by Prof. Boryana Georgieva Tumanova, Ph.D.

University “St. Kliment Ohridski” of Sofia,

member of a scientific jury by order of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, No. RD-38-215/03.05.2022 for the presented scientific production for occupying the academic position of “professor” in Methodology of Physical Education in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional directory 1.3 Pedagogy of education in...

Candidate: Assoc. Prof. Veselina Georgieva Ivanova, Ph.D.

***Information about the contest***

The contest has been announced for “Professor” in Methodology in Physical Education. Information about it is presented on the website of Trakia University - Stara Zagora. Information was published in the State newspaper, issue 30/15.04.2022 All legal regulations have been complied with.

Associate Professor Veselina Georgieva Ivanova participates in the contest as the only candidate.

***Brief information about the candidate***

The candidate assoc. prof. Veselina Georgieva Ivanova, Ph.D. teaches at Trakia University - Stara Zagora in the subject “Theory and Methodology of Physical Education in Grades 1-4”, “Theoretical foundations of Physical Education”, “Methodology of Physical Education in “PSPSE”, “Biological regularities and social functions of physical activity”, “Bulgarian folk dances”. Until 2008, she conducted an educational and training process with the representative swimming team of Trakia University. She has been a master of sports in swimming since 1977.

She completed her higher education at the Institute for Physical Education “Georgi Dimitrov” (1980-1984), with bachelor's and master's degrees with two majors: “Teacher in Physical Education”, and “Coach swimming”, as well as an additional major in “Sports Journalistic” (1983-1984). She began her teaching career at Trakia University in 1988, as a senior lecturer in Physical Education and Sports at the Faculty of Education. In 2005, she defended a dissertation on the topic “Paradigm for value orientations of students towards Physical Culture” and obtained the scientific degree “Doctor”. From 2011 until now, she holds the academic position of “associate professor”.

**Performs managerial positions:** Head of the PSPSE department from 2016 to today. Member of the Control Board of Trakia University from 2019 to today. Deputy Chairman of the General Assembly of Trakia University (mandate 2015-2019)

**Teaching activity:** The candidate for “professor”, Assoc. prof. Veselina Ivanova has 34 years of teaching experience (lecture courses, seminars, and practical exercises) at the Pedagogical Faculty of Trakia University - Stara Zagora. She teaches bachelor's and master's students. She fulfills her academic employment with study programs in the following subjects: Theoretical foundations of Physical Education and Sports - regular and part-time studies; Methodology of Physical Education in preschool and primary school age - regular and part-time studies; Theory and methodology of Physical Education in grades 1-4 - regular studies; Movement training and adapted physical activity - regular studies; Biological regularities and social functions of physical activity - extramural studies; Methodological aspects of Physical Education in 1-4 grades - extramural studies. She is the author of a curriculum on Bulgarian folk dances.

**Scientific, project, editorial, and public activities:** Assoc. prof. Ivanova is the supervisor of 2 doctoral students and 25 successfully defended diploma students. She is the head of 7 scientific research projects. She is a member of the scientific board of the journal “Research in Kinesiology” published by the Federation of Sports pedagogues from North Macedonia. She has five participations under the Erasmus program for teaching mobility.

***Overall characteristics of the presented materials***

The candidate has submitted the following documents and a list of 30 publications for participation in the contest for the academic position “professor”: 1 monograph, 27 articles in scientific journals (of which 3 are referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information), 2 published chapters of collective monographs, 1 textbook, curriculum vitae, diplomas, certificate of work experience, reference for the implementation of the Minimum national requirements, reference for citations, contribution points, summaries of peer-reviewed publications and others. The publications are related to the scientific field of the contest. The author's share of the scientific works is expressed in 13 independent publications and 17 in co-authorship. 6 of the works are written in Bulgarian, and 25 in English. The author has been cited in scientific publications, referenced, and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes 6 times and several times more in monographs, collective volumes, and non-refereed journals with a scientific review. The lists of scientific publications, the summaries, and the reference for the contributions present the information in the texts with which Assoc. prof. Ivanova applied for the academic position of “professor” in an overview and conveniently.

