

OPINION

by **Prof. Dr. Pelagia Mihaylova Terziyska**

about the submitted materials for participation in a competition for the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences; professional field 1.2. Pedagogy

The competition was announced for the needs of the New Bulgarian University - Faculty of Distance, Electronic and Advanced Learning, Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures and was published in the State Gazette, issue 69, dated 16.08.2024.

Candidate: **Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Hristo Chukurliev**

This opinion was prepared on the basis of order No. 3-PK-5/04.10.2024 of the Rector of NBU, as well as a decision of the scientific jury on the procedure.

In the competition for "half-time associate professor" the only candidate is Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Hristo Chukurliev.

The procedures for the competition are in accordance with the Regulations for the implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University for the development of the academic staff at the University. The candidate Ch. Asst. Prof. Dr. Hristo Chukurliev has fulfilled the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the additional university requirements.

Brief biographical information about the candidate

From the presented professional biography of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Hristo Chukurliev, it can be seen that he has been working at NBU since 2002 as Director of the Master's Faculty. In the period 2010 - 2018, he was Director of the Faculty of Distance, Electronic and Continuing Education, and since 2018, Director of the Central University Administration of NBU. Since March 1, 2019, he has been a full-time lecturer at the Faculty of Distance, Electronic and Continuing Education, after successfully defending his dissertation in 2018. He is a member of the Pedagogy Section in the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures.

He is the head of PROJECT BG051PO001-4.3.04 - 0037 "Improving the quality of distance learning at the Center for Distance and E-Learning at the New Bulgarian University". In addition to the active work on implementing unified e-learning at NBU, improving the e-learning platform

MOODLE and training teachers in its use, from 2010 to 2014, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Chukurliev implemented a model for managing a distance learning form, which functions with minor changes to this day. His reports, which he prepares and presents during participation in scientific forums in the period 2014-2023, are also in this area.

Following his path of continuous development, expert and teaching activity, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Chukurliev is developing as a specialist with significant professional competencies in the field of management models, digital technologies, digitalization processes, and the transformation of teaching methods and forms.

II. Description of scientific works

In the competition for the academic position of "associate professor", Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Chukurliev participated with **18 publications** including: **1 Monograph** - habilitation thesis; 1 monograph, which is not presented as the main habilitation thesis; **2 articles in refereed journals**, one of which is in print; **14 articles and reports in non-refereed publications** with scientific review or in edited collective volumes, 2 of which are co-authored.

Chief Asst. Prof. Dr. Chukurliev participates in **3 national projects** and is the **chair of 3**. He also participates in **2 international projects**.

He is a member of the National Center for Distance Learning. He participates in the board/management council of the National Center for Distance Learning and of UniArt at NBU.

Analysis of the habilitation work

In the competition for Associate Professor, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Chukurliev participated with a monograph on the topic "Evolution of university education" (in press at NBU).

The work is constructed on a comprehensive study of the development trends of higher education, its transformation towards a digital environment, and towards meeting the requirements of new generations of students.

The problems and challenges that are provoked by the digital transition and require a transformation of the role of the teacher from a bearer of knowledge to a mediator are clearly presented.

The monograph is logically structured into four chapters. In the first two chapters, attention is drawn to the historical development of universities until the 21st century and the dimensions of digitalization, emphasising the requirements it places on higher education today. The analysis of

data from the field of higher education and scientific research gives the author reason to emphasize that the transformation of universities to a digital environment is already a fact and the role of the teacher is to adapt to it. For this adaptation to be purposeful, a clear strategy and a specific goal are needed. It is imperative for universities to reconsider the relationship between students and teachers in order to comply with the new information reality - the digitalization of information carriers and the rapid, often uncontrollable access to information.

Chapter three presents the author's research examining the relationship between university and profession through the perspectives of students and academic staff from NBU. The survey included over 150 academic staff and 700 students, allowing for a comparison of the opinions of these key participants in the higher education process.

The fourth chapter examines the main challenges facing the university of the future, as the interests of the three main parties – students, teachers and employers – are often different. The characteristics of the new generations are analyzed with an emphasis on topics such as information, fake news, free time and applicability of what has been learned. The profile of the university lecturer and the competencies sought in the new professional fields are also presented.

The rapid development of digital technologies facilitates the storage and transfer of data on a global scale, making knowledge accessible to all and democratizing access to information. However, along with the democratization of knowledge, new challenges arise – the need to verify the reliability, relevance and authenticity of information that everyone can easily access. These skills for analyzing and verifying information are becoming essential for the new generation of students, along with the development of mechanisms for discovering true and useful information.

The focus of the research is on the development of new teaching methods aimed at acquiring knowledge and skills from students adequate to the dynamically changing external environment and the new professions emerging as a result of the digital transformation.

The retrospective review of the conceptual foundations of university education and the analysis of classical forms and methods of education gives the author of the monograph reason to present, in an argumentative manner, modern forms and methods of education that meet the challenges facing universities today and are in line with the professions of the future.

