

Review

for the competition for the academic position of “Professor” in the field of higher education Social Sciences, in Professional field 3.4. Social activities (Counseling and Vocational guidance in Social work with children and families), announced in SG issue 54, 29.06.2021, for the needs of the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Pedagogy at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Reviewer:

Prof. Yanka Merdjanova, DPS, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Pedagogy, Department of Didactics

Description of the competition: the competition was announced by the Department of Social Work at the Faculty of Pedagogy at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Procedural aspects: complied with all stages of the competition procedure, it is legitimate.

Content aspects /availability of academic hours and documentation/: reference with academic workload is correct and corresponds to the profile of the competition. The announced candidacy in the competition is based on a sufficient number of obligatory academic hours – 150 hours lectures: at the bachelor's level in Social work with foster families, Vocational Guidance and Counseling, Counseling and Job application; 70 hours lectures in compulsory disciplines уш master’s level: Recruitment and job application, Skills development for career management. Another 310 hours of elective courses at bachelor's and master's level are described, which match the profile of the competition. The courses are part of the majors’ curriculums in Social activities, Pedagogy and Non-formal education at the Faculty of Pedagogy. The professorship should provide a leading professor and a scientist in two key areas in social activities - social work in the field of employment and vocational guidance, as well as social work with children and families. This burdens the competition procedure in advance, as well as the potential candidates, with high expectations.

Documentation: prepared precisely, the documentation is accurate, in compliance with the requirements, and available to the scientific expertise.

Presentation of the candidates: the only candidate in the competition is Associated Professor Monika Bogdanova, DPS, an acting lecturer at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Department of Social work. Assoc. Prof. M. Bogdanova was born in 1977. The educational qualification she obtained have pedagogical and psychological background - Master degree in Pedagogy, postgraduate qualification in Psychology, assistant teacher. The obtained PhD degree is in the field of foster care and the Doctor of Sciences in Pedagogical Sciences – Vocational guidance and counseling of children and youth with specific needs. Since 2011 M. Bogdanova has been an associate professor of pedagogy – basics of social work. Her professional qualifications show continual development for the synthesis between pedagogy, psychology and social work – she has been a psychoanalyst since 2014, and psychotherapist. Assoc. Prof. M. Bogdanova’s professional experience is related to sociological research, pedagogical counseling, and psychology. In 2005 she was an assistant professor in the Faculty of Pedagogy, where she has grown professionally so far. She has had 10 international specializations and trainings - in France, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria - related

to foster care, social work and counseling with babies, children and their families, speech therapy and specific methodologies for working with individuals with specific needs. Most of these specializations are permanent, based on scientific, applied and cultural longlasting cooperation. The teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova is in the areas of the competition procedure; research and applied activities are substantial, at international and national levels, related to cooperation with institutions in the field of social work, as well as in education, health facilities, day care centers and social services.

General characteristics and substantive evaluation of the candidate's scientific publications

The applicant presents a list of 41 scientific papers and publications on the profile of the competition, and a total of over 110 within her entire productive career. The publications *submitted for the competition* are as follows: 3 monographs and a chapter of a monograph in co-authorship, 3 university textbooks and manuals, 4 studies, 1 abstract, 29 articles in scientific journals and collective volumes or editions, 11 publications marked as “others”.

I will not review FIVE of the presented works as a co-author - 1 monograph, publ. № 4; 1 manual - publ. № 40; 1 studio - publ. № 8; 1 paper - publ. № 27; and National Program for career guidance of students at school level - publ. № 41. The review will analyze and evaluate 36 publications of Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova - 9 are co-authored with Bulgarian and foreign authors; 2 are in journals referenced and indexed in international databases; 2 are in English.

Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova's publications cover similar, but an upgrading and deepening issue, around the two main cores – Vocational guidance and counseling and Social work with children and families.

These two areas are deeply integrated, which is reflected in the specification of the competition announced by the Department of Social Work and the Faculty of Pedagogy. Following the evolution of the author's research interests and outcomes, focusing on the relationship and interference between scientific problems, it could be seen that their circle gradually and evenly swells, but harmoniously around the cores – special interest in early age and its social primary environment, with specific unique characteristics /publ. № 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 21, 23, 28, 32, 33, 34, 37/, and facilitating the vitality of this system by supporting the basic social integration - labor /4, 7, 8, 26, 24, 27, 10, 36, 39, 40, 41/. In this view, they seem acceptable, and over the years the preferences of Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova to three main mechanisms of such support - professional counseling, psychoanalytic, multisensory - is grounded and bounded. And since historically they have developed into independent scientific fields, they are blended through a synergetic approach. I note and acknowledge the merits of this logical and product-objectified semantic integrity of the seemingly very diverse works of the author.

