

## REVIEW

by

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**Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"**

of the materials submitted for participation in the competition

for the academic position "**professor**"

**at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"**

in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical/Educational sciences,

professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education)

In the competition for "professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 57 from 26.06. 2020 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Pedagogy and Management of Education at the Faculty of Pedagogy, as a candidate participates Assoc. Prof. dsc Zhana Atanasova Yankova from the Department of Pedagogy and Management of Education at the Faculty of Education. Faculty of PU.

### **1. General presentation of the submitted materials.**

By order № P33-4118 of 24.08.2020 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I was appointed a member of the scientific jury in the competition for the academic position "professor" in PU in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical/Educational sciences, professional field 1.2 Pedagogy (Special Education), announced for the needs of the Department of Pedagogy and Management of Education at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Plovdiv.

The only candidate for participation in the announced competition who has submitted documents is: Assoc. Prof. Zhana Atanasova Yankova from the Department of Pedagogy and Education Management at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Plovdiv.

I got acquainted in detail with the materials presented by Zhana Yankova for participation in the competition for "professor" on paper, as well as with the similar set of electronic materials, and I can say and conclude that they are fully compliant with both the legal national requirements and with the requirements of PU "Paisii Hilendarski". They are very detailed and precisely arranged and organized on paper and in electronic form. The set of paper materials presented by Zhana Yankova is in accordance with the Regulations for development of the academic staff of the University of Plovdiv, and includes the following documents in a total of 16 points, some of which are:

- Diplomas for education and acquired scientific degrees and academic position;
- CV;
- Scientific papers for participation in the competition in the completeness of the set;
- Data and documents about the teaching activities and the work experience;
- Documents for the research work and activities;
- Lists of publications – general and for participation in the competition;
- Information about meeting the minimum national requirements;
- Annotations of the publications for participation in the competition;
- References for citations;
- Certificates from participation in trainings and conferences;
- Certificates for participation in scientific conferences;
- Official notes and protocols, etc.

The candidate Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova participated in the competition with a total of 50 scientific papers, of which 3 monographs, 1 study, 30 scientific articles in Bulgarian, 8 scientific articles in a foreign languages, 7 textbooks and teaching manuals for university students and 1 electronic teaching manual for pupils. I accept for review all 50 scientific papers. The presented

scientific papers can be divided as follows: 42 in Bulgarian language and 8 in foreign languages (7 in English and 1 in Russian). Among the 50 scientific papers for participation in the competition, 14 are co-authored and the rest are single/independent. Of the 50 publications, 48 have already been published and only two publications are in print,/in press and are accompanied by official notes that they have been officially accepted for printing.

## **2. Short biographical data about the candidate.**

The candidate Assoc. Prof. Zhana A. Yankova graduated in 1979 from the semi-higher institute for primary and lower secondary teachers in the town of Kardzhali. In 1985 she studied at the Department for qualifications at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" and received retraining as a teacher of students with intellectual disabilities. In 1987 she graduated from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv with a degree in biology and chemistry. She received a first class qualification in biology in Sofia and a first professional qualification degree in special education in Stara Zagora.

In 2004 Zhana Yankova defended her doctoral dissertation in the scientific specialty 05.07.04. "Special education" and received Phd ( "Doctor" by the Higher Attestation Commission). In 2007 the Higher Attestation Commission again awarded Zhana Yankova the scientific title "Associate Professor", and in 2016 the University of Plovdiv awarded her the scientific degree "Doctor of Science".

Zh. Yankova worked as a teacher in the period 1979-1994, as an assistant director in the period 1994-1996, she was a part-time lecturer at the Thracian University in 2005-2007. From 2007 to 2011 Zhana Yankova worked as an associate professor in special education in the department for information and professional development of teachers at TrU in Stara Zagora. Since 2011 Assoc. Prof. Yankova is a full-time associate professor in special education at the University of Plovdiv.

