

# O P I N I O N

For a competition for obtaining the scientific title "Associate Professor"  
professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Pedagogical sociology, social adaptation and maladaptation)  
for the needs of the Faculty of Pedagogy, announced in SG, issue 22 of 16. 03. 2021

## Candidate:

*Ch. Assistant Silvia Varbanova Varbanova PhD, Department of Didactics, Faculty of Pedagogy, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski "*

## Member of the scientific jury:

Assoc. Prof Trayan Alexandrov Popkochev PhD

## **PROCEDURE**

Only one candidate took part in the announced competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" - Ch. Assistant Silvia Varbanova Varbanova Phd. There are no violations of the procedure. The necessary documents have been submitted according to the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of Sofia University and have been admitted to the competition.

As seen from the attached reference (Appendix № 12.CompletionMinRequirements.pdf) the applicant fulfills the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of the Law of Pedagogical Sciences for holding the position of associate professor in the field of "Pedagogical Sciences", and on some of the indicators, for example for citing scientific results and participation in projects, significantly exceeds these requirements.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ch. Assistant Silvia Varbanova Ph.D. graduated with honors from Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski", majoring in "Pedagogy" with a qualification teacher and full-time lecturer in 1981. In 2006, after defending a doctoral dissertation on "Socio-pedagogical projections of differentiation in secondary education" with a decision of the Higher Attestation Commission acquired the degree of "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Theory of Education and Didactics".

She acquired additional qualifications in higher and secondary education in courses at the Universities of Plymouth and Dublin.

During the period 1981-1982, she was a lecturer in Child and Pedagogical Psychology at the then Semi-Higher Institute for Primary Teachers "Dr. Peter Beron", Shumen. From 1983 to 1986 she was an assistant professor in Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University. Until 1989 she held the position of senior assistant, the position of chief assistant afterward.

As a lecturer at Sofia University, she leads lecture courses and exercises in the disciplines Pedagogical Sociology, Society and Education, Social Adaptation and Disadaptation, Stress Management in a Professional (Educational) Environment in Bachelor's and Master's Programs at the University. She teaches in courses and training: for a postgraduate qualification, for newly appointed lecturers at the university, for teachers and principals of various projects. They are thematic in the field of the competition or have a relation to it.

Her professional development is marked by participation as a teacher and coordinator in a total of 9 projects.

She participates in the editorial board of two bulletins of the Ministry of Education and Science: Department of Secondary Education and Department of Higher Education. She has expertise as a consultant on the issues of social adaptation of drug addicts in a team of Horizont Medical Center.

## **SCIENTIFIC WORK**

The publications of Ch. Assistant Silvia Varbanova Ph.D., are 35 (Appendix 10 A), of which she selected 20 for participation in the competition after obtaining the educational scientific degree "Doctor" (Appendix 10B SelectedPublicationsList.pdf). Their distribution is as follows (Table № 1):

*Table 1.  
Distribution of the publications of Ch. Assistant Varbanova PhD (Appendix 10 B)*

<b>Type of publications</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>remark:</b>
<i>Monographs</i>	1	
<i>Book</i>	1	
<i>Articles and studies with scientific review</i>		
<i>Studies in yearbooks of SU *</i>	3	
<i>Articles in referenced and indexed editions</i>	3	In co-authorship - 2
		In English language - 2
<i>Articles and reports in peer-reviewed editions *</i>	9	In co-authorship - 1
		In English language - 2
<i>Textbooks</i>	3	6 topics
		In English language - 2
		* - unREFERRED
<b>Total:</b>	<b>20</b>	

Although they present aspects of Varbanova's Ph.D. interests, since the publications №№ 18, 19, and 20 of the selected list are conjunctive of an educational nature and in the field of didactics and management in education, they do not fall within the scope of the competition, therefore exclude them from review.

Thematically, the publications refer to several areas of the announced competition: 1) Social and cultural changes - socialization and identity - №№ 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13; 2) parent-adolescent relationship, socialization - publications 4, 14; 3) inequalities-differentiation in education - 2, 5, 6, 8, 13, 15, 17; 4) hidden program in education - 9, 11, 15, 17; 5) quality of education and training programs - 12, 16.

### **AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS**

From my point of view, I see the contributions of Dr. Varbanova in a way that differs somewhat from the self-assessment presented by her, as far as I am more interested in the product completion of her research than their activity-procedural presentation.

In the thematic area of Sociocultural Change-Socialization, Identity the main publication is the monograph "Individuality in the Mirrors of the Postmodern Time" (№1). , Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, W. Beck, Fr. Fukuyama, I. Hassan, etc. The processes of socialization and social adaptation are considered, the role of "strategies for constructing, maintaining and reconstructing the sense of identity" is discussed. (Also referred to as styles - informative, normative and diffuse), the role of socio-cultural structures of the family and the microenvironment for the formation of identity, typical value characteristics of socialization and typical fears of modern young people, including in our country,

problems of successful adaptation and efficiency, the network of factors for socialization in Postmodernity (family, education, hidden curriculum, media, peers).

