

REVIEW

For the teaching and research activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Diana Petkova Petkova, participant in the competition for the academic position of "Professor": Professional Field of Study 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Intercultural Communication), for the needs of the Department of "Communication, Public Relations and Advertising", Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications, SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", announced in the "State Gazette" no. 55/28.06.2024

1. Data about the competition

The competition for the selection of a professor has been announced for the needs of the Department of "Communication, Public Relations and Advertising" at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", in which Diyana Petkova is an associate professor from 01/09/2014 until today and head of the department from 2021. I participated with a review at the meeting of the department on 04/24/2024, at which her latest book "Religiosity, Identity and Postmodernity: Studies on Intercultural Communication and Comparative Folk Psychology", Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2024. The decision on the professorial competition was then taken by the Department Council and the Faculty Council.

From all the submitted documents, I can see that the competition and the procedure correspond to the requirements of the *Law of Scientific Positions and Degrees*, as well as that the candidate meets the scientometric requirements.

2. Data about the candidate

I have known Associate Professor Diana Petkova since 2005, when she participated as a young assistant together with Prof. Mincho Draganov at the organized during my deanship at the Faculty of Philosophy of VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" scientific conference "People's Psychology and Globalization", from which a nice collection was published. We have also met at other conferences,

I have reviewed her publications. She quickly established herself as a serious and thorough researcher in the fields of intercultural communication, comparative folk psychology and the study of global processes.

Diana Petkova has quickly taken the steps after defending her doctorate to chief assistant and habilitation, and as can be seen from the publication activity, this growth is fully deserved. Since 2014, she has been an associate professor of journalism (folk psychology). She was the deputy dean of the Faculty of Journalism of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" in scientific and project activities, and from 2021 until today he is the head of the Department of "Communication, Public Relations and Advertising".

She has a respectable scientific biography with a huge number of publications, numerous specializations as a guest lecturer and guest researcher on international projects and the Erasmus Program, she has international honors, awards and scholarships. Participant and leader in many international projects, participant and organizer of a number of international conferences.

3. Description of scientific works

For evaluation and participation in the competition for professor, Assoc. Dr. Diyana Petkova presented 22 publications, which give grounds for her to be recognized as scientometric indicators 100 items. for habilitation work and 260 for articles and reports and a chapter in a collective monograph.

The habilitation work is the monograph "Religiousness, Identity and Postmodernity. Studies on Intercultural Communication and Comparative Folk Psychology." Sofia University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2024, ISBN: 978-954-07-5935-7, 288 pages. In it, religiosity as a socio-psychological and communication phenomenon was studied, and on the basis of a comparative

analysis of the folk-psychological characteristics of the population of four countries (Bulgaria, India, Japan, Ecuador), the main transformations of identity in the postmodern era were studied.

Two papers with impact factor/rank are also suggested. The first examines the socio-psychological phenomenon of rumors during the global Covid-19 pandemic 2020-2022. Factors that determine the longevity of the maintenance of misconceptions and rumors in crisis situations are derived. In the second, freedom of speech and democratic values in the digital age are analyzed. The thesis is defended that the political and social processes in a given country are predetermined by the cultural values deeply rooted in the collective consciousness. The research shows that there is a special relationship between cultural values and freedom of speech.

In the remaining papers numbered 4 to 21 in the list of publications, various topics are analyzed. The one about the role of rumors and conspiracy theories in crisis situations was continued. There are articles about the national image in the conditions of the pandemic, about cultural memory. I would single out the articles from 12 to 21, in which topics and problems are explored more widely in the monograph - the role of religiosity in the global era, cultural and national identity and cultural distances, the national image of Bulgarians, Japanese, Ecuadorians, comparative studies between different cultures. It is noteworthy that most of the studies consider cultures that have been analyzed too little in comparative studies.

In the published chapter of a collective monograph ("Models of religious identities in postmodernity", In: Petkova, Diana, comp. "Religious Identities in the Postmodern World: Intercultural and Communication aspects), Sofia: University Press "St. Kliment Ohridski" ISBN: 978- 954-07-5043-9, pp. 13-46) key topics and problems from the habilitation work are presented.

4. Scientific contributions

It can definitely be argued that the content of the scientific production of Assoc. Dr. Diana Petkova fully fits the theme of the competition and corresponds to the modern level of knowledge in the fields of intercultural communication and comparative folk psychology. Her scientific contributions can be seen as highlighting new aspects in the applications of the theories of intercultural communication, cultural models and national identity, understandings of the role of religiosity in the global age and folk psychological research in a comparative plan.

The first thematic circle related to Diana Petkova's contribution and innovative achievements refers to intercultural comparative studies between two or more cultures. She contributed the article "Communication Modes, Eastern European" in "The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication", presenting communication modes in Eastern European countries (2017-2018).

The habilitation thesis presents comparative intercultural studies of folk-psychological and cultural characteristics of people from four countries - Bulgaria, Japan, India and Ecuador. There are few comparative publications with studies and comparisons Bulgarian-Latin American, Bulgarian-Japanese or a comparison of all these cultures.

In the paper "Silenced Voices and Speaking Up: a Case Study of Romani People in Europe", published in the Journal of Silence Studies in Education, 2021, a study of the Roma in Bulgarian and Finnish cultures was carried out. In two other articles "Religiosity and Perceptions of Life and Death among Bulgarians and Indians: A Cross-cultural Study" (2019) and "Death, After-Life and Rebirth: Cultural transfusion of Ideas" (2018) the perceptions of Bulgarians and Indians

about such phenomena as 'religiosity', 'death' and 'life after death'. The fundamental differences

in the cultural attitudes of Bulgarians and Indians are outlined, as well as the increasing convergence between cultures in the global era. In the paper "Beyond Silence. A Cross-Cultural Comparison between Finnish Quietude and Japanese Tranquility" is a comparative study of Finnish and Japanese cultural features.

The second round of scientific contributions can be related to the current topic of cultural identity. One of the ideological fallacies pushed past analyzes of globalization was the substitution of social and national identity for some other type, eg gender, political, spiritual. Diana Petkova very convincingly opposes this point of view. It shows the necessary and essential connection between religious and cultural identity and national characteristics. Petkova confidently defends the integrative model of identity advanced in her earlier studies, according to which it should be considered at the identity and community level. In the monograph, these ideas are further developed with the hypothesis that collective (community) identity itself, in turn, can also be studied at the level of the individual and at the level of the group or collective. In other words, group identity is not a mechanical sum derived from individual affiliations and consciousnesses, but can be defined as a meta-identity, or as a complex socio-cultural structure with its own and independent existence.

The monograph substantiates the revival of religious self-awareness and reveals four models of religiosity related to the national characteristics of Ecuador, India, Japan and Bulgaria, respectively. Of the various approaches to identity, a choice has been made in favor of defining it both as a discourse and as a construct, but it is emphasized that both approaches concentrate on the image of commonality that is generated in the mind through words and text. The thesis is substantiated that

cultural identity should be considered not only as a social reality, but also as a communication and expression of this reality, which can be fundamentally different not only in different communities, but also in each individual. The monograph concludes that the discourse of identity is a complex phenomenon in which many factors are intertwined - a specific communication context and events, values and attitudes in the community, collective self-evaluation, cultural memory and attitude to the past.

The components of religious identity are outlined in five main broad and generalized categories. These are the philosophical-ideological doctrine, which includes ideas, images, myths, narratives and symbols of the given religious community; ritual actions – from the simplest to the most complex rituals; the moral-ethical system and the specific value code; the spatio-temporal dimensions. The fifth element is religious belief, which can be referred to as piety or religiosity. In the monograph, a structural and functional study of cultural and, in particular, religious identity was carried out.

The third thematic round of achievements are contributions to the study of religiosity in the context of postmodernity. The thesis is made that religiosity is a complex socio-psychological phenomenon that can be viewed multi-layered from different angles - as an element of identity, character trait, value, attitude and worldview, but also as an independent structure of ideas and feelings about the supernatural and transcendental. The postmodern era is interpreted in the spirit of Lyotard as "the end of grand narratives", the sunset of universal models and values. Diana Petkova's interpretation of the revival of religion in postmodernity is of particular interest to me. On the basis of conducted studies on values, a thesis is made about the correlation between religiosity, on the one hand, and the strength of individualism/collectivism. The monograph contrasts opposing viewpoints on

secularization and desecularization in the modern world. It is argued that secularization may prove to be one of the most important factors in modern society for the establishment of intercultural dialogue.

