

STATEMENT

by Prof. Vladimira Stefanova Angelova, PhD
Professor at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"
on the materials submitted for participation in a competition
for the academic position of "**Associate Professor**"
at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski,"
under Higher Education Area **1. Pedagogical Sciences;**
Professional Field **1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching ...**
(Methodology of Orientation in the Surrounding World)

The competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor," announced in State Gazette, issue 98 of 19.11.2024, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," for the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy, has one applicant: assistant professor **Biliana Mladenova Kaloferova, PhD**, from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski."

1. Summary of the candidate's procedure

Presentation of the Procedure

With Order No. RD-22-83 of 17.01.2025, issued by the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I was appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury for the competition for the academic position of "**Associate Professor**" at PU, under Higher Education Area 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching ... (Methodology of Orientation in the Surrounding World), announced for the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy.

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: Assistant Professor Biliana Mladenova Kaloferova, PhD, from PU "Paisii Hilendarski."

At the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 23.01.2025, the documents related to the competition were reviewed and accepted. During this meeting, I was appointed to prepare a statement. Upon reviewing and analysing the submitted materials, no procedural violations were identified.

The set of documents and materials submitted by Assistant Professor Biliana Kaloferova, both in paper and electronic format, is systematically organized and complies with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU. These documents and materials allow for an objective and comprehensive assessment of the candidate in accordance with the applicable regulatory requirements.

Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova participates in the competition with 11 scientific publications: 1 monograph; 1 book based on a defended doctoral dissertation; 5 articles published in scientific journals indexed in internationally recognized databases; and 4 articles published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes. None of these works were previously used for acquiring the academic position of "Chief Assistant Professor" or the educational and scientific degree "Doctor."

All scientific works are relevant to the competition profile, meet the requirements, and are accepted for review.

Brief Biographical Information about the Candidate

Assistant Professor Bilyana Mladenova Kaloferova PhD obtained her Bachelor's degree in 2011 in the specialty "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy," with a qualification as a pedagogue, preschool teacher, and primary school teacher at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." In 2013, she successfully completed her Master's degree in "Innovative Technologies in Preschool Education and the Primary Stage of Secondary Education." In 2019, she earned the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" with a dissertation on "A Pedagogical Model for Orienting 6-7-Year-Old Children in a Healthy and Social Environment Based on Key Competencies." From 2011 to 2018, she worked as a kindergarten teacher and a part-time lecturer at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Plovdiv University. Since 2018, she has been working at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Department of Preschool Pedagogy, holding the academic positions of Assistant Professor and Senior Assistant Professor.

Main Activities and Responsibilities of Assistant Professor Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova include teaching, research, and administrative work.

Administrative Positions Held:

- Member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski."
- Coordinator of Bachelor's Degree Programs: "Preschool Pedagogy" (full-time education); "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy" (part-time education) at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski."

Active Participation in Committees for:

- Preparation of accreditation documents for Bachelor's and Master's programs in Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy
- Internal and external audits of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy
- Quality management of the educational product
- Evaluation of speech and communication skills of prospective students

Scientific Interests:

Her main research interests lie in the field of the Methodology of Orientation in the World Around Us. Her professional competence and qualifications align with the profile of the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor.

Personal Impressions

I know Assistant Professor Biliana Kaloferova as a lecturer who follows and develops modern trends in education. As a researcher, she consistently adheres to high academic standards.

2. Summary characteristics of the candidate's activities

Assessment of the candidate's pedagogical and educational activity

Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD has been engaged in university teaching and academic activities for over 10 years. Her teaching responsibilities are in the field of the methodology of orientation in the world around us. She teaches courses to students in both the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, covering a range of course types: compulsory, elective, and optional. She has developed numerous curricula for the courses she teaches.

Assistant Professor Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova's work with students is diverse. She regularly conducts consultations with them on theoretical and practical training. Her role as a research supervisor for students participating in student scientific forums is commendable. Under her guidance, six thesis papers from Bachelor's and Master's students have been successfully defended.

The assessment of Assistant Professor Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova's teaching and academic activities is highly positive. In her teaching, she applies the latest advancements in information and communication technologies and utilizes modern methods and technical tools to enhance the learning experience.

Assessment of the candidate's scientific-research activity

Biliana Kaloferova's academic research includes 26 scientific works, of which 8 are related to her PhD dissertation, and 7 were used for acquiring the position of Assistant Professor. The current competition for Associate Professor includes 11 publications that were not previously used for obtaining the "Doctor" degree or "Assistant Professor" position.

Her research aligns with the competition's thematic scope, addressing current issues in the methodology of orientation in the surrounding world.

I will analyse and assess the scientific contributions of the publications according to the research and developments numbered from 1 to 11 in the list proposed by the candidate.

The monograph [1] has high theoretical and applied value, and its structure is professionally developed. The relevance and significance of the study for the modern education are indisputable. In the introduction, the choice of the topic and its relevance are competently justified. The research objectives, subject, scope, and tasks are correctly formulated. The first chapter provides an in-depth analysis of scientific works related to the research problem addressed by the author. The active cognitive position of the child is presented, as reflected in regulatory and strategic documents. In the second chapter, the methodological literature on project-based learning is competently analysed. The key concepts and dimensions of "project-based," "project-oriented," and "problem-based" learning are precisely clarified. Various types of projects are also analysed. The third chapter presents a project-oriented model for health education based on integrative connections and key competencies. The essence of project activities is explained. The integration of so-called transferable (soft) skills—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—into the project is skilfully presented. The fourth chapter elaborates on the innovative characteristics of the project-oriented model for health education. Competency-based projects in the field of health education are professionally presented. Based on the comprehensive theoretical and experimental study, conclusions are formulated.

The book [2], published based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor," is also professionally written. In the first chapter, contemporary holistic views and definitions of the concept of "health" are competently examined and analysed. The second chapter discusses the regulatory framework regarding the orientation of 6-7-year-old children in a healthy and social environment. The third chapter precisely defines the essence and objectives of health education in preschool age. The fourth chapter clarifies the purpose, tasks, and organization of the research. The fifth chapter presents the parameters of the educational model for orientation in a healthy and social environment. The sixth chapter analyses the research results and competently explains the relationship between health-oriented thematic areas and the key competencies of 6-7-year-old children.

It is noteworthy that the scientific articles [3; 4; 5; 6; 7] are published in scientific journals that are referenced and indexed in globally recognized scientific databases. I will present their theoretical and applied scientific contributions.

Publication [3] presents the author's research on the atelier as a form of pedagogical interaction. The activity of preschool children in the atelier environment is competently analysed. The stages of pedagogical interaction are developed within an exemplary technological model for the development of the atelier in preschool age. The theoretical exposition is skilfully complemented by atelier projects aimed at orienting preschool children in a healthy and social environment.

Article [4] presents a study on the essence of digital competence and analyses the range of technologies and media in the context of the educational field "The World

Around Us." Digital competence is thoroughly examined as a combination of key competencies in the following areas: information and media literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content, safety, and problem-solving.

In [5], the author explores the shared responsibility between parents and teachers in shaping a "worldview." The fundamental characteristics of the process of sustainable child development in preschool age are highlighted in the context of Bulgarian educational policy and its projection in the educational field "The World Around Us." The content (normative and socio-pedagogical) of the terms "shared responsibility" and "responsible parenting" is examined. Various forms of communication and cooperation between parents and educators are presented.

Strategies for managing and organizing the educational environment for orienting preschool children in the world around them are developed in publication [6]. The pedagogical projections of the educational environment and its transformation into a safe, supportive, inclusive, and interactive space are presented. The essence of discovery-based learning for orienting children in their environment is outlined. The diverse types of interest-based learning corners, where preschool children engage in exploratory activities, are also described.

The development of scientific competencies in 6-7-year-old children through digital photography is examined in [7]. Scientific competencies are analysed in strategic and regulatory documents. Studies on the manifestation of scientific competencies through digital photography are presented. The content parameters of these competencies in preschool children when orienting in the world around them are highlighted. Photography is viewed not only as a visualization technique but also as a subjectively significant activity for children in their exploration of nature.

