

REVIEW

of the application of Senior Lecturer Nataliya Mladenova Hristova-Peeva, PhD
for the *Associate Professorship Position*
in occupational field 1.3. Pedagogical Sciences (Methodology of Teaching Literature,
Information and Communication Technologies and Digital Media in Education),
job opportunity posted in the *State Gazette*, No. 54, 29 June 2021

by: Prof. Adriana Damyanova, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Chair of the academic selection committee appointed by Ordinance № RD 38 – 366 dated 21 July 2021 of the Rector of Sofia University *St. Kliment Ohridsky*

The only application submitted for the Associate Professorship position in occupational field 1.3. Pedagogical Sciences (Methodology of Teaching Literature. Information and Communication Technologies and Digital Media in Education) by Senior Lecturer Nataliya Mladenova Hristova-Peeva, PhD, fulfils the requirements stipulated in Art. 105, para.1 and Art. 107, para. 1, items 12-14 of the *Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Science Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridsky*.

Teaching Activities of Senior Lecturer Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva, PhD at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridsky

As an Associate Lecturer (2006 – 2009), Lecturer (2009 – 2011), and Senior Lecturer (2011 – to date) in the Methodology of Teaching Department, Faculty of Slavonic Studies, Nataliya Hristova, PhD has demonstrated competence, responsibility and effectiveness in supervising Bulgarian Studies Practicum at all levels: Guided Observation, Trial Lessons, School Practicum. Future teachers recognize Senior Lecturer N. Hristova, PhD as an expert, whose well-balanced judgement they can trust, and a responsive mentor, on whose unconditional support they can rely.

Special attention should be given to the elective courses N. Hristova, PhD, teaches. Compared to Hristova's publications and reports at scientific forums, they show the applicant does not hesitate to approbate her research ideas and hypotheses in an auditorium proto-expert environment, involving students in ongoing scientific research, thus cultivating in them the requisite skills for such activities and enhancing their scientific creativity. The elective courses N. Hristova, PhD, teaches stand out with their original, innovative, topical interdisciplinary design, which proactively supports the diversification of *Methodology of Teaching* as an academic field.

Conference Attendance of Senior Lecturer Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva, PhD

N. Hristova, PhD, started attending and contributing actively to national and international conferences ever since she was a full time PhD student with the Methodology of Teaching Department. From 2004 to 2020, she attended 24 (twenty-four) scientific forums. Comparison

between the conference themes and Hristova's presentations shows a high level of consistency which testifies to a systematic selection approach employed by the candidate. N. Hristova, PhD, participates only in scientific events well aligned with her specific research interests; thus, manages to actively contribute to furthering the discussion. As a research scientist, N. Hristova, PhD, is recognized in the international scientific debate on modern pedagogy, language and literature teaching. This benefits significantly the scientific rigor of the research and teaching activities at the Methodology of Teaching Department.

Publications of Senior Lecturer Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva, PhD

A significant part of Hristova's papers submitted with her application for the Associate Professorship position are post-2014. They reveal the contributor's research efforts are focused unequivocally on digital technologies colluding with neoliberal capitalism to impose the logic of quick turnover, market economy and consumption in all spheres of life. In the sense designated by the research discourse, this post-/transhuman function of digital technologies dominates ever so strongly, which worries Hristova, but also triggers her critical agility and capability to identify problems and offer possible solutions. The researcher's texts elucidate the relation between the "(deep) attention deficit", increasingly more found in students, and the internet, marketing and advertising, hence promoting the "construction of detoxicating and therapeutic uses of ICT in the educational field". Hristova's research uncovers the ruthless expansion of hyperindustrial capitalism in all public spheres, including education, managing to instrumentalize even *human* projects such as literary writing at school. As a result, humanness, humanity and unique subjective consciousness are found to be called into question, in as much as data mining science is out for the obliteration of the space of human critical thought and discourse, whereas schools, unintentionally or not, take part in the realization of this drive by changing their focus from acquiring knowledge to constructing competences. Hristova's articles are in fact among the few in the Bulgarian scientific and education field whose discourse sustains a healthy critical distance from the competence approach, imposed by the new Act on Pre-School and School Education of 2016.

