

REVIEW

by Full Prof. Iren Yordanova Peltekova, PhD,
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Subject: competition for an academic position "**Associate Professor**" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogy, professional direction 1.3. Pedagogy of training in (Physical education and sports - non-traditional sports in the educational system) for the needs of the Department of Sports at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The competition was announced in the Official Gazette, No 35 of 18.04.2023.

Grounds for presenting the review: I participate in the composition of a scientific jury according to Order No RD 38-295 of 12.06.2023 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

To participate in the announced competition, the only candidate submitted documents:
Chief Assistant Marina Nikolaeva Nedkova, PhD

1. Fulfillment of the requirements for occupying the academic position

The documents presented in the competition from Chief Assistant, **Marina Nikolaeva Nedkova, PhD** comply with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB/ZRASRB), the Rules for the Implementation of the (LDASRB) (RILDASRB), the regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

In the Map for the fulfillment of the quantitative requirements, compliance with the criteria established in the Law is reported as equal to 463 points for the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor" under PN 1.3. Pedagogy of training in ... 400 points. According to the regulations for the terms and conditions for obtaining a scientific degree and holding academic positions at the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" has no additional requirements for candidates. This allows me to conclude that the implementation under the MNI covers all the necessary groups of criteria and the application meets the requirements provided in the Law.

The documents are carefully described and systematized, which greatly facilitates the evaluation of the submitted materials for participation in the competition.

2. Information about the candidate - educational status, competitive, teaching, coaching, academic, research and project activity

Marina Nedkova was born in 1983. In 2002 - 2006, she studied at the National Sports Academy (NSA) "Vasil Levski", where she received a bachelor's degree in two majors, namely: first major "Physical Education" with professional qualification "Physical Education Teacher" and second major "Sport" with professional qualification "Ski Coach". In the period 2006-2009, she continued her studies in the Master's program "Sports Management", again at the "Vasil Levski" National Academy of Sciences and received a diploma in the specialty "Sports Management" with the professional qualification "Master's in Dispute Management". The selection of a topic for the defense of a master's thesis, namely "Research of some aspects of management in the implementation of the International Traditional Rugby Sevens Tournament in Bulgaria", is impressive. This is an indicator of Marina Nedkova's long-term research interest in "non-traditional" sports for Bulgaria. As additional professional training, the candidate has a certificate of professional qualification "Editor in a sports department in radio, television and press", specialty "Sport", specialization "Sports Journalism" from the National Academy of Sciences "Vasil Levski", 2005. In her autobiography, the candidate indicates she completed additional specialization "Management of sports facilities" in High Sierra pools, Virginia, Maryland, USA, 2009. Marina Nedkova holds certificates of completion of a cricket course, which entitles her to conduct initial cricket training for children and youth of school and university age, and an international certificate of completion of an international training course in cricket, issued by the International Cricket Union in 2023. She is a licensed ski instructor with the Bulgarian Ski Federation, has a certificate of competence as a water rescuer since 2003. In the submitted documents, the candidate Marina Nedkova has attached many more diplomas and certificates related to her professional realization and scientific growth, which I will not dwell on separately, I will only note that they convincingly complement her application for participation in this competition.

In 2014, Marina Nedkova successfully defended a dissertation on "New approaches to improving physical education and sports in higher schools in the Republic of Bulgaria" at Vasil Levski National Academy of Sciences, for which she was awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in specialty "Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sports Training (Including Methodology of Physical Therapy)". It can be said that Marina Nedkova's impressive educational status was a factor that influenced her subsequent academic growth. In 2014, she was appointed to the position of "assistant" in the Department of Sports of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", where she still works as a senior assistant. Before she was appointed to SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" Marina Nedkova was a part-time teacher at VTU "Todor Kableshkov", NSA "Vasil Levski", University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy (UCTM) and at the University.

The competitive biography of Marina Nedkova shows that for ten years she competed in alpine skiing in SK "Mladost", two years in rugby in RK "NSA" and became the champion of the Republic of Bulgaria with the senior girls' team; three years she played cricket in KK NSA, where she won the Women's State Championship. Marina Nedkova is part of the national cricket team and Balkan champion. This is an indicator that she has developed practical skills, technical-tactical and psychological knowledge in these disciplines, which undoubtedly increases the quality of her current teaching activity.

The educational and teaching employment, as can be seen from the presented service note, for the last six academic years averaged 454.76, and during this period Marina Nedkova used maternity leave. Ch. assistant Marina Nedkova has lecture hours with students from the "Physical Education and Sport" specialty and practical exercises in the "Sport" discipline in the following types of sports: rugby, cricket, fitness, zumba, hiking, skiing with students from all faculties of SU. During her teaching career, she led lectures and seminars on "Theory and Methodology of Physical Education" and "Didactics of Physical Education".

The academic workload of Chief Assistant Nedkova, PhD shows the level of her teaching skills, as well as the adequate relationship between her education and her teaching activity. It can be confidently concluded that Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova, PhD, has extensive teaching experience, which she can successfully develop at a higher level.