From the presented tabular report by groups of indicators for occupying the academic position “professor”, it is clear that the candidate fulfills the required national minimum of 550 points and participates in the contest with 768 points.

The publications presented by the candidate are proof of the development of Assoc. prof. Ivanova as a teacher, researcher, and active participant in forums related to Physical Education, sports, the importance of preschool education, university sports, the teaching profession, and others.

***Scientific and scientific-applied achievements of the candidate***

For her participation in the contest, Assoc. prof. Ivanova has presented various thematic scientific articles and reports. One group of the publications is related to competencies and innovations in the educational process, physical education in kindergarten and school. The candidate's main contributions are presented in Monograph (1) “Children's active games in a targeted, meaningful and diagnostic context”. The monograph has a logical structure, there is a balance in the presentation of knowledge from two areas: Physical Education and teaching methodology in preschool education. It is here that the author's contribution and innovation are to create specific models through games for mastering different types of physical exercises, representing the main educational content of preschool Physical Education. There is enough evidence to conclude the author's excellent theoretical and methodological experience in the text of the monograph. In this work, the author attempts to analyze the characteristics of preschool education, determining the child's natural right to physical and psycho-social development. Ivanova justifiably reaches a rethinking of the possibilities of the existing methods for learning through play and the need to optimize the games concerning the modern environment, taking into account the age characteristics and guaranteeing the overall development of the child, as well as possibilities for protecting its physical and mental health. Theoretically, the connection between physical activity, play, and education is also emphasized. The influence of playing sports not only on physical health, but also on the psyche and intellect, emotions, and the construction of the human value system. In the monograph, the problems related to physically active play are advocated, as a basis for pedagogical interactions with the manifestation and deployment of its various functions. Relationships and socialization in kindergarten, the age characteristics of play activities, and opportunities through active games, as a purposeful and organized activity towards a given mental process, to have a favorable impact on the development of the cognitive sphere are also considered. Models are proposed with the clarification that the variety of active games does not end with them, namely the children's educator is the one who best evaluates the given application of game technology according to the characteristics of the children, the place, the time, the season, the equipment, etc. The need to define several educational cores: “Natural-applied physical activity activity”, “Game physical activity”, and “Sports-preparatory physical activity” is determined. The author's research experience in pre-school education allows her to present a grading scale as a guide for the teachers in this process. With the greatest value in the presented work, I appreciate the diagnostic procedures in which the active games have a main place, through which the child's development can be established in the direction of mastering the physical tasks from the educational content such as volume, complexity, and quality of execution. The monograph was published by the Faculty of Education of Trakia University - Stara Zagora in 2022, with a volume of 113 pages. The text is divided into a preface, seven chapters, and references - 83 sources. It has been reviewed by two scientific reviewers.

The articles: № 6.2; 7.4; 7,3; 7,6; 7,7; 7.8; 7,9; 7,10; 7,11; 7,14; 7.18; 7.21; 7.22; 7.23; 7.24 also find their place on this topic. On the issue: "Modern metamorphoses of relationships in the children's group" (6.2), the authors point out some problems provoked by the modern problems of society and their impact on the social behavior of the person in the conditions of group activity and on the socialization of children of preschool age. Outline projections for the construction of pedagogical technology to dynamize relationships and stimulate the child's social activity. On the questions about: „Mobile Games in the Preparation of Children for School“(7.4) and “The play motor activity in the primary school -implementation and problems. (7.22) the author examines the topic of school readiness on the one hand and the functional value of active games on the other, in the context of school preparation. Negatives are revealed that hinder the effective pedagogical process. To the question: “Projections of the Game with Motional Performances in the Process of Literary Communication at Pedagogical Interaction with 6-7 Years Old Children” (7.3) focus is placed on the play as an immanent characteristic of pedagogical interaction in kindergarten and its defining role in the personal formation. The effectiveness of the approved model in a natural preschool environment and activity, providing a dynamic game approach to communication with folklore or literary works, was investigated.

