

REVIEW

Regarding the competition for the academic position of „Associate Professor“

Field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences

Professional field: 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy)

Candidate: *Chief Assistant Professor Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, PhD*

Author of the review: *Prof. Snezhana Hristova Nikolova, PhD, Shumen University „Bishop Konstantin Preslavski“*

According order No. 447 of 27.12.2024 of the Rector of „Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov“ University

1. Description of the Competition Procedure

In the announced competition for the academic position of “ Associate Professor“ in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy), for the needs of the Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Social Sciences, announced in the Official Journal of Republic of Bulgaria, issue 91 of 29.10.2024, one candidate participated: Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov.

The documents of Chief Assistant Professor Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, PhD, submitted for participation in the competition, demonstrate that the procedure for its disclosure and announcement has been complied with and they are in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as with the Regulations on the terms and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and for occupying academic positions at the University „Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov“, Burgas.

2. Biographical Data of the Candidate

In 2003, Kaloyan Damyanov graduated from the specialty „Special Pedagogy“ at Trakia University – Stara Zagora with the professional qualification „teacher in a special school“ and the topic of his thesis „Organizations dealing with children with special educational needs and the activity of PR. In 2005, he graduated from the VTU „St. St. Cyril and Methodius“ – master's program „Social Pedagogy“, specialty „Pedagogy of the socialization of children at risk“ with the qualification „social pedagogue“ and the topic of his thesis „Improvement of social work for people with disabilities“. Since 2010, he has been a master in Intercultural and Environmental Management of Schools (CA FORSCARI UNIVERSITY, VENEZIA, ITALY), and in 2012 he graduated from the master's specialty „Special Pedagogy – Speech Therapy“ at Trakia University – Stara Zagora.

In 2013 The Faculty of Pedagogy of the Thracian University – Stara Zagora awarded him the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ in Special Pedagogy for the defended dissertation: „Analysis of a supportive environment in the integration of children and students with special educational needs“.

The candidate received qualifications: „Occupational Therapist in Inclusive Education“, „School Psychologist“ and „English Teacher“ at the New Bulgarian University. In the period 2004 – 2016, he took part in a number of additional trainings, most of which are related to the inclusive education of children with special educational needs, psychological counseling and the formation of key competencies.

In the period July 2003 – October 2005, he was the Head of the Child Protection Department at the Social Assistance Directorate – Stara Zagora. In October 2005 – October 2006, he worked as a senior expert at the National Pedagogical Center at the Ministry of Education and Science. From December 2007 to the present, he has been the Director of the Resource Center for Integrated Education and Upbringing of Children and Students with Special Educational Needs – Stara Zagora and Sofia – City (since 2016, the name of the institution is the Regional Center for Support of the Inclusive Education Process).

He has been a part-time lecturer at a number of universities: Thracian University – Stara Zagora (DIPKU – 2017 – 2021), New Bulgarian University (Center for Development of Pedagogical Specialists), Plovdiv University „Paisiy Hilendarski“ (2013 – 2015 and 2020 – 2022), Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ (2020 – 2022), (University „Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov“ – Burgas (from the academic year 2024 – 2025).

Since September 2023, he has been a senior assistant professor of ½ staff in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy – Inclusive Education) at the Department of „Special Pedagogy“ of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts at Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“. He teaches basic disciplines related to the formation of knowledge in Inclusive Education, Pedagogy of children and students with multiple disabilities, Pedagogy of special needs, Supportive environment for children and students with SEN, Social and legal protection of children and students with SEN, etc.

Kaloyan Damyanov is the holder of a diploma for many years of comprehensive professional work in the system of preschool and school education. He is the Chairman of the National Association of Resource Teachers (NARU) and a national Coordinator of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education for Bulgaria.

3. Scientific indicators

According to the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for acquiring academic degrees and for occupying academic positions at the University „Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov“, Burgas, the scientometric indicators of the candidate Chief Assistant Professor Kaloyan Damyanov, PhD for occupying the academic position „associate professor“ are the following:

Indicator „A“ (*Fulfilled – PhD*) – **50 points**

Indicator „B“ is not required for this position.