All of the above shows the consistent and deep interest of Assoc. Prof. Zh. Yankova in special education and her gradual scientific and academic growth. A very good impression makes the purposefulness and at the same time fluency, moderation and validity of her career growth and development.

## **3. General characteristics of the candidate's activities.**

### **3.1. Compliance with the minimum national requirements.**

From the attached reference for fulfillment of the minimum national requirements, it is evident that Assoc. Prof. Zh. Yankova has 50 points on indicator A, 100 on indicator B, 100 on indicator C, 565 on indicator D, 465 on indicator D and 595.13 on indicator E, or the total number of points is 1875.13 compared with the required 550 points. There is full coverage of the minimum national requirements and even a significant excess of the points in indicators, D, E and E. I agree with the values indicated.

### **3.2. Educational activity of the candidate.**

I would like to consider first of all the educational and educational activity of the candidate. As evidence are attached 1) Certificate of work experience from PU, proving that the candidate is on a basic employment contract at PU, 2) Author's reference in three sections, the first section presents data on auditorium and extracurricular duties of the candidate, showing the classes and disciplines, which Zh. Yankova teaches in PU in bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as a list of the developed curricula in the respective classes; The second part briefly presents a list of published teaching materials - one individual textbook, two co-authored textbooks for university students, four co-authored manuals, one electronic textbook for students with SEN and one electronic manual for students, and section three presents the supervision of diploma theses - a total of 30 in bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as a table with a list of supervisions of doctoral students - 6. Three of them have successfully defended their PhDs, one has been expelled with the right to defense and two are current. 3) Reference for the research activity, which is also built in three parts. The first shows the participation in research projects, among them being a manager of three research projects, participation in 14 scientific or educational projects (among them academic mentoring under the project "Student Internships") and participation in 2 international projects; the second part shows the participation in national and international scientific forums, reflecting participation in 23 such; the third part indicates the number of scientific papers for participation in the competition [the, fourth part indicates the participation as a reviewer of monographs, collections, etc. - 7 in total, the fifth part indicates a review by National Association of Resource Teachers (NARU) for the active work of the candidate to the organization and her participation in trainings organized by NARU, and the last, sixth part is a reference for one participation with lectures in Poland in 2015, and a certificate is attached as evidence. Apart from this author's reference, certificates from PU and TrU for participation in projects are

attached. The active teaching, scientific and research activity of Zh. Yankova, as well as her participation in numerous projects are evident from everything applied.

Evidence is also attached in the form of certificates for participation in various trainings - a total of 5 for the period 2006 - 2016 and one certificate for participation in the first meeting of a project under the Erasmus + program of the University of Plovdiv.

From all the attached documents it is clear and makes a very good impression the great commitment and activity of Zh. Yankova in all aspects of the university life of the University of Plovdiv.

### **3.3. Scientific and publishing activity of the candidate.**

The candidate participates in the competition with a total of 50 publications. Of these, I will begin by reviewing the three monographs:

1. Undoubtedly the most significant is the monograph *"Determinants in access to education for children and students with special educational needs"* which was published in 2019 by the University "Paisii Hilendarski". It is 284 pages long. This is a very valuable research-oriented publication, consisting of 4 chapters: the first two chapters are theoretical and offer a very good theoretical analysis and overview of the emergence and development of integrated education and its development into inclusive education, and offers in-depth, modern and current characteristics of the different categories and groups of children with special educational needs (SEN). The third chapter describes the design of the research, which includes a survey among 231 principals of kindergartens and schools in several districts of the country, as well as providing an expert assessment. The analysis of the collected data, presented in the fourth chapter, is very detailed and correct and reaches significant conclusions about the accessibility of the environment, the teaching materials, the programs, the information and communication technologies (ICT) and the qualification of the educational staff. The obtained results contribute to the theory and practice in our country.
2. The second monograph for participation in the competition is entitled "Correctional and developmental training in biology for students with mental retardation", published in 2006 by the publ. company Spark. This monograph is 94 pages long and in my opinion is theoretical. It analyzes in two chapters first the essence of the correctional and developmental education,

