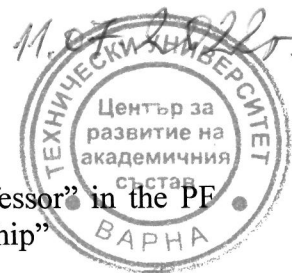


OPINION



on the competition for acquiring the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the PE 5.13. General Engineering and the specialty of “Technological Entrepreneurship” announced in the SG, issue 31 of 19.04.2022.

candidate: Ch. Assist. Prof. Dr. Sibel Ilhanova Ahmedova

Member of the scientific jury: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobrin Zhekov Dobrev

1. General characteristics of the candidate’s scientific research and applied activities

The scientific research activity of the candidate Sibel Ahmedova comprises 22 works, including: dissertation thesis, dissertation abstract and five related publications. The dissertation work and its accompanying publications are in the field of SME programming and competitiveness. Submitted, for the purposes of the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” are 16 publications: 1 monograph and 15 papers. The papers are written in English and have been presented to national and international scientific forums. Two of the publications are co-authored and two are in print.

The candidate demonstrates increasing commitment to project-based activities. Dr. Sibel Ahmedova participated, over a relatively short period of time, in two national and three university research projects.

2. Evaluation of the candidate’s pedagogical approaches, training and lecturing activities

Sibel Ahmedova has 3 years’ experience of working as a lecturer at TU – Varna with an extensive teaching portfolio for delivered lectures and seminars as evidenced from the presented reference. The disciplines taught are in the field of management, entrepreneurship, innovations, competitiveness, finance, accounting, and others. She provides training to students in different specialties in both educational qualification degrees “Bachelor” and “Master”.

For the period under consideration, Dr. Ahmedova was involved in the development of three course programmes (curricula): “Fundamentals of Finance”, “Business Financial Management”, “Technological Entrepreneurship”. She was also assigned a thesis supervisor to four graduate students in their EQD “Bachelor”, specialty “Industrial Management”.

Her teaching workload is high – the reported total teaching load is more than 600 hours per year on average. Attached are certificates of staff mobility projects validating her teaching activity overseas and completed lecture hours at foreign universities abroad.

Developed, as an additional medium of instruction to support and enhance the process of learning, in co-authorship are: university textbook “Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship” Publishing House - TU Varna 2020, and a course manual for laboratory exercises “Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship” – Publishing House - TU 2020.

3. Main scientific and scientifically applied contributions.

Submitted, by the candidate Sibel Ahmedova, is a monograph entitled “Regional competitiveness as a factor in the development of the North-Eastern region”.

The monograph consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a reference list. The practical relevance of the research work is conditioned by the need for improved dynamic competitive performance of Bulgaria’s regions. Indeed, this is a promising concept within the context of high public sensitivity towards the observed disparities in the

development of the individual regions, and to the potentials for the individual and social welfare improvement as well. The monograph is designed to explore the existing competitiveness within certain regions in Bulgaria and Turkey and examine the models providing new regional perspectives.

The first chapter clarifies the basic concepts, summarizes the leading authors' positions as to the underlying factors behind regional competitiveness, examines the factors as outlined by the EC, refers to a concrete model for increased regional competitiveness. Studied, in the practical part, is the economic state of NER.

Studied in great detail is the development of the Sakarya Province, Turkey. A considerable amount of information on key macro and micro economic variables has been processed. Analysed, further, are the corresponding relationships, dependencies, and achievements. An attempt is made to substantiate the effectiveness of the regional development model adopted in Sakarya by investigating the dynamics regarding: R&D expenditures, innovations, technological transfer, completed projects, trade turnover, unemployment, business income, income growth, etc. What immediately rivets the attention is the author's genuine interest in a number of recurrent themes related to innovations, investments, training, entrepreneurship, and their crucial role in regional competitive performance.

The monograph proceeds with a thorough SWOT analysis on the basis of which the author brings out the potential opportunities for NER's economic growth. The author's viewpoint of NER's development strategy is reflected in the five clearly identified priorities. The monograph comes to a logical conclusion with a model, developed by the author, and designed to enhance the regional competitive performance. Observed, though, is a certain inclination on the part of the author towards more detailed methodologies, and insufficient regard for the results of the analysed studies.

The monograph is characterized by its practical relevance and logical cohesion, with the problems being traced both in theoretical and practical terms.

Contributions and relevance.

Systematised are the fundamental concepts of regional competitiveness, and a new definition is proposed.

Theoretical Substantiation.

Established is the need for regional specialisation, and proposed, accordingly, are some practical guidelines for a more enhanced regional competitiveness within NER.

Confirmation of a new hypothesis.

Considered carefully are the factors leading to improved regional competitiveness of Sakarya Province.

Verification and facts.

Developed, accordingly, is a model designed to enhance the competitive performance of the region under consideration.

Establishment of new methods.

Fully consistent with the concepts of the monograph are the conclusions, the recommendations, and the contributions in publications D.7.3, D.8.3, D.8.5. These are the papers that inquire into the nature and characteristics of the integration of digital technologies into all areas of NER businesses, the COVID-19 effects upon the North-Eastern region, the importance of research and development (R&D) in strengthening NER enterprise competitiveness.

S. Ahmedova's publication activity, apart from the monograph, is associated with the following three areas: technological entrepreneurship – with six corresponding publications; enterprise competitiveness – two publications; financial management – 4 publications. Of utmost importance is the study into the entrepreneurial attitudes of undergraduates

specializing in “Industrial Management” and “Technological Entrepreneurship and Innovations” at TU-Varna.

Available evidence strengthens my absolute conviction that all the academic achievements and contributions are entirely attributable to the scientific endeavour and special effort made by the candidate S. Ahmedova.

It should also be noted that the retrieved citation count in refereed and indexed journals includes five references of her publications in Web of Science, 12 citations in monographs and collective volumes and 2 citations in non-refereed journals. On the whole, the scientific journals in which the papers are published are varied, sufficiently representative and are within the scientific field of the present competition.

4. The relevance of the contributions to the science and practice.

The summary of the publications reveals S. Ahmedova’s preference for interdisciplinarity both in her training activities and scientific research. She is inclined to use large databases, to bring together quantitative and qualitative studies into a unified whole, to process and analyze statistical information, and correctly interpret the findings attained in the research endeavours. The results achieved proved considerably significant at national, regional, and business levels. The practical and applied contributions are of great consequences for SMBs, public administration and NER’s economic development. Dr. S. Ahmedova’s scientific research and publication achievements deserve wider recognition among the relevant scientific communities, business, and management.

From the reference presented by the candidate it is evident that the quantitative indicators of the criteria for acquiring the academic position of “Associate Professor” are fully met.

5. Critical notes and recommendations

Recommendation: concentration of the efforts into a more restricted range of scientific interests.

CONCLUSION

The candidate, from the perspective of the scientific research evaluation in terms of scientometric indicators, strictly complies with the requirements of the Academic Development Act and the Regulations for TU– Varna research and publication activities. Submitted is sufficient scientific production with regards to volume, thematic consistence and practical solutions. There are feasible opportunities for further development, theoretical and practical improvement of the attained research endeavours.

The candidate meets the requirements of the Act on Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations of ADASRB implementation and the Regulations on the conditions and order for holding academic positions at the Technical University of Varna. Based on the above presented arguments and my close acquaintance with the submitted scientific works, their considerable significance on the grounds of the aforementioned scientific, scientifically-applied and applied contributions, I find it reasonable **to propose** Sibel Ilhanova Ahmedova to be elected for holding the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the PF 5.13. General Engineering in the specialty of “Technological Entrepreneurship”.

July 07th, 2022

Varna

MEMBER OF THE JURY:

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. D. Dobrev/

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2016/679