They are, in my opinion, both a response and a reaction, and an effort of the author, swooped each time by the nature of the real problems, to "dissect" them at the level of theory and to stick them together again at the level of "living" practice. Monika Bogdanova is not satisfied with one or two monographs and publications in the fields of psychoanalysis in social work, vocational guidance and counseling with children and adolescents at social risk and with special needs, motherhood and parenthood as refusal and consent; of the approaches as a

consulting practice, as a therapy and as pedagogical mechanisms; of vocational guidance seen as methods, and as a system, and as a specific language of communication with children and families of children with specific needs. She does not stop specifying and introducing other terms - more appropriate, in her opinion, and specific to the studied phenomena. Especially because the nature of social and psychological phenomena related to the depths of the personality is multifaceted. The author seems to be consciously and persistently challenging the risk of being accused by the scientific good faith and straightforwardness in the opposite - in non-straightforwardness, in chaos, in lack of center, in frivolity and outright waywardness. After all, this turns out to be - first, in the field of vocational guidance and counseling in social work / where we work with people alienated from labor for various reasons / - both a duty and an obligation. Second, in the field of social work with children and families in the modern world / in which pathology and disability are natural consequences of ancestral changes / - this turns out to be the possible honest and realistic, gradually precised focus to resolve sometimes dramatic problems in people's lives - from earliest age to adulthood.

The documentation contains evidence of **over 85 citations in 54 publications of other authors of 20 works** by Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova from the National Library and a certificate of indexed and cited work in the international databases of the University Library. In general, I accept the accents described by the candidate in the abstracts and the indicated contributions - they are not discerned only in a separate paper or paragraph, but rather stand out in the overall related reading of the publications, which seem to be a great trilogy / vocational guidance and counseling, psychoanalysis, social work as prevention and early care for children and families /, written in its separate parts. The problems are solved in various publications, even the main monographs are open and have their sequels in the following ones. That is why *the content evaluation is by groups of works*, which highlights in turn *their scientific contributions - synergized in both main areas of the competition - career counseling and counseling - of children and families in social work*:

1. Methodologically grounded, constructed, applied and implemented in recent years **synergetic model of vocational guidance and counseling** of children and youth with specific needs, based on the integration of significant approaches /synergetic, multisensory, psychoanalytic/ - /publ. № 4, 7, 8, 24, 26, 27, 41/.
2. In-depth practice-oriented study of the **systems, approaches and practices of career education worldwide and its trends and status in Bulgaria** / publ. № 4, 40, 41/. In this field the candidate is a leading author in the country, developing **a model of career counseling in an academic environment** /publ. № 4, 6, 8, 13, 38, 40/.
3. **Conceptual deployment** of the mission, integrated methodological psychoanalytic paradigms, substantive fields, consulting interactions between specialist and client /babies, children, families/ **in modern social work - based on analysis of personality and human development - from conception to adulthood** /publ. № 10, 36, 39, 22, 29, 23, 28, 32/.
4. **Valuable practical approaches and tools have been developed and implemented, integrating** both professional counseling and the overall vital and personal support of babies, mothers, children and adolescents with specific needs /publ. № 10, 36, 39, 38, 40, 41/.

For me personally, this range of publications and the practical work of the author are of exceptional value. The source "Dictionary of Bulgarian Sign Language" stands out, which

is developed on the basis of practical several-year training of students majoring in Pedagogy and Social activities at the Faculty, with the consulting expertise of specialists from the practice of working with people with hearing impairment. The manual "Understanding the child with specific needs" is provided with a rich system of methods and tools for prevention, early prophylaxis and support of the child in school, extracurricular and family environment - the multisensory principle, Makaton, sign language, pictograms, sensory models, the C-MAP method, fairy tales, role-plays, are not only well described, methodically provided, but also practiced, applied, disseminated by the author / leading international and national practices are described, as well as personal ones in the Green Yard Foundation/. The *internal institutional mechanisms* for application of the specific methods for early diagnosis and prevention are also substantiated - mentoring and coaching, non-formal education, art workshops.

5. A remarkable achievement and contribution is the insightful and competent interpretation and supportive counseling provision of **the most delicate and difficult life situations** - premature birth, difficult and un-wanted motherhood, parenthood, babies and children with specific needs /publ. № 11, 17, 33/. **Clinical social work** receives a new complementary interpretation and perspective / publ. № 14, 15, 27/.

