

## OPINION

from

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PN 1.2. Pedagogy

External member of the Scientific Jury, according to order No. PD-21-11-81 of 07.06.2024 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

**Subject:** Competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of education and didactics - Innovative educational models), announced for the needs of the department "Pedagogy and management of education" at the Faculty of Pedagogy in SG, no. 32/09/04/2024 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The only candidate in the competition is **Ch. Assist. Diana Minkova Dimitrova**, assistant professor at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

### **I. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate for the competition**

At its first meeting, held on 14.06.2024, the Scientific Jury accepted the documents for the competition and found that these presented by Ch. Assis. Professor Diana Minkova Dimitrova's, proving her scientific production, are in accordance with the national minimum and the additional requirements of the PF and she was allowed to participate in the competition.

Ch. Assistant Professor Diana Minkova Dimitrova, PhD, has correctly and precisely prepared the documentation for the competition. All the necessary documents stipulated in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its application and the Regulations of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" are presented, which enables a precise quantitative and qualitative assessment of the overall academic development of the candidate.

The necessary evidence for the publication activity is attached and a list of citations is presented. In addition to the required documents, the evidence also contains additional references and certificates, certifying all circumstances related to the applicant's qualifications, professional activity and achievements.

### **Candidate's career profile**

Diana Dimitrova, chief assistant professor, graduated in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in "Preschool and primary school pedagogy" from the Faculty of Education of the Paisii Hilendarski University.

She has completed two master's programs at "Paisii Hilendarski" PU: "English Language and Methodology of Early Foreign Language Learning" (2010) and "English Language and Methodology" (2014). In 2016, she obtained the doctorate degree after successfully defending her dissertation on the topic "Interactive methods of teaching English at the initial stage of primary education" at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the "Paisii Hilendarski" PU.

She began her professional career in 2007 as an educator and teacher in the primary stage of a secondary school. In the period 2012-2015, she was a part-time teacher in English Language Teaching Methodology in the "Primary School Pedagogy" department of the Faculty of Education of the PU "Paisii Hilendarski". After successfully passing assistantship competitions, in 2015 she was appointed to the academic position of "Assistant", and from 2018 she holds the position of "Chief Assistant" in the Department of "Pedagogy and Education Management" at the Faculty of Education, where she has been working until now.

The educational and career development of Ch. Assistant Dr. Diana Dimitrova undoubtedly proves that she has considerable teaching experience and is establishing herself as a competent specialist in her professional field. In an effort to continuously upgrade her knowledge, the candidate participates in various trainings and seminars. The scientific works presented by her show purposefulness and consistency in research, interest in innovative models and approaches in education, which fully satisfies the requirements for the profile and qualification of the candidate for the announced competition.

## **II. General characteristics of the applicant's activity**

### **1. Evaluation of the candidate's educational and teaching activities**

Ch. Assistant Professor Diana Dimitrova, PhD, is an established and respected teacher with many years of teaching experience. The report on her academic employment shows that she has a significantly higher academic load than the norm. During the last school years, her auditory employment has increased threefold /between 1100-1200 hours/, with a standard of 360 hours. This proves that the competition is provided with the necessary horarium hours.

The educational and teaching activity of the candidate in the competition is in the field of her professional training and scientific interests. She teaches 15 academic disciplines in the field of pedagogy, in various bachelor's and master's programs. In her teaching work, she uses modern methods and technical means for teaching, as well as the latest achievements of information and communication technologies.

I would also like to note the active work of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Diana Dimitrova with the students. From 2021, she performs the functions of coordinator of the Pedagogy specialty.

From the attached documentation on the competition, it is clear that she was a supervisor of 12 graduates of Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in Education, one graduate of the Children's Teacher Training Center and one teacher for the acquisition of a qualification for teachers. She guided and supported students participating in a Student Scientific Forum organized by the Faculty of Education.

The educational and teaching activity of Ch. Assistant Professor Diana Dimitrova undoubtedly deserves a high praise. She actively participates in the development of curricula: 14 curricula for the bachelor's degree program, 5 for the master's degree program and one for a qualification course for pedagogical specialists, as well as in the development of teaching and methodical materials for students - exam options for semester exams. The activity of Ch. Assistant Professor Diana Dimitrova, PhD, in faculty committees for the preparation of documents for program accreditation of professional fields and doctoral program.

## **2. Evaluation of the candidate's research activity**

The scientific works of Dr. D. Dimitrova are grouped precisely, according to the guidelines for covering the minimum national requirements for holding the position of "Associate Professor" in the area of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy.

The list of general scientific production contains 29 titles, of which 14 were presented in previous proceedings.

The scientific works with which she participated in the competition for an associate professor are 15 (all after the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in 2016 and the competition for chief assistant in 2018), which are distributed as follows:

- 2 independent monographs, one of which is presented as a habilitation thesis;
- 4 articles published in refereed scientific publications (3 of them in English and 1 article in Bulgarian);
- 9 articles published in non-refereed but peer-reviewed scientific publications (2 of them in English and 3 in Russian).

