

OPINION

From: prof. **Valentina Ljubenova Nikolova-Alexieva, PhD**
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Professional direction 3.8 . Economy Scientific specialty
"Economics and Management" (Business Economics,
Corporate management)

Regarding: competition for a **professor** in the field of higher education
3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional field
3.7. Administration and management, scientific specialty
"Business communications and personal development management",
announced from **the Higher School of Insurance and Finance**

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate.

The competition for the occupation of the academic position "professor" in the field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.7 "Administration and management (Business communications and management of personal development)" has been announced for the needs of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance (HSIF) - Sofia in State Gazette, issue 30/15/04/2022. I participate in the composition of the scientific jury for the competition, according to Order No. 167/25/07/2022 of the Rector of HSIF.

In the contest participates only one candidate - Associate professor Daniela Ilieva, PhD from the Higher School of Insurance and Finance - Sofia . Through 2004 the candidate obtained a bachelor's degree in Business Administration at the European University, and in 2006 a master's degree in Marketing at University of National and World Economy (UNWE). In the period 2011-2015, he defended his dissertation work and obtained a PhD degree in the scientific specialty "Social Management" at UNWE. In 2020, Daniela Ilieva completed studies in Artificial Intelligence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

She began his academic career in 2009 as a part-time teacher at UNWE, where until 2016 she taught the disciplines "Management", "Human Resource Management", "CSR", "Organizational Behavior". In the period 2011-2016, she was a guest lecturer not only at the University of Sheffield, but also at HSIF, where in 2016 he acquired the scientific title of "associate professor". From 2016 to the present, she has been a guest lecturer at UNIBIT and at SU "Kliment Ohridski".

During the period from 2003 to the present moment, Assoc. prof. Daniela Ilieva gained extensive experience in business practice, holding successively the positions of "Events" manager and "Hotel" manager at Maxi Park Hotel&SPA, since 2012 until now she is a business consultant for Corporate trainings, and since 2015 until now she is the executive director of the "Law and Internet" Foundation. She has acquired over 10 different professional qualifications, some of which are: "Certified Business Etiquette and International Protocol Consultant"; "Masterclass in presentation skills and public speaking skills"; "Certified NLP trainer "; "Certified trainer in Hypnotherapy" etc., *which complements her theoretical training with practical knowledge and skills useful for teaching work.*

Assoc. prof. Daniela Ilieva is active in public organizations and networks. She is an active member of over 12 international professional societies such as SOURCE Societal Security Network; European Platform for Adult Learning in Europe; European Mentoring and Coaching Council; International NLP Association and others.

She has an excellent command of English and Spanish, uses German and Russian at a good level, which allows her to monitor foreign scientific achievements and good management practices and adapt them to modern conditions.

2. Fulfillment of the requirements for occupying the academic position.

The candidate meets all the mandatory conditions under Art. 24 of ZRASRB and the additional requirements of HSIE, according to Art. 15, para. 1 of ZRASRB and Art. 60 of PPZRASRB.

Regarding the requirement for acquired ESD "Doctor" (art. 60, para. 1, item 1 of PPZRASRB) - in 2015 Assoc. prof. Ilieva defended a dissertation work at UNWE, on the topic: "Methodology for improving presentation skills". She obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Social Management" (diploma 182/05.02.2015).

Regarding the requirement for minimum academic experience (Art. 60, para. 1, item 2 of PPZRASRB) - the total work experience of Assoc. prof. Daniela Ilieva as a teacher at HSIF is more than 6 years (official note No. 414/28.06.22). Obviously, the candidate fully meets the legal requirement for a minimum academic experience of two years.

Regarding the requirement for a published monographic work (art. 60, para. 1, item 3 of PPZRASRB) - Assoc. prof. Ilieva presented a habilitation thesis on the topic "Management on the personal development". The paper was reviewed by two respected reviewers in the scientific community,, published in 2022 in the publishing house "Grigoriy Bogoslov", Sofia" and has a volume of 149 pages. The topic of the monographic work, the object, the subject and the time period to which it refers, does not imply an overlap with the dissertation work and the monograph for the occupation of the academic position of "associate professor" of the candidate, which meets the legal requirement of Art. 24, para. 1, item 3 of ZRASRB.

Regarding the requirement to present other original scientific research works (Art. 60, para. 1, item 4 of PPZRASRB) - the candidate has submitted 2 monographs, 1 book based on a dissertation work, 8 articles and 1 report from an international scientific conference. All of them refer to the period 2019 - 2022, which does not imply overlap with publications from previous competitions for academic positions and doctoral degrees.

*Regarding the requirement to meet the relevant minimum national criteria and the requirements under Art. 1a, paragraph 2; (art. 60, para. 1, item 5 of PPZRASRB) - according to the presented Reference, the candidate achieved a total of **1 345 points** (of indicators: A- 50 points; B-100 points; G-250 points; D- 155 points; E- 790 points), which significantly exceeds the required threshold of 550 points. It is noteworthy that activity was reported for each of the indicators, and for some of them, an implementation significantly exceeding the minimum threshold was reported - such as E (projects, textbooks, etc.). *This proves beyond doubt the potential of the candidate for the academic position and the enormous work she has done.**

In regard to the requirement that there is no proven plagiarism in scientific works (Art. 60, Para. 1, Point 6 of the PPZRASRB) - at the moment, such has not been established.

Daniela Ilieva is also a *recognized researcher* with contributions in the field of social management and business communications. Assoc. prof. Ilieva's comprehensive pedagogical training and activities show that she is an established and respected teacher who is also sought after by other universities as a lecturer. It also has an *established international image*. Her repeated participation in national and international forums and numerous television shows and media initiatives is proof of her potential to develop and her desire to work to raise the image of HSIF.

Based on everything stated above, regarding the versatile and in-depth teaching and research work of Associate professor Ilieva, I believe that ***she fully meets the quantitative and qualitative requirements*** for occupying the academic position of "professor" at HSIF.

3. Evaluation of teaching and research activities

Assoc. prof. Daniela Ilieva has a guaranteed teaching load in the disciplines: "Business communications in IT projects" (bachelor's and master's degrees); "Business Communications and Ethics"; "Business etiquette" (in Bulgarian and English); "Business communications and business events in tourism"; "Corporate culture and communications"; "Corporate culture and competitiveness"; "Basics of Management"; "Strategic Management"; "Theoretical foundations of CSR"; "IT Project Management"; "Management of CR"; "HRM in the 21st century"; "Business Communications" (in English); Business ethics (in English); Business skills for successful leadership (in English); CSR and ethics (in English); Leadership and corporate culture (in English). Its reported classroom occupancy for the period 2017-2022 is a total of 1,350 lecture hours (*official note No. 414/28.06.22*). It is clear from the reference that during the last academic years her classroom employment was between 300 and 400 hours, therefore exceeding the mandatory minimum.

The results of the scientific activity of the candidate for "professor" are impressive. In addition to the materials presented in the competition, a list of **33 more publications** is attached, including: **1 monograph, 21 articles and scientific publications** (including in international journals) and **11 reports from conferences** in the country and abroad. The presented publications are proof of her creative activity in scientific and applied activities related to the teaching of academic disciplines.

Her active participation in project activity makes an excellent impression. Prof. Ilieva took part in **16 international scientific and educational projects**, of which she was the head of 1 national and 7 international projects. The topics and activities of the projects in which she participates are directly related to her teaching and research work. The high project activity gives reason to conclude that Dr. Ilieva has acquired sufficient experience and routine and testifies to professionalism in her teaching work.

Dr. Daniela Ilieva *supervises 4 successfully defended doctoral students* during the period 2018-2022.

The academic, teaching and scientific activity of Associate professor Daniela Ilieva as a lecturer, author of numerous scientific publications, manager and participant in many international and national projects and scientific supervisor of doctoral students, fully corresponds to the requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor" in HSIF.

4. Brief description of the presented scientific works/publications

Careful acquaintance with the scientific production gives me grounds for the following conclusions and generalizations:

First, Assoc. prof. Ilieva participates in the competition with sufficient scientific production, whose volume amounts to on *628 standard pages*. The relative share of independent publications is 75 %, and co-authored publications – 25 %, which indicates that the candidate for professor has not only a *strong ability to perform independently, but also indisputable skills for teamwork*.

N O	Type of posts	Independent		Co-authored		Total
		Bulgarian language	English language	Bulgarian language	English language	
1	Monographs	2	-	-	-	2
2.	A book based on a dissertation	1	-	-	-	1
3	Studios	-	-	-	-	-
4	Articles	4	2	1	1	8
5	Scientific reports	-	-	-	1	1
6	Textbooks and aids	-	-	-	-	-
	Total:	7	2	1	2	12

Second, the publications of Associate professor Daniela Ilieva reveal her ambition to research current, complex and significant problems for modern science and business practice. Her interests are mainly in the field of social management, business communications and personal development. *All of them are directly related to the disciplines of the competition.*

Her independent monograph "Management of Personal Development" is also dedicated to *personal development*, in which Assoc. prof. Ilieva conscientiously collected and processed a huge amount of information. The main emphasis is placed on self-knowledge and on the significant role of teachers, university professors and mentors in the process of personal development. The thesis is that only a person who knows himself, his talents and his strengths, a person who lives and works in harmony with his aptitudes and gifts, can achieve well-being, success and satisfaction in the various areas of life. *The monograph deserves a high evaluation from both a theoretical and a practical point of view.* It concerns a topic and problems directly related to the subject of the announced competition.

The second monograph "Communication on time and in place" is dedicated to *business communications*, published by the renowned publishing house IC "Bozhidar Danev" - Sofia in 2020. It is structured in 6 chapters with a total volume of 272 pages. In it, Daniela Ilieva has set herself the goal of presenting a conceptual framework and toolkit for achieving specific communication skills by taking responsibility for the communication process. Daniela Ilieva examines the classic theories of communication through a new, more up-to-date reading and unites them in the idea of responsible communication. An interesting interweaving of classics and modernism, old and new in business and informal communication is presented. *The work was developed at a high modern scientific level and represents a completed study with specific theoretical - methodological and practical-applied contributions .*

The analysis of the publications presented in the procedure shows that they are distinguished both by relevance and originality, as well as by a clear methodological framework and professional interpretation of the empirical results. They do not repeat publications related to previous competition. As a whole, these scientific works reveal a

deep scientific interest of Assoc. Dr. Ilieva in the thematic area of the competition: business communications and management of personal development.

Third, the presented publications have been published in reputable publications, referenced and indexed in other international databases with scientific information. I positively assess the aspiration of Assoc. prof. Daniela Ilieva to publish her works in international editions, as well as those in national editions, in English (about 33% of her publications are in English). *This greatly increases the potential of her work to become recognizable in international scientific circles.*

Fourth, Assoc. prof. Ilieva's publication activity is combined with a high citation rate of her scientific publications. The total number of ***citations is 28***, of which ***three are in*** peer-reviewed monographs and collective volumes, and ***twenty-five citations are*** in non-refereed publications. This information conclusively proves that the applicant's research achievements have *found recognition and public prominence among the scientific community.*

The representatives publications attest Assoc. prof. Daniela Ilieva, PhD as a serious, conscientious, thorough and promising researcher.

5. Synthesized assessment of the main contributions

The publications contain a number of scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions of varying degrees of significance for social-management science:

Scientific contributions include:

- various theories in the field of human resources management have been systematized, and applicable approaches for career development, talent management and stress management have been derived and adapted to the Bulgarian conditions;
- major classical and contemporary theories are systematized in four managerial research areas: human resource management, organizational behavior, managerial psychology, and career development.
- theoretical summaries are derived and conceptual approaches to the existence of relationships between factors of education, family environment and human capital management in organizations are highlighted;
- scientific knowledge in the field of human resources management has been enriched, with special attention paid to techniques for personal development, the formation of the value system, the choice of education and career orientation of employees.

Scientific – applied contributions include:

- the role and place of the theoretical and applied conceptual framework of "self-knowledge" accumulated as a result of upbringing and the system of education and performance management is highlighted. On this basis, the "appropriate" place of the "new" methods for personal development based on well-being is argued.
- an author's methodology is proposed, taking into account the individual time resource of the student, in order to improve his presentation skills in business-
- based on the study of the development of digital technologies, the author's view on the digital skills of people and their relationship with digital entrepreneurship is presented. Accordingly, author's steps are proposed for designing new business models that, through the means of communication, satisfy customers with convenience, excellent quality and affordable prices.
- an analysis of the features of the education system was carried out, with particular attention paid to the skills that students need to develop for their future, neglecting the skills that teachers need to cope with rapid technological changes.

Applied contributions include:

- current programs for talent development and management in Bulgarian and international organizations operating in Bulgaria were studied and, on this basis, a model and programs for personal development in a school and university environment in Bulgaria were proposed.
- the modern challenges of the "clash of generations" are identified, and the main elements of the "student-teacher" relationship are systematized. On this basis, practical communication techniques, up-to-date guidelines and innovative models for improving and improving these relations are proposed.
- applied tools for using mentoring, coaching and other techniques developing and supporting interpersonal relationships and personal development in the workplace are proposed.

In summary , I consider the scientific achievements of Associate professor Daniela Ilieva to be *her personal work* and can be attributed to the group of "*enrichment of existing knowledge*" and "*application of new scientific achievements in practice* ", as well as "*obtaining new data and facts*" for studied economic objects.

6. Key critical notes and recommendations

I have no critical remarks, but at the same time I allow myself to make the following recommendations for the future work on candidate:

- I recommend to direct his efforts in reputable publications, referenced and indexed in global databases such as Scopus and Web of Science.
- In order to improve the learning process, I recommend that the candidate make efforts to develop textbooks and study aids for the disciplines that he will bring to HSIF.

These notes should not be taken as "criticism" and are not of such a nature as to challenge the contributions of the candidate for professorship. They are a collegial "recommendation" and "encouragement" on the occasion of the upcoming scientific events of Associate professor Daniela Ilieva and her growth in the academic field.

7. Conclusion

Based on the above, I can summarize that there is a convincing candidacy for the academic position of "professor" at HSIF. **Associate professor Daniela Ilieva, PhD** is a promising scientist who combines research with practical-applied activities, and has proven her achievements in teaching and teaching.

The competition documents testify that all the national minimum criteria and the *quantitative and qualitative requirements* of HSIF for the occupation of the academic position "professor" have been met.

With full conviction, I give my POSITIVE evaluation and recommend to the other respected members of the Scientific Jury to vote FOR AWARDING the academic position of "Professor" to Associate professor Daniela Ilieva in professional field 3.7. Administration and management, scientific specialty "Business communications and management of personal development".

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Prepared the opinion:

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/Prof. V. Nikolova-Alexieva, PhD/