

TENURE REVIEW

of the entire work of Assoc. Prof. Radka Emilova Vasileva - a single candidate for the academic position of “Full Professor” in the professional field of 1.2. Education (Pedagogy, Animation and Education)

Assoc. Prof. Radka Emilova Vasileva was born in 1960. Her development as an expert educator can be traced through several stages of education and professional realization which cumulatively enrich her and rally her to the scientific field of education and help her successful development as a scientist – a university teacher and researcher of rich experience and outstanding scientific research achievements: in 1980 Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva graduates at the semi-higher institute for Elementary and Early Childhood Teachers “*Nadezhda Krupskaya*” in the city of Sofia, specializing in *Russian and Physical Education*; in 1985 she completes the specialty of *Education and Philosophy* at Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”; for a year she works as the Manager of the Department for Education at the Town Council of Kostenets; since 1986 she has worked as an Associate Professor at Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”, at the Faculty of Education; and in 1998 Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva defends a doctoral dissertation on the topic: *Pedagogical dimensions of the “Educational Theatre” as a play-based educational model*. Thus, the author provides evidence for the scientific, practical and applied effectiveness of a new scientific orientation, not on the level of reflective interpretations and verbal uselessness, but through real school practice verification.

In 1995 Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva sets the beginning of an educational system as a Manager and Creative Director of *Educational Theatre* OOD and *Fun Science Theatre* EOOD. To date, each year the theatre inspires over 200 teachers and students. An audience of more than 2000 teachers receives the necessary professional qualification for working with students and creating an interactive and attractive educational environment. With 25 schools in the capital city Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva has implemented and sustained her original educational programme among children at elementary school level. The system operates successfully in educational practice with high popularity and proven efficiency. Thousands of Bulgarian children experience unique moments of encounter with art, perform multifaceted impersonations and enjoy one-of-a-kind learning-related emotional experiences. Each child receives the chance for a creative self-

expression, for sharing and gaining experience – not by means of the prevalent authoritarian reproduction, but by a truly conscious feeling of the worth and freedom of expression.

Since 2007 Radka Vasileva is an associate professor at the department of Didactics at the faculty of Education at Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski” and teaches lecture courses on Education, Animation and Education, Drama Animation and Educational Theatre, Management Training, and Conflict Resolution, among others. Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva forms functional creative teams of followers – theatre experts, actors, directors, scenographers and educators who work together to design and produce the programme of the theatre in close collaboration with the schools.

Analysis of research publications

In her application for the academic position of a “Full Professor” Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva submits the following list of publications:

- Habilitation thesis “Art Animation in Education – Teachers and Students in Dramatic Interaction“ (2020);
- Monographs: ”An Educational Drama Model at School” (2014);
- 5 papers, published in referenced and internationally indexed scientific editions in world famous academic databases;
- 6 papers, published in non-referenced peer-reviewed editions;
- *Being a Citizen. Teacher’s Book. Civic education topics for the class-time hours.* (2010).

Scientific publications by Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva mark two main territories which jointly form a broader thematic and value-oriented whole, related to education: **the functioning of alternative teaching-learning prototypes** (*art animation in education; performance – as an event entertainment performance of educational orientation, an educational game, educational theatre*); and **the democratization and humanization of education** (*civic education; teacher preparation and motivation; challenges for and of the modern educational system related to the optimal student learning growth*).

Central themes to which the author devotes many years of in-depth and meaningful analyses are educational theatre and art animation in education. The monograph “An Educational Drama Model at School” and the habilitation thesis “Art Animation in Education – Teachers and Students in Dramatic Interaction” mutually complement each other by means of a gradual and multilayer broadening of the research perimeter. As a particular accomplishment in the habilitation

