

## REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Sc. Milen Zamfirov

On the submitted works for participation in the competition

For the academic position of "Associate Professor"

In the field of Higher Education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences,

Professional Field: 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education)

Announced by the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas

In the State Gazette, Issue 91/29.10.2024

As Chairperson of the scientific jury for this competition (Order of the Rector of the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas No. 447/27.12.2024), and pursuant to Article 4 and Article 25 of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Article 57, Paragraphs (1) and (2) of the regulations for its implementation, as well as Article 68, Paragraph (1) of the Rules for the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Academic Degrees and Occupying Academic Positions at the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas, I hereby present this REVIEW.

In the competition for "Associate Professor" for the needs of the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Social Sciences, the sole candidate is **Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov**.

### 1. Information about the Candidate

Kaloyan Damyanov holds a Ph.D. in "Special Education," which he earned on September 4, 2013, at Trakia University - Stara Zagora, defending a dissertation titled "Creating and Organizing a Supportive Environment for the Integration of Children and Students with Special Educational Needs" under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Sc. Vladimir Radulov. He completed his bachelor's degree in "Special Education" in 2003 and his master's degree in "Special Education - Speech Therapy" in 2012, both at Trakia University. Additionally, he holds two more master's degrees: "Pedagogy of Socialization of Children at Risk" with a professional qualification as a social pedagogue from Veliko Tarnovo University "Sts. Cyril and Methodius" (2005) and

"Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology" from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." (2024) Furthermore, he has a postgraduate qualification in "Occupational Therapy in Inclusive Education" from New Bulgarian University (2023).

The candidate's professional career has been entirely devoted to the academic and practical fields of special education and its related areas. Since September 2023, Kaloyan Damyanov has served as a Senior Assistant Professor in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education - Inclusive Education) at the Department of Special Education in the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." Previously, he was a part-time lecturer at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," New Bulgarian University, and Trakia University. Since 2024, he has also been a part-time lecturer at the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas.

Since July 2014, Kaloyan Damyanov has been appointed by the Minister of Education and Science as Director of the Regional Center for Support of the Inclusive Education Process - Sofia City. Prior to that, from December 2007 to July 2014, he served as Director of the Resource Center for Supporting the Integrated Education and Training of Children and Students with Special Educational Needs - Stara Zagora.

A notable milestone in his career occurred in 2016 when he was appointed National Coordinator of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education by the Minister of Education and Science. During 2016-2017, he held the position of "Advisor to the Minister of Education and Science," focusing on educational policies for inclusion and intercultural education during the adoption of new legislation in preschool and school education.

At the beginning of his professional journey, he worked in the social sector. From July 2003 to October 2005, he was Head of the "Child Protection" Department at the Directorate of Social Assistance in Stara Zagora.

In 2016, the candidate completed a fellowship program under the Singapore Government's Education Quality Exchange Program. In 2012, he participated in and successfully completed the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs "Professional Fellows Program," focused on promoting and organizing vulnerable social groups at the community level.

In 2023, Kaloyan Damyanov received the "Neofit Rilski" award for his contributions to school education from the Minister of Education and Science.

## **2. Lecturing responsibilities**

At the time of this competition, the candidate's teaching activities are associated with two primary academic institutions: Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas.

As a Senior Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," he delivers a lecture course on "Inclusive Education" for undergraduate programs such as "Special Education," "Primary and Preschool Pedagogy," "Music," and "Media Pedagogy and Artistic Communication." He also conducts practical sessions on "Inclusive Education and Resource Support for Children with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders" in the "Special Education" program.

In addition, he teaches the following courses in master's programs:

"Social Rehabilitation and Social Services with Sign Language" in the master's program "Sign Language in Education."

"Human Resource Management" in the master's program "Pedagogy of the Visually Impaired."

"Inclusive Education and Resource Support for Children with Hearing Impairments" in the master's program "Speech and Hearing Rehabilitation."

