

## **REVIEW**

according to the announcement in SG, issue 54 / 29.06.2021 competition for the academic position "professor" in a professional field

3.4 Social activities (Counseling and vocational guidance in social work with children and families)

for the needs of FP, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Author of the review: Prof. Dr. Nelly Petrova-Dimitrova

### **Presentation of the competition:**

The competition has been announced for the needs of FP and its announcement is in accordance with all legal requirements. The position envisages a study load in the field of counseling and professional orientation in social work with children and families, which workload, according to the presented reference, corresponds to the hours required in the law for opening the position. The only candidate in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Monika Borisova Bogdanova. The documents submitted for participation in the competition also meet all formal requirements.

### **Presentation of the candidate:**

According to information from the submitted documents, the candidate Assoc. Prof. Monika Borisova Bogdanova has a professional career and professional development, which in the first place can be defined as a process of continuous educational and training upgrading, from secondary education to bachelor's and master's programs in pedagogy, postgraduate qualification in psychology, as well as a process of connecting the academic career with psychopedagogical and psychotherapeutic practice of helping, in one way, seems parallel and probably influential in both directions.

The professional development of the candidate meets pedagogy and psychology, and later social work through the performance of positions as a public educator, home educator, pedagogical advisor, trainer, consultant, supervisor, etc. to reach a psychoanalyst and psychotherapist.

During this same period, through her participation in various trainings, internships, study visits of different duration, thematic focus, scope of different target groups, the profile of a specialist who is tempted in research and university activities, as well as in practice, emerges. A good impression is made by the combination of different forms of formal and non-formal education and training, which illustrate the author's search and understanding of practice through theory and persistent theoretical research in response to questions from practice.

Her scientific career has been developing since 2001, when she obtained the scientific and educational degree of Doctor of Pedagogy, and her academic career since 2005, when she started working as an assistant in the Faculty of Pedagogy, and during this period of twenty years stages of successful development, became an associate professor in 2011. I can not fail to note the acquisition of the scientific degree Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences in 1.2. Pedagogy (Vocational guidance and counseling of children and youth with special needs), diploma No SU2015-7, ed. on 30.04.2015.

### **Scientific activity, publications, citations, scientific contribution**

For her participation in the competition, the candidate presents a total of 41 publications, of which one habilitation thesis, two monographs, one chapter in a collective monograph, four studies published in unrefereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, two articles and reports published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases of scientific information, twenty-six articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, three university textbooks, one additional publication. Two of the publications are in English.

*Publications in the field of counselling of children and families at risk (presenting the psychoanalytic approach in early childhood, the connection of psychoanalysis with social work and pedagogy)*

The publications here, I would define as a field of psychoanalytic reading of early childhood and the identification of the necessary support of parents (relatives, adoptive parents, foster parents) and professionals. This field demands to be developed and understood through the psychoanalytic paradigm, through representatives of the French psychoanalytic school, such as Jacques Lacan, Françoise Dolto, but also through the Anglo-Saxon tradition, especially Donald Winnicott, Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, and others. In this area are more than half of the publications that have been selected for this competition. Among them are the monograph "The Baby, the Child and Their Language" (1), which the candidate defines as a habilitation thesis for the competition, as well as the two monographs - The Question of the Body in Clinical Practice (2) and Welcoming the New-born in Words and in the World (3). They show the erudition of the author, presenting important topics aimed at better understanding of the appearance and development of the child, the child's relationship with the mother, father, early childhood, topics of diagnosis in early childhood, through concepts such as language, speech, body, connection, desire, absence, subject, objects, suffering, enjoyment, etc. Introducing another meaningful view of the baby's welcome, children's speech, its development and functions through Dolto's understanding of what language is, the place, and the meaning of the specific language between baby and mother, the father's function, the accompaniment of separation of the child and its individualization, etc., really shift layers in the traditionally experimental, cognitive and behavioural approaches, in the knowledge of the child, the baby and their development in our country. Most of the topics in the publication's present knowledge design for modelling approaches to public care for children, as well as for direct work with children and consulting their parents or those who care for children. It can be argued that the book "The Baby, the Child and Their Language" has a very good "educational" value, as the author presents a set of different concepts, along with elements of his own reading, which seems to be the focus of these publications, namely comprehension through the "translation" of psychoanalytic concepts and concepts into one's own language, including pedagogical language. These excerpts from cases, most of the author's own practice, provide an opportunity to illustrate, clarify, specify what is said in the theoretical presentation, which helps to some extent to understand the difficult theses of psychoanalysis.

I cannot fail to note that in her publications, mainly in the last five years, M. Bogdanova presents a very important topic - the relationship between psychoanalysis and pedagogy, and psychoanalysis and social work. In her publications on it (14,15, 23, 25, 32, 35, 37) he directly

outlines the field of possible "use" of psychoanalytic knowledge, its limitations, but also the possible fundamental importance for overcoming the inherent normative and super-ego character of the pedagogical and transferred through them in social work, instructive counselling approaches.

