

REVIEW

of the scientific works and educational activity
of lecturer Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva
candidate in a competition for the academic position of "associate professor" in
Field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences
Professional field: 3.4. Social activities
Scientific specialty: "Organization and management of social activities"

Contest details

The competition for the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.4. Social activities (Organization and management of social activities) was announced in the State Gazette - issue 65/02.08.2024 by Shumen University *Konstantin Preslavski* upon a decision and proposal of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education (Protocol No. FD - 02- 02/17.10.2024) for the needs of the Department of "Social Activities".

The competition procedure for occupying the academic position of "associate professor" is in accordance with the requirements of the LDASRB, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Shumen University *Konstantin Preslavski*.

By Order of the Rector (No. RD-16-186 of 31.10.2024), the composition of the scientific jury was determined and the official course of the competition procedure was given.

Candidate details

The only candidate in the competition is Prof. Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva. The submitted set of documents and materials contains the necessary (for application and review) information.

The attached biography shows that Kolarova-Vasileva built her career in the academic and social sphere through a methodically implemented educational strategy: she successively acquired a bachelor's and master's degree at the "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski" University of Social Sciences, after which she became a doctoral student at the same university. Rev. Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva acquired an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in 2018 in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy with a dissertation: "Optimizing the practical training of future social workers". The topic of the dissertation is in direct correlation with the profile of the announced competition.

Kolarova-Vasileva has experience in the field of social activities (in the "Sunbeam" Children's and Youth Center in Shumen, she works as a social worker, group manager for people with disabilities, art therapist) and in the academic field (teacher at the "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski" University of Shumen from April 2015 to the present). Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva purposefully expands the perimeter of her interests and the specificity of her professional competencies: Bachelor of Social Pedagogy, Master of Social Pedagogy (Social Work with Refugees), Doctor of Pedagogy.

The candidate has experience in various activities: teaching, research, publication, project, methodological and creative. It is undeniable that the acquired experience in various aspects of the social and academic spheres is a favorable prerequisite for her work as a university lecturer.

The certificate of fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.4. Social

activities – 445 points, out of the required 400 points (Group of indicators A – 50 points, Group of indicators B – 100 points, Group of indicators D – 230 points, Group of indicators E – 65 points) proves that they are covered.

A certificate of fulfillment of additional indicators is presented, which provides information about her academic commitments: teaching a wide range of academic disciplines (Social work methodology; Project work; Social rehabilitation; Social pedagogy; Organization and management of social activities; Practicum in regional social institutions; Summer practical module; Professional practicum; Pre-graduate internship) and project work.

Dr. Kolarova-Vasileva has participated in projects of various ranks:

- national - 2;
- intra-university - 10;
- international. 3.

Description and analysis of the publications submitted for the competition

For participation in the competition, Prof. Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva has presented:

- habilitation thesis: "Dynamics and formation of professional image and prestige of social work";
- monograph: "Technology of professional success of the manager in the social sphere";
- monograph "Mastery of knowledge, skills and competencies by students of the specialty "Social activities" during practical knowledge" - developed and published on the basis of the defended dissertation work for awarding the ONS "doctor";
- scientific publications in non-refereed journals with scientific review or in edited collective volumes - 7 issues.

Up to this point, the listed publications have not been subject to evaluation in other competitions.

There has been no proven plagiarism in the scientific works in accordance with the established procedure, and no violation of other people's copyrights has been admitted. For this statement, the following are attached:

- first**, anti-plagiarism system protocol;
- second**, declaration of authorship;
- third**, declaration of authenticity;
- fourth**, separation protocols for co-authorship.

In her postdoctoral period, Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva has shown interest and sensitivity to problems of permanent relevance and practical utility, which can be grouped into three thematic areas:

- Dynamics and current aspects of social work - prestige, image, success, social diagnosis, innovations;
- Management in the social sphere - the role of the manager;
- Preparation of students as future social workers.

I would like to emphasize that the indicated thematic differentiation is conditional, the content of the publications is not fragmentarily constructed. The researched problems are closely related and interdependent, which is a sign of a lasting and profound scientific interest and approach.

The direction "**Dynamics and current aspects of social work - prestige, image, success, social diagnosis, innovative projects**" is most strongly reflected in Kolarova-Vasileva's habilitation work.