The academic employment of Chief Assistant Nedkova, PhD expands with the sports improvement classes she leads for the representative teams of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". She has coached the student alpine skiing (men's and women's, 2016-2018; men's 2020-present) and cricket (2015-present) teams.

Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova actively participates in activities related to the academic community and the structure of the Department of Sports. She is the chairman of the Attestation Commission since 2021, having previously been a member of the same. She participates in the editorial board of the Department's Yearbook, she is a reviewer of reports for admission to their publication in Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference organized by the Department of Sports, and she is actively involved in the activities of the Department of Sports, which are related to the organization and holding of "Athlete of the year", the summer and winter forums of sports pedagogues from universities in Bulgaria and student sports practices.

Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova actively participates in scientific conferences (more than 20), where she presents her scientific production. She was a participant in nine scientific projects, one of which she was the leader of, the coordinator of one, and a participant in the others.

In non-university engagement Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova, PhD, is also involved in coaching. She has a coaching practice at the "Student Cricket Union Association" from 2018 to 2023. With the team, she became the State Champion and winner of the ECS, 2019 and 2020. Marina Nedkova's coaching experience is complemented by her work in the organization for sports with intellectual disabilities. "Special Olympics", where she worked with athletes in alpine skiing and snowshoeing in 2016 and 2017. Marina Nedkova's public activity includes responsibilities such as "Secretary of the Organizing Committee of the European Rugby Championship-7 (Women), Division "A" (2012); chairman of the technical committee of the 6th European Rugby Sevens Championship (2013); executive director of BSCS (2015) and chairman of the Association "Bulgarian Student Cricket Union" (2019).

3. Data on published monographic work and its scientific contributions

The main monographic work, designated as habilitation, is an independent scientific production on the topic "*Non-traditional sports in the educational system and part of physical education and sport in high schools in Bulgaria*"., Ed. "Avangard Prima", Press, 2023, 225 pages. The work was reviewed by two scientific experts in the field of physical education and sports. The reviews are printed in the thesis, which is not a common practice, but I think it can serve as a good example to other authors. Structurally, the monograph begins with index lists of tables, photographs, figures and abbreviations, follows the requirements accepted for this type of scientific work - introduction, main chapters (there are five in this work), literature and online resources, and finally the monograph ends with appended reviews, evaluating the value of the scientific publication. Following these steps contributes to research order, logic, coherence, and good readership.

The content on the topic fully corresponds to the chosen title, the volume is suitable for this type of scientific production. Marina Nedkova manages to avoid unnecessary deviation from the researched topic, which achieves a good understanding of the text.

The monographic book presents the author's searches in a comprehensive form based on the in-depth personal orientation of Chief Assistant Nedkova to the problems of physical education and sports in higher education institutions (HEIs) both from the point of view of the state and university administration, as well as from the point of view of the organization of the educational process in sports and the possibilities of expanding the educational content of sports programs in VU with the sports disciplines of cricket, rugby and field hockey.

She applies a relevant scientific approach to a theoretical-applied type of research based on her extensive sporting and teaching practice as a teacher and coach in cricket, rugby and field hockey, which she researches in action. In the monograph, a very

historical topic related to an overview of the development of physical education in the University of the Republic of Bulgaria and the emergence and spread of the sports of cricket, rugby and field hockey on a global and national scale is provided. The text highlights the focus of the listed sports disciplines and the opportunities for their practice in university settings as a study discipline - Sports and the participation of student teams in cricket, rugby and field hockey competitions of a national and international nature.

The author was not satisfied with only a theoretical and historical review in her work, but researched and presented results of the state of physical fitness of students engaged in non-traditional sports in higher schools in Bulgaria. Of particular relevance are the data from the study of the state of the physical capacity of students participating in physical education and sports classes in the country's higher schools after nearly two years of online education. I define the developed and implemented in practice from Chief Assistant Nedkova normative table for assessing the physical capacity of students to have a high methodological and practical value. With this, it contributes to updating the methodology of assessing students' physical fitness and provides an opportunity for them to monitor their current condition themselves. These texts contribute to the research character of the monograph (p.115-119).

Marina Nedkova independently conducts a large-scale (584 students) survey (I determine the scale according to the available opportunities of a researcher from a university with a non-sports orientation and the ratio of the number of students who play sports in universities), about the attitude of students, teachers and specialists to the FVS and their assessment of the level, novelties and problems of the educational process in physical education and sports. This analysis provides a very accurate and up-to-date assessment of the state of the teaching process of FFS in the system of higher education and confirms the concerns about the sharp decrease in the level in the last 20 years.

The researched topic is new for sports literature in our country. What interests me is the author's classification of sports as traditional and non-traditional, popular and unpopular, and preferred and unpreferred. After an in-depth study, Marina Nedkova and her colleagues (Peeva, Kolev) managed to select 15 criteria, according to which sports should be ranked by popularity worldwide in the period from 2012 to 2022. In a critical analysis, the author comments on the methodology determined by the Ministry of Youth and sports, in which sports federations are financed on the basis of the qualification of sports as Olympic and non-Olympic, and in this way prerequisites are created for the state to "conduct" the opportunities for the development of a given sport in our country (p. 61-68).

