

OPINION

by

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External member of the Scientific Jury, according to Order No. PD-22-1119 of 05.06.2026 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

Subject: Competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" 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 in the State Gazette, issue 34/07.04.2026 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The only candidate in the competition is Chief Asst. Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova, a lecturer at the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski".

I. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate for the competition

At its first meeting, the Scientific Jury accepted the competition documents and established that the scientific production presented by Chief Asst. Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova is in accordance with the national minimum and additional requirements of the PF, and is allowed to participate in the competition.

Chief Asst. Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova has prepared the documentation for the competition correctly and precisely. All necessary documents provided for in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LAADRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LAADRB and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" are presented, which allows for a precise quantitative and qualitative assessment of the overall academic development of the candidate. The necessary evidence for the teaching and research activities is attached and a list of citations is presented. In addition to the required documents, the evidence also contains additional references certifying all circumstances related to the qualification, professional activity and achievements of the candidate in the competition.

Candidate's Career Profile

Chief Assistant Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova graduated in 2010 in the specialty "Preschool Pedagogy and Foreign Language" with the professional qualification of a pedagogue, children's teacher and English teacher.

In 2012, she graduated with a master's degree from the Faculty of Philology of Plovdiv University and acquired the qualification "English Teacher (1st–12th grade)". In 2021, she defended her dissertation on the topic "Development of Story-Role Playing as a Joint Activity for 5–7-Year-Old Children" and acquired the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Plovdiv University.

She began her professional career as an English teacher in a language center and a private kindergarten. After successfully passing assistant competitions, in 2019 she was appointed to

the academic position of "Assistant", and since 2023 she has held the position of "Chief Assistant" in the Department of "Preschool Pedagogy" at the Faculty of Pedagogy, where she works to this day.

The practical work of Chief Assistant Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova in the field of early foreign language learning and preschool pedagogy contributes to the formation of a lasting interest in modern pedagogical approaches and the possibilities for integrating gaming and interactive technologies into the educational process.

She speaks English at level B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and has good computer literacy, including working with MS Word, MS Excel and MS PowerPoint. Dr. Bahchevanova's professional biography and the scientific works presented by her demonstrate purposefulness in her research and interests in the field of preschool pedagogy, which fully meets the requirements for the candidate and corresponds to the direction of the announced competition.

II. General characteristics of the candidate's activities

1. Assessment of the candidate's teaching and learning activities

Chief Assistant Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova is an established and respected lecturer. The report on her teaching employment shows that her classroom and extracurricular employment exceed the established annual norm. Her classroom employment in recent academic years averages 645 hours against a norm of 360 hours. This proves that the competition is provided with the necessary number of hours for teaching workload.

In accordance with the competencies that she has, her educational activity includes lectures, seminars and practical exercises, as well as all types of pedagogical practice. Her voted lecture courses in the disciplines: "Pedagogical Technologies in the Game", "Introduction to the Specialty", "Game Therapy", "Game-Based Education", "Game and Creativity" in the specialties: Pedagogy, Preschool pedagogy, Primary and preschool pedagogy, Psychology - full-time and part-time education of the educational qualification degree "bachelor" and "master" testify to professional growth. The educational and teaching activity of the candidate in the competition is in the field of her professional training and scientific interests.

In her teaching work, Chief Assistant Bahchevanova uses modern methods and technical means of teaching, as well as the latest achievements of information and communication technologies. The attached documentation for the competition shows that she was the supervisor of 15 successfully graduated graduates in the Bachelor's and Master's Degrees. She provided guidance and support to students participating in Student Scientific Forums organized by the Faculty of Pedagogy and actively participated in compiling collections of scientific papers from these conferences.

The teaching and learning activities of Chief Assistant Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova undoubtedly deserve high praise. The eight curricula she developed are mandatory, elective and optional subjects. She also actively participates in the development of teaching and learning materials for students – exam options for semester exams, reviews of diploma theses.

The long list of other activities in which she actively participates as a member of: accreditation committees; committees for the preparation of documents for program accreditation of professional areas and doctoral programs; committees for conducting semester and state exams;

chairman of the international activities committee; coordinator of the specialty "Preschool Pedagogy", etc. is impressive.

2. Assessment of the candidate's research activity

The scientific works of Dr. T. Bahchevanova are grouped precisely, according to the instructions for covering the minimum national requirements and additional ones for the PF for occupying the position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy.

The list of total scientific production contains 27 titles, of which 12 were presented in previous procedures.

The scientific works with which she participated in the competition for "Associate Professor" are 15 (all after acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in 2021 and the competition for Chief Assistant in 2023), which are distributed as follows:

- 1 (one) independent monograph, which is presented as a habilitation thesis;
- 1 (one) book based on a defended dissertation;
- 3 (three) articles published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (of which 2 in English and 1 article in Bulgarian);
- 10 (ten) articles, of which one in print (certified by an official note), published in non-refereed, but scientifically reviewed scientific publications.

The publications are in the field of preschool pedagogy, the theory of upbringing and didactics, as well as pedagogical technologies in the game, which fully meets the requirements of the direction of the competition.

The list of publications is correct and the necessary evidentiary material for them is attached. A good impression is left by the fact that the distribution of scientific works by year is quite even, which speaks of a purposeful and well-planned scientific development of the candidate. A significant part of the presented publications are in established specialized scientific publications.

In her publishing activities, Dr. Bahchevanova appears as the sole author in almost all publications (only 1 publication is co-authored).