The habilitation thesis "Dynamics and Formation of Professional Image and Prestige of Social Work" is loaded with rich information about the specifics of social work as an extremely dynamic field. The logically structured content is built on an analysis of problems with a wide range (from theory to methodology) and highlights the guidelines for studying the prestige and

image of professions as scientific categories. The approaches used (deductive-inductive and sociological) specify the methodology for assessing the image of the social worker's profession and define the profile and mechanisms of its construction, supplementation, and correction.

As methodological determinants, the specifics of the foreign methodology for measuring the level of prestige of various types of activity are applied; the status characteristics of professional groups, their resources; the social and personal assessment of professional prestige with an emphasis on the attractiveness of the profession as a humane one. Last but not least is the relationship between prestige, quality of social work and the role of the media and social networks, whose function now and in the future will grow in parallel with the increase in positive synergy, charity, and philanthropy.

Through the possibilities of the interdisciplinary approach, a successful attempt has been made to specify the relationship/dependence between the categories of prestige and image, to identify those prerequisites, conditions, factors, and processes that ensure their formation at three levels: individual, personal, and institutional.

In the context of the analyzed approaches and models, the author has also managed to express his own understanding of the mechanisms for theoretical and substantive construction of tools for forming and affirming a professional image, thereby compensating for a certain deficit in this issue.

Kolarova-Vasileva convincingly emphasizes the logical connection between a number of phenomena: the prestige of social work and the role of social diagnosis, social diagnosis and ethics of the social worker; the information society and social reality. The intertwining storylines prove not only the complexity, but also the trends and prospects in the development of social processes and social work.

Related to this direction are chapters from the monograph "Technology of Professional Success of the Manager in the Social Sphere", a number of articles ("Development of Innovative Projects in Social Work"; "The Image of the Social Worker Profession Internationally"; "The Role of Social Diagnosis in Social Work"; "The Information Society in Social Reality").

In the direction "**Management in the social sphere - the role of the manager**" the emphasis is placed, on the one hand, on general theoretical and methodological approaches regarding the working culture of the modern manager of a social organization (characteristics, essence, content, success factors), and on the other hand, on specific aspects in the activities of managers at different organizational levels and structures, institutions, services in the field of social protection and social services. On the basis of the chronological approach, important characteristics and specifics of the organizational and work culture of the manager have been derived. The correct theoretical analysis made provokes relevant references to the specifics of social work and objectivity of the conclusions and generalizations.

The above-mentioned constructs are the subject of analysis mainly in the monograph "Technology of the professional success of the manager in the social sphere". Reflections on the management of social work are also shared in the habilitation work. The analysis of management as a social phenomenon, management schools, their "dissolution" in the specifics of social activities provides favorable conditions for improving the system of relations, psychological climate, which in turn affects the quality of life, social behavior, work culture of workers, as well as users of social services.

The subject of Kolarova-Vasileva's special attention are the prerequisites and conditions for achieving professional success for the manager. The open interpretation of popular theories, observations and opinions gives a competitive advantage to a number of qualities significant for the manager of a social institution: responsibility, self-control, professional self-confidence, emotional stability.

Of professional interest are also the author's comments on the development of innovative projects as an element of sound management. In the field of social activities, this is a procedure

that requires specific skills and is a key factor for social change and the implementation of social technologies in support of clients with various problems.

Kolarova-Vasileva also makes an analytical reading of another essential aspect of the manager's managerial activity - the methodology of social diagnosis and the importance of monitoring in this process, emphasizing the relationship between cause-and-effect factors, between assessment and diagnosis, between diagnosis and prognosis, on which making adequate decisions for the client depends.

The publications in the direction of "**Preparation of students as future social workers**" cover serious deficits related to the formation of professional knowledge, skills and competencies in students for their future realization in the variety of social services. The monograph "Mastery of knowledge, skills and competencies by students of the specialty "Social activities" during practical classes" has a pronounced practical and applied value. In academic practice, the prevalence of theoretical training over practical training is often observed, which makes it difficult to build competencies in students and their choice of the most suitable social field for their realization. In this regard, their practice in various social institutions and positions of those working in them acquires particular importance.

