

## **Sample. Review for "associate professor"**

### **REVIEW**

**by Prof. DSc Maria Kirilova Baeva, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",  
Faculty of Science, Education and Arts**

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 (Preschool Pedagogy - game technologies)

In the competition for "associate professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 34 of 07.04.2026 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy, the candidate is Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova from the Department of Preschool Pedagogy, Faculty of Pedagogy, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

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

By order No. PD-22-1119 of 05.06.2026 of the rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in a competition for the academic position of **"associate professor" at PU** in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy - game technologies), **announced for the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy.**

**Only one candidate** has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition:

- Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova from the Department of Preschool Pedagogy, Faculty of Pedagogy, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The set of materials on paper submitted by Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv and includes the necessary documents for participation in the competition and described in the application submitted by the candidate (Formal Application to the Rector for Admission to Participation in the Competition).

The candidate (Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bakhchevanova) has submitted a total of 27 scientific papers (2 monographs and 25 articles). 15 scientific papers that are outside the dissertation are accepted for review and are taken into ac-

count in the final grade. 12 scientific papers on the dissertation and senior assistant are not reviewed. The distribution of scientific papers by relevant rubrics (in the country and abroad) is as follows:

- ➤ 2 monographs
- • habilitation thesis - monograph;
- • published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor";
- ➤ 13 articles
- • 6 articles published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information;
- • 7 articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes.

## **2. Short biographical data (of the candidate)**

Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova is a senior assistant professor in the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski". Her scientific interests are in the field of preschool pedagogy, theory of upbringing, didactics, early foreign language learning and pedagogical technologies in play.

- • 2010 - Bachelor's degree in "Preschool Pedagogy and Foreign Language";
- • 2012 - Master's degree with the qualification "English Teacher";
- • 2020 - defense of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Pedagogy at Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski".
- • until 2019 - English teacher in a language center and private kindergarten;
- • from 2019 - lecturer in the Department of "Preschool Pedagogy";
- • from 2023 - Chief Assistant Professor, Department of Preschool Pedagogy, Faculty of Pedagogy, Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski";
- • participates in research projects;
- • speaks English at level B2 and has good computer literacy.

## **3. General characteristics of the candidate's activities**

For participation in the competition for the academic position of "associate professor" in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool pedagogy - game technologies) Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bakhchevanova presents 15 scientific papers that do not repeat publications used in other procedures for acquiring scientific degrees and academic positions, with the exception of the book published on the basis of the successfully defended dissertation work, which is reported in accordance with the requirements of the 3PACPB and the Regulations for its implementation.

The presented scientific production **does not include patents, utility models, registration certificates or other intellectual property objects**, which is understandable given the specifics of the professional field.

Scientific publications can be systematized according to the following indicators.

**By type of publications**

- habilitation monograph – 1
- book published on the basis of a defended dissertation – 1
- scientific articles – 11
- reports published in proceedings of scientific conferences – 2

Total number of publications: 15.

**By thematic focus**

The scientific output is thematically consistent and outlines several interconnected directions.

**First direction – game-based and competency-oriented education**

(monograph No. 1; publications No. 4, No. 9, No. 13, No. 14).

This is the leading scientific direction in the author's research activity. It develops the conceptual foundations of game-based education, models for the formation of key competencies, and pedagogical technologies for organizing the educational process in kindergarten.

**Second direction – development of plot-role-playing and social interaction**

(monograph No. 2; publications No. 10 and No. 15).

The research is focused on the mechanisms of joint gaming activity, social learning and the continuity between preschool and primary education.

**Third direction – digital technologies and game educational environment**

(publications No. 3, No. 5, No. 10 and No. 12).

The author analyzes the possibilities for integrating digital resources and digital games in preschool education, considering both the pedagogical effects and the possibilities for increasing children's engagement.

**Fourth direction – development of cognitive, linguistic and creative abilities through play**

(publications No. 4, No. 6, No. 7, No. 8 and No. 11).

Pedagogical solutions have been developed to stimulate creativity, imagination, linguistic development, cognitive abilities and diagnostic capabilities of game methods.

**By importance of publications**

- publications in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in international databases – 6
- publications in national peer-reviewed scientific journals and edited scientific collections – 7
- monographs – 2

Among the publications presented there are no articles in journals with an impact factor (Web of Science Journal Citation Reports), but publications in internationally indexed scientific journals and collections of prestigious international scientific fo-

rum (INTED) are included, which ensures good international visibility of scientific results.

No awarded publications or plenary reports have been presented.