Some of these topics are also discussed in publications from this group, such as: "The process of identity building" (№3), "Adolescents and parental control strategies" (№ 4), "Non-formal and formal education - effects of connectivity" (№ 6), "School Adaptation of Roma Children" (№ 8) and others.

*The research contribution of ch. Assistant Varbanova in the field of "socio-cultural changes - socialization, identity" is of the type of verification and disclosure of new facts and their conceptualization within established scientific approaches, and in some cases, questioning already accepted theoretical positions. This scope includes the established decreasing importance of socio-cultural factors from the environment in the formation of identity and individuality at the expense of personal choice and activity; about the way parents control their relationships with adolescents and the growing understanding with fathers; for the contradiction between self-esteem-self-efficacy in adolescents and prolonged infantilism due to over-concern of parents; for the hidden factors of school maladaptation and elements of the hidden curriculum in education; to increase the success of students from the Gypsy ethnic group in conditions of mixed classes and support from teaching assistants from the same ethnic group. A contribution to this area is the adaptation of Bezonsky's method for studying the socio-cognitive perspective in building identity.*

*The above enriches the factual scientific base and contributes to the scientific discussion in the field of pedagogical sociology.*

*In essence, the second thematic area is dedicated to understanding the practice of parent-adolescent relations - socialization in the context of empirical research.*

*Dr. Varbanova's contributions here are of the type of confirmation and transfer in the field of parent-educational relations of results known in the field of social and pedagogical psychology regarding the role of spontaneity in human relations. In the discussion on control strategies, the opinion is argued to avoid extremes and patterns by deriving and interpreting facts in favor of moderate control and its role in building value attachment and personal identity. The thesis for a certain release of the adolescent socialization from the firm institutional control at the expense of searching for individual trajectories for personal and cognitive development is substantiated.*

*A pedagogical analysis of the contradiction of self-esteem-self-efficacy in the context of socialization and building the identity of adolescents is ascertained and proposed.*

For the thematic area of inequalities in education, the publication "Different and (in) equal in education" stands out, based on the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Varbanova, as well as the other publications already mentioned in this field.

*The candidate's contributions are in the width and depth of the systematic and humane understanding of various problems and solutions that arise from the meeting of socio-ethical expectations for equality of conditions for access to quality education and individual and socio-cultural differences, which mark the personal efforts and achievements of the trainees. Based on an in-depth analysis, such phenomena in education as "culture of poverty", "language code", "seasonal differences", "geographical differences", social habits, children's cultural capital, and others are considered. A typical postmodern line is drawn for the need to increase the social, economic, and personal efficiency of education by investing in the search for models and technologies for education that is closer to the individual, without neglecting its economic efficiency..*

The hidden program in education in Bulgaria is a poorly researched area, which falls in the interests of Dr. Varbanova and to which it shows width and analyticity.

*The contributions are of the systematization type and concretization to a cultural context. Good knowledge of the problem allows her to analyze systematically, in-depth, and present such aspects of this "program" through the effects of dichotomous language assessment by teachers, modeling only the correct answer, fear of mistakes, devaluation of praise, a discrepancy in the expectations of teachers and students.*

### **AUTHORSHIP OF TEXTBOOKS**

Ch. Assistant Varbanova also participated in the competition and authored textbooks. In two of them, she developed topics related to the professional burnout of pedagogical specialists and project management (Appendix 10B, №№18, 19). In one of them, the topic is focused on didactic issues (Appendix 10A, №№ 20). Although the scope of the publications is outside the topic of the competition and is excluded from review and evaluation, from the point of view of the candidate's teaching field, the topic should be well scientifically developed and didactically adequately presented. a wide range of scientific interests.

### **CRITICAL NOTES:**

Although not found only in the candidate, the use of the term "self-reflection" (1; 31) is questionable in the etymological and cognitive aspects. There are also publications in Bulgarian literature (I. Koleva) that shows this. I recommend refining its use.

In the context of the well-known issues in which Dr. Varbanova works, outlining the contradictions and dialectic of the impact of several postmodern processes in education would help to avoid abstract sounds. For example, some postmodern phenomena nourish conservative social currents, which are reflected in education through the hidden program, cultural pluralism is reflected as epistemological relativism and underestimation of the scientific truth importance..

### **CONCLUSION:**

The results of research in these areas presented by Dr. Varbanova are her work. They portray her as a researcher who has contributions of the nature of verifying established and discovering, systematizing and interpreting new facts; problematization of established theoretical views on individual issues of socialization and the construction of the identity of adolescents; adaptation and testing of research methods. The textbook presents her as an author who can carefully translate his research into didactic language.

Her contributions are recognized in their citation by the professional community.

All this gives me a reason to assume that Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Varbanova is a researcher with a formed profile and style. With the results of her work, she meets the requirements for holding the position of "associate professor" in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Pedagogical sociology, social adaptation and maladaptation).

2 July 2021  
Blagoevgrad

Reviewer: .....  
(Assoc. Prof Trayan Popkochev PhD)