

## OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobrin Hristov Kanev, NBU, Political Science (3.3)

on the scientific works for participation in a 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 no. 21/13 March 2020, p. 90 with candidate Assistant Professor Dr. Iya Petkova-Gurbalova

The only participant in the announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in professional field 3.7. Administration and Management (Management, Organizational Behavior, Leadership - in Bulgarian and English) competition for the academic position of associate professor, who submitted the necessary documents within the announced deadline, is Assistant Professor Dr. Iya Todorova Petkova-Gurbalova.

From the very beginning I would like to confirm that the candidate meets all the requirements for holding the mentioned academic position, set in Art. 29 of the Law for Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. She obtained the scientific and educational degree "PhD" in the same professional field in 2013. She held the academic position of Assistant Professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" from 2016 to the present. She has presented a published monograph and scientific articles and studies, which were published after obtaining the educational and scientific degree "PhD" and do not repeat the dissertation. Her current research output and teaching achievements meet the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor, and some of the indicators show higher results (for example, sections Г, Д, Е). The publications are original and follow the rules of academic ethics.

The **research production** of the candidate, presented for participation in the competition, includes twenty-nine titles. Among them are one monograph, 20 articles (author's and co-authored), two studies and six chapters in collective monographs (most of which are co-authored).

All of them fit into the thematic framework of the competition, focused on management, organizational behavior and leadership.

Here I will draw attention to the fact that these publications of the author, as well as others outside the competition, have entered international scientific life, have been the subject of citations and references. The attached reference (11 citations extracted from renowned databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, etc.) shows that Iya Petkova-Gurbalova is present as an author on the international research scene, which is a consequence of her serious research achievements.

This conclusion is confirmed by the research publications submitted for the competition and subject of this review. In the first place, this applies, of course, to the monograph of Iya Petkova-Gurbalova "Leadership - current trends: the example of Bulgaria", published in the prestigious "St. Kliment Ohridski University Publishing House.

The paper is structured in an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion, including annexes that illustrate the analysis of empirical data. As can be expected, the first chapter sets out and develops the main methodological approaches on which the author steps in order to achieve her research goals. Especially important is the choice of definitions of the basic concepts that the author has chosen. Here we will mention, for example, the perception of leadership as a process in which a person influences a group of people to achieve a certain goal; the decision to consider the direct administrator in the business organization (manager) as a bearer and developer of leadership; the shared idea that leadership is not just a function of personality, but is a relationship between different elements, that includes the presence of followers.

The various types of leadership are clarified here, with an emphasis on those that the author uses for her analysis in the following parts of the monograph - in the center of the second chapter is transformational (and to some extent transactional) leadership, and the third chapter is dedicated to authentic leadership. The advantage of the author is her detailed and in-depth knowledge of practically all significant theories of leadership from their inception to the present day. The deep knowledge of a huge amount of theoretical literature allows her to outline analytically and critically all the basic concepts and models in her field of research.

It is on this reliable scientific basis that the independent solutions of Iya Petkova-Gurbalova are derived and her quantitative and qualitative research is oriented.

The outlined structure of the work (we can mention the conclusion in which the results of the research are summarized, the problem of their applicability is touched upon, but also conclusions are made for opened fields for future research) has provided the basis for solving the main research goal - to reveal typical approaches and attitudes of the leaders in business organizations in Bulgaria to the problems and practice of leadership, to determine their preferred leadership styles. The questions to which the author seeks answers are formulated by her as follows: 1) Is the leader in Bulgaria transforming (what are the preferred leadership approaches in the context of transactional and transformational leadership)? 2) Is the Bulgarian manager authentic? (p. 37)

To find her answers, the author conducted a quantitative and qualitative study. The quantitative survey was conducted in the form of an anonymous survey (an online questionnaire), and 348 questionnaires

were processed through various statistical methods of analysis. The qualitative research, which aims to verify the results of the quantitative research and enrich the analysis, is in the form of an in-depth interview with 20 respondents. In both cases, the respondents are current managers in four sectors: services, manufacturing, trade, central and local administration.

The author is aware that there are a number of limitations in the study, arising from the inability to take into account all the specifics of the respondents, the difficulty of achieving preferred balances due to voluntary participation in the study, and to achieve greater representation due to the online nature of the research. Potential problems also arise from the fact that respondents are self-assessing themselves, which carries the risk of data distortion. She correctly set them out in the text (pp. 37-38).

Without commenting in the short opinion on the specific conclusions reached by the author, we can state that in view of the precision of the applied analytical tools they are sufficiently reliable and valid within the framework set by Petkova-Gurbalova.

This means that we can agree with the self-assessment of the scientific and applied contributions of the monograph - the successful testing in Bulgarian reality of existing models of leadership research; building a solid theoretical and empirical basis for monitoring leadership behavior; acquirement of new knowledge regarding the orientation of business leaders in Bulgaria to specific leadership styles; confirmation or correction of developed theoretical schemes and interpretations of leadership and leadership behavior; the study is a possible starting point for building and developing successful organizational behavioral strategies, incl. for training of managers and development of leadership competencies.

Additional support for these conclusions can be found in the other publications that the candidate has submitted for participation in the competition and which also show the handwriting of a serious and erudite scientist. They show a wider range of research interests and results of the author, including issues related to leadership and management such as the role of culture and values in this regard, issues of lobbying and others. Some of these publications are published abroad in English, which is also a certain certificate of their quality.

Iya Petkova-Gurbalova proves her significant academic capacity with her work in a number of research projects. In the period 2012-2015 she participated in five research projects on important topics for Bulgarian education and economic life - application of distance e-learning at the university; a mechanism for adapting curricula to the needs of labor markets; entrepreneurship education at universities and etc. Some of them are funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Research Fund.

Turning to the evaluation of the **teaching activities** of the candidate, we will note that she began her teaching career in 2010, when she became an Assistant at the Department of Business Administration. After the successful defense of her PhD dissertation (2013), from 2016 until now, she is a Assistant Professor at the same department of the Faculty of Economics at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

As the attached official reports for the last six academic years show, her workload (classroom and extracurricular) is really significant, especially considering her other commitments in recent years. She assists in two courses of the Bachelor's program in Business Administration and one course in the Master's program in Business Administration, where she is the titular holder of the course "Management and Development of Organizational Culture".

Her teaching activity is characterized by the use of modern teaching methods (group-dynamic trainings, virtual training modules and digitization of theoretical material) and the realization of a close link between education and business, as well as education and state and local government (leaders in leading companies of the Bulgarian economy as visiting lecturers, activities of students in a practical environment, meetings with leading politicians).

Iya Petkova-Gurbalova works successfully with PhD fellows and students. Her work with graduates is intensive, and for the period 2014-2019 she provides supervision to 54 graduates. Her engagements with PhD students include a joint research report at an international conference and publication with PhD student Ivona Litsova, as well as the support of PhD student Leona Aslanova in implementing the Academy for Innovation initiative in five editions.

Based on all the above, I come to the conclusion that the candidacy of Assistant Professor Dr. Iya Petkova-Gurbalova meets all the requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor. I mean the quantity and quality of her scientific output; her participation in research projects; her successful teaching activity at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"; her ability to work with graduates and PhD students.

This gives me every reason to fully support the candidacy of Assistant Professor Dr. Iya Petkova-Gurbalova for Associate Professor in the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management.

Sofia, August 2, 2020

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