



REVIEW



by

for a competition to acquire "Associate Professor" academic position

in

Higher Education: 1. Pedagogical sciences, Professional direction 1.2 Pedagogy,
(Special Education)

Candidate: Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov

Author of the review: *Associate Professor Dr Katerina Ivanova Zlatkova-Doncheva*
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(Order No. № 447 from 27.12.2024 г. of the Rector of Prof. Dr Asen Zlatarov
University – Burgas)

1. Description of the Competition Procedure

By Order No. 447 dated 27.12.2024 of the Rector of Prof. Dr Asen Zlatarov University, the composition of the academic jury has been determined, and a date has been set for the public defense in connection with the acquisition of the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy, scientific specialty Special Pedagogy.

One candidate, Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, has applied for the competition, which was announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 91 of 29.10.2024.

2. Scientometric Indicators

In accordance with the provisions for admitting candidates for evaluation, in compliance with the minimum national requirements under Article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), and pursuant to Article 68(1) of the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedures for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" University, the candidate, Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, meets and significantly exceeds both the relevant minimum national requirements and the minimum requirements set by these regulations.



3. Main Research Areas and Key Scientific Contributions

The candidate, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov, is participating in the competition with the following scientific works:

- Book – 1, based on a defended dissertation.
- Monograph – 1, presented as a habilitation thesis.
- Monographs – 2 additional.
- Independent chapters in a collective monograph – 2.
- Studies – 3.
- Articles published in scientific journals indexed in globally recognized databases (Scopus; Web of Science) – 3 (two in English and one in Bulgarian).
- Publications – 19, of which 3 are co-authored.
- University textbooks/manuals, including 1 independently authored textbook and 1 co-authored teaching manual.
- Citations – 15, including:
 - 5 in scientific journals indexed in globally recognized databases (Scopus; Web of Science).
 - 7 in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer review.
 - 3 in citations from non-referred journals with scientific peer review.

There is a substantial amount of scientific work that demonstrates the candidate's strong commitment to research. At the same time, Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov's research interests are clearly defined, and he systematically and thoroughly investigates specific fields. His publications focus on key issues in inclusive education and special pedagogy, particularly on research topics related to the functional assessment of students and the provision of support for children and students with special educational needs. Based on their content and the ideas developed within them, his works can be categorized into the following thematic areas:

1. Inclusive Education

This category includes 12 publications, 2 of which are monographs. The candidate's primary habilitation thesis, "Functional Assessment and the Intensity of Support in Inclusive Education," stands out. This monograph provides an in-depth examination of functional assessment based on the ICF-CY (International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health – Children and Youth version) and its role in determining the intensity of support in inclusive education. The work is distinguished



by its analytical focus and rigorous research approach, utilizing a nationally representative sample. It offers significant contributions both theoretically and in terms of practical applications in inclusive education.

The second monograph contributing to the concept of inclusive education is “Inclusive Education and the Organization of a Supportive Environment,” which is a published book based on a defended dissertation. This monograph integrates various theories, provides definitions and models aligned with contemporary international standards, and thoroughly examines the supportive environment, focusing on its physical, social, and organizational dimensions.

The following publications presented by the candidate also fall within this research area: G5.1, G7.2, G7.11, G7.12, G7.15, G7.16, G7.17, G9.2, G10.1, E.20.1.

2. Educational Approaches and Therapeutic Support for Children and Students with Special Educational Needs

This category includes 13 publications, with a notable monograph: “Educational and Social Inclusion of Students with Intellectual Disabilities and Multiple Disabilities.” This work analyzes the challenges and opportunities for integrating students with intellectual disabilities and multiple impairments into educational and social environments. The study demonstrates a strong research focus on adapted curricula and specialized interventions aimed at improving both the quality of life and the educational process for these students.

Several publications emphasize practical and methodological aspects of teaching and supporting children and students with special educational needs, including: G6.1, G6.2, G7.1, G7.5, G7.6, G7.7, G7.13, G7.14, G7.18, G7.19, G10.2, E.20.2.

3. Studies on Socio-Pedagogical and Intercultural Interaction in the Educational Environment

This category includes 9 publications, among which the monograph “Socio-Pedagogical Support and Prevention of School Dropout” stands out. This work presents a comprehensive concept of socio-pedagogical support in the educational environment and examines current issues, policies, and practices related to early school dropout. The study analyzes the factors contributing to school dropout and proposes structured interventions at different levels.



