

OPINION

for a competition procedure for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 1.2. Pedagogy (Social Pedagogy), announced in SG 21 of 15.05.2022 for the needs of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts, Protocol 7/19.4.2022.

A candidacy has been submitted for the competition, namely that of Assoc. Prof. Maya Lyubenova Cholakova. The candidate is associate professor in the Department of Medical and Social Sciences at the Faculty of Public Health, Health Care and Sport of Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski". After a procedure for checking eligibility, by decision of the respective faculty committee, she was admitted to participate to the competition.

1. Data analyzed in relation to compliance of the application with the minimum and additional requirements for the appointment to the academic position "Associate Professor".

The candidate, Assoc. Prof. Maya Lyubenova Cholakova, has submitted the necessary documents certifying compliance of her application with the requirements of the Law on Scientific Degrees and Titles, as well as with the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding scientific positions at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski".

The review of the submitted documents for compliance with the minimal science indicators for research, teaching and expert work shows the following distribution:

Group of indicators A:	50 p. (Required 50)
Group of indicators B:	100 p. (Required 100)
Group of indicators D:	155 p. (Required 200)
Group of indicators G:	75 p. (Required 50)
Group of indicators E:	145 p. (Required 100)
<i>Total:</i>	525 p. (Required 500)

This quantitative data differs in part from the data, calculated by the candidate herself, since in this case the publications which, in our judgment, do not correspond to the profile of the competition have been excluded from the list with reviewed publications.

With regard to implementation of *the indicators of Group A* (100 p.), Assoc. Prof. Cholakova has acquired the scientific degree "Doctor" in 2004 in scientific direction 05.07.01 Theory of Education and Didactics (Socio-Pedagogical Dimensions of The Potential of Learning in Children From Ethnic Minority Communities).

With regard to performance of *the indicators from Group B* (100 p.), Assoc. Prof. Cholakova has presented a habilitation work entitled "Cultural *Humility*", ISBN 978-954-07-5430-7.

With regard to *the indicators in Group D* (155 p.) for its participation in this competition, Assoc. Prof. Cholakova has presented a list and summaries of 17 (out of 49) publications, including:

- a monograph,
- a published book based on dissertation thesis,
- four articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information,
- nine articles and reports published in unreferenced journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes,
- two studies published in unreferenced scientific review journals or in edited collective volumes.

The thematic distribution of publications is as follows:

<i>Thematic and problematic fields</i>	<i>Publications numbers:</i>
“Cultural Humility” and its interpretations and applications in social work / social pedagogy.	1, 3, 7, 12
Research on learning potential and learning approaches for children and persons with disabilities and minority communities	2, 4
Social work and social inclusion	5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16
Empowerment in social work	13, 14, 17

Of direct relevance to the current competition for the position of Associate Professor in heading 1.2. Pedagogy (Social Pedagogy) are 6 of the 17 publications, which have been submitted for review and evaluation. One of the relevant fields is related to the latest studies of the candidate of “cultural humility” and its dimensions, interpretations and applications in social work / social pedagogy (# 1, 3, 7, 12). The other two publications concern the study

of learning potential in children from minority communities (# 2, 2004) and the implementation of evidence-based practices in distance learning in the 21st century (# 4, 2020). At the same time, a 2017 publication dedicated to the discussion on social pedagogy in the UK has remained out of the list, along with an article on the ethno-cultural aspects of 2004 training.

The analysis shows that most of the publications presented in the competition concern social work and its scientific and practical dimensions. Specific attention is paid to the family-oriented social work (# 6, 8, 10), the social work with people from ethnic communities (# 13), the integrated approach in social work (# 5, 15), the social inclusion (# 9) and the support for people with disabilities (No8, 11) and empowerment in social work (# 8, 13, 14).

In general, the reviewed publications addressing *indicators in Group D* in accordance with the minimum scientific indicators amount to a total of 155 p. (out of required minimum of 200p.):

- one work published based on dissertation thesis – 75 p.
- two articles in referenced and indexed editions – 60 p.
- two articles in unrefereed scientific publications or collections – 20 p.

In short, the candidate has submitted a limited volume of publications which correspond to the contest announced.

As regards the minimum requirements for *Group G*, a list of nine noted quotations is submitted referring to quotations of the publications included in the competition. Three of them refer to quotations of publications in non-referenced and non-indexed publications not covered by the competition (Nos 1 and 2). Therefore, the total number of points regarding the minimum scientific citation indicators **is seventy-five points (out of a required minimum of 50)**.

Regarding the **group of indicators E** (120 p.), the candidate has submitted documents and evidence for scientific mentorship of two successfully defended PhD students, management and participation in numerous international and national projects.

In summary, the total number of points evaluating the compliance of the minimum requirements for the competition is slightly higher than the required minimum of 500 points.

One of the indicators is slightly under implemented in view of the narrowed scope and partially inappropriate selection of the publications submitted in the competition, covering 17 out of 49.

2. Data on professional development, academic and expert activities of the applicant which are not directly covered by the minimum and additional requirements for appointment to the academic position "Associate Professor".

The submitted data on the professional development of the candidate show that Maya Cholakova performs active teaching, expert, project and public activity.