To the question “Bulgarian Folks Dances in School Physical Education and Sport” (7.10) the peculiarities, traditions, means, and approaches for accessible and interesting application in Physical Education lessons at the initial stage of the secondary general education school are studied. The possibilities of Bulgarian folk dances for the favorable education of primary school children are proven. The article “Communicative Competence of Pedagogical Interaction in Motor Education” (7.6) focuses on the communicative competence of the students from the Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy “Bachelor” (IV year) programme - and “Master” who were studying at the Faculty of Pedagogy of Trakia University during the 2012/13 academic year. The results of the conducted survey indicate that the studied students know the essence of the pedagogical interaction and adequately address the most important skills that they must possess as pedagogues for the effective implementation of Physical Education in preschool and primary school age.

In the article “Concept of the Curriculum According to the Adapted Physical Activity for Future Preschool and Primary Teachers” (7.7) it is proposed to introduce a new study discipline “Movement training and adapted physical activity”, paying special attention to the imperative optimization of the professional training of pre-school and primary school teachers for adequate pedagogical activity in Physical Education and Sports, including for children with disabilities, as well as for effective interaction with other specialists - special educators, psychologists, rehabilitators, speech therapists, etc.

Regarding the question “Motor Education at Preschool Age - Actuality and Tendencies” (7.8), the current educational model of movement training for 3-7 years old children in the Republic of Bulgaria is discussed and emphasis is placed on the Law on Preschool and School Education.

In the article “Physical Education and Diagnostic Procedures” (7.9) a study with students of the programme “Preschool and Elementary School Pedagogy” is presented. The researched level of competence for performing quantitative and qualitative analysis with summarizing conclusions on data from the mandatory diagnostic procedures, establishing the level of the physical capacity of primary school students, show deficits in professional training and readiness to interpret the obtained data. In the article “Problems when evaluating the achievements of the pupils' motor education in the primary school/the Physical Education and Sports marks - feedback, motivation, stress or simply numbers for the Bulgarian pupils” (7.11) the focus is on control, verification and assessment as mandatory elements of Physical Education in the Bulgarian school. Criteria and indicators are discussed, which objectify the evaluation of the academic achievements of students from the initial stage of the basic educational degree. An assessment model implemented in a school in Cyncoed (Cardiff, Wales) is presented as an experience and example of good practice. Emphasis is placed on detailing the requirements in terms of technique, tactics, psyche, aesthetics, etc. of the offered movements units.

In the focus of the research in the article “Good practices and innovations during the realization of the practical training of the pedagogy students” (7.14), the attitudes and evaluations of the mentor teachers are present, as direct bearers of the desired professional qualities that the student must acquire. Mentor teachers support the modernization of the forms of practical training of students, emphasizing the activity and motivation of trainee teachers. In the interaction between mentor teacher - trainee teacher - academic teacher, the modern trends for mobility, variability, and dynamics of the conditions of the educational environment in line with the quality requirements are manifested. An essential result of the research is the positive attitudes of the mentor teachers towards partnership with the higher school in the context of lifelong learning and their professional development. To the question “Active PE games - a determinant in the development of relationships in the child diversity group” (7.18), the dynamics of children's relationships in a mixed group are studied, as a consequence of the applied pedagogical system of active games in the different regime moments of the kindergarten. Addresses issues related to children's social development. In the articles “Projection of the attitude of future teachers to Physical Education on their intentions about movement training in the kindergarten” (7.21), and “Research on expectations of student pedagogues for the formation of professional competence and readiness for professional work” (7.23), attention is paid to the specific nature of the formation of professional competences. This implies and requires cognitive and physical activity from students for the successful transfer of acquired knowledge and skills (including movement) in a real working environment. The purpose of the research is to determine the attitudes toward the formation of professional competence and readiness for professional work in the field of Physical Education of students in the programme “Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy”. Regarding the question “Competencies of Physical Education teachers in conducting online education” (7.24), the competencies of Physical Education teachers in conducting online education are studied. Physical Education and Sports teachers rate the current online education as relatively good. At the same time, the educational activity of sports teachers during the pandemic has reduced their motivation for professional activity. The author presents in detail and in-depth the researched theoretical foundations of the investigated problems and possibilities of Physical Education and sports in preschool and primary school education. Ivanova formulates ideas about the special preparation, the professional competence of the teacher, and his readiness to respond to the challenges of today.