thesis I would point out the methodological starting point in presenting Art Animation in Education which essentially determines the entire strategy for design and implementation of the educational process as well as for ensuring its value-based meaningful essence. The depth of the scientific analyses is also a sign of the impressive passion of a researcher which Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva demonstrates by exploring the especially significant but insufficiently analyzed in literature research territories. Adequately and correctly from a scientific point of view does she outline the structure of art animation in education. Sociocultural prototypes and educational projections are revealed: the concept and practice of animation, and animation as a proto-beginning. Its particular components and formats in education are outlined. Special attention is paid to the original author's variants of implementation in actual educational practice. In a very effective way, thoroughly distancing her approach from the trivial and authoritative educational tradition, Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva presents interesting multi-layered configurations of the relation: *educational drama – art animation – learning – creative activity – fully developed individual* in a personified and *impersonated* educational context and in a deep interrelation with the meaning obtained from any learning creative activity. The ideas underpinning the role-based behavioural theories by representatives of various scientific fields (philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, sociology, etc.) are recreated and decomposed as main orientations in the educational environment: for achieving personal and social competence; for developing team working skills; for developing intelligence and existential awareness; for accomplishing innovative ideas, philosophical thinking and ecological consciousness. All this is bound by and justified in a clear conceptual framework where on the basis of a reflexive, active, and interpretational level by means of a visual, image and multisensory approach the educational environment offers creative drama interaction – provocative, awakening and empowering the creative potential of the individual. Just attention is given to the satisfaction from the accomplished level of success as a form of motive for transforming the creative interest into a sustainable emotional, psychic and intellectual state. In real educational conditions Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva explores the opportunities of art animation in their dynamic interrelation and interaction both in the wider and in the downright specific everyday context: meeting new people; learning rules; setting up a community; learning social norms; developing social responsibility; and role taking in everyday life. The animation approach is outlined in depth. Its educational reasoning is revealed. By constructing an imaginary setting students get involved in a process of reviving, reliving and recreating phenomena, relations,

events, touching upon them by virtue of their own individually manifested sensitivity and sensation of meaning from what is going on. As the author explains: “the animated characters activate in a particular way the thinking, behavioural and affective student resources.” Placed in such a setting students acquire useful art techniques, self-knowledge techniques, directing their creative energy into other levels of everyday and existential awareness.

By introducing us to the modifications of the educational – as a monologue, as a formal meeting, as an influential behaviour and as a theatre, Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva presents the system of drama methods called upon to create an illusory reality that differs from everyday life but poses as a challenge sufficient to trigger a meaningful interaction and self-expression in a socially protected space where reality is consciously paused and an illusory world voluntarily ushered in for the realization of productive spontaneity. Getting into the complex structuring of drama technologies Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva draws clear outlines of their crossing sections with the theatrical performance and thus, even more meaningfully and comprehensibly does she reveal the wide range of opportunities for rallying the learner to the realm of knowledge, for a value-based interpretation of real facts and data from another epistemological and role angle fostering the reestablishment of *the perspective of the self*. Special attention in the conducted analyses is given to presentation. The sequence in its structure is successfully expounded upon as a specifically construed symbolic-sign multilayer model for conducting a wholesome educational interaction.

Mechanisms for constructing specific technological solutions are offered as well. The author elaborates on an impressive number of concrete presentational techniques aimed to achieve desired effects in the course of communication, such as: *sincerity, stage façade, perfection, arts mastery, sexualisation, meta-performance* and *visuality*. The presentation of each of them rests on good argumentation.

With her exceptional research insight and precision Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva by far surpasses the existing educational designs on these issues revealing in greater depth the integrative essence of art animation in education – as a logically defined, complex and contradictory whole, where irreconcilable invariants blend, in addition to possible variants of functioning prompting the learning individual towards accessible creative horizons in the realm of knowledge. The impersonated (permeated with emotion and personal awareness of each creative situation) educational *dramatic* interaction effected through play, interpretation, individual re-creation of

characters and actions – *here and now*, rearranges the educational space into a new dimension of a deeply meaningful realization filled with profound and desired connotations. Her enviable expertise on the practice created by the author herself provides her with the research audacity to formulate clear and well-designed stages manifesting the integral content whole of the educational performance – as a non-standard form of education involving a high-level subject-based intellectual and personal development. Thus, from a desired aim in a strictly formalized learning environment, traditionally imposed, the study content is transformed into a means of discovering new opportunities for inclusion in research and creation of new information, lived-through, interpreted and transformed by the students in various degrees of sensitivity, existential providence, creative insight and spiritual joy. Internal motivation is enhanced in addition to the feeling of emotional belonging and significance.

