

OPINION

by prof. Neli Tsvetanova Vasileva, DSc,

Speech Therapy Department

on the materials for the scientific and teaching activities of chief assistant, PhD Elena Kirilova Boyadzhieva-Deleva, presented for participation in a competition for the academic position " Associate Professor" in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Speech Therapy) for the needs of Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts at SU "St. Kl. Ohridski", announced in the Official Gazette. No. 48 of 28.06.2022

For participation in the announced competition, documents have been submitted from chief assistant Elena Kirilova Boyadzhieva-Deleva, PhD (FNOI of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"), who is the only candidate for the academic position of "associate professor". The opinion was prepared on the basis of order No. RD 38-392/13.07.2022 of the rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" and according to the decision of the scientific jury. The procedure for the course of the competition and the submitted documentation are in accordance with ZRASRB and the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

1. General biographical introduction of the candidate

Chief assistant, PhD Elena Boyadjieva-Deleva has a rich professional and scientific biography, which is rare among young university lecturers. In 2004 she graduated with honours with a Bachelor's degree in Speech Therapy, and in 2006 with a Master's degree in Speech Therapy at Sofia University (Communication Development Disorders programme). Her broad interests and motivation for development encouraged her to continue her studies in the Master's programme "Kinesitherapy of persons with neurosomatic disorders" at FNPP, resulting in a Master's degree in Special Education in 2008. In the same period, PhD Boyadjieva-Deleva actively worked as a basic speech therapist at 28 Secondary School, Sofia. In 2006, she worked as a collaborator of the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Agency for Child Development in a micro-project for national statistics and database for children with SEN (2006) and in a project for the implementation of instrumental methods in the integrated education of children with severe communication disorders (2007-2008).

In 2006 she participated in trainings within the project "Development of Education for Students with Disabilities and Students at Risk in Southeastern Europe" at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

A natural continuation of the candidate's high theoretical and practical training is her work as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Department of Special Education (2007-2009) and her meritorious performance in 2009 in a competition for the academic position of Assistant Professor of Speech Therapy at the FNPP. She served in this position until 2018, when she was promoted to the academic position of Senior Assistant Professor. Working as an assistant professor of speech therapy proved to be a major boost to the candidate's research interests. In 2011, she was enrolled in the PhD program in Special Education - Speech Therapy, scientific supervisor prof. DSc Tsenova. In 2015, after defending her dissertation thesis on the problems of childhood dysarthria, she acquired the scientific and educational degree of Doctor of Special Pedagogy - Logopedics. PhD Boyadjieva-Deleva's rapid professional and scientific growth is also supported by her excellent command of foreign languages - French, English and Russian.

2. Teaching

In the process of working with the students of the Bachelor's and Master's programmes in Logopedics, Dr. Deleva shows a serious attitude and high professional competence, which makes her a respected and valuable teacher. Evidence of her teaching activity is the large number of courses she teaches alone or in a team (eight courses in the Bachelor's degree, three in the MSc in Communicative Development Disorders and three courses in the MSc in Speech Therapy), as well as her participation as a group leader within the pre-diploma practice. I particularly welcome the various forms of collaborative work with undergraduate and postgraduate speech therapy students as a way of passing on professional experience and motivating their development (co-authorship of papers at the FNOI Student Research Forum, participation in university and international projects, volunteering initiatives).

3. Research activities

The active research activity of chief assistant Elena Boyadjieva continues after the defence of her dissertation and shows a constant expansion of the research field of her interests. Among the main thematic areas of the author's work are: theoretical, diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of speech disorders; issues of early intervention and prevention of child language and speech development; theoretical aspects of modern speech therapy practice; theoretical

and diagnostic problems of language development disorders; theoretical and applied aspects of oromotor therapy in speech therapy. A large part of the presented publications (monographic works and articles) analyze and summarize data from own experimental research. Three of the articles reflect the results of successfully implemented projects, funded with earmarked funds from the state research budget. A well-deserved recognition of Dr. Boyadjieva-Deleva's scientific qualities and competences is her membership in the Board of Editors of Pedagogy /Education Journal, which dates back to 2020.

