

## **REVIEW**

by Prof. Dr. Rozaliya Yordanova Kuzmanova – Kartalova

member of a scientific jury in a competition for the academic position of "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR", announced in the State Gazette, no. 24 of 17.03.2023, in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of education) for the needs of the Faculty of Education and Arts at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Regarding: the scientific, scientific-applied and professional-academic activity and production presented by the participant in the competition

Candidate in the competition: Alexander Ivanov Ranev

### **1. Information about the contest**

By Order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" RD-38- 234/10.05.2023 on the proposal of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education and Arts (Protocol 5/26.04.2023) is a certain composition of the scientific jury, in which I have the honor to participate. One candidate took part in the competition - Ch. assistant professor, Dr. Alexander Ivanov Ranev, currently holding the position of chief assistant in the department

"Social pedagogy and social work" at the Faculty of Education Sciences and the Arts" in SU "Kl. Ohridski".

According to the competition procedure, I do not find any violations committed.

### **2. Information about the candidate – educational status, professional-academic and scientific-applied activity**

#### ***Educational preparation and professional-practical activity***

Alexander Ranev, is a graduate of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 2002, he obtained a bachelor's degree in "Pedagogy", and in 2004 a master's degree in "Educational Management" at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the SU. Since 2010, by decision of the Supreme Administrative Court, he has a doctorate in theory of education and didactics with a defended dissertation on the topic "The teacher as a class manager", and from 12.01.2011 to 10.11.2011 he has been an assistant and from then until now chief assistant in the Department of "Social Pedagogy and Social Work" at the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts at the University of St. Kl. Ohridski".

The candidate's professional path is also tied to Sofia University. He began his work in 2001 as a host in the Sofia Library (until 2004). In the period 2005 - 2006, he worked at the Secondary Special School for Children with Hearing Impairments "Prof. Decho Denev" as an educator of hearing impaired children.

From 2007 to 2010, he led a project aimed at the organization and functioning of one of the country's first Centers for working with children with emotional and behavioral disorders in the cities of Dupnitsa and Samokov, with key activities - consulting and supervision of the teams, case work, conducting and participation in conferences, round tables, development of policies as part of a team in the National Council for the DAPS, development of policies for supporting

children within working groups with the local authority, organizing and conducting trainings and trainings among specialists in the country. In 2009-2010, he led a project to support children and youth at risk at the "Partners Bulgaria" Foundation. From 2010 to 2021, he worked in Sheltered housing "Together" as a psychologist, realizing psychological, socio-pedagogical and educational support for young people who have left homes for children deprived of parental care.

In 2005, he began his studies and preparation in doctoral studies at the department "Theory of Education" at the Faculty of Pedagogy at Sofia University until 2008.

In 2008-2010, he was a part-time assistant at the Faculty of Pedagogy.

In addition to his profile are various courses that he has organized and qualifications that he has acquired, such as: a diploma for organizing online trainings; certified mediation course; organizes and conducts an impressive number of trainings, trainings, supervisions among specialists in Sofia and the country (directors, teachers, educators, social pedagogues, special pedagogues, psychologists, pedagogical advisors, etc. in schools and organizations providing social services) on topics related to educational work with children and youth at risk and organization of educational activities; participates in seminars, conferences and projects on issues of education, upbringing, social work.

He speaks English and Russian very well, both written and spoken.

### **Teaching activity**

The profile of the candidate for associate professor repeatedly exceeds the required minimum hours of the current competition. From the teacher employment reference for the last five years (2017/2018, 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022) it is clear that his classroom employment is in the range of 785 - 1024 hours, and the teaching hours between 1179, 6 – 1765.4 hours.

The teaching activity of Ch. assistant professor Dr. Ranev is associated with two faculties of Sofia University - the Faculty of Pedagogy, as a part-time teacher and as a teacher on an employment contract at the Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy, currently the Faculty of Educational Sciences and the Arts. His educational and teaching commitment is related to classroom and extracurricular classes in bachelor's, master's and postgraduate qualification programs. In the period 2009 – 2011, he was part-time p lecturer in the disciplines: Social pedagogy (lectures and exercises), Introduction to the specialty (exercises) and practicum on Introduction to the specialty for the specialty "Informal Education" at the Faculty of Pedagogy. Since 2011, as the main assistant at the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts, he leads the disciplines: Pedagogy, Theory of Education, Class Management, Social-Pedagogical Work at School, Work with Children with Challenging Behavior, also supervises the practice of students from the specialty "Social Pedagogy".

The educational, teaching, research and professional-academic activity of the candidate for associate professor ch. Assistant Professor Alexander Ranev is mainly focused in the field of pedagogy, theory of education, social pedagogy and socio-pedagogical work. He is currently the holder of lecture courses, including e-courses for distance learning at FNIO. The main ones are for students in bachelor's and master's degree programs

"Social pedagogy", such as: Theoretical foundations of education, Social pedagogical work in school, Class management, Social pedagogical practicum until 2020 and combines the discipline with a colleague "Positive Approaches and Physical Intervention in Working with Children". Teaches discipline "Pedagogy (Theory of education and didactics) of other specialties from FNIO, such as: Speech therapy, Special pedagogy, PNUP, Physical education and sports, Music, Fine art, PUPCHE, PMHK, as well as students from the Faculty of Pedagogy of the SU discipline" Social Pedagogy". It is also in the master's degree holder of a number of disciplines: Management of relationships in an educational environment, Pedagogy, Management of free time and cultural activities, Alternatives and innovations in education and early childhood care, Mediation and resolution of disputes in school, Management of the learning process and discipline in the classroom , Pedagogy, Theory of education, Modern pedagogical concepts, theories and schools for various master's programs at FNIO - NUP, PUP, Management of socio-pedagogical activities, Pedagogical advisor at school, Montessori pedagogy in the digital society, Special pedagogy, Pedagogy and semiotics of fine art . Since 2012, he has been responsible for organizing and conducting practical training - hospitalization, current and pre-graduate social-pedagogical practices of the "Social Pedagogy" specialty. Participates in programs for SDC in the discipline "Social Pedagogy" at FNOI.

Regarding teaching methods ch. assistant professor Dr. Ranev states motivation for continuous development and improvement by permanently creating and updating his electronic courses and their resources, including presentations, audio and video lectures, educational videos, additional literature, individual and group activities for students, which speaks of the quality of education in the taught disciplines. In a purposeful project, he acquired competencies for designing, conducting and providing quality electronic distance learning with a certificate of professional qualification "Specialist in design and conducting of online trainings".

### **Work with students and doctoral students**

In the attached report, the candidate for associate professor presents active work with students and doctoral students of the National Institute of Scientific Research on all scientific-research, educational and charitable projects in which he participated.

From the position of head of the practical training of the students from the "Social Pedagogy" specialty, he annually conducts supervisions and consultations with them to support practice, case work, preparation of a social assessment.

An interesting fact is his participation in 2015 in the filming of an educational film by students of the "Social Pedagogy" specialty about the work of pedagogical advisors. He takes an active part in the "Student Practices" project as an academic mentor, through which he monitors and supports the professional development and competencies of students from various specialties of the faculty.

On a voluntary basis, it organizes joint participation of students and users of social services, actions for cleaning natural objects, activities based on interests in the territory of social services for work with children and adults.

In 2022, in the project led by him at the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Affairs, a doctoral student participated in the organization and conduct of the project research, and students from the specialty "Social Pedagogy" also participated. In the academic year 2022/2023, on his initiative, a doctoral student at the department takes the seminar exercises in

the discipline "Pedagogy (Theory of Education)" of the NUPCHE specialty, of which the associate professor candidate is a holder, assisting him in his academic teaching work.

### ***Scientific activity***

Alexander Ranev participated in the competition for associate professor with a rich and meaningful scientific production, realized in monographs, studies, articles, reports, with presented results of the research of significant scientific and forums and with active scientific applied activity related to numerous project participations and a wide spectrum of creative-scientific, expert and practical-applied activities - conferences, projects, supervisions, etc.

He participates in two international and twelve national projects as a trainer and researcher and is the leader of one, which projects are thematically linked to the fields of his research work, namely: as a member of an international project "Building capacity for educational and social inclusion" (2023) develops a methodology and program on the topic: "Working with children with behavioral difficulties from vulnerable groups", presented at a conference organized within the project in 2021; international project "MODERN-A: MODERNIZATION in partnership through digitization of the Academic Ecosystem" - develops courses and educational content in the discipline "Competency approach in the process of inclusion" for full-time and part-time students, as well as an online course; in national projects: "Effective pedagogical interactions in a multicultural environment" (2021 - 2022) - develops curricula and conducts training among pedagogical specialists on topics related to pedagogical communication in a multicultural environment; "Opportunities and challenges in the practical training of students in "Social Pedagogy" in the conditions of crisis" - research on the practical training of students in the conditions of Covid restrictions (2022); project leader "Attitudes, expectations and interests among students for education, qualification and career development in the socio-pedagogical sphere" (2021) - research among specialists and students, the results of which were published in a refereed and indexed publication, etc.

The results of the scientific studies of ch. Assistant Professor Alexander Ranev are related to educational and correctional work with children and youth with challenging behavior, alternative educational and pedagogical models and management-organizational aspects of the educational process. It is considered that these results are integrated into the educational content of the disciplines it leads, and from there indirectly included in the practice of social pedagogues, teachers, etc. pedagogical specialists through their university training. Direct professional work and research carried out during practical participation in social services and school are reflected in the learning content of the disciplines it leads through developed case studies, role situations, research data, sharing of experience, familiarization with current models and approaches in the field of education, teaching and socio-pedagogical work.