Other broadly and extensively presented thematic units expanding the creative research activity of Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva are the problems dedicated to: teacher motivation, civic education, differentiated teaching and learning, moral education, problems of the modern educational system, and the impersonated educational space. There are several noteworthy achievements in this respect: the author makes use of an original author-created tool (educational drama) for finding out the main motives rallying the teacher to the realm of innovations in educational practice and the motives distancing them from the need of further professional education. This information allows for the planning of professional education in accordance with the actual needs of each teacher and precludes the chaotic and campaign-like approach in this respect. Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva looks into the moral education of elementary school students by providing specific technological solutions in the processes of social interaction. The researcher reports the need for promotion of the basic moral values among the children in a non-violent way. The author lends meaning and educational reasoning to differentiated teaching-learning considering its main determinants. Thus, she embraces the idea of the personalization, democratization and humanization of learning, i.e. of a learning in a permanent relation with the current needs, interests and abilities of the students. Of special merit is the civic education textbook written by Assoc. Prof. Radka Vassileva *et al.* It offers ideas on thematic education aimed not only at knowledge acquisition but also at knowledge application in real practice situations (conflict resolution, patriotic education, self-assertion, respect and care for family and friends, among others). With competence and expertise the author offers a new outlook over educational reality

and the opportunities for its optimization and improvement, not on a whim or by attractive-but-useless solutions, but by means of well-reasoned technological steps, taking into account the essence of human nature, the logic of educational interaction, and the strive for continuous self-development.

Each one publication of Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva is an element of a representative comprehensive piece of research pointing to the fact that the author is a scientist of a new type, a worthy representative of the humanistic field in education, practically changing the essence and the meaning of education.

Scientific research and project activity

Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva has directed two scientific projects on the main issues she has been dedicated to and has participated as a research team expert in another seven.

She is a member of the Board of Directors of Kids Academy University Centre at Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”. She is also an Editorial Board Member of Educational Journal: Science Publishing Group, USA. She has supervised three successful doctoral candidates. Currently, she is supervising another three. The submitted reference with 50 citations of her publications is clear evidence of her recognizability within the educational community.

Exceptionally high is the evaluation of her doctoral student supervision - two successfully defended and three currently studying, who all embraced her ideas. This is how a long-lasting drama educational school is established which works in a professional way for achieving high quality in education by means of the drama educational approach based on art animation in education.

Teaching activity

Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva meets the required academic horarium for the position of a Full Professor.

As a university teacher at the Faculty of Education and title holder of a course on Education for the teaching specialties, Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva enjoys great authority. She constantly demonstrates her high expertise by the innovative approach in her work and her commitment in working with the students. As a colleague she is distinguished for her high moral principles, restless research drive and a vocal civil position.

Major contributions to science

First, it is only fair to say that the habilitation work exhibits the features of a higher doctorate.

I accept the candidate's personal reference of the contributory essence of her publications. Summarily, I will present them as follows:

1. An original approach of art animation in education has been created and tested. Its functioning is revealed in terms of contents and on the basis of the relation: *animation – fun – play – educational and social outcome*.
2. Original applied formats of the Art Animation approach have been created for the purposes of school and non-formal education.
3. An effective model of educational theatre by the name of *Fun Science* has been created.
4. An author's theoretical and applied model of educational drama named *School Educational Drama* has been created. A wide author's set of original plays and drama etudes has been systematized for the purposes of non-formal and training education tested in a real educational environment.
5. The profile of the modern teacher has been outlined as a combination of expertise, artistry and moral educational functionality.

The analysis of Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva's entire work as well as her professional realization as a teacher at the Faculty of Education at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski" reveal her as a non-standard educator and teacher, an erudite scientist and researcher with focused and stable professional interests linked to the most topical and delicate spheres of the changing Bulgarian education, and, respectively, the Bulgarian school.

Her academic works are in direct orientation to the reference code of the tenure procedure.

The submitted documents comply with the requirements in the Staff Regulation of Sofia University for holding the academic position of "Full Professor".

The candidate's indisputable scientific achievements and professional qualities give me reason to recommend the honourable Members of the Academic Jury with full conviction to accept the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Radka Vasileva for the position of a "Full Professor" in the professional field of 1.2. Education (Pedagogy, Animation and Education) and to form a positive proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski".

Reviewer:

Prof. Emiliya Vasileva, PhD

SU "St Kliment Ohridski"