

# OPINION

**by Professor Dr. Reni Hristova - Kotseva,**

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on the materials submitted for participation in a competition  
for the academic position of Associate Professor  
at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv,  
in the field of higher education **1. Educational Sciences**,  
professional field **1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy)**

In the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette, Issue No. 26 of 11 November 2025, and on the official website of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, the candidate participating in the procedure is Elena Angelova Kamenova from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

## **1. General Overview of the Submitted Materials**

By Order No. RD-22-33 of 9 January 2026, issued by the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (PU), I was appointed as a member of the academic jury in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor at the same university in the field of higher education 1. Educational Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy). The competition was announced to meet the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education. A single candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition—Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova from Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, a faculty member of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education.

The set of materials submitted in hard copy by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova complies with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, pursuant to Article 66, paragraph 2.

The candidate has submitted a total of 14 scholarly publications, including one monograph, one book based on a defended doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD), five publications in scientific journals indexed in internationally recognized databases, and seven publications in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes.

The scholarly works submitted by the candidate meet the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor (400 points), as well as the additional requirements of the Faculty of Education at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. As indicated in the accompanying report, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova has 265 points under Indicator Group G, compared to the required additional

minimum of 60 points, along with five publications in journals indexed in internationally recognized scientific databases. The number of points under Indicator Group D—185 points—significantly exceeds the required minimum of 115 points.

**Table 2. Minimum Required Points by Indicator Groups for the Academic Position of Associate Professor and Points Achieved by the Candidate, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova**

Indicator Group	Minimum Required Points for the Position of Associate Professor	Actual Number of Points Achieved by the Candidate
A	50	50
Б	-	-
B	100	100
Г	200	265
Д	50	185
E	-	15
<b>Total Number of Points:</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>615</b>

The candidate, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova, has accumulated a total of 240 points for teaching activities, compared to the required minimum of 30 points. The candidate’s research activity is further complemented by participation in Project No. FP 23-PF-016 “Interdisciplinary Learning through Arts, Sports and Digital Technologies”, funded by the Research Fund of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for the period 2024–2025. Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova meets the criteria for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, adopted by the Faculty Council, Protocol No. 13 of 6 July 2021.

## **2. Brief Biographical Information about the Candidate**

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova completed her secondary education at Petko Rachov Slaveykov Secondary School in the city of Kardzhali in 2004. She is a graduate of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

In 2010, she obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Preschool Pedagogy and English Language from the Faculty of Education, and in 2012 she was awarded a Master’s degree in Methodology of Teaching English (Grades 1–12) from the Faculty of Philology.

In the period March 2015 – March 2019, she was a doctoral student in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of Education and Didactics) at the Faculty of Education of Paisii

Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. Following the successful defense of her doctoral dissertation entitled “An Innovative Pedagogical Model for Foreign Language Acquisition in Early Childhood” in 2019, she was awarded the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD).

Since March 2019, she has been a full-time faculty member in the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv — serving as Assistant Professor (March 2019 – March 2023) and as Chief Assistant Professor from March 2023 to the present.

The educational and professional qualifications, teaching experience, and research expertise of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova correspond fully to the requirements of the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor.

### **3. General Overview of the Candidate’s Activity**

#### ***Assessment of Teaching Activity and Professional Preparation***

The classroom teaching load of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova has ranged between 800 and 900 hours annually, while in the current academic year it has reached approximately 1300 hours, compared to the established annual norm of 360 hours.

She is a lecturer who demonstrates high professional competence in the design and delivery of lecture courses, seminars, and practical classes within both Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes. She teaches 16 courses, including 5 compulsory, 4 elective, 1 optional, 3 practical courses (classroom observation, current pedagogical practice, and internship practice) in Bachelor’s programmes, as well as 3 compulsory courses in a Master’s programme.

She has developed 10 new lecture courses and curricula in accordance with the updated curricula of the Bachelor’s degree programmes.

Dr. Kamenova also participates in the Department for Qualification and Professional Development of Pedagogical Specialists at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, serving as a consultation leader in Preschool Pedagogy for teachers seeking to obtain the Fourth and Fifth Professional Qualification Degrees, and as a member of examination boards for awarding the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Professional Qualification Degrees.

Her teaching responsibilities further include participation in examination committees for semester and state examinations, as well as in committees responsible for the assessment of speech and communicative competencies. She has participated in accreditation committees and the preparation of self-evaluation reports in 2019 and 2025.

Dr. Kamenova is also a member of the Committee for Quality Management of the Educational Product, which conducts regular surveys among students and employers each academic year, summarizes and analyzes the collected data, and prepares reports on the results.

She served as coordinator of the degree programmes “Preschool Pedagogy” and “Preschool Pedagogy and Foreign Language” from 2020 to 2025.

Her work with students in research and creative projects is particularly active. She has supervised 12 successfully completed Bachelor’s and Master’s theses, with five additional students completing their theses during the current academic year (2025–2026). Since 2023, she has also served as mentor of the “Young Pedagogue” Club at the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

### *Assessment of the Candidate's Research and Applied Scientific Activity*

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova participates in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor with one monograph and one book based on a defended doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD), five publications in scientific journals indexed in internationally recognized databases (three single-authored and two co-authored), including two indexed in Web of Science and two indexed in CEEOL. In addition, the candidate has submitted seven publications in non-indexed scholarly outlets, including three published in the Annual of the Faculty of Education at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv and four papers published in proceedings of scientific conferences, peer-reviewed or included in edited collective volumes. Of the submitted publications, one is written in English and fourteen are written in Bulgarian.

### *Contributions (Scientific, Applied Scientific, and Practical) and Citations*

The primary research interests of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova lie in the field of preschool pedagogy and preschool education. Her scholarly contributions possess both theoretical and practical significance and may be systematized within the following thematic areas:

**First area.** *Theoretical and applied studies and developments related to essential aspects of the education and upbringing of preschool children*—including labour education, moral education, physical education, and socio-emotional development [2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 11; 12].

**Second area.** *Scientific and practice-oriented studies and developments emphasizing the significance of games, supplementary forms of activity, and multimedia presentations in the educational process of the kindergarten* for stimulating children’s motor and cognitive activity and their emotional–volitional readiness for school [1; 2; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9].

**Third area.** *Theoretical and practical research on the role, functions, and challenges of the contemporary preschool teacher* [4; 10; 11].

Within the first thematic area, the research and applied contributions concern the field of education and the educational process in early childhood [2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 11; 12].

A comprehensive analysis of the current state of the educational process in preschool age is presented, including an evaluation of its effectiveness and perspectives in accordance with contemporary educational paradigms and societal expectations. Drawing upon traditionally established components—moral, intellectual, labour, physical, aesthetic, and family education—Dr. Kamenova substantiates the role of socio-emotional development as a key factor in the formation of the child’s personality [2; 11].

A well-argued theoretical and practical study is also presented on the fundamental importance of physical education and physical activity for the holistic development of preschool children. The main functions of movement for physical and psychological health are outlined, as well as their decisive role for intellectual development and the formation of basic competences. The role of parents and educators in stimulating motor activity in early childhood is emphasized. The significance of active play as a supplementary form supporting increased motor activity among children is convincingly demonstrated [2; 7; 12]. An original contemporary study is also proposed concerning the educational, formative, and developmental

functions of labour activities and their effective influence on the development of key personal qualities, volitional abilities, and socio-emotional skills among preschool children [5].

Special attention is given to the fairy tale as a valuable pedagogical resource for enriching the moral concepts of children aged 6–7. The analysis of the results from the conducted research convincingly demonstrates the effectiveness of the applied pedagogical system of children’s fairy tales in supporting the formation and enrichment of moral representations among children aged 6–7, as well as its applicability in pedagogical practice [5].

Dr. Kamenova’s research interests are also focused on a highly relevant issue in contemporary preschool education—namely, the socio-emotional and volitional development of preschool children [1; 6; 9].

Within the second thematic area, related to research and practical developments for stimulating motor and cognitive activity and emotional–volitional readiness for school, several significant theoretical and applied contributions can be identified. These are presented primarily in the monograph Kamenova, E. (2025). *Organized Activities in the Emotional–Volitional Preparation for School of Children Aged 5–7*. Plovdiv, ISBN 978-619-281-078-8, as well as in a number of other studies and publications [1; 2; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9].

Dr. Kamenova employs a competent research approach in clarifying the theoretical foundations of children’s school readiness in contemporary educational institutions, placing particular emphasis on the specific characteristics, psycho-pedagogical dimensions, and significance of emotional–volitional preparation. Based on a constructive analysis, she highlights the necessity of a holistic approach, in which the educational process is implemented both through organized and free activities—including play, artistic-creative, labour, research, and interactive activities—stimulating the development of the emotional–volitional sphere and supporting the child’s socio-emotional and motivational–volitional readiness for school [1; 5; 6].

The necessity of diverse organized activities, their technological characteristics, and their practical applicability is scientifically substantiated. An authorial theoretical framework for organized activities is proposed, combining purposeful pedagogical guidance with creative freedom and providing educators with opportunities to interpret, adapt, and modify activities according to the individual characteristics, interests, and needs of each child, with the aim of fostering emotional responsiveness and volitional engagement, thereby stimulating emotional–volitional preparation [1; 6; 9].

The developed criterion framework for monitoring the development of emotional–volitional preparation among children aged 5–7 constitutes a reliable instrument for both research purposes and practical application in preschool education [1; 6; 9; 11].

It is also convincingly argued that multimedia presentations represent a valuable tool for enriching the traditional educational process in kindergarten [8].

Important contributions to preschool pedagogy are also presented in the book Kamenova, E. (2025). *A Pedagogical Model for Stimulating Cognitive Activity in Foreign Language Learning among Children Aged 6–7*. Plovdiv, ISBN 978-619-281-070-2, including games designed to stimulate foreign language learning in kindergarten, as well as author-developed games supporting the emotional–volitional preparation of children for school [1; 7; 9].

The third thematic area of Dr. Kamenova's research concerns contributions related to theoretical and practical studies on the role, functions, and challenges of the contemporary preschool teacher [4; 10; 11].

A representative empirical study has been conducted among preschool teachers in Bulgaria, aiming to explore their attitudes, experience, and professional evaluations regarding the state of emotional–volitional preparation of children aged 6–7. The analysis indicates that teachers support the idea of optimizing pedagogical practice in order to more effectively stimulate children's emotional–volitional readiness for school [4; 10].

The study also theoretically substantiates the organizational skills and professional competences of the teacher, which should encourage motor, cognitive, and social activity as an integrated process aimed at the emotional–volitional preparation of children for school [10; 11].

The presented publications convincingly demonstrate scientific awareness, innovativeness, and professional competence, which characterize Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova as an ambitious researcher and lecturer.

Dr. Kamenova has 12 single-authored publications and 2 co-authored publications, which testifies to her ability both to conduct independent scientific research and to work successfully within a research team.

Her participation in various scientific forums (conferences, seminars, and round tables) is reflected in her scholarly publications.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova reports 24 citations, including 5 citations in publications indexed in internationally recognized scientific databases or in monographs and edited volumes, 3 citations in peer-reviewed monographs and edited volumes, and 16 citations in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals. These citations meet the requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor and demonstrate her recognition within the scholarly community.

#### **4. Critical Remarks and Recommendations**

In today's digital world, fostering moral values through fairy tales is particularly valuable. My recommendation is that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova expand her research and develop a system of children's fairy tales targeting children aged 3–6 years.

#### **Conclusion**

The documents and materials submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova fully comply with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ADASRB, and the corresponding Regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The candidate has submitted a sufficient number of scholarly works published after the materials used for the defense of her Doctoral degree (PhD) and for the appointment to the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor. Her work demonstrates original scientific and applied contributions, which have received international recognition, with a representative portion published in journals and scientific collections issued by international academic

publishers. Her theoretical developments possess practical applicability, some of which are directly oriented toward teaching activities. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova are fully compatible with the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor.

The results achieved by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova in both teaching and research activities fully meet the minimum national requirements as well as the additional requirements of the Faculty of Education, adopted in accordance with the Regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for the implementation of ADASRB.

After reviewing the submitted materials and scholarly works, and based on an analysis of their significance and the scientific, applied scientific, and practical contributions contained therein, I consider it justified to provide a positive evaluation and recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education proposing the appointment of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova to the academic position of Associate Professor at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in the field of higher education 1. Educational Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy).

09.03. 2026 г.

**Prepared by:** .....

(Prof. Dr. Reni Hristova-Kotseva)