

## REVIEW

from

**Prof. Dr. Petya Yordanova Karaivanova,  
*St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo***

of the materials submitted to the competition  
for the academic position of Associate Professor  
at Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski University

in: field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences,  
professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of education in... ,  
scientific speciality "Methodology of orientation in the surrounding world"

In the competition for "Associate Professor" announced in the State Gazette, no. 98 of 19.11.2024 and on the internet page of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy, as a candidate participated Assoc. Dr. Bilyana Mladenova Kaloferova from Paisii Hilendarski University of Education

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

#### **Subject:**

By Order No. RD-22-83 of 17.01.2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU) I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury of the competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" at PU in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. ("Methodology of orientation in the surrounding world"), announced for the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education. For participation in the announced competition has submitted documents only one candidate: Bilyana Mladenova Kaloferova, principal Asst. Dr. at Paisii Hilendarski University of Education.

Presented by prof. as. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova set of materials on paper is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU and includes the following documents: application form to the Rector for admission to the competition; autobiography according to the European format; copies of diplomas (for obtained Bachelor's, Master's and PhD degrees); list of scientific works; scientific works (copies of publications); list of citations; copies of publications with citations; references (for compliance with the MRI and the DFI); annotations of the materials under Art. 65. From the PRASPU in Bulgarian and English; self-assessment of contributions (in Bulgarian and English); declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents; certificate of work experience; documents for academic work (classroom and extracurricular employment; reference for graduates); documents for research work (official note for participation in a project) and a set of the above documents on paper and electronic media.

The candidate prof. as. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova has submitted a total of 11 scientific works: 1 monograph; 1 book published on the basis of a defended dissertation for the award of PhD; 5 articles published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-known databases of scientific information and 4 articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review or in edited collective volumes. Textbooks and teaching aids are not included as they are not required for this type of competition. Lists of publications used in the implementation of

the pro-procedures for obtaining the Ph.D. degree and for participation in the competition for the academic post of Principal Assistant Professor are attached to the documentation. The lists include a total of 26 titles, of which 11 research papers are relevant to the present competition, as stated above. They are duly and correctly differentiated and are accepted for review, as they are outside the dissertation and are taken into account in the final evaluation. One participation in a research project is documented. 8 research papers from the thesis and 7 from a previous competition are not peer-reviewed. These are attached to illustrate the sustainability of the publication activity and the previous degrees and academics defended. There are no research papers outside the scope of the competition. The distribution of the scientific works according to the relevant headings, in the country and abroad, is as follows: habilitation thesis - monograph (1 pc.), i.e. group C - 100 pts.; group D - 265 pts., i.e. together with 50 pts. from the city of Sofia. A and 157.5 points from group A. E, a total of 572.5 points have been proved against the required 400 points. No documents (in the form of staff notes) have been submitted for participation and for the implemented de-bottlenecks, both for their usefulness and data on the economic effect obtained, as they are not required in this procedure.

No reduction is required for overlapping content and other reasons.

## **2. Brief biographical details (of the applicant(s))**

From the enclosed CV of head. as. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova's CV, it is possible to trace the successive acquisition of educational background, qualifications and professional experience. She is a graduate of Paisii Hilendarski University, where she initially obtained a Bachelor's degree in Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy, and later a Master's degree after successful training in the Master's programme "Innovative Technologies of Pre-school Education and Primary School Stage". In 2019, she successfully defended her dissertation thesis on "Pedagogical model for orientation in a healthy and social environment of 6 - 7-year-old children based on key competencies", developed under the scientific supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sofka Raicheva Karakehayova. She started her professional career in 2011 as a children's teacher in the kindergarten "Sinchets", village of. She started her career in 2011 in the school "Cinchinsky", Branipole, municipality. Rodopi, region. Plovdiv. From 20.09.2018 she was appointed as an assistant professor at the Pedagogical Faculty of the Pedagogical University, where she is currently working after a successful competition for the academic position of "senior assistant" in 2022.

Her teaching activity is varied - besides lecturing courses on: "Methodology of orientation in the surrounding world", "Foundations of ecological culture", "Alternative technologies of pedagogical interaction child - surrounding world", "Discovery and creativity in orientation in the surrounding world", "Health and environmental education", "Experimentation in the natural and social world in preschool age", "Complementary forms of pedagogical interaction for orientation in the environment of the pre-school child", she also has commitments related to the conduct of professional-practical training of students and conducting semester and state examinations in the Bachelor's and Master's degree. Her administrative activities include participation in accreditation committees, internal audit, membership in the Faculty Council of the PF, coordination of the specialty "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy", Hons. "Preschool Pedagogy (until 2022).

The data from the CV of Asst. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova testify to her ambitions for realization and proof in professional plan. They illustrate the purposefulness of her interests in the field of education and qualification and in a convincing way prove her ability to defend them from the position of a responsible young scientist who enjoys authority both among the academic community of PU and among the college in the country.

### **3. General description of the applicant's activities**

Assessment of the candidate's teaching and training activities

Principal asst. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova has an average annual lecture time between 800 and 900 hours with an annual norm of 360 hours, providing compulsory, elective and optional courses in Bachelor and Master programmes (these are specified in a previous component of the review). It is evident from the detailed reference provided that she has accurately developed the curriculum required for each of them. Her lecture courses are related to current problem fields of the pedagogical interaction "child - environment" and are aimed at providing future teachers with the necessary professional-practical competences for organizing the educational interaction in the environment in the kindergarten. They are provided with the necessary resources. In her work with students, Asst. Dr. Kaloferova successfully integrates the results of her research in order to ensure high-quality preparation for the realization of their professional commitments as teacher-educators. In parallel with her direct teaching commitments, she advises young people and supports their ambitions to participate in student research forums and thesis defenses (two student publications under her supervision and six graduate student supervisions are documented).

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

The previous paragraph of the review already commented on the grouping of the candidate's scientific production according to the MNI. The minimum points required by the groups of indicators for the academic post of Associate Professor have been met as follows: group A - 50 points, group C - 100 points, group D - 265 points, group E - 157.5 points, total - 572.5 points. It is noteworthy that 5 articles have been printed in prestigious journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases, three of them are in a foreign language. The remaining four, apart from the monograph and the book based on the defended dissertation for the award of PhD, are reflected as follows: 1 - in the PU Yearbook, 2 - in proceedings and 1 - in an electronic journal.

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

I accept the candidate's differentiation of four scientific fields corresponding to the announced competition, in which his contributions to science and practice are specified in a reflective plan. These are logically outlined and I refer to them in the relevant publications, precisely specified for each of them. In connection with their differentiation, I recommend the candidate in subsequent procedures to systematize them according to their nature of scientific, scientific-applied and applied.

According to their thematic-content nature, the contributions can be grouped into the following areas:

***Area One. Research and development related to health education and its application in orienting the preschool child to the world around him/her (NT1, NT2, NT3, NT8, NT9).*** Issues are presented in detail in a total of 5 publications. Among them, the monograph "Project-oriented model for health education based on integrative links and key competencies" is of particular importance. The author has chosen and developed a topic that is of key importance for the present and future of pre-school education in our country in the light of European educational priorities. The title reflects her ambition to defend the four main areas of contribution specified in the context of the scientific specialisation of the competition, and the content convincingly reflects this intention. It presents an in-depth analysis of current dimensions of health education training and authors' views on the nature of project-based interactive technologies, through which the formation of key competences is assumed in the conditions of integrative links of science, art, sport, digital technologies. It reflects Bilyana Kaloferova proficiency in interpreting ideas and opinions,