### ***Membership in scientific and professional organizations***

He is a member of prestigious scientific organizations, such as: Management Board of the Interuniversity Institute of Education Management - Interaula (MIMO), of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria. He is a member of the General Assembly of the SU from the FNOI quota, of the Commission on proposals of the SU "St. Kl. Ohridski", of the FNOI Faculty Council; of Faculty Committees, such as: Committee on Quality and Risks; Accreditation Commission; Faculty Center for Electronic and Distance Learning.

### **3. Description of scientific production and evaluation of scientific works**

### ***Scientific indicators***

The quantitative indicators of the criteria for occupying the academic position "associate professor", according to the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, are complied with, namely: 635 points according to indicators A, B, D, D, ch. Assistant Professor Alexander Rankov covers and exceeds them. Their performance is as follows:

Indicator A – 50 points:

- Defense thesis - 50 points.

Indicator B – 100 points:

- Habilitation thesis - monograph: 1 pc. - 100 items

Indicator D - 300 points:

- D 4. Published monograph that was not submitted for the main habilitation thesis: 1 item. - 100 items

- D 6. Articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information: 4 items, one of which is co-authored - 105 items.

- D 7. Articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes: 4 nos. - 40 items

- D 9. Studies published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes: 3 nos. - 45 items

- D 10. Published chapter of a collective monograph: 1 issue. - 10 items

Indicator D – 185 points:

- D 11. Citations or reviews in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes: 6 items. - 90 items

- D 12. Citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review: 9 nos. – 90 items

- D 13. Citations or reviews in non-refereed journals with scientific review: 1 pc. – 5 items

### ***Description of the scientific output***

Alexander Ranev participated in the competition for associate professor with the following production: 1 monograph - habilitation thesis, Indicator V.; 1 published monograph, which is not the main habilitation work, Indicator G. item 4.; 1 published chapter of a collective monograph, Index G, item 10.; 3 studies published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes, Index G. item 9.; 4 articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (2 independent and 2 co-authored), Indicator G item 6.; 4 articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in collective volumes, Indicator G. item 7.

Thematically, the production can be presented in three main directions:

a) Social-pedagogical work for positive upbringing and behavioral change of children with challenging behavior and behavioral difficulties - Indicator C; Indicator G item 6 (3); Indicator D item 10 (1).

b) Socio-pedagogical and educational approaches in an educational and social environment - Indicator G item 6 (1), (2), (4), Indicator G item 7 (2), (3), (4), Indicator G item 9 (1), (3).

c) Theoretical-practical dimensions of the educational and pedagogical ideas of Petar Danov and their projection in the modern pedagogical reality - Indicator G. item 4.; Indicator 9 item 7 (1); Indicator G. item 9. (3).

In the first thematic direction - Social-pedagogical work for positive upbringing and behavioral change of children with challenging behavior and behavioral difficulties, one monograph (main habilitation thesis), one chapter in a collective monograph (co-authored) and one article in a refereed and indexed publication are presented magazine (co-authored).

The habilitation thesis "Positive education and behavioral change. Working with children with challenging behavior" (UI "St. Kl. Ohridski", 2022. ISBN: 978-954-07-5565-6) is dedicated to positive behavioral support, as one of the approaches to affirm socially desirable behavior, such as conkrapoint of the problematic, when working with children with challenging behavior and emotional difficulties. The counteraction of aggression, negative personality attitudes and challenging behavior through positively affirming and encouraging methods and models of behavior can be defined as an approach of particular importance for socio-pedagogical practice today, as well as for clarifying values and relationships between people in general. This, in turn, argues for the relevance and significance of the habilitation work. Realizing the application of the positive-behavioral approach as an opportunity and method of influence in working with children with challenging behavior, it can be said that it is not sufficiently developed in practice, an idea that I admire in the present work.

The habilitation thesis is composed of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, literature and appendices. In the introduction, the relevance of the research on the positive-behavioral support approach for children with behavioral difficulties is convincingly motivated, and its applicability is argued both for persons at risk of deterioration in the quality of life and for those who care for them. Its practical value has been successfully clarified through three basic behavioral strategies: support of desired behavior; supporting substitute behavior and skill acquisition. Based on fundamental statements of foreign and our scientists, the author declares his conviction of the application of the "positive behavioral support" approach as an approach with a comprehensive, systematic, conceptual character, including behavioral-oriented, cognitive, health, social and personal strategies for organizing the physical, social, educational, medical and logistical support necessary to achieve overall improvement in lifestyle and to reduce problem behaviour. Even here, the basic concepts of "children with challenging behavior" and "children with emotional and behavioral difficulties" are clearly explained.

