

REVIEW

Linked to a contest for holding the academic post ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR Professional field 1.1. Theory and Management of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care), announced by Thracian University — Stara Zagora, State Gazette Issue 41/03.06.2022

This review has been prepared by Prof. Svetlozar Petkov Vatsov, PhD, Professional field 1.1. Theory and Management of Education (Education Management), as a member of the Scientific Commission in the contest, Order No 1920/17.06.2022 by the Chancellor of the Thracian University.

One candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced contest: Assistant Akseniya Borislavova Tileva, Ph.D.

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBMITTED MATERIALS

1. Applicant's details

To attend the contest, the applicant Ms. Akseniya Tileva has submitted: application for admission to the contest, curriculum vitae, higher education diploma, PHD degree diploma, certificate of criminal record, certificate of internship in the major subject, list of publications for participation in the contest, summaries of publications participating in the contest, reference for scientific contributions, reference of citations, document of foreign language proficiency, reference on the fulfillment of the minimum statutory requirements under Article 2b, para. (2) and (3) of the Academic Staff Act.

The above documents are clearly organized, well arranged and fully comply with all requirements of Academic Staff Act, the Rules on the Implementation of the Academic Staff Act and the Rules on the Development of the Academic Staff at Thracian University — Stara Zagora.

2. Applicant's details

Ms. Akseniya Borislavova Tileva is a Master in Preschool Pedagogy, having graduated from Veliko Tarnovo University St. Cyril and Methodius, and has completed a series of individual qualification courses in *Comenius* and *Interactive Pedagogical Technology enabling Teacher Qualification* at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

Her professional track record dates back to 1988 having started work in the field of education as a pedagogue, and since 1995 as a Headmaster of *Winnie the Pooh* Kindergarten. From 2010 to 2013 she was the only preschool pedagogue in the evaluation commissions under the Operational Programme *Human Resources Development*, launched by the Ministry of

Education. Since September 2021, she has been appointed Assistant at Thracian University — Stara Zagora.

She has excellent communication and management skills. Her professional and scientific development is an expression of a long-lasting interest in the problems of management of education, in particular pre-school education.

3. Characteristics and evaluation of the applicant's teaching activity

Ms. Akseniya Tileva leads lectures and seminars in *Pre-school Pedagogy* at the Thracian University for university students in their first year of studies, with major subject Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy and *Pre-school Pedagogy; Organization and management of pre-school education* — for second and third year university students with major subject Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy; *Development and management of educational projects* — for third year university students studying Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy combined with a Foreign Language; *Pedagogy of verbal and performing arts* — for second year university students studying Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy combined with a Foreign Language or Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy; *Introduction to the subject*—for first year university students in Pre-school pedagogy. I don't know in detail and I can't assess her teaching activity.

4. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific work and achievements

Ms. Akseniya Tileva presents in the contest a scientific production corresponding to the requirements — a published habilitational work, a book based on a dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree PHD, an article published in a journal, referenced and indexed in the world databases of scientific information and sixteen articles published in unrefereed journals with scientific review or editorial collective volumes. In their focus and content, they correspond to the themes of the announced contest and are dedicated to issues having a significant effect on theory and management practice, in particular.

The quality and quantity of the materials submitted by the applicant show that with the 422 points collected they meet the minimum requirements under Article 2b(2) and (3) of the Academic Staff Act requiring 400 points for taking the academic degree ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in the scientific field and professional scope of the contest. Moreover, the applicant's works come after the presentation of her PHD thesis and there is no detected plagiarism in the scientific works submitted to the contest.

5. Meaningful analysis of the candidate's scientific achievements contained in the materials for participation in the competition

The papers proposed for review outline the framework of professional interests and reveal the focus of the candidate's research in the field of education management.

The thesis *Managing an Effective Educational Environment in the Kindergarten* is dedicated to the impact of the educational environment on the development of children from kindergartens and the management approaches that contribute to the creation and organisation of a developing, supportive, inclusive, safe, multicultural and interactive educational environment. The focus is on the strategic management decisions that the headmaster of a kindergarten can take in order to enhance the efficiency through activities and approaches oriented towards achieving institutional objectives.