points out the need to adapt the curriculum in biology in order to be mastered by students from the former special schools, now Centers for special educational support. The second chapter focuses on the objectives of teaching biology to students with intellectual disabilities, characterizes the organization and structure of teaching, indicates the main methods, approaches and means of teaching. A separate paragraph discusses the integrated and inclusive education, points out the importance of conducting a comprehensive educational assessment and developing an individual educational program for children and students with intellectual disabilities. Given that the publication is from 2006, there are some terminological features typical for that particular time, as well as the analysis envisions the activities and training in biology in the non-existent special schools for mentally retarded.

3. The third monograph is from 2020, published by the university press of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" under the title "Aids and technologies for children and students with special educational needs in inclusive education." Here, two chapters discuss these aids and technologies, their role and benefits, describe the policy of their use and offer a classification. A separate paragraph in the first chapter describes the groups of children and students with SEN. It is interesting the decision to present the groups of children with SEN in a table. I also find valuable the description in § 4 of the first chapter of some modern models for providing technological support in the educational process, including the Bowser & Reed model, the model of adaptations, the Texas model, the model of Georgia, USA and others. The second chapter focuses on the inclusive education of children and students with SEN, points to the need to assess the individual needs of the child in order to provide technical aids and describes a large number of low- and high-tech assistive technologies in the learning process. Here I have the following question: does the candidate consider that there are also medium-tech aids, as many English-speaking authors claim?

Under № 4 in the list of publications for participation in the competition there is a study "Multicultural education - inclusion of different" in the publication "Multiculturalism and Education", with authors Lavrentsova, Yankova and Delchev, 2012 edition of the Thracian University-DIPKU. Here on pages 85-108 is the study of Zh. Yankova, which unfortunately is without a name on page 85. For me, however, there is no doubt the authorship of the text, as I clearly recognize the style and expression of Assoc. Prof. Zh. Yankova. This study has a theoretical focus and outlines several perspectives – the role of the teacher, the importance of multicultural education to overcome stigmas

and stereotypes, regulations with an emphasis on the inclusion of children from minority backgrounds, the importance of teachers' qualifications for multicultural work, the environment, specific strategies and techniques for working in a multicultural environment. The topic of multiculturalism is particularly relevant in the current time and I believe that the study is an appropriate complement to the issue.

The list of scientific articles in Bulgarian is rich and includes a total of 30 titles. I will conditionally divide them into several thematic groups and review them as a groups. In the following text I will use for short the abbreviation SEN for children with special educational needs, and it should be specified that the candidate Zh. Yankova has used a complete spelling in her publications.

The first group of scientific articles includes 4 articles - HT5, HT27, HT30 and HT34. They address the issue of inclusive education as a concept. The first article is *entitled "Access to quality inclusive education for children and students with SEN"* and is in print. The article is 13 pages long and is of a research nature. It summarizes the results of the research carried out in the monograph "Determinants in access to education for children and students with special educational needs" among 231 principals from several districts in Bulgaria. The second article is entitled "*From integrated education to inclusive education of children and students with SEN*" and is a paper published in the conference proceedings of PU in 2013. It is theoretical and within 8 pages historically examines the process of transition from integrated education for inclusive education. The stages in the organization of integrated education are described, focusing on the role of the resource teacher and on cooperation with the family. The third article is "*Training of children and students with SEN in the system of public education*" and is again a paper presented on the Fifth Autumn Scientific Conference held by TrU in 2007, published in conference proceedings. The article is theoretical and describes two stages of integrated education, namely complex educational assessment and the actual organization of the educational process. The article is 6 pages long. The last article in this group is "*Socialization and integration of children and students with SEN*", which theoretically addresses the issue of socialization in the process of integration of students with SEN. The article was published in conference proceedings "Socialization" of PU in 2011.

