

REVIEW

by **Professor Velislava Atanasova Chavdarova, PhD**

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of the materials submitted for participation in the competition

to occupy the academic position "**professor**"

at University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski

by: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences professional direction

3.2. Psychology (**Social Psychology**)

In the competition for "professor", announced in National Journal No. 96 of November 17, 2023 and on the website University of Plovdiv Paisiy Hilendarski for the needs of the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Education, the candidate is **Assoc. Prof. Youri Pavlov Ianakiev, PhD** from the University of Plovdiv Paisiy Hilendarski.

1. General presentation of the received materials

The large-scale scientific output of assoc. prof. Youri Ianakiev, PhD, presented for review is impressively arranged and correctly presents his research and teaching work in the period 2015 - 2024, for the time after occupying the academic position of "associate professor". The candidate has correctly submitted all the necessary documents for participation in the competition, including a complete list of publications with annotations and separation protocols, a list of citations, documents certifying scientific research achievements, a report on contributions, etc.

I note that all the criteria and formal requirements for holding the competition have been met, including the attached documentation and texts of scientific publications, exceeding the scientometric requirements for holding this position.

By order No. PD-21-72 dated 16/01/24 of the Rector of University of Plovdiv Paisiy Hilendarski, I am included as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic

position of "**professor**" in the **University of Plovdiv** in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.2. Psychology (Social Psychology), announced for the needs of the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education. To participate in the announced competition, Associate Professor Youri Ianakiev from University of Plovdiv Paisiy Hilendarski submitted documents.

Associate Professor Ianakiev applies 31 scientific works corresponding to the profile of the competition.

The scientometric certificate required by the current legal provisions and regulations of the University of Plovdiv for compliance with the minimum required points according to the 6 groups of indicators for the candidate's participation in the announced competition, does not just cover, but with the specified number 1660 points, far exceeds the number of points required for this academic position (660).

A number of scientific publications, including monographs, textbooks, handbooks, articles and reports from participation in national and international scientific conferences, which have numerous citations in specialized publications, are indicated in the Reference for Noticed Citations. A fact that testifies to the recognizability and popularity of the candidate in the research areas of socio-psychological knowledge.

I can confidently state that the quantity and quality of full-text scientific works submitted for review demonstrate a high level of expertise and professional erudition and many times exceed the requirements for holding the academic position of "professor".

On the other hand, the information from the creative autobiography further strengthens the impression of respect for the numerous activities that testify to undoubted possibilities and constant striving to improve skills in various areas of scientific theory, public academic space and social practice.

2. Brief biographical data

Biographical facts reveal a worthy creative path - with upgrading, diversification and deepening of professional competences. As it becomes clear, assoc. prof. Ianakiev's interests are focused on psychology in general, and in particular on the subject areas of social, medical, pedagogical and developmental psychology. Undoubtedly, the established direction in the research, public and professional activities of Assoc. prof. Youri Ianakiev corresponds to the thematic area in which the announced competition is.

After defending his master's degree at the University of Pau and the Adour region - Academy of Bordeaux, France, the candidate started his professional career as a court expert at the Ministry of Justice and a part-time lecturer at the University of Plovdiv and New Bulgarian University. He has been working as a full-time university lecturer since 2009. He obtained his doctorate degree at the University of Pau and the Adour region - Academy of Bordeaux, France, where he defended his dissertation, and in 2015 he obtained the academic position of "associated professor" in social psychology.

The variety of bachelor's and master's programs and courses where the candidate is a supervisor and teacher are impressive. Leads a number of lectures in the undergraduate program: social psychology part I and II, psycholinguistics, stress and coping strategies; Lectures in master's programs: social knowledge and behavior, stress and mental health, motivation and behavior, psychology of optimal experience, etc.

And all this does not completely exhaust the professional interests of assoc. prof. Ianakiev. He has a number of memberships in organizations and associations such as American Psychological Association, Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Society of Psychologists in Bulgaria (BG RP 100957), Secretary of the Section "Social, Political and Ethnopsychology" at the Society of Psychologists in Bulgaria, Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, member of the Management Board of the Public Council for Culture and Cultural Heritage, member of the scientific committee of the Rhine and Danube University Publishing House, etc.

He also exercises responsible administrative functions of a diverse nature as Head of the Department of Psychology and Education (from 2021), director of the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology and Neurosciences (from 2022), director of the University Center for Volunteers (from 2011), head of master's programs Psychology of Leadership and School Psychology (from 2019), vice-dean (2015-2019), scientific secretary (2012-2015) and faculty coordinator of the "Erasmus+" program (2011-2019) of the Faculty of Education, editor-in-chief of the journal Developmental Psychology (since 2020), etc.