Among the most significant of the fourth round of achievements are contributions aimed at applying the theory of cultural patterns in intercultural communication and at delineating cultural patterns in comparative terms. Based on the comparative studies in four countries (India, Bulgaria, Ecuador and Japan), four cultural models are outlined - a model of traditional religiosity (Ecuador), a model of resistance, where religiosity becomes a tool for individual and collective self-affirmation (India) , open model (Bulgaria) and the model of Japan, where we have a complete synthesis of religious ideas, traditions and rituals, where there is even a refusal to recognize any differences between the individual components. Cultural patterns theory has proven to be a successful basis for delineating different patterns of culture and religiosity in comparative terms.

No less significant are the contributions of Assoc.Prof. Dr. Diana Petkova to the methodological studies of intercultural communication. The conclusion about the impossibility of creating the same questionnaire for the informants in each country is justified. This is a widespread practice in intercultural studies of different countries, which, in the opinion of the author, should be stopped.

One can also talk about contributions in the direction of the Western-centric or Eurocentric approach in intercultural communication and research. The research presents two perspectives on religion and spirituality - the Western and the Japanese. It emphasizes the fact that in Europe people can openly discuss philosophical viewpoints and doctrinal differences between religious traditions, as well as make a number of rational arguments about following or not following a particular denomination.

I tend to agree with what Assoc. Dr. Diana Petkova contributed to the study of the psychology of communication and media culture. In several articles, she explores rumors and various aspects of disinformation in crisis situations. Conspiracy theories are becoming the core of populism in political communication in the age of Covid-19. To this I can add the candidate's articles with contributing ideas on media culture and freedom of speech.

Regarding her contributions to the study of artificial intelligence and communication, I note that according to a 2023 paper it leads from a "revolution in communication to a folklorization of digital postmodernity." The optimistic thesis has been developed that the introduction of artificial intelligence leads to the need for correction in traditional communication theories.

I also note the contributions of the candidate in the study of silence as a cultural and social phenomenon. This was done based on the study of its place in Japanese culture.

Several papers have explored national image and attitudes and perceptions regarding some national groups. The positive conclusion is that as a result of the restrictions during the pandemic, the fragmentation and diversification of global society is increasing. This is a path towards overcoming globalist myths, towards which a number of steps are taken in the monograph and proposed research papers.

The only critical note I would make has to do with my disagreement with today's era being seen as postmodern. Perhaps with the disintegration of expectations from globalization it is better interpreted as 'post-postmodern'? I would be interested to hear the opinion of Associate Professor Diana Petkova on this matter.

Unifying in all these areas of scientific achievements is addressing various aspects of intercultural communication and finding common points for a comparative analysis of religiosity, cultural and spiritual identity in the theory of cultural patterns and other contemporary approaches that are applied to new, underexplored phenomena, countries and peoples.

At the end of the part about scientific achievements, I would like to note as a completely positive fact the huge number of citations of the works of Assoc.Prof. Diana Petkova in refereed editions, in monographs and anthologies, which bring her a total of 1000 points. This shows the high evaluation of her scientific work and achievements by the Bulgarian and foreign professional community.

5. Teaching work

For the teaching work of Assoc. I can judge Dr. Diana Petkova by her numerous teaching visits under the Erasmus Plus Program, reflected in her CV. From her project work and publications, I can see that she tries to combine research with teaching work and does so successfully.

6. Conclusion

The achievements of the candidate for the academic position "professor" fully meet the requirements of the law and the modern level of scientific knowledge in the field of public communication sciences (intercultural communication and comparative folk psychology). In conclusion, I would like to express my extremely positive attitude towards the scientific contributions and teaching activity of Associate Professor Diana Petkova Petkova, which gives me reason to vote positively for his election to the academic position of "professor" in the professional field 3.5. "Public Communications and Information Sciences (Intercultural Communication)".

08.11.2024

Reviewer:

(Prof. Vihren Bouzov, DSc,

“St. Cyril and St. Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo)