

## **REVIEW**

**From Dr Siyka Georgieva Chavdarova – Kostova, prof.**

**SU “Sv. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of education**

of the materials submitted for participation in the competition  
for occupation of the academic position of "associate professor"

at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”

on: field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences,

professional area 1.2 Pedagogy

(Theory of education and didactics - Innovative educational models)

In the competition for "associate professor", announced in the State Gazette, no.32 of 04/09/2024 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department "Pedagogy and education management" at the Faculty of Education, as a candidate participates ch. assistant PhD Diana Dimitrova from the city of Plovdiv.

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

By order No. PD-21-1181 of 07.06. 2024 of the Rector of the Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of a competition for the academic position of “associate professor” in the PU in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional area 1.2 Pedagogy (Theory of education and didactics - Innovative educational models), announced for the needs of the Department of Pedagogy and education management" at the Faculty of education.

For participation in the announced competition, a document was submitted by a single candidate ch. assistant PhD Diana Minkova Dimitrova, PU "P. Hilendarski".

The presented by ch. assistant professor Diana Dimitrova, a set of paper materials is in accordance with the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of the PU, and includes the following documents:

- Autobiography;
- Annotation of scientific works in Bulgarian and English;
- Declaration of originality;

- Diplomas for degrees "Master" and "Doctor";
- Documents for the academic work;
- Papers for research work;
- Self-assessment of scientific contributions in Bulgarian and English;
- Certificates and official notes;
- List of scientific works;
- List of citations;
- Certificate of compliance with additional requirements;
- Certificate of compliance with minimum national requirements;
- Certificate of work experience;
- Publications.

The candidate ch. assistant professor Diana Dimitrova, PhD, has submitted a total of 15 scientific works - 2 monographs, 13 articles. 15 scientific works that are outside the dissertation are accepted for review and are counted in the final evaluation. The distribution of the scientific works by relevant rubrics, in the country and abroad, is as follows: 4 - in Bulgarian, 5 - in English, 2 - in Russian and 2 - in Ukrainian.

## **2. Brief biographical data of the applicant**

Ch. assistant PhD Diana Dimitrova worked for 8 years as a primary teacher. For three years she worked as a part-time teacher in PU, and since 2015 he has been a full-time assistant at the Department of "Pedagogy and education management" at the Faculty of education of PU "P. Hilendarski". Since 2018, she is main assistant at the mentioned department. In the period 2013-2016, she was a full-time doctoral student, obtaining PhD in 2016 with the topic of her dissertation work "Interactive methods of teaching English in the primary stage of basic education".

Her professional career naturally follows her education at educational degree "Bachelor" - Preschool and primary school pedagogy /2002-2007/ and educational degree "Master - English Language and Methodology and English Language and Methodology for early foreign language learning", PU "P. Hilendarski".

She has participated in several university projects at the Pedagogical faculty, in the national program "Young scientists and postdoctoral fellows", in an international project, as well as in the "Student practices" project.

She has carried out 3 mobilities under the Erasmus+ program in the city of Prague. There are several certificates for participation in international conferences.

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

#### *Evaluation of educational-pedagogical activity and preparation of the candidate*

The annual auditorium activity from the beginning of the academic career of ch. assistant professor PhD D. Dimitrova exceeds the basic standard by almost three times. The academic disciplines she teaches at educational-qualification degree "Bachelor" are: Pedagogy (Theory of education), Pedagogy (Didactics), Organization of activities in the school day, Paradigms of education, Pedagogical animation, History of pedagogy and Bulgarian education, History of Bulgarian education, History of education and pedagogical ideas, Competency approach and innovations in education. The academic disciplines he teaches at the educational-qualification degree "Master" are: Pedagogy, Competence approach in speech therapy work, All-day organization of the school day, Mentoring of newly appointed speech therapists in inclusive education, Leadership in education. Curriculum have been developed for a significant part of these disciplines, as well as for the disciplines: Early prevention of students dropping out of education, Interactive methods for learning English, Current pedagogical practice, Internship practice.

She was the supervisor of 12 graduates who successfully defended their diplomas. In addition to teaching, she actively works with students, advising them on various issues, she is the coordinator of the specialty Pedagogy from 2021.

#### *Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and scientific-applied activity*

The monograph "Pedagogical animation in teaching" presented as a habilitation work contains main dimensions of the author's research on a phenomenon defined as "an effective approach to the formation of an educational environment, tailored to the needs, opportunities and interests of students" /p. 6.7/. The necessity of pedagogical animation for the development of students through entertainment, fun, dynamics in the classroom with the aim of learning and consolidating knowledge and increasing the effectiveness of the overall learning process is well argued. The aspiration to multifaceted coverage of various manifestations of the "animation" phenomenon is visible - in cultural, philosophical, sociological, educational, etc. aspects.

Emphasis is placed on the relationship between learning and entertainment, its usefulness for increasing the interest of students and their active involvement in the learning process, as well as the relationships of learning with phenomena such as experience, recreation, free time, creativity, etc. Different types and forms of animation are presented, which have corresponding pedagogical implications. In a separate chapter, the results of empirical studies are presented, which illustrate the possibilities of applying animation as an approach in the work of the teacher in teaching children of primary school age - both in terms of the development of social skills through play and film animations, as well as in mastering educational language content. The described sample lesson activity options provide ideas for teachers on how to animate their work in the classroom. Special attention is paid to the need to change the role and functions of teachers when applying animation as an approach in the classroom activity.

In the book “Interactivity in the teaching of English in the primary school”, interactivity is considered in the context of innovation. The importance of interactive methods as activating students' activity is emphasized. A special emphasis is placed on opportunities for interactivity in the teaching of English in the primary grades. An author's system for measuring student achievement as a result of this training is presented, as well as a model for teaching English in the primary school. In the book, there are many practical examples of the application of interactivity in classrooms in English language learning, which reinforces its methodological value.

Some of the articles are in foreign language editions. Two of the articles are in Polish collections: Theoretical – applied model for early learning of a foreign language as in preschool age through interactive methods /2022/; Pedagogical animation for the development of social skills in children /2022/. Two other articles are in Ukrainian collections – Laying the foundations of aesthetic culture in preschool age through musical play /2019/; Interactive methods of early foreign language teaching to Roma children as an opportunity to demonstrate a positive attitude to school life /2020/. Three articles are in the collection from the international conferences – Innovative educational environment as a factor for the prevention of dropping of Roma children out of school /2018/; Innovative methods for training children from primary school /2019/; Interactive methods of teaching in English as a foreign language for children in Bulgarian schools /2020/.

One of the articles is in a magazine: Pedagogical animation in mastering English in the first grade of primary school /2021/, and four - in collections: Possibilities for visualizing the learning content in English in primary school /2018/; Positive messages of children's cartoons and their influence on the development of children's personality /2019/; Pedagogical animation in the primary

school classroom /2021/; Creating prerequisites for the formation of aesthetic culture in children through pedagogical animation /2022/.

Main key concepts in the publications are: interactive methods, animation, animated films, foreign language learning in preschool and primary school age, English language. The texts argue for the need for interactivity in training from the point of view of the formation of valuable personal qualities in children, with a view to their future development. Emphasis is placed on the formation of positive emotional attitude, arousing interest, including to other languages, peoples and cultures, retaining attention to learning a foreign language through the use of interactive methods. Paying attention to the link between interactivity and memory, in the context of the necessity for repetition, including for the development of oral speech in preschool age. The activating role of interactive methods in teaching children a foreign language is underlined. Some specifics in the application of interactive methods in the foreign language education of children of Roma origin are presented. The relationship interactivity - modern technologies, use of an interactive whiteboard in the learning process was examined. Overall, there is a very good rationale for the models offered, the benefits in interactive learning of the game, visualization, design method, etc. It makes an impression the good knowledge of the Bulgarian literature dedicated to the issue of interactivity in education.

A second content block in the publications is outlined around the idea of applying animation in education, in the classroom and beyond. The effort to outline the specifics of the teacher as an animator and various manifestations of animation in the learning process is visible. The link between animation and visualization for learning purposes is well established. The texts about the positive influences of children's animated films are interesting, with an emphasis mainly on the educational effect, including the development of valuable social skills. I highly appreciate the interpretation of the problem of animation in the context of aesthetic education and aesthetic culture, which are actually the main methodology of pedagogical animation.

*Contributions (scientific, scientific-applied, applied) and citations*

The self-assessment of the candidate's scientific contributions is too detailed and long.

The scientific contributions can be synthesized presented to the following:

- Development of the concept of interactivity in education based on own empirical studies - with an emphasis on preschool and primary school education, increasing motivation and interest in the learning process on the part of students.

- Development and systematization of the concept of animation in education based on own empirical studies - with an emphasis on primary school education, increasing the interest and sense of joy and satisfaction of participation in the learning process on the part of students.

Scientific-applied:

- Empirical application of variants of interactivity in training - based on relevant theoretical argumentation;
- Empirical application of variants of animacy in training - based on corresponding theoretical argumentation;
- Interpreting the importance of using cartoons for educational purposes in pedagogical work with small children.

Application-methodical::

- The options of methodological solutions proposed in the publications in the context of interactivity and animacy in learning can be directly applied by teachers in their work in the classroom.

The citation reference shows that they are 21 in number. Three of the citations are by foreign authors, 1 – in Pedagogika magazine, and the rest – by Bulgarian authors in monographs, collective volumes and collections. The citations are mainly from 2023 and 2024, in the interval until 2018, when there is 1 citation. There are also citations of publications that are not subject to reviewing under this competition procedure, published before 2018 (4 in number). The citations are from different authors and in different publications, there is no "accumulation" of citations from certain authors.

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

In my opinion, the personal contribution of the candidate is clearly distinguishable, highlighting the personal opinion and his argumentation, well described, explained and defended through her own pedagogical experience. I have no doubt that the results obtained and the contributions of the candidate are her personal merit.

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

- To think when describing respective interactive methods, how to better make a connection between the ways of presenting the same didactic phenomena, named differently in the literature, e.g. to what extent "visualization", presented as an interactive method, is actually a manifestation of the "demonstration" method in education, realizing the classical didactic principle of visibility.

- When developing a toolkit for empirical research, the questionnaires should have more questions. While both 4 or 6 questions can provide some background information on the problem under study, this is insufficient to draw a more comprehensive picture. Rather, this type of survey with short questionnaires can serve as a pilot for subsequent in-depth research on a relevant issue.
- When presenting the problematic of pedagogical animation, a stronger emphasis is placed on certain methods as its main components. It is good to expand the publication activity of the author and regarding the roles of the teacher as an animator outside of these components, including to make connections with other manifestations of animation that have points of contact with the pedagogical, e.g. sports, tourist, entertainment animation, as well as presenting manifestations of pedagogical animation in work with adults.
- A comparison with the publications for the acquisition of the ONS "Doctor" and the competition for the chief assistant show that the candidate continues to work on problems related to her dissertation research. It would be good to expand her research fields in other problematic pedagogical areas.
- In the monograph, as sources for the presentation of philosophical concepts, popular sites on the Internet are indicated, they are not based on monographs and scientific articles. This type of citation should be avoided in scientific literature due to the quality of texts without clear authorship, which is also associated with responsibility for the quality of the content offered (this also applies to other places in the text where Wikipedia is cited or other non-copyrighted sources).
- Please provide evidence that publications №3, 4 and 5 are in sources "referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information". This is relevant both in the scoring of publications and in citations related to them.

## **6. Personal impressions**

I have personal impressions from only one short meeting with ch. assistant professor Dr. D. Dimitrova, during which I was left with pleasant impressions of her motivation to search for effective solutions in education by activating the students in the classroom.

## **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials presented by ch. assistant professor PhD D. Dimitrova meet the requirements of the Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of the PU "Paisiy Hillendarski".

The candidate in the competition has submitted a certain number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defense of the educational-scientific degree "Doctor" and competition for chief assistant. The candidate's works have original scientific and applied contributions that have popularization through publications abroad. The publications also have practical applicability in the education of students mainly of primary school age. The scientific and teaching qualifications of ch. assistant PhD Diana Dimitrova is unquestionable.

The achievements of ch. assistant PhD Diana Dimitrova results in the educational and scientific research activities fully correspond to the minimal national and additional requirements of the Pedagogical faculty, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the PU for the application of ZRASRB.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to recommend the Scientific jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty council of the Pedagogical faculty for the election of ch. assistant professor Diana Dimitrova, PhD, at the academic position of "associate professor" at PU "Paisii Hilendarski" in: field of higher education Pedagogical Sciences, professional area 1.2 Pedagogy (Theory of education and didactics - Innovative educational models).

25.08.2024 г.

Reviewer: .....

(signature)

(Prof. Dr Siyka Chavdarova - Kostova)