture – between tradition and innovation pp. 133-143; chapter 5: Assessment and evaluation in education pp.239-264.

Collaborative publications are completed with a declaration from all authors, confirming the validity of chief assistant Dr. Silvia Varbanova's contribution.

**S. Varbanova's research projects and scientific work** demonstrate the depth of knowledge developed through her practice as a coordinator and lecturer. 8 projects with international participation (TRAIN-KOSOZIAL, "EVAS-Train", Leonardo da Vinci, TEMPUS and others) and 1 – in partnership with the department of scientific research of the University of Sofia.

**The candidate's international participation and qualification** conducted in Plymouth University, GB (1994-96) in the National Centre for Guidance in Education-Dublin, University of Cork, Ireland (2001).

**Service and Outreach: Editing and consulting practices** of S. Varbanova are also executed with excellent level of proficiency. She is an experienced member of the editorial board of "Governance of the secondary education department. MES's journal (1993-2000) and member of the editorial board of "Governance of the higher education. MES's journal (2000-2001). Including her membership in the professional team of the Medical centre of "Horizont" and her consultancy practice with regards to the social adaptation of drug users (2003-2008).

### **Citations/References**

Citations are validated (by department of "Library-information services" of the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski" library"); personal enquiry of the candidate also provides overall picture. Considerable amount of citations/references is reported by the Library– 49 references in internationally reviewed databases, and 167 references in total, observed personally by the candidate (reference list is attached), 77 of which are included in the report for minimal requirements. The citations/ references do not require any special commentary. They are definite proof for the high quality and wide recognition of the candidate's scientific work.

### **Contributions and quotes in core publications by S. Varbanova, reviewed for the purposes of the competition.**

In the key habilitation monography "Individuality in the mirror of the postmodern era" (2021) S. Varbanova enquires in depth the new characteristics of the postmodern era. "The Colorful palette" created from S. Varbanova's careful selection of authors (Daniel Bel, Zygmunt Bauman, Gilles Lipovetsky, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, Ihab Hasan, Jean Baudrillard, Francis Fukuyama, Ken Wilber), her conclusions and interpretations of their approaches and concepts enabled her to demonstrate a detailed picture of postmodernity, including the globalization and the cultural transformation with their controversial aspects, logically connected and presented in the context of the work.

The transition from the deeply investigated and intriguingly described panorama of the postmodernity to the questions of socialization, its invariants and unpredictability of interactions is elegantly and competently demonstrated in the respective publication.

S. Varbanova differentiates and describes some typical delays, as reaching social maternity amongst adolescents, and respectively postponing of key life decisions. Part of the core contributions, regarding the enriched and focused scientific understanding of the peculiarity of the socialisation, and the consequences of the postmodern ideology, can be observed in the candidate's monographic research. Those consequences are related to the personal development as well as to choices young people are facing during their educational path and career route.

The author defines some notable conclusions about the notion of personal identity in her work. These conclusions are described as important contributions in the part. S. Varbanova reports about her personal scientific research on the process of developing identity, as she adds a new subscale for autonomy, which enriches Michael Berzonsky's model. She provokes and opens a new page for scientific debates and reports from conducted research regarding the connections between education, place of residence, social status, family and forming an identity. The drawn conclusions about the lack of importance of these connections regarding the styles for identity deserve special attention. They are at least a justification for future analysis and further investigation of the described connections. The author's contribution is in the differentiation of critical moments in the value systems and orientations of the adolescents.

Similarities and differences between socialization and social adaptation are convincingly proven and professionally reported. The successful adaptation and the accompanying difficulties have been well analysed. Special attention has been given to the disadaptation and its characteristic.