#### **By place of publication**

- monographs published by a university publishing house – 2
- articles in refereed and indexed international scientific publications – 6
- articles in national scientific journals and university yearbooks – 5
- reports at international scientific conferences, published in proceedings abroad – 2
- reports at scientific conferences in Bulgaria and edited collective volumes – 2

#### **By language of publications**

- in Bulgarian – 12
- in English – 3

Publications in English are intended primarily for the international scientific community and are published in proceedings of international conferences, indexed in global databases.

#### **By authorship**

- independent publications – 14
- publications with one co-author – 1
- publications with two or more co-authors – none

The predominant share of independent publications is convincing evidence of the candidate's personal contribution to the development of the scientific problem.

#### **Reduction due to overlap with other procedures**

**The submitted publications do not overlap with publications used in the procedure for occupying the academic position of "chief assistant".** Only the book published on the basis of the defended dissertation is included as a separate indicator in accordance with the regulatory requirements and should not be considered as duplication of scientific production.

#### **Reviewer's assessment**

The presented scientific production is distinguished by a clearly expressed thematic sequence, scientific logic and sustainable development of the candidate's research program. The publications form a single conceptual line aimed at the study of game technologies as a basic pedagogical tool for the development of competences in pre-school age.

Particularly impressive is the gradual evolution of scientific research – from research on role-playing games to the development of a comprehensive competency-based model for learning through play, enriched with digital technologies, child development diagnostics and models for continuity between educational levels. This shows consistency in scientific development, the ability to upgrade, which meets the requirements for a candidate for the academic position of "associate professor".

## **Analysis of scientific publications and monographs by groups**

### **I. Monographic works**

#### **1. Habilitation work – monograph**

**Bakhchevanova, T. (2026). *Competency-oriented model for learning through play in preschool age*.**

The monograph is a completed independent scientific work with a clearly formulated concept of competence-oriented education through play. The author develops an original pedagogical model based on modern European policies for competence-oriented education and on leading theories of game learning. The study combines theoretical analysis, pedagogical modeling and empirical verification, offering a practically applicable model for organizing the educational process in kindergarten.

Among the main scientific merits are:

- systematization of modern scientific statements on game learning;
- development of an original competency-oriented model;
- integration of game technologies with key competencies;
- development of methodological tools for pedagogical practice;
- convincing empirical proof of the effectiveness of the proposed model.

The monograph has a significant contribution both to the theory of preschool pedagogy and to the improvement of pedagogical practice.

#### **2. Book published based on a dissertation**

**Bakhchevanova, T. (2026). *Development of role-playing games as a joint activity in 5–7-year-old children*.**

The publication presents a further developed dissertation dedicated to one of the fundamental forms of children's activity - role-playing games. The psychological and pedagogical mechanisms of joint gaming activities, social interaction and the role of the teacher in stimulating the development of gaming competence are analyzed.

The work has a contribution character through:

- in-depth study of the structure and dynamics of the plot-role-playing game;
- development of pedagogical conditions for its effective development;
- practical guidelines for working with preschool children.

The book provides the scientific basis on which the author's other publications are subsequently developed.

### **II. Articles in refereed and indexed scientific journals**

Publications in this group outline the sustainable development of scientific interests in several interrelated thematic areas.

#### **1. Digital technologies and game-based learning**

This group includes publications No. 3 and No. 5.

The articles examine the possibilities of integrating digital games into the educational process and the use of didactic games in English language teaching. The re-

search demonstrates an orientation towards international trends in the digitalization of preschool education and presents practical models for the use of digital resources.

## **2. Game as a means of developing key competencies**

Publications No. 4, No. 6 and No. 7 relate to this direction.

The author considers the game as a universal pedagogical tool for developing:

- creativity;
- imagination;
- key competencies;
- cognitive activity.

The effort to link game technologies with modern competency models in education is particularly valuable.

## **3. Game technologies as a means of diagnosis**

Article No. 8 expands the traditional understanding of the game by presenting the diagnostic potential of game methods.

The study demonstrates:

- possibilities for tracking cognitive development;
- use of game situations in pedagogical diagnostics;
- methodological guidelines for assessing development in a natural game environment.

This publication enriches a relatively less developed direction in preschool pedagogy.

## **III. Articles and reports in scientific collections and peer-reviewed publications**

Publications in this group expand and develop the author's basic scientific ideas.

### **1. Competency-oriented game training**

Publications No. 9, No. 13 and No. 14 present different aspects of game-based training.

The following are tracked:

- the development of pedagogical models;
- international experience;
- comparative analysis of different approaches;
- the relationship between the game and competency-based education.

These publications show the gradual construction of a comprehensive author's concept.

### **2. Digitalization of the gaming environment**

Publications No. 10 and No. 12 analyze the use of digital technologies in gaming.