Indicator „C“ – monography submitted as habilitation work (*Fulfilled – monographic work presented „ Functional assessment and intensity of support in inclusive education “*, 2024 r.) – **100 points**

Indicator „D“

- Published monograph that is not presented as the main habilitation work (100 points) – **information provided for 2 monographs** (“Educational and Social Inclusion of Students with Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities“, 2014 and „Socio-Pedagogical Support and Prevention of School Dropout“, 2022) – **200 points**
- Published book based on dissertation work (for awarding the PhD) (75 points) – **information provided for 1 book** (“Inclusive Education and Organization of the Supporting Environment“, 2022) – **75 points**
- Articles and reports published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in global databases with scientific information (30 points each) – **information presented for 3 articles – 90 points**

- Articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes (10 points each) – **19 articles were presented, 3 of which were co-authored – 165 points**
- Studies published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in global databases of scientific information (45 points each) – **not presented – 0 points**
- Studies published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes (15 points each) – **information provided for 3 studies – 45 points**
- Published chapter of a collective monograph (20 points each) – **information provided for 2 collective monographs – 40 points**

Total points for Group „D“: 625 points (minimal requirement 400 points)

Indicators from Group „E“:

- Citations or reviews in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in global databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes (15 points each) – **information provided for 5 citations – 75 points**
- Citations in monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes (10 points each) – **information provided for 7 citations – 70 points**
- Citations or reviews in non-refereed journals with scientific review (5 points each) – **information provided for 3 citations – 15 points**

Total points for Indicator „E“: 160 points (minimal requirement 100 points)

Indicators from Group „F“:

- Acquired scientific degree “ Doctor of Science“ (40 points) – **not presented – 0 points**
- Participation in a national scientific or educational project (15 points each) – **not presented – 0 points**
- Participation in an international scientific or educational project (20 points each) – **information presented for 1 project – 20 points**
- Management of a national scientific or educational project (30 points each) – **information presented for 2 projects – 60 points**
- Management of an international scientific or educational project (40 points each) – **information presented for 1 project – 40 points**
- Published university textbook or textbook used in the school network (40 points each) – **information presented for 2 textbooks, one co-authored – 60 points**
- Published university textbook or textbook used in the school network (20 points each) – **not presented – 0 points**

Total points for Group „F“: 180 points (minimal requirement – 50 points)

Total points for Indicators A – F: 1115 points, minimal requirement of 700 points.

The scientific production presented by Chief Assistant Professor Kaloyan Damyanov, PhD **corresponds** to the scientometric set out in the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and for occupying academic positions at the University „Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov“, Burgas.

4. Directions in the candidate's research work and scientific contributions

Kaloyan Damyanov is the author of 33 scientific and methodological publications – three monographs, one book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the ONS “doctor”, two chapters of collective monographs, 25 articles, studies and reports, 2 textbooks. Most of them are

independently developed. It is important to mention that three of the articles are published in scientific publications indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Scopus; Web of Science), two in English and one in Bulgarian. Of the noted citations, 5 are in scientific publications indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Scopus; Web of Science).

The candidate has identified 3 thematic areas in his research work, which can bring out scientific-theoretical, scientific-applied and methodological contributions:

- ✓ Educational approaches and therapeutic support for children and students with special educational needs.
- ✓ Development of inclusive education.
- ✓ Socio-pedagogical and intercultural interaction in the educational environment.

Educational approaches and therapeutic support for children and students with special educational needs

This direction includes one monograph (Damyanov, K. (2014). Educational and social inclusion of students with mental retardation and multiple disabilities), one chapter of a collective monograph (Damyanov, K (2023) Essence and features of the work of the resource teacher supporting the inclusive education of children and students with special educational needs. Main functions. Collective monograph: Special pedagogy), one methodological guide (Damyanov, K, Kolchakova, G (2021) Methodological guide for adapting the curriculum for the first stage of high school for students with special educational needs who are educated according to individual curricula in schools in the school education system) and 10 articles.