specifying the concepts of "health", "competence" and "competences", "education for health", specifying levels of competence, types of competence and competences, defending nuances in defining the essence of sustainable models of healthy and environmentally friendly lifestyle, presenting significant research aspects of: psychological, motivational and emotional-volitional conditioning of behavioral competence in preschool age towards the manifestation of skills for sustainable development and healthy lifestyle; project-oriented educational interaction for the preparation and manifestation of key competencies, fundamental for the mastery of self-regulated health behavior; profile of the participants in the interactive process and characteristics of the interactive educational environment, promoting mastery of sustainable models to maintain health and ensure children's well-being. The careful reading of the monographic work allows to formulate the finding that the head. as. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova demonstrates an excellent knowledge of significant publications and documents at national and European level, a thorough understanding of the specifics of the functioning of preschool education institutions and training in the direction of forming key competencies in the context of health education and a firm mastery of modern tools for the implementation of pedagogical research. This allows her to achieve significant results, materialized through the author's pro-project-oriented model as an alternative strategy for the implementation of health education in the fourth preparatory group (6 - 7-year-old children), based on integrative relationships and key competencies. Her professional experience and competence as a research scientist are benchmarks that are also relevant to the chosen research scope and its inclusion of educational specialists. The study of their attitudes and priorities and the publication of its results set the starting points for a debate on their readiness to ensure the early preparation and expression of children's competence in health education. The candidate's achievements outlined in this way are complemented by the book submitted for review, 'An educational model for orientation in a healthy and social environment based on key competences', published on the basis of her defended dissertation. It accurately characterizes contemporary models for orienting the preschool child in a healthy and social environment. It is argued that health education is an element of the complex civic, environmental and intercultural education in preschool childhood. The elements of the complex concept of "health" and health education in preschool are successfully and accurately highlighted. The correlation between the health thematic areas and the key competencies of the 6 - 7 year old child is convincingly demonstrated. The candidate's theses related to the first area of her contributions have also been convincingly defended through publications NT3, NT8 and NT9, which focus on workshop projects for orientation in healthy and social environments, the tracking of skills for leading a healthy lifestyle in interest corners and the transformative function of creative expressions and pro-ductive art activities in project activities integrated into competency areas of health education.

***Area Two. Research related to the competency approach and key competencies in guiding the child towards a sustainable and healthy lifestyle (NT1, NT2, NT7, NT8, NT9, NT11).*** This thematic area is protected by 6 publications. In the habilitation thesis educational-applied solutions for pedagogical accompaniment of educational interaction are justified, described in the context of the competence paradigm. Emphasis is placed on the promotion of models for the realization of a positive pedagogical strategy to guarantee key competences in the orientation of the child in a healthy and social environment, defended as best practices. The importance of key competences as a basis for the prospective formation of adaptive and active individuals is convincingly argued. The need to create a positive educational environment that ensures a variety of opportunities to stimulate behaviours related to the nine key competencies in the context of health education domains is justified. The authors' contributions to this problem area are complemented through the book and articles presented. They propose options for optimizing competency-based educational

interaction focused on the sustainability of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions for leading a healthy lifestyle in harmony with the environment.

**Area Three. Research and development related to project-oriented technology and its application in preschool (NT1, NT9, NT10, NT11).** Issues related to this thematic research area are present in 4 publications. What is valuable in them is the presentation of the theoretical-conceptual parameters of project-based learning and their projections in preschool education. The pedagogical dimensions of the project and the project activity are analyzed in the habilitation thesis in a substantiated way. They are characterized on the basis of leading theoretical propositions, whose inter-pretation allows to defend the variability of the project and the strategic phenomenology of project-based interaction as a tool to guarantee integrativeness in pedagogical interaction. The author's thesis on the relation of project interaction to the skills of the XXI century, defended in the direction of communication, collaboration and creativity in the conditions of project activity, is contributory. It is complemented by the outlined innovative characteristics of project interaction and technological development of health education projects, illustrated through the proposed thematic project mobilities by health education competence areas. Particular aspects of this are detailed in publications NT9, NT10 and NT11. They make the case for the integrative potential of the pre-school project and the possibility of developing the skills of anticipation and control of the goal-setting algorithm and the formation of subjective criteria for the effectiveness of one's own actions.