The following are considered:

- social interaction;
- children's engagement;
- the possibilities of digital resources;
- the pedagogical effects of the digital educational environment.

The research is up-to-date and corresponds to contemporary trends in European education.

### **3. Play and language development**

Publication No. 11 presents play as a means of stimulating the development of speech and the communicative competences.

Specific pedagogical approaches have been developed for:

- language interaction;
- vocabulary development;
- communicative activity through game situations.

### **4. Continuity between kindergarten and school**

Publication No. 15 is a logical continuation of the overall scientific concept.

The author analyzes the role of play activity in the transition to school education, proposing pedagogical solutions to ensure smooth educational continuity.

The topic is particularly relevant in connection with modern policies for early childhood development.

### **Summary assessment**

The scientific output of Senior Asst. Prof. Dr. Teodora Bakhchevanova is distinguished by a pronounced thematic consistency, conceptual integrity and sustainable development of the research issues. All presented works are united by a common scientific line aimed at studying game-based learning as a leading pedagogical approach in preschool education.

Several main areas of scientific contributions can be highlighted:

- development and theoretical substantiation of a competency-oriented model for learning through play;
- development of the theory of story-role-playing and didactic play;
- integration of digital technologies in game-based learning;
- research into the role of play in the development of creativity, imagination, language and cognitive competencies;
- development of diagnostic capabilities of game methods;
- analysis of the continuity between preschool and primary education through game approaches.

In their entirety, the presented works form a comprehensive author's scientific profile, which corresponds to the topic of the competition for the academic position of "associate professor" in the professional field (**1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool pedagogy - game technologies)**).

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

The presented scientific publications provide grounds for a positive assessment of the candidate's personal contribution.

- The scientific works are distinguished by thematic consistency, conceptual completeness and a clearly expressed author's position on current problems of preschool pedagogy and game-based learning. The contribution to the development of an au-

thor's competency-oriented model for learning through play is particularly significant.

- The analytical nature of the research, the formulated scientific generalizations and the proposed practical solutions testify to independent research activity and high scientific competence.
- I believe that the stated scientific contributions are to a significant extent the personal merit of the candidate and represent a significant contribution to the development of the theory and practice of preschool education.

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

- The presented scientific works are distinguished by their topicality, thematic consistency and significant practical focus. But, some recommendations can be made that are more prospective than critical in nature.
- First of all, the empirical basis of some of the studies could be expanded by including larger samples and applying comparative research designs, which would ensure the applicability of the proposed pedagogical models.
- Secondly, it is recommended that the developed author's models and technologies for game-based learning be tested in a wider range of educational institutions and different socio-cultural contexts, which would contribute to expanding their scope and practical validity.
- In the future, scientific research could be directed towards a more in-depth study of the possibilities for integrating digital technologies and artificial intelligence into game-based learning, as well as towards developing tools for assessing the effectiveness of game-based pedagogical practices on the development of key competences in preschool age.

The above recommendations do not diminish the scientific value and significance of the presented publications. They are aimed at the future development of the candidate's research activity and at expanding the applicability of the achieved scientific and applied scientific results.

## **6. Personal Impressions**

My impressions of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Bakhchevanova are as an established teacher and researcher with consistent scientific interests, high professional competence and active engagement with current problems of preschool education. The candidate demonstrates a responsible attitude towards teaching and research activities, skills for academic cooperation and a desire to implement scientific results in pedagogical practice.

## **CONCLUSION**

The documents and materials presented by **Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova** meet all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (3PACPB), the Regulations

for the Implementation of the 3PACPB and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Paisii Hilendarski University.

The candidate in the competition has presented a sufficient number of scientific papers published after acquiring the educational and scientific degree "doctor" and occupying the academic position "chief assistant". The candidate's scientific papers contain original scientific and applied scientific contributions, a significant part of which have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and collections with international participation. The theoretical developments are distinguished by their practical focus and applicability in the system of preschool education, as some of them are directly oriented towards improving educational practice and the training of pedagogical specialists. The scientific and teaching qualifications of **Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova** are undoubted.

The results achieved by **Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova** in teaching and research activities **fully comply** with the minimum national requirements and the additional requirements of the **Faculty of Pedagogy at the "Paisiy Hilendarski" University**, adopted in connection with the Regulations for the Implementation of the 3PACPB.

After reviewing the materials and scientific papers presented in the competition and in view of the analysis of their scientific value and the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to give my **positive assessment** and **recommend** to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the **Faculty of Pedagogy** for the election of **Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bakhchevanova** to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the "Paisiy Hilendarski" University in **the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy - Game Technologies).**

11.07.2026

Reviewer:

(Prof. DSc Maria Baeva)