- She is engaged in a variety of teaching work, which also covers lecture courses in social pedagogy in a bachelor's degree of special education.
- She has extensive administrative experience, accumulated during her work as Director of the Ethnic and Demographic Affairs Directorate of the Council of Ministers in the period 2005-2009, as well as through her work as inspector on international treaties and programs at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" (1999-2006);
- Her teaching experience covers both working as an educator in socio-pedagogical institutions (1988-1992) and as a university lecturer (1988-1992; 2009);
- She is member of the Management Board of the Bulgarian Association of Social Work;
- She is also a member of the Academic Council on Refugees at UNHCR – Bulgaria;
- She is a member of the Management Board of the "Zone Family".

Maya Cholakova's report on teaching employment shows that in recent years she has had a full workload. Regrettably, it is not clear from the report how much of this workload is related to the field of pedagogy (in particular social pedagogy).

Therefore, the candidate has a variety of practical and professional experiences in the field of socio-pedagogical work and its integration into social activities and practices. All this is a favorable prerequisite for her application.

Assessment of the quality of the applicant's scientific input and scientific contributions

On the basis of the secondary evaluation of the publications included in the competition, the following six publications were identified for review:

- A. Cholakova, M. (2022). *Cultural humility*. Sofia: St. Constantine and Helena High School ISBN 978-954-07-5430-7;
- B. Cholakova, M. (2004). *Learning potential for children from minority communities*. Sofia: St. Constantine and Helena High School ISBN 954-07-1941-0;
- C. Cholakova, M. (2022). Interpretations of humility in a pedagogical context. *Pedagogy*, 94(3), 306-317), <https://doi.org/10.53656/ped2022-3.02>, ref. Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation
- D. Georgieva, D., Cholakova, M. (2020). Evidence-based practice and distance learning in the 21st century – new perspectives. *Educational and scientific policy strategies*, 28(4), 379-391, COBISS. BG-ID –41721608, Ref. Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation Index; The Philosopher's Index; ERIH eLibrary.ru; CEEOL; EbscoHost; Google Scholar; Ex Libris; ProQuest; Sociological Abstracts; Social Services Abstracts; Worldwide Political Science;
- E. Cholakova, M. (2021). Cultural humility in social work. In a *collection of reports from the Jubilee Scientific Conference of the Faculty of Pedagogy of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"*;
- F. Cholakova, M. (2018). Beyond cultural competence: the American concept of cultural humility in the field of helping. *Clinical and Advisory Psychology*, 1(35), 15-26.

One thematic group of publications (A, C, E and F) relates to cultural humility and its implementation in social, educational and socio-pedagogical work as a relatively new paradigm of support for personal development. The other two publications (B and D) could not be seen as a single group as they address different thematic areas. One is related to exploring the learning potential of children from minority communities, and the other is focused on evidence-based practices in 21st-century distance education.

The most *serious* theoretical contributions of the candidate should be related precisely to the broadly developed theme of cultural humility. Her achievements in this sense correspond to two of the theoretical contributions that Maya Cholakova has highlighted, in particular:

- An impressive multidisciplinary overview and analysis of classical and contemporary interpretations of humility has been made as a new value paradigm in the field of pedagogical, humanities and social sciences.
- The conceptual and scientific framework of value-oriented social and socio-pedagogical approaches and practices in the Bulgarian specialized discourse of social work and social pedagogy has been enriched.

As regards the *candidate's scope research contributions* in the field of this competition, here her contributions, which are identified in peer-reviewed publications, relate mainly to:

- The in-depth study of dynamic assessment capabilities as an approach and tool for analyzing diagnostic practice with regard to learning potential in children from ethnic minorities;
- Partial approbation of a methodology for measuring the learning potential of children from ethnic minorities aged 6 - 8;
- The study and analysis of good evidence-based practices in distance learning, through which future social workers and educators prepare to address the challenges of dynamic factors and circumstances.

These scientific and empirical achievements in clarifying, analyzing and adapting cultural humility in a Bulgarian context are designed in clear and convincing practical and applied contributions, among which should be highlighted:

- The boundaries and tools of the applicability of the American concept of cultural humility in the current social and socio-pedagogical practices in Bulgaria are outlined incl. and in the preparation of future social workers and social educators.
- A toolkit has been developed to diagnose the learning potential of children from ethnic minorities.

As regards the other contributions which the applicant self-identifies as significant achievements, I don't identify them as relevant to the present competition, since the analyses and perspectives involved blur the boundaries between science, philosophies, and practices. E.g. the literal "transfer" of the value discourse of Frayer's "pedagogy of the oppressed" in social work is not convincing precisely because of the lack of clear structural, meaningful

and procedural boundaries and parallels between them. This prevents her from reaching the level of multi-disciplinarity to the holistic ness of the interdisciplinary vision.

In summary, at this stage Assis. Prof. Maya Cholakova has established her as a researcher with a strong interest in identifying and analyzing the multifaceted nature and dimensions of social and socio-pedagogical issues. Its contribution to the promotion and deep multidisciplinary study of cultural humility is unique to Bulgaria, although still poorly recognizable in its chosen concept and applied discourse.

In view of the extremely broad theoretical and applied dimensions of social pedagogy and as a university discipline and specialty, I would recommend to the candidate in the future to balance more broadly and adequately with a view to conditions in Bulgaria her research interests to the most common and well-established value-conceptual paradigms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, despite the limited possibilities for a more comprehensive assessment of the scientific activity and contribution of the candidate due to the limited number of publications presented in the competition, taking into account the overall implementation of the minimum science indicators under this competition, as well as the rich professional experience of the candidate and her public engagement in the field of social work and social pedagogy, I give a positive assessment of her candidacy and wish her success.

20.05.2022

Reviewer:

Sofia

Prof. Silvia Nikolaeva Nikolova