

REVIEW

by professor Dora Levterova – Gadjalova, DSc

from the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”

of the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic position of "professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski”

in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences

professional field 1.2. Education

(Special education)

1. Procedure

In the competition for "professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 57 of June 26, 2020. The only candidate in the competition is Assoc. prof. Zhana Atanasova, DSc from Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski ”with a total of 50 scientific papers, of which 3 independent monographs; 38 articles, 1 study, 7 textbooks for university students and 1 electronic teaching manual for children. Of the 50 publications presented, 14 are co-authored. For two of the publications, official notes are presented that they are in press, and the rest are published. The distribution of the scientific papers by headings: language of publication and publication in the country and abroad is as follows, 30 of the articles are published in Bulgarian scientific journals and 8 are a foreign language. The monographs and articles have the full text content and certified publication. All of the submitted publications are accepted for review.

2. Minimal requirements for holding the academic position of "professor"

In relation with the minimum requirements for holding the academic position of "professor", the following facts have been established for the candidate:

Group indicators	minimum points of ”professor”	Real points of candidate
Group indicators A	50 points	50 points
Group indicators B	100 points	100 points
Group indicators V	100 points	100 points
Group indicators G	200 points	565 points

Group indicators D	100 points	465 points
Group indicators E	100 points	595,13 points
Total	550 points	1875,13 points

It is evident that the scientific production of the candidate Assoc. prof. Zhana Atanasova significantly exceeds the minimum requirements for the academic position of "professor".

3. Brief biographical data for the candidate

The candidate assoc. prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova, DSc graduated from the semi-higher institute for primary and lower secondary teachers in the town of Kardzhali in 1979. In 1985 she received retraining as a teacher of students with intellectual disabilities from the "Department of Information and Teacher Training" at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski". In 1987 she graduated from University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendaski" with a degree in biology and chemistry. She owns a first class qualification in biology from the "Department of Information and Teacher Training" at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" and a first professional qualification degree in special education in Trakiya University, Stara Zagora.

In 2004, she defended her PhD dissertation in the scientific specialty 05.07.04. "Special education" by the Higher Attestation Commission, in 2007 she received the scientific title "Associate Professor", and in 2016 scientific degree "Doctor of Science" from University of Plovdiv.

The candidate has worked as a teacher / 1979 - 1994 /, as an assistant director / 1994 - 1996 /, as a part-time lecturer at the Thracian University / 2005 - 2007 /. In the period 2007 - 2011 she worked as an associate professor of special pedagogy in the Department of Information and Teacher Training at the Thracian University, Stara Zagora. Since 2011 she is a full-time associate professor in special education at the University of Plovdiv.

4. General characteristics of the candidate's activity

The candidate presents a certificate of work experience, which shows that she has a basic employment contract with the University of Plovdiv. The teaching and pedagogical activity of Assoc. Prof. Atanasova exceeds the required for the University of Plovdiv, it is evident from the presented author's reference for classroom and extracurricular employment and a list of developed curricula in the respective academic disciplines she teaches. The same author's reference presents a list of published teaching materials: one independent textbook,

two textbooks for students in co-authorship, four co-authored textbooks, one electronic textbook for students with special educational needs and one electronic material for students.

The targeted author's reference reflects the graduates managed so far - 30 Bachelor's and Master's degrees, as well as a list of topics of PhD students, of which she is research supervisor. There are three successfully defended doctoral students, one deducted with the right to defend and two doctoral students who are in the process of training.

A Reference for the research activity is presented, which reflects participation in project activity, in national and international scientific forums, the number of scientific papers for participation in the competition, participation as a reviewer of scientific publications, feedback from NGOs for participation in its activities and conducting lectures on the Erasmus Program abroad.

According to the attached reference for the research activity of Assoc. Prof. Atanasova, it is evident that she has taken part in 14 scientific or educational projects, 3 of which she is the project manager. Certificates for participation in projects from the University of Plovdiv and Thracian University are attached. She has participated in 23 scientific forums nationally and internationally. The response from the NGO is from NARU /National Association of Resource Teachers/ for active work as a trainer to the organization. Erasmus lectures were held in Poland in 2015, with a certificate attached.

Certificates for participation in various trainings and events under projects are attached, noting a total of 6 for the period 2006 - 2018.

It is evident from the attached documents that Assoc. Prof. J. Atanasova has a serious teaching occupation, engagement with project and administrative activities for providing and updating curricula and study plans.

5. Scientific and scientific-applied activity contributions

The scientific and scientific-applied activity of Assoc. Prof. Atanasova, derived in self-assessment, could be specified in several main scientific spaces in the field of inclusive education:

- access to education for children and students with special educational needs;

- use of aids and technologies in the education of children and students with special educational needs;

- resource support for personal development of children and students with special educational needs;

- education of children and students with special educational needs;

- the area of inclusive education;

as well as the professional preparation of the students from the professional field "Pedagogy", the continuing qualification of the pedagogical specialists, the training of university students and pupils.

6. Scientific contributions

The main research interests and scientific achievements of Assoc. Prof. Jana Atanasova in the targeted scientific spaces bring out the following contribution models:

- *access to education for children and students with special educational needs*. The issue is developed in depth and has an up-to-date sound offering models, which would assist the teacher in providing the main components of access to education in kindergartens and schools for children and students with special educational needs. The policies and regulations in the field of education in the international, European and national plan, which are related to the access and quality of education of children and students with special needs [HT1, HT5], are analyzed. The organization of the access of children and students with special educational needs to the educational institutions [HT1] is presented. The components providing the accessible architectural and physical environment, accessibility of information and communication, access to curricula and learning content, teaching aids and technologies [HT1, HT5] are described. In the applied aspect, the developed and approved questionnaire for self-assessment of the principals of school organizations for the accessibility to education of children and students with special needs and the questionnaire for experts in the field of inclusive education are a contribution. The diagnostic tool interpreted in the habilitation work "Determinants in access to education for children and students with special educational needs" could find effective application as a model for assessing access to the educational environment in inclusive education, and in particular for assessing access to education for children and students with special educational needs [HT1]. The emphasis in the monograph is on clarifying terminological clarifications, such as "accessible physical environment",

"accessible architectural environment" and "accessible route". Accessibility is viewed through a multi-layered prism. Not only the accessible architectural and spatial environment is considered, but also the accessibility to information and communication, the access to curricula and to the educational content. A successful attempt has been made to consider access to education for children and students with special educational needs from all groups included in this focus group of inclusive education. Access to education is also interpreted in a separate article [HT5].

- use of aids and technologies in the education of children and students with special educational needs, reflected in the monograph "Aids and technologies for children and students with special educational needs in inclusive education" [HT3]. The monograph considers aids and technologies as tools that can be recommended to the child or student with special educational needs and which must meet his individual needs. A classification of aids and technologies in education with their application targeted at children and students with special educational needs. Guidance is provided for the assessment of their individual needs for the provision of aids and technologies, as well as their use by pedagogical specialists in the conditions of the kindergarten or school. The issue of aids and technologies in education for children and students with special educational needs is reflected in a number of articles [HT15, HT23, HT19, HT20, HT29, HT38, HT42, HT20].

- resource support for personal development of children and students with special educational needs [HT16, HT21, HT26, HT32, HT35]. In this group of publications the resource support is considered as a component of educational inclusion in school and the kindergarten and cooperation with the family; the role of the resource teacher to support children and students in the educational process in the kindergarten or school; additional support for the personal development of children and students with special educational needs through assistive technologies; information technology to support children and students with special educational needs in the educational process and in the educational space; support for personal development as a new component for focus groups in inclusive education.

- education of children and students with special educational needs [HT2, HT9, HT12, HT24, HT30, HT30, HT31, HT33, HT34, HT41,]. This group of publications, the emphasis is placed on additional support; the methodological aspects of teaching biology to students with mental retardation, studying in a special school; the education of students with severe intellectual and multiple disabilities in school education; the connection between the

assessment of children and students with special educational needs by the teams for support of personal development and their training in a general education environment is clarified; Information technologies are presented as an innovation in organizing the education of children and students with special educational needs in the educational environment of the school and kindergarten.

- the thematic area of inclusive education [HT27, HT36, HT39]. The normative aspects of inclusive education are interpreted; as well as the link between inclusive education and the supportive environment.

- the professional preparation of the students from the professional field "Pedagogy", the continuing qualification of the pedagogical specialists, the training of students and pupils [HT4], [HT8, HT11, HT18, HT22, HT40]. In the group of publications an analysis of the educational processes of students and pedagogical specialists is made, substantiated proposal for improvement of the professional training and the continuing qualification are submitted.

The monographs are reviewed by habilitated lecturers who are recognized specialists in their fields, and the articles are in peer-reviewed or referenced Bulgarian and foreign publications.

7. Assessment of the personal contribution of the candidate

The personal contribution of Assoc. Zhana Atanasova for the development of the processes of inclusive education for students with special educational needs, for the analysis of its components, for the improvement of the quality of the professional training and the continuing qualification of the pedagogical specialists is indisputable. The formulated contributions and the obtained results are her personal merit. I fully and unreservedly accept the contributions.

8. Citation

In the attached materials for the competition, Assoc. Prof. Atanasova has presented in detail and diligently evidence regarding citations of her own publications in scientific works of other authors. The citations cover a long period of time, but the predominant ones are from the last few years. The number of marked citations is 75, but only according to Atanasova's research and it is possible that there are more. The citations are mainly from colleagues working in the field of special pedagogic and inclusive education. A fact that speaks

eloquently about the high recognition of Assoc. Prof. Atanasova and the popularity of her scientific production in the professional community.

9. Critical remarks and recommendations

In the publications of Assoc. Prof. Atanasova there are clearly identified innovative aspects related to the application of the competence approach in the inclusive education of students with special educational needs, which can be developed continuously with successful scientific theoretical and practical applicability.

10. Personal impressions

I know Assoc. Prof. Atanasova as a respected lecturer by students and colleagues, as a conscientious and precise author with independent monographs and with separate developed parts and chapters in joint editions of textbooks and teaching aids, as a responsive and attentive colleague and a specialist with a good image in the special pedagogical guild. I have been a reviewer of her research papers and I can confidently say that she manages to interpret in depth, with scientific skill and elegance, the pulsating problems of children and students with special educational needs in the process of inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The candidate in the competition has submitted a sufficient number of scientific papers published after the materials used in the defense of PhD and "Doctor of Science". In the candidates work there are original scientific and applied contributions, which have received international recognition, as well as a part of them had been published in journals and scientific journals published by international academic publishers. Her theoretical developments have practical applicability, as some of them are directly oriented to the educational work. The scientific and teaching qualification of Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova, DSc is undoubtful.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific papers presented in the competition, as well as analysing their significance and the contained in them scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty

Council of the Educational Faculty at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the election of Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova, DSC at the academic position "Professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" in professional field 1.2. Education (Special education).

05.10. 2020

Reviewer:

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