The scientific apparatus of the research has been successfully brought out - object, subject, goal, tasks, hypothesis, which sets the framework for a meaningful, scientifically based and practical-applied research. The purpose of the study is to substantiate and derive a theoretical-applied framework for an approach to work with children with challenging behavior in the paradigm of positive education, and the main hypothesis that is put forward in the study is that: challenging behavior is a consequence of multiple factors, related both to the individuality of the child and

to the cultural characteristics and resources in his environment. A comprehensive approach to behavioral support and education is needed to achieve lasting and sustainable results. It can be emphasized here that the hypothesis has been successfully proven through the well-constructed theoretical and realized empirical research presented in the chapters of the work.

The value of the research is also associated with its long-term, purposefulness and well-thought-out planned stages. The research was carried out with a team of specialists, part of which was the author of the monographic research from 2008 to 2012 under a project of the "Partners - Bulgaria" foundation, implemented on the territory of the municipalities of Dupnitsa and Samokov, with the focus of the work: building and functioning of Centers for working with children with emotional and behavioral difficulties; development and implementation of an approach of positive behavioral support and physical intervention adapted to the Bulgarian conditions and specifics; conducting a study of the results of the application of the approach; conducting trainings and seminars for the implementation of the approach in the country among specialists working with children - teachers, social workers, educators, psychologists, special pedagogues, etc. In the 2012 - 2020 period, the study and application of the approach was implemented by Dr. Ranev in educational work in social services, was presented at trainings, seminars and lectures among parents, specialists and students from various fields of work with children.

The first chapter "Theoretical-Applied Dimensions of Positively Oriented Education" is devoted to in-depth analyzes of the nature of challenging behavior, with the author postulating that the later attention is paid to challenging behavior, the greater the costs of dealing with it, and vice versa. In order to avoid such risks, it is necessary to take measures at the earliest possible stage, which implies a preparedness and attitude of parents and professionals for preventive and corrective work in their support to children with challenging behavior, which is the subject of analysis more further into labor. The principles of positively oriented education for working with children with challenging behavior, on the basis of which the support should be implemented, are derived and substantiated in detail.

The philosophical framework, ideological and practical aspects of the approach, which finds its dimensions in positive, humanistic psychology, positive behavioral support when working with children, as well as various models, practices and schools, including cognitive-behavioral practices, Waldorf pedagogy, are presented. of Rudolf Steiner, Montessori pedagogy, Peter Dunov's pedagogical ideas, Molello's brain balance program, etc. The approach has a very well organized structural framework. It is by its nature complex, located in the paradigm of positive-oriented education and behavioral support, and is developed both at the personal and systemic level. This chapter also presents a casework model, a functional assessment and a support plan with specific cases and examples from practical work. Of interest are the presented specific strategies and methods for dealing with challenging behavior in children in their natural environment.

Chapter Two, Factors for Challenging Behavior, takes a very good look at the main groups of factors that lead to the emergence of challenging behaviour. Numerous concepts of our and foreign scientists have been examined regarding the various factors for various types of challenging behavior in children. Of interest is the author's decision to differentiate between factors related to the personality and those determined by the environment, and those that are determined by personal attitudes are considered as due to the physical, mental and spiritual

substructure of the person, which is successful author's decision. The detailed examination of the influence of the various factors is a reliable basis for timely and informed prevention of problems, as well as for justified and adequate intervention through the positively oriented approach.

The third chapter examines in detail the professional profile of the educator working with children with challenging behavior. The author clarifies and argues his view that, given the educational focus of the approach, specialists working with children mean professionals carrying out purposeful, organized and systematic educational work, such as: teachers, social and special pedagogues, psychologists, school psychologists, pedagogical counselors, educators and in a wider context and parents, who fulfill different functions and roles, with a unifying function - the educational one. The professional culture of specialists working with children with challenging behavior is very well presented, including behavioral models, communication style, relationships with others (child, colleagues, parents), processes and situations in the work environment. Values, norms, rules and the personal culture in the professional context of the specialist are understood.

The fourth chapter competently presents the design and results of the empirical research conducted among over 400 individuals from various institutions and organizations - representatives of local authorities and structures, principals, parents, teachers, social workers, pedagogical advisors, special educators, rehabilitators, public educators, police officers, medical personnel.

The main directions of the study are related to clarifying the understanding of "challenging behavior" - its nature and the factors leading to it; survey of attitudes and practices to support children with challenging behaviour; analysis of experience in the application of the approach in centers for working with children with emotional and behavioral difficulties; feedback and for the conceptual and applied content of the approach; clarifying attitudes, understandings and practices about 'physical intervention' when working with children.

The study is spread over the period from 2008 to 2020 in two stages.

The research methods used are reliable, according to the set goals and empirical hypotheses, namely: focus group, research in action, case work, document analysis.

