

OPINION

for election of an associate professor in a professional field: 1. 2 Pedagogy (Social pedagogy), announced for the needs of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"

Reviewer: Prof. Klavdiya Sapundjieva, Sofia University

Only one candidate participates in the competition - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maya Lyubenova Cholakova. The second candidate - Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov withdrew from the competition and withdrew his documents with application № 93-K-68 / 23.05.2022. The competition was announced in SG, no. 21 / 15.03.2022. There are no violations in the procedure, and the presented set of documents is in accordance with the Regulations for development of the academic staff of Sofia University. The candidate meets the national requirements for participation in the competition.

1. Biographical data and teaching status:

Maya Cholakova was born in 1966. She graduated in Special Pedagogy with a specialization in Pedagogy for Children with Mental Retardation at SWU Neofit Rilski - Blagoevgrad. Her professional path is related to the academic, social and pedagogical spheres, as follows: school educator, senior assistant at SWU "Blagoevgrad"; inspector for international agreements and programs at Sofia University, Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education; Director of the Directorate for Ethnic and Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministers and Associate Professor since 2009 at SWU - Blagoevgrad. Maya Cholakova has been a PhD student at the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Work at

the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education/ Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts and has been a Doctor of Pedagogy since 2004. Her teaching activities are in the field of competition and cover the main fields of social pedagogy and social work.

The competition is provided with the necessary hours in the announced scientific field, and the professional characteristics present the candidate as a distinguished lecturer with author's lecture courses and a specialist with proven scientific development. Proof of this is the diverse educational, qualification, organizational and practical activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maya Cholakova as a trainer, member of various organizations, translator. She has made dozens of appearances in international scientific forums and participated in projects. For the period January - April 2019 she was a Fulbright specialist at the School of Social Work at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, USA on social work and supporting professions. He is the supervisor of dozens of graduates and five doctoral students, including two foreign and two already successfully defended.

2. Scientific creativity:

Maya Cholakova is the author of a total of 49 publications from various scientific genres. She participated in the competition with 17 publications - habilitation thesis (monograph), articles and reports, studies and publications in collective monographs / collections with independent authorship.

The main habilitation work presents Maya Cholakova as an author with an original research orientation and multifaceted training and culture. In particular, he presents a comprehensive and multi-layered picture of the views on humility and its practical interpretation, which should be "implanted" in the numerous and diverse (multi) cultural variations of the helping activity. In this sense, the book makes a significant contribution to stimulating intercultural dialogue and

outlining new fields in the theoretical arsenal of social sciences, as well as the practical training of students focused on helping professions, especially social workers and social educators. The book has two main research and interpretive focuses. The first presents the overall picture of the idea and development of the understanding of cultural humility in historical and contemporary contexts (chapters one and two). Cultural humility is presented as the core of the religious and as views and practical manifestations, attested in the research insights of philosophy and psychology. The second focus presents the practical application of cultural humility (third chapter). This part shows not only the research capabilities of the candidate, but also the authentic scientific contact with the problem, as the empirical analysis is based on the author's experience as a specialist in the United States.

I am particularly biased towards the text related to the intercultural perspectives in the Bulgarian educational context and the projections of the research idea in teaching and assisting practice, because these are analyzes and data that have long been awaited in the field of social activities and especially socio-pedagogical science. and its fields of application. With the content analysis of the educational documentation in our country - curricula in both educational degrees - Bachelor and Master in Social Pedagogy and Social Activities, a detailed picture of the state of the problem in Bulgaria is outlined, with achievements (mostly as a job with ethnic groups and communities) and promising niches - with the understanding and formalization of the necessary educational opportunities in this regard. The author's conclusion about the need for education in cultural humility has a wide charge for future perspectives in the social sphere and especially in socio-pedagogical theory and practice. The topic of humility in different contexts and in front of different academic audiences is presented in other publications - № 3,7, 12 and others.

The other publications cover the fields of social work and socio-pedagogical intervention and assistance with different groups and on different issues. They

present the candidate as a competent researcher, analyst and implementer of the various dimensions and areas of social pedagogy:

- The problems of empowerment in social and socio-pedagogical work related to the concept and philosophical and pedagogical idea of Paulo Freire, which provide specific guidelines for understanding social and socio-pedagogical work, as well as to improve the relationship specialist - client in the direction of stimulating self-esteem. , of one's own expertise and the pursuit of dialogue (№ 7, 14, 17, etc.).
- Areas and focuses of social and socio-pedagogical work: family-oriented approach, work with parents, work with people from ethnic minority communities, work and support for people with disabilities (№ 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, etc.).
- The problems of autonomy and self-determination in social work, the different aspects and understandings of social work and the application of the integrated approach to users of social and health services, as well as some modern problems of practice related to distance learning through analysis of master's programs in social work (№ 4, 5, 15, 16, etc.).

The publications are on the topic of the competition. References are correct and accurate. The positive fact is that the candidate has published in international publications and in collections with international participation. The overall summary of the achievements of the candidate for associate professor is reflected in the contributions that are reliable and correct. A list with a sufficient number of citations, corresponding to the required indicators, is also presented.

3. Critical remarks and recommendations

It would be good and useful for a future even broader academic presentation of the research work - as specific, adapted for the Bulgarian case recommendations

/ handbook for the training of social pedagogues, social workers and other helping professions related to empathy, self-esteem, self-expertise, etc. .

4. Summary:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maya Cholakova is a researcher who proves her lasting interests in the field of theory and practice of social pedagogy and social work and has a resource for future active research. The main contribution achievements of the candidate are the following:

- Theoretical understanding and conceptualization of social pedagogy and social work through the ideas of humility, empowerment, personal autonomy, values and ethical dimensions, which enriches their theoretical framework and indicates prospects for their scientific enrichment and development.
- The perspectives of various leading theoretical concepts are proved empirically and their practical possibilities in socio-pedagogical work are presented - integrated approach, work with families of children at risk and people with disabilities, dynamic assessment by measuring the learning potential of children from ethnic minorities, etc.
- Perceptions and attitudes towards empowerment in the context of social services are studied and various contemporary good practices in social work are studied, which enriches the arsenal of approaches and tools to address the challenges facing social workers and social educators.

In general, Maya Cholakova's publications reveal opportunities for future research work to supplement some promising niches in social pedagogy - working with minority communities, forming and preparing students for value and moral suitability for the profession, forming self-esteem and self-expertise at the client, etc. n.

Conclusion: Based on the mentioned scientific achievements, the position of the candidate among the academic community, his overall teaching activity, as well as my personal impressions, I give my *positive assessment* and propose Maya Lyubanova Cholakova to be elected to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at Sofia University: 1.2 Pedagogy (Social pedagogy).

15. 06. 2022

Author of the opinion:

(prof. Klavdia Sapundjieva)