

REVIEW

of scientific works, teaching and research activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva, for participation in a competition for the academic position "Professor" in Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski "in a professional direction

3.2. Psychology (General and age psychology)

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. of psych. sc. Veselin Kostov Vasilev

(prof. field 3.2. Psychology, scientific specialty General Psychology)

By order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski "I have been appointed as a reviewer in the competition for the academic position of "professor" in professional field 3.2. Psychology (General and age psychology), announced in SG, issue 22 of 16.03.2021, for the needs of the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Affairs, Faculty of Science, Education and Arts.

1. General presentation of the received materials

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the competition: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Angelova Stefanova - Bakracheva. She presented all the necessary documents and materials, including a voluminous scientific production, including a total of 111 titles (11 books and 100 studies and articles). These publications will be analyzed and differentiated according to the period of publication (before and after the previous habilitation), and those accepted for review - those published after the first habilitation - in this competition will be evaluated qualitatively.

2. Details of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Bakracheva graduated from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ", and her diploma in Social Pedagogy is recognized as a master's degree. From 2000 to 2003 she was a full-time doctoral student at the

Institute of Psychology - BAS, where she defended her doctoral dissertation in 2004 and from the same year she was a research associate (assistant doctor) at the Institute, Department of Psychology of personality. She has a habilitation as a senior researcher. (equated to associate professor) at the Institute in 2011. She also underwent habilitation procedures when changing jobs - in 2014 (MA "G.S. Rakovski") and 2018 (Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski") - therefore in the current competition for the academic position of "professor" I will evaluate all publications after the first habilitation in 2011 at BAS.

Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva has been impressively active both in raising her scientific and professional qualification in various forms of training and development, and as a teacher and mentor in raising the qualification of a wide range of professionals. She has a number of scientific and professional awards and prizes, is a member of major professional organizations and editorial boards, has been the scientific supervisor of three successfully defended doctoral students and numerous graduates. Her professional biography and public appearances characterize her as an authoritative scientist and teacher with a prominent position in the psychological community, and accordingly as a completely suitable candidate in this competition. Both her scientific output and her professional experience are adequate to her field the specialty of the announced competition.

3. General characteristics and evaluation of the scientific production of the candidate

The analysis and evaluation of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva gives grounds to assume that in the current competition for professor (in which we will evaluate only the publications after her first habilitation) she participated with a total of 64 titles: 4 books with the qualities of monographs, another 4 authorial participations in books (on the border between monographs and collections), 56 studies and articles. After her first habilitation - as a senior researcher at the Institute of Psychology - BAS, M.

Bakracheva has participated in 2 more competitions, but they are related only to a change of her workplace and are not a reason to change the above assessment. Four articles have been published in peer-reviewed and indexed editions, and all presented publications will be recognized as serious academic achievements that fully cover the modern requirements for psychological research: they are dedicated to significant (serious) topics in psychological science, have a high theoretical level, and the main part of them contains valuable empirical research - ingeniously designed and skillfully executed with quality research tools. Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva works successfully both in a team and individually, and the topics of her research and publications have both clearly distinguishable problem-thematic cores and sufficient diversity and variety, testifying to the width of her scientific interests and her competence. The monograph, which she herself has assigned the status of a habilitation thesis, outlines the main thematic course of the research interests of Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva: "Identity and stress management" (2017). The book traces the interrelationship and interdependence between the two phenomena: psychosocial identity and coping / stress management strategies. The author considers them as a process of adaptation that can be self-regulated by applying self-reflection. The analyzed research results lead to the conclusion that active coping strategies stimulate the building of the identity of young people.

In this book, too, the inherent research attitude of M. Bakracheva stands out: to purposefully look for the directions and ways to comprehend even the most complex theoretical ideas in their applied potential and to try and suggest ways for their technologicalization, i.e. their introduction into broad social practice.

In the other two books, interesting problems have been developed, which in our country are not yet in the focus of the college's attention. Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva has dedicated her book, probably the first on this topic in Bulgaria,

to the non-traditional issues - proactive mindfulness. It presents three studies and the accompanying theoretical interpretations.