The first stage of the study was carried out in the period 2008 - 2012 under a project to work with children with emotional and behavioral difficulties in the cities of Dupnitsa and Samokov and was carried out within 12 trainings in two modules - Positive behavioral support and Physical intervention when working with children with challenging behavior and workshops among directors of schools and kindergartens, teachers, pedagogical advisors, school psychologists, health workers (doctors and nurses), social workers, representatives of non-governmental organizations, parents, representatives of local authorities.

In the second stage in the period between 2012 - 2020, 14 trainings were held among specialists - teachers, social workers, educators, resource teachers, special pedagogues, psychologists, pedagogical advisors, directors in private, state, special schools, kindergartens, resource centers; focus groups with representatives of local authorities in the municipalities of Samokov and Dupnitsa, as well as in the course of trainings with parents and specialists in the country; case work and research in action - implemented in the course of work in the Centers for working with children with emotional and behavioral difficulties in Samokov and Dupnitsa.

The research was conducted in a team and with distributed activities, as the application of the methodology of the positive behavioral approach in the Centers, the supervision and follow-up of work on the cases were realized by Dr. Ranev, as well as the predominant organization and conduct of the trainings and focus groups. For the period from 2008 - 2010, a total of 39 cases with children and parents were covered in two centers, and based on experience and feedback from specialists and parents, the approach was refined and developed over time.

The results of the theoretical-empirical study lead to important conclusions and present the problem of the impact of a positive-oriented approach on problematic behavior in children in a reasoned research projection, taking into account: expanding the understanding of children with emotional disorders and challenging behavior and their justified removal from the context of children with SEN; substantiating a wide range of factors for behavioral and emotional disorders in children with a detailed specification of the importance of personal and environmental factors; expanded understanding of the nature of support as a complete system, a complex of activities, methods and techniques with a focus on behavioral and comprehensive educational support; enriching the range of support strategies and methods; expanding the framework of the process and the toolkit of the approach with inferred indicators related to the child's behavior, characteristics, resources, coping skills, etc.; separating the functions of behavior with the introduction of the clarifying concepts "primary function" and "deep function"; restructuring and change in the content framework of the Support Plan by dividing it into three zones - past, present, future, while protecting the idea of time distribution, helping a more in-depth and complex analysis; specifying criteria and indicators for the results of the implementation of the Support Plan.

The value of the monographic work is associated with multiplying the effectiveness of the approach, based on an in-depth analytical review of fundamental and modern scientific sources, of concepts and theories of our and foreign researchers, of methodologies and practices related to the positive behavioral approach, on the one hand, and presentation of results from the author's long-term experience in his work with children and youth in schools, in support centers and in social services, on the other. On this basis is a structured approach based on the ideas, methods, strategies of positively oriented education and support, on practical experience, on empirical research and results of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Another indisputable merit of the monograph is the included numerous case studies, examples from practice and working toolkits for diagnosis and support. In this way, the work has a practical and applied value, the results of which are not only approved, but also verified in the practice of specialists from various fields of work with children - teachers, educators, social workers, school psychologists, etc. including parents.

In the article "Positive approach and physical intervention when working with children with challenging behavior", which is co-authored, (In: magazine *Pedagogika*. 4/2017. p. 528-537, ISSN 1314-8540) the author's text of Dr. Ranev is associated with deriving and justifying groups of children with challenging behavior, according to their behavioral and psychological characteristics. Was examined the new causes of behavioral deviations in children. A model of a positive approach to work with children with challenging behavior is presented, based on revealing and using the child's positive potential, on an individual approach, teamwork, change through activities from everyday life and the natural environment, support for parents and specialists working with the child .

In this thematic direction is a chapter of a collective monograph, co-authored by "Prevention and crisis intervention when working with children with behavioral difficulties" (In collective monograph: Academic fields of social pedagogy. UI "St. Kl. Ohridski", 2014. pp. 452 - 487. ISBN: 978-954-07-3800 -0). The part which is the authorship of Ch. assistant professor Ranev, is related to the examination of the problem of "children with challenging behavior" at the micro-, meso- and macro-level, and approaches to influencing it at different levels have been analyzed. A theoretical-applied model and specific guidelines for working with children with behavioral difficulties have been successfully presented. The model is based on the understanding that children's behavior is a form and way of interaction of the child with the surrounding environment. Methodology for case work, evaluation process, development of a support plan is also presented, with specific situations and examples from practice. The opinion is argued that such an approach presupposes the presence not only of good professional competence on the part of the specialists who apply it, but also the appropriate philosophy and culture - professional and personal, without which success at work would be difficult to achieve.

It can be emphasized that this is the author's first publication on this issue, making a serious request to study the meaning, role and functions of a positive-oriented approach to support children with challenging behavior, which we see further developed in an article in a refereed and indexed journal and logically finds its kind of completion, as a model tested and validated in practice, presented in the monographic study.