The candidate's interest in the problems of psychological-pedagogical dimensions of the pedagogical activity is persistent – articles: 6.1; 7.1; 7.2; 7.12; 7.15; 7.16. The article “Manifestation of divergence as a specific feature of thinking” (6.1) examines the issue of intelligence and its development, as a variety of contradictions in viewpoints. In the study, theoretical propositions and some practical aspects are systematized and derived based on the features of developmental learning through the process of solving tasks and the need for skillful work with hypotheses and multivariate search for a solution when solving a given task. The development of students' divergent thinking, helps to build skills and transferability by solving a limited number of tasks in close areas, creating a work style that generates internal motivation for solving tasks. In the article „Reflection and effectiveness in physical education“ (7.1), the view that in Physical Education, favorable conditions can be created and used for the manifestation and development of reflection, contributing to the optimization of physical education for 16-19-year-old students, is presented. It supports the implementation of important functions of the educational process: target, content-informational, motivational, corrective, control, and developing-educational. The article “Aspects of students' developing reflection in their methodological preparation” (7.2), focuses on a system of work for developing pedagogical reflection and mastering models for professional reflective analysis and evaluation by third-year students and graduates of the Faculty of Pedagogy at Trakia University. In the experiment, the construction of the student's reflective practice is based on the process of learning through external and personal experience. The simulated problem in the scientific-applied activity is a guide for the student, an important step towards effective pedagogical interaction and generating experience. In the article “Metacognitive processes in the perception of the specialized text” (7.12), the subject is the influence of metacognitive processes on the performance characteristics of the perception with an understanding of scientific information in the field of Theory and Methodology of Physical Education. It is concluded that the purposeful formation of skills for working with didactic resources would increase the effectiveness of the student's educational and cognitive activity and would optimize their scientific and methodological preparation. To the question “Metacognitive Components in the Structure of the Abilities of Motor Education” (7.16), physical skills are considered in terms of activity and operation, metacognitive components in physical training, and sports practice. The ability to solve tasks is developed through effort and intelligence, where thinking is manifested mostly through reflection and anticipation. The article “Anticipation in the structure of the solving problems skill” (7.15), emphasizes the essential role of anticipation in the heuristic aspects of the task-solving activity. By solving them, various elements of the student's mathematical competence are built. As a result, higher levels of internal goal orientation are achieved, and efficiency is ensured in the formation of anticipatory abilities, with a tendency for transferability across ages and activities.

The third group of publications unites questions related to Biological regularities and social functions of physical activity. In them, the author brings together up-to-date information, allowing conclusions to be drawn, which serve as a basis for developing a more comprehensive study of the influence of sports on the functions of the body and various disorders thereof. Here I refer to the publications: “Effect of Isometric Training and Swimming for a Strong Muscular Corset Build Up in Children With Spinal Deformities” (7.5); “Hippotherapy as an alternative method of improving the praxis function in children with multiple disorders” (7,17); “Effects of hippotherapy on motor aspects in children with autism spectrum disorders” (7.20).

To the issue of motivation and satisfaction with teaching work, I refer to the publications: “Factors of primary teachers' satisfaction from the professional activity” (6.3); “Teachers' satisfaction with their professional activities in Physical Education and sport” (7.16); “Attitudes of pre-service teachers in primary and pre-school pedagogy to work in their special subject” (7.19). In them, the researcher has established the factors that positively influence the satisfaction of teachers, as well as their professional qualifications and career development. A changed profile of primary teachers in the country is outlined.

In the chapter “Physical skills as a component of competence” presented for the contest, part of the collective monograph “Competence approach in the education of students of pedagogic specialties”, research activity is presented with a focus on the special training, professional competence of the teacher and his readiness to respond to the challenges of today, the good knowledge of the didactic stages of motor training and the physiological and psychological regularities related to them. The second presented chapter of a collective monograph “Physical Education Practices in Bulgaria with a Focus on Young People's Health” is the result of the author's teaching and research interest in the current state of Physical Education in Bulgaria and the development trends are presented as priorities of the State policy regarding health and the well-being of future generations. The place of Physical Education in the Bulgarian education system is discussed in detail and a retrospective review is made of the specifics of the curriculum, general education minimum, state standards for educational content, etc. normative documents regulating the state of Physical Education in different time ranges. Both the positives and some negatives in its condition are indicated.

