

REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Victoria Svetlomirova Gatzova, PhD
from VUZF University – Sofia

of the materials submitted for participation in the competition for
the academic position “**chief assistant professor**”
in the Higher School of Insurance and Finance
in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences,
professional field

3.8 Economics (Financial Optimizations and Business Process Management)

In the competition for „chief assistant professor“, announced in the State Gazette, № 34 of 16.04.2024 and on the website of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance, there is one candidate participating – Dr. Nikola Dimitrov from the Higher School of Insurance and Finance.

1. General description of the presented materials

By order № 182 of 17.06.2024 of the rector of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position of “**chief assistant professor**” at VUZF in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field **3.8. Economics (Financial Optimizations and Business Process Management)**.

Only one candidate - Dr. Nikola Dimitrov, was admitted to participate in the announced competition.

The set of electronic materials, presented by Dr. Nikola Dimitrov, is in accordance with the Regulations for the terms and conditions for holding academic positions at VUZF and includes the following documents:

- Application for admission to the competition for the academic position of „chief assistant professor“;
- Autobiography;
- Copy of the diploma for the educational and scientific degree “doctor”;
- List of publications and the full texts of them;
- Reference on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position “chief assistant professor”;
- Official note, certifying educational activity under Art. 14, para. 1 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for holding academic positions at VUZF;
- Certificate of internship in the specialty;
- Medical certificate;
- Criminal record certificate;
- Consent form for the processing of personal data in connection with participation in the contest.

The candidate has attached a dissertation work and three articles in non-refereed scientific publications. I accept the indicated materials for review.

The reference of the minimum national requirements shows that the total number of points of Dr. Nikola Dimitrov is 80 points, with the required minimum of 50 points according to Indicator A (dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree “doctor”).

2. Brief biographical data of the candidate

Dr. Nikola Dimitrov completed his higher education at the University of Sheffield, where he obtained a BA in Computer Science and an MA in Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship. In March 2024, he obtained a PhD in economics at the Higher School of Insurance and Finance.

Dr. Nikola Dimitrov has been a teacher at VUZF for seven years, and the disciplines he leads in Bulgarian and English are related to business process management, sales management skills, information technology, etc. The listed

disciplines indicate the candidate's scientific focus on the topic of business process management. They fully correspond to the announced competition.

In the period 2019-2021, he held administrative positions at the Higher School, namely - director of the Directorate “Educational Activity” and director of the Distance Learning Center at VUZF.

Dr. Dimitrov has extensive professional experience in the field of lean management and optimization of business processes. From 2016 to March 2024, he was working at the Lean Institute as a senior consultant for a number of companies. He is currently a strategic success consultant at Success Consulting.

Based on the biographical data, it can be claimed that the candidate's professional, scientific and academic qualifications fully correspond to the announced competition for the academic position of “chief assistant professor“ at VUZF.

3. General characteristics of the candidate's activity

3.1. Evaluation of the candidate's educational and pedagogical activity

From the presented academic workload report for the period 2019-2024, it is clearly seen that Dr. Dimitrov is a lecturer in a wide range of disciplines (24 in number) in both the bachelor's and master's programs of VUZF. It is important to note that the candidate also teaches in English. For the specified period, he has conducted 2,440 lecture hours in a number of disciplines that are substantively related to the announced competition.

3.2. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and scientific-applied activity

The dissertation and the three scientific publications, presented by the candidate, fully correspond to the subject of the announced competition.

The dissertation work on the topic “Financial Optimization of Organizations through Lean Thinking” has a volume of 152 pages, of which 24 pages include bibliography and appendices. The research presented in this dissertation is

interdisciplinary in nature, as it is the result of the intersection of two scientific fields - organizational behavior and financial management. In his dissertation, Dr. Nikola Dimitrov clearly presents the relevance of the researched topic. In today's dynamic business world, a major challenge, which is also a decisive factor for the success of organizations, is the optimization of financial results. The author of the thesis introduces the construct "organizational chaos" through which he presents the complexity of structure, processes and interactions in organizations, and offers lean management as a tool for effectively dealing with complex processes and improving financial results. The candidate skillfully performs the research tasks, achieves the main goal and convincingly proves the stated thesis, according to which lean systems and tools can serve not only to mitigate operational turmoil, but also to create an environment that is conducive to sustainable organizational growth and financial stability.

The work consists of an introduction, four chapters, references and appendices. The balance of the individual chapters could be improved, as the second chapter is much longer (72 pages) than the other three chapters, which are between 10-15 pages. A positive impression is made by carefully designed tables and figures that contribute to better structuring and visualization of information.

The first chapter, which is of a theoretical nature, introduces and defines the concepts of chaos and complexity in organizations. The interaction between organizational chaos, process complexity and financial performance is examined, paying attention to the role of leadership and the need for lean thinking in managing chaos. The second chapter is a literature review of the problems of organizational chaos management and lean thinking investigated in the dissertation. The mentioned constructs are presented in depth at a theoretical level. The lean principles and their application in different organizational contexts are studied. Emphasis is also placed on the financial consequences of lean thinking in a chaotic environment. The third chapter of the work has a methodological nature. The need to conduct quantitative and qualitative research to achieve the completeness of the collected data is substantiated. The sample profile is presented, the research instrument for collecting quantitative data is described, and the interview process is discussed. In the fourth chapter, which is

empirical, the analysis of the results of the questionnaire and of the conducted interviews, the discussion and the interpretation of the obtained results are presented.

Structurally, there is a logical sequence in the development of the researched problem.

In the dissertation work, 192 sources in English have been researched and presented. The number of used literature is a sign of the candidate's desire to seriously and responsibly research the problem. The presented theoretical information, combined with the in-depth analyzes within the framework of the exhibition, testify to the good awareness of Dr. Nikola Dimitrov in relation to the issues he researches.

The publications that the candidate has submitted for his participation in the competition are **three articles** on the topic of the dissertation, published in English in non-refereed scientific publications, and all three publications are independent. They are dedicated to lean management issues. In his publications, the candidate explores how lean thinking helps organizations adapt to changing market demands and customer needs, turning potential difficulties into competitive advantages. Dr. Dimitrov's articles also explore the importance of specific lean tools for the modern business environment. Emphasis is also placed on the quantifiable financial benefits of lean management, emphasizing its strategic role in stimulating organizational efficiency and financial success.

The analyzed problems in the scientific publications of Dr. Nikola Dimitrov are in the scope of the announced competition.

3.3. Evaluation of the candidate's contributions

When reviewing the materials, presented in the competition (dissertation work and scientific publications), the following more significant scientific and scientific-applied contributions of Dr. Nikola Dimitrov can be highlighted:

- An in-depth study at a theoretical level of the constructs “organizational chaos” and “lean management”.
- Revealing the strategic role of lean management in streamlining processes, driving organizational efficiency and improving productivity.

- Revealing the importance of lean management for optimizing the financial results of organizations.

4. Evaluation of the candidate's personal contribution

I believe that the results obtained and the contributions in the materials, presented for the competition (dissertation work and three publications), are a personal merit of Dr. Nikola Dimitrov.

5. Critical notes and recommendations

I have a critical remark regarding the structuring of the dissertation. It is noticeable that there are too many points and sub-points, which create a feeling of excessive schematization of the presented information and fragmentation of the text.

My second critical remark is regarding the materials for the competition - in the presented list of publications, it is necessary to write correctly the bibliographic data of the three articles, because only the name of the author and the titles of the articles are indicated, without specifying the journals, the year and so called.

I recommend that the candidate include more current sources in his research.

Also, my main recommendation to Dr. Dimitrov is to focus his efforts on publishing articles in scientific publications that are referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases.

6. Personal impressions

I know Nikola Dimitrov personally, because we are colleagues at the Higher School of Insurance and Finance. He is a good lecturer with a strong commitment to the learning process, who applies innovative approaches in his teaching activities.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials, presented by Dr. Nikola Dimitrov, **meet all the requirements** of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the same law and the relevant Regulations of VUZF.

The candidate in the competition has submitted a sufficient number of scientific papers. The candidate's works contain original scientific and scientific-applied contributions. Dr. Nikola Dimitrov's scientific and teaching qualifications are unquestionable.

The results, achieved by Dr. Dimitrov in the educational and research activities, correspond to the Regulations of VUZF for the application of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

After carefully reading the materials and scientific works, presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to give my **positive assessment** and **to recommend** to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Academic Council for election of **Dr. Nikola Dimitrov** for the academic position of “**chief assistant professor**” at VUZF in professional field **3.8. Economics (Financial Optimizations and Business Process Management)**.

30.06.2024

Sofia

Reviewer: (s)
(Assoc. Prof. Victoria Gatzova, PhD)