The topics of the publications fully satisfy the requirements of the competition.

The distribution of scientific papers by year is quite even, which speaks of a purposeful and well-planned scientific development of the candidate in the competition.

With an overall chronological view of the scientific publications presented by the candidate, the upgrading and deepening of the research questions in the direction of the competition is impressive. In her publication activity, Dr. D. Dimitrova appears as the sole author in all publications.

Her works contain certain scientific contributions to pedagogical theory and practice, and cover a wide range of scientific issues. They are a reflection of the research and

teaching activities of Ch. Assistant Professor Dimitrova and confirm her erudition and competence.

### ● **Contributions**

The research activity of Ch. Assistant Professor Diana Dimitrova is focused on revealing the role of the pedagogical animation in increasing the effectiveness of the entire learning process. The use of pedagogical animation contributes to the mastery of social skills by children, as it opens up opportunities for positive communication with others, for enriching interactions and building good relationships.

The features of the innovative educational environment are also an object of her research interests. The main characteristics of interactive learning as an innovation are explored. A significant contribution is the pedagogical model developed and tested by the author for teaching English based on the application of interactive methods in primary classes. The challenges and opportunities for more effective education of children of primary school age, through the application of interactive methods, are analyzed and highlighted. Another significant contribution is the author's developed system of criteria and indicators, enabling the a correct assessment of acquired social skills as a result of the application of animation.

Research related to the socialization and education of Roma children in an innovative educational environment is presented with experience and erudition. The interactive methods applied in training are considered as a means of forming a positive attitude of Roma children towards education and increasing their activity in educational activities. The directions in which Ch. Assistant Dr. D. Dimitrova works are extremely important, current and promising. Proof of the importance of the research conducted with her participation are the publications in specialized issues, as well as numerous positive citations.

### ● **Reflection (citation) of the candidate's publications**

A total of 21 citations are presented in the reference for citations, of which: three are from foreign authors, and the rest - from Bulgarian authors in monographs, collective volumes and anthologies. It can be seen that the interest in the scientific works of the candidate in the competition is from both Bulgarian and foreign researchers.

### ● **Scientific activity**

The research activity of Dr. Diana Dimitrova leaves a good impression. She actively participates with reports in international and national conferences on education issues. Seven certificates of participation in international scientific forums abroad are presented. In addition to her teaching activity, the candidate in the competition is a member of the team of seven scientific research projects, six of which are national and one international. She has completed three mobilities under the Erasmus+ program in the city of Prague, Czech Republic.

### **III. General assessment of the applicant's compliance with the mandatory conditions and the mandatory quantitative criteria and scientometric indicators**

The volume and quality of the presented scientific production from Ch. Assistant Professor D. Dimitrova fully meets the requirements for occupying the academic position "Associate Professor" according to the Regulations of the PU "Paisii Hilendarski", the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its application.

It is clear from the presented reference that the scientific production of Ch. Associate Professor D. Dimitrova not only meets, but also exceeds the minimum national requirements and those of PU "Paisii Hilendarski" for a scientific degree "Associate Professor" (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of the results of Ch. Assistant Professor Diana Dimitrova, PhD, and the minimum required points for a scientific degree "Associate Professor" by groups of indicators

<b>a group of metrics</b>	<b>minimum required number of points for associate professor</b>	<b>Number of points based on the evidence presented by the candidate</b>
A	50	<b>50</b>
B	–	–
W	100	<b>100</b>
G	200	<b>310</b>
D	50	<b>220</b>
E	–	<b>110</b>
<b>Total points</b>	400	<b>790</b>

### **IV. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)**

I would like to express my excellent impressions of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Diana Dimitrova, who I know from participating in scientific forums in recent years. She is an erudite teacher, valued partner and ethical colleague. She has invested a lot of energy and strength in her professional development and has achieved significant results. Her academic career to date is a natural result of her overall scientific and teaching activities.

## V. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no critical remarks and recommendations regarding the activity and achievements of the candidate in the competition. I wish her successful development in the scientific directions to which she has directed her research interest.

## VI. Conclusion

The candidate participating in the current competition fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LADSRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LADSRB and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the PU "Paisii Hilendarski" for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor".

Ch. Assistant Professor Diana Dimitrova, PhD, demonstrates desire for development and potential for an educational and scientific career. She presented a sufficient volume of scientific production, with significant teaching and research experience.

My overall assessment of the professional development, educational and teaching activities and scientific contribution is a reason to give a **positive opinion** and to confidently recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy for the election of the **Ch. Assistant Professor Diana Minkova Dimitrova, PhD, in the academic position "Associate Professor"** in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of education and didactics - Innovative educational models)" for the needs of the Department of "Pedagogy and Education Management" at the Faculty of Pedagogy of PU "Paisii Hilendarski".

31.08.2024  
city of Plovdiv

Prepared the opinion: .....  
/prof. Dr. Bianka Tornyova/