The procedure documentation contains evidence of the candidate's numerous participations in national and international conferences, scientific forums, seminars and trainings, delivery of lecture courses abroad under the "Erasmus+" program and work on various research projects in the field of higher education.

3. General characteristics of the applicant's activity

The teaching activity of assoc. prof. Ianakiev is distinguished by creativity, precision, professionalism and correctness. He not only succeeds in teaching with pedagogical mastery and scientific erudition, but also professionally ensures the conduct of lectures and seminars, which he leads with useful teaching aids.

His scientific activity is also tied to the guidance of doctoral students and dozens of graduate students.

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

In the competition for professorship, assoc. prof. Ianakiev participated with 1 monograph, 1 published book based on a defended dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor"; 2 studies, 22 articles, 2 university textbooks and 3 handbooks. The distribution of scientific works in the country and abroad is as follows: 27 in the country and 4 abroad. The list of publications not submitted for peer review indicates a rich publication activity, primarily in the field of social psychology.

Associate Professor Ianakiev demonstrates a sustained professional interest in modern, topical and open-to-solution problems, especially in the field of social psychology, which is one of the most dynamically developing sections in the discussion fields of modern psychology. I state that the scientific production included for review is an adequate theoretical basis of the public, administrative and practical-applied activities in the candidate's previous professional realization.

Complete bibliographic data are accurately and correctly described in the procedure documents. Original copies of the indicated monographs and aids are provided, as well as copies of the studies, articles and reports published in the indicated sources.

Based on the review of their content, I accept as reasonable their conditional identification in 6 semantic fields, which reveal the dominants of research interest in the scientific production of assoc. prof. Ianakiev.

1. Planning, development and implementation of the author's empirical studies and cross-cultural analyzes on topics related to stress, burnout and resilience among educational specialists and specialists from helping professions. Derivation and application of algorithms to deal with chronic stress in risk groups.

2. Operationalize effective strategies to deal with workplace stressors and prevent burnout syndrome and strengthen the mental health and well-being of helping professionals. Argumentation of practices for providing more effective individual and group psychological

assistance for building competences for stress management on the part of pedagogical personnel.

3. Description and analysis of the main applications of bio- and neurofeedback methods and methods of non-invasive brain stimulation to unfold the potential of neurotechnologies as tools for personal development and stimulation of creativity in people with disabilities.

4. Enrichment of theory and development of practices related to psychological resilience through traditional and innovative methods in terms of clarifying their essence, specificity and determination.

5. Current problematization of phenomena and ethical constructs such as "hope", "attachment", "communication", "creativity", etc.

6. Creative discussion of innovative topics such as dialectical confrontation between semiotic theory and fictional worlds in the work of Umberto Eco; Creativity and psychopathology in the life and work of Salvador Dali; Rembrandt's Self-Portraits as Visual Autobiography; Aspects of the genius artistic creativity of Rembrandt van Rijn and Salvador Dalí, related to their personal development and their attitude to the processes of maturation, social conflicts and old age.

Regardless of the scientific and applied contributions of the candidate indicated so far, both identified in the perspective of his overall scientific production and in terms of his brilliant qualities as a teacher, I cannot help but focus attention on the most essential component legitimizing the meaning of the habilitation procedure.

In the habilitation work *Diagnostics of burnout syndrome among educational specialists. Strategies for coping with chronic stress in the workplace. (Second Supplemented and Revised Edition)*. Plovdiv: University Publishing House, 193 pages. ISBN 978-619-202-836-7 assoc. prof. Ianakiev presents both analytical and empirically verified integral and systematic approach for diagnosis, prevention and management of psychosocial risks of burnout syndrome for the development of psychological resilience in pedagogical specialists in the context of trends in modern society, simultaneously posing questions and giving reasoned answers. The subjective practical experience of the author is objectified through a precise, comprehensive and systematic analysis of key concepts of psychological theory.

The monograph brings together the results of two large-scale studies conducted over the past five years. One of them is the first national representative study of its kind in Bulgaria, which aims not only to diagnose the level of burnout syndrome among educational specialists

and to study the influence of demographic factors, factors of the professional, family and social environment, but also to develop algorithms for coping with chronic stress. A respectable number of 1,000 teachers of all age groups who practice in small and large cities and villages take part in the study. The research methodology includes: a certified method for assessing work stress (Burnout-Q) and an author's questionnaire on the influence of the factors of the professional, family and social environment on the occurrence of burnout syndrome among pedagogical specialists.

