

REVIEW

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This review concerns the works of Assistant Professor Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva, submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in "Developmental and Pedagogical Psychology," Professional field: 3.2. Psychology, in the area of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences.

The present review was commissioned by the decision of the Scientific Jury, as defined in Order No. 3288 dated September 28, 2023, by the Rector of Trakia University, Stara Zagora, based on Article 4, Paragraph 5, Item 5 of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Article 5, Paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Regulation on the Procedure for Assessing the Scientific and Teaching Activities of the Academic Staff, and a report from the Dean of the Faculty. The competition is for the academic position of Associate Professor in "Developmental and Pedagogical Psychology," Professional field: Psychology, in the area of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, and aims to meet the needs of the Department of Pedagogical and Social Sciences for an associate professor in pedagogical and developmental psychology.

The competition announcement was published in the State Gazette, issue 60 dated July 14, 2023, in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing regulations, as well as the regulations of Trakia University in Stara Zagora. Only Assistant Professor Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva participated in the competition. The documents submitted by her are in accordance with Section IV, Article 29, Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing regulations, as well as the regulations of Trakia University in Stara Zagora. The attachments to the application for participation in the competition provide grounds to claim that the requirements for its conduct have been correctly fulfilled. The candidate's self-assessment of the contributions of her scientific works is objective and supported by relevant data.

Biographical Data

Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva completed her Bachelor's degree in Special Education at the Faculty of Education at Trakia University, Stara Zagora, in 2002. After graduating, she obtained her Master's degree in Psychology from the Faculty of Philosophy at Veliko Tarnovo University "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" in 2008. In the same year, she completed additional specialization at the Qualification Center of Veliko Tarnovo University, resulting in her professional qualification as a psychologist-consultant. Following a successful competition in 2008, she was selected as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Education at Trakia University, Stara Zagora, where she conducted lectures and seminars on general, developmental, pedagogical, social, and special psychology. She served as the supervisor for the educational practice and pre-diploma internship for students in the regular and part-time programs of the "Social Pedagogy" major. I have personal impressions of Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva's teaching from our collaboration during the training process in developmental and pedagogical psychology with students in both regular and part-time forms of education. In my opinion, she demonstrates competence and responsibility in her professional activities, earning respect from both students and colleagues.

Following the successful defense of her dissertation in 2019 on the topic "Social Interest in Children Raised in Different Social Conditions," she earned the academic degree of Doctor in Pedagogical and Developmental Psychology. I am pleased that she fulfilled the recommendation I made as a reviewer of her dissertation, namely to expand and deepen her research and publish it as an independent work. This has been accomplished with the publication of the monograph "Social Interest and Educational Environment" by the "Kota" Publishing House in Stara Zagora in 2023. The monograph analyzes the results of her own research and systematizes theoretical and empirical information about social interest as a factor for effective socialization and adaptation of preschool-aged children. A model for the development of social interest in children of this age group has been proposed and tested, applicable for development in various social conditions. This model for working with preschool-aged children provides new opportunities for parents and educators to foster social interest in their charges. The results of the conducted research unequivocally illustrate that developing skills in children to collaborate, make collective and responsible decisions, mutually respect each other, and trust one another forms a sense of "we" and belonging to the group. A significant practical contribution of the monograph is the conceptual model for the development of social interest in children raised outside the family environment. I am confident that the synthesized knowledge based on the results of the described research in the monograph will be valuable

and applicable for shaping and developing social interest in preschool-aged children.

Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva is proficient in English and Russian and possesses skills in working with computer programs, including MS Windows, MS Office, MS Excel, PowerPoint, Photoshop, and Internet. She serves as a member and cashier of the Bulgarian Society for Individual Psychology "Alfred Adler" – Stara Zagora. She actively participates in various national and international scientific forums and has published articles in scientific journals and collections.

Analysis of the Candidate's Scientific Achievements and Contributions

Assistant Professor Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva is the author of 18 publications. Seven of them are related to her dissertation work and, for this reason, are not subject to review. The remaining 11 works will be analyzed and evaluated in the current review. Three of them are monographs, and the rest are articles in journals and printed conference reports in peer-reviewed collections. Two of the publications are in foreign collections and are in English. The works in collaboration serve as evidence that the candidate for the position has the ability to work in a team, which is an important advantage for occupying an academic position in modern university education. In the reference, 9 citations of Assistant Professor Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva's publications are noted, with two of them being from foreign authors. They have been identified using traditional methods and stored in a personal archive.

The analysis of the submitted publications reveals that the works fully meet the requirements of the announced competition for the position of associate professor in "Developmental and Pedagogical Psychology." They are the result of the systematic, purposeful, and consistent work of Assistant Professor Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva in the field of developmental and pedagogical psychology. Her writing style is characterized by readability, scientific clarity, and precision. In her creative endeavors, she demonstrates professional erudition, qualities of a systematizer, and a striving for self-improvement.

The current law requires that for the selection of an associate professor, the candidate must submit a "monographic work or equivalent publications" (Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Article 24, Paragraph 1, Item 3). The concept of "monograph" is defined as a scholarly work that does not repeat or summarize existing knowledge, has an ISBN, a scholarly editor, and/or scientific reviewers. It contains a "complete and comprehensive study of a specific subject, problem, or personality" and has a volume of no less than 100 typewritten pages. The two monographs submitted for participation in

the competition meet the specified requirements, and it is natural for them to receive greater attention in the current review. Both monographs have a similar structure and are application-oriented regarding educational practice. They systematically organize a vast amount of information based on numerous authoritative sources, mostly printed in Bulgarian, English, and Russian over recent years, addressing issues in developmental and pedagogical psychology.

Assistant Professor Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva's primary habilitation work is "Lifestyle and Social Interest in Preschool Age" (2023), Stara Zagora: Kota Publishing House (ISBN: 978-954-305-630-7), comprising 142 pages organized into 3 chapters, a preface, bibliography, and appendix. This work possesses several merits that unveil crucial psychological aspects of contemporary education. This is why the mentioned monograph is specifically and thoroughly analyzed. The monograph represents a comprehensive and serious study addressing various important issues in developmental and pedagogical psychology. It is dedicated to the lifestyle and social interest of preschool-age children with diverse ethnic backgrounds.

At the beginning of the reviewed work, various ideas of psychologists contributing to the development of children's psyche are logically presented. Drawing on the perspectives of Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Rudolf Dreikurs, Henri Wallon, John Bowlby, and numerous Bulgarian specialists in the field, Assistant Professor Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva characterizes the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, moral, and communicative aspects of preschool-age children. She identifies important factors and principles influencing their development. A distinctive feature of her position is that she reveals the complexity of the phenomena under investigation and the pluralism in their explanation, rather than opposing different theoretical concepts to each other. The author thoughtfully presents the reasons for her preference for the Adlerian approach to explaining children's behavior. She aligns herself with Alfred Adler's opinion that the social interest of every human being is naturally conditioned, not acquired as a habit. The monograph emphasizes that the sense of community, although innate, may remain underdeveloped in the absence of appropriate upbringing.

The reviewed work analytically and comprehensively presents specific results from the study of social interest in preschool-age children with different ethnic backgrounds – Bulgarian and Roma. This study is connected to another research conducted over three consecutive years (2015, 2016, and 2017) using a combination of methods. Special attention is given to the idea that the family and the kindergarten each play a unique role in the development of lifestyle and social interest in preschool-age children. In her research, Assistant Professor Dr. Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva utilizes a questionnaire she specially created. The

questions in the survey relate to four criteria indicating the presence of social interest: attitude towards others, adherence to established rules, communication, and cooperation. The study was conducted in some of the most populous kindergartens in the Stara Zagora region. In the monograph, the obtained results are thoroughly analyzed, and a general conclusion is drawn that "most of the studied children have an average and high level of social interest." Another important result from the study is that "when comparing the mean values of social interest and its four criteria, there is a statistically significant difference among children from the two studied groups." The conclusion points out that these differences are caused by the specific lifestyle characteristics of the studied children with Bulgarian and Roma ethnic backgrounds. I believe that additional conclusions arising from the conducted research could have been highlighted in the conclusion to enhance its significance.

For her participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in Educational Psychology, Assistant Professor Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva has submitted the monograph "Social Responsibility and Social Interest – Predictors of Teachers' Professional Aptitude" (2023) Stara Zagora: Kota Publishing (ISBN: 978-954-305-653-8), containing 188 pages. It is structured with an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, and bibliography. The monograph provides detailed descriptions of important characteristics of teachers as subjects of pedagogical work and reveals a model of their activity. My recommendation is not to overlook the works of numerous Bulgarian scholars such as Stoyanka Zheleva, Eliana Pencheva, Mihail Mihaylov, Dobrinka Todorina, and others, who contribute to the study of this issue. The monograph is valuable for current and future educators because the specialized psychological knowledge presented is essential in light of the increased societal interest in teachers' personalities and their work. The conducted research possesses numerous qualities and reveals specific knowledge that enriches the issues of educational psychology in Bulgaria.

In her monograph, Assistant Professor Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva shares the results and their interpretation from an original study she conducted to establish the essence and significance of social responsibility and social interest according to current and future educators. The aim of the research is to examine the characteristics of these important traits in contemporary teachers. The study establishes a correlation between the results of participants in the two examined samples. The obtained data allow outlining trends in the manifestations and development of the investigated individuals' indicators. The conclusion is formulated that social responsibility and social interest of current and future teachers are complex mental phenomena that are crucial for their professional realization. They are considered a "meaning-forming professional characteristic

of education professionals" and can be accepted as a "predictor of teachers' social suitability."

The presented works by Assistant Professor Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva for the competition include 8 articles. In these articles, her in-depth knowledge of various aspects of educational and developmental psychology related to the socially-oriented approach to the study of human psychology by Alfred Adler is revealed. These primarily address issues extensively described in her monographic studies, focusing on the social interest of preschool-age children with different ethno-cultural developmental characteristics. The publications regarding the manifestations of social interest, social responsibility, and satisfaction of teachers and students in pedagogical specialties are of interest to specialists. All of them are relevant and significant for educational theory and practice. They carry valuable psycho-pedagogical knowledge and illustrate the excellent professional competencies of their author.

In conclusion, I believe that the candidate for the position of associate professor in developmental and educational psychology, Assistant Professor Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva, possesses significant scientific abilities evident in her comprehensive research and teaching activities. Her creative achievements undeniably showcase her professional competence and her potential to apply academic psychology achievements in the field of educational practice. My overall and unequivocal assessment of her scientific production and teaching activities is positive. I consider her knowledge and skills essential for the development of contemporary theory and practice in educational psychology in Bulgaria. The specified competencies of Assistant Professor Nedelina Zdravkova Koleva demonstrate that she fully meets the legal requirements, established scientific criteria, and the needs of the Department of Pedagogical and Social Sciences at the Faculty of Education of Trakia University in Stara Zagora. This gives me grounds to vote positively for her candidacy. **I propose that the members of the academic jury support my recommendation, and she be awarded the academic position of associate professor in developmental and educational psychology.**

07.12. 2023 г.

Reviewer:

Professor Stoyko Vanchev Ivanov, PhD

