

# REVIEW

by prof. Virginia Ivanova Zhelyazkova, DSc

of the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "professor" at VUZF University - Sofia

in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences professional direction, 3.7. Administration and Management (Human Resource Management, Leadership and Organizational Change)

In the competition for “professor”, announced in the State Gazette, no. 52 of 07/05/2022 and on the website of the VUZF University - Sofia (VUZF), as the only candidate appeared associate professor Teodora Milcheva Lazarova, Ph.D., from VUZF

## **1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate**

I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury under the present procedure by order No. 368 of 10.11.2022. of the Rector of VUZF. At the first meeting of this jury, it was decided that I prepare a review of the applicant's works and activities.

Prof. Lazarova submitted the following documents in connection with the present procedure:

- Autobiography;
- Diploma for acquired educational and scientific degree "doctor";

- Document for the occupation of the academic position "Associate Professor" at VUZF;
- Habilitation thesis on the topic of the announced competition;
- Other publications in connection with the competition and their summaries - a total of 23 articles and reports in scientific journals developed independently, two textbooks and one teaching aid;
- Reference to the fulfillment of the national minimum requirements laid down in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation;
- Reference to contributions in scientific publications;
- Reference for the citations of scientific works in publications of other scientists - a total of 27, some of which in journals referenced and indexed in world-known databases with scientific information;
- Employment certificate;
- Information on the candidate's participation in various projects;
- Other administrative documents accompanying the procedure.

## **2. Fulfillment of the national minimum requirements laid down in the LDASRB and the Regulations for its implementation**

The number and type of the applicant's scientific publications, textbooks and teaching aids, participation in scientific research projects, as well as the available citations of her works in the publications of other authors, are sufficient for the

fulfillment of the minimum national requirements laid down in the LDASRB and the Rules for its implementation.

### **3. General characteristics of the applicant's activity**

Assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova, Ph.D., obtained bachelor degree majoring in "Psychology" at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski". After that, she continued her studies at graduate level at the same university in two different majors: organizational consulting and business management. She obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Psychology" after studying at the Institute for Population and Human Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Assoc. prof. Lazarova successfully combines her academic development with work in business practice. She has been part of VUZF team since 2012, participating in the VUZF joint program with the University of Sheffield, and in parallel she used to teach at a number of other higher schools in Bulgaria - the University of National and World Economy, New Bulgarian University, the National Sports Academy. In this way, over the years assoc. prof. Lazarova has accumulated significant teaching and pedagogical experience and knowledge, which she passes on to students as part of the teaching and learning process in numerous disciplines from the wide spectrum of her competence - both from the field of business psychology and also from the field of human resource management resources. Assoc. prof. Lazarova's study load report is impressive - over 1,000 study hours realized in the last 4 years after taking up the academic position of "associate professor" - and this speaks eloquently of both her ability to work and her capacity to lead classes in a number of current and at the same time complex disciplines in both Bulgarian and English.

Her long-term experience in the business practice of large international companies in leadership positions builds her insight into the day-to-day management of human resources and the application of the principles of business psychology at all stages of this process. Prof. Lazarova is a rare specialist with versatile knowledge and experience, which is especially valuable for the university where she teaches and for its undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students.

#### **4. General characteristics of the candidate's publications**

Among the scientific publications submitted for review, the candidate's monograph: "Leadership and Management of Organizational Change" stands out. This work is devoted to topics whose importance has increased especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has forced major changes in the way organizations function primarily in a purely logistical sense as a result of shifting much of key processes and communication between people online. This new work environment then naturally necessitated a rethinking of a number of what were considered to be unquestionable, fundamental, notions about the role of the leader and how it manifests itself. Leaders at all levels were faced with unprecedented challenges, which in turn called into question their authority and their roles.

In her work, assoc. prof. Lazarova describes the main lines along which the change of the leadership role in the modern, post-covid world should be sought. She very clearly presents and systematizes the main problems facing leaders in the process of managing organizational change, which in the dynamic modern age is observed practically every day, especially in some volatile sectors of the economy.

The monograph consists of 240 pages. Structurally, the work is arranged logically within an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. In the introduction, the

author sets out her main three hypotheses related to the matter she researches. The hypotheses are formulated clearly, this shows the depth of the knowledge the author has of the problem, both theoretically and practically.

The first chapter is devoted to leadership, the second to human resources, the third to the relationship between leadership and human resources management. It makes a strong impression that a total of 456 studies in Bulgarian and in English have been cited - a huge amount of information has been analyzed and systematized by the author. The methodology is from the field of qualitative analysis and corresponds to the research objectives.

The author's main contribution is in presenting her own unconventional view of what effectiveness means in human resource management, what its main characteristics are, and how it is defined and depends on leaders in organizations and their behavior style.

Assoc. prof. Lazarova emphasizes the importance of innovative, non-standard approaches for the implementation of effective management in a highly dynamic, unpredictable environment and defines precisely their application as the basis of leadership effectiveness. This view is not conceptually new to science and practice, but the way the author presents it, combined with her reflections based on many years of experience as an HR manager in large organizations, clearly sets her monograph apart and makes it useful for management and the employees of any organization.

An important scientific-applied result of the research is the systematization of a number of concepts related to leadership and human resources management and their presentation in a new, modern light, such as the individual types of leadership styles, the stages in human resources management and their modification in the context of the global pandemic from COVID-19.

The main merit of assoc. prof. Lazarova in the monograph submitted for review consists in the analysis of an extremely high number of scientific studies - a total of 456 - of Bulgarian and foreign authors and in the presentation of a number of concepts and statements that they consider, in a discussion discourse, through the prism of the author's practical experience in the field of human resource management.

The contributions in the monograph are of a scientific-applied nature and can be outlined as follows:

- Classification of the types of leadership styles in a modern context;
- Presentation of the author's reading of the definition of the stages in the human resources management process;
- Outlining of the conceptual relationship between leadership styles and the effectiveness of the human resource management process in a contemporary context.

These contributions make the work interesting and of marked importance both for practice and for the purposes of teaching students on the topics related to leadership and human resource management.

Associate professor Lazarova's remaining works complement her image as an accomplished specialist and lecturer on the subject of the announced competition, with sound scientific contributions and achievements in the field of research and teaching of the problems of human resource management, leadership and organizational behavior.

## **5. Evaluation of the candidate's personal contribution**

At the time of preparation of this opinion, there is no information that would give grounds to doubt the authenticity of assoc. prof. Lazarova's publications.

## **6. Personal impressions**

I have the pleasure of knowing associate professor Todora Lazarova for more than fifteen years, during which we have worked together both at VUZF and within other organizations and projects. She is an extremely talented, capable and highly efficient person, which is evident from the results she has achieved - a sound scientific production, distinguished by thoroughness and marked maturity, authorship of two textbooks and a teaching aid, conducting classes with a significant teaching hours in terms of load and variety of disciplines, which she has developed independently in two languages and all this in combination with experience from the practice of many responsible management positions in international companies. She has made a significant contribution to the development of several majors at VUZF in the field of business psychology and human resource management, and this, as well as all her qualities and achievements listed so far, make her a particularly valuable lecturer and researcher at the university.

## **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials presented by assoc. prof. Teodora Milcheva Lazarova, Ph.D., meet all the requirements of the LDASRB, the Regulations for the implementation of the LDASRB and the relevant VUZF Regulations. The candidate in the competition has submitted a significant number of scientific works published after the materials used in the procedure for the occupation of the academic position "associate professor". The applicant's scientific publications clearly show substantial original scientific and applied scientific contributions that have received national and international recognition, as evidenced by the applicant's citation record. The theoretical developments have a clear practical applicability, and some of them are

directly oriented to the academic work. Assoc. prof. Lazarova's scientific and teaching qualifications are unquestionable. The results achieved by the candidate in the educational and scientific research activities fully comply with the VUZF Regulations for the application of LDASRB.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Academic Council of VUZF for the election of assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova, Ph.D. to the academic position of "professor" at VUZF in professional field "3.7. Administration and Management (Human Resource Management, Leadership and Organizational Change)".

01.12.2022

Reviewer: (s)

Sofia

/prof. Virginia Zhelyazkova, DSc/