

## Review

for the competition for the academic position “associate professor”,  
field of higher education “Pedagogical Sciences”,  
professional area 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool and primary school pedagogy, media  
pedagogy),  
announced by the Burgas Free University in State Gazette No. 82/14.10.2022

Reviewer: Prof. Dr Siyka Chavdarova - Kostova

Documents for participation in the competition were submitted by only one  
candidate - assistant professor PhD Zlatina Georgieva Dimitrova.

### *Biographical data:*

Asst. prof. Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, has been a lecturer at the Center for  
Humanities of the Burgas Free University since 2022. Prior to that, and currently,  
she has experience as a part-time lecturer at VTU “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”  
on the teaching methodology of Bulgarian language and literature (I-IV class).  
He has many years of experience as a journalist in areas related to culture,  
education, youth activities, NGOs. Her educational biography is entirely centered  
in VTU “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” - master of theology with additional  
qualification in journalism, master of preschool and primary school pedagogy;  
PhD in Methodics of teaching Bulgarian language and literature (I-IV grade) with  
the topic of the dissertation work “Formation of media literacy of 4<sup>th</sup> grade  
students through out-of-class forms of work”.

She has participated in 5 conferences in Bulgaria with reports on topics related to the primary education, digital socialization, media literacy, training of future teachers, etc. She has involved in projects aimed at media literacy, economic education, training of journalists, etc. She has received several awards for her journalistic activities. She is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists and the Union of Bulgarian Teachers.

The review of the biographical data shows an undoubted correspondence between the educational training and the professional experience of asst. prof. PhD Zlatina Dimitrova with the profile of the competition - both in the field of preschool and primary school pedagogy, and in the field of media pedagogy.

*Publication scope:*

Asst. prof. Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, participated in the competition with 13 publications after obtaining the PhD: 1 monograph; 1 book based on a defended dissertation; 10 articles and reports in scientific journals and collections, of which 2 – in journals referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases and 8 – in non-refereed journals and collections with scientific review or in edited collective volumes; 1 study published in a non-refereed peer-reviewed journal.

*Citations:*

A reference is presented with 9 citations of publications of asst. prof. PhD Zlatina Dimitrova related to media literacy.

*Teaching activity:*

*Asst. prof. PhD Zlatina Dimitrova*, teaches courses (lectures and/or exercises) related to digital competence and digital culture, health and ecological education, work in a multicultural environment, pedagogical technologies for

learning about the surrounding world, pedagogical technologies for forming mathematical notions in KG, online communications and social networks, information competence in communications, etc. She has 14 electronic courses developed for disciplines in bachelor's and master's programs in the MOODLE system of BSU.

She works actively with students and outside of the direct teaching work - as a scientific supervisor for participation in conferences, scientific supervisor of graduates, creator and leader of the Student Club “Teacher Mission”. The report of student opinion surveys for the winter semester of the academic year 2022/2023 shows very high values of approval on the part of the students both in general and more specifically for the methodics of teaching of the asst. prof. PhD Zlatina Dimitrova.

*Registrations in NACID:*

The reference from NACID illustrates the registration of asst. prof. PhD Zlatina Dimitrova - with available information about her scientific degree PhD and the academic position “assistant professor PhD”.

*Fulfillment of the minimum national requirements:*

The reference regarding the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position “associate professor” shows that they are fulfilled.

*Analysis of scientific production:*

- Regarding the monograph "Digital Transformation - Competence and Creativity in the Kindergarten and School":

Digital competence and digital creativity are seen as “a fundamental part of the initiated process of digital transformation in the global education” (p.3). Their grounds, inevitability and usefulness for the overall development of the education as a system and at individual level are convincingly argued.

The presentation of new nuances related to the idea of literacy at the beginning of the book is a natural beginning to illustrate the relevance of this theme in times of increasing digitalization and the subsequent transformation of people's lifestyles. After that, the connection was naturally made with the concept and manifestations of competences and the significance of the competence approach in education. Special attention is paid to the importance of the development of digital competences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including of digital creativity, emphasizing both the possibilities for this already at preschool and primary school age, as well as the need for pedagogical specialists to have mastered digital competences “to the maximum extent” (p. 60).

Emphasis is placed on “the Alpha generation”, which is completely immersed in the digital world from birth” (p.9), as the second chapter of the monograph is devoted to its “digital socialization”. Both the positive influence of the digital environment in terms of children's development, as well as negative effects of limiting interpersonal communication not mediated by digital means and the dangers to protect against, are presented. As an illustration of the situation with the development of children's digital literacy and the attitude of their educators towards this process, the results of a study with 187 parents of children of preschool and primary school age, 70 kindergarten and primary school teachers, 77 students from 1. to 4. class are presented.

