

## **REVIEW**

by

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professional field 1.3 Pedagogy of Teaching in...

on

the academic output

for participation in a competition

for the academic position of “Associated Professor”

in the professional field 1.3 Pedagogy of Teaching in...(English Language),

announced in The State Gazette № 62 of 6<sup>th</sup> August 2019,

with an only candidate

**Assist. Prof. Mariya Todorova Neykova, PhD**

### **I. Evaluation of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University.**

Assist.Prof. Maria Todorova Neykova,PhD participates in the competition with scientific works, which fully comply with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University (NBU) for the occupation of the academic position of “Associated Professor” in the professional field 1.3 *Pedagogy of Teaching in...(English Language)*. It should be mentioned that the candidate's results on some indicators, e.g. scientific production and citations, go beyond the minimum requirements.

### **II. Research work and results**

#### **1. Evaluation of the monograph**

The title of Dr. Mariya Neykova's monograph submitted for participation in the competition is „*An Action-oriented Approach to Foreign Language Acquisition in the Context of Blended Learning*“, Sofia: Farago, 2015. The 146-page work is structured according to the scientific standard and includes an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and two appendices.

The *Introduction* sets out the general concept of work. The relevance of the problem is emphasized as an attempt to outline the place and role of the Action-oriented Approach in modern foreign language teaching and to offer an example of a structural model for its implementing in the context of blended learning.

The goal and objectives are adequately formulated and related to the research topic. The author aims to prove the effectiveness of the Action-oriented Approach in the foreign language teaching by means of theoretical analysis and description of working methodological algorithms from practice, based on the researched approach, an overview of the modern opportunities of blended e-learning and results of testing the model developed by the author in teaching English to students at NBU. As a result of this goal, the research tasks are presented comprehensively as four consecutive and logically determined steps. Among them, I would like to highlight two: 1) to explore the possibilities of collaborative learning application in the field of foreign language teaching and building an e-learning community; 2) to develop and put into practice an example of a structural model for implementing the Action-oriented Approach to foreign language teaching in the context of blended learning.

I think that the goal of the research has been achieved, and a multi-sided, systematic and well-structured development of the scientific problem has been proposed. The monograph is a modern academic work with a thorough scientific and provocative for application profile.

In the first chapter, "*Characteristics of Blended E-Learning*", the author explores the characteristics of blended e-learning, collaborative learning, and the creation of an e-learning community. It is noteworthy that Dr. Neykova has excellent knowledge of the terminology and scientific concepts associated with the analysis of the topic under

study. The theoretical framework of the research is convincingly presented: a review of the current status, modern concepts and classifications on the topic by different authors is made.

The second chapter, *“Methodological Framework of the Action-oriented Foreign Language Teaching”*, contains a study of the concepts of “method” and “approach” in the methodology of foreign language teaching. It provides an overview of frequently used methods and forms of work that reflect the main characteristics of the Action-oriented Approach, which results I find valuable and useful. Without going into detail on the proposed analysis of each type, it should be noted that Dr. Neykova has been able to study and summarize their specifics as a didactic resource. It has been consistently justified that task-based learning, problem-based learning and project work are fully suitable for working in an electronic environment so that their best features can be used for real language communication.

The third chapter *“Action-oriented Teaching in Blended Learning”* traces the development of the Action-oriented Approach, considered by some to have originated from the Communicative Approach. In my opinion, the methodological functionality of the approach presented in this part of the monograph is of particular interest. It should be mentioned that Dr. Neykova has been able to convincingly highlight the problems in the implementation of the approach and the ways of overcoming them.

The fourth chapter *“Organizational and Pedagogical Forms of Action-oriented Foreign Language Teaching in Blended Learning”* provides an exemplary structural model for implementing the investigated approach in the context of blended learning and the results of its application in practice. Summing up the tasks presented at the beginning, it becomes obvious that the practical part of this study convincingly illustrates and proves them. The results are presented in 20 diagrams and 4 figures. I see the main advantage in emphasizing the flexibility of the model, its adaptability to a large variety of new courses and its didactic potential to create the necessary prerequisites for active learning.

In the *Conclusion* the author summarizes what has been achieved in the monographic work. The contributing moments are correctly stated and I accept them.