The applicant makes a comprehensive overview of the scientific and specialized literature, as well as the regulatory documents governing the management of an effective educational environment in the kindergartens. It affirms that the educational environment, being a place of purposeful pedagogical interaction between children and the world around, should create room for development of their individuality, satisfy their internal needs and interests for studying and learning, and create conditions for social, emotional, physical and mental growth. It is emphasised that the management of the combination of conditions, factors and elements ensuring the effective evolution of educational process and the active interaction of all stakeholders is subject to educational policies at all levels while the achievement of the strategic objectives in each individual kindergarten depends on the motivation and competence of the management bodies — the headmaster and the teacher council.

The proofs of the hypothesis and sub-hypotheses lead to the formulation of basic conclusions for the management of the process, contributing to the development of supportive, inclusive, safe, multicultural and interactive educational environment.

One of the most important conclusions for creating an effective educational environment is that the current legal documents governing pre-school education in Bulgaria and covering early childhood education and care lack clear criteria and an evaluation system for the effectiveness of the educational environment.

Particularly important is the recommendation to develop a quality framework or equivalent document, as well as to implement control mechanisms for compliance with the regulatory requirements aimed at synchronising policies and standards for care and education in nurseries and nursery groups in kindergartens, which would lead to greater coherence between institutions working under the authority of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science to ensure quality and developing early childhood education and care.

The monograph *Evaluation and self-assessment of kindergarten teachers* was developed on the basis of the dissertation work, enriched with regard to the mechanisms and tools for self-assessment of the work of kindergarten teachers.

It demonstrates that, in the context of educational policies seeking to continuously improve the quality of education by increasing investments in the educational system, including teacher remuneration and modernising the educational environment, the downward trend of educational outcomes is unjustified.

The book argues convincingly that one of the management approaches that can be applied until the development and entry into force of the statutory educational standards for quality in education is the application of the developed maps for self-assessment of the pedagogical and digital competences of kindergarten teachers. A Framework for Assessment of Teacher Pedagogical and Digital Competences has been established to support the controlling functions of the headmasters, reflecting all regulatory requirements of the Bulgarian legislation currently in force. A mechanism for implementing the toolkit is also proposed, describing a procedure implemented in a specific kindergarten and drawing conclusions and recommendations.

The articles presented by Akseniya Tileva analyse the phenomena from several thematic angles: early childhood education and care, pre-school pedagogy, education management, development and management of educational projects, management of an effective educational environment.

6. Critical remarks and recommendations.

I have no critical remarks and recommendations to the papers submitted for review and I fully accept the scientific contributions mentioned in the report.

7. Personal impressions of the candidate

I know Ms. Akseniya Tileva from working together during her PHD studies. During this period, I have had the opportunity to convince myself repeatedly of her precision as well as the high professionalism in her professional field. She has excellent skills for teamwork, loyalty, creativity, responsibility, correctness, organisation, coordination, and control in working on targets. She has the highest level of skills in each area of the qualification framework — information processing, communication, content creation, security, problem solving.

8. Conclusion

After acquainting myself with the materials and the scientific works presented in the competition and on the basis of the analysis of their significance and of the scientific contributions contained therein, I confirm that the scientific achievements meet the requirements of the Academic Staff Act and the Rules for its application for the candidate to take the academic position ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in the scientific field and professional field of the contest. In particular, the candidate meets the minimum statutory requirements in the

professional field and no plagiarism has been established in the scientific works submitted to the competition.

II. GENERAL CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above, I give my positive assessment of the application and recommend to the scientific jury to propose to the competent authority to nominate Ms. Akseniya Borislavova Tileva for holding the academic position ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in professional field 1.1. Theory and management of education (Early Childhood Education and Care).

Shumen, 23.09.2022

Prepared by:

Prof. Svetlozar Vatsov, PhD