In his monograph (2014), Kaloyan Damyanov analyzes the possibilities for integration of students with mental retardation and multiple disabilities by assessing their needs. He proposes methods and strategies for the successful inclusion of these students in a general educational and social environment. The contributions relate to the precise definition of the concept of social inclusion based on a critical analysis of existing models of social and educational inclusion. At the same time, specific strategies for adapting the learning process, practical guidelines for identifying individual needs of students and recommendations for improving legislation and policies for inclusive education are proposed.

Some of the articles included in this area deal with topics related to the education and support of children with various disorders – communication disorders, visual impairments, intellectual disabilities. Useful and effective tools are proposed to support the emotional and social integration of children with communication disorders (through storytelling), specific interventions aimed at developing the communicative and cognitive skills of children with visual impairments, as well as a model for collaborative learning, improving the qualifications of teachers and better organizing the supportive environment for children with intellectual disabilities.

Strategies for including occupational therapy in individual education plans (IEPs) are analyzed in order to improve the cognitive, motor and sensory skills of students. The importance of differentiated learning, the use of assistive technologies and collaborative teaching models that support the integration of students with special educational needs (SEN) are presented. In this regard, scientific publications (articles, a chapter of a collective monograph and a methodological guide) are included in which the readiness and competencies of teachers for adapting the curriculum for children with SEN in the context of inclusive education are examined. The emphasis is on the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in developing the competencies of resource teachers for the successful implementation of inclusive strategies, on the need for effective cooperation between resource teachers, general education teachers and other specialists involved in supporting students, and on the

importance of an individual approach oriented towards removing barriers to learning and creating opportunities for students to participate in all aspects of school life.

Kaloyan Damyanov also draws attention to contemporary trends in the field of special pedagogical issues. He examines the application of ICF-CY as a framework for planning early interventions in inclusive education. He points out the need for a comprehensive approach that includes an assessment of students' strengths and limitations, as well as effective cooperation between specialists, parents and teachers to implement inclusive practices.

Development of inclusive education

The second scientific direction includes two monographs (Damyanov. K (2024) Functional assessment and intensity of support in inclusive education and Damyanov. K (2022) Inclusive education and organization of the supportive environment), one chapter of a collective monograph (Damyanov. K (2023) Essence of inclusive education for children and students with special educational needs. Collective monograph: Special pedagogy), one textbook (Damyanov. K (2019) The teacher's assistant in inclusive education) and 6 articles and 1 study.

The habilitation work (2024) is dedicated to the functional assessment based on the ICF-CY and its role in determining the intensity of support in inclusive education. The paradigm „inclusive education“ is presented in theoretical terms. A competent analysis of the use of the Functional Assessment Card, combining international standards with national specifics, is included, which is applicable not only to children with SEN, but also to children with chronic diseases, children at risk and children with outstanding talents. An important contribution is the introduction of an assessment model for the intensity of additional support for personal development. The inclusion of artificial intelligence (AI), augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) is proposed to facilitate the assessment processes and differentiated support.

The published book based on a defended dissertation (2022) examines the integration of students with SEN into the general education system through the creation and optimization of a supportive environment. The contributions are related to updating the concept of inclusive education, researching the supportive environment and developing and effectively implementing indicators for assessing the supportive environment.

The textbook (2019) presents the main concepts, principles and practical aspects of the role of the assistant in the educational environment. A practical toolkit is offered for the qualitative inclusion of the teacher's assistant in the educational process, emphasizing his key role in creating a supportive environment for students with SEN.

Publications in this area reveal various aspects of inclusive education. The historical stages of development of the concept of inclusive education in Bulgaria are traced. The current challenges related to the qualification of pedagogical specialists to provide quality support and equal opportunities for all students are specified. The challenges related to stereotypes, the lack of adapted methodologies and the insufficient supporting infrastructure are described. The need for change in the learning environment and pedagogical practices is emphasized in order to create more effective conditions for learning and development of students with learning difficulties.