"Functional Assessment of Special Educational Needs" in the master's program "Special Education and Inclusive Education."

"Forms of Interaction Between School and Out-of-School Institutions" in the master's program "Special Education," taught in English.

Kaloyan Damyanov also delivers a lecture course and an elective subject, "Pedagogy of Integration," for the bachelor's program in "Social Pedagogy."

At the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas, he currently serves as a part-time lecturer, delivering lecture courses on "Clinic of Intellectual Disabilities" in the bachelor's program "Special Education" and "Introduction to Special Education" for the program in "Social

Pedagogy." He also conducts practical sessions in courses such as "Pedagogy of Special Needs" in the bachelor's program "Special Education" and the master's program "Resource Teacher."

### **3. Scientific and Applied Activities**

By order of the Minister of Education and Science, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov has been appointed as a member of the permanent working group tasked with monitoring legislation in the field of inclusive education and proposing necessary regulatory amendments when required. Within this role, he has proposed and implemented several training programs at the national level as part of the projects "Support for Inclusive Education," "Strong Start," and "Support for Success" under the Education 2021-2027 Program, funded by the European Union. The trainings focus on two main areas: "Implementation and Conducting Functional Assessments of Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Illnesses" and "Adapting Educational Content for Children in Preschool Education."

In response to an official assignment (Ref. No. 94-6940, dated 07.12.2023) from the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), as Director of the Regional Center for Support of the Inclusive Education Process – Sofia City, Kaloyan Damyanov was tasked with overseeing the development of a guide for applying a screening test for early risk assessment of learning difficulties in children aged 3 to 3 years and 6 months. This requirement arises from Article 9, Paragraph 2 of the Regulation on Inclusive Education. The guide was successfully published, and national training sessions for its implementation were held in 2024, organized by the regional centers for support of inclusive education processes nationwide. The candidate was actively involved in every stage of this process.

In the academic field, in 2022, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov participated in organizing the national scientific-practical conference "Inclusive Education in Bulgaria: 15 Years Later" in collaboration with the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski." Experts and academic representatives from across the country participated, resulting in the publication of a collection of conference papers.

In February 2023, Kaloyan Damyanov served as the lead organizer of the European conference "Resource Teachers and Special Educational Needs in Inclusive Education," which included representatives from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, as well as prominent specialists from the UK, Germany, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia.

In March 2024, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov was the principal organizer of an international conference titled "The Roma Community and Inclusive Education – Challenges and Opportunities." The conference featured academic representatives from the UK, Sweden, Spain, Poland, and Bulgaria. A bilingual collection of scientific papers in Bulgarian and English was published as a result of this event.

In December 2024, Kaloyan Damyanov became part of the scientific project SUMMIT (Sofia University Marking Momentum for Innovation and Technological Transfer), funded under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Component "Innovative Bulgaria," Investment 1 "Program for Accelerating Economic Recovery and Transformation through Science and Innovation." As part of the project, the candidate participated in a delegation that visited Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, India, and engaged in negotiations for academic exchange and collaboration.

#### **4. Description of Scientific Output and Evaluation of Academic Works**

##### ***Scientometric Indicators***

The quantitative criteria for attaining the academic position of "Associate Professor," as stipulated in the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Academic Degrees and Positions at the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas, have been met. Specifically, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov has achieved a total of 635 points under indicators A, B, C, D, and E, exceeding the required thresholds. The breakdown is as follows:

***Indicator A*** - 50 points

Defended dissertation: 50 points

***Indicator B*** - 100 points

Habilitation work - monograph: 1 publication, 100 points

***Indicator C*** - 625 points

Published monographs not presented as the main habilitation work: 2 publications, 200 points

Book based on the defended dissertation for the degree of "Doctor" or "Doctor of Science": 1 publication, 100 points

Articles and papers published in journals indexed in globally recognized databases (Scopus; Web of Science): 3 publications, 90 points