The author's efforts are significant in this and in other publications to "translate" the ideas of Jacques Lacan, Françoise Dolto, through the specifics of social work, which is not an easy task, and it can be said that the risk of trivialization is rather mastered. This and other publications from this group (1,2,3,5, 9,11, 12, 16,17,18,19,19,20,21,22, 28,30,31,33,34,36) could be defined as very useful for conceptualising the counselling activity of social workers, namely in the field of early childhood. I would say that the content of the publications goes beyond the perimeter of the consultative activity.

It is necessary to note the topic of synergy, synergistic models of social work with babies, and above all babies with various manifestations of mental suffering, which is present in the publications (10,36,37) of M. Bogdanova, publications that she herself defines as contributing. The publications themselves present a unification and interpretation, i.e. synergy, through the analytical ideas for the baby, of knowledge from pedagogy, psychology, medicine and psychoanalysis. The publications are of interest to researchers, students, practitioners and are important for building interdisciplinary bridges.

I think it is important to note the authorship of forewords to many serious publications of famous representatives of the psychoanalytic school in our country, which is a recognition of the contribution of Associate Professor Bogdanova in this truly fascinating process of discovering this knowledge in recent years for the general professional public.

#### *Publications in the field of vocational guidance and counselling*

The other large group of publications is in the field of vocational guidance and counselling (4,6,7,8, 10,13, 24,26, 27, 38, 39, 40), including information and career education, and some of them go beyond the overview approach, include the presentation of own research, as well as different approaches to link knowledge with practice. The pedagogical comprehension of pedagogical activities, both in one's own pedagogical field and in the field of social work, is still rather episodic, often too normative, and in this sense the existence of a more pluralistic and more meaningful, perhaps postmodern reading the practice, really brings flexibility and more freedom of scientific support, to which the candidate contributes.

It is also important to say that publications in the field of vocational guidance and counselling in different ways focus attention on significant psychopedagogical, socio-pedagogical problems, such as the lack of conceptualization in the practice of social work, as well as in pedagogical, with negligible exceptions. The problem was identified through a study of the attitude of specialists to vocational guidance and realization of children with special needs, along with the opportunities of different theoretical schools to be a support through which to develop research and applied activities in this field. The projections of the problem to the topics for the training of specialists can be clearly outlined. It is also important to say that publications in the field of vocational guidance and counselling in different ways focus attention on significant psychopedagogical, socio-pedagogical problems, such as the lack of

conceptualization in the practice of social work, as well as in pedagogical, one might even say lack of conceptualization, with negligible exceptions. The problem was identified through a study of the attitude of professionals to career guidance and realization of children with special needs. The possibilities of the different theoretical schools to be a support through which to develop research and applied activities in this field are presented. The projections of the problem to the topics for the training of specialists can be clearly outlined.

It is important to note the study (7), in which Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova offers a conceptual model for career guidance and counselling oriented to a specific group of children with special needs, as it is an example of uniting, connecting, combining, meeting her research interests. The conceptual model presented in the study is defined as synergistic, and covers three levels, applied, scientific and methodological, symbolized by a cross, truncated triangles and a Borromean knot. Through these symbols, interpreted in religious, cultural, and psychoanalytic aspects, the nature of the relationship between spheres of life, sciences, and concepts is presented. What is the main idea of the author, in my opinion, is the synergy between multisensory, psychoanalysis and pragmatic approaches to career guidance and counselling, which for her is methodological. The conducted empirical research has an ascertaining character and could be a basis for in-depth development of the model. The study of the notion of the child with a disability in different professionals is of particular interest, because due to the different conceptual view it reaches knowledge that is not usually sought. Although there are questions about the scientific justification of the way of including religion in the model, as well as questions about the choice of the relationship between science and scientific fields, but I would emphasize the importance of trying to conceptualize the field of career guidance and counselling.

The developments at the practical-applied level offer pedagogical answers to the integration of multidisciplinary knowledge in practice (27,38,39, 40, 41) which are also answers to the difficult tasks in developing students' skills.

In the context of educational and scientific activity, it should be noted the exceptional activity of the candidate to work on projects (over 40), to participate in various scientific, applied science conferences (over 100), artistic and other forums, both in our country and in various European countries, and in most of them she presents reports, author's seminars, etc. This allows her to have a strong professional network both at academic and at the level of direct support of people.

#### *Citation*

From the presented reference, as well as from the documents accompanying it, she presents a total of 45 citations, 10 of them are in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information, 14 are published in non-referenced scientific journals, reviewed, or published in edited collective volumes, all in Bulgarian. The citations cover both publications that can be related to the topic of counselling in social work (19,1, 2,3) and publications in the field of vocational guidance (4,1, 7). The other citations mentioned in the reference are on publications not presented in the competition.

### ***Teaching activity***

From the presented reference it is understood that in terms of content, the teaching activity is in the same main fields of research interests of the author and are related to her publications, developments, research. Assoc. Prof. M. Bogdanova teaches three compulsory training courses, which are in the field of vocational guidance and counselling, and the development of social services, such as foster care, five elective courses, three of which are in the same field, and two of them could relate to the field of early childhood and its psychoanalytic reading.