In the second group of scientific articles I include 4 articles which discuss issues related to providing a supportive environment and additional support to children and students with SEN. This group includes HT12, HT14, HT31 and HT33. The first article in this group is "*The role of a team to support personal development in the assessment of children and students with SEN in kindergarten and school*", 7 pages long and published in the conference proceedings entitled "Scientific and practical

aspects of inclusive education" from the scientific conference with international participation of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" in 2018. This is a theoretical paper, which thoroughly and in detail describes the functions and activities performed by the educational team, and which shows the good knowledge of the candidate of the organization of work of these teams. The second article *"Additional support - a condition for personal development of children and students in preschool and school education"* is published in the conference proceedings from the interdisciplinary scientific conference of PU in 2017 "Socio-pedagogical aspects of child development". The article has research nature and in 12 pages describes a study among 78 pedagogical specialists from three cities in Bulgaria on the need to provide additional support. The article could draw some conclusions. The third article is *"Supportive environment in the education of children and students with SEN"* and was published in the journal Special Education in 2011. It theoretically discusses the importance of the supportive environment for the successful inclusion of children and students with SEN, describing its main components. The author critically points out some shortcomings and gaps in the process of providing a supportive environment, which is valuable for the practice. The fourth article is entitled *"Educational assessment of children and students with SEN"*, published in conference proceedings of Sofia University in 2010 from the jubilee scientific conference dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of Prof. D. Denev and 25 years of FNPP (now FNOI). It is theoretical and in a volume of 7 pages discusses the activities of the teams for complex educational assessment, to some extent overlapping the topic and content of the previous article.

The third group of scientific articles includes 6 articles which are dedicated to the resource teacher - HT8, HT16, HT21, HT22, HT26 and HT32. The first article is a conference paper entitled *"Qualification for professional development of the resonant teacher"*, 10 pages long, and published in conference proceedings from the national conference "Resource teachers and co-teaching in the inclusive education" of NARU in 2019. It is research-based and reports the results of a large-scale survey conducted in the period 2018-2019 among 177 pedagogical specialists from RCPPO in Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Pazardzhik and Kardzhali on their qualification. The second article is *"The resource teacher in the conditions of education of children and students with SEN in an inclusive environment"* in the conference proceedings of PU from 2016 "United in diversity". Here, in theoretical terms, some of the functions of the resource teacher in the process of providing resource support are indicated. The third article is *"Resource support for students with SEN - advantages and disadvantages"* in the conference proceedings "Psychological and pedagogical problems of the development of the professional's personality in university education" from 2014. In a research plan it



examines the advantages and disadvantages of the resource support, as far as I understand, among parents, teachers, principals and students, without specifying the number of respondents and their distribution in groups. The article would have benefited if the research and analysis had been more comprehensive. The next article in this group is "*Continuing qualification of the resource teacher*", published in the journal *Special Education* in 2014, which within 14 pages and in research plan examines the qualification and training of 121 resource teachers from the Regional Centers in the cities of St. Zagora and Veliko Tarnovo. As a result of the study, specific recommendations are made to address the identified problems. The article "*Resource support for the family and school inclusion*", co-authored with K. Damyanov and published in the electronic magazine "Pedagogical Forum" in 2013, provides a theoretical justification for the importance of resource support for the family of a child with SEN. It also underlines the value of cooperation between specialists and parents, provides recommendations to the practice in order this cooperation to be improved. The article "*Resource support for children and students with SEN*" is published in the Yearbook of the Union of Scientists in Blagoevgrad in 2010. The article is 6 pages long and theoretically focuses more on activities related to assistive technologies as an element of the resource support.

The fourth group of articles covers 6 articles, the topic of which is on the preparation of students and future teachers of children with SEN, including HT10, HT11, HT13, HT17, HT25 and HT28. The first five articles are reports published in conference proceedings of the Association of Professors from the Slavic countries in different years. The first is entitled "*Preparing students to work with children and students with SEN*" from 2019. Within 5 pages and in research plan it discusses the university education with an emphasis on the training of special educators and examines the views of 24 bachelor students in special education regarding the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by them during their university education. The analysis of the results shows good preparation and confidence in the skills of the majority of students, but also the presence of some gaps and deficits. The second article "*Professional training of teachers for the education of children and students with SEN included in the educational environment*" is from 2018, which in theoretical terms describes the academic, educational and administrative competencies of the teachers-to-be and their knowledge on the inclusive environment. The third article "*Preparing the future teacher for work in an inclusive environment*" is from 2017. Here, within 5 pages, a theoretical analysis of the necessary knowledge and skills of teachers of children with SEN is offered. The fourth article "*Professional training of the future pedagogue to work in an inclusive educational environment*" is from 2016 and is theoretical. To some extent, there is little overlap in the content of these four articles. The fifth article "*University*

*environment - conditions for the formation of the future pedagogue to work in inclusive education"* is from 2012 and it describes in a theoretical perspective the content of disciplines set in the university training in the specialties "Education", "Preschool education", "Primary school education" and "Social education", which form the basis of knowledge of university students for their work with children and students with SEN in an inclusive environment. The sixth article in this group is entitled "*The supportive environment in the education of students with special needs*" and is published in the proceedings "Prosperity in the context of social identity" of the University of Plovdiv from 2013. It theoretically analyzes and characterizes the necessary components for successful inclusion of students with SEN by providing accessible architectural environment, textbooks and materials, aids, etc.

In the fifth group of scientific articles I include 9 publications related to assistive technologies - respectively HT6, HT7, HT15, HT18, HT19, HT20, HT23, HT24 and HT29. HT6 is an article entitled "*Additional support for children and students with SEN in the process of education through assistive technologies*", published in the journal "Pedagogy" in 2019, which in 9 pages offers a thorough theoretical analysis and description of various popular and suitable for the education of students with SEN aids, divided into groups for alternative and augmentative communication, for the visually impaired, etc. The second article is in a collective edition of the University of Plovdiv from 2019 "Man and Global Society", entitled "*Information technology to support children and students with SEN*" and discusses in theory the requirements, opportunities, advantages of modern information technology to support the process of teaching children with SEN. The third article "*Aids and technologies in the education of children and students with specific learning disabilities*" is in the conference proceedings of PU from 2017. "Prospects for creating an innovative educational environment". It focuses on a more specific group of children and students, namely those with learning disabilities and is research-based. It reports the results of a survey among 100 teachers from three regional cities in Bulgaria on their knowledge and skills in the use of assistive technologies. The results alert to the lack of aids in most kindergartens and schools where respondents work. The fourth article is in the conference proceedings "Challenges of inclusive education" of the University of Plovdiv from 2015 and is entitled "*Professional training of resource teachers for the introduction of aids and technologies in the education of students with SEN*". It indicates theoretically the basic elements of the preparation of future resource teachers for the implementation of aids in their work, indicates the knowledge, skills and competencies that they should master in this regard. The fifth publication is again in the conference proceedings of PU from 2015 "Education, Development, Art", where Zh. Yankova has an article "*Educational environment - a condition for the introduction of aids and technologies for students with*

*SEN*". Within 12 pages this paper discusses and describes various suitable technical aids. The content is somewhat similar to the first article in this group. The next two articles "*Preparation of future teachers for the implementation of technical aids and technologies in the inclusive educational environment*" and "*Inclusive education - a condition for the implementation of high-tech aids to students with SEN*" are in the conference proceedings of the Association of Slavic Professors in 2013 and 2015. Both papers are theoretical and in a slightly different perspective describe the benefits of the technical aids and technologies and the conditions for their implementation through the development of knowledge and skills in the teachers-to-be. The eighth article was published in the conference proceedings of NARU in 2014 and is entitled "*Information technology in the education of students with SEN*". The new element in it is the description of a newly developed e-textbook "Man and nature in the world of geometry". The last article in this group is co-authored with A. Yanina "*Easy scissors for children with SEN*", published in the journal "Special Education" in 2012, which makes a thorough analysis and description of different types of scissors suitable for use by children with various motor disorders, by children with ADHD and other disabilities.