Articles and papers published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes: 19 publications, 175 points

Studies published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes: 3 publications, 45 points

Published chapters in collective monographs: 2 chapters, 40 points

#### ***Indicator D***

Citations or reviews in scientific publications indexed in globally recognized databases (Scopus; Web of Science): 5 citations, 75 points

Citations in peer-reviewed monographs and collective volumes: 7 citations, 70 points

Citations or reviews in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals: 3 citations, 15 points

#### ***Indicator E***

Participation in an international scientific or educational project: 1 project, 20 points

Leadership of national scientific or educational projects: 2 projects, 60 points

Leadership of an international scientific or educational project: 1 project, 40 points

Published university textbook or textbook used in the school network: 2 publications, 60 points

#### ***Description of Scientific Output***

For this competition, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov presents a portfolio of 31 scientific works (monographs, publications, textbooks, and conference papers) and participation in 4 research and applied projects, including two international and two national projects.

The scientific works include:

Three individual monographs, one of which is the habilitation work.

One book based on the defended dissertation for the degree of "Doctor."

Two individual chapters in a collective monograph.

25 publications (studies, articles, and conference papers), of which 22 are individual and 3 are co-authored.

Two university textbooks/manuals, including one individual textbook and one co-authored methodological manual.

The candidate's participation in the competition is based on the following scientific output:

31 scientific works that do not overlap with the topic of the doctoral dissertation and are not included in the list of publications related to the dissertation for the degree of "Doctor." In alignment with the field of higher education, the professional area, and the scientific discipline specified in the competition, the following are presented:

One individual monograph (habilitation work) under indicator B.3.

Two individual monographs not presented as the main habilitation work, under indicators G4.1 and G4.2.

One book based on the defended dissertation for the degree of "Doctor," under indicator G5.1.

Two chapters in a collective monograph, under indicators G10.1 and G10.2.

Three articles published in scientific journals indexed in globally recognized databases (Scopus; Web of Science), two in English and one in Bulgarian, under indicator G6.

Nineteen (19) publications in full text, including 16 individual works and 3 co-authored works (articles and conference papers published in non-indexed, peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes), under indicator G7.

Three studies published in non-indexed, peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes, under indicator G9.

Participation as a leader in one international educational project and two national research-educational projects. Additionally, a participant in one international scientific project.

Fifteen citations, distributed as follows:

Five citations in scientific publications indexed in globally recognized databases (Scopus; Web of Science).

Seven citations in monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes.

Three citations in non-indexed, peer-reviewed journals.

One individual university textbook and one co-authored methodological manual, under indicator E20.

Based on the nature of my research and publication activities, the primary scientific and applied contributions of my work can be thematically summarized in the following areas:

***Research focused on the development of inclusive education***

Project leader of "Steps Together" at the Regional Center for Support of Inclusive Education Processes (RCSIIEP) – Sofia City, funded by UNICEF-Bulgaria. This project aims to develop emotional intelligence and social skills to prevent and manage conflicts among adults and children, both within schools and in the community.

Research aimed at educational approaches and therapeutic support for children and students with special educational needs

Project leader of "A Voice for Every Child" at RCSIIEP – Sofia City, focused on preparing specialists to use augmentative and alternative communication tools in the education and support of children and students with special educational needs nationwide. Funded by UNICEF-Bulgaria.

Project leader of 2023-2-BG01-KA210-SCH-000179040 "RoboSTEAM4ALL: Supporting Teachers' Professional Development for Inclusive STEAM and Robotics Education for Children with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities," funded by the EU Erasmus+ program.

Research examining socio-pedagogical and intercultural interaction in the educational environment

Participation in the scientific project under Contract BG-RRP-2.004-0008 for funding the project "Sofia University Marking Momentum for Innovation and Technological Transfer" (SUMMIT), part of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan's Program for Accelerating



Economic Recovery and Transformation through Science and Innovation. This includes a research visit and field study at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India.