The co-authored book (The Many Faces of the Self, together with M. Manolov) seeks answers to questions about the emotions, interests and anxieties of modern young people, the construction of their goals, values and identity, as well as the ability to interact effectively with them.

In a series of 4 articles, published in peer-reviewed and indexed scientific journals, developments with undoubted contributory effect are presented: building tolerance and communication skills through phototherapy techniques, prosocial behavior, assistants to people with disabilities, identity, self-affirmation and self-reflection for pupils and students. In each of these articles Margarita Bakracheva's research and professional nature stands out again - to connect and make sense of the researched scientific-theoretical psychological issues with her relevant practices - social and pedagogical, i.e. to trace the connection between psychological science and living life.

As the list of the other 52 articles is too extensive and thematically diverse, I will present them in summary, grouped by the problems that Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva has identified in order to systematize the main contributions in her production. I will allow myself to rearrange them depending on my subjective assessment of the role of Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva as an authoritative and leading author in the respective thematic area.

- In a series of publications - books and articles (I list them according to the full list of publications) - Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva presents her research on **psychosocial identity**. In addition to excellent reviews of an analytical nature, she constructs her position and understanding on this phenomenon and construct, explores it ingeniously in comparison with other phenomena and constructs (well-being, stress and coping, reflection), as the empirical results contribute to enrich the knowledge on it, and also to generate useful ideas for the practical application of this knowledge (№№ 4, 5, 36, 39, 41, 46, 56, 66, 80,90);

- **Strategies for dealing with stress** are a thematic area in which M. Bakracheva actively works and purposefully monitors the influences of internal and external factors, the effects of active and reactive coping. Along with systematizing the available concepts and ideas in this field, she produces empirical data in her own research, as well as ideas for new explanatory mechanisms and ideas for interventions in a positive direction (№№ 4, 5, 6, 62, 73, 77, 79, 87, 88, 89, 92);

- **Mental well-being** is a problem in which M. Bakracheva is one of the pioneers in our country and she has been researching it for years, correlating it with other phenomena, looking for its predictors and promising models for interventions and programs to build proactive mindfulness (№№). 4, 5, 6, 51, 87, 88, 89, etc.);

- A number of other articles devoted to **various topics** (all related to the topic of the competition and subject to evaluation), characterize Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva as a researcher with broad interests and competencies in the broad field of personality issues.

4. Characteristics and assessment of the educational and pedagogical activity of the candidate

In addition to her teaching work at the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva has collaborated and is collaborating as a part-time lecturer in other universities (G.S. Rakovski Military Academy, Plovdiv University P. Hilendarski, National Academy of Arts). Our direct, collegial, professional contacts at the University of Plovdiv allow me to assess her professional competence, commitment and personal qualities with the generalized assessment: "high-class teacher".

5. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the candidate

I traced the scientific contributions and achievements of the candidate for the academic position of "professor", linking them with the relevant major publications. I accept all of M. Bakracheva's self-assessments as well-founded.

6. Assessment of the personal contribution of the candidate

The personal contribution of the candidate for the presented achievements is undoubted. Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva is already a skilful leader of the scientific work of young doctoral scientists and I am convinced that she will continue to be still active and successful in this regard.

7. Notes and recommendations

I have no critical remarks and recommendations for the presented works.

8. Personal impressions

I know the candidate well from various business contacts - both scientific and teaching - and my assessment of her professional and scientific performances, qualities and achievements, as well as her overall potential, is very high. Assoc. Prof. M. Bakracheva combines her teaching performances in a complex and harmonious way with high-level research work, and given her age she has the potential for future development.

CONCLUSION

The materials and scientific works presented in the competition, their significance and the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained in them deserve an unconditional **positive** assessment. Therefore, I **recommend** to the Scientific Jury to vote Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Angelova Stefanova - Bakracheva to be elected to the academic position of "Professor" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in the professional field 3.2. Psychology (General and age psychology).

July 14, 2021.

Reviewer:

(Prof. Dr. Veselin Vassilev)