

OPINION

by Associate Professor Dr. Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova,

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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 – Play-Based Technologies)**

In the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette, Issue No. 34 of 07 April 2026, 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 Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova from the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Candidate

Subject

By Order No. RD-22-1119 of 5 June 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 - Play-Based Technologies). 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. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova, from the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Plovdiv.

The set of materials submitted in hard copy by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova complies with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv and includes the following documents:

- Application form addressed to the Rector for admission to the competition;
- Curriculum Vitae (European format);
- Diploma of higher education awarding the Master's degree, accompanied by a supplement (original and copy) or a notarized copy;
- Diploma for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) (original and copy) or a notarized copy;
- List of scientific publications;
- Scholarly works (copies of publications);
 - ✓ List of citations;
- Statements of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the additional faculty-specific requirements;
- Annotations of the submitted materials:
 - ✓ Annotations of materials under Article 65 of the Regulations of PU (PRASPU) in Bulgarian;
 - ✓ Annotations of materials under Article 65 of the Regulations of PU (PRASPU) in English;
- Self-assessment of contributions:
 - ✓ Self-assessment of contributions in Bulgarian;
 - ✓ Self-assessment of contributions in English;
- Declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents;
- Certificate of employment (professional experience);
- Documents certifying teaching activity;
- Documents certifying research activity.

The candidate, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova, has submitted a total of 15 scholarly works, including: 1 monograph; 1 book published on the basis of a successfully defended doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD); 6 articles published in peer-reviewed and indexed journals in internationally recognized scientific databases; and 7 articles and conference papers published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes.

The submitted documentation does not include **textbooks or teaching aids**, as these are not required for this type of competition. It does, however, contain lists of publications used in previous procedures for the acquisition of the **educational and scientific degree "Doctor"**

(PhD) and for participation in a competition for the academic position of **Chief Assistant Professor**.

All publication lists comprise a total of **27 titles**, of which the above-mentioned **15 scholarly** works are relevant to the present competition. These have been accurately differentiated, are accepted for review, and are taken into account in the final evaluation. A total of 7 publications related to the doctoral dissertation and 5 publications from the previous competition for Chief Assistant Professor are not subject to review in the current procedure; however, they demonstrate the consistency of the candidate's publication activity, as well as previously awarded academic degrees and positions. There are no publications outside the scope of the competition's thematic field. The distribution of the scholarly works according to the indicator groups, in compliance with the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor, is as follows: **group A: Doctoral dissertation – 50 points; group B: Habilitation thesis – monograph (1) – 100 points; group C: Published book based on the defended doctoral dissertation – 75 points; Articles and conference papers published in peer-reviewed and indexed journals in internationally recognized scientific databases – 165 points; Articles and conference papers published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes – 70 points; Total for group C: 310 points** (minimum required: 200 points); **group D: Citations – 210 points** (minimum required: 50 points). Out of a required minimum **total of 400 points**, the candidate in the present competition for Associate Professor has submitted scholarly output amounting to a total of **670 points**. The application dossier also includes additional information related to **group E indicators**: participation in national research or educational projects, with supporting evidence for the candidate's participation in one project, contributing **15 points**. Although not required for this type of competition, this further demonstrates the candidate's active and in-depth research engagement.

The reviewed documentation also demonstrates compliance with the additional faculty-specific requirements for the academic position.

No documents (such as official certificates) regarding participation in implemented projects, their practical benefits, or data on the economic impact are included, as these are not required for the current procedure.

No reduction of points or consideration for overlap in content or other reasons is necessary.

Brief Biographical Data of the Candidate

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova she works in the fields of preschool pedagogy, foreign language education, and the training of future educators. She is an alumna of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." Since 2023, she has held the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor in the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." From 2019 to 2023, she worked as an assistant lecturer in the same department, where she was actively engaged in teaching and research. Prior to entering academia, she gained professional experience as an English language teacher at a language center and a private kindergarten. Her practical work in early foreign language education and preschool pedagogy fostered a lasting interest in modern pedagogical approaches and the potential for integrating game-based and interactive technologies into the educational process. Her educational background has consistently focused on the fields of preschool pedagogy and foreign language teaching methodology. In 2010, she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Preschool Pedagogy and Foreign Language, qualifying as an educator, preschool teacher, and English language teacher. In 2012, she completed a Master's degree at the Faculty of Philology of Plovdiv University, qualifying as an English language teacher (Grades 1–12). In 2020, she obtained the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD) in the professional field of Pedagogy (1.2) from the Faculty of Education at Plovdiv University. Her research interests focus on preschool pedagogy, the theory of education and didactics, as well as pedagogical technologies involving play. Her professional work combines research activities—through participation in projects—with active teaching practice in the field of preschool education. She is proficient in English at the B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and possesses strong computer skills, including proficiency in MS Word, MS Excel, and MS PowerPoint.

Over the years, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova has taught a number of courses within Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, including: "Pedagogical Technologies in Play," "Development of Role-Play as a Joint Activity for Preschool Children," "Play Therapy," "Introduction to the Major," "Pedagogical Foundations of Preschool Education Curricula," "Game-Based Pedagogical Technologies," "Game-Based Education," "Play and Creativity," and "English Language." To date, she has developed eight course syllabi for Bachelor's degree programs.

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova she serves as the Scientific Secretary for International Cooperation and Work with Students and Doctoral Candidates within the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Education at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." She chairs the Committee on International Activities at the Faculty of Education and is a member of the

committee associated with the Faculty of Education's Doctoral Schoolq, coordinator of the "Preschool Education" specialty; serves on committees for semester and state examinations, university entrance exams, and accreditation panels, as well as on committees for the acquisition of professional qualification degrees at the Department for Qualification and Professional Development of Pedagogical Specialists at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." Since 2023, she has been actively involved in organizing the annual Student Scientific Forum and compiling collections of research papers by undergraduate and doctoral students. She provides consulting services to students, degree candidates, and mentor teachers. To date, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova has supervised 11 students who have successfully defended their Bachelor's theses.