The last article I will review separately from the others and this is publication HT9, entitled "*Education of students with severe intellectual and multiple disabilities in the educational institutions*" and is in print, with an official note for its acceptance for printing. It will be published in the conference proceedings from a scientific conference with international participation of the University of Plovdiv in 2019 and theoretically discusses the opportunities and conditions for inclusion of students with profound disabilities, as well as multiple disabilities.

The group of articles in a foreign language follows - a total of 8.

The first article is entitled "*Development of special educational needs support for children and students with SEN*", published in English in the journal "Strategies of education and science policy, in 2018. It theoretically describes and characterizes 4 stages in the development of special education and inclusive education in Bulgaria. The second article is "*Inclusive education of children and students at kindergarten and school level*", published in the electronic journal Folia 276 Anales Universitari Paedagogicae Cracoviensis in 2018. It is theoretical and emphasizes on the need to provide general and additional support. The third and fourth articles are from 2017 and have been published in two issues of the International Journal of Knowledge, published in Northern Macedonia. The first is entitled "*Support for personal development of children and students with SEN in the process of education*". It again, as in the previous article, comments on the general and additional support provided to children

and students with SEN. The second article *“Educational environment-a requirement for the implementation of assistive means and technologies in the training of children and students with SEN”* is dedicated to the use of special aids and technologies in the educational process of children and students with SEN with a description of some selected aids. The fifth article was published in 2013 in the Trakia Journal of Sciences and is entitled *“Supportive environment-condition for personal development and social well-being of schoolchildren with mental retardation”*. It focuses specifically on children with intellectual disabilities and the opportunities to provide a supportive environment in their learning process. The sixth article is in Russian *“Qualification and social well-being of the special teacher working with special aids and technologies for children with special educational needs”*, published in issue 2 of 2012 in the Russian journal Psychology and School. Here, within 5 pages, the technologies in the education of children and students with SEN are described and the need for development of knowledge and skills in the future teachers-special educators on them is indicated. The article is theoretical. The last two articles were reprinted in the Trakia Journal of Sciences in a 2010 issue, the first article being co-authored with D. Brunekova and entitled *“Possibilities for application of informal technologies with the training of children and students with SEN”*, and the second is co-authored with A. Yanina and is entitled *“Assistive devices and technology in education of children and students with mental retardation”*. The first is theoretical in nature and describes various aids for children with SEN in the learning process, and the second is research-based and reports the results of a survey among an unspecified number of teachers on their knowledge and skills to use and include in the education of children with intellectual disabilities different technical aids and technologies.

In a separate group I will review the seven textbooks and teaching manuals for university students. These include the textbooks: *“Additional support for children and students through aids and technologies in preschool and school education”*, *“Strategies for working with children and students with special educational needs”* co-authored in 2016 and the newer edition again co-authored *“Strategies and models for working with children and students with special educational needs”* from 2019, *“Psychology of children and students with special educational needs”* co-authored in 2018, *“Art techniques for the development of individuality”* co-authored and published in 2015, *“United in Diversity”* co-authored and printed in 2011 and *“The World is for All - A Handbook for Parents of Mentally Retarded Children”* co-authored in 2007.

The first textbook is independent and was published in 2018 by the publ. house Alpha Vision and has a volume of 103 pages. It consists of three chapters, the first two of which are theoretical and

describe the philosophy of providing additional support to children and students with SEN as well as providing technical aids in the system of preschool education. Particularly useful is the third chapter, entitled School Practice, which contains short interviews with individuals working in the system of inclusive education, with a focus on the implementation of technical aids in the educational process of children with SEN. The publication has both theoretical and practical value.

The second textbook was published in 2016 and is co-authored with D. Levterova and I. Trichkov. Here Assoc. Prof. Zh. Yankova is an independent author of five chapters / sections - 1, 3, 13, 15 and 17. The first section discusses the inclusive education as an educational concept, the second describes models of work for children with SEN, the third concerns the cooperation between the school and the family, the fourth is dedicated to the teaching aids and technologies, and the latter describes a few brief rules for communication with children with SEN. I consider as significant and serious the presence of Zh. Yankova as an author in this textbook.

