

## REVIEW

**From Assoc. Prof. Dr. Iliana Ognyanova Petkova**

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on the scientific works for participation in a competition for the academic position of associate professor, in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy, announced in SG 69/16.08.2024, with candidate – senior assistant Dr. Hristo Vasilev Chukurliev

### **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University.**

In professional field 1. Educational Sciences, the candidate for the academic position "associate professor" must have 400 points by indicators from A to D. NBU has additional requirements, divided into another 3 indicators, which are: related to participation in projects, membership in organizations, application of results in practice, assessment from work with students, reviews of thesis defenses and graduates, participation as a trainee and in the academic life of NBU. They add another 170 points.

According to the personal statement provided by senior assistant Hr. Chukurliev, he has 595 points, 195 points above the required national level and 300 points, 130 above the requirements of NBU.

**Under item 1, my conclusion is that the candidate, senior assistant Dr. Hr. Chukurliev, fully meets the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University.**

### **II. Research activity and results**

In the competition, the candidate participates with a monographic work titled "Evolution of University Education" - a title that is both very specific and demanding in-depth knowledge in various fields - history, history of pedagogy, pedagogy of higher education, didactics. The candidate meets the challenge and successfully combines these aspects by presenting the idea of the emergence of the university and its evolution during the 18th and 19th centuries, providing interesting and lesser-known information about the origins of the first universities in the world such as those in Constantinople (the so-called Magnaura School), "the first higher education institution in the Abbasid Caliphate, founded in Fez, Morocco in 859 – known as Al Quaraouiyyine"), and the universities in Bologna, Paris, and Oxford.

A focus of the monograph is the forms and methods of instruction through which the education process is operationalized. The author has presented several individual methods by describing their application in a university setting. The candidate challenges himself by reflecting on the direction and evolution of teaching methods that need to be synchronized with the learning styles of Generation Z. His research attention is provoked by the relationship between traditional and alternative teaching methods, the introduction of new technologies in education, and the competencies of university teachers.

Another problem the author addresses is the linkage of universities with the development of professions. Again using a historical approach, Hr. Chukurliev describes the evolution within the universities themselves, their mission, and vision for development.

He views higher education institutions as centers for obtaining professional education and raises the current and debatable question - can the university prepare young people for the professions of the future? The candidate defends his authorial theses through a study conducted among 169 teachers and 735 students from all programs at NBU. A survey was used with questions aimed at exploring opinions on "lifelong learning," the duration of higher education, and the connection between education and professions/practice. The data are presented in a comparative manner based on predefined indicators. Gradually and fully justified, Hr. Chukurliev reaches the idea of returning universities to their Enlightenment-era mission and content - when they were not a "factory" of specialists fueling the labor market with their knowledge and skills turned into professions. It was a center of philosophizing, of knowledge, of exchange of ideas, which is why students were free to argue, reflect, and provoke their teachers. How far are we from that time now?

Following these reflections, it is quite natural that the next monographic study also appears with such a provocative title, "Postpedagogy - Illusion or Reality?". Again, the focus is on university education and teaching methods within it. However, before reaching them, Hr. Chukurliev conducts an analysis and "critique of existing pedagogical models in light of the needs of the new generations" (p.25). According to him, postpedagogy or the pedagogy of the new era can be built on 7 "pillars and principles of understanding the educational process" (p.32), namely: decentralization of power, appropriateness and personalization of education, integration of digital literacy, emphasis on critical thinking and creativity, lifelong learning, development of educational pathways, global and ethical awareness. The author hypothesizes that "there is a need for a new kind of pedagogy, which corresponds to the change in our environment, the characteristics of the new generations, and all this in the context of the development of digital technologies, including various applications of artificial intelligence." (p.37) This postpedagogy is not focused either on the erudition of the teacher, nor on the student, nor even on preparing for future professions - It is directed toward "university training in the third millennium of the 21st century" (ibid.). The methods are the paths, the ways we work with students and can transform and direct their thinking. That is why it is important to modernize them (we would find new difficult ones) according to the new generation and their way of learning. In fact, this work can be taken as a guide for every university teacher seeking ways to improve their way of working with students. Hr. Chukurliev describes in detail the technology of application of 5 methods: Description of the Subject, Humanities Laboratory, Venus from Slatina, Time Machine, Portfolio. The latter has been approved at the University of Warsaw as a method for completing an educational degree. It honors the author that he not only describes and presents the design of their application but also presents results from their testing in various universities in Denmark, Germany, and NBU.

