

## REVIEW

by: Associate Professor Olympia Yordanova Vedar, PhD  
Sofia university St. Kliment Ohridski  
Scientific specialty: 3.7. Administration and management

**Regarding:** research papers submitted by Iya Todorova Petkova-Gourbalova, PhD for participation in the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” in professional field 3.7. Administration and management (Management, Organizational behavior, Leadership – in Bulgarian and English), announced in SG, issue 21/13.03.2020

**Grounds for the review:** member of the scientific jury by virtue of Order No. RD 38-195, dated 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020, issued by the Rector of the Sofia university St. Kliment Ohridski

### 1. Brief presentation of the candidate

The candidate meets all the requirements provided by the Development of the academic staff Act, the Regulations for its implementation, the Regulations for the order and the requirements for awarding scientific degrees and academic positions in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, as well as the adopted internal quantitative requirements for academic positions at the Faculty of Economics and Business administration at the Sofia University.

Mrs. Gourbalova, PhD graduated from the Sofia university “St. Kliment Ohridski”: Bachelor’s degree in 2002 – Business administration and MBA in 2003 – Strategic management. In 2013 she was awarded the academic degree of PhD in the scientific field 3.7. Administration and management (Social management) with the “Leadership style of men and women managers in Bulgaria” dissertation paper. She has completed many additional trainings and specializations, the predominant part of which directly related to the topic of this competition.

According to the Certificate submitted by the Department of Human Resources, as of 01.09.2020, Mrs. Gourbalova, PhD has accumulated a total of about 18 years work experience, exactly 10 years of which work experience in the specialty within the University. She started working at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Economics and Business administration, Department of Business Administration on 01.09.2010 as an Assistant Professor. In 2016 she became a Senior Assistant Professor, the position that she currently occupies. She has been conducting seminars in “Organizational Behavior” and “Organizational and Management Models for Quality and Organizational Excellence” (Bachelor's Degree) and in “National and Organizational Cultures” and “Management and Development of Organizational Culture” (Master's Degree). She is currently conducting an independent course (lectures and seminars) in “Leadership in a Multicultural Environment” (Master's Degree). She has developed complete e-courses in the disciplines she teaches. She has been a full-time lecturer.

She has been working actively in various research and teaching projects with the students in the Bachelor’s and Master’s programs, as well as the PhD students at the Department of Business administration. Annually she has also been a supervisor of Master’s theses (an average of nine scientific papers for the last six years) (according to the “Authors” system).

Senior Assistant Professor Iya Gourbalova, PhD has participated in two university (National research fund) and three national projects (“Human Resources Development” Operational Program).

In the last six years she has participated in twelve national and international conferences.

In addition to the academic experience, Iya Gourbalova, PhD has also work experience in the business sector: Citibank - Human Resources expert and Global Transactions Services expert (two years); AFIS Ltd. - Agency for Social and Marketing Research (ten years). Her work as a Head of the Strategic Development, Marketing, Advertising and Production unit at the National Palace of Culture – Congress Center Sofia (2015-2020) should be especially highlighted.

## **2. General description of the submitted papers**

All required documents are attached to the materials regarding the Associate professor competition.

The complete list of publications of the candidate includes 34 titles, of which 30 are submitted for participation in the competition. These publications correspond to the scope and scientific classification of the announced competition and include:

- PhD degree Dissertation paper (from the enclosure list – enclosure 10B/1);
- One monograph (“Leadership – contemporary development trends: The example of Bulgaria” – 10B/2);
- One study (“Contemporary models for describing and research on leadership”, in two parts – 10B/23 и 10B/24);
- Twenty research papers and reports (from 10B/3 to 10B/22), published in non-refereed peer-reviewed scientific journals or in peer-reviewed collective volumes (nine of them are co-authorship);
- Six chapters in collective monographs (one independent authorship – 10B/30 and five in co-authorship – from 10B/25 to 10B/29).

The citation certificate (issued by The National center for information and documentation) shows a total of 11 citations.

## **3. Characteristics of the candidate’s research and applied scientific work**

Although a habilitation paper should begin with a commentary on it, I will focus first on the “Contemporary models for describing and research on leadership” study. In my view, it is indicative of the development of the candidate's scientific research potential and it is a kind of a transition and at the same time a qualitative leap between the PhD dissertation paper and the habilitation monograph.

Taking into account that the contemporary business environment is characterized by strong dynamism, complexity and a high degree of uncertainty, Iya Gourbalova, PhD decides to reconsider the theoretical accumulations and empirical results achieved in the process of preparing the doctoral dissertation and attempts to re-read and understand the already existing theories and shaping the framework of new conceptual models in the field of management and leadership.

The study discusses contemporary models for leadership research. Quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis are commented. The study gives an overview of the models used to study leadership in Bulgaria and outlines a field for current research.

We see the result of this “setting landmarks” in the presented habilitation paper – monograph – “Leadership – contemporary development trends: The example of Bulgaria”. The focus of the analysis in the monograph are two current ideas about leadership – transformational and authentic leadership. The review of theoretical postulates and empirical verification presents the situation in Bulgaria in 2018-2019. The main purpose of the text is to reveal typical

attributes and attitudes of the leaders in Bulgaria to the problems and practice of leadership. Two main questions have been sought: 1) Is transformational the Bulgarian leader (what are the preferred leadership approaches in the context of transactional and transformational leadership)? and 2) Is the Bulgarian manager authentic? The results of the quantitative and qualitative research conducted for the purposes of the analysis are discussed.

