

OPINION

by Tsvetan Parvanov Davidkov, professor, doctor of sociological sciences at Sofia University
"St. Kliment Ohridski" University
on the materials submitted for participation in the competition
to occupy the academic position of PROFESSOR
of VUZF University - Sofia
in the area of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional
field 3.7. Administration and Management (Human Resource Management, Leadership
and Organizational Change)

By order No. 368 of 10.11.2022. of the Rector of VUZF University, I have been appointed member of the scientific jury of competition for the appointment of the academic position of professor at VUZF; area of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field "3.7. Administration and Management (Human Resource Management, Leadership and Organizational Change)".

In the competition for professor, announced in the State Gazette, no. 52 /05.07.2022 and on the website of VUZF, as the only candidate participating appeared assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova, Ph.D. from VUZF.

1. General presentation of the received materials

The set of electronic materials presented by assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at VUZF and includes the following documents:

1. Curriculum Vitae (European format);
2. Copy of the diploma for the educational and scientific degree "Philosophiae Doctop";
3. Document certifying the occupied academic position "associate professor";
4. Monograph with summary;
5. List of publications after being appointed dor the academic position of "associate professor";
8. Certificate of criminal record;
9. Certificate of the required experience under Art. 33, para. 1, item 2;
10. Separation protocols for the joint publications;
11. Evidence of supervision of doctoral students;
12. Evidence of leading scientific and other research projects tasks;
13. Reference on the implementation of the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position "professor";
14. Reference to the original scientific contributions in the works and to the citations (without self-citations);
15. Form - consent to the processing of personal data in connection with participation in the competition.

Candidate assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova has filed a total of 26 (twenty-six) research papers as follows: 1 (one) monograph; 2 (two) textbooks; 1 (one) study aid; 22 (twenty-two) articles and scientific reports. Documents for acquired certificates and conducted trainings, for participation and for implemented developments in national and international projects, including information for the benefit of them; data on the effect obtained have also been submitted by the candidate. All submitted materials are accepted for review.

2. Brief biographical data of the applicant

The candidate, associate professor Teodora Lazarova, Ph.D., has extensive practical experience in the field of human resources management - in Bulgarian and international organizations. Assoc. prof. Lazarova successfully combines business with an academic career. There is an effective complementarity between practical experience and academic activity. Participation in the current competition is a logical step in the candidate's academic development.

Assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova has consistently performed all roles in the field of the management and development of human resources. She holds a doctorate in psychology from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS); pursues teaching activity in the field of higher education (VUZF, University of Sheffield, UNSS, NBU and other universities). Assoc. prof. Lazarova has specialized in the field (and holds certificates); she herself teaches in the following areas: leadership and management; communication; conflict solving; working in a multicultural environment; motivational strategies; time management; management of stress; leadership and group effectiveness; group cohesion, etc. This solid diversity is a prerequisite for an integrative approach in her work.

3. General characteristics of the applicant's activity

The candidate has submitted information regarding her teaching activities – it shows that the candidate meets the requirements of the law and the regulations of VUZF. I accept the reference for the scientific contributions in the main monographic work and in the textbooks. The research interests of the candidate could be identified in three consecutive areas – leadership styles, human resource management and organizational change management, as well as the newly developed field of scientific knowledge in the area of the concept of self-leadership; the links between the theories and business have been identified and highlighted by the candidate in her works.

The candidate explores the topic of managing change in organizations (being current, the topic takes on new significance in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic) and its impact on the functioning and development of modern organizations. The main monographic work - "Leadership and management of organizational change" - has a volume of 195 standard pages and is divided into three parts. In the introduction, the author's hypothesis is presented, namely that the main challenges to the effective management of human resources and organizational change, are related to 1) the criticality of effective leadership in organizations, 2) to the modern business reality, which requires the imposition of non-standard and innovative approaches in the management of human resources in order to achieve higher levels of employee motivation, satisfaction and retention, and 3) with the automation of processes and the optimization of teams. This requires leaders to develop and implement innovative management techniques (which they have not applied until now).

The author explores the influence of leadership styles and their significance for human resource management and organizational change. She draws attention to the need to define the main challenges facing modern leaders in the conditions of global crisis and uncertainty. She seeks a contemporary understanding of effective human resource management and organizational change by considering non-standard approaches, methods, techniques and tools and their use in present day organizations.

The goal is to achieve higher motivation, efficiency and productivity in organizations. The research is based on qualitative and comparative analysis.

In the first chapter of the monographic work, the leadership styles in the management of the organization are investigated. Of interest are the innovative techniques and practices that would contribute to increasing the efficiency of the management process. In the second chapter "Human Resource Management" focuses on the stages of management

of human resources. The key factors for long-term motivation and attachment of employees to the company are analyzed. The Covid crisis and its consequences are examined in detail and their impact on HR management (HRM) is investigated. In the third chapter "Leadership and Human Resource Management" the candidate derives major interactions associated with the higher effectiveness of certain leadership styles in different business environments and diverse organizational dynamics. She touches upon and then investigates the topic of leadership styles and entrepreneurship. Based on the consideration of each problem-thematic center, conclusions and recommendations are offered to improve the overall HRM process and organizational change. In the conclusion, the achievements are summarized and the results and inferences leading to confirmation of the author's thesis are presented again.

The monographic work gives reason to draw the following conclusion: assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova knows the scientific literature and scientific achievements in the specific scientific field. She is able to develop and build on what has been achieved and formulate discussion questions. The rich corpus of information sources referred to in the work has been used correctly. The monograph presented by assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova on "Leadership and Management of Organizational Change" is a comprehensive study in the field of HRM, organizational change, leadership and management. It will be useful the work to be published with the critical remarks reflected.

The applicant provides a significant number (and volume) of publications; references for citations exceeding the minimum requirements. A good impression is made by the international response of the candidate's publications (visible in the citation reference).

4. Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution

The scientific works and publications presented for the competition confirm the personal contribution of the candidate. Formulated contributions and obtained results are the outcome of her personal work.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations.

The findings formulated below have the nature of more of an "external reflection" that can serve as a potential guide for future improvements.

- In view of the fact candidate intensively uses foreign information sources, can some translations be improved? For example, what is translated as technical training (related to technical skills, competencies), is it not more accurate to speak of vocational training (training to acquire skills necessary to practice a certain profession; to perform a specific job).

- Given the importance of the topic of employee training (complex, multifaceted), is it not good to put an independent emphasis on LEARNING (as a specific phenomenon that corresponds to learning, but is not reduced to it). This is also important from the point of view of the students' responsibility for the results; and in the context of the concepts: learning organization; knowledge management etc.

- Linguistic issues related to the style of expression can be discussed in the texts; the possibility of using Bulgarian words instead of foreign ones, etc.

- I recommend the author to publish more in indexed journals that would provide her wider visibility among the qualified scientific and academic community.

In the spirit of review stylistics: the above in no way diminishes the value and my high assessment of the scientific and academic texts of the candidate.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova correspond to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation and the relevant Regulations of the VUZF.

The candidate in the competition has submitted a significant number of published scientific works after the procedure for associate professor. In the works of the candidate there are original scientific and applied contributions that have achieved national and international recognition. A representative part of them are published in magazines and scientific volumes published by prestigious academic publishing houses. Theoretical developments have practical applicability - some of them are aimed directly at the academic work. The results achieved by the candidate in the educational and scientific research activities fully comply with the VUZF Regulations for the application of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in Bulgaria. The scientific and teaching qualifications of the candidate are high and meet the requirements of occupying the academic position PROFESSOR.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analysis of 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 for the election of assoc. prof. Teodora Lazarova to the academic position of "professor" at the VUZF in professional field "3.7. Administration and Management (Human Resource Management, Leadership and Organizational Change)".

02.11.2022

Prepared the opinion:

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