With a sense of responsibility and standard, Kolarova-Vasileva outlines the necessary and useful parameters in the practical training of students:

- forms of practical training - hospice (presence, observation, conferencing) and participation in specific activities depending on the type of institution and the health status of the clients;
- information about the structures for managing social activities in Bulgaria (in which practical classes can also be held);
- information about the types of social services depending on the environment: social services that are provided in the community and social services that are provided in specialized institutions;
- information about the positions and obligations of those performing the relevant service;
- - specialized knowledge - Social Assistance Act and Regulations for its implementation; mandatory documentation;
- knowledge about the social reality, about the specific client;
- knowledge and competencies regarding modern therapeutic methods - Montessori therapy, music therapy, art therapy, kinesitherapy, ergotherapy, etc.
- formation of basic professional skills of the social worker (communicative, organizational, psycho-pedagogical, diagnostic, analytical, reflection skills, etc.) - to understand the reasons for a specific situation/behavior, to provide help and support, to build positive relationships of trust and respect, to show empathy, to work in a team, to show self-control and self-assessment, etc.
- building values and attitudes as a mandatory component of the professional-personal profile of the social worker (social justice, striving for social change, respect for individual and group differences, faith in the client's abilities, perseverance and optimism in efforts to help those in need, separation of the personal from the professional, etc.).

The applied program for the study practice of the specialty "Social Activities" is open-ended and allows for change - upgrading and correction.

The publications available in this area ("Optimizing the practical training of students majoring in "Social Activities" - future social workers"; "Internet advertising as a tool for social education"; "Compensating for the lack of social communication with interactive methods in learning in an electronic environment") are useful for academic practice because they bring ideas for enriching the didactic space and offer an opportunity to stimulate the creativity of future social workers.

With constructive sensitivity, Kolarova-Vasileva also draws attention to current phenomena in life - the role of Internet advertising and the absence of social communication in learning in an electronic environment.

The importance of meaningful social advertising, which can stimulate humane actions to provide help and support to those in need, is logically emphasized.

The forced training in a digital environment in recent years has had a negative impact on communicative processes, therefore the interactive models shared by Dr. Kolarova-Vasileva to compensate for the absence of social communication have the advantage of a successful didactic algorithm.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the publications reflect Kolarova-Vasileva's experience from her participation in projects and various scientific forums: conferences, seminars, in which she promotes good academic practices.

The professional profile of Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva would not be complete if it were not emphasized that she is a recognizable lecturer, which is proven by the reference made for citations.

Significance of contributions to science and practice

In my opinion, the scientific contributions mentioned by Prof. Dr. Kolarova-Vasileva are an objective reflection of her production.

To them I would add:

- in-depth knowledge of social matter, theoretical statements, methodology, teaching practice and the specialty;
- publications and research activities largely compensate for deficiencies in academic training;
- there is a specific author's style and color of the publications;
- the target and procedural components in the practical training of students in the specialty "Social Activities" are specified;
- the categorical modern scientific orientation of the publications allows their use to improve the qualifications of active social workers.

Critical notes and recommendations

The analysis of the scientific production of Prof. Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva gives me reason to make some **recommendations**:

First, it is necessary for the candidate to expand her publication activity in journals with an impact factor/impact rank, which will expand her popularity as a university lecturer nationally and internationally, increase the prestige of the specialty, as well as the authority of the University in the academic space.

Secondly, it is advisable to intensify research activities in the direction of field work in order to use the accumulated practical experience.

The overall summary of the scientific production of Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva points to the following **conclusions**:

1. The candidate's presence in the university space as a lecturer is necessary, her activity is marked by creative pragmatism.
2. The candidate's scientific research activity and production are distinguished by correctness and academic responsibility regarding reading and interpretation.
3. The candidate's scientific interests, activities and products are integrative in nature, reflecting the diversity of social and academic realities and perspectives.

Conclusion

I support the candidacy of Prof. Dr. Hristina Kolarova-Vasileva for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the University of Sofia in the Field of Higher Education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences; Professional Field: 3.4. Social Activities;

Scientific specialty: "Organization and management of social activities" for the following reasons:

first, the deposited materials have cognitive and pragmatic value;

second, the scientific contributions and publications on the topic correspond to the profile of the announced competition;

third, the required minimum national requirements for holding the above-mentioned position are met.

12.12.2024
Stara Zagora

Member of the scientific jury:.

/Assoc. prof. Stefka Ivanova Dinchiyska, Ph.D./

