

## REVIEW

**by Prof. Dr. Adriana Damyanova,**

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on the materials presented for contest participation for occupation of academic position “Associate

Professor“ at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski“,

announced in “State Gazette“, No. 22 on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2021,

needed for the Methodology Department at the Faculty of Slavic Studies

in area of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences,

professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of education (Methodology of teaching the Bulgarian language)

The most significant scientific contributions of D. Vasileva, PhD, are participations in research projects and conferences, scientific publications, and also co-authorship in textbooks and teaching supporting books for high school. The review of her work highlights the lasting scientific interests of the candidate, differentiated in several areas. Undoubtedly one of them is building up of civic competence in students, On this topic are dedicated not only D. Vasileva's doctoral dissertation and the monograph based on it, but also her subsequent publications and participation in an interfaculty project on the same area. In direct connection with the commitment to civic education is that on media and digital literacy of students, as evidenced by articles and studies published between 2017 and 2021.

The academic growth of D. Vasileva, PhD, could be traced in development of her scientific interests and, in particular, in their deepening and integration. Obviously, the candidate comes to the idea that civic, media or digital competencies of student are based on fundamental reading skills and attitudes. It is the formation and improvement of these skills and attitudes that we find as a scientific subject in a series of publications by D. Vasileva, PhD, in recent years in the specialized periodicals. The monograph "Development of cognitive and metacognitive reading skills in Bulgarian language teaching" (2021)—the main work which the candidate presents for participating in the competition—enriches, summarizes and systematizes her previous research on students' reading skills.

The monograph critically examines the current educational problem of reading skills in the "digital age", built up and applied in a "hybrid" environment. The paper outlines and follows an original research route different from that of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), for example, which approach is one of the most popular. In a sense, the study paves a kind of "para-PISA" trajectory, advocating the idea of reading as a humanitarian value, insofar as it participates in the complex process of cultivating, retaining and renewing the body of values and also as a source of pleasure. D. Vasileva, PhD, reading research dares to rehabilitate some of those aspects. In this sense, the work of the candidate unequivocally avoids the necessary reorientation of education from knowledge to competencies, from the redefinition of the enlightenment concept of education in terms of neoliberal ideology.

As another indisputable contribution of her research, it is necessary to point out that it opens new research perspectives and tasks for the methodology of teaching the Bulgarian language, as it in good faith outlining its perimeter and possible research routes beyond it. The study envisages urgent changes in educational policies and stands out the investment not in "protecting" the "children" from the trials in

the field of communication, but in providing them with resources to deal with the trials through their exposure to current (incl. and most of all—civic) problems. Proof of this finding are the texts proposed for the development of reading skills—as content and issues, structure and meaning, they remain far from the hypocritical sterility of the typical for the System impersonal, without any intrigue readings (from the register of popular science descriptions), which usually do not say nothing and therefore do not worry.

The conclusions of her research work—the results of which are described in good faith and correctly—are convincingly substantiated (and those subject to proof—have been proven) and effectively applicable in methodological practice. The proposed methodological options for working with different classes show that the cultivation of cognitive and so-called extra-linguistic skills, as well as metacognitive strategies, are a task of Bulgarian language teaching in general, as the differences between the classes are based primarily on the degree of difficulty of the topics and problems interpreted by the texts used, as well as the language.

Dr. Vasileva's monograph shows mature scientific thinking, free from naive optimism and unfounded idealism, untempted by complaining about the "sad present". On the contrary, the work offers a balanced theoretical model of the educational present, alien to elementary binary (ethical, epistemological etc.) oppositions, critical reading of the sources used and—especially important—critical self-reflection.

**Conclusion:**

Based on the fact that the discussed candidature unquestionably meets all the requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor"—and also on the no less indisputable scientific contributions of the candidate—I suggest to the distinguished members of the scientific jury to award Assist. Prof. Dr. Despina Mirolyubova Vasileva the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of education (Methodology of teaching in Bulgarian language)