The following publications also fall within this research area: G6.3, G7.3, G7.4, G7.8, G7.9, G7.10, G9.1, G9.3.

The outlined research areas and publications expand and deepen the candidate's scientific exploration, offering well-founded interpretations along with bold yet well-supported conclusions, solutions, and recommendations for improving pedagogical practice within the context of inclusive education.

The relevance and significance of the presented scientific work establish Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov as a dedicated and thorough researcher. Of particular interest are his publications that analyze the organization, structure, and content of inclusive education from both methodological and practical perspectives.

Dr. Damyanov's publication activity is complemented by active participation in scientific and applied research forums and projects, as evidenced by the provided report. This demonstrates his professional commitment to the topics and challenges discussed in his work.

Scientific Contributions

The research outcomes of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov can be systematically categorized into the following scientific contributions, which largely align with those identified by the candidate himself:

Theoretical Contributions:

- A theoretically grounded new assessment tool based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY), integrating international standards with national specifics. This tool is applicable to children with special educational needs (SEN), chronic illnesses, children at risk, and gifted children.
- A newly developed framework for applying the classification beyond traditional SEN cases, extending its use to children at risk and gifted students, thereby broadening its educational application.
- A new evaluation model for the intensity of additional support for personal development, derived from an in-depth research approach.
- An updated concept of inclusive education, proposing definitions and models aligned with modern international standards. The study integrates pedagogical, social, and psychological models to enhance understanding of inclusive practices.*



- A framework for analyzing the supportive environment in inclusive practices, focusing on the physical, social, and organizational aspects of school settings.
- A conceptual definition of social inclusion, along with an analysis of existing social and educational inclusion models and their application for students with multiple disabilities.
- An expanded theoretical framework addressing the support of students with intellectual disabilities in educational environments.
- A detailed classification and analysis of school dropout factors and their impact on at-risk students.
- An integrated model for socio-pedagogical support, incorporating interventions at individual, interpersonal, and organizational levels within national and international contexts.

Practical, Applied, and Social Contributions:

- The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), and Virtual Reality (VR) in assessment processes and differentiated support in inclusive education. Robotic solutions are proposed to assist the learning process of children with disabilities and facilitate their engagement in education.
- Development of methodological guidelines and recommendations for teachers and resource teams on implementing functional assessments and providing additional support.
- Proposals for the sustainable development of inclusive education through a holistic approach, emphasizing collaboration between education, social, and healthcare systems.
- Pilot testing and implementation of functional assessments as a key policy element, with recommendations for resource allocation and specialist training.
- Development of indicators for evaluating the supportive environment and tools for assessing intervention effectiveness.
- Practical recommendations for school organization, including accessible infrastructure, adapted learning materials, and individualized education plans for SEN students. Pilot studies in schools and kindergartens demonstrate successful interventions.
- Proposed legislative changes to optimize educational services for students with SEN.
- Methodological guidelines for curriculum adaptation, with specific methods and strategies tailored to students' diverse needs.



- Creation of practical tools for assessing students' needs and providing guidance for meeting their individual requirements.
- Recommendations for sustainable policies and legislative improvements to enhance inclusive education.
- A comprehensive approach to inclusive education policies, focusing not only on education but also on quality of life and the social-emotional aspects of inclusion.
- Defining the professional role of the social pedagogue as a key mediator between schools, families, and communities.
- Concrete intervention proposals to prevent school dropout, including early diagnosis and reintegration programs for students who have left school.
- Recommendations for establishing school-based social services and effective institutional collaboration mechanisms, with proposals to integrate socio-pedagogical support into national education policies.

Evaluation of the Candidate's Personal Contribution

The scientific contributions of the candidate are original, with a strongly expressed fundamental theoretical and applied character, which undoubtedly highlights his research potential. The theoretical developments have practical applicability and are directly oriented toward educational practice.

I firmly express my high regard for the scientific and teaching competence of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov. Based on the analysis of the publications submitted for the competition, I consider that the candidate has made an entirely personal contribution to them, and their impact extends significantly across the national education system. I can confidently state that the formulated contributions and achieved results are entirely his personal merit.

4. Critical Remarks, Recommendations, and Questions

I have no critical remarks.

5. Conclusion

Considering the above, I propose that Dr. Kaloyan Ivanov Damyanov be appointed as Associate Professor in Professional Field 1.2 – Pedagogy, in the scientific specialty of Special Education.

Date: 14.02.2025
Burgas

Member of the scientific jury:

/Associate Professor Dr Katerina Zlatkova-Doncheva /