

OPINION

by **Dr. Iliana Ognyanova Petkova, Associate Professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"**

of the materials submitted for participation in a competition
for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor"
of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"

By Area of Higher Education 1 Pedagogical Sciences
Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics - Innovative Educational Models)

In the competition for "Associate Professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 32 of 09.04.2024. 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 Education, Assist. Prof. PhD. Diana Minkova Dimitrova from the Faculty of Education participates as a candidate

1. General presentation of the procedure and the applicant(s)

By Order No. PD-21-1181 of 07.06.2024 of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I was appointed a member of the scientific jury in the above-mentioned competition. Only 1 candidate participates in it - Assist. Prof. PhD. Diana Minkova Dimitrova, who is a full-time lecturer at the University of Plovdiv, Faculty of Education. The presented set of materials is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv.

Under the announced competition., the candidate has submitted a list of scientific papers, in which she has correctly indicated the publications for obtaining the degree of "Doctor" and when she participated in a competition. for the position of "Assistant Professor". According to the Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Application, they are excluded for evaluation in the competition for "Associate Professor". In it, assist. Prof. Diana Dimitrova participated with a total of 15 publications: 2 monographs and 13 articles.

The career path of assist. prof. Diana Dimitrova is a testament to her dedication to education. She is a graduate of the University of Plovdiv and after completing her bachelor's degree in 2007 in special. Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy started working as a teacher in the village of Skutare, Plovdiv region. Her love of learning and striving for personal improvement probably prompted her to apply and graduate from the Master's Degree as a Elementary English teacher. In the period 2012-2014 she completed a second Master's degree as an English Language Teacher (1-12 grades). Assistant Professor D. Dimitrova began her academic career as a part-time lecturer in 2012 and is a teacher of English Language Teaching Methodology at the Department of Primary School Pedagogy at the University of Plovdiv. In 2013 she won a competition for a full-time PhD student and defended her doctoral dissertation on the following topics: Interactive Methods for Teaching English in the Primary Stage of Primary Education.

I have no personal impressions of the candidate, but from the presented CV and overall production it's clear that assist. prof. PhD Diana Dimitrova is a scientist who "climbs" the academic ladder gradually and with dignity. She wins the assistantship competition in 2015, in 2018 – for assistant professor and is now applying for associate professor. Such professional development commands respect, especially since it's based on high-quality scientific production.

2. General characteristics of the applicant's activity

2.1. Assessment of educational and pedagogical activity

From the presented report on academic workload, it's evident that the academic employment of assist. prof. PhD D. Dimitrova is four times higher than the required one. It has between 1100-1200 hours of classroom occupancy with a standard of 360 hours. Through these classes and the course on

"Paradigms of Education", the profile of the competition – Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics) is undeniably defended. The candidate also leads classes on "History of Pedagogy and Bulgarian Education", "Competence Approach and Innovations in Education" in both Educational Qualification Degree (EQD), "Mentoring of Newly Appointed Speech Therapists in Inclusive Education" and "Leadership in Education" in the "Master". EQD. For each of them, she has developed author's curricula. A study has also been developed. program for the qualification course "Leadership, Mentoring, Coaching", which is offered by the Department for Qualification and Professional Development of Pedagogical Specialists at the University of Plovdiv.

Along with his direct teaching activity since 2017 until now assist. prof. PhD D. Dimitrova has participated in 6 national research projects and 1 international one. She is a participant in them with scholarships as a young scientist, postdoctoral student and academic mentor respectively - awards that are evidence of the high quality of the candidate's work.

In addition to the training and research activities, Assist. prof. Dimitrova ensures the institutional contractual relations between the basic schools and the University of Plovdiv for the organization the practical training of the students from the special. Pedagogy. Since 2022, she has been a member of the working groups that prepare the full set of documentation for accreditation under PN 1.2.Pedagogy, under the MP "Educational Management" at PN 1.1 Theory and Management of Education and Doctoral Program - Management of Education. Since 2017, she has been participating in the Commission for Checking Speech and Communication Abilities during the candidate student campaign of the University of Plovdiv. She conducts internal safety briefings at the workplace and is responsible for the Occupational Safety and Health Commission.

This broad-spectrum engagement of the candidate is impressive and is a proof, on the one hand, of the trust and respect that the heads of the Faculty of Education have towards her, but on the other hand, they are evidence of her administrative and organizational competence and her skills to work in a team.

2.2 Assessment of the applicant's scientific and applied activities

In the competition for acad. position (AD) Associate Professor, assist.prof. Diana Dimitrova participated with 14 publications with a total volume of 459 pages, of which 2 monographs and 12 articles.

The first monograph - "Pedagogical Animation in Education" was published in 2023 and has a volume of 139 pages. It's the main habilitation thesis and can be considered as an upgrade and deepening of the candidate's scientific research. In this work, attention is focused not on interactive methods in general (on which the doctoral dissertation is based), but specifically on pedagogical animation. The work includes three chapters: the first entirely theoretical, in which pedagogical animation as a scientific problem is discussed in detail; the second, which presents a model and describes the design of the empirical research that seeks the effectiveness of pedagogical animation in the education of primary school students; the third – the analysis of the results. The monographic work submitted for evaluation enriches pedagogical science by showing the "power" of pedagogical animation when properly applied in the classroom. The monograph is accompanied by three reviews dedicated lecturers, specialists in the field.

The second monograph - "Interactivity in English Language Teaching in Primary School" is based on the dissertation defended in 2016. The theoretical part is enriched with new ideas and publications after the year of protection, incl. and those from 2023. Attached to the monograph are three reviews by 2 habilitation and 1 non-habilitated teacher, who give a high assessment of the practical-applied nature of the work. In it, Diana Dimitrova, PhD, describes and empirically proves the effectiveness of her proposed theoretical-applied model for teaching English in primary school.

According to the competition, assist. prof. Dimitrova has presented 13 articles. I have excluded from the evaluation publ.15 from the list of scientific papers, because it's a english translation of publ. 7. Even without this publication, the candidate fully meets the minimum national requirements by exceeding by 110 points the requirements for criteria D. She also meets the additional requirements of the PU for awarding the academic position (AD) "associate professor". Thus, 12 articles remain for evaluation, 5 in Bulgarian, 4 in English, 2 in Uskain and 1 in Russian. In this way, the candidate gives wide publicity to her scientific ideas and research. According to the

additional requirements of the University of Plovdiv, at least 1 publication must be in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information. The candidate has 4 such publications, 3 of which are in international journals. The remaining 8 articles are from a scientific conference organized by the Plovdiv University, as well as from universities in Ukraine, Poland and Slovakia.

Since the announced competition is in Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics), it is noteworthy that in articles No. 3, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 are focused on aesthetic and musical education, the formation of a positive attitude towards learning – subject related to the theory of education. The rest of the articles (No. 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 14) reflect rather the technology of application of specific interactive methods or the use of pedagogical animation in English language learning and are general and particular-didactic in nature.

2.3. Contributions (scientific, scientific-applied, applied) and citations

I evaluate the candidate's contributions on two levels – theoretical and practical. At the first level, they are: enrichment of pedagogical theory with author's ideas about the essence and possibilities of application of interactive methods; 2) development and presentation of pedagogical animation as an opportunity to activate young students and increase their motivation for learning. Practical and applied level; proving theoretical hypotheses through empirical data, which demonstrate skills for proper planning, organized and conducting pedagogical research and analysis of results.

The candidate has indicated 14 citations, but in my opinion they are 16 – 3 in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes; 11 - in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, and 2 - in non-refereed journals with scientific review.

2.4. Assessment of the personal contribution of the applicant(s)

I accept the contributions formulated by the candidate at theoretical and applied level. Through each of the publications, she demonstrates a wide awareness of the researched problem, correctness in citations and personal attitude, which are proof of the absence of plagiarism.

3. Critical remarks and recommendations - I don't have any

CONCLUSION

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific papers presented in the competition, an analysis of their significance and the scientific and applied contributions contained in them give me reason to confidently give my positive assessment and recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education for the election of Assistant Professor PhD. Diana Minkova Dimitrova to the academic position of Associate Professor at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" in: area of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Prof. Field 1.2 Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics - Innovative Educational Models).

25.08. 2024

Prepared the opinion:

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Assoc. prof. PhD Iliana Petkova