The text is interesting and gives us a theoretical (but also very strong practically charged) model of key competences of managers in our country (indicated by the respondents as key competences). The model is presented in the form of a pyramid, the base of which (with the most accumulations in the answers) is built of trust. The next level is dedicated to team building. This is followed by providing and taking care of the work. The fourth level describes the leader who supports ideas and initiatives – generates ideas, seeks, and supports new solutions and ideas, questions the status quo and is not afraid to innovate, constantly upgrades. At the top of the pyramid is personal example, which includes behavioral characteristics based on values.

The content of the presented research papers and published conference reports can definitely be traced to the research and gradual accumulation of knowledge and experience that led to the creation of the monograph, and of course, some of the data and reflections from the research papers and reports are used in it.

It is noteworthy that almost all publications from the last 4-5 years are closely focused on leadership and organizational behavior in their various aspects and dimensions (enclosures 10B/3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15 and 16 – scientific papers and reports, and enclosures 10B/29 and 10B/30 - chapters in a monograph).

I would like to highlight one of the most recent research papers (from 2020) - 10B/3 “E-Leadership: Challenges and Opportunities”, which addresses issues in the context of digitalization and the virtual world in which we live. In the scientific literature, terms with “E-...” are increasingly common and one of them is e-leadership. Information technology creates a new context in which leadership exists, and hence new problems for the leaders. The research paper presents leading research in the field of e-leadership, with special attention paid to building trust in virtual teams. The results of a qualitative research are presented and some main difficulties that the leaders (managers) encounter in their work in the new conditions are summarized. This is valuable knowledge, both for the practice and for the educational process at the University.

The older research papers and conference proceedings reports (10B/14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21) are entirely co-authored. They are grouped around the problems of organizational culture, values, entrepreneurial attitudes, organizational behavior and more. This is fully understandable given the initial stage of professional development of Iya Gourbalova, PhD at that time, respectively – the seminars in these disciplines conducted at that time and (to some extent) the influence of scientific interests of the rest of the team.

From this initial period, I would like to mark an extremely interesting text - 10B/22 “Lobbying – a decision making mean. Lobbying as an instrument in the EU environment” (2008). The research paper is dedicated to the various lobbying practices used in the EU countries, lobbying institutions are presented, it is discussed in which steps of the business decision-making process potential for lobbying practices can be found, etc. Unfortunately, the issues discussed in the paper then somehow left out of Iya Gourbalova’s interests and I did not find further development on this topic.

Finally, I will single out a group of publications that I would structure in the field “Training, learning techniques, methodology” (scientific papers and reports: 10B/4, 10B/6, 10B/8, as well as chapters in a monograph: 10B/25, 26, 27 and 28 - in co-authorship) They demonstrate on one hand the broad framework of the field of scientific interests of Iya

Gourbalova, PhD and on the other – her “teaching attitude” and the ability to “translate” the theoretical construction into the language of the lecture and exercise.

#### **4. Research and applied scientific contributions**

The review of the research papers submitted for the competition by Iya Gourbalova, PhD shows that these are independent studies that meet the scientific standards. The analysis of the publications reveals that the candidate has contributions in major problem areas related to leadership, organizational behavior, and management. The contributions can be considered in two groups: theoretical-methodological and applied scientific:

##### **THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

- Theoretical formulations are systematized and basic concepts in the field of leadership, social management and organizational behavior are derived. Theoretical reviews of models in the field of transformational, transactional and authentic leadership have been developed.
- The main scientific areas and the conducted in their framework scientific researches on leadership in Bulgaria have been systemized.
- A model and analytical tool for studying the leadership styles in the Bulgarian socio-cultural reality has been proven and verified. A model for measuring the authenticity of managers has been partially tested.
- A solid theoretical and empirical corpus has been built, that allows a systematic monitoring of the dynamics of the orientation towards leadership behavior.
- The need for continuing training and development of management staff has been proven, including the role of the teacher and lecturer as a leading role model.

##### **APPLIED SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

- Using the analysis of new data from conducted research, new knowledge was obtained about the perceptions of business leaders in Bulgaria to specific leadership styles. Integrating the views of leaders and followers contributes to creating a holistic organizational context for understanding and interpreting leadership behavior.
- The derived conceptualizations are a tool for knowledge/self-knowledge of managers and employees in business organizations and can serve as a starting point for building and developing successful organizational behavioral strategies, incl. for training of managers and development of leadership competencies.
- The conclusions from the analyzes and the obtained results can be used as a basis for substantiation of new research projects.
- The conclusions of the analyzes can be used by teachers in the field of management and leadership – as up-to-date knowledge, based on which the content can be enriched, and the quality of academic courses can be improved.

#### **5. Critical notes, recommendations, and questions**

Formal remark regarding the grouping of the materials – in the group “Research papers and reports published in non-referred peer-reviewed scientific journals” it would be more appropriate if the “actual” research papers were clearly separated from the reports published in proceedings of scientific conferences.

My only critical remark or rather a recommendation to the candidate is that she should focus on publishing in national and international referred and mainly indexed scientific journals, which would help her to increase the visibility of the achieved scientific results.

## 6. Conclusion

The presented publications of the candidate reveal detailed knowledge of the researched areas, striving for critical reading and own interpretation of various problems. The candidate has done a lot of work to systematize the issues and achievements in the field of leadership, its multicultural aspects, organizational behavior, and cultural aspects in the organizations. Important theoretical models have been specified and significant problems have been discussed. Resources for student training have been created and tested. With the presented publications, the serious scientific and teaching work and with her active practical activity outside the academic environment Iya Gourbalova, PhD shows herself as a dedicated lecturer, mature researcher and a person with experience that can be passed on to the students in the process of training and education.

**All this assures me to recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” to approve the candidacy of Senior Assistant Professor Iya Todorova Petkova-Gourbalova, PhD and she to take the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management.**

Sofia,  
25/08/2020

Reviewer:

Associate Professor Olympia Vedar, PhD