The proposals for legislative amendments related to the development of student sports are justified and reasonable.

The monographic study presented by Dr. Nedkova is important for the development of student sports, for sports theory, history and practical application for

improving the physical capacity of students with the means of non-traditional for Bulgaria sports games.

The author, Marina Nedkova, has applied personal knowledge of the researched problems, which has provided originality and individuality to her monographic development.

4. Description of the scientific production and evaluation of the scientific works submitted for the competition

The main scientific production is entirely in the professional direction and fully corresponds to the scientific specialty for which the competition was announced. The list covers publications made from 2013 to 2023. Quantitatively for her participation in the competition, the candidate Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova, PhD, presents 31 scientific works. The publications are distributed by genre as follows: 2 independent books, the first of which is of a monographic type, and the second published book is based on a protected dissertation work for the award of the ONS "Doctor"; 5 articles in scientific journals and 24 articles and reports in scientific journals and proceedings. In the scientific production thus listed Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova is the independent author of 10 of them, and co-author of the others, with five of the publications published in English.

For reviewing (outside the monographic work), Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova, PhD, has presented 1 book and 29 articles and reports. Of these, 26 are aimed at physical education and sports in higher schools, and two (3, 11) are focused on the physical skills of preschool children and maintaining physical activity of children in a home environment. The reports listed under numbers 20 and 22 relate to the nutrition and recovery of female rugby-7 players and the performance tracking of batting players.

The content of the texts gives me reason to group the developments in the following topics:

- Development, opportunities, advantages and weaknesses of physical education and sports in higher schools in our country.
- Analyzing, refining and updating the "Sports" curricula in higher education - selection of sports disciplines to be studied and practiced by the students.
- Motivating students to motor activity and competitive activity through the means of non-traditional (for us) sports disciplines, in this case - cricket, rugby and field hockey.
- Influence of state policy, social, financial and geographical factors on the popularization of sports in the Republic of Bulgaria.
- The physical condition of young people. Strengthening and maintaining health through sports and proper nutrition from an early age.

From the publications selected by the candidate, it can be concluded that she has an abiding interest in physical education and sports in higher education, its past, present and opportunities for better development in the future. Chief Assistant Nedkova shows in-depth knowledge of the subject, a sense of innovation, and last but not least, a desire to improve existing practices, not deny them.

The written reports have a theoretical and practical-applied contribution.

The presented citations in the documents show that the proposed ideas and results have found an echo in the specialized sports-scientific literature and among the community of sports educators and specialists.

5. Critical notes, recommendations and questions

I have no critical remarks on the presented scientific production of the candidate.

I express my personal opinion that the presentation of the lists of tables, photographs, figures and abbreviations would be more suitable to be published in an appendix at the end of the monographic work. My reasons for this recommendation are that it takes up a lot of pages and the introduction starts on page 17, which weakens its power and distracts the reader. This recommendation does not affect the quality of the work structure, but represents a personal perception.

I find it appropriate to propose to Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova to deepen her research in the direction of establishing the level of assimilation of technical and tactical skills among student athletes in cricket, rugby, and field hockey within the framework of academic training and the methodology of their training. I believe this could be a fruitful direction for future research.

My questions to the candidate are as follows:

- ✓ Is it appropriate to associate a type of sports discipline with the major studied by the students and their future professional realization?
- ✓ If you think this is a good practice, please explain for which majors and professions non-traditional sports - cricket, rugby and field hockey - would be most suitable?

6. Personal impressions

I have known Marina Nedkova since she joined the Department of Sports as an assistant in 2014. Even then, I was impressed by her qualities and enthusiasm in her scientific pursuits, combined with practical experience, fueled by a personal commitment to attractive initiatives for students in their studies in sport. I can responsibly say that she "awakened" the team and brought us into the reality of the XXI century and the modern demands of students. My personal observations, as well as reviewing her scientific output, enable me to say that Chief Assistant Nedkova grows as a responsible researcher and sought-after teacher and specialist.

7. Conclusion

The monographic study and the other works with which Marina Nedkova participated in the competition show a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and a desire for a comprehensive study of the set research questions. The educational and teaching activity and the topics of the publications are in accordance with the scientific direction of the announced competition. In his capacity as a candidate for the academic position "Associate Professor", Chief Assistant Marina Nedkova, PhD, has fulfilled all the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of LDASRB/ZRASRB.

Based on the above, I believe that there are sufficient grounds to propose to the scientific jury **Chief Assistant Marina Nikolaeva Nedkova, PhD**, to be elected to the academic position of "**Associate Professor**" in **professional direction 1.3. Pedagogy of training in** (Physical education and sports - non-traditional sports in the educational system), for the needs of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (Sofia) and Department of Sports.

As a member of the scientific jury, I give my **positive** assessment of the application.

07 August 2023

Prepared the review:
/Full Prof. Iren Peltekova/