The candidate in the competition presents a textbook entitled “Theory and methodology of physical education in preschool age” intended for students of the programmes “Preschool pedagogy” and “Preschool and primary school pedagogy”, for children's educators, as well as for those interested in problems in the field of Physical Education in the age period 3-7 years. It includes basic questions from the Theory and Methodology of Physical Education. The basics of Physical Culture and theoretical and methodological approaches to the educational process in kindergarten are considered. The theoretical and methodological foundations of Physical Education are being analyzed and synthesized. The methodology of physical training for 3-7-year-old children is presented.

***Evaluation of the candidate’s contributions***

The results obtained from all the studies have been comprehensively analyzed and correct conclusions and recommendations for theory and practice have been made. The style in which the works are written is readable and at the same time precise from a scientific point of view. Summarizing their review, I can conclude that Ivanova makes a successful attempt to analyze the characteristics of educating and teaching in Physical Education - the special preparation, the professional competence of the teacher, and his readiness to respond to the challenges of today.

The contributions contained in the publications of Assoc. prof. Veselina Georgieva Ivanova, Ph.D., presented at the contest for the academic position of “Professor”, are in the field of general and preschool pedagogy of Physical Education. They have a theoretical, methodical, and practical-applied character. The theoretical and methodological character is expressed in the resulting specific goals of preschool Physical Education. Theoretical and practical statements have been systematized and derived based on the features of developmental education. The essence of the ability to solve physical movement tasks was investigated. It has been established that active games, applied in a system during the pedagogical interaction in other educational directions in the kindergarten, ensure the targeted orientation towards the complex development of the child’s personality. Peculiarities in the application of active games in the mixed age group are discussed - an issue that has not been addressed in the specialized literature until now. The effect of applying isometric training and swimming, as well as hippotherapy on the body’s function in children with various difficulties, was studied and followed. The satisfaction of primary teachers and Physical Education teachers with their professional activity and the factors that influence it were investigated.

The practical-applied contribution is proven by the compiled Models through games, criteria for evaluating children's motility through active games, research on the attitude towards online teaching in Physical Education, and ideas for updating the forms and content of the practical preparation of student teachers. Long-term experience and methodology of applying a system of work for developing pedagogical reflection and mastering models for professional reflective analysis and assessment in the physical training of children and students are summarized. Developed and implemented in practice is an electronic methodical aid for fitness and bodybuilding, contributing to optimizing the physical training of students. The physical movement training methodology is proposed, which includes: application of the theoretical foundations and general regularities of Physical Education in preschool age; methodical development of the educational content in the field of “Physical Culture” for 3-7-year-old children; formation of applicable knowledge, physical skills, and competencies for the main technical parameters of body’s actions; effective professional preparation in Physical Education of teachers.

The achieved results contribute to updating the theory, practice, and methodology of Physical Education and Sports. The results of the research can be used in further studies of the possibilities for developing physical training and, in particular, active games in preschool and elementary school.

***Conclusion***

The scientific contributions of Assoc. prof. Veselina Georgieva Ivanova. Ph.D., are presented in her publications, which are within the scope of the pedagogy of Physical Education and sports training. According to the candidate, the current process of changing the focus in education from the teaching of knowledge to the mastery of competencies necessitates a complex and balanced approach to its theoretical and practical dimensions. A base on which she steps and methodically develops the knowledge and methods for the special training and professional competence of the teacher. All this speaks of a high level of theoretical, teaching, and research experience.

The submitted production for review does not duplicate the work of other authors and there is no presence of plagiarism.

Taking into account all of the above and in my capacity as a reviewer and member of the scientific jury, I strongly suggest to the members of the respected scientific jury to vote for Veselina Georgieva Ivanova to be awarded the academic position of “professor” in Methodology in Physical Education in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional directory 1.3 Pedagogy of education in...

09.09.2022 Prof. Boryana Tumanova, Ph.D.