**Area Four. Research and development related to the application of the studio - a complementary form of pedagogical interaction, in orienting the child in a healthy and social environment: (NT2, NT1).** The authors' achievements related to this thematic area are systematized in 2 research papers. They can be concretized in the direction of conceptual substantiation and technological concretization of parameters of an educational model calculated on the studio as a complementary form of pedagogical interaction. The competent structuring of the cognitive content in the model - the specification of the elements: name, symbol, motto; the organization of the educational environment according to the type of the workshop, the specification of the phases of technological development; the definition of goals, the refinement of content units that reflect key competencies as a result of the orientation of the 6-7-year-old child in a healthy and social environment. Both the monograph and the book convincingly defend those themes and ideas that reflect a reasoned authorial view of the purposeful use of the studio as a variant of a complementary form in the pedagogical interaction in the world around.

They are in line with the key competences and contemporary educational priorities and are thoroughly thought through and justified in theory and application.

The contributions of the head as. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova can be summarized as:

### **I. CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCIENTIFIC AND THEORETICAL NATURE**

1. I appreciate the author's contribution in supplementing the existing scientific knowledge with new nuances about the essence of the concepts "health", "project-based", "project-oriented" and "problem-based learning" and their interpretation in the contextual field of modern paradigms, setting the vision for the implementation of health education in the conditions of the "Environment" field.

2. I highlight the enrichment of the theory of health education through models for its integration in orientation in the surrounding world. The educational content structured in them, the scientifically grounded technologies for its mastering and the derived pedagogical conditions for the competence orientation of the interaction in the health and social environment guarantee the effectiveness in terms of ensuring the autonomy and freedom of choice in the preschool childhood.

3. I positively accept the theoretically grounded correlation between health education and key competences, which sets benchmarks for making sense of the holistic character of health as a priority and value in the professional life of the pre-school teacher. I admire the design-solutions that satisfy the vision of contemporary interaction in the conditions of activity collaboration between the child and the educator in the space of the studio and project interaction.

## **II. CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCIENTIFIC AND APPLIED NATURE**

1. I highlight the contribution of the study of children's ideas about health, reflection and reflexive manifestations as a mechanism for the formation of self-awareness.

2. I accept as contributory the scientific-applied justification of the technological development of health education projects and their importance for stimulating children's practical-cognitive and research activity in unity with creativity. I acknowledge the achievements of the candidate in differentiating the phases in the technological development of the studio and linking them to the affirmation of the child's subject position in the process of orientation in a healthy and social environment.

3. I find the findings valuable in scientific and applied terms in the study of teachers' professional competencies for the implementation of projects in preschool. They are a starting point for rethinking the functions of the educator as a subject of the ob-educational interaction who purposefully supports children's world-discovery in terms of meaningful, emotionally engaging and socially binding subjectively significant collaborative or emancipated exploratory activity.

## **III. CONTRIBUTIONS OF AN APPLIED NATURE**

1. I take as an advantage the protected good practices related to the application of modern model technologies for the implementation of health education, protected methodologically with a focus on motivating the growing individuality for active participation in the process of mastering the experience of leading a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

2. I admire the solutions applied in practice to optimize health education training in the discourse of the competency approach. Valuable is their integration in the educational interaction in the conditions of project-based activities and workshops that stimulate children's activity and presuppose the formation of personally meaningful motivation for emancipated orientation in a healthy and social environment through the collaboration of science, art, sport, digital technologies.

3. I acknowledge the author's contribution in relation to the proposed thematic workshops, consolidated in three focus areas: 'Me and my body', 'My self' and 'Me and others'. I welcome the use of modern technologies in the interaction with events, information and objects, provided applied through the generation of QR codes and schematically depicted models.

I evaluate the presented production as genre diverse and developed at a high scientific level. I find the author's contributions in the thematic fields and groups outlined above indisputable and relevant to this competition.