Analysis of other scientific works

The monograph "*Post-pedagogy - illusion or reality?*" seeks an answer to the question of whether there is a place for post-pedagogy. In the process of the study, the author reflects on what rules and principles it is necessary to obey in the education of students and are they not precisely "post-pedagogical, because they follow the phase of pedagogy and precede the science of adult education?" He draws attention to the problems that Artificial Intelligence creates for university teachers and the need to apply new, different from the old norms and understandings of correctness, transparency and quality. He proposes and describes methods (the key elements that form the basis of these methods) that stimulate students to critical thinking and problem-solving skills, provoking them to search for and use various sources of information on their own without the recommendation of a teacher, stimulating their imagination and creativity. He offers a "Step-by-Step Guide" for the practical application of the specific method.

He comes to the conclusion that today there is a need for post-pedagogy in order to effectively address the challenge of filling university education with content.“

This issue is also addressed in the article "*Four Innovative Teaching Methods. Is There a Place for Post-Pedagogy?*". It emphasizes the need for a new pedagogical framework in the context of modern higher education, influenced by digital innovations and generational change. Four innovative pedagogical approaches are introduced – Object Description, Humanities Laboratory, Venus of Slatina and Time Machine – which serve as a basis for discussing “post-pedagogy”. The approaches are united by the goal of achieving priorities such as interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking and fostering curiosity.

The problem of the need for a new type of pedagogy - post-pedagogy - is also addressed in the article "Navigating Change: Towards Post-Pedagogy in the Digital Age". It points to new methods, often using digital tools and applied to learners whose profiles are very different from those studied in pedagogy.

The following publications are dedicated to exploring the challenges and opportunities that educators face when educating Generation Z – a generation that grew up with the internet and is deeply connected to digital technologies, and the need for new teaching methods:

- "*Teaching Generation Z.*" The article highlights the need for universities to evolve their pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of Generation Z. It proposes a training program for teachers designed to bridge the communication gap between them and students, ensuring that future teaching methods are in line with the digital realities of the modern world.

- "*How to teach millennial students?*" The article presents the New Bulgarian University's attempt to create a teacher training program aimed at reviving two-way communication between them and students. New technologies, the integration of digital methodologies, and innovative forms of feedback aimed at millennial teachers are recommended.

- "*Assessment of the Adequacy of Modern Teaching Methods at the University: Perspectives of Students and Teachers for Innovative Educational Practices*" - an in-depth analysis of modern pedagogical practices at universities is made, taking into account the perspectives of teachers and students. It emphasizes the need for universities to move towards a model that prioritizes practical participation and collaboration in solving complex, real-world problems.

- The introduction of the podcast as an additional tool in the learning process is discussed in the article "*Podcast - when, if not now?*". A specific example of starting a podcast with participating teachers and students is presented.

The students' point of view on the present and future of their professions is presented in the publications:

- "*Digitalization and the effect of Covid-19 in the fields of management, marketing, fashion, finance, communications and tourism (through the eyes of students)*". A study of professional and emotional expectations is presented.

- „*The Professions of the Future and the Education of the Past*" - emphasizes the importance of a new type of interdisciplinary preparation for the professions of the future.

The report "*Critical Thinking as a Goal of Higher Education from Socrates to ChatGPT*" traces the attitude towards critical thinking as a skill, on the one hand, and as a quality, on the other, in institutions related to higher education throughout the centuries.

The author's views on the path along which the digital transformation of higher education should continue are presented in the article "*Feedback from Teachers and Students on the Learning Process in a Pandemic Situation*". The importance of education for developing entrepreneurship and adaptation to new realities, as well as the need for critical thinking in understanding and applying technologies, is expressed in the report "*The Digital Clothes of Blockchain Technologies*".

Attention to connecting volunteering with higher education is drawn to the report "*Building Transferable Skills through Volunteering: The NBU Experience*." The disclosure of the concept, historical development, and implementation of volunteering provokes the cultivation of transferable skills that are essential for personal, academic, and professional success.

III Scientific contributions

Based on the presented publications, scientific and applied contributions of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Hristo Chukurliev can be highlighted and summarized, including:

- The knowledge and skills that students must acquire in accordance with the new realities are substantiated in an argumentative manner.
- Based on analyzing the competencies that are necessary for the professions of the future and taking into account the progress of technologies, the globalized market for goods, people and services, as well as demographic processes, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Chukurliev specifies the areas in which new professions may appear.
- Innovative teaching methods are presented (two teaching methods used in European universities and two original ones) to build key qualities and skills in students that are the foundation of university education.
- Implements a model for managing a distance learning form.

The reference submitted by the candidate shows a total of 10 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review.

IV. Teaching work

Led 2 public lectures on behalf of NBU at the invitation of HEIs or prestigious national/international organizations - at the final conference of the EDUGATE project - June 8, 2023 and a lecture at Sofia University on the topic "Anti-plagiarism and academicism - problems and solutions".

Introduction of the volunteering course at NBU. Participation in improving the program - Law, Politics and Civilization.

Created original teaching materials for 10 courses in "Moodle NBU".

Collaborated with students in 2 research and/or creative projects.

Created a program for training the teaching and administrative staff of NBU and participated as a trainee in it. Creator and the program for training the teaching and administrative staff of NBU and participated as a trainer in it.

VI. Recommendations

I recommend that he continue his active scientific research and share new scientific ideas through subsequent publications.

VII. Заключение:

The analysis and evaluation of the research activity, the publications presented and the educational activities carried out are grounds for supporting the candidacy of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Hristo Chukurliev for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy for the needs of NBU.

Opinion's author:

27/1/2024

Prof. Dr. Pelagia Terziyska