In her work as a teacher, both through the courses she leads, but also through various forms such as laboratories, teamwork with other teachers on various topics, organizing, supervising, supporting student practice, leading research projects, she has a serious contribution to providing communication between the taught theoretical knowledge and its importance for building attitudes and skills for professional activity in students.

Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova is a scientific supervisor of diploma theses of students, she has a scientific supervisor of two successfully defended doctoral students and one who is in the process of presenting the thesis. It should also be noted that Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova teaches in a foreign language to Erasmus + students, mainly elective courses, three for the last two years.

### ***General remarks and recommendations for scientific production***

I would like to recommend that Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova continue her efforts to overcome a certain imbalance in her research and development and the content of the university courses she leads and for which the competition has been announced. In this context, I have a question for Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova, how she sees the connection, the bridges between the two major topics in her scientific career as a teacher, if she sees, seeks, and has new ideas for meetings between them, beyond their meeting with children.

From the point of view of a more critical analysis of the scientific content of the presented scientific production, I would say that there is more description, presentation, review, retelling, large citations, especially in the first group of publications. I believe that scientific production will benefit if more emphasis is placed on the author's analysis, her own theoretical reading of the works of the authors themselves, not so much their analysts, as well as a clearer distinction between own and other authors' studies, such as biographical studies. I must point out that even the mere presentation of important topics for the candidate through psychoanalytic discourse is an achievement insofar as it is too complex both as knowledge and as expression. It seems to require first "learning" the language and its concepts, which can be an endless process. In this sense, I do not underestimate what has been achieved, but rather try to see and highlight the perspective.

I would also recommend that the started process of conceptualisation of vocational guidance and counselling through the psychoanalytic paradigm continues, probably through a change in concepts, which is needed in the field of its theoretical understanding and scientific service in practice.

In summary, I can say that the data from the reference under Art. 2b of the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, presented in the documents for the competition show that the candidate meets the minimum requirements for holding the

position of professor, and according to some indicators the coverage is many times more than the required minimum.

### ***Scientific contributions***

In general, I accept the fields of contributions that the candidate herself has indicated in the competition documents. I would like to highlight the contribution points in the following areas:

#### *On a theoretical level*

Presenting in an analytical and comprehensive way the main theses in the psychoanalytic concept, contributing to the meaning of practice, in "equipping" professionals with a deep framework of viewing and understanding the child, his connections, relationships, etc. and a very good cognitive contribution.

Constructing in a scientific, teaching, and advisory aspect the topic of the baby and the need for more in-depth knowledge of early childhood, the topic of the importance of early childhood, in a systematic, consistent, and persistent way, including through the introduction of a discipline such as Social Work with babies is an indisputable contribution. The contribution to the support of premature babies and the early detection of children at risk of autism deserves special attention.

The expansion and enrichment of the diagnostic view through the construction of useful tools for early diagnosis in the period of early childhood development, but also approaches to support, through the support of people around the child.

The different conceptual view of vocational guidance, counselling, career education, which is evident in some research and publications opens opportunities to seek alternatives to the existing in practice instructional training approach based on assessment, the search for a balance between skills and labour market, to approach of making sense, understanding, and making choices that bring satisfaction and unlock the expression of human potential.

#### *At the practical-applied level*

In the field of conceptualization and professionalization of family counselling in social work, the preparation of students has through these publications a serious cognitive support with successful practices of integrating knowledge around specific cases and situations.

The placement, research and testing of models, by applying different approaches such as psychoanalytic, multisensory, synergistic, etc., develops interdisciplinary knowledge, involving its various carriers in this process. The topic of the relationship between sciences, scientific disciplines, interprofessionalism, as cooperation between different professionals around a case, is present as extremely relevant in research on the practice of social work in all countries, I would say, although called by different concepts.

It can be said that she creates or participates in the creation of laboratories for meeting knowledge and practice, which has its positives in both directions, such as the Green Yard, the

Centre for Career Development in FP. I welcome the meaningful links between university careers and practice, which can protect us university professors from the risk of entering self-satisfying pseudoscience, and real professional activity from the risk of life trivialization.

**Conclusion: The candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Monika Borisova Bogdanova corresponds to the scientometric criteria and indicators for holding the position of professor, as well as to all the requirements of ZRASRB.**

**Having in mind the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Monika Bogdanova, its thematic scope and content, her scientific contribution and contribution to the conceptualization of the helping practice both directly and by improving the training of future helping specialists, as well as the efforts to develop forms of scientific associations together with other scientists and professionals, I believe that the academic community of FP has in its face a worthy colleague, scientist and lecturer.**

**I strongly recommend the members of the esteemed jury to vote "for" the election of Assoc. Prof. Monika Borisova Bogdanova to the position of "Professor" in the professional field 3.4 Social activities (Consulting and career guidance in social work with children and families) for the needs of FP, Sofia University " Saint Kliment Ohridski".**

15/11/2021

Author of the review:

(Prof. Dr. Nelly Petrova-Dimitrova)