The latest textbook has a newer, significantly more in-depth edition from 2019, which was printed by the publishing house of the University of Plovdiv and is co-authored with D. Levterova, I. Trichkov and V. Sivakova. Zh. Yankova is the author of 6 chapters / sections here, namely: Groups of children with SEN; Models for children with SEN; Strategies and models for working with children and students with intellectual disabilities; Cooperation between the family and the educational institutions in support of children and students with SEN; Aids and technologies in the education of children and students with SEN and General rules for communication with children with disabilities. While some of the texts are very similar to the previous edition of the textbook, others have been revised and supplemented in terms of content and supported by new data and information. Again, the presence of Zh. Yankova as an author is significant.

In the textbook "Psychology of children and students with special educational needs" co-authored with D. Levterova, I. Trichkov, Z. Kostova and V. Sivakova from 2018, Zh. Yankova is the author of the chapter / section "Sensory disabilities". Within 22 pages, she makes a good and comprehensive overview of the two groups of children with hearing and with visual impairments, describing the causes of deafness and blindness, giving a brief psychological and pedagogical description of the two groups of children, and focusing on some typical features in their educational process - sign language and fingerspelling, Braille.

The textbook "Art techniques for the development of individuality" is co-authored with D. Balti and was published by the Thracian University in 2015. This manual describes in a volume of 46 pages various art techniques, including working with clay, working with pencils with a description of several appropriate activities, working with crayons and working with paper, again supported by specific description of several available activities. The manual can be used by university students, but is also a valuable addition to school practice.

The textbook "United in Diversity" has been published by the Thracian University in 2011. It is co-authored with S. Dinchiyka, N. Zhilkov, M. Ilieva, J. Iliev and S. Gavazova. Zh. Yankova is the author of the first section "Multicultural education in the classroom" in a volume of 13 pages. It describes the essence of multicultural education in the inclusive classroom, lists some of the corresponding regulations and discusses the training and qualification of teachers to work in such environment.

The handbook "The world is for everyone - Handbook for parents of children with mental retardation" is co-authored with 7 other authors and is a 2007 edition. It was developed as a product of the project "Together we can do more". Here Zh. Yankova is the author of the section "Opportunities for inclusion of children and students with SEN in the educational process", located on pages 49-57. The section describes the concept of integrated education, the functions of the resource center, indicates the place of the special schools in the process of integration and inclusion.

The last group of publications includes a manual for students, which is co-authored with E. Yovcheva, and is entitled "Man and nature in the world of geometry", and is on CD. The manual is intended for 5th grade students. It contains a theoretical part, describes the basic geometric concepts, as well as the concepts in the school subject "Man and nature", contains many useful materials for solving difficulties in geometry, worksheets for independent work in geometry and "Man and nature", describes the integral relationship between mathematics and "Man and nature". The manual is well organized, easy to use and useful for practice.

### **3.4. Contributions and citations**

Information about the contributions is contained in the self-assessment made by the candidate Zhana Yankova, who presents the contribution moments of her publication in a total of seven areas:

- access to education for children and students with SEN;
- research in connection with the use of technical aids and technologies;
- resource support;
- education of children with SEN;
- research on inclusive education;
- professional training of students;
- contributions related to the development of pupils, teaching aids for pupils and students.

I agree with all the contributions mentioned. They are undoubtedly a personal contribution and personal work of the candidate.

**3.5. Regarding the observed citations,** very detailed evidence is attached in folder 3 of the paper documents, where copies of articles, reports in conference proceedings and others are arranged in a very organized manner, where the candidate Zhana Yankova is cited. I personally found a total of 75 documented citations. In the interest of truth, my personal observations are for greater citation of the candidate and I assume it may not have been possible to collect all available citations here. The attached evidence for the citation is completely sufficient and shows the good knowledge of the works of Zh. Yankova in the country and the reference to her publications by a number of authors. All citations are in already printed scientific publications and only one is in press, and an official note is attached to it as a proof that the publication has been accepted for publication. The citations cover a relatively wide range of time, with the majority being from the last few years.

