

STANDPOINT

By

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Of materials submitted for participation in a contest for taking an academic position Associate Professor at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” in the area of higher education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Vocational Direction: 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics). In the contest for an Associate Professor, announced in State Newspaper, Issue 31, from 12.04.2019 and on the website of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” for the requirements of department for Elementary School Pedagogy to Pedagogy Faculty, with an applicant: **Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova**, Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”.

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Applicant

With Order No P33-3698 from 10.07.2019 by the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific panel for the contest for taking the academic position of an Associate Professor at PU in the area of higher education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Vocational Direction; 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics) for the requirements of department for Elementary School Pedagogy to Pedagogy Faculty.

For participation in the announced contest only one candidate has submitted documents: Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova, Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”. The submitted by Chief Assistant doctor Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova set of materials, which is on paper, is in accordance with the Rules for Development of the Academic Staff of PU and includes the following documents:

- Application sample to the Rector to be allowed to participate in the contest;
- Curriculum Vitae European standard;
- Diploma for Educational Degree “Master”;
- Diploma for Scientific Degree “Doctor”
- List and copies of scientific papers;
- Certificate for compliance with the minimum national requirements;
- Declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- Annotation of the scientific papers, including self-assessment of contributions;
- Work experience certificate;
- Academic work documents;
- Scientific – research work documents;
- Other documents according to the requirements of Pedagogy Faculty – a record from a meeting of the committee for determining the suitability of the candidate to take the academic position of an Associate Professor;
- Other documents – certificates for participation in conferences, official notices, court certificates, reviews, programmes and others.

Nikolinka Atanasova graduated with the subject: Pre-school Pedagogy, Educational Degree Bachelor and Pedagogy, Educational Degree Master from Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”. She Acquired Science Degree PhD in 2011. Her professional career is connected only with Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” as since 2002 she has gradually gone through the academic positions of: Assistant, Senior Assistant, Chief Assistant. She has an excellent command of Russian and good command of German, which is a prerequisite for

her scientific privity. She has attended numerous international and national forums and participated in national and university projects.

Her scientific papers, presented for reviews, were published for the period 2003 – 2019. Four of them were before she acquired PhD Scientific Degree and the others after that. In the list of scientific papers are included publications, which are connected with her acquiring PhD Degree, so they will not be reviewed or indicated in the general scientific production with which Nikolinka Atanasova participates in the procedure for becoming an Associate Professor. The scientific production with which Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Atanasova participates in the announced contest corresponds the scientific specialty and its specificity. It comprises 26 publications in total, 2 of which monographs, 6 electronic books, 17 articles and reports, 3 of which in co-authorship; all of them are included in the National Reference List, 1 e-course for students. The publications mentioned above comply with minimum national requirements and the national scientometric indicators for taking the academic position Associate Professor.

Nikolinka Atanasova's scientific interests are concentrated mainly in the field of didactics. This thematic concentration make a good impression and does not suggest dispersion in the research field.

2. General Characteristics of the applicant's activity

Monograph "Mind Maps as Innovative Technique for Learning and Teaching" is in a complex research field because the work issue has multiple-direction characteristics and corresponds to perspectives for search of alternative approaches, methods and techniques of study, which lead to positive change in the study process (both for university and school students). In this context, the main plot lines of the research can be commented on, which represent the strong sides of the monograph.

Firstly, the undeniable actuality of the considered issue and the thematic option, which are persuasively presented and grounded. The arguments have a wide range: from the necessity of modernizing and optimizing the study process, through the opportunities for stimulating and motivating learning through the usage of mind maps as a technique of studying, to the deficiency (to some extent) of works on the topic in the Bulgarian research and academic practice.

Secondly, the topic is presented in depth, in the context of the contemporary concepts and personality-oriented educational paradigm. She demonstrates flair and skills of analysis of opinions of leading people connected with these problems, of searching and discovering the roots and further development of the concept "mind maps".

Third, Nikolinka Atanasova is familiar with the issue in details and she approaches the theoretical analysis from the position of the historical approach. The development of the problem is interpreted in nine interrelated paragraphs. Logically, taking into consideration the multiple directions of the author's opinions on the notion, a special emphasis is placed on the main category "mind maps". After careful selection of definitions and classifications by a number of authors, despite being cautious, she managed to create her own classification of the mind maps.

Forth, the design of the research stands out with strict semantic organization: the conceptual frame and methodological parameters of the research are appropriate. All components are present (goal, hypothesis, tasks, object, subject, aimed people, stages), which are precisely worded in subordination with the topic, in line with each other, forming the purpose and location of the research procedure.

Fifth, the monograph work regarding its style and language is precise, it has rich and precise scientific stylistics. The technical performance is correct; the information is supported with visual images, fitted in the relevant places.

