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STANDPOINT

By Prof. Kirilka Simeonova Tagareva, PhD, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", research direction 3.2. Psychology,

on scientific papers for participation in a competition for the academic position "professor", by professional direction 3.2. Psychology (Early Childhood Psychology), announced in SG No. 58/09.07.2024,

with candidate associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements

The reference of associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, clearly shows that through her work and achievements, she meets and exceeds the minimum national requirements set by the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDSAB) for occupying the academic position "professor" in professional direction 3.2. Psychology.

II. Research activity and results

1. Assessment of the monograph.

Associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, presented the monograph "Movement and Exploration of the World by the Child" published by the BAS publishing house "Prof. Marin Drinov", 2024, 212p., ISBN: 978-619-245-450-0, as her habilitation thesis. The book corresponds to the requirements for a monographic work in terms of its nature, completeness and volume. The monograph is an in-depth and comprehensive study of a current topic related to developmental psychology in early ontogenesis. It is the result of many years of creative efforts of the author and provides significant contributions to the scientific field of decision-making from the perspective of psychology. The motor and cognitive activities of infants are examined in the context of developmental cascades. In the first chapter, the study of the motor and exploratory activity of children in the perspective of cascades is theoretically justified. It analyses child development in the perspective of cascades; motor development and exploratory behaviour. Special attention is paid to the social development and exploratory behaviour of the

young child in the context of the “secure attachment-exploratory behaviour” relationship. The second chapter is dedicated to theoretical and empirical research of the relationship between motor skills and children's exploration. This is skilfully done in the context of four age “windows” in the motor development of the infant with an emphasis on four motor achievements: raising the head, rolling over; reaching and grasping objects; sitting and crawling; walking. Empirical evidence has been obtained for the interaction between motor habits in the four age periods and the formation of inquisitiveness, curiosity and exploration of the surrounding world in the first year of the child's life. The monograph thoroughly analyses relevant classical and contemporary literature on the topic. The contributions of the work include the verification of the model for the developmental cascades in the Bulgarian cultural environment in a study of the motor and exploratory activity during infancy. The results of these studies can be useful for parents, doctors, psychologists, educators, social workers, as well as for developing practical applications in the raising and upbringing of children in early childhood.

2. *Assessment of contributions in other submitted publications made after the appointment of the academic position “associate professor”.*

As a candidate for this competition, associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, presented 23 publications published after the appointment of the academic position “associate professor”: 18 articles and studies, and 5 chapters in collective monographs. The publications demonstrate her systematic and focused work over the years on current topics. Some of them explore various factors and aspects of the quality of the educational environment in kindergartens, the professional qualifications of teachers, and new educational technologies. Others are related to the study of child development and upbringing: motor development, language acquisition, understanding of living and non-living concepts in nature, cognitive, emotional and social development. Another part of the publications is dedicated to the construction, adaptation and standardization of assessment and diagnostic tools for children in early childhood: the psychometric parameters have been established – external validity, sensitivity, specificity, and reliability of the created short form of the screening test for three-year-olds, etc. Some of the publications are in referenced and indexed databases for scientific editions – a sign of the high quality of the research tasks undertaken by the author. They represent an undeniable and original contribution to scientific knowledge.

3. *Citations by other authors.*

The reference indicates 28 citations of the publications of associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, by other authors in scientific publications, showing that the candidate's

research and achievements have been recognized and have received well-deserved recognition by both the international and the Bulgarian scientific community.

4. Assessment of the results from participation in research and creative projects and the applications of the results in practice.

Associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, participated in a total of 6 research and creative projects; four are national, and two are international. In one project, she is a participant, and in the remaining five, she is the project leader. The activities of the project fully align with the author's scientific interests in the field of early childhood development and upbringing, and the results have practical applications.

5. Scientific contributions, originality of the submitted works and reliability of the scientific data provided.

The main contributions of the research activity of associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, related to the current competition, are convincingly demonstrated through the submitted monographic work and a significant number of publications, including referenced and indexed international editions. They are concluded in the study of early life stages, the exploration of psychological constructs and relationships, and the development of practical models based on them.

The contributions are:

1. A theoretical analysis and justification of the developmental cascade approach and its operationalization in the study of child motor and exploratory activity.
2. An examination of the quality of the educational environment in kindergartens.
3. The application of psychological knowledge in educational practice.
4. The study of conditions for the development of children at risk of developmental problems.
5. The construction, adaptation and standardization of psychological measurement and assessment tools for early childhood.

IV. Personal impressions of the candidate

I know associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, as a colleague working in the field of early childhood development through participation in various scientific forums, congresses, and conferences. My impressions are highly positive. She is a researcher with clearly defined scientific interests that she systematically follows.

Conclusion

After reviewing the materials and scientific works submitted in the competition, analysing their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions they contain,

I find it reasonable to give my **positive** evaluation and **recommend** that the Scientific Jury prepare a report to the Scientific Council of the IPHS for the selection of associate professor Maria Petrova Trifonova, PhD, for the academic position of "professor" at the IPHS – BAS in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology.

18.10.2024 Signature: