

OPINION

from

Prof. Reni Georgieva Hristova-Kotseva, PhD,

member of a scientific jury

by competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor"

at Burgas Free University

Field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences

Professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool and primary school pedagogy, Media pedagogy)

Announced: in the State Gazette, no. 82/14.10.2022

Candidate for the competition: Assistant Professor Zlatina Georgieva Dimitrova, PhD, lecturer at the Burgas Free University

Reasons for preparing the opinion: Order of the Rector of BFU No. LS/53 of 02.12.2022

I. Contest details

The competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Burgas Free University was announced in SG no. 82 of 14. 10. 2022. All the requirements of the ZRASRB and the Regulations for the terms and conditions for occupying academic positions at BFU have been met. Assistant Professor Zlatina Georgieva Dimitrova, PhD, is the only candidate in the competition.

II. Data about the candidate participating in the competition

Assistant Professor Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, has completed two master's degrees at VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" - "Theology" (1998) and "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy" (2015).

She began her professional career as a journalist, and then as deputy chief and editor-in-chief of Yantra TODAY. For a year and a half, she was a primary teacher at "P. R. Slaveikov", Veliko Tarnovo (September 2020 - February 2022).

In May 2021, she successfully defended her dissertation on the topic "Formation of media literacy of 4th grade students through extracurricular forms of work" and acquired PhD degree in 1.3. Pedagogy of education in... (Methodology of the study of Bulgarian language and literature /I-IV class/).

The beginning of her academic development was as a part-time teacher at VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" at the Faculty of Pedagogy on "Methodology of teaching Bulgarian language and literature". Since 2019 to the present, she leads seminar exercises, hospitalization, current pedagogical practice and trainee pedagogical practice in the specialties: "Preschool and primary school pedagogy", "Primary school pedagogy and special pedagogy", "Primary school pedagogy and foreign language". Since 2022, she is an assistant professor of Pedagogy at the Burgas Free University, where she provides lecture courses, seminar exercises and teaching practices in the specialties: "Preschool and

primary school pedagogy", "Primary school pedagogy and foreign language", "Journalism and public relations" and "Psychology".

She participates in national and international projects.

She carried out mobility with the aim of practice under the "Erasmus+" program at the Bulgarian Sunday School "Bulgarche" in the city of Naples, Italy (February - April 2019).

She speaks English and Russian.

The presented biographical data testify to the ambitions of assistant professor Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, for professional and career development of a university teacher and researcher.

III. Description of the scientific works with which the candidate participated in the announced competition

Assistant professor Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, has presented 13 publications with which she participates in the announced competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor". The scientific production of the candidate includes:

- **1 monograph** – habilitation thesis;
- **1 book** based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "PhD";
- **1 study** published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes;
- **2 articles and reports** published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information;
- **8 articles and reports** published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes.

The publications can be grouped in the following **directions**:

1. Theoretical and applied aspects of digital competence in kindergarten and primary school (№1, 2, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13).
2. Theoretical and applied aspects of media pedagogy (№2, 9, 11, 12).
3. The methodology of teaching Bulgarian language and literature at primary school age (№ 3, 5, 9, 11).
4. Primary education and modern educational technologies (№5, 8, 11).
5. Higher education pedagogy (№4, 6, 7, 12).
6. Non-formal education (№6).
7. Publications in the field of media communication (№10).

Among them, the monograph "**Digital Transformation - Competence and Creativity in Kindergarten and School**" occupies an important place. **EX PRESS - Gabrovo, 2023, 232 pg. ISBN 978-954-490-767-9.**

The monographic work is dedicated to current issues for pedagogical science - formation of digital competence and digital creativity in kindergarten and primary school. In the Bulgarian education system, pedagogical

technologies for the formation of digital competence and digital creativity in preschool and primary school age are an insufficiently researched scientific field. And the formation of digital competence and digital creativity are basic competences in the development of the personality of the modern child.

The monograph is structured in an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion, with the first and second chapters providing a theoretical justification of the researched problem, and the third and fourth are practically oriented.

In the first chapter, the main concepts characterizing the new literacy and the key skills in the digital world are analyzed as a basis for the competence approach in education. An analysis of the modern legal framework and educational documentation regarding digital transformation, key competencies and educational content in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as their unification with the requirements of the European Commission, was made.

In the second chapter, based on the author's research among students of primary school age, parents and teachers, the specific age characteristics of "Alpha" children and the peculiarities of their digital socialization are presented. Special attention is paid to the influence of parents on the digital development of children, which is a relatively new dimension in the parent-child partnership and in family and public educational and educational interactions. The readiness of kindergarten and elementary school teachers for the advent of digitalization in education was investigated with the aim of critical selection and competent use of digital resources in the educational process. Contemporary trends and requirements for teacher competencies based on the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Teachers, known as DigCompEdu, and the standards of the International Association for the Development of Information Technologies in Education are examined /ISTE/.

In the third chapter, various aspects of the pedagogical interaction and the possibilities for forming digital competence and digital creativity in the kindergarten are presented. The proposed model for a digital kindergarten as an educational ecosystem, as well as options for the application of digital technologies in cognitive work with children of preschool age, are tailored to the age characteristics and precisely integrated into the forms of pedagogical interaction.

The fourth chapter offers pedagogical approaches for the formation of digital competence and digital creativity in primary school. Models for digital transformation in school education in Finland, South Korea, and Singapore are examined, as, according to the author, these countries have successfully introduced technological learning programs that respond to new challenges and demonstrate a consistently high level of success for their students. Emphasis is placed on project-based learning in a digital educational environment and gamification of the learning process. Представени са новите технологии и формати в дигиталното образование (дистанционно и смесено). Some new

forms of experiential and collaborative learning are also described, which are increasingly entering the pedagogical practice, supporting the development of competencies such as creativity, teamwork skills, communication development and collaboration in the digital world..

The monograph is addressed to university professors, teachers, students, parents and everyone who is interested in the theoretical and practical aspects of digital competence and digital creativity.

In the monograph "**Media Literacy in Primary School**". Guyana - Rouse. 2022. 392 pg. ISBN 978-619-7604-26-9 an author's model for the formation of media literacy of students in grades 1. – 4. is presented.

In the first chapter, an in-depth theoretical analysis is made and the concepts of "media environment", "media culture", and "media literacy" are defined, the relationship between key competencies, media literacy and literacy levels in the Bulgarian school is analyzed. It was theoretically substantiated that the formation of media literacy in the initial stage is a major part of the literacy process of young students to acquire the key competence "communicating in the native language".

In the second chapter, the possibilities for the formation of media literacy through formal and informal education in the stage 1st - 4th grade are considered. The models for media education in countries that have good achievements in the formation of media literacy among young students are analyzed. Five author's options for forming media literacy through extracurricular forms of work are described in detail.

In the third chapter, the theoretical justification of the experimental model is presented. The technological research process, carried out through the author's diagnostic toolkit, is detailed.

In the fourth chapter, the results of the experimental research are summarized and analyzed. The approved experimental model is valuable for pedagogical theory and practice with the developed curriculum, including the activities to increase students' media literacy in extracurricular forms.

The model for the formation of media literacy presented in the monography offers opportunities to achieve a basic educational level of media culture for the young student.

IV. Contributions

The contributions in the works of Assistant Professor Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, are after receiving the "PhD" degree. The author's interests and the publications based on them have a special focus on significant aspects of pedagogical theory and practice. They expand research horizons, enrich existing professional knowledge.

Scientific-theoretical contributions

1. An in-depth theoretical analysis of the main concepts of new literacy and the key skills in the digital world, as a basis for the competence approach in education, has been made (№1, 7, 9, 11, 12).

2. The modern regulatory framework and educational documentation regarding digital transformation, key competencies and educational content in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as their unification with the requirements of the European Commission, have been analyzed. The prospects for the development of digital transformation in kindergarten and primary school are theoretically justified (№1, 7, 9, 11, 12).

3. The specific influence of parents on children's digital development has been studied and systematized, which is a research novelty in the context of the parent-child partnership and in family and public educational interactions (№1, 13).

4. The readiness of children's and elementary teachers for the digitalization in education has been investigated with the aim of critical selection and competent use of digital resources in the educational processes (№1, 13).

5. A substantive analysis of scientific concepts was made to clarify the basic concepts of media literacy and the substantive aspects of media literacy among 7-11-year-old students, as well as the possibilities for its formation through formal and informal education (№2, 9, 11, 12).

6. The curricula of Bulgarian language and literature have been analyzed in the context of the elements of media literacy that are present in them. The possibilities for the formation of media literacy of young students through media tools, which are an integral part of the education in Bulgarian language and literature in the elementary stage, have been systematized. (№2, 3, 5, 9, 11).

Contributions of a practical and applied nature

1. A model has been developed for a digital kindergarten as an educational ecosystem and options for the application of digital technologies in cognitive work with children of preschool age (№1).

2. An author's theoretical model for the formation of media literacy through extracurricular forms of work of students in the 4th grade and five technological options for training are presented. The following were developed and tested: a diagnostic instrument for measuring the level of media literacy of students; an experimental model for the formation of media literacy through extracurricular forms of work; experimental curriculum with the application of media technologies. The approved experimental model for the formation of media literacy and an experimental curriculum were initially introduced into pedagogical practice (№2).

3. An author's survey was conducted among primary teachers regarding the consumption of media content and the use of media tools by students in grades 1. - 4. Based on the summarized and analyzed data, the level of media competence of the teachers was established. Specific conclusions are drawn

related to the need for special training in order to form media competence of current and future teachers (№2, 12).

4. The empirical study, based on a survey among students from BFU, was carried out, related to the practical training of students of pedagogical specialties in the conditions of modernization of modern education, dictated by the new reality in the post-pandemic era. Based on the collected data, conclusions and proposals related to the practical training of future teachers have been made (№4).

5. Based on an empirical study conducted among students, the theoretical and applied aspects of the student club as a form of informal education in higher schools (Student Club "Mission Teacher" at Burgas Free University) are outlined. Through the research, it was established that by applying the methodological instrumental forms of non-formal education, the following are stimulated: the critical and creative thinking of the future teachers; the development of their communication skills and techniques; their skills for working in a team and defending their own positions; higher degree of professional adequacy; application of innovative techniques and strategies in practice (oriented above all to integration between different types of arts), etc. (№6).

V. Teaching

I positively assess the activity of the candidate for associate professor as a teacher.

The lecture courses conducted by assistant professor Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, are tied to her scientific research and combine innovations in educational theory and practice. She has developed curricula and lecture courses in the disciplines she leads in bachelor's and master's programs at Burgas Free University: Digital competence and digital culture; Health and environmental education; Pedagogical ethics; Working in a multicultural environment; PT for getting to know the surrounding world; PT for the formation of mathematical concepts in primary grades; TM of Man and Society and Man and Nature at primary school; TM in Bulgarian language and literature at primary school; Press journalism; Information competence in communications; Online communications and social networks; Creative techniques. It also conducts practical training: hospitalization and internship practice.

She has 14 electronic courses in the BSU MOODLE system, 1 joint course with Prof. M. Aleksieva, PhD, at the Center for Distance Learning, Department of Qualification, Retraining and PCS and 1 independent course at Student Clubs.

As a part-time teacher at VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" conducts exercises on the Methodology of teaching Bulgarian language and literature; hospitalization in primary school (Bulgarian language and literature); current teaching practice and trainee teaching practice.

She participated in 8 scientific conferences and 7 research projects.

The citation reference includes 9, of which 5 in peer-reviewed monographs and collective volumes and 4 in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals.

She actively works with students as the scientific supervisor of 5 students who participated in the XXIII conference on student scientific creativity with international participation, organized by the Burgas Free University; scientific supervisor of 2 students who participated in the International Scientific Forum "Methodology of Pedagogical Research - Traditional and Contemporary Trends" at the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" and supervisor of 13 successfully defended diplomas.

Assistant professor Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, is the creator and head of the Student Club "Teacher Mission", whose activity is impressive.

The quality of her teaching activity has been highly rated.

She is the winner of prestigious awards, awarded to her for active journalistic activity.

She is a member of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists and the Union of Bulgarian Teachers.

The educational and teaching activity of Assistant professor Zlatina Dimitrova, PhD, fully meets the requirements of the announced competition for "associate professor".

The ratio between the presented scientific publications (monographs, studies, articles, scientific reports and participation in conferences and projects) shows a successful combination of research and teaching work.

Conclusion

The presented scientific production and the active teaching and learning activities of Assistant Professor Zlatina Georgieva Dimitrova, PhD, fully satisfy the requirements for successful performance in the competition for the academic position of "associate professor" in accordance with the ZRASRB and the Regulations for the terms and conditions for the occupation of academic positions at BFU.

The findings and assessments made are a reason to propose to the members of the scientific jury to choose **Assistant Professor Zlatina Georgieva Dimitrova, PhD**, for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool and primary school pedagogy, Media pedagogy).

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Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

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