The set of documents includes also 18 certificates and attestations for Zh. Yankova's participation in various national and international conferences, of which 16 are for national scientific forums and 2 for foreign ones, outside Bulgaria.

#### **4. Evaluation of the personal contribution of the candidate**

Based on the above analysis of the publications, I believe that the candidate has a personal contribution to them. The formulated contributions and the obtained results are also her personal merit.

I fully accept the declaration of originality and authenticity attached by the applicant. My own observations over the years fully confirm the personal contribution and commitment of Zh. Yankova.

### **5. Critical remarks, recommendations and questions.**

I have no substantive remarks on the documentation and publications in this competition. I highly appreciate all the scientific works of the candidate.

I have a question in addition to my above question, about how the manual "Man and Nature in the World of Geometry" designed for pupils on CD and intended for 5th graders, is distributed and to what extent it is implemented and used in the schools. In my opinion it is useful and I hope it has a popularity and good spread in our country.

### **6. Personal impressions**

I have known Assoc. Prof. Zhana Yankova since the time of her work as an associate professor in special education in the Department of Information and Teacher Training at the University of Stara Zagora. At that time she organized many quality and in-depth trainings for students, and she herself was teaching many valuable ones. Her students have shared with their excellent impressions of her. Subsequently, when Assoc. Prof. Yankova moved to a full-time position at the University of Plovdiv, my observations were for a very thorough and earnest, teaching and publishing activity on her part. I have had the honor and pleasure to be a reviewer of several of her publications, including the independent monograph "Determinants in access to education for children and students with SEN", which I was reviewing it has made a very good impression on me with its precision, depth and accuracy, as well as its direct practical orientation. I have also reviewed the textbooks "Additional support for children and students through aids and technologies in preschool and school education" and "Strategies for working with children and students with special educational needs."

I can confidently point out that Assoc. Prof. Yankova is an earnest researcher, interesting professor to her students, good lecturer and speaker, has a high reputation among special educators in Bulgaria and is known for his publications in our country.



## IN CONCLUSION

After getting acquainted very carefully and thoroughly with all the submitted documentation for the competition, including three folders on paper and a similar amount of documentation in electronic version, I can conclude that the documents and materials submitted by Zhana Atanasova Yankova fully meet the requirements of The Law for Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria, of the Regulations for implementation of the Law and the respective Regulations of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski". They are in order, well organized, complete in the set and in accordance with all laws and regulations.

The candidate in the competition has submitted a completely sufficient and significant number of scientific papers that have not participated in previous competitions, and which have been published after the materials used in the defense for "Doctor" and "Doctor of Science", as well as after obtaining the scientific degree "Associate Professor". In the works and publications of the candidate there are enough original scientific and applied contributions, which have received national and international recognition and popularity. The presented works have both theoretical and practical value and applicability, as some of them are directly oriented to the educational work. Zhana Yankova's scientific and teaching qualification is undoubted and valuable.

The results achieved by Assoc. Prof. Zhana A. Yankova in her teaching and research activities fully comply with the specific requirements of the Pedagogical/Educational Faculty of the University of Plovdiv, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the University of Plovdiv for the application of the Law on the Development of Research and Development.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, and after an in-depth analysis of their significance and the theoretical and applied-practical contributions contained in them, **I am fully convinced and find it completely justified to give my positive evaluation** and to recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Plovdiv for election of **Zhana Atanasova Yankova** to the academic position **"Professor"** at the University of Plovdiv "P. Hilendarski" in professional field 1.2 Pedagogy (Special Education).

1 October 2020

Reviewer: .....

(Prof. Mira Dimitrova Tzvetkova-Arsova)