

REVIEW

according to the announcements in the State Gazette, issue 21 / 22.03.2022 competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Social pedagogy)

for the needs of FNOI, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

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Presentation of the competition:

The competition was announced for the needs of FNOI, Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Affairs and its announcement is in accordance with all legal requirements. The position envisages a study load in the field of the basics and methodology of social pedagogy and social work, as well as in specific fields of social and socio-pedagogical work with different groups of people in need.

The only candidate in the competition is Dr. Maya Lyubenova Cholakova, associate professor at SWU "N. Rilski". The documents submitted by the candidate for participation in the competition also meet all formal requirements.

Presentation of the candidate:

According to information from the submitted documents, the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maya Lyubenova Cholakova has a consistent professional career and professional development, starting with higher education in special pedagogy, followed by direct socio-pedagogical work with children with special needs and academic teaching as an assistant at SWU "N. Rilski", in the same field, and it is probably not by chance that they have "shifted" entirely to the field of social pedagogy and social work in the last more than fifteen years, both in terms of research and academia, as well as professionally. I draw this conclusion on the basis of the topics of the doctoral dissertation, defended in 2004. "Socio-pedagogical dimensions of learning potential for children from ethnic and minority communities", work and as director of the "Ethnic and Demographic Issues" in the Council of Ministers in period 2004-2009, as well as the issues of the courses she leads as an associate professor of "Theory of Education and Didactics" at SWU "N. Rilski", №25610 of the Higher Attestation Commission of 27.05.2009 in bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs in the professional field 3.4. Social activities. I definitely consider the connection between scientific, academic, on the one hand and on the other hand, practical professional activity as deepening and giving meaning to both sides. In this sense, I would also like to emphasize in connection with the competition, the sufficiently long professional experience as a teacher, as an associate professor in a completely relevant to the competition issues.

The candidate is a coordinator and participant in a number of international and national projects in the field of social work. She is a member of the Academic Council for Refugees, the Association for Social Work Education.

Scientific activity, publications, citations.

The candidate presents a total of 49 publications, of which 17 specifically for the competition, of which:

- one habilitation thesis, monograph;
- one book published on the basis of a dissertation;

- four articles in peer-reviewed journals, three of which are co-authored, two of the four articles are in English and have been published in international journals;
- nine articles in non-peer-reviewed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited volumes, five of which are independent and two in English;
- two studies in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited volumes.

It is very important to note that of all the publications submitted for participation in the competition, only one is the period before 2009, when she acquired the title of "Associate Professor" at SWU and this is the publication developed on the basis of dissertation research to acquire scientific and educational degree "Doctor" Theory of upbringing and didactics ("Socio-pedagogical dimensions of the learning potential of children from ethnic-minority communities") / Level 8 SNA in pedagogy at the Higher Attestation Commission (No. 29165 / 28.06.2004). All other publications are from the period 2016-2022.

The thematically presented for the competition publications can be grouped according to their nature into theoretical / conceptual, practical and applied and aimed at the training and education of social workers.

Publications dedicated to fundamental, conceptual issues of social work and social pedagogy.

First of all, I would like to say that I find very interesting, inspiring and useful the relationship between the different groups of publications of Maya Cholakova, and above all the apparent predominance of theoretical, oriented to the essence, principles and values of social work, to clarify basic concepts in the presented research and publications. This group includes mainly publications on the topics of humility and its connection with social work, the presentation and analysis of the concepts of empowerment, fundamental to modern social work, as well as the concepts of social exclusion, autonomy and self-determination, ethical standards, etc. (1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12,13,14, 16)¹ Systematically and consistently the author examines both the dimensions of the content of these concepts and the relationship between humility, oppression and empowerment in social work, and their projections in personal autonomy and self-determination.

Of particular interest is the analysis of humility in the monograph "Cultural Humility", which is listed as a habilitation thesis in the competition, where the concept of humility is considered through the eyes of religion, sociology and psychology as virtue, quality, attitude, attitude and social work and helping professions as another angle of acceptance of the other and of oneself, of non-judgment, goodwill, respect. The presentation and analysis is done successfully through the support of publications in English, American and other foreign authors, as well as Bulgarian authors. Cultural humility is analyzed in the context of cultural and multicultural competence, multiculturalism in general, the attitude towards the person seeking help, the practice of respect and return of power to his life in his hands, and understanding of possible oppressive, or the language I use - a harassing function of institutions, including social services.

¹ The numbering in brackets corresponds to the numbering in the publication list for the competition submitted by the candidate.

At the same time, in the context of accepting the impossible multicultural competence as knowledge of a rural culture, understanding humility, understood as acceptance and respect for others, and as self-reflection on one's own human and professional capabilities and limitations, puts another dynamic on the framework of professional relationship in helping, which is process-oriented, flexible and more relevant to reality. Accepting the other, accepting his cultural identity, often means not knowing his culture, but rather realizing and accepting the difference and trying to understand how he lives in that difference. I believe that the references to the education of social workers and social pedagogues in our country, which result and projection of the content of the book, have and could have significant usefulness. The monograph dedicated to the topic is a mature work that stimulates reflection and questions of readers.

Empowerment in social work, in addition to being a theory and process, as defined by the author, is also a principle of social work that affects all its essential and process aspects. The topic is considered in the context of concepts such as power, discrimination, oppression, social exclusion, which refers to a rather macro framework, but at the same time reveals an attitude to clinical work, both in terms of professional characteristics and in methodological terms mainly through advocacy interventions. I would say that the morally normative traditional pedagogical attitude and interpretation on the topic of power has been successfully avoided, which has a serious contribution to the active and passive abuse and neglect of people at risk, at all ages, from babies in homes and nurseries, through children in kindergartens, gardens, schools, to the elderly.

Publications on current issues of the practice of social work and socio-pedagogical work (5, 6, 8,10, 11,13,14,15,16).

These publications are dedicated to topics such as the integrated services, the integrated approach, the family-oriented approach, which are very relevant for the development of social services in our country and need scientific and scientific-applied interpretation. Most of them are based on empirical research, including as part of the scientific guidance of doctoral students. An article on a vision for integrated social services has been published in the International Journal of Social Work, one of the leaders in this field. These publications seek and offer answers to science and research, to questions posed by practice, which in itself is valuable for both science and practice.

Publications related to training and education in social work (1, 4, 14)

When presenting publications and research on this topic, it is necessary to note the good start of Assoc. Prof. Cholakova through her doctoral dissertation and the monograph "Potential for learning in minority communities" published on the basis of this study. The topic is multi-layered, in-depth, theoretical research explores both ideological, terminological conceptual issues and methodological aspects of diagnosing the potential of learning and naturally determines the framework of empirical research. Empirical research, in my opinion, successfully goes beyond the invasion of surveys in doctoral dissertations, making a qualitative analysis of diagnostic documentation, as well as testing a tool for diagnosing learning potential. In the article "Practice based on evidence and distance learning in the 21st century", which analyzes the definition of good practices, among the set of concepts such as reflective, collaborative, knowledge-based, etc. practices, which analysis is based on content analysis of 165 sources published in different countries and from different countries.

In summary, in her publications, the author demonstrates research, research and analysis of a serious set of publications, mostly American, and mainly in English, which allows her to delve into each of the concepts, as well as to present a view to him from a different social or scientific angle. I believe that these publications are of interest to any scientist or specialist in the helping professions, and also that they are a good basis for meaningful teaching.

It is important to point out, in my opinion, the candidate's commitment to quality methods and especially that of content analysis of various written sources, such as professional documents, publications on a particular topic, which is used in almost all her research and publications (1,2, 3, 4, 7), which definitely brings more meaning and knowledge.

Citation

From the presented reference, as well as from the documents accompanying it, it can be seen that of the 10 citations included in the competition reference, 3 are in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information, two of them in international publications; one citation is in published in edited collective volumes, and four citations in unreferred journals with scientific peer-review, three of which are by foreign authors in international journals.

The citations cover publications that are entirely on the topic of the competition.

Teaching activity

As an associate professor of "Theory of Education and Didactics, at SWU" N. Rilski ", Maya Cholakova leads courses in the bachelor's program in Social Activities in Social Pedagogy, Social Work with Children, Social Work with Ethno-Cultural Communities, Anti-Opressive Social Work; Social work with refugees and migrants, etc.), as well as lecture courses in master's programs: Methodology and methods of research in social work; Social integration of ethnocultural communities; Mediation in conflict resolution and Lecture course in the doctoral program "Organization and management of social activities" in Methodology and methodology of research in social activities. As can be seen, this teaching activity is completely relevant in terms of content of the announced competition.

The presented documents show that Assoc. Prof. Cholakova conducts courses in English, both in universities in the country, including Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", but also abroad, which would definitely contribute to the development of academic exchange of teachers and students majoring in Social Pedagogy with other universities and institutes in Europe and the world.

Maya Cholakova is a scientific supervisor of students' dissertations, she has a scientific supervisor of two successfully defended doctoral students and one who is in the process of defense.

Proficiency in English allows her to participate in a number of international projects, conferences, forums and research on one of the leading topics in her research in the United States, at the School of Social Work at the University of Central Florida, Orlando, thanks to a Fulbright scholarship in 2019 In 2012, as part of an EU Erasmus project, he lectured at the

University of Stockholm. He has more than ten participations with reports at international and national scientific conferences since 2009, and there are significantly more in total.

General remarks and recommendations for scientific production

I would recommend the interest in the conceptualization of social work and socio-pedagogical work, which I appreciate, to develop and move from a rather psycho-social, sociological, socio-political aspects to the coverage of national research related to the conceptual connection between social work and social pedagogy, which is present as a topic in more and more European studies and publications and could contribute to its understanding and application in our country, both in higher education and in the practice of helping.

I understand and support the desire to use all opportunities, various conferences, types of publications, etc. to disseminate a study on a specific, already published topic, however, I would recommend that it be accompanied by nuances, depending on the specifics of readers of the forum, as well as with a more visible expansion of the scope or subject of research, with innovations and differences that enrich, develop and deepen it.

I also think that it would be useful and entirely within the candidate's ability to continue to focus on psycho-pedagogical research, answering questions about how, with what, etc., and I definitely think that methodological topics, developed in a modern, rich conceptual framework, as Maya Cholakova demonstrates, would be extremely useful both for teaching in basic courses and for the practice, which is poor precisely because of this scientific presence.

From the point of view of a more critical analysis of the scientific content of the presented scientific production, I believe that it will win if the presentation of different ideas and opinions includes even more author's analysis, own theoretical reading of ideas and research results.

In this context, I have a question for the candidate - What does she see if she sees the specifics in the training and implementation of social pedagogues, compared to the preparation and implementation of students in the specialty "Social Activities"?

In summary, I can say that the data from the reference under Art. 2b of Law on the development of the academic composition in the republic of Bulgaria, presented in the documents for the competition show that the candidate meets the minimum requirements for holding the position of associate professor, and in some of the indicators the coverage exceeds the required minimum.

Scientific contributions

I fully accept the outlined contribution moments in the publications presented by Assoc. Prof. Cholakova, which are formulated in a very modest and in my opinion extremely correct way.

At the theoretical level and research level

To them I would add a common contribution to the development and deepening of the foundations of social work and socio-pedagogical activities in our country.

Next, I would like to emphasize again the use of qualitative methods such as analysis of the content of publications, analysis of the content of professional documentation, which allow to outline in more detail the semantic layers of the studied phenomena. approach to the provision of social services, attitudes to empower people in social service professionals, the analysis of approaches to assess good practices in social work.

At the practical level

I would like to point out the successful design of all her theoretical studies for their application in the training of specialists. Here we can highlight the ideas of humility and its projections in the education of students, the recommendations for standardization of distance and hybrid learning, for learning the basic principles and values.

The contribution of the study of power attitudes and attitudes to empowerment of workers in social services should definitely be emphasized, which opens new perspectives for research focused on the preparation of students in helping professions and the practice of social and socio-pedagogical work in the different types of social services provided in our country.

Conclusion: The candidacy of Maya Lyubanova Cholakova corresponds to the scientometric criteria and indicators for holding the position of associate professor, as well as to all the requirements of Law on the development of the academic composition in the republic of Bulgaria.

Considering the scientific production of Maya Lyubanova Cholakova, its thematic scope and content, her scientific contribution and contribution to the conceptualization of social and socio-pedagogical practice both directly and by improving the training of future assistants, having in mind her professional experience in teaching courses, fully related to the academic issues of the announced competition,

I strongly recommend the members of the esteemed jury to vote "for" the election of Maya Lyubanova Cholakova to the position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Social pedagogy) for the needs of FNOI, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

June 18, 2022.

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