The importance of general support and appropriate policies and methodologies as a fundamental component of inclusive education is presented. The focus is on the functions, stages of work and responsibilities of the personal development support teams, which carry out assessment and develop individual plans and programs.

Various models of collaborative teaching are analyzed, which include the cooperation between resource teachers and classroom teachers in the general education environment. Good practices from Bulgarian schools are examined, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach. The

role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the process of differentiated learning in the context of inclusive education is studied. In this regard, a framework for the ethical and effective use of AI technologies is proposed.

Socio-pedagogical and intercultural interaction in the educational environment

The latter direction includes one monograph (Damyanov, K. (2022). Social and pedagogical support and prevention of school dropout), two studies and 6 articles.

The monographic study examines a comprehensive concept of social and pedagogical support in schools, aimed at preventing school dropout. An in-depth analysis of the factors for dropout was conducted through a national study involving 25 educational institutions in 10 regions of Bulgaria. Structured interventions are proposed at different levels – individual, interpersonal and organizational. In practical terms, the professional profile of the social pedagogue is presented as an intermediary between different institutions – school, family, community. Based on these conclusions, recommendations are made for the introduction of school social services and mechanisms for effective interaction between different institutions.

The role of the social pedagogue is clearly defined as an important factor in reducing the number of students dropping out of the education system. As a result of a field study, a mechanism for overcoming the risk of student dropout has been proposed, focusing on an integrated approach to working with students, families and communities. Through an analysis of the professional duties of teachers, the need for integrating socio-pedagogical approaches into their daily work has been determined. Pedagogical approaches to promoting the inclusion of families in school activities and cooperation with the community through educational mediators have been proposed.

The issue of ensuring equal access to education and social integration for Roma children has also been raised. Not only the main barriers have been specified, but also the opportunities for overcoming segregation and their social isolation have been highlighted. The importance of cultural identity and its role in the integration of Roma students, as well as the need to develop educational strategies tailored to their culture and traditions, is emphasized.

An important contribution of Kaloyan Damyanov is the research on STEAM education (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) as an important priority of European education policy. These include surveys with pedagogical specialists and analysis of factors such as social interaction, communication and autonomy in learning.

The implementation of the STEAM approach in the vocational education of students with SEN improves their academic and technical skills and develops soft skills such as teamwork, critical thinking and a creative approach to problem solving.

The candidate is distinguished by extensive experience in the field of inclusive education and special pedagogy. Proof of this is the scientifically based research present in his publications. Kaloyan Damyanov relies on modern paradigms and concepts in special pedagogy and inclusive education. He has a distinct and integrated categorical thinking.

5. Critical remarks, Recommendations, Questions

My main critical note is that there is repetition of some of the texts in different publications. This in no way changes my positive opinion about the scientific and publication activity of the candidate, as well as the contributions defined by him.

In my opinion, in the scientific production of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Damyanov there are sufficiently originally presented ideas, diagnostic interviews, surveys and field studies, which can be even more intensively popularized through publications abroad, which will

contribute to the establishment of the author's authority and will open up opportunities for participation in wider global scientific and research spaces.

Given the topic and nature of the announced competition for associate professor, I recommend that Kaloyan Damyanov write a systematic university textbook on Special Pedagogy, as well as more scientific publications related to current trends in the development of special pedagogical science.

6. Conclusion

Based on the materials submitted for the competition, I believe that the candidate Chief Assistant Professor Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, PhD **meets** the criteria for holding the academic position „Associate Professor“ as defined by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Implementation, as well as the Regulations on the Terms and Procedure for Acquiring Academic Degrees and Occupying Academic Positions at the University „Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov“, Burgas.

I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury **to vote positively** and recommend to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University „Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov“, Burgas, **to elect** Chief Assistant Professor Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanovq PhD to the academic position “Associate Professor“ in the professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy).

Date: 23.02.2025

Shumen

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Prof. ð-p Snezhana Nikolova, PhD)