Socialisation's effects on society have been reported in an original manner. Justified with personal research, that could be considered as longitude, including the period between 2013-2017 and 2013-2018. The conclusion is that "the parent-child communication develops in direction of understanding, emotional connection and support" while communication child-friends and peers is identified as "fluctuating and characterised with situational attachment" including inconsistent variants of "devotion and reciprocity" and redefining previously established positions. The author uses an original methodological framework to investigate the family relationships, which enriches the additional value of the contributions in this scientific field. S. Varbanova contributes to the theoretical database, used for analysis of the contemporary family model and its practices regarding the relationships parent-child. Her research helps specify the conclusions concerning the dynamic in the communication between peers in the context of the postmodern era.

The author demonstrates original style of presentation and interpretation of numerous contemporary postmodern approaches in education. If the inclusion approach in the educational system is being intensively discussed in the contemporary publications and reports, then Varbanova's contribution in emphasising and justifying the importance of the education system for the personal development is crucial. Her chosen approach allows for

clear differentiation between formal and informal education. The definition of the role of “transliteracy” and the competence based approach in education are also among the author’s contributions. The analysed characteristics of the educational adaptation and disadaptation have also added to the stated above contributions.

The critical analyses and discourses presented in the most crucial issues and challenges, regarding the social media’s presence amongst the adolescents, the need for introduction of new digital and media culture, with the role of the cultural codes in interpretational processes, with the consequences from the unbearable speed of informational processes and the logical “gliding above the surface” of the information, are some great achievements of the candidate. These accomplishments have both theoretical and practical value. They are connected to the need for innovative managing decisions in the field of education and school curriculum, as well as with understanding “hidden curriculum” effects, and assist the implementation of opportunities for preventing negative consequences, and for original model of governance of the adaptational processes. The author’s findings demonstrate aspiration and possibilities for “a new reading” of existing educational models, approaches, concepts, and interpretations, as well as consist of scientifically proven guidelines for improving the governing practices and decisions, thus creating some excellent suggestions for further consideration. These contributions are evident in the already developed and working original programs for training of students, teachers, and other related professionals in the field of pedagogical and social care.

The fundamental contributions of the book “Different and (un)equal in education”, are already displayed in social places, where the PhD thesis of the candidate has been successfully defended. For the purposes of this competition though, I cannot avoid to mention the consistently displayed and followed author’s interest toward the connection education-society, educational-economic and social prosperity, educational and personal development and achievements’ recognition. These connections have been carefully analysed with different approaches and methodologies, deeply considered, and well presented by S. Varbanova during her professional career. They can be observed in other crucial publications of hers, regardless of the year of press. S. Varbanova possesses the amazing ability to see and predict, to consider and connect different aspects and layers of information, and to indicate unwanted results from poorly considered choices. The accent on the significance of differentiation in education and the fundamental contributions in this aspect are the rational thinking about what, why and how. This would assist avoiding the negative circumstances of “hidden differentiation”, from the quantitative approach for equality in education at the expense of neglected functionality of knowledge, and less opportunities for personal development.

In both monographic and other publications of the candidate, the aspects that define the professional quality of work, the richness of cultural knowledge, and diversity of skills are evident. With analytical abilities and critically constructive studies and reports, S. Varbanova makes novel contributions in her reviewed works, (The process of forming an identity; adolescents and the control strategies of their parents; Origin and dynamic of inequality in education). They regard: systematic and well-defined significance of the practical role of students being taught; active learning about the importance of change and perfecting the

educational setting; the meaning of active cooperation with parents for the purposes of students' adaptation.

The emphasised contributions for the purposes of this competition are evident in the reviewed articles, in referenced and indexed publications, also in not scientifically reviewed publications, including collective works. S. Varbanova formulates the "diagnosis" and fundamental aspects of the educational problems with precision, the consequences for both the education and the personal development. She identifies the significance of pedagogical and psychological expertise for a successful school adaptation, including the ethnic minorities (Roma students).

The Handbooks/manuals, which the candidate uses for the purposes of the competition, consist of practical implementation of theoretical knowledge in decision-making process. The exemplification of the burnout syndrome is crucial in professionally practical sense, and proves the irrefutable ability of S. Varbanova to think and work in dedication for the people she works with. The accessibility and quality of her works, balancing the theoretical and practical aspects of the matter are amongst her special recognitions and contributions, and also identify the practical value of these publications.

### **Fundamental Scientific Contributions.**

I fully accept thematically specified and listed contributions, identified important segments, and their more extensive interpretations by the candidate S. Varbanova herself. In addition, I would like to emphasize that her written works integrate both theoretical and practical aspects, the quality of which has been positively reinforced by some specific abilities.

S. Varbanova demonstrates academic and scientific abilities to:

- Select, integrate and analyze scientific research, concepts, interpretational models on an exceptional level of competence, in order to identify trends, and to differentiate social and personal projections;
- "Listen" the "critical" feedback of committees, scientists, and researchers, but also to find new themes, regarding the priorities of the scientific field, and to analyze and interpret the findings.
- Understand the connections between different aspects and concepts, while also maintaining the focus on the context of the theme.
- Strive for diversity in her longitudinal research and for developing the research framework and methodologies, while maintaining self-control and proficient levels of ethics and anonymity.
- Combines theory and practice, searching for effective leadership systems and creates practically valuable educational programs;

Professionals and qualified experts demonstrate interest in her notions about the power of reflection, stimulating them to shape their own personal reflective practices.

**Contextual contribution is evident in:**



- The combination between selected controversial aspects of globalization and cultural transformation, the emphasized interconnection in the context of postmodernity, and its reflexive analysis.
- Selection, integration, and transfer of concepts;
- The distinguished novel leading trends in the process of socialization, the differentiated parameters, and projections of the factors of socialization, which influence the adolescents.
- The emphasized specific relations between socialization and adaptation/disadaptation;
- The original research on family's influence, practices, and ever evolving communication parent-child in the postmodern era.
- Peers' influence and changes in communication.
- Constructively critical analysis of the current education system, seeking, achieving, and "practicing" one's identity;
- The proven role of the paradigm for active learning;
- Education's importance as a personal choice, and personal development project;
- Evaluation of crucial connections between formal, informal, and aformal education.
- Autonomously conducted research, supported with novel or additional research methodologies and frameworks.
- Achievements in balancing conceptually and practically proven advice in practice.

## **Recommendations and Questions**

**Recommendation:** To strengthen the publicity of her works in order more professionals, including the ones trained through the years by S. Varbanova, to be able to touch and admire again the power of her convincing statements and positions, to feel her empowering emotion while presenting own new research results, including her personal example of career achievements, and the ability to use her everlasting sense of identity and mission – to be herself and to lead the others.

### **Questions.**

1. What could be predicted about the development of the communication parent-child? Will the trend for a better communication, support, and understanding continue? Could the communication between peers be predicted, considering that now it seems to be "fluid, and situationally attached", or is there a reason to suggest something different?
2. Does the pandemic Covid-19 make a difference in the communication parent-child? Of yes – what is it?

### **Conclusion**

Chief assistant Professor, Dr. Silvia Varbanova is a remarkably noticeable university colleague and professional. The merits for her coherent and strongly convincing academic development throughout school, university and professional phases must be emphasized. Varbanova's responsibility and perfectionism, her irrefutable dedication, devotion, and openness in the scientific field, towards teachers, students, and other professionals she works with, combined with her outstanding personal skills, make her an undisputable candidate for the tenure track academic position of "Associate Professor", full-time. I am

honored to be a part of the jury (committee) for this competition. This allows me to extract the most out of her expertise, and the coherency of the presented academic works, that reach the scientific standards of the field. Considering my evaluation on S. Varbanova's academic achievements, quality and merits of scientific research, and proficiency in every aspect in her career, **I declare my firm support for the promotion of Chief Assistant Professor, Dr. Silvia Varbanova Varbanova to the rank of "Associate Professor", full-time** in the professional field of 1.2. Pedagogy (Educational Sociology, Social adaptation and disadaptation) for the purposes of the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Education.

01.07.2021  
Sofia

Reviewer:  
/Prof. Dr. Julieta (Zhulieta) Savova /