In a separate part, various possibilities for the development of a “digital kindergarten” are presented in detail, including through the application of a variety of digital technologies, paying special attention to basic requirements for the achievement of pedagogical effectiveness. A separate chapter is devoted to the formation of digital competence and digital creativity in primary school. In general, the monograph presents current trends in the process of digitization of the preschool and primary school education, outlining possible perspectives for Bulgarian education.

- Regarding the book published on the basis of a dissertation for the acquisition of the PhD – “Media Literacy in Primary School”

In the book a skillful balance between theoretical statements and presentation of results of empirical research on the issue is achieved. The numerous examples of opportunities for integrating knowledge about the media and forming practical skills in the field of media education are both an illustration of the importance of media pedagogy in the contemporarity, and of its real practical manifestations in an educational environment. Asst. prof. PhD Zlatina Dimitrova not only demonstrates professional-pedagogical and research competence, but also offers a rich resource for practical realization of the formation of media competences in working with pupils.

- Regarding the other publications for participation in the competition:

The presented articles outline a variety of emphases to which the author has oriented herself as an object of theoretical or empirical research.

In one group, publications can be placed related to searches for increasing interest in reading for young students by applying a variety of options, including through media, electronic textbooks (“Application of project-based learning in literature lessons (1-4 grades”, “Digital reading as a methodics approach in the teaching of Bulgarian language and literature in primary school age”, “Formal education - a basis for formation of media literacy in the educational process in the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grades”), achieving optimal solutions based on the styles of pedagogical communication and taking into account age characteristics (“Conflicts in pedagogical communication between student and teacher and strategies for their overcoming), for the development of ecological culture (“Possibilities of the research approach for the formation of ecological culture in primary school”).

In another group, publications aimed at the teacher training can be considered: presentation of opportunities for extracurricular activity of students -

future teachers (“Development of professional skills of future teachers through activities in the student club "Mission teacher”); issuing recommendations for optimizing the practical training of students (“Professional and practical training of future teachers - realities and perspectives”).

In a third group, publications focused on the digital competences of the primary teacher can be placed (“The role of the primary teacher for the digital socialization of the young pupil”, “The media competence of the primary teacher - reality and perspectives”).

Specific emphasis is placed in publications such as “Cultural evolution: the theater during a pandemic - opportunities to reach cultural production through digital means” and “Pedagogical aspects of the phenomenon “digital childhood” and the digital socialization of children of the “Alpha” generation”.

*Recommendations:*

- Regarding the monograph:
  - To be more careful with statements that express absolute categoricalness, which can, however, be contested, e.g.: “Education for the purpose of digital competence and digital creativity of children of preschool and primary school age is an unexplored scientific field.” (p. 12); “...we can claim that we are witnesses of a digital transformation, but children/students have not become more digital” (p.13).
  - To revise what is indicated as “relations” in table 3 (p.50). Attitudes are not “actions performed automatically”, it is a fundamental characteristic of the habits. “Attitudes” and “habits” should not be confused, as they have completely different characteristics and place in the approaches mentioned. The authentic place of “relationships” is in the competence approach, but with completely different dimensions than those indicated in the table.

- I recommend that future publications do not make such a separation between “traditional” and “competence” approaches, but rather show the possibility of synergy between them in order to more successfully achievement of the educational goals.

- Of a more general nature:

- In future research, I recommend to be made attempts to investigate the real degree of digital competences of parents and teachers, and not to rely solely on their self-assessment, which can be both adequate and overestimated or underestimated.

- In order to popularize the results of her research activity, to participate in international conferences outside Bulgaria.

*Questions regarding the monograph:*

- What give reasons to the author for the criticality in the sentence: “Lessons”, not projects, dominate” (p. 13). Aren't projects a natural possibility for implementation within the established form of learning - a lesson? How is it possible to separate the project from the lesson when we have a lesson form of learning?

- To rethink the part about the competence approach in table 2. Whether only “Problem solving is the meaning of the learning activity” and whether “The level of education is the higher, ... the higher the degree of uncertainty of the situations, in which he can act independently.” (p.49) Isn't it a limitation of the real possibilities of the competence approach in educational activity?

*Conclusion:*

On the basis of the positive characteristics in the scientific creativity and overall professional biography of Zlatina Dimitrova, taking into account the perspectives in her development as a lecturer and researcher, I support the

awarding of the academic position “associate professor”, PN 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool and primary school pedagogy, media pedagogy) for the needs of the Burgas Free University.

04.01.2023 г.

Reviewer:

/Prof. Dr Siyka Chavdarova - Kostova/