It is evident from the attached evidence that the candidate is recognizable in the scientific community and his work has been actively cited in publications of various genres by established and young scientists. The citations are meaningful and the points associated with them are many times higher than those required (157.5 points out of the required 50). Three of them are reflected in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-known databases of scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes (two of them are abroad), and 17 - in non-refereed peer-

reviewed journals. All of them are in the period 2022 - 2024, i.e. after the academic position of "Principal Assistant Professor".

The contributions in the candidate's scientific works are significant for the theory and practice of pre-school education and, in particular, for the methodology of orientation in the surrounding world in pre-school. All the quantitative indicators of the criteria for the academic position of "Associate Professor" (commented and specified above), as well as the specific requirements of the Pedagogical Faculty of PU are met. Evidence of the recognition of the head chief asst. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova among the scientific circles are the attached citations, as well as the qualities of her scientific production, evaluated by its publication in prestigious pedagogical publications.

#### *Extramural activity*

Although the procedure does not require the presentation of evidence of this type of activity, I note that the vast majority of the reviewed papers demonstrate the implementation of innovative educational and applied solutions and ideas in practice. This is a rather thin evidence of the professional commitment of the candidate to the implementation of innovative for the Bulgarian preschool education private didactic models.

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

Principal asst. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova has demonstrated in a definite way her personal contribution to the complementation of the existing private methodological knowledge and its purposeful use in the development and implementation of modern educational-applied solutions, not needed in practice. The content of her scientific developments demonstrates an original style in interpreting and complementing with new research nuances the private-methodological knowledge, and the contributions and results obtained are convincingly defended as her professional and personal merit.

#### **5. Critical comments and recommendations**

I have no critical comments. I recommend to prof. as. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova to continue to actively promote the results of her research at home and abroad, because the thematic fields in which she works are promising and significant both in a general pedagogical and in a private didactic context.

I put to the attention of the candidate the following question: what do you think are the challenges for the educational practices in pre-school in relation to the innovation of the pedagogical interaction in the world around through the purposeful application of the project technology and the workshop?

#### **6. Personal impressions**

My personal impressions of the candidate's performances are related to the review of his dissertation, monograph and book, his participation in scientific forums and his publication activity. Principal asst. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova is a young scientist and researcher who successfully defends her ambitions for professional expression in her chosen scientific field. She is creative, proactive, ethical and responsible, precise and consistent in the implementation of her professional commitments. I find that she demonstrates her own style in the development of scientific texts and is a worthy successor to her scientific supervisor - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sofia Karakehayova. Her professional competences are combined with personal qualities that complete her profile as a

university lecturer who enjoys authority among colleagues, students and experts in the field of pre-school education.

### **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials, presented by Asst. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova meet all the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LADAPB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LADAPB and the relevant Regulations of the Paisii Hilendarski University.

The candidate in the competition has submitted a significant number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defence of the PhD degree and successfully passed the competition for the academic position of "Principal Assistant Professor". The candidate's works contain original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, a representative part of which have been published in prestigious journals and scientific collections. His theoretical developments have practical applicability and are directly aimed at optimizing educational interaction in the modern kindergarten. The scientific and teaching qualification of head as. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova is undoubted.

The achievements of prof. as. Dr. Bilyana Kaloferova results in teaching and research activities fully comply with the minimum national and supplementary requirements of the Faculty of Education, adopted in conjunction with the Regulations of the PU for the application of the Law on Education (attached Reference for compliance with additional requirements for admission to the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Faculty of Education).

After familiarizing with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analysis of their significance and scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it justified to give my positive assessment and to recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy for the election of the head as. Dr. Bilyana Mladenova Kaloferova to the academic position of Associate Professor at the Pedagogical University "Paisii Hilendarski" in the following field of higher education 1. 1. Pedagogy of education in... ("Methodology of orientation in the surrounding world").

08.03.2025 г.

Reviewer: .....

(Prof. Dr. Petya Karaivanova)