The scientific articles [8; 9; 10; 11] are published in non-referenced journals with scientific peer review or in edited collective volumes. I will present their main theoretical and applied scientific contributions.

In [8], strategic and regulatory documents related to defining the essence of skills for sustainable development and a healthy lifestyle are analysed. The author examines the manifestation of sustainable development skills and healthy lifestyle habits in 6-7-year-old children within interest-based learning corners.

In [9], the integrative links between areas of competence in health education and the arts within project-based activities in preschool age are investigated. The essential characteristics and stages of technological project development in preschool age are outlined. The author's professionally developed technological model of a health education project is presented. The study also explores the attitudes of pedagogical specialists regarding the project and the integrative links between health education and the arts.

The reflective manifestations of 6-7-year-old children in project-based interaction are examined in [10]. Through an original project titled *How to Turn Trash*

into Treasure?, the readiness of fourth-group preschool children to predict and control the algorithm for achieving a specific goal is analysed. The results of the conducted study are examined.

In [11], research on key competencies and their manifestation in orienting preschool children in the world around them is presented. The constructs of competence are highlighted, with an emphasis on the ratio of these constructs in forming subjective criteria for the effectiveness of children's actions. The requirements for the technology of world orientation, which provides opportunities for competency development, are described.

The content and ideas developed in the presented scientific works can be grouped, according to the author's proposal, into the following thematic areas:

1. Research and developments related to health education and its application in orienting preschool children in the world around them.
2. Research and developments related to the competency-based approach and key competencies in guiding children toward a sustainable and healthy lifestyle.
3. Research and developments related to project-oriented technology and its application in preschool age.
4. Research and developments related to the application of the atelier as an additional form of pedagogical interaction for orienting children in a healthy and social environment.

The analysis of the research activities of Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD demonstrates their significant value.

The competition documentation includes a self-assessment by Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD regarding her scientific contributions. I firmly believe that this self-assessment objectively reflects the actual contributions of the author, as presented in the scientific works.

Documentary evidence confirms the participation of Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD in the research project *Interdisciplinary Education through Arts, Sports, and Digital Technologies*.

Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution

The presented materials and my positive assessment indicate that Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD has made significant **scientific and applied contributions** in the field of methodology of orientation in the surrounding world.

Without a doubt, the presented scientific work is **the author's own creation**.

Based on the analysis of the submitted scientific works of Assistant Professor Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova, I conclude that there is **no plagiarism**.

The significance of Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova's scientific contributions is also evident from the numerous documented **citations**, which indicate that her work is well-known among the academic community.

Reference No. 7.1 from the list of documents shows that Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD not only meets but exceeds the minimum national **requirements** for scientific activity necessary to attain the academic position of "Associate Professor," in accordance with the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Furthermore, Reference No. 7.2 from the list of documents demonstrates that the candidate also exceeds the additional requirements set by the Faculty of Pedagogy at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski."

3. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

I have no critical remarks or recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD fully comply with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for attaining the academic position of "Associate Professor."

The candidate in the competition has presented high-quality scientific works, published after the materials used for obtaining the Doctoral (PhD) degree and those included in the competition for the academic position of "Senior Assistant Professor." The candidate's publications contain original scientific and applied contributions, which have received both national and international recognition. Theoretical developments have practical applicability, with some of them being directly oriented toward educational activities. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD are undeniable.

The high achievements of Assistant Professor Bilyana Kaloferova PhD in teaching and research activities fully meet the requirements for attaining the academic position of "Associate Professor."

I explicitly emphasize that the candidate meets both the minimum national requirements for the academic position of "Associate Professor" and the additional requirements set by the Faculty of Pedagogy, in accordance with the Regulations of Plovdiv University for the Implementation of the LDASRB.

After reviewing the materials and scientific works submitted for the competition, analysing their significance, and assessing their scientific, applied, and theoretical contributions, I find it well-founded to give a deservedly high assessment and to express my **positive conclusion**. I therefore recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy, proposing the appointment

of Assistant Professor Bilyana Mladenova Kaloferova PhD to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" in the professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching in... (Methodology of Orientation in the World Around Us).

09.03.2025

Statement prepared by:

Prof. Vladimira Angelova, PhD