

## **REVIEW**

by Prof. Vessela Metodieva Gyurova, PhD  
Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski",  
of the materials submitted for participation in the competition  
for the academic position of "Associate Professor"  
at Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski",  
in: field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences,  
professional field 1.2 Pedagogy  
field of scientific specialty (Preschool Pedagogy)

In the competition for "associate professor", announced in the State Gazette, SG, issue 96 of 11.11.2025, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of "Preschool Pedagogy" at the Faculty of Pedagogy, the candidate is Chief Assistant Professor Elena Angelova Kamenova, PhD, from the Department of Preschool Pedagogy, Faculty of Pedagogy.

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

#### **1.1. Presentation of the procedure - subject:**

By order No. PD-22-33 of 09. 01. 2026 of the rector of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" (PU), I am appointed as a member of the scientific jury, and as a result of the first absentee meeting (19. 01. 2026) as a reviewer in a competition for the academic position of "associate professor" at PU in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional direction 1.2 Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy), announced for the needs of the Department of "Preschool Pedagogy" at the Faculty of Pedagogy.

A single candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition: Chief Assistant Professor Elena Angelova Kamenova, PhD, Department of Preschool Pedagogy, Faculty of Pedagogy.

#### **1.2. Inventory of materials received for review.**

The set of materials submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Elena Kamenova, PhD on paper and in electronic format are in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv and includes the following documents:

– Application, CV, certificate of work experience and other mandatory informative data for the candidate related to the competition;

– List of scientific works, references for compliance with the minimum requirements of the National Academy of Sciences and Arts and the additional ones from the Regulations of the University of Plovdiv, annotations for the works in Bulgarian and in a foreign language, the

works themselves, accompanied by a self-assessment of the scientific contributions, a declaration of originality and reliability, documentation for scientific research work, etc.

The candidate Chief Assistant Professor Elena Angelova Kamenova, PhD has applied a total of fourteen scientific works in the issues of the academic position of "associate professor". Among them, one monograph, one book, 12 articles stand out.

The articles published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information are 5, two of which are co-authored, and one of them - in a foreign language. Seven are the articles published in non-refereed journals: three in the Yearbook of the Faculty of Pedagogy of the Plovdiv University Publishing House "Paisiy Hilendarski"; four from scientific conferences and forums, also published by the Publishing House of the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski".

**14 scientific works** are accepted for review, which are on the issues of the announced competition. The distribution of scientific works by relevant headings, in the country and abroad, is as follows: ***one article in co-authorship in a foreign language, published in the proceedings of a conference in Seville, Spain (indexed and refereed). One document was also presented (in the form of an official note when submitting the documents in January) in confirmation that the article, authored by Elena Kamenova, PhD was accepted for publication in issue 3 of the scientific journal "Pedagogy" in 2026.***

In this competition, the candidate does not include publications with which she applied for the academic degree "doctor" or the academic position "chief assistant".

I find no grounds for a reduction in the relevant number of scientific papers, overlapping in their content, as well as the absence of documents. The candidate has certified her scientific publication activity in good faith and with professional responsibility.

## 2. Brief biographical data of the candidate

Chief Assistant Professor Elena Kamenova, PhD, obtained a bachelor's degree at the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski", Faculty of Pedagogy as part of her higher education (October 2006 - June 2010). From November 2010 to November 2012 she studied at the "Master's" course at the Faculty of Philology of the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski", and in the years March 2015 - March 2019 she was a doctoral student in the field of "Theory of Education and Didactics" at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the same university. Thus, she combines her teaching experience from the bachelor's degree in preschool pedagogy and English with competencies improved in the philological master's program, which she builds on in a scientific and research plan in her doctoral dissertation.

Chief Assistant Professor Elena Kamenova, PhD participates in the project "Interdisciplinary Education through Arts, Sports and Digital Technologies" from the competition session 2023-2024. Works in the Department for Qualification and Professional Development of Pedagogical Specialists at the "Paisiy Hilendarski" University: leads consultations on "Preschool Pedagogy" for the acquisition of V and IV PKS; participates in the examination committee for the acquisition of III, IV, V PKS.

The presented data shows that the candidate in the competition for the academic position "associate professor" combines teaching, scientific and professional experience in connection with the announced competition.

### **3.1. Assessment of teaching activity.**

As of 15.12. 2025, the candidate has a teaching experience of 9 years and 11 days, as evidenced by the submitted certificate of the University of Sofia. She has been a doctor since 2019, and a chief assistant professor for 2 years, 8 months and 27 days. Her classroom workload over the years has been within the limit of 800-900 hours per year, and during this academic year it reaches 1300 hours, with an annual norm of 360 hours.

The provided reference for teaching employment shows that she participated in a total of 36 courses in the functions of a lecturer, leading seminars, hosting, etc., such as:

□ In the Bachelor's Degree Program she led: 9 lecture courses as a titular on: the problems of preschool pedagogy in two related main disciplines for the professional training of students (OPUP and PUP) in the specialties of the Bachelor's Degree Program: PUP r.o.; in PNUP, r.o. and z.o.; in PUPCHE r.o.; Pedagogy r.o.; PUPCHE r.o.; 2 main lecture courses on the problems of "Psychology and Pedagogy of Early Childhood" in the specialty PUP r.o. and PUPCHE r.o.; is the holder of two elective subjects "European Models of Preschool Education" and "Pedagogical Interaction in a Multicultural Environment", as well as the holder of one PhD "Organization and Content of Additional Activities in Kindergarten".

□ In the "Master's" OCS - holder of 3 lecture courses "Preschool Education - Innovations", "Reggio Pedagogy - PhD" in the program "Alternatives in Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy" and "Preschool Pedagogy" in the program "Preschool Pedagogy".

She has competently developed 10 curricula in these disciplines for the various specialties listed above. She supervises 12 successfully graduated graduates in the OKS "bachelor" and "master" and 5 current graduates scheduled to defend this academic year 2025-

26, as they are from the specialty PUP and PNUP, where part of the main teaching activity of the Chief Assistant Professor Elena Kamenova, PhD is implemented.

The candidate participates in: examination committees for conducting semester exams; examination committees for state exams; candidate student campaigns of PU; accreditation committees and preparation of a self-assessment report in 2019 and 2025; the committee for managing the quality of the educational product - conducting a survey of students and employers periodically each academic year, summarizing, analyzing and preparing a report on the results obtained; the commission for checking the speech and communication abilities of candidate students until 2024. She is also a member of the audit committee of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski". She has been a mentor of the "Young Pedagogist" club at the Faculty of Pedagogy of PU "Paisiy Hilendarski" since 2023.

Based on what is presented in the review, I can confirm my high assessment of the educational and pedagogical activity of Chief Assistant Professor Elena Kamenova, PhD and her preparation in the academic sphere - her convincing performance in basic lecture courses, responsible work with students and postgraduates. Her active presence in the university institution is documented through a wide range of her functions in psycho-logo-pedagogical and practical-applied training of bachelors and masters. She has been delegated important responsibilities for participation in the main teaching team, which she fulfills with dignity.

### ***3.2. Assessment of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific activity.***

At the very beginning, I would like to note that in her scientific and research and publication activity, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova, PhD meets the minimum required points by groups of indicators for the academic position "associate professor" of NACID, as well as the additional requirements for holding the academic position "associate professor" in scientific fields/or professional areas of the Faculty of Education, which I will present in detail after justifying the contributions of this publication activity.

This convincingly proves her strengths in scientific and research activities, which I will specify in the assessment of her works and publications below:

□ ***The monograph in a volume of 172 pages***, structured with an introduction, 4 chapters, conclusion and conclusions, and an appendix (questionnaire used in the study) is on the topic of "Organized activity in the emotional-volitional preparation for school of 5-7-year-old children, (2025), Plovdiv, ISBN 978-619-281-078-8. 120 titles in Cyrillic and 29 in Latin participated in the theoretical overview of the problem, which shows the author's good

awareness in comparing the key concepts, state, principles, trends and modern approaches to the formation of the child's emotional-volitional preparation for school.

In the first three chapters, the author thoroughly and precisely presents the concepts of researchers regarding their point of view on the essence of emotional-volitional preparation of the child for school. Varieties of children's content-oriented, procedural and productively oriented activities are systematized, and their functions for the preparation of the child for school are competently deduced, focusing on the emotional-volitional sphere of the child's individuality in 5 - 7-year-old children. I would like to note the culture of hierarchization when summarizing points of view from classical psychological-pedagogical theories with experimentally traced modern applied practices in an institutional plan.

I especially admire the fourth chapter and paragraph 4.1. "Criteria framework for tracking the development of the child's emotional-volitional preparation for school in 5 - 7-year-old children", which I will refer below to the contributions of substantive importance of Chief Assistant Professor E. Kamenova, PhD. In tabular form (133-137) are presented criteria guidelines for observing by the educator the manifestations of children related to: initiative, persistence, organization and discipline, determination, endurance, manifestations of empathy, emotional expressiveness (awareness), coping with stressful situations, socio-emotional adaptability.

I would also highlight paragraph. 4.2., which presents the views of the kindergarten teacher regarding organized activities aimed at developing emotional-volitional preparation for school. Unlike the previous chapters, the emphasis here is not on theoretical statements and scientific analyses, but is empirically organized. 77 teachers from kindergartens in Plovdiv, Sofia and in smaller urban and rural settlements are included, which is representative in nature and, according to the author, expresses the specificity of different educational practices. Here too, in the review, I will note an emphasis with a positive effect from the conducted survey, related to the self-assessment of teachers in their work on the application of program systems regarding the emotional-volitional development of the child and their opinion on the complex use of activities, as well as on the teacher's creativity as a factor for the prosperity of adolescents in their preparation for school regarding their emotional-volitional expression in the new conditions of the institutional environment. This is evident from the presented results and their summaries (139-150)

In conclusion, I will note the presented important perspective for me, indicated by the author of the monograph - the need "for balancing between the academic and emotional-social orientation of the educational process, as well as for integrating specially organized activities

that purposefully stimulate the development of the emotional and volitional qualities of the child" (153).

□ **The published book** based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" is on the topic "Pedagogical model for stimulating cognitive activity in a foreign language in 6-7-year-old children", (2025), Plovdiv, ISBN 978-619-281-070-2. It is 164 pages long, structured in an introduction, three chapters, conclusions and conclusion, literature and six appendices. It corresponds to the doctoral research conducted by Chief Assistant Professor Elena Kamenova, PhD, applying a concept for teachers to take into account "the interests of children, to stimulate their curiosity and to motivate them in their research activities, in which they are given the opportunity to formulate a number of hypotheses about the phenomena of the world around them and in the process of active activity and interactions with others to acquire new knowledge" (p. 47). This more general concept of education is tested in early foreign language interaction, by formulating an assumption in the hypothesis that the applied model "will influence the acquisition of English by children aged 5–6" (p. 107). The experimental formative research is conducted in a kindergarten and is associated with conclusions about the influence of 12 topics on derived important skills for the expression of children such as: "desire to participate in a situation", "ability to communicate (implement dialogues between children)", "acquiring and applying knowledge in the English language situation" (p. 113). The analysis of the results (134 – 144) is summarized in three stages, proving the positive influence "on the acquisition of English by children aged 5–6" (p. 145). This confirms the trend for the integration of game-based, interactive and modern methods that create a positive emotional environment and stimulate children's cognitive activity.

□ **Five publications** in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information,

The article published in a foreign language in Seville, Spain, is co-authored and is dedicated to the problems of "Didactic game - a means of learning English in Bulgarian kindergartens". It presents a study on the importance and effectiveness of didactic game for foreign language learning for preschool children. A survey was conducted among teachers, and the conclusion emphasizes that this method contributes to the formation of language skills and creates emotional comfort in the learning process.

**Two articles** are reflected in the journal "Pedagogy" - one published with the title "Fundamental importance of movements for health and competence resources" (Pedagogica,

Vol. 95, issue 4s, pp. 59-68), which is co-authored and one for upcoming publication with a document titled "The fairy tale as a valuable resource for enriching moral concepts in 6-7-year-old children" (Pedagogy, Vol. 97(1), xx–xx.- in press). Both contain data on empirical studies: in the first of practical dimensions through a survey among teachers on the conditions and opportunities for motor activity in kindergartens; in the second of a pedagogical stage experiment, proving positive changes, which takes into account the educational potential of the fairy tale system on the formation and enrichment of moral concepts in 6-7-year-old children.

In *two articles* in the Yearbook of Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski" (XXIX(D). University Publishing House "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", Shumen, ISSN 1314 – 6769, (indexed in CEEOL). The first presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis of a large-scale empirical study conducted among teachers in preschool education in Bulgaria, reflecting their functions in adapting to dynamic educational factors and their functions in the modern educational environment (364-371). In the second, the author confirms in pedagogical observation, as well as in qualitative and quantitative analysis of results, based on previously developed criteria for accounting for the changes that have occurred in children as a result of the functions of work activity (355-363).

□ *Seven publications* are in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, such as:

*Three are in the Yearbook* of the Faculty of Pedagogy. Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski", Plovdiv in different years (2023: Vol. 2, ISSN28154134, pp. 123-132; 2024: Vol. 3, ISSN2815-4134, pp. 260-272; 2025: Vol. 4, ISSN 2815-4134, pp. 226-238). They interpret the problems of: 1) a survey of educators, confirming the positive impact of additional activities on children who attend them and are also empirically included in the data through an interview; 2) multimedia presentation as a modern and effective educational tool in preschool age; 3) building the necessary sustainable work skills for children.

*Three are in collections of published materials* of Plovdiv University Publishing House "Paisiy Hilendarski", Plovdiv. They are dedicated to research related to: 1) criteria that aim to establish children's desire to perform natural-applied movements during play, as well as their physical qualities (2023: ISBN 978-619-7663-76-1, pp. 215 - p. 227); 2) results of participation in an interdisciplinary scientific conference "Traditions and Innovation" on the problems of criteria that aim to establish children's skills for demonstrating independence, initiative and executive position, as well as their emotional attitude during play (2024: ISBN 978-619-7768-

12-1, pp. 307-320); 3) report from an interdisciplinary scientific conference "Creativity and Science in Action: Multidisciplinary Research and Education for the Future" (2025: ISBN 978-619-7768-45-9, pp. 254-267).

*As an assessment of this criterion, I would like to emphasize:*

In the publication activity of Chief Assistant Professor. E. Kamenova, PhD in addition to the scientific and theoretical analysis of concepts and research by our and foreign authors, her ability to combine theory with empirically motivated and modernly argued activity stands out. I can characterize her as a current technological psychological and pedagogical energy, as a result of which she sets trends, verified in institutional experimental educational conditions. This applies both to her monograph and book as more comprehensive works, and to the articles in scientific publications, refereed and indexed and in non-refereed yearbooks and collections of university publishing houses.

### ***3.3. Contributions (scientific, applied science, applied) and citations.***

I accept the self-assessment of the contributions of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. E. Kamenova, which she differentiates into three substantively distinct thematic areas of her publication activity, related (reference No. 9.1.):

□ with labor education, moral education, physical education and social-emotional development in preschool children[2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 11; 12];

□ with the importance of games, additional forms and multimedia presentations for stimulating the educational process – motor activity, cognitive activity and emotional-volitional preparation of the child for school.[ 1; 2, 5; 6; 7; 8; 9];

□ with the role and functions of the teacher; contemporary problems and challenges faced by the preschool teacher [4; 10; 11 ].

At the same time, I will outline how these content areas demonstrate, in my opinion, a contributing character:

#### ***1. Scientific-theoretical and analytical:***

- Scientific-theoretical comparative concepts of the educational process in an institutional plan are hierarchized - procedural characteristics, trends, challenges and prospects [3, 12, 5].

- A new modern-oriented theoretical overview is made of the professional skills and abilities of the educator. Against the background of classical concepts, current conclusions of researchers on trends in motor, cognitive and social activity as interconnected processes are presented, emphasizing the need for an integral impact. [10; 11]

## ***2. Scientific-research and experimental-applied:***

- The main functions of movement, as well as various perspectives in the context of the need for the development of motor activity, have been empirically traced and systematized as a result of psychological and pedagogical research [2].

- A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the studied areas related to moral, physical and labor education has been carried out, as well as the place of the additional form and the fairy tale as a valuable educational resource [3, 12, 5].

- The specificity of labor activity in childhood has been studied and studied, as well as its influence on the development of volitional and socio-emotional skills by children. [5].

- A pedagogical study has been presented, the results of which confirm the significant role of additional activities in stimulating socio-emotional development in preschool age [6].

- The importance of outdoor play and games with open rules as a significant resource for stimulating motor activity and emotional-volitional preparation of the child for school has been experimentally verified. Pedagogical studies have been conducted that confirm their key role in educational practice in kindergarten [7, 11].

- Results of surveys with teachers and their role as a leading factor for movement as an indispensable health resource have been systematized [2].

- Significant aspects regarding the inclusion of organized activities as a means of stimulating the educational process and activities of preschool children have been studied. [ 1; 2; 5; 6; 7; 9 ]

- Games to stimulate foreign language learning in kindergarten, as well as author's games to stimulate the emotional-volitional preparation of the child for school, have been developed and presented. [1; 7; 9 ]

- Additional activities and their importance for the socio-emotional development of preschool children are examined. [6]

- Specially organized work activities are proposed. Their educational value and their place in the educational process in kindergarten are examined. [5]

- A quantitative and qualitative analysis of a large-scale empirical study conducted among teachers in preschool education in Bulgaria is presented. [4].

### ***3. Applied-technological and methodological:***

- The main challenges faced by teachers in modern preschool practice are examined. The key problems that affect the quality of pedagogical work are objectively identified. [4].

- The children's presentation is examined as a motivational tool for enriching children's ideas. The positive aspects are taken into account, as well as its place in the educational process as a modern resource [8].

- The organizational function of the teacher is examined, which provides for planning, organizing, adapting and conducting activities that create conditions for achieving educational goals and objectives [10; 11]

- The role of parents and educators in stimulating motor activity in preschool age is emphasized [2]

I find that among the contributions thus derived, ch. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Kamenova presents herself convincingly, especially in the second group, which dominates my review – the experimental-scientific one. In my opinion, this confirms her as a teacher-researcher, capable of discovering her own current guidelines as a result of an objective assessment of modern educational practice in institutions. Moreover, in her publications she always tests these assumptions through appropriate technological procedures for the implementation and verification of a formative system. She proves trends in generalizations and conclusions, with which she not only confirms, but also sets new directions for research by teachers and students.

I define the contributions brought out by Assoc. Prof. E. Kamenova, PhD as the personal work of the candidate.

This is evidenced by the presented reference No. 6.1. for the citations of her publications. The ***total number of citations is 24***. The number of citations or reviews in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases ***with scientific information is 5*** (presented in Table 1), the number of citations in monographs and collective volumes with ***scientific review is 3*** (in Table 2), ***and 16 is the number of citations or reviews in non-refereed journals with scientific review*** (Table 3). The data on citations are presented both in group D in accordance with the scientometric minimum requirements of NACID for holding the academic position of “associate professor”, and in connection with the additional requirements of PU “Paisiy Hilendarski”.