In the second thematic direction - Social-pedagogical and educational approaches in an educational and social environment - three articles published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information are presented (Professional Education magazine - one article and Pedagogy magazine - two articles ); three articles and reports published in edited collective volumes; two studies published in edited collective volumes (Sofia University Yearbook).

In this thematic direction, an upgrade of the research searches of ch. assistant professor Dr. Ranev after his dissertation research by surveying the substantive characteristics and practical application of management in an educational environment. And more specifically: in the article "Substantive and practical dimensions of classroom management as a working (physical) environment" (In: Journal of Professional Education, 2013, pp. 105-114. ISSN 1314 - 555X) analyzes of current approaches are presented and specific practices in the work of the teacher in relation to his organizational-management activities, based on research data, to improve the classroom climate and to influence the quality of the educational process. The author's view of the substantive dimensions of the teacher's working (physical) environment, related to the factors - time, space, hygiene, ecology, documentation, is argued. The article "Management of the symbolic environment in the classroom" (In: Pedagogika 8/2014. pp. 1232-1243. ISSN 1314-8540) expands the field of study of the educational environment, analyzing in it the educational aspects of classroom symbolism and the influence of the physical and environmental parameters of the working environment on the educational processes and activities in class, a problem poorly represented in research practice in our country.

The study "Educational and educational practices in social service "supervised housing" (In: Sofia University Yearbook. 111/2019, p.185-207, ISSN 2682-9622), the article "Educational aspects in social service "observed housing" (In collection: Adolescence as a transition between childhood and adulthood - challenges and humanistic perspectives. Sofia. Avangard-Prima,

2020, p. 377-388, ISBN 978-619-239-500-1) and the article "Practices of non-formal education in a social service "supervised housing" (In the magazine Pedagogika. 7/2018, pp. 909-917, ISSN 0861-3982 and In: Anthology of Non-formal Education. Sofia. University Publishing House. 2018, pp. 627-635 , ISBN 978-954-07-4375-2) present analyzes of the nature and specificity of the work of social service specialists "supervised housing". The main risks for adult young men and women who have left homes for children deprived of parental care, family-type accommodation centers, foster families and other social services for children at risk have been examined, and the role of the provision of the "supervised housing" service has been highlighted " as a form of risk prevention. The results of the practical experience of the work of ch. assistant professor Dr. Ranev in "Monitored housing TOGETHER" in the village of Gurmazovo, as well as results of interviews and observations of the work of colleagues from other monitored housing in Sofia and the country. On this basis, the specific needs of the users of the "supervised housing" service, the typical educational practices and the basic prerequisites for the implementation of effective user support are highlighted. The specifics of the individual, group and remote form of support are examined. The opportunities that non-formal education offers for the development and realization of personal potential have been examined of these young people and for their transition to an independent life. In this section, I note some overlap of texts in the various publications. I recommend in further developments to look for greater independence in the presentation of the various conceptual ideas, of course, with continuity and upgrading.

The article "Peculiarities of mediation in social services for adults" (Collection: Intercultural, scientific and educational dialogues. 2020, pp. 228-242, ISBN 978-954-314-102-9) presents the essence and peculiarities of disputes and conflicts in the educational work in social services and motivates the use of methods and concepts for their solution. In this sense, mediation is argued as a specific method for resolving disputes and conflicts, and its specifics, principles and features for its application in social service are brought out.

"supervised housing". Applications of the method are argued, according to the peculiarities of the environment, based on practical experience in a multicultural educational environment.

The study "Application of mediation when working with children and youth" (In: Sofia University Yearbook. Volume 114. 2021. p. 209-241. ISSN 2683-1074) considers mediation as a method for resolving disputes at different levels and directions - interpersonal, intrapersonal, group, inter-institutional, inter-community, inter-state. The legal and normative regulators in its application in our country are commented. Emphasis is placed on school mediation, which is examined in a national and international context. Its application in the field of social services is also argued. Data from an empirical study of 48 persons: teachers, pedagogical advisers, psychologists, social workers from 10 Bulgarian cities, working in schools and in social services. On the basis of the study, the features of conflicts in an educational environment and the features of mediation and the role of the mediator in conflicts and disputes in an educational environment have been identified and analyzed. The conducted survey among teachers and social workers regarding their attitudes, competencies and practices for applying mediation and resolving disputes and conflicts provides clarity for personal professional practice related to the application of mediation in an educational environment. Main characteristics and competencies for applying mediation in an educational environment and key competencies for applying mediation in socio-pedagogical work with children and youth are highlighted.

In the set of documents, one more article is attached, which, however, is not in the list of publications that was attached for the competition - "Attitudes, expectations and interests among students for education and career development in the socio-pedagogical sphere." (In the journal *Strategies of Educational and Scientific Policy*, Volume 30, 2/2022, pp. 200-210, in co-authorship) and for this reason it will not be reviewed, I will only note that it provides information on the prospective view of expanding the field of research in this thematic direction (it was published later than the others - in 2022).