4. Scientific production

4.1. Compliance with the scientific metrics for the academic position

Dr. Boyadjieva-Deleva's scientific output fully meets the minimum national requirements for the science metrics for the academic position of Associate Professor, and in some indicators (groups D and E) it significantly exceeds the minimum number of points. A large number of points (135) were also scored for indicator F, which is not required for the post of Associate Professor. The output is wide-ranging in scope and thematic focus, indicating the candidate's high professional and academic competences. The total list of scientific publications for the period of work at the SU (2009-2022) includes 58 titles.

The list of publications for the current competition includes 34 titles that have been published since the award of the academic post of Senior Lecturer and relate to the period 2018-2022. They include: 3 monographs, one of them as a major habilitation thesis; 1 textbook; 1 chapter of a collective monograph (co-authored, in English), 2 studies; 24 articles (in Bulgarian and English, 5 of them co-authored) and 3 others (posters and a popular science article). Of these publications, 16 are included in the national reference list of NACID, and 6 are in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world databases of scientific information (Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCO, Research Gate, Google Scholar, etc.), which makes Boyadjieva-Deleva an internationally recognizable author. The publications reflected in library catalogues are. Cyril and Methodius" - 16 publications and in the University Library "St. Cyril and Methodius" - 16 publications. Kliment Ohridski Library - 13 publications.

In the reference for citations identified by traditional means (Google Scholar, Google Books) and reflected in the database of scientific activity of Sofia University "The Authors", 28 citations are present. In the reference from the Department of Library and Information Services of the University Library at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski 7 citations in Web of Science, 2 citations of 1 indexed document in Scopus ELSEVIER (h-index:1) and 1 citation in ScienceDirect.

4.2 Content analysis of the scientific papers submitted to the competition

All the publications submitted to the competition deserve high evaluation. In them the head as. Boyadjieva-Deleva shows an excellent style of scientific writing, serious theoretical preparation and analytical thinking. The ability to comment critically on theoretical models and to defend her own position explain the innovative nature of the author's concepts and the tools developed. I will focus on the candidate's monographic works, which by their structure and content deserve special attention.

The habilitation thesis 'Diagnosis of Speech and its Disorders in Childhood' presents a detailed and competent analysis of a large number of contemporary models of speech with psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic orientation. Symptoms at different levels of the speech mechanism, associated speech disorder syndromes, and the leading signs for their differentiation are described. The detailed description of the methods of evaluation and diagnosis of speech in childhood, which section of the work is of value as a reference source on the problem, deserves very high praise. Of particular value is the author's standardized Oral Motor Ability Test battery, which is multi-component and includes 71 items to assess oral motor skills for feeding and speech, oral and articulatory praxis, and all levels of articulation in children aged 5-7;6 years with impaired phonation and reduced speech intelligibility.

The monograph 'Oromotor Speech Therapy: Theoretical Aspects and Practical Application' is another major work of the candidate with definite theoretical, educational and applied value. In terms of content, a serious attempt has been made to integrate information between different fields, in particular orthodontic and speech therapy. The first description in Bulgarian of the interrelationship between the oromotor mechanisms of feeding and speech, both in the norm and from the position of the impact of harmful oral habits on the development of feeding and speech, is presented.

The monograph 'Speech, Language and Cognitive Development in Children with Cerebral Palsy' and the textbook 'Compendium of Forms for Speech Therapy Practice' also deserve high praise. Manual for students of speech therapy. The former work is interdisciplinary in nature and addresses a number of controversial and under-researched issues about the impact of cerebral palsy syndrome on the development of children's language, speech and intellectual functions. The literature review is supported by statistical data from the authors' experimental study.

