

REVIEW

by Prof. Pelagiya Mihaylova Terzijska, PhD at South-Western University “Neophite Rilski”

on the documentation submitted for participation in the competition for the conferral of the academic title of **Professor at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”**

in the higher education area of Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education)

Zhana Atanasova Yankova from Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” is a participant in the competition for the title of Professor, promulgated in State Gazette, issue 57 from 26.06.2020 and on the webpage of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” for the purposes of the Department of Pedagogy and Educational Management at the Faculty of Pedagogy.

1. General presentation of the received documentation

The procedures for this competition comply with the Law on the conditions and order for the acquisition of research degrees and appointment to academic ranks at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”. The documents and materials provided by Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova, PhD, DEdSc meet all requirements of the Law on the development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Statute for its application and the respective Statute of PU “Paisii Hilendarski”.

Presentation of the procedure and description of the materials received for review

By Decree № P33-4118 from 24.08.2020 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” I was elected a member of the scientific jury for the competition for conferral of the academic title of **Professor at PU** in the higher educational area Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education), **announced for the purposes of** the Department of Pedagogy and Educational Management at the Faculty of Pedagogy.

The only candidate who submitted the application for the announced competition was Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova, PhD, DEdSc from Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”.

The set of materials on paper presented by Assoc. Prof Zhana Atanasova Yankova, PhD, DEdSc meets the requirements of the Statute for development of the academic staff in PU and includes the following documents:

- Sample request to the rector for admission to the competition;
- European Curriculum Vitae
- Diploma for Higher Education with acquired educational and qualification degree of Master – original and supplement
- Diploma for the educational and research degree of Doctor – original
- Diploma (certificate) for the academic title of associate professor – original
- Diploma for the research degree of Doctor of Sciences – original
- List and copies of all research works
- Inquiry for compliance with the minimal national requirements
- Declaration for originality and veracity of the attached documents
- Annotations of the research works, including self-evaluation of the contributions in Bulgarian and English
- Certificate for professional experience
- Documents for teaching experience
- Documents for research work
 - o Inquiry for research
 - o Certificates for project activity, certificates and feedback
- Other documents:
 - o Certificates and protocols
 - o Proof for citation
 - o Certificates for participation in conferences and trainings
- A set of documents on paper from item 1 to item 14 – 4 pieces
- A set of documents on electronic carrier from item 1 to item 14 – 8 pieces

Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova, PhD, DEdSc has attached a list of 95 publications. For this competition she **participates with 50** of them. Seventeen out of these 50 works have been published after presenting her dissertation for conferral of the research degree of Doctor of Sciences. The list of research works for this competition includes one monograph, two books, one

study (as a coauthor), 30 research articles in Bulgarian (five of which as a coauthor) and eight in a foreign language (two as a coauthor); seven textbooks and manuals for students, of which six as a coauthor; one manual for pupils (as a coauthor).

The documentation presented by Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova, PhD, DEdSc for this competition has been thoroughly organized, contains all the necessary information and has accurately been compiled visually and in content. This considerably facilitates the work of the members of the scientific jury.

2. Brief biographical background of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova, PhD, DEdSc graduated the Semi-higher Institute for Elementary and Pre-secondary School Teachers “Lyuben Karavelov” in the town of Kardjali, and in 1985 she acquired additional qualification in oligophrenopedagogy at SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” – Central Institute for Training Teachers and Managers in Sofia.

After receiving a second class qualification in oligophrenopedagogy in 1986 at SU “St Kliment Ohridski” – Central Institute for Training Teachers and Managers in Sofia, she finished her higher education at PU “Paisii Hilendarski” as a biologist, teacher of biology with a secondary degree in chemistry within ten years. She obtained second and first class in biology and first professional qualification degree in special education (1998). Her attempts to constantly expand and enrich her education continued and in 2003 Assoc. Prof. Yankova was conferred the educational and research degree of Doctor in the specialty 05.07.04 Special Education. Three years later she acquired the academic title of associate professor in the same specialty, and in 2016 the research degree of Doctor of Sciences.

The professional career of Assoc. Prof. Yankova started as a teacher and assistant director at the Special Education School “Lyuben Karavelov” in the town of Stara Zagora. From 1996 to 2007 she served as a senior expert in integrated learning, special educational schools and homes for raising and educating children without parental care at the Regional Inspectorate of Education – Stara Zagora, as in the last two years of this period she was an honorary lecturer in special education at Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Faculty of Pedagogy, Medical Faculty, Faculty of Agriculture, and the Department of Information and In-service Teacher Training.

From 2007 to 2011 she was an associate professor in special education at DIITT, Trakia University, and since 2011 – an associate professor in special education at PU “Paisii Hilendarski”, Faculty of Pedagogy, the Department of Pedagogy and Educational Management.

Since 1995 she has taken part in multiple trainings for which she has presented certificates. She has also been a trainer of various pedagogical specialists.

Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova, PhD, DEdSc successfully combines teaching with research, including participation in research and scientific projects, for some of which she has acted as a manager or coordinator.

3. General characteristic of the activity of the candidate

Evaluation of the educational and training activity

Assoc. Prof. Yankova teaches various academic disciplines in the specialties at bachelor and master level. All of them are related to special education and inclusive education.

The academic courses she teaches at the full-time specialty of Special Education are: Introduction to the profession, Resource assistance of children and pupils with special educational needs, Assistive tools and technologies, as well as On-going pedagogical practice and Pre-graduation pedagogical practice.

In the specialties of Elementary School Pedagogy with a Foreign Language, Elementary School Pedagogy, Pre-school and Elementary School Pedagogy she teaches Additional support to students with special educational needs, while in the specialties of Pedagogy and Social Pedagogy she delivers lectures in Inclusive education. In the specialty of Social Work she conducts trainings in Social work for people with disabilities.

The candidate teaches academic courses in Resource assistance in inclusive education, Supportive environment for SEN children and pupils, Specifics of training SEN children/ pupils with intellectual disabilities, Assistive tools and technologies for SEN children and pupils at the Master's programme in Special Pedagogy – Resource Teacher, for which she has developed a new curriculum (part-time training, 2 years). She also teaches a large number of disciplines at other master's programmes of the Faculty of Pedagogy, among which Introduction to communication disorders, Individual programmes and design of the instructions for communication disorders,

Assistive technologies and universal design for learning with communication disorders, Ergotherapy and communication disorders – MP “Communication developmental disorders”, Inclusive education of SEN children and pupils at MP “Educational management”, Strategies for inclusive education – MP “Alternatives in pre-school and elementary school pedagogy”.

Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova, PhD, DEdSc is the author of two academic plans for further professional qualification “Resource Teacher”, of curricula for short term courses for pedagogical specialists with conferral of qualification credits at the Department of Qualification and Professional Development of Pedagogical Specialists.

She has published one textbook as a sole author for students (RW44) and two as a co-author (RW45), (RW46), four manuals for students as a co-author (RW43), (RW47), (RW48), (RW49) and one electronic manual for SEN students (RW50), an e-course on Inclusive education of SEN students.

She has been an academic advisor of six PhD students, three of whom have successfully defended their theses.

Evaluation of the research and applied research activity of the candidate

As a result of her continuous pedagogical queries and research Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova has presented enough research works to match the profile of the announced competition for a professor. Her publication activity is an evidence for her achievements as a scholar-expert in special education.

The distribution of her research works submitted for participation in this competition in respective sections at home and abroad is the following: habilitation work – a monograph (RW1), two books – one based on a defended dissertation thesis for conferral of the educational and research degree of doctor (RW2), and the second – for acquisition of the research work doctor of sciences (RW3); 38 articles, three of which published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world renown databases with scientific information and 33 – in non-referenced journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, in seven of which she has been a co-author.

The monograph *Determinants in the Access to Education of SEN Children and Pupils* is directly related to the experience of Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova, PhD, DEdSc. In it she presents her

studies in theoretical and normative aspect from the perspective of the organization and components of the access to education of SEN children and pupils and shares best practices.

She follows the emergence and development of integrated learning and the access of these children as a first step towards their inclusion in the educational process in the kindergarten and school, as well as the specifics of inclusive education. She analyses the determinants of the access to education, which imply equal participation in the educational process and social life of the educational institution. On the basis of a conducted analysis on the theoretical concepts of Bulgarian authors she defines separate disorders and disabilities, presents the etiology and classification and characterizes individual symptoms through the prism of access to education. She reveals some instances of the practice of resource teachers working with various SEN children and pupils and their parents.

The empirical study impresses with the large number of participants: 231 directors of kindergartens and schools from five regions – Stara Zagora, Haskovo, Pazardjik, Kardjali and Smolyan and nine experts from the Ministry of Education and Science, higher schools, regional centres for support of the process of inclusive education, schools, kindergartens, and NGOs. The academically consistent theoretical, quantity and quality analysis of the results obtained for the study presuppose the formulation of important inferences and recommendations related to the improved access to quality inclusive education of all children and pupils, including SEN children and pupils. The timely and useful character of this monograph is unarguable.

Research work 5 also concerns the above mentioned problems.

The book *Remedial Development Education in Biology of Students with Intellectual Disabilities* (RW2) views the scientific-theoretical and practical possibilities to overcome or reduce the disorders in the cognitive activity of students with intellectual disabilities, as well as the specifics of their training in Biology.

The book *Assistive Tools and Technologies for SEN Children and Pupils in Inclusive Education* (RW3) informs about the diversity of assistive tools and technologies in the educational process of SEN children and pupils. The need for provision of the indicated tools by the educational institutions has been emphasized so that these children and pupils may have access to information and learning content together with everyone else according to their individual needs.

The studies related to the use of assistive tools and technologies educating SEN children and pupils have been presented in publication numbered: RW15, RW19, RW20, RW23, RW29, RW38, RW42. The results from studies conducted by the author with pedagogues have been analyzed and summarized.

The particularly pertinent problem of resource assistance and support for the personal development of SEN children and pupils has been discussed in RW6, RW7, RW14, RW16, RW21, RW26, RW31, RW32, RW33, RW35, RW37. They contain a specification of the technologies for alternative and complementary communication technologies additionally assisting these children and pupils in their learning process. The possibilities for using IT technologies in the process of increasing the motivation of SEN students for learning and participation in class have been presented which would lead to improving the quality of the educational process and equal participation.

In several of her publications Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova, PhD, DEdSc has directed her attention to research related to the specifics of teaching SEN children, pupils and students, including teaching pupils with severe intellectual and multiple disorders in schools: RW2, RW9, RW12, RW24, RW25, RW30, RW31, RW34, RW41.

The regulatory foundations of inclusive education, its practical implementation in kindergartens and schools, the importance of supportive environment for the personal development of children and pupils with intellectual disabilities included in mainstream classrooms have been viewed in RW27, RW36, and RW39.

Special attention has been paid to the preparation of students in their professional field of Pedagogy for working with SEN children and pupils in the conditions of inclusive education, as well as the improvement of further qualifications for educational specialists, including the requirements for continuing education of the resource teacher – RW4, RW8, RW10, RW11, RW13, RW17, RW18, RW22, RW28, RW40.

The psychological specifics of the groups of SEN children and pupils, as well as important questions related to the additional assistance for personal development in educational institutions have been presented in the textbooks for university students – RW46, RW44, RW45, RW43, RW47. The main strategies and models of work with these children and pupils have been specified

and justified, and the value of art therapy exercises for developing their individuality has been revealed by indicating and describing such instances.

The publication activity presented for this competition describe Assoc. Prof. Yankova as a methodical and strict researcher of current problems in the area of special education.

Assoc. Prof. Yankova has participated in 14 **national research or educational projects**, such as: four projects as a member of the research team, five as a trainer, three as a project coordinator, one as an expert instructor, and one as an academic tutor. She has been a manager of three national projects. As a member of the research team she has participated in two **international projects**.

She has participated in 15 international and 7 national **conferences** with reports, as well as in one international educational seminar. She has delivered lectures at the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, Poland from 03.05.2015 to 08.05.2015.

The candidate has reviewed six monographs, proceedings from international research and applied conferences in Kiten from 2015 to 2020.

Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova, PhD, DEdSc is a **member** of: Union of Scientist in Bulgaria; part of the community of professors from Slavic countries; the Regional Council of Integrating SEN Children in the Public Educational System; of the Adoption Council at the Regional Directorate of Social Assistance – Stara Zagora; the Commission for Child Protection at the Directorate for Social Assistance – Stara Zagora. She is a chairlady of the Expert Commission for Inclusive Education at the Regional Inspectorate for Education – Stara Zagora.

Contributions (research, research-applied, applied) and citations

The presented inquiry proves that one of the publication of Assoc. Prof. Yankova has been **cited** once in a journal referenced and indexed in world renown databases with scientific information. Moreover, reviews of two of her books have been published in journals indexed in the same database. The total number of **citations** from ten publications of the author in monographs and collected works with scientific review is 16. The citations in non-referenced journals with scientific review are 52.

Contributions:

- The organization and components of the access of SEN children and pupils to educational institutions have been presented. (RW1, RW5)
- A questionnaire for self-assessment of directors of kindergartens and schools on the accessibility to education of SEN children and pupils has been developed and applied, as well as a card for experts in the area of inclusive education for evaluating the access to education of these children and pupils (RW1).
- A complete study on the problem of assistive tools and technologies in educating SEN children and pupils has been made: the categorical apparatus and their classification have been specified and made more precise. Checklists for evaluating the need of the child or pupil for assistive tools and technologies in the educational process have been created; low and high technology tools that facilitate participation in all activities of the educational institution have been described (RW3, RW38, RW23).
- A model for basic preparation of students with respect to applying contemporary assistive tools and technologies in teaching SEN children and pupils has been proposed. (RW19, RW20)
- The role of adapted assistive tools for writing, reading and cutting in the teaching of SEN children and pupils has been clarified, the specifics of four models of adapted scissors have been described, and 15 steps for developing cutting skills have been presented (RW29, RW38).
- The development of research assistance in Bulgaria has been studied as a component of educational inclusion in schools and kindergartens and the cooperation with the family (RW16, RW21, RW26, RW32, RW35).
- The essence of the support for personal development in the conditions of inclusive education of SEN children and pupils has been clarified together with the importance of additional support for personal development through assistive and IT technologies, and the main strategies and models for working with these children and pupils. (RW6, RW7, RW14, RW31, RW37, RW44, RW3, RW45).
- A model of the activities for realizing integrated learning in schools or kindergartens has been constructed and proposed, and methodological aspects of teaching Biology to students with intellectual disabilities in special schools have been indicated. (RW2, RW31, RW34)
- Directions for developing a standard for inclusive education have been proposed. (RW27)

- An original programme for assistive tools and technologies for SEN children and pupils has been promoted and suggestions regarding the improvement of the continuing qualification of pedagogical specialists have been made. (RW4, RW8, RW11, RW18, RW22, RW40)
- E-manual “Man and Nature in the World of Geometry” (5 grade), intended for SEN pupils has been described and approved. (RW50)

The theoretical works have practical application, as part of them are directly oriented to teaching.

4. Evaluation of the personal contribution of the candidate

The personal participation and contribution of the candidate are unarguable. I am fully convinced that the formulated contributions and the results obtained are her personal merit.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no critical remarks or recommendations.

6. Personal impressions

My personal impressions from Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova, PhD, DEdSc are exceptionally positive. We have participated in common activities, such as: scientific juries, conferences, meetings during the visit of the expert group with the National Agency of Evaluation and Accreditation to PU “Paisii Hilendarski”. The colleague has acted as a responsible, focused, ambitious and assiduously working researcher and teacher. She combines high professionalism, academic behavior and well-intended attitude and shares her experience with young specialists, colleagues and the general public.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by **Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova, PhD, DEdSc** meet all requirements of the Law on the development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Statute for application of LDASRB and the relevant Statute of PU “Paisii Hilendarski”.

The candidate in this competition has presented **a sufficient number of research works** published after the materials used for the defense of her doctoral and doctor of sciences degrees. Her

publications have scientific and applied contributions. Her work as a teacher and author of manuals prove her **responsible attitude to the teaching process**.

The results achieved by **Assoc. Prof. Yankova** in her teaching and research activity **fully** comply with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Pedagogy, adopted with respect to the Statute of PU for application of the LDASRB. Her research and teaching qualification is **undoubted**.

After getting acquainted with the materials and research works submitted for this competition, upon analyzing their significance and research, theoretically applied and applied contributions, I find it relevant to announce my **positive** evaluation and recommend to the scientific jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy for the conferral of the academic title of Professor at PU “Paisii Hilendarski” in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education) to **Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova, PhD, DEdSc**.

23.09.2020

Reviewer:

Prof. Pelagiya Terzijska, PhD