In the third thematic direction - Theoretical-practical dimensions of Petar Danov's educational and pedagogical ideas and their projection in the modern pedagogical reality, one monograph, one study and one article are presented.

The monograph "Peter Dunov on education" (Sofia. East-West. 2017. ISBN 978-610-01-0142-0) is dedicated to the study, summarization and systematization of Petar Dunov's pedagogical ideas. It is made up of eight compositional sections clarifying the essence of solar pedagogy, the main concepts used in it, its principles and methods. A special section is dedicated to the views on the structure of the world and man. The profile of the solar pedagogy teacher is displayed. Modern educational and educational manifestations of the Solar have been studied pedagogy, as well as the challenges and opportunities before it. The ideas of Solar Pedagogy are examined in the context of other alternative models such as Waldorf and Montessori pedagogy and in the nature of their application in the modern educational environment.

The research toolkit used in the monographic study is made up of literature analysis, focus group, observations, interview. The main goal of the research is to derive and systematize the theoretical and practical foundations of the Solar Pedagogy and outline its practical dimensions in today's reality which has been successfully achieved. This is one of the first attempts to structure the educational and pedagogical ideas of Petar Danov, using the experience of modern pedagogues applying them in their educational practice. Through the collected data, a new pedagogic system in the Bulgarian educational space, possessing its own specific educational and pedagogical goals, methods, principles, presented in the work, has been substantiated. Some controversial, unexplained questions, which remain as a perspective and a request for further research in this direction, have not been overlooked. The main conclusions reached and defended by the author are that Petar Danov's pedagogical views combine elements of formal and informal education, traditional and non-traditional, spiritual and secular, scientific and mystical, which gives them richness and raises questions, criticism and doubts leading to the risk of both complete rejection and non-acceptance as well as idealization. Commenting on Petar Dunov's ideas in this kind of scientific research is an innovative approach and a positive practice for the educational and social development of children.

This theme is unfolded and developed in the article "Practical dimensions of informal learning and education in Solar Pedagogy" (In: *Anthology of Informal Education*. Sofia. University Publishing House. 2018, p. 282-291, ISBN 978-954-07-4375- 2) and in the study related to the methods and principles of Solar Pedagogy. In the article, Solar pedagogy is examined as a Bulgarian educational model based on the philosophical-pedagogical teaching of Petar Danov (the Teacher) from the beginning of the 20th century and rediscovered today at the beginning of today's 21st century in the field of education and upbringing, when followers consider, structure and extend these views into a systemic whole. Its principles - Love, Wisdom, Truth and methods - panearthymia, prayer, contemplation, work with the colored rays are brought out

and popularized. The various work and creative activities specific to her, sports, movement, games, through which children acquire basic social skills and knowledge about the world and themselves, are systematized. Emphasis is placed on activities with music, gymnastics, dancing, breathing exercises, activities in nature. A symbiotic reasoned connection is made with non-formal learning through which it finds a fertile ground of manifestation. More specifically, the conceptual foundations and practical manifestations of non-formal education in the organizations "White Snow White" and "Izgrev" Primary School, which implement the Solar Pedagogy in Bulgaria, are presented.

The study "Basic methods and principles in Petar Danov's pedagogy - history and modernity" (In Pedagogical News magazine. Year IX, 1/2020, pp. 122-141, ISSN 1314-7714) presents the philosophical ideas and teachings of Petar Danov, structured on the basis of both his own and material from his followers. A study was conducted among modern educators, followers of Petar Danov, regarding the understanding and application of the principles and methods underlying his pedagogical ideas. From the analysis of the collected information, the main theoretical-applied aspects of the methods and principles building this pedagogy were structured, and an empirical study was conducted through the following research methods: analysis of literary sources; focus group; an interview; analysis and synthesis of information. The author emphasizes that some of the followers' materials are presented for the first time in the intended studio. As a contributing emphasis, the description of modern theoretical concepts and practices in the application of this pedagogy in our country is emphasized, with the emphasis being placed on its principles and methods. The author declares his conviction "that there is a new pedagogical phenomenon in our country, which we can conditionally call "Pedagogy of Petar Danov". This study is developed more broadly as a subject in the monograph reviewed above.

**Summary:** In the competition for associate professor ch. Assistant Professor Alexander Ranev presents a sufficient volume of scientific production. The production is up-to-date, scientifically based, in-depth and interesting as integrative connections and projections of interactions between the educational and social spheres. Significant scientific contributions have been made in the field of innovative approaches and methods for educational and social support for children, youth and adults, as well as for children with challenging behavior. An interesting highlight in the candidate's scientific work is the topic related to the application of the ideas of Solar pedagogy in modern educational practice. It can be emphasized that in the publications, scientific activity, applied products and practical activity, symbiosis, meaningfulness, purposefulness and connectedness of the activities are taken into account, which speaks of creative maturity, good scientific approach and personal academic presentation.