5. Scientific-theoretical, practical-applied and other contributions

The works of chief assistant Elena Boyadjieva-Deleva presented for the competition have undeniable contribution to the theory and practice of speech therapy. The contributions of a scientific-theoretical nature include:

- 1.** Development of a standardized author's battery Test of Oral Motor Skills (TOMS), - the first of its kind criterion-oriented diagnostic tool in Bulgarian, standardized according to the world psychometric standards;
- 2.** Systematization of methods for screening and diagnosis of speech disorders from the position of similarities and differences in the method of assessment, content, procedures and psychometric indicators;
- 3.** First analysis in the Bulgarian speech therapy literature of the relationship between oromotor mechanisms of feeding and speech in typical ontogenesis and different pathologies, with subsequent description of the influence of harmful oral habits and orthodontic disorders on feeding and speech and an attempt to integrate speech therapy and orthodontic treatment; Systematization of the means of speech therapy according to the principles of medical rehabilitation, description of the specifics of myogymnastics and techniques of passive oromotor therapy;
- 4.** Analysis of typical development of motor, language, speech and cognitive processes in early and preschool age and their disorders in children with cerebral palsy.

Of marked educational and applied value is the textbook "Compendium of Forms for Speech Therapy Practice. Manual for students of speech therapy". Its revised version has been expanded with protocols for the assessment of language development, play activities and a new version of the phonology and articulation test, which has been tested on 84 children.

Evidence of Dr. Elena Boyadjieva-Deleva's broad interests is her participation in a number of university, national and international projects. Contributing to the teaching and scientific-applied activities of the Department of Speech Therapy is the research project "Development of digital teaching resources and creation of a didactic video fund at the Therapy Room of the Faculty of Education Sciences and Arts to support practical and e-learning of students" (2021), led by her and funded by the University of Sofia. As the head of the Therapy Room, Dr. Deleva shows high motivation and professionalism, which contributes to the development of the academic life of the Department and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

She is a member of the International Association of Therapeutic Teaching Specialists, co-founder of the Association of Private Practitioners of Speech Therapy in Bulgaria and a member of the support group of the Trusted Speech Therapists Network of the Association of Facial Anomalies - AFA since 2015.

In recent years, she has realized 9 participations in trainings and seminars at the invitation of external organizations related to issues of early diagnosis and prevention of child development, which is one of the leading topics of her scientific interests.

6. Personal impressions

I am happy to share my satisfaction that I know such an ambitious and competent young scientist as chief assistant Elena Boyadjieva-Deleva. My impressions of her date back to her student days and continue throughout her work as a university lecturer and PhD student. Throughout this time, Dr. Deleva distinguished herself by her breadth of scientific interests, analytical mind and high professional ethics. I cannot fail to mention her personal qualities - kindness, responsiveness and modesty, combined with an enviable diligence and sense of responsibility - an increasingly rare combination among the scientific community.

7. Comments, recommendations and questions

To the candidate in the competition, Chief assistant, PhD Elena Boyadjieva-Deleva, I have no remarks or questions. My only recommendation to her is to follow the worthy path of a scientist, teacher and continuator of the work of her teachers, dedicated to the cause of strengthening the School of Speech Therapy at the Department of Speech Therapy of Sofia University.

8. Final evaluation

I categorically and convincingly state that the scientific production and teaching activity of Chief assistant, PhD Elena Boyadjieva-Deleva meet all the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LADAB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LADAB and the Regulations of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for holding the academic position of Associate Professor. This is confirmed by the serious scientific-theoretical and practical-applied contributions of the presented publications and by the large number of citations.

I give a well-deserved positive assessment of the materials submitted in the competition and recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education Sciences and Arts of the Chief assistant, PhD Elena Kirilova Boyadjieva-Deleva to be elected to the academic position of Associate Professor in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Logopedics).

Date: 08.11.2022

Member of the scientific jury:

(prof. Neli Vassileva, DSc)