The second study is international and is dedicated to the diagnosis of psychosocial risks and stress at work and the development of psychological resilience in teachers from Austria, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy. Its main focus is engaged in building competences for stress management on the part of pedagogical specialists in the four European countries. Its importance is related both to providing effective strategies for dealing with workplace stressors and prevention of burnout syndrome, and to strengthening their mental health and well-being.

The reading of the monographic work gives grounds for evaluating the author's excellent level of analytical preparation. Systematic presentation leaves the impression of skills in composing knowledge and presenting it correctly. Critical analysis is relevant to the weight of a thesis, simultaneously asking questions, seeking answers and providing solutions.

The author is able to summarize and interpret empirical facts. He is able to go beyond the quantitative data and reach the depth and essence of the studied phenomena. Youri Ianakiev's excellent psychological literacy and competence is evident from the precise text. The author has managed to the maximum extent to describe the individual stages of the process, aimed at reducing psychosocial risks and stress in the workplace and building psychological resilience among educational specialists. Achieving this goal is crucial for teachers' professional motivation and fulfillment. Assoc. prof. Ianakiev skillfully and expertly convinces us that the retention of teachers in the education system, their subsequent career development and personal and family well-being depend on the skills to build psychological resilience. On the other hand, the feeling of happiness in the personal and professional life of the teacher inevitably reflects on the quality of the learning process and hence on the well-being of his students.

The tabular and graphical presentation of the results correspond to the text of the analysis, which is appropriate for better understanding by the reader. I believe that the habilitation work is a convincing verification of Youri Ianakiev's holistic, humane and expert view of the teacher and can be used as a timely and necessary source of objective information and a tool for psychological work in the education system.

The textbook *Stress and mental health: textbook for students*, Plovdiv: Paisii Hilendarski University Publishing House. ISBN 978-619-202-630-1, and the **university handbooks**: Ianakiev, Y., Nikolov, N. and others. (2022) *Resilience for teachers: building resilience to stress and burnout*. Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Publishing House (translated into English, Bulgarian, German, Italian, Greek languages), ISBN 978-619-202-746-9; *Leadership and group behavior: handbook for students*. Plovdiv: Paisiy Hilendarski University Publishing House. ISBN 978-619-202-837-4; *Stress and mental health: university textbook*. University Publishing House. ISBN: ISBN 978-619-202-634-9 are works by assoc. prof. Ianakiev, which I define as valuable practical-applied tools with two main tasks: to consolidate and make sense of the psychology material already learned by the students and to offer them to the students - psychological tools, methods and ways of diagnostic research. The content is attractively presented, with easy access to both individual subtopics and the global structure of the material. The exposition of the topics implies active feedback both during the learning process and during self-training, for which purpose questions and tasks are provided for individual and group reflection, case studies, sharing of experience and experiences. At the end of the manual, additional resources are offered for checking and upgrading knowledge. The solutions to the set tasks require thoroughness and awareness of the knowledge from the lecture courses, transfer skills and flexible application of the scientific presentations. Thus, students have the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge acquired during lectures and exercises and form an initial diagnostic experience.

The author succeeds in offering content possessing the qualities of a useful tool that at the same time fills the need for both expert and accessible reading analyzing the processes of resilience, group behavior, aggression, stress, etc.

Among the most valuable elements in the scientific work of assoc. prof. Youri Ianakiev, PhD, presented in the series of studies, articles and reports, are his inclination and abilities for theoretical-applied, innovative research; analysis and summarization of different conceptual trends and methodological approaches in applied psychology; combining empirical data and theoretical constructions into a comprehensive picture of the studied processes; systematic description of the manifestations of the psyche in health and disease, as well as interest in significant current problems of social practice.

Assoc. prof. Ianakiev is not afraid to deal with the big topics of psychological science such as mental well-being, attachment, social attitudes, burnout, resilience, psychological interpretation of works of art and many others, giving his author's contribution to their conceptualization, nor to polemicize with established perceptions and to problematize popular

understandings. The broad perspective, the reflection on actuality and the transformation of the existing knowledge into a comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomena turn his works into an original author's creation.

A careful reading of the scientific publications of assoc. prof. Youri Ianakiev, his academic and teaching work can be briefly summarized as follows:

First, as a teacher and scientist, he has theoretical training at a level that meets the criteria for actual, modern psychological science.

Secondly, at the same time as a good theoretical preparation, he is also a researcher, an author of numerous empirical studies.

Third, the accumulated evidence in multiple scientific studies reflects on various fields of applied social psychology.