The recognition of the candidate for associate professor among scientific circles can be noted through the 16 citations attached to the documentation, realized in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review (9 nos.), in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information (6 nos.) and in non-refereed journals with scientific review (1 no.) for the scientific production of ch. Assistant Dr. Alexander Ranev.

#### **4. Scientific contributions**

I accept the contributions made by the candidate for associate professor from his scientific production and activity as actually achieved.

In summary, I will present them in the directions in which they were analyzed above.

1. A model for the procedural and instrumental application of a positive support approach, whose technological construction is based on established theoretical-applied frameworks, is systematized, developed and argued, through the in-depth survey of concepts of our and foreign researchers.
2. A long-term targeted empirical study of the model for supporting children with challenging behavior and their families, based on positive socio-pedagogical support with a built-in author's toolkit, evaluation criteria and indicators, was made.
3. A positively oriented approach to working with children with challenging behavior has been substantiated, tested and validated in practice, expanding the understanding of the nature of support with a focus not only on behavioral but also overall educational support. The model is of high practical-applied significance with the included numerous case studies and examples from practice in case work.
4. For the first time, the theoretical-practical dimensions of Petar Danov's educational and pedagogical ideas were scientifically analyzed, summarized and systematized, and their projection in the modern pedagogical reality was investigated.
5. The content and practical dimensions of the specific principles, methods, concepts and philosophical frameworks of Petar Dunov's educational and pedagogical ideas are put into scientific focus, and comparisons are made with other alternative models such as Waldorf pedagogy and Montessori pedagogy. It is a structured and systematized model known as Solar Pedagogy, Solar Education, Pedagogy of Petar Danov.
6. Focus is placed on the dimensions of informal education in the Solar Pedagogy, and a symbiotic reasoned connection with informal learning is made, through which it finds a fertile ground for manifestation.
7. Strategies for supporting and modernizing the educational environment through the management of the classroom environment and innovative approaches to work in a socio-pedagogical environment have been systematized and analyzed. Peculiarities of the role interactions between an educator and a user are brought out, innovative approaches in team and individual educational work are outlined.
8. One of the first studies of the processes and activities in social services through the prism of non-formal education to support the personal development of users was made.
9. Socio-pedagogical and educational approaches in an educational and social environment for resolving conflicts in an educational environment and mediation in a school environment as a procedural-technological framework have been studied, systematized and argued. The role of mediation is substantiated not only as a way to resolve disputes and conflicts, but also as an educational method.
10. The educational aspects of the class symbolism and the influence of the physical and environmental parameters of the working environment on the educational processes and activities in the class have been deduced, analyzed and systematized.

***Significance of contributions to science and practice***

Through his scientific developments ch. assistant professor Alexander Ranev makes contributions to the theory, methodology and practice in the direction of educational and social interactions, new educational approaches and methods and rethinking the role of the pedagogical subject and the specialist in the social assistance and support system through current, research-based, desired skills, qualities and competences.

The topics in the peer-reviewed works are integrated into the curricula of various disciplines, led by the candidate for associate professor in the bachelor's and master's degrees. In this way, his scientific activity is implicitly linked to the teaching one, thereby enriching the theoretical-applied knowledge, skills, attitudes of the students, as well as the specialists from the fields of pedagogy, education, social pedagogy.

The candidate's participation in various scientific forums (5 in number), the implemented project initiative in national and international projects (14 projects in total), expert activity in the form of supervisions, trainings, etc. on the subject of his scientific developments and interests, contribute to effective linking theory with practice and testing its scientific results in various fields.

## **5. Notes and recommendations**

In the second thematic heading "Social-pedagogical and educational approaches in an educational and social environment" I report an overlap of texts in the various publications. I recommend looking for a bigger one in further developments independence in the presentation of the various conceptual ideas, of course with continuity and upgrading.

Acquaintance with the overall of academic, teaching, project and expert activity of ch. assistant professor Dr. Alexander Ranev and assessing his academic capabilities, allows me to make the following recommendation: to prospectively provide the academic disciplines led by him with independent textbooks and teaching aids, which will also be preparation for his subsequent scientific growth.

## **6. Conclusion**

The analyzes and findings regarding the scientific, expert and teaching achievements of the candidate, assessing the relevance, significance and innovativeness of his developments, based on the above analyzes and arguments related to the successful teaching activity, active participation and management of significant research projects, the participation in international and national scientific forums and the popularization of the results of scientific research in practice and their high practical-applied value, give me the reason to give my positive vote for occupying the academic position "associate professor" from Alexander Ivanov Ranev in the professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of education).

06/20/2023

City. Veliko Tarnovo

Reviewer: .....

/prof. Dr. Rozaliya Kuzmanova - Kartalova/