Against the background of the analysis of these two significant studies, the assessment of the remaining 16 articles will be brief - Each one of them defends the candidate Hr. Chukurliev's belief in the necessity for change in university education. Through them, he points out the paths to the professions of the future, which are: through the use of new technologies, through the application of new methods, through a different way of evaluating achievements, through new training programs. Two of the articles are published in scientific journals, peer-reviewed and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information, and 14 in non-peer-reviewed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes.

**Assessment of the monographic work and publications, including an evaluation of the author's scientific and applied scientific contributions** - In my opinion, the candidate's contributions are indisputable and in two directions.

The first - theoretical – the publications are philosophical-pedagogical, which do not just present the judgments of other authors, but compel the reader to seek new dimensions in pedagogy, to provoke themselves towards a new way of perceiving the idea of higher education and to seek the transformation of higher education through new technologies and in relation to new generations. However, the works also raise other questions - what should the training of a university teacher be like? Should it remain narrowly specialized or should the teacher gradually transform back into the ancient philosopher who, through his reflections, captivated his students but led them along the path to knowledge?

The second group of contributions are practical-applicative - each of the theses is defended with conducted research, the results of which have been echoed in publications in Bulgarian and English.

Five of the candidate's publications have been cited, these publications range from 2014 to 2021, i.e., the works of Hr. Chukurliiev are followed and known, but by a limited circle of authors. Irena Nikolova cites him in 2 of her publications, Tatyana Fed – in 3, and Maria Ivanova also in three. The citations are mainly in publications from international conferences in Bulgaria.

**Overall assessment of the presented works - authors who manage to look beyond the usual and what happens around us are increasingly rare. Therefore, I believe that the author's ideas have the qualities and should be introduced to the "broad" scientific pedagogical stage.**

According to the personal statement, Hr. Chukurliiev has participated in three scientific research projects, two international ones, and has been the leader of three projects.

### **III. Teaching and educational activities**

Due to the lack of information on auditorium occupancy, I cannot comment on the candidate's teaching and educational activities. I assume that the competition is secured with the necessary number of hours. The candidate has indicated that he has developed original teaching materials for 10 courses in "Moodle NBU". He has three graduates who have defended their master's theses. He has implemented two international projects involving students (Mediterranean Connections and a traveling seminar through ERUA to the island of Lesbos).

In the personal statement, Hr. Chukurliiev has indicated that the average score from student satisfaction surveys is excellent, 4.76. I assume that there is a technical error and the score should be 5.76.

### **IV. Administrative and Community**

Activity From the provided information, it is evident that the candidate Hr. Chukurliiev has extensive and rich administrative experience. He is part of the team of teachers at the Faculty for Distance, Electronic and Continuing Education (ФДЕНО) and on the board of UniArt at NBU. He participates in the meetings of the Departments of Administration and Management; Foreign Languages and Cultures – Pedagogy Section, in the preparation and execution of accreditation procedures to ФБО. He is a member of the Faculty Council of ФДЕНО, the Rector's and Academic Council of NBU. He is the director of ИЦА.

He has presented a public lecture on "Anti-plagiarism and Academicism – Problems and Solutions" at SU "St. Kl. Ohridski" and at the Final Conference of the EDUGATE project in 2023.

He is the creator of the training program for the teaching and administrative staff of NBU.

He has introduced a course on volunteering at NBU.

**V. Personal Impressions of the Candidate (if any)**

I have no impressions of the candidate's professional and personal qualities. I have had one conversation with him, from which I was impressed by his erudition, purposefulness, and responsible attitude towards his commitments.

**VI. Opinions, Recommendations, and Notes on the Activities and Achievements of the Candidate**

Since the candidate expresses a desire for professional development in a new scientific field - 1.2. Pedagogy, I recommend that he present his ideas in specialized peer-reviewed journals and at scientific conferences in the field of education. I believe that Hristo Chukurliev has the erudition and inspiration to present and defend his ideas in peer-reviewed pedagogical journals such as "Strategies of Scientific and Educational Policy" and "Pedagogy."

**Conclusion – Based on the analysis of the presented works and the personal information provided, which the candidate fully meets all additional criteria, I give a high positive assessment of the academic activity of the candidate – senior assistant Dr. Hristo Vasilev Chukurliev. I confidently propose to the members of the Academic Council to elect him as an associate professor in professional field 1.2. Pedagogy.**

Date: 30.11.2024 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Assoc. Prof. Dr. Iliana Petkova