In general and summarizing the contributory nature of the candidate's work, the Social work with children and families is **paradigmatically developed as a bounding in one vital whole** the phases of motherhood - pregnancy - birth - nursing - early childhood - adolescence: **at methodological, theoretical, and practical level.**

In recent years, the author has been trying to link social work not just with families, but with babies; babies with psychoanalysis; pedagogy with psychoanalysis - of course, this is a real cause, only time will tell its perspective, but the scientific risk and therefore the scientific value is high. **On this synergetic basis the importance of the psychoanalytic paradigm** and its gradual real integration with pedagogical, counseling, health-improving approaches on the principle of prevention of human identity, health and social integrity **at a practical level is substantiated.** Everywhere in the works there is a substantiation and presentation of the real models of possible *professionalism and professional standards in the team work* of the various specialists - pedagogues, social workers, health specialists, special pedagogues, therapists and psychologists. The monograph "The baby, the child and their language" / publ. № 1 / definitely focuses on most successful of the candidate's work in the field of social professional work and support through logic: *a/ features – b/ observed typical problems in parenting and family – c/ consequences as issues in child development – d/ necessary preventive approaches and methods.* Such extremely relevant and important problems to the context of social work, medical care, pedagogical developing practices are discussed, such as surrogacy, "dead father and mother", "evil stepmother", foster mother and adoptive mother; in order to shift on to the consequences of dysfunction in the child - childhood amnesia, archaic fears, distortion of body images, autism. The many applications are tailored to the approach to prevention and prophylaxis, early diagnosis and use and development of all personal and family potential. Therefore, *the synergetic approach* to bounding paradigms, theories, approaches, principles, practical efforts in the activity of united multidisciplinary professional teams, sharing common ideas and attitudes towards the child and the baby, is valuable and is *a pioneering endeavor, creating a new and promising scientific research and an applied niche in the field of modern social work.* It is worth

emphasizing two fundamental characteristics of this main work of the candidate. **First**, a broad understanding of **Language** - not only verbal, but bodily, behavioral, playful, gestural, specifically problematic, intuitive, allegorical, far beyond the literal boundaries of words. In the fold of the message with a philosophical question "can we read the messages of our children, between each other, and can we rely on the messages we send to each other?" placed in the context of an extremely pragmatized area today – the social work, and in the context in crisis situations, where the threshold of capacity and energy resources of clients is extremely painful and low, such issues are critical, and challenging, and risky. But the author and the figure Bogdanova is tireless in this respect. **And the second clear feature of work** – here **counseling** is integrated into the training of many professionals in contact with the child with specific needs and his family - babysitter, midwife, professional parents, kindergarten assistant, novice nurses in specialized institutions – a truly synergistic model, not only theoretically tested, but also practically realized in the "Green Yard", adapting the international experience of socio-pedagogical support of children and their families through a completely modernized paradigm of psychoanalysis. *In this logic, the title of the work "The baby, the child and their language" embodies the message of the extended statement "Authentic synergetic socio-pedagogical counseling of families with specific problems in childbirth and parenting" OR of the question - "Is it possible to achieve a unique professionalized support program for every uniquely needy child and his family?"*. Colossal problems, fully inscribed in the profile of the announced competition, whose solutions will be sought by both the author and other like-minded people in the coming decades.

With her overall activity - research, academic, applied, practical-professional, the candidate for professor Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova acts as a PIONEER in the synthesis between pedagogy, social work, psychology, medicine - in outlining a new modern look of social service and support of the full development of the human from the earliest childhood to full growth. This actually extends the subject field of social work. In such pioneering endeavors, the distinction between the scientific fields, the synthesis and integration of methods and practical approaches, face objective difficulties, are accompanied by fluctuations and "stagers" in one direction or another, but in any case, the value of the first furrows is exceptional. This is how I perceive and evaluate the candidate's overall work and the inevitable critical remarks it provokes.

Critical comments and questions to the author of the works

A question:

1. What are the "brightest" limitations of the psychoanalytic approach in social work / the author has written enough about the advantages /, according to Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova, and how they combine / or compensate or differentiate / with the data and achievements of modern neurobiology, neurophysiology, and robotics regarding the future of man?

A critical remark:

1. *The article "The Baby as a Subject in Psychoanalysis" and the monograph "The Baby, the Child and Their Language"* are the subject of a remark with two aspects: first, in the scientific classical tradition /both ancient and from modern times/ "subject" is associated attributively with formed **and not only manifested, but also intentional, self-consciousness - the baby is a person, but does not act as a subject, in psychoanalysis itself; secondly -**

"psychoanalysis" is a term to denote the METHOD and should at least be deployed in the title as "psychoanalytic interaction" or "process" or "contact", because it is unlikely that Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova introduces the child as a subject of the method itself - there is no such level of interpretation in the article. A remark of this kind can be made to other concepts and terms that the author wants to introduce and impose in circulation in the professional scientific language and practice.