Fourth, significant for his scientific activity is the validation, adaptation, standardization and construction of psychological tools for the Bulgarian context.

Fifth, his publications correspond reliably both with the scientific achievements of psychology and with current, expert psychological practices.

In the appendices to the documentation *List of all publications*, including and beyond the scope of this competition, the candidate has presented a complete bibliographic description of his overall publication activity.

The unequivocal conclusion regarding Youri Ianakiev's scientific production is that it is distinguished by thoroughness, research precision, creative approach and undoubted practical applicability.

Contributions (scientific, scientific-applied, applied) and citations

I cannot but express my respect for associate professor Ianakiev's ability, on the one hand, to synthesize scientific knowledge in the direction of correct operationalization and erudition in the construction of author's theoretical models, and on the other hand, to skillfully verify his theoretical findings through a number of empirical studies.

I fully accept the formulated contributions related to the psychosocial dimensions of stress and burnout syndrome; aggression, stereotypes and discrimination in a school environment; interpersonal relationships; creativity and social identity, which I comment on as follows:

1. A creatively constructed integral approach for research, understanding and regulation of the psychosocial dimensions of stress through analysis of the essence, mechanisms, factors, risks, diagnostics, coping and the building of psychological resilience.

2. Realized large-scale cross-cultural studies by applying, for the first time in Bulgaria, a systematic approach for diagnosis, prevention and management of the psychosocial risks of burnout syndrome and for the development of psychological resilience among educational specialists.

3. A thoroughly developed socio-psychological phenomenology of the genesis, structure and conditions for studying the levels of burnout and self-assessment of resilience among teachers.

4. Realization of the first large-scale interdisciplinary studies in the country and the region of burnout syndrome in doctors with different medical specialties and its relationship with biomarkers of stress.

5. An excellently realized attempt to construct, for the first time in Bulgaria, a study of psychosocial distress, anxiety and depression in oncological patients in the operative stage of treatment, in which a distress thermometer adapted for work in a clinical environment in our country was used.

6. Demonstrated well-formed, expert skills in the development of the empirical design of cross-cultural and representative studies, which I consider to be an aspect with a significant contribution to the research methodology of social psychological theory and practice. A model for comprehensive, thoughtful and precisely executed investigative and analytical work.

4. Evaluation of the personal contribution of the candidate

I'll express the opinion that assoc. prof. Ianakiev, PhD, is able to successfully achieve his research goals, shows excellent knowledge of the issue, personal and professional commitment to it, as well as impressive skills for scientific research work. I believe that it will be continued with the realization of the future ideas that arose during the writing of his scientific works.

The presented scientific works are original scientific developments. The deposited documentation, including the noted citations, are in order and meet all the criteria in terms of the procedure for conducting the current competition. The information from Youri Ianakiev's autobiography testifies to a step-by-step and dignified path to professional realization in the field of psychology.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

I recommend to assoc. prof. Youri Ianakiev, PhD, to continue developing his research potential and to publish in international publications included in the world databases.

6. Personal impressions

It is more than obvious that assoc. prof. Ianakiev demonstrates a sustained interest mainly in topical and open-ended problems of social psychology, generated by the work of pedagogical and medical specialists and respondents in illness and health. I state that the entire scientific production submitted for review represents an adequate expert base of the professional appearances and practical activities in the current realization of assoc. prof. Youri Ianakiev. I believe that to a significant extent it meets one of the most important criteria for modern quality teaching, namely – achieved unity between theoretical constructs and scientific facts. I define this achievement as a significant **contribution** of his research and teaching realization to the present moment.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Youri Ianakiev 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 this laws and the relevant Regulations of the University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski.

The candidate in the competition **has** submitted a significant number of scientific works published after the materials used in the occupation of the academic position Associate Professor. In the scientific works of associate professor Youri Ianakiev, there are original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition.

His theoretical developments have practical applicability, and some of them are directly oriented to academic work. The scientific and teaching qualifications of associate professor Ianakiev, PhD, are unquestionable.

The results achieved by Assoc. prof. Youri Ianakiev in the educational and research activities fully correspond to the minimum national and additional requirements of the Faculty of Education, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the University of Plovdiv for the application of the Bulgarian law.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition and analyzing their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to express my **positive** assessment and to

recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty council of the Faculty of Education for the selection of the academic position "professor" of **assoc. prof. Youri Pavlov Ianakiev** at the University of Plovdiv Paisiy Hilendarski in: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal, professional direction 3.2. Psychology (Social Psychology).

20/02/2024

Reviewer:

(signature)

Prof. Velislava Chavdarova, PhD