The biographical details of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova reveal a competent specialist in the field of education a professional who is purposeful and consistent in her work, and focused on creating innovative, interactive activities and practices. She is a respected university scholar and educator within the professional community.

Personal Impressions

My personal impressions are based on my professional interaction with Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova. I first met her during her doctoral studies in the discipline of "Methodology and Methods of Scientific Research," a period that revealed a significant part of her research potential.

I had the opportunity to work alongside Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova on the course "Interactive Teaching Methods in Primary Education" with Bachelor's degree students Specialty in Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy. She distinguishes herself as a well-organized, motivated, charismatic, responsible, ethical, professional, and consistent scholar and university lecturer. Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova has established herself as an inspiring leader among colleagues, students, doctoral candidates, and teachers alike.

2. General Overview of the Candidate's Academic Activities *Assessment of Teaching and Pedagogical Work, Including Educational Materials, Lecture Courses, and Supervision of Students, Graduates, and Doctoral Candidates*

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova completed 645 hours of classroom teaching during the 2025–2026 academic year—exceeding the annual requirement of 360 hours—by delivering compulsory, elective, and optional courses within Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programs, for some of which she developed the curricula. The courses she teaches focus primarily on children's play as a powerful mechanism for their holistic development during the preschool years.

Her non-teaching workload includes supervising ongoing and pre-graduation pedagogical practicums for the "Preschool Education and Foreign Language" specialization, supervising students working on their theses, reviewing theses, preparing examination materials, and a range of other activities.

Assessment of the Candidate’s Scientific and Applied Research Activities

As noted above, the candidate’s scientific output has been grouped in accordance with the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor. The candidate has met the minimum required points across all indicator groups, with points in groups G and D exceeding the required minimum. The submission includes a habilitation work as well as a book based on the defended doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor.”

The articles submitted for the competition are organized into two groups. The first group includes publications in prestigious peer-reviewed journals indexed in internationally recognized databases. Of the total of 6, two are in a foreign language and published in foreign journals, three are published in Bulgarian journals, and one article is published in the yearbook of a Bulgarian university. One of the six is a co-authored publication, while the other five are single-authored. The second group of publications consists of seven papers, all single-authored, published in non-indexed journals. Three of them appeared in the „Yearbook of Plovdiv University“, three in collections published by the Faculty of Education at Plovdiv University, and one is in a jubilee volume to Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

Scientific, Applied, and Practical Contributions and Citations

The four scientific fields identified by the candidate fully correspond to the announced competition. His contributions to science and practice are specified within these fields. I accept the highlighted scientific fields and the associated contributions. Contributions of a scientific-theoretical, scientific-applied, and applied nature are evident in each of the four fields.

The candidate's body of scientific work is of high value and is reflected in the active citations found in numerous publications by both established and emerging scholars. This demonstrates that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova is an authoritative researcher who is well-recognized within the scientific community. The citations are substantive, and the associated points significantly exceed the required threshold (210 points against a requirement of 50). Six of the citations appear in scholarly publications refereed and indexed in globally renowned databases, four are in peer-reviewed monographs and edited volumes, and sixteen are in peer-reviewed, non-refereed journals. All citations fall within the 2022–2025 period, following the candidate's appointment to the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor. The contributions within the candidate's scholarly works are significant for the theory and practice of preschool education in Bulgaria.

The quantitative criteria for the academic position of “Associate Professor” have been fully met, as well as the specific requirements of the Faculty of Education at Plovdiv University.

The reviewed documentation provides indisputable evidence of the candidate's high-quality scholarly output in the present competition, which is further disseminated through numerous citations.

Implementation Activities

Through her contributions, the candidate in the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” has facilitated the implementation of new models, ideas, and solutions aimed at optimizing practice in preschool education, based on game-based activity.

Assessment of the Candidate's Personal Contribution

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova has convincingly demonstrated her contribution to enriching existing theory and practice in the field of preschool pedagogy in Bulgaria. In her scholarly work, she presents an original vision for utilizing play as a pathway, method, and resource for the more effective socialization and development of the child within a diverse, positive, innovative, interactive, and dynamic environment. The candidate's contributions and the results achieved are to their professional and personal merit.

3. Critical Remarks and Recommendation

I have no critical remarks. I recommend that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova continue to disseminate her research achievements and to seek out and develop innovative game-based models, resources, technologies, and strategies for stimulating and fostering the creative potential of preschool-age children, given that play is a multifaceted social phenomenon with a broad scope for research.

CONCLUSION

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

The candidate has presented a sufficient number of scientific works published after those used for the defense of her doctoral degree and the successful completion of the competition for the academic position of “Assistant Professor.” Her works demonstrate original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, with a representative portion published in journals and scientific collections. Her theoretical developments are practically applicable and focused on optimizing educational and pedagogical activities in kindergarten. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova are beyond doubt.

The results achieved by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova in both her teaching and research activities fully meet the minimum national and additional requirements set by the Faculty of Education in accordance with the University Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB (a Compliance Report with the additional requirements for admission to the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University is on file).

After reviewing the materials and scientific works submitted for the competition, and based on an analysis of their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied, and applied contributions contained therein, I find it justified to give my positive evaluation and to recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education for the appointment of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova 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 - Play-Based Technologies).

28.07.2026

Plovdiv

Prepared by:
(signature)

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