In terms of its actual number of points, in accordance with the minimum requirements, it exceeds *point D by 65 (from 200-265), point D by 135 (from 50 to 185) and point E (not foreseen, but 15 points are available)*. In the total number of *points out of 400 minimum required, it meets in total 615 points*, which is one third more than the minimum requirements for all indicators for the academic position of "associate professor". At the same time, it also fulfills additional requirements for occupying the academic position of "associate professor" in scientific fields/or professional directions of the Faculty of Education:

- In *point D*, it has an additional *65 above the minimum 200 according* to Table 2 in the Report on compliance with minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of "associate professor";

- It has *5 publications in scientific journals*, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases and exceeds the additional requirements of the University by 4;

- Under *point E*, there are an *additional 135 points above the minimum 50 points* according to Table 2 in the Report on Compliance with Minimum National Requirements for Holding the Academic Position of Associate Professor;

- there are a *total of 240 points* for academic activity with a minimum requirement of 30.

The citations prove the attitude of the academic and professional community to the results of her work.

In terms of content, the citations are positive regarding the game activity, the creativity of children in it, the cognitive functions of mathematical preparation for school, the creation of a modern technological environment in the institution, the functions of the didactic, mobile, visual game and multimedia presentations in education. From the attached reference with the cited No. 6.1. it can be seen that they are in the period from 2023 to 2025, which proves that her publication activity is multiplied in studies by contemporary authors in the academic community. This makes her recognizable for teaching staff in universities, both in our country and abroad (Spain).

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

My assessment of the candidate's personal contribution, Chief Assistant Professor. Elena Kamenova, PhD, is positive, as it is based on the peer-reviewed publications I presented and her contributions I formulated. This high assessment of her qualities, both personally and

professionally, stems from the overall presentation of her academic presence in the Department of Preschool Pedagogy and this is her personal merit.

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

I have no recommendations or critical remarks for the candidate.

### **6. Personal impressions**

I know Chief Assistant Professor E. Kamenova, PhD, personally from our professional and informal contacts as like-minded people in close areas of our common scientific interests. My personal impressions of her performances are associated with a collegial, conscientious attitude towards the commitments she carries out, her readiness to always cooperate willingly in support of the authority of the university community and her integration with that of Sofia University in joint initiatives and administrative activities.

## **CONCLUSION**

From everything said so far, I give a positive assessment of the presented scientific works, as well as the scientific and applied contributions highlighted in my review.

I categorically express my position as a member of the National Council in support of the appointment of the academic position of "associate professor" by Chief Assistant Professor Elena Angelova Kamenova, PhD. The documents presented by her meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of the University "Paisiy Hilendarski".

The candidate in the competition has presented a significant number of scientific works, published after the materials used in the defence of the ONS "doctor" and the competition for the academic position " Chief Assistant Professor ". Her works contain original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, as published in journals and in scientific collections published by international academic publishing houses (Spain). Her theoretical developments have practical applicability, some of which are directly oriented towards the education of students and the qualification of teachers. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Chief Assistant Professor Elena Kamenova, PhD are unquestionable.

The results achieved by Chief Assistant Professor Elena Angelova Kamenova, PhD in teaching and research activities fully comply with the minimum national and additional requirements adopted in connection with the Regulations of the University of Sofia for the implementation of the Law on the Education of the Republic of Bulgaria.

*After familiarizing myself with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition and in view of the analysis of their significance, the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy for the election of Chief Assistant Professor Elena Kamenova, PhD to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the "Paisiy Hilendarski" University in: field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (preschool pedagogy).*

02.02. 2026

Reviewer:

(signature)

Prof. Vesela Gyurova, PhD

(ac. dl., n. s., name, surname)