These contributions have theoretical, applied, and methodological significance within the noted areas of scientific interest and are reflected in the provided summaries.

The habilitation work "Functional Assessment and Intensity of Support in Inclusive Education," published by Sofia University Press "St. Kliment Ohridski," provides an exceptional contribution to the field of educational sciences. Through this monograph, the author delivers a comprehensive analysis of functional assessment based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) and its significance for determining the intensity of support in inclusive education.

The work is structured into five chapters, which progressively explore theoretical foundations, methodological approaches, the application of assessment tools, the analysis of support, and its effectiveness. The monograph offers a significant theoretical contribution by introducing a new perspective on using the ICF-CY in the context of Bulgarian education. The introduction of the Functional Assessment Map, which combines international standards with national specifics, exemplifies an innovative approach to evaluating the specific needs of students with diverse educational needs. The author effectively demonstrates how functional assessment can be adapted and applied to groups of students traditionally excluded from standard approaches, such as children at risk and gifted students.

The integration of technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) to enhance assessment processes and individualized support is particularly noteworthy. The proposed robotic solutions for educating children with disabilities and facilitating their inclusion in the learning process illustrate innovative applications of new technologies in education. Furthermore, the author provides concrete recommendations and guidelines for teachers and resource teams, which facilitate the implementation of functional assessment and support in practice.

The study lays the foundation for optimizing inclusive education policies in Bulgaria. By offering a detailed analysis of regional disparities in support provision, the monograph emphasizes the need for an equitable distribution of resources and the improvement of specialist qualifications. Additionally, it highlights the importance of cultural transformation in creating

a school environment that removes social barriers and ensures equal access to quality education for all children.

In conclusion, the monograph makes a significant contribution to the development of inclusive education through a detailed theoretical analysis, practical application of new methodologies and technologies, and proposals for social and policy improvements in the education sector.

In the remaining portion of his scientific output, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov presents an in-depth study of the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the general education system through the optimization of the supportive environment. His research combines theoretical foundations with practical applicability, making it highly significant in the fields of pedagogy and educational policy. As a tangible outcome of his work, the concept of inclusive education in Bulgaria has been updated, the scientific framework for analyzing the supportive environment has been expanded, and various theoretical approaches have been integrated to achieve a deeper understanding of the developmental dynamics of children and students with special educational needs.

Damyanov's work also includes the development of indicators for evaluating the supportive environment, which serve to monitor and assess the effectiveness of implemented interventions. His descriptions of the roles of specialists within the school environment facilitate a better understanding of the interactions and collaboration among various participants in the educational process. His legislative proposals reflect his commitment to optimizing conditions in the educational system and highlight the importance of inclusive education in reducing social stigmatization.

Furthermore, Damyanov continues to expand his scientific contributions with numerous publications examining the differentiation of educational content through functional assessment of special educational needs, the role of regional centers in the development of inclusive education over the past 15 years, and the significance of teacher qualification. These studies support and complement the primary findings in his monograph, demonstrating Damyanov's dedication to bridging theoretical concepts with practical application in real educational contexts, thereby solidifying his reputation as a leading researcher in the field of inclusive education in Bulgaria.

## **Conclusion**

The analyses and findings regarding the scientific, professional, and teaching achievements of the candidate—evaluating the relevance, significance, and innovativeness of his work—based on the above analyses and arguments related to his successful teaching activities, active participation in and leadership of significant research projects, contributions to international and national scientific forums, and the dissemination of research results into practice with high practical applicability, provide me with a solid basis to cast a decisively positive vote for the appointment of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Education).

**Reviewer:**

**(Prof. Dr. Sc. Milen Zamfirov)**

**February 5, 2025**

**Milen  
Zamfirov** Digitally signed  
by Milen Zamfirov  
Date: 2025.02.05  
17:15:47 +02'00'