I have no doubt about plagiarism in the scientific papers submitted for review.

The works of the candidate in the competition are distinguished by their contribution, originality of the research approach and clearly defined results, which find application both in the academic environment and in practice.

I fully accept the comprehensive, reasoned report on the contributions of the candidate in the competition. The content and developed ideas in the proposed scientific papers can be classified, according to the author's proposal, in the following thematic areas:

✓ Pedagogical models and technologies for learning through play [1; 4; 6; 9; 13; 14]

In this thematic area, the candidate in the competition carries out a theoretical and applied understanding of game-based learning as a modern pedagogical paradigm for the development of key competencies in preschool age. The role of play as a space for stimulating creativity, critical thinking, initiative, social interaction and problem-solving skills is substantiated.

A significant contribution is the habilitation work "Competency-oriented model for learning through play in preschool age", in which an author's competency-oriented model for learning through play was developed. The monograph is dedicated to the processes of transformation in

modern preschool education - from traditional approaches to competency-oriented learning through play. Conceptual, structural and technological parameters of the model are proposed, as well as a system of pedagogical technologies and game scenarios for different age groups in kindergarten, aimed at actively oriented learning.

Comparative analyses and theoretical summaries of established international models of learning through play have been carried out, and the possibilities for their adaptation to the Bulgarian educational environment have been outlined.

✓ **Digital and interactive resources in game-based learning [3; 10; 12].**

The presented publications explore the possibilities for integrating digital technologies and interactive resources in game-based learning in preschool. The need to create a modern educational environment combining game approaches and technological solutions to support child development is substantiated.

The impact of digital technologies on social interaction in the context of children's play is studied and arguments are put forward in support of the balanced and pedagogically justified application of digital technologies in preschool education.

✓ **Game approaches for language and communicative development [5; 11]**

This thematic area analyzes the role of play as a means of stimulating the language and communicative development of preschool children. The possibilities of play activity for stimulating speech activity, communicative skills and language competence of children, as well as the attitudes of pedagogical specialists towards the use of games in educational practice, are studied.

A significant contribution is the affirmation of the importance of play as an effective pedagogical tool for language development in preschool children.

✓ **Play as a space for social, cognitive and creative development [2; 7; 8; 15]**

The publications related to this thematic area examine the role-playing game as a space for socialization, communication and joint construction of game meaning.

With experience and erudition, the research related to the diagnostic potential of game methods in assessing the cognitive development of preschool children is presented. Criteria and exemplary game situations have been developed for monitoring memory, attention, thinking, language skills and problem-solving strategies in a natural game environment.

The integrative potential of play activity as a means of ensuring continuity between kindergarten and primary school has been studied. The possibilities of play for supporting cognitive, social and emotional development in the transition to a school environment have been analyzed.

The thematic areas in which Chief Asst. Dr. T. Bahchevanova works are extremely important, relevant and promising. Proof of the significance of the research conducted with her participation are the publications in specialized publications, as well as the numerous positive citations.

● **Reflection (citation) of the candidate's publications**

The citation report presents a total of 26 citations by Bulgarian authors in refereed and indexed publications, monographs, collective volumes and collections. The presented number of citations is indisputable evidence of the author's recognition in pedagogical circles.

● **Scientific activity**

The research activity of Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova leaves a good impression. She actively participates with reports in international and national conferences on the problems of preschool education. It is also worth noting her participation in the research project No. FP 23-PF-016 "Interdisciplinary education through arts, sports and digital technologies", aimed at the development and implementation of innovative educational practices and interdisciplinary approaches in education

III. General assessment of the candidate's compliance with the mandatory conditions and mandatory quantitative criteria and scientometric indicators

The volume and quality of the scientific production presented by Chief Asst. Dr. T. Bahchevanova fully meets the requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor" according to the Regulations of the "Paisii Hilendarski" University, the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation.

From the presented report it is evident that the scientific production of Chief Asst. Teodora Bahchevanova not only covers, but also exceeds in some indicators the minimum national requirements and the additional ones of the "Paisii Hilendarski" University for AD "Associate Professor" (table 1).

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of the results of Chief Assistant Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova and the minimum required points for AD "Associate Professor" by groups of indicators

A group of metrics	Minimum required number of points for associate professor	Number of points based on the evidence presented by the candidate
A	50	50
B	—	—
W	100	100
G	200	250
D	50	210
E	—	15
Total points	400	625

V. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)

I know the candidate in the competition personally from my participation in her competition for AP "Chief Assistant". I have excellent impressions of her preparation and attitude towards scientific research. I believe that she is a thorough researcher and competent teacher, dedicated to her profession.

VI. Conclusion

The candidate participating in this competition fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LAADRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LAADRB and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Paisii Hilendarski University for holding the academic position of Associate Professor.

My overall impressions of Dr. Teodora Bahchevanova form the opinion that all the professional and personal prerequisites for occupying a higher academic position are present - thoroughness and systematicity in her work, a high sense of responsibility and consistency in the search for innovations in her chosen scientific field. Her dedication and commitment to academic activity are obvious, as is her ability to inspire and motivate her students and colleagues.

My overall assessment of the professional development, teaching and research activities and scientific contribution is a reason to give a positive opinion and to confidently 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 Dr. Teodora Zhivkova Bahchevanova to the academic position of "Associate Professor"** in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy - Game Technologies) for the needs of the Department of "Preschool Pedagogy" at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the "Paisiy Hilendarski" University.

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city of Plovdiv

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