

OPINION

**by Assoc. Prof. Pavlina Petkova Damyanova, PhD
retired and part - time lecturer in
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski "**

**of the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic position of "Associate Professor"
of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"**

**by: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences
professional field 3.2. Psychology (Clinical Psychology)**

**In the competition for "Associate Professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 94 /
from 12.11. 2021 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the
needs of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy, as the
only candidate participates ZLATOMIRA GEORGIEVA KOSTOVA from the same
department of the University.**

1. General presentation of the procedure and the applicant

Zlatomira Kostova is Chief Assistant at the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy at the University of Plovdiv "P. Hilendarski "since 2014. She has a master degree in clinical and counseling psychology and has a doctorate in psychology.

After obtaining her PhD, Kostova continued her specialization in the field of psychological counseling and psychotherapy, gaining a professional qualification of "Consultant 2014 and Psychotherapist 2019" in the "Cognitive-behavioral psychotherapeutic paradigm." She additionally specializes in "Emotionally Focused Therapy" and "Therapy Scheme". Specializes in the field of Psychodiagnostics: certified in 2014 for work in MMPI 2 and MMPI A and in 2018 certified for work with CAT - children's apperceptive test; certified in 2015 for "Work on Children Victims of Sexual Violence". Kostova has been working at the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv since 2001, and has been an assistant professor for more than 13 years.

2. General characteristics of the candidate's activity

Z. Kostova has a very serious teaching activity, where she gives lectures on clinical psychology and interventions, psychology of personal adjustment, crisis intervention, social work with families. Here she skillfully interweaves her excellent practical experience as a psychotherapist with adolescents who have serious problems in their personal development and social adaptation, their parents and adults who have experienced trauma, life difficulties, communication and self-esteem problems, functional disorders. Kostova presents her author's topics in collections and textbooks for: important areas of clinical psychology and counseling, psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioral approaches in clinical psychology and psychotherapy, counseling of couples and families, client-centered psychotherapy. Her developed courses are in the field of clinical psychology and cover: basics of clinical psychology in social work; positive parenting; therapeutic approaches to the spectrum of autistic disorders and their families; parental competence; positive parenting;

Z. Kostova presents for the purposes of the competition a very rich list of scientific papers. Leading the monograph "Trauma and Parenthood" and the book "Emotional Regulation in Autism Spectrum Disorders", which reflect her research and extensive practical experience in psych diagnostic analysis and psychotherapy in adolescents with severe mental retardation, experienced traumas, the problems of parenthood in them, the stages of counseling and support of social adaptation. In the monograph, Kostova skillfully discusses how untreated, unprocessed acute trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder exacerbate neuropsychological disorders in children and upset parents emotionally and behaviorally, especially mothers. In the practical part, important approaches and techniques are proposed that integrate cognitive, behavioral, dynamic aspects of work that are useful for both professionals and parents. In the book "Emotional Regulation in Autism Spectrum Disorders" Kostova makes a scientifically based, in-depth analysis of the mother-child interaction, which underlies the impaired mental development of these children. The specific defense mechanisms are very skillfully derived, which on the one hand situationally alleviate painful emotions, but on the other hand aggravate the problem. They are described in great detail, illustrated with concrete examples and become understandable for both professionals and parents. An author's questionnaire for the functioning of the sick child, a modified interview for diagnostic assessment of autistic disorder and "cases of diagnostic assessment and therapeutic

work" are attached, which are very suitable for specialized clinical psychologists and psychotherapists.

In summary, the other scientific publications of Z. Kostova highlight several main areas of scientifically derived diagnostic and psychotherapeutic contributions: expansion of specific parameters in the nosological units in child clinical psychology; presentation of very well derived and interpreted models of the relationship between parents - sick children from the autism spectrum, marital subsystem; influence of the father's figure on the sick child and derivation of early predictors of disorders in its development; protective mechanisms; presentation of author's models of psychotherapeutic work, based on modern aspects of cerebral plasticity, brain-based therapy, specific mindfulness techniques, techniques for dealing with unconscious resistance to therapy, a series of presented cases of practical psychotherapy in children with autistic disabilities and their parents. The publications in which Kostova's practical experience integrates in her teaching lectures, textbooks, practical materials have a special aspect of contributions.

Z. Kostova presents a description of a series of publications: participation in four textbooks and co-authorship; three articles and scientific reports from international prestigious reviewed and indexed scientific journals; 21 articles and reports with scientific review and publications in edited scientific volumes; three team-developed studies published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in a world-renowned database of scientific information. Separation protocols are also presented, where Kostova's personal contribution is very clearly highlighted in the joint publications, including a reference to the excess number of points on scientometric indicators for its overall activity in relation to national standards. A separate protocol contains citations and reviews in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases of scientific information, which reflect the significant value of scientific analyzes and practical proposals of Kostova for work in clinical and psychological counseling and psychotherapy. These publications in world-renowned reviewed and indexed scientific journals reflect the extremely high professional skills and achievements of Kostova to produce scientific materials on her practical experience and scientific analysis, which receive an evaluation of the highest, world professional rank! For all this Kostova deserves admiration and recognition of the high prestige of a professional, teacher and researcher!

Kostova integrates the researched and analyzed psychodiagnostic aspects of disorders in the mental development of adolescents, the problematic relationships between parents and sick

children, the specialized psychotherapeutic techniques and specific for Bulgarian culture counseling approaches in her teaching work, illustrating with the personally described " case of work ". This is an extremely important contribution to the practice, which is based on Kostova's personal experience and helps students and graduates to understand the complex theoretical analyzes and psychotherapeutic techniques for change. We can definitely emphasize that Kostova is a unique academic lecturer who combines theory with concrete practical experience and scientific analysis, which corresponds to the current high requirements for a university lecturer!

Z. Kostova participates in a number of projects of PU "P. Hilendarski related to the topics of inclusive education, alternatives in education, innovative educational environment, projects to non-governmental organizations related to counseling and therapy for children with disabilities and their parents, supporting their social functioning.

3. Critical remarks and recommendations

In my opinion I have no critical remarks on the research, teaching and practical professional work of Zlatomira Kostova, a psychologist-consultant and psychotherapist. I definitely recommend Z. Kostova to continue to be ambitious and inspired to work as a lecturer and researcher, to continue presenting her excellent practical experience in publications to support specialists, to continue publishing in international journals, which she will continue presenting in the Bulgarian School of Psychology and Psychotherapy in a dignified way!

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to vote for ZLATOMIRA KOSTOVA to take the academic position of "Associate Professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences and professional field 3.2. Psychology (Clinical Psychology).

11.03.2022

Prepared the opinion:

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(academic length, n. st., name, surname)