Monograph „**Interactive group and project education face to face. Theoretical applied aspects**” is topical and contemporary. The issue of interactivity in the study process is simultaneously old and a new one. For the past years, it has been written and spoken about intensively. Today it is commented on in many dimensions in the context of the new educational paradigms and it is “promoted” as a modern model for creating an educational dialogue. The topic is valid and significant because in the conditions of interactive education the student is an active participant in the study process. The effective learning is largely determined by the shared experience of the students. The education is successful when the teacher has the role of a facilitator (mentor, preceptor, consultant) and feedback is given by the facilitator and the other participants. Maximum results are achieved when each student is able to reflect the educational environment, draw conclusion, apply their knowledge in practice, successfully transfers their knowledge to other fields (learning through experience). All present knowledge and skills of the students are used and the inclination to risky behavior is encouraged. These aspects, to a large extent, meet and satisfy the needs of the new generation regarding the study process. The topic of the monograph is valid and significant since it is related to an important problem for the pedagogic theory and practice, namely the one of the interactive group and project education.

The presented monographic paper is a complete author’s concept, in which new possibilities are searched and presented, connected with the issues discussed. With the availability of a wide variety of concepts and definitions on the topic, the author made a successful attempt to express and justify her point of view. The commented and drawn conclusions do not remain at an abstract level, but sharpen our insight and perception of the contemporary failures in education and show opportunities for overcoming them. The style and language used are scientifically sound.

As a positive aspect of Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Atanasova’s work can be mentioned the electronic books in Bulgarian Language and Literature for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Grade, intended for a wide range of users in school education.

The rest of the presented publications emphasize on topical issues, connected with the pedagogy theory and practice in the area of interactive education (2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10), didactics (8, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17), virtual and digital education (1, 5), intercultural education (14), where a unique and variable, technological method is presented for education of students in pedagogical specialties, oriented towards giving them stimuli for active learning and building a well-defined social stand, inclusive education (11), upbringing (4). They provide solutions to general and particular didactic and educational problems.

As a whole Nikolinka Atanasova’s scientific production is characterized with a relatively high degree of thematic concentration, meaningful relevance and professional profoundness.

I accept the scientific contributions made by Nikolinka Atanasova’s self-assessment. To them the following can be added:

- The tasks developed in Chapter 3, Paragraph 3.4 are of the same matrix, which can be successfully used in teaching other subjects. It is also applicable in the use of different technologies for education;
- In her monograph „Interactive group and project education face to face. Theoretical applied aspects” the author’s classification of different groups is presented.

The scientific papers, which Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Atanasova participates in the contest with, are her personal researches and achievements. There is a content analysis in them of contemporary theories, practices and technologies in the area of didactic knowledge, their characteristics and comparison, which reveal and prove the possibilities for a positive change in the educational process. My assessment of Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Atanasova’s scientific papers is positive.

The citations, connected with Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Atanasova's publications are 11 (traditionally reported). They are from people outside the author teams, of which Nikolinka Atanasova was a member for the period of 2015 – 2019, as there has been most citations in 2019.

3. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

- In her monographic work “Mind Maps as an Innovative Technique for Studying and Teaching” in the analysis of the results from the empiric research not the whole potential of the received data was used. The analysis is only on the specialty axis and Educational Degree Bachelor, but it suggests the opportunity for interpreting the data and search for correlations with different dimensions such as gender and age. It is interesting whether there are any gender and age differences in regard to the researched problem;
- The scientific publications' quality will be improved if they are written in only one verb tense (Present Simple for example) and if the use of first person singular or plural is avoided;
- The candidate has enough teaching experience and good theoretical preparation, which a prerequisite to direct her attention to publications in scientific journals, referred to and indexed in world-famous data bases with scientific information (Web of Science Core Collection, Scopus).

The remarks made do not lower the general positive assessment of the scientific papers written by Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova, but aim to improve her future work.

Conclusion

The analysis of the teaching, research and scientific activities, as well as the submitted reference of conformity with the scientific-metric indicators for taking the academic position Associate Professor, present Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova as a profound researcher and good lecturer. I consider that the candidate meets the requirements and the order for taking the academic position Associate Professor according to the Law for Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria. The candidate in this contest meets the minimum national requirements for taking the academic position Associate Professor. I have no doubt of plagiarism in her scientific papers and publications. The ideas, developed in the presented publications, the contributions of the author in the area of the pedagogic science, the academic and scientific research work of Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova give me the reason for the positive conclusion and to recommend to the Scientific Panel to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of Pedagogy Faculty for the election of **Chief Assistant Doctor Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova** for the academic position of Associate Professor at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” in the professional field of 1.2 Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics).

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The standpoint was complied by:

(Professor Doctor Natalia Vitanova)