A recommendation:

1. As Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova works exclusively in a psychological context, I recommend that, in the future, she state her presence more clearly as an author in the specialized and indexed scientific psychological periodicals, both in Bulgaria and in international publications. The ideas and efforts of the author require and deserve this.

Teaching activity

The teaching activity is on the profile of the competition and presents the candidate as an established and leading academic lecturer in the professional fields of the competition - compulsory disciplines at bachelor's and master's degree level, many electives – Vocational guidance and counseling, Organizational culture and career development, Recruitment and counseling for job application, Motherhood and counseling, Family counseling, Personal counseling, Career education, Formation of career management skills. Numerous academic programs have been developed and updated - in the field of vocational guidance and counseling, social work with children and families, motherhood, clinical social work, recruitment and job application, counseling. Management of doctoral students and graduates - 3 successfully defended PhD students, plus 1 current.

Research and professional creative activity

Academic positions: for 4 years Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova has been a member of the Faculty Council; since 2006 she has been a member of the Educational and Scientific Laboratory of Experimental and Professional Pedagogy; since 2015 she has been the head of the Career Center at Faculty of Pedagogy. She also works as a member of the Commission for undergraduate practice in the university majors of social activities and non-formal education; Member of the Erasmus+ Commission; member of the Accreditation Commission; she is a member of the Bulgarian psychoanalytic space; a chairwoman of the Bulgarian Association of Psychotherapy; a member of the Bulgarian Association for Social Work Training. Numerous participations in national and international projects are described - 20 after becoming associate professor, definitely related to professional and career guidance, career development, the activity of the laboratory and the career center, art workshops with students, career days. After becoming associate professor, Monika Bogdanova has over 30 participations in scientific conferences - social work, neonatology, pediatrics, psychotherapy, psychiatry, psychology, vocational guidance and counseling. For several years in a row, the candidate has organized and realized the already traditional Dolto Days in Bulgaria, integrating on a theoretical and applied level specialists from different fields and practitioners such as pedagogues, social workers, physicians, obstetricians, psychologists, pediatricians through the care of the baby, the child and the mother. Assoc. Prof. Bogdanova is the head of the Career Center of the Faculty of Pedagogy, for years she has been organizing December career days and student constellations. In her face I see a

worthy successor, sincerely committed to the field related to employment and vocational guidance in the supporting pedagogical professions and social work; *worthy leed academic lecturer in the field of social work with children and families.*

Summary of the compliance of the application with the legal and academic requirements for the position of "Professor"

1. Compliance with the criteria in scientific and creative aspects - the above scientific contributions to the work of the candidate in its various modes - scientific publications, participation in scientific forums, participation in collective scientific publications, ensure compliance of the candidacy in this aspect.

2. Compliance with the criteria in academic and teaching aspect – the candidate for the competition is an active full-time lecturer in the primary scientific unit, which announced the competition and provides the requested hours, which correspond to the cipher of the competition. The developed lectures and academic programs, her work as a lecturer at bachelor's and master's level in the Faculty of Pedagogy and other faculties on the profile of the competition, her qualifications and specializations, international scientific and teaching mobility, the activity of the Career Center of the Faculty in cooperation with other faculties and units - ensure full compliance of the application in this aspect with the requirements.

3. Compliance of the criteria in scientific, research and applied aspects – the work on research projects, the active scientific applied activity and cooperation with institutions outside the university, which are teaching institutions for the students of the Faculty of Pedagogy in the field of social work and work with children and families; the management of the “Green Yard” and the activities for the implementation of the candidate’s ideas and experience in social work, drawn and developing international trends, ensure compliance with this aspect of the requirements.

4. Compliance with the criteria for academic ethics and professionalism – The very transparency at each stage of the procedure confirms the high professionalism of the department board, and the precision and transparency of the work of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy and the ethics of the candidate.

Conclusion: I believe that this is a *solid candidacy, providing the scientific expertise with a sufficient number of scientific contributions, and a capacity to pursue genuine knowledge-developing perspectives. An academic figure of the future.* Having in mind all the above considerations, I strongly support this candidacy and give my positive assessment. In addition, I recommend with full conviction to the members of the esteemed scientific jury to **vote positive for the election of Assoc. Prof. Monika Bogdanova, DPS to take the academic position “Professor” in professional field 3.4. Social activities /Counseling and vocational guidance in social work with children and families/ for the needs of the Department of Social Work and the Faculty of Pedagogy at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.**

17. 10. 2021

Sofia

Reviewer:

/ Prof. Yanka Merdjanova, DPS/