Transhumanism and the Future of Education (in Literature), 2021 is Hristova's latest monograph and her main/habilitation thesis, which the candidate submitted with her application. The book reveals the political and economic pledges invested in the current redefinition of the Enlightenment notion of education as "rising up to humanity through culture" (Herder) by revising and replacing it with the view of education as an instrument for the attainment of economic effectiveness in the horizon delineated by transhumanist educational projects. Such projects include the "improvement" or "enhancement" of cognitive/intellectual, as well as empathetic, imaginative and the like *functions* of children, starting from (pre-)embryonal age using bio-, nano- cognitive and informational technologies, i.e. they envision the creation of a hybrid or artificial intelligence – a post-human machine that would absolve the human being of imperfections, of *imperfectiveness/incompleteness* and would thus prevent the self-destruction of humanity (would it?). Therefore, the convergence of neuromedicine and education is looming in the not that distant educational horizon, condemning school to extinction, and turning teachers into neuro-engineers/neuro-cultivators. Literature turns out to be the first in the educational *surplus* thus

constructed by transhumanism – in its effort to offer fictional/possible completion to the incomplete (in and of itself) human experience, it is rendered meaningless. The above-mentioned *imperfectiveness/incompleteness* immanent to the human being is rewritten by transhumanist discourses as a series of pathologies/diagnoses which is a symptom and a sanctification of the ubiquitous spread of medicine in all spheres of social, political, and economic life, and their consequent medicamentalization. Hristova's habilitation thesis argues that medical care for the *human-capital* – soon to be included in the labour market – in fact masks/*predetermines* (the solution to) the problems of social inequality and of the novel media and technological environment as causes of various educational difficulties, inscribing the genesis of those difficulties in its own scientific field and generously offering bio-/nano-/neuro-/technological remedies. In its closing chapter, *Transhumanism and the Future of Education (in Literature)* substantiates the necessity of delaying the end of human imperfection; in as much as the transhumanist project attempts something such as a *bypass*, circumventing the symbolic/sign sequence (of language) where the becoming-human of a human is situated, behind its ideal realization – the perfect human – is nothing but the perfected ending of a human.

Systematized summary of Senior Lecturer Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva's scientific contributions, as defined by her publications, and particularly, her habilitation thesis:

The political and economic pledges invested in the current redefinition of educational objectives are revealed: from mastering knowledge to mastering competences (in market demand).

Literary education in secondary schools is inscribed in a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary perspective, combining methodology of teaching literature, pedagogy, social and humanitarian sciences, critical research of digital and convergent technologies.

The toxic effects of modern media and the digital environment on school education and children's fragile psychic apparatus are examined; thus, substantiating the need of devising a therapeutic educational approach regarding new media with a really critical, creative, "enlightened" usage of ICT in schools. This aims at forming emancipatory attitudes and practices towards the modern technological environment, as opposed to the prevailing applicationist, consumerist and adaptational logic of their usage.

Emblematic texts, strategic documents and prospective visons of transhumanism are referred to critically; thus, disclosing transhumanism's anti-humanistic essence founded in the strategic convergence, from a bio-political point of view, of education and medicine.

The field of national academic debate on the problems of transhumanism in general, and transhumanist education in particular, is not only expanded, but the dominating and worrisome perspectives of the transhumanist movement are modified with a strong commitment to critical analysis and sceptical judgement from a humanitarian point of view.

The Methodology of Teaching Literature is inscribed in the international academic debate on the future of education, but also on the future of our children and our common world.

Conclusion: Based on the application under discussion which undoubtedly fulfils all criteria set by the *Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Science Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridsky*, and the above-mentioned incontestable scientific contributions of the applicant, I wholeheartedly propose Senior Lecturer Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva, PhD, to be appointed Associate Professor in occupational field 1.3. Pedagogical Sciences (Methodology of Teaching Literature. Information and Communication Technologies and Digital Media in Education).

17 November 2021

Signature:

/Prof. A. Damyanova, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences/