

ATTITUDE OF REVIEWER

from

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on

on the competition announced in the State Gazette, issue. 54 of 29.06.2021,

for the academic position of „**Docent**“

at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

in the field of higher education 3. “Pedagogical Sciences”,

professional field 1.3. "Pedagogy of teaching in...

(Methodology of teaching literature. Information and communication technologies in teaching and working in a digital environment)”

1. Information about the procedure

I hereby submit this opinion as an internal member of the Scientific Jury for the academic position of "Docent" on the basis of: the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for the Application of ADASRB, Order of the Director of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” RD 38-366/21.07.2021 and Decisions from the first meeting of the academic jury held on September 17th, 2021.

One candidate participates in the competition for the academic position “Docent” in the professional field 1.3. 1.3. "Pedagogy of teaching in... (Methodology of teaching literature. Information and communication technologies in teaching and working in a digital environment)”: Chief Assistant Professor Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva, PhD. The documents have been submitted on time and comply with the requirements of the ADASRB. At the first meeting of the scientific jury, held in attendance on 17.09.2021 at 15.30 in room 137 of the Rectorate, it was decided to prepare an opinion for evaluation of the presented by Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva publications.

This opinion is based on the materials provided by the author, namely: publications, including 1 monograph, 15 articles and reports, of which 14 in Bulgarian and 1 in French; autobiography; higher education diploma; doctor's degree; 2 pcs. certificates for holding an academic position; list of all publications; scientific contributions; reference for fulfillment of the minimum requirements under art. 26 ZRASRB; reference to the citations with a complete bibliographic description of the cited and cited publications; reference for the original scientific

contributions; work with students and doctoral students, including joint work with students and doctoral students in research and art projects; summaries of peer-reviewed publications (in Bulgarian and English).

The focus of this opinion will be the monograph "Transhumanism and the Future of Education (of Literature)", the content of which incorporates some of the other publications of Dr. Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva, as well as the scientific merits and contributions contained in this publication.

2. Short biography of the candidate

Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva was born in 1976 in the town of Lovech. She graduated from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", in 2000, obtaining a master's degree in Bulgarian philology. During the period 2002 - 2006 he was a full-time doctoral student in Methodology of teaching literature at the Faculty of Slavic Philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ", and in 2007 he defended his doctoral dissertation with a dissertation on the topic“ Literary education in the postmodern situation (a possible design of teaching in literary writing) ”. Dr. Hristova-Peeva has two specializations: at the Catholic University, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium (October 2004 - December 2004) and at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland (September 2016 - March 2017).

Dr. Hristova-Peeva's interests are clearly outlined in her priority field of the methodology of teaching literature, applied in a postmodern situation, which raises the question of "the obsolescence of school education" and the replacement of traditional teaching methods with different forms of medicalization and pharmacological imperialism. It is in these areas that most of her scientific publications and scientific reports are described in detail in the presented autobiography

Natalia Hristova-Peeva was a teacher of Bulgarian language and literature from 2000 to 2009. She currently holds the scientific position of "Chief Assistant" in Methodology of Teaching Literature as a member of the Department of Methodology at the Faculty of Slavic Philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ". Among the disciplines taught by her can be mentioned: Methodology of teaching literature (hospice, current pedagogical practice, undergraduate pedagogical practice); Intertextual writing practices in high school; Literary writing in high school; Digital humanism and literary education, as well as Transhumanism and the future of education - the discipline that is closest in its subject matter to the monograph submitted for participation in this competition.

Natalia Hristova-Peeva is the author of 2 monographs, 28 articles and 2 reviews. Her academic development includes participation in 8 research projects (one of which she is a leader and the other a coordinator) and 24 conferences and seminars. Natalia Hristova-Peeva has 6 citations for this activity.

3. Compliance with the Minimal National Standards for the academic degree of Doctor of Sciences

According to the documents presented by the candidate regarding the minimum requirements by groups of indicators for associate professor, Natalia Hristova-Peeva meets the minimum national requirements for the academic position of docent.

4. Evaluation of the content of academic achievements of the candidate

As I pointed out in Section 1 of this opinion, the focus of the substantive analysis of the scientific achievements of Dr. Hristova-Peeva will be her habilitation thesis "Transhumanism and the Future of Education (of Literature)" (2021). One of the main tasks of the research is to reveal the real reorientation from the democratic-humanistic concept of (literary) education to its transformation into an instrument for achieving economic efficiency and adaptability to the labor market without real public debate (p. 15 of the dissertation). and technological innovations (p. 4 of the Reference for the original scientific contributions submitted by the applicant). The thesis is not developed in detail about the extent to which the described process is (irre)versible and what is the more specific toolkit (outside the general wording "integration of ICT in education", p. 127) of resistances is. Although the dissertation clearly defends the role of the school in teaching children the ability to "deep attention" (p. 121 of the habilitation thesis) - an ability that is key to turning students into active citizens of a democratic society.

The prospect of replacing "traditional teachers" with a team of geneticists, engineers and robots working before the birth of children and turning education into a personal project without schools and kindergartens portends serious social consequences. On the first pages of her monograph Dr. Hristova-Peeva opposes the attempts of the teacher to become "a neurophysiologist, a neurocultivator, a neuroengineer, a neurohacker" (p. 8 of the dissertation), and the child to be treated as a precisely programmed hybrid, combining natural and artificial intelligence.

Here behind the critical position of Dr. Hristova-Peeva stand a number of prominent humanists and philosophers, including Martha Nussbaum (insisting on the need for education through literature in the so-called "democratic emotions" and the ability to appreciate the

vulnerability of others), Luke Boltanski (defining modern capitalism as "domination without ideology"), Tsvetan Todorov and Richard Rorty (criticizing egotism as "a kind of ignorance and lack of attention to the other person" - p. 29), Michael Sandel and Francis Fukuyama (opposing the production of "superchildren," "ageless bodies," and "happy souls," p. 56), Luke Ferry (emphasizing the clear line between treatment and improvement and skepticism about so-called "morphological freedom," p. 64), Ivan Ilyich (a leading scientist in the struggle against "social and cultural iatrogenesis" and "diagnostic imperialism", pp. 80-82).

Dr. Hristova-Peeva encounters the opposite position of popular names such as John Moravets (insisting on the new society of „noumads“ and „children 3.0“, p. 9), Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Pearson (describing modern man as "a human ape" with anachronistic "moral concepts and incentives", p. 31), Pierre Thayer de Chardin (looking at the Omega point and the emergence of the ultraman as early as 1951), Marvin Minsky and his seven steps towards artificial intelligence, p. 60), Max More, Nick Bostrom and the designer Natasha Vita-More (believers in the creation of an "alternative human body" type of bricolage, p. 64), Ray Kurzweil (led the march to the singularity across the bridges to infinite life through the systematic application of the so-called "pattern recognition theory of the mind", pp. 67-71), the Russian multi-billionaire Dmitry Itzkov (financing the so-called "Initiative 2045", pp. 71-72).

Some of the names that Dr. Hristova-Peeva opposes are adherents of the "economic paradigm" (p. 16), while others profess "technoprogressive solutionism" (p. 65), joining the ranks of the so-called "Bioprogressives" and evangelists of the speculative "economy of promises" (p. 66). Particular attention is paid to Norbert Wiener and the impact that the birth and rise of cybernetics have on the status of the humanities (pp. 34-49). Among scientists related to or inspired by cybernetics are Warren McCulloch, Claude Shannon, John Watson, Chris Anderson, Eric Schmidt, and others.

Amid the avalanche of promises of pacifying depoliticization (p. 84) through medicalization, Badiou's statement that "man as an immortal being, not as a species, relies on the incalculable, the unprecedented" (p. 49) sounds as a scream of inadequate eccentricity. Nevertheless, the dissertation manages to maintain the humanitarian pledge and the need to demedicalize a number of social problems. The necessary demedicalization of the social to some extent turns out to be a partial depoliticization of the biological. Of course, here cited by Dr. Hristova-Peeva author and undisputed authority in the field is Michel Foucault, pp. 86-88, and together with him are referenced the ethopolitics of Nicholas Rose (p. 89), as well as the thesis of Herbert Gottweiss for "decorporalizing" and "informatizing" biopolitics (p. 88).

The merit of the habilitation work is the fact that it traces the consequences of the practical perception of cyber solutions in the field of warfare, including by replacing life-threatening soldiers with remote-controlled drones (Gregoire Chamayou, pp. 49-53). The example can easily escalate into the question: is drone education possible? This issue is somehow particularly relevant in a situation of global pandemic and distance education. Even more questionable is the hypothesis of the disappearance of children (Mark Roux, pp. 90-92) in the event of the success of transhumanism's attempts to achieve human immortality (Aubrey de Gray, p. 93). What will humanity lose and what will it gain? But let's go back to the current problems in education.

The dissertation emphasizes the detrimental effect of the economization of education (p. 17) and the devaluation of humanitarian knowledge (p. 9). Among the authors referred here are Christian Laval and Ken Jones (alarming about the transformation of education from a common good into a commodity as everyone else, and the children - in entrepreneurs themselves) and Nuccio Ordine (daring to defend the useless in a world where "one hammer costs more than a symphony, one knife more than a poem"). A brief reference to Dickens's novel *Hard Times* and its proposed anti-utopian model of emotion-free education (the school of Thomas Gradgrind) is quite appropriate, a model that may be an implicit model of modern educational requirements. The detrimental effect of excluding the imagination and replacing it with "education of the facts" has been demonstrated (p. 28).

In her research, Dr. Hristova-Peeva easily manages to show the possible consequences of untying the "invisible hand" (pp. 121, 129) of the Market in the field of education, and to protect the need for teachers to invest in the so-called "ethical attention" (p. 122) - attention, which is not only a form of concentration, but also a manifestation of care. Here is one of the places where the pathos of the monograph is most palpable: the desire to expose the harmful effects that the current media environment has on children (pp. 124-126).

In this regard, I confirm the contributions made by Dr. Hristova-Peeva, and I would like to emphasize the third of them, concerning "the study of the toxic effects of modern media and digital environment on the school education and on the fragile mental apparatus of the child, based on which justifies the need for the formation of a therapeutic educational approach to new media, as well as a truly critical, creative, "enlightened" use of ICT in the modern school". I believe that in this scientific and professional task Dr. Hristova-Peeva is not alone and has the potential together with her colleagues to achieve several successes, which I sincerely wish her.

5. Impact of the publications of the candidate

Natalia Hristova-Peeva presented 6 notable citations that cover the minimum requirements for holding the position of "Associate Professor", two of which are in the magazine "Bulgarian Language and Literature", which is a scientific publication, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information. The main publication cited is the article "Literary Writing in High School", published in 2012 (4 citations), and the other two citations concern texts that fall within the thematic field of the presented habilitation work: "Missing Children: Biopolitics of Posthumous Humanity" and "Drones, algorithms, automata, or the non-man I am therefore" - both, published in Piron magazine in 2019 and 2016.

6. Critical commentary on the submitted thesis

In addition to my positive assessment of the dissertation and other scientific achievements of Dr. Natalia Hristova-Peeva, I would like to make a few recommendations and remarks, motivated entirely by my desire to achieve even more to a large extent the scientific goals announced by her. Despite the detailed description of the so-called "ADHD case" (pp. 99-119) - children diagnosed with "attention deficit hyperactivity disorder", the studies mentioned in the habilitation work, including the cited dialogues and shared reactions of children and parents, were related to a foreign context: American and German schools. The study of these practices, including the application of ICD 10 and DMS IV, as well as their effect in the Bulgarian context, could be extremely useful to test the hypothesis of whether the medicalization of education is a fact in Bulgaria and whether and if so - what forms take, the various resistances against this medicalization: both resistance on the part of the students and resistance on the part of their parents. In my opinion, it is especially important to understand how much Bulgarian children suffer from "dysphilosophy" (in the words of Philippe Meirillo, p. 98), and why not "dysliteration", and how this affects their ability to show "deep attention". Has literature won more Ritalin in Bulgaria? The answer to such a question could be the subject of subsequent research project, led by Dr. Natalia Hristova-Peeva.

The second recommendation I would make is related to the structure of the habilitation. Despite the description of the individual chapters of the monograph made in the "Summaries of publications" submitted by the candidate, I personally have the impression of a certain fragmentation and insufficient systematicity. Indeed, at the beginning of the study, his main bets are placed, and at the end they are again brought to the fore, already enriched by the information contained in the middle of the habilitation. Despite this "strengthening" of the theses, the addition of an introductory chapter indicating the goals, objectives and the specific trajectory through which the research will pass, would contribute to the creation of greater monolithicity,

consistency and coherence of the scientific monograph. This result could be further enhanced by the inclusion of a concluding chapter summarizing and explicating the main scientific theses and their social and practical relevance.

7. Personal opinion about the candidate

I know Dr. Natalia Hristova-Peeva from various academic and scientific forums in which we have participated as rapporteurs. She has always been an active participant with clear scientific theses, who knows how to argue and defend her positions.

We do not have common publications with Natalia Hristova-Peeva and we have not worked on common projects.

I believe that Natalia Hristova-Peeva is a responsible and conscientious scientist who works in an extremely relevant field that needs strong humanitarian support. The topics chosen by her are not just an object of pure scientific curiosity, but also a matter of position and even a personal and professional cause, the resistance of which can be key to achieving the necessary balance between experimental and exact sciences for the stability of modern human societies, on the one hand, and the humanities and social sciences, on the other.

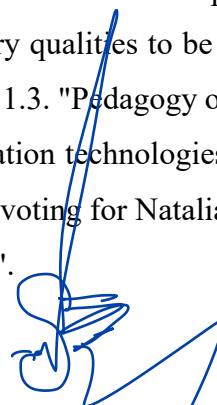
8. Conclusion

From the submitted documents it can be concluded that Natalia Hristova-Peeva meets the minimum national and institutional requirements for the respective academic position. Her research, publication and teaching activities have all the necessary qualities to be awarded the academic position of "Associate Professor" in a professional field 1.3. "Pedagogy of teaching... (Methodology of teaching literature. Information and communication technologies in teaching and working in a digital environment)". I am convinced that I am voting for Natalia Mladenova Hristova-Peeva to be awarded the academic position of " Docent ".

15.11.2021

Sofia

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Stoyan Stavru', written over a vertical line.

Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Stavru