The *Bibliographic reference* contains 131 titles, of which 128 scientific publications (73 in English, 47 in Bulgarian, 3 in Russian and 1 in German), 3 dictionaries and 16 online sources with correctly cited reading dates. 21 of the sources have been published in the last ten years, which means that the author is aware of the current state of her research.

## 2. Evaluation of the contributions in the candidate's publications

Dr. Neykova has submitted another book "*Foreign Language Teaching. Active Learning. Online Interaction*" /Beau Bassin, LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018/ and 22 articles that analyse various aspects of the topic being researched. There is no difference between the approaches and the analysis made in the monograph work and the scientific publications presented. Seventeen of them are single-authored and five are co-authored. It should be noted that five of the single-authored articles have been published in referenced and indexed in Web of Science Bulgarian scientific journals.

The complete acquaintance with the monograph work and the publications of Dr. Neykova gives me the reason to conclude that the works presented in the competition contain scientific and applied results that make a contribution to the foreign language methodology. The contributions mentioned by the author reflect the actually achieved results and I accept them.

I would highlight the following specific contributions:

- In theoretical terms, this is the first in our country study of the Action-oriented Approach to foreign language teaching, conducted in the context of blended learning.
- In theoretical and applied terms, a theoretical analysis of the methods and forms of active learning based on the Action-oriented Approach has been made and a structural model for implementing the Action-oriented Approach in foreign language teaching in the context of blended learning has been developed.

## 3. Citation by other authors

Dr. Neykova lists sixteen citations of her research works made by three Bulgarian and one foreign author. Five citations are in scientific journals, which are referenced and indexed in world-famous databases.

4. Evaluation of the results from participation in research and creative projects and their practical implementation

Dr. Neykova does not mention leadership and participation in national or international scientific or educational projects.

At the same time, she has worked on six university projects involving external funds and students at NBU. The main application of their results is in the field of using an electronic platform to support general and specialized foreign language teaching for the development of e-learning materials and tests and their transfer to general English courses.

### **III. Educational and teaching activities**

Dr. M. Neykova has 28 years of work experience, of which 20 as a lecturer at NBU. She participated in the creation of a Bachelor's programme in Applied Foreign Languages for Administration and Management (in English and a Second Foreign Language) as well as in the development of courses for it. She has a large number of author's materials at Moodle NBU, and provides practice and internships for students in the programmes "English Language, Culture and Literature" and "Linguodidactics".

Dr. M. Neykova works actively with the students by organizing methodological seminars, travelling seminars and participation with a report in the XVIII International Conference of the Bulgarian Association of Teachers of English /2019/.

Her teaching is highly rated by students with an average satisfaction survey score of 4.74.

### **IV. Administrative and social activities**

Dr. Neykova is deeply involved in the activities of the Faculty of Basic Education – she is a member of the Faculty Accreditation Committee, the Commission for Reviewing Projects to the Curriculum Fund, the Program Boards of various Departments and the Academic Administration of NBU.

She is also involved in attracting students to NBU programmes by organizing three literary competitions for high school students studying English.

#### **V. Personal impressions of the candidate**

I do not know Dr. Neykova personally, but I am impressed by her work as a university lecturer and researcher.

#### **VI. Opinions, recommendations and comments on the candidate's activities and achievements**

My opinion on the activities and achievements of Dr. Maria Neykova is positive. I highly appreciate the results of her research and her work with students.

I would recommend participation in international scientific and educational projects and generalization of the accumulated experience in a university textbook.

#### **Conclusion**

The competition procedure for the occupation of the academic position of "Associated Professor" fully complies with the Academic Staff Development Law in the Republic of Bulgaria, Rules for its implementation and NBU Academic Staff

The only candidate in the competition Dr Mariya Neykova has proven work and teaching experience, a rich academic production, clearly defined specificity and thematic scope of her research interests and skillfully uses appropriate methodology and good scientific knowledge for the successful achievement of her academic goals. I would like to

emphasize here that, in terms of volume and quality, Dr Neykova's academic output exceeds the requirements for the academic position of "Associated Professor".

All this gives me grounds to suggest to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury of the competition to award Assist.Prof. Dr. Mariya Todorova Neykova the academic position of " Associated Professor" in the professional field 1.3. *Pedagogy of Teaching in... (English Language)*, for which I will vote with confidence. I suggest that she be admitted for election by the Academic Council of New Bulgarian University.

**Reviewer:**

**Prof. Galina Shamonina, PhD**

27<sup>th</sup> December 2019