

STATEMENT

by

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1.3. Pedagogy of education in ...

Ref.: Competition for the academic position of Associate Professor

in the area of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences,

professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of education in ...

(Methodology of teaching English language)

With a single applicant Maria Petrova Neykova

I. Assessment of the compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University (NBU)

The performance of Chief Assistant Maria Neykova, Ph.D. in the areas of research, teaching and administration meets the national and intra-university requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor.

II. Research and results

1. Assessment of the monograph

The habilitation treatise *An Activity-oriented Approach to Foreign Language Learning in the Context of Blended E-learning* (Sofia, Frago, 2015, 146 p.) features a topical theme that has been in the focus of attention of a number of educators and methodologists in recent years. The wide appeal and even gravity of the research issue enables Maria Neykova to attain multifaceted contextualization of her own scientific subject, while on the other hand it is a challenge in terms of unlocking the potential of an educational approach of a proven efficiency and devising new higher versions of its. The second guarantee for topicality of the habilitation treatise is the linkage of education with modern electronic technology. The pragmatization of foreign language pedagogy in both of these areas is a central task of communicative teaching and learning. The choice of research issues is justified and beneficial, it fits in with the quests of today's educational constructivism.

Information and electronic technologies have been examined through the prism of the existing discussion on their use in foreign language teaching. Maria Neykova shares the view of a blended type of teaching combining traditional face-to-face and electronic learning. Numerous quotations from scientific papers, annotations and references to various specialized

sources knit together an argumentative network that captures important statements about the modern role of information technology in education. Without aiming to delve deeper into its theoretical foundations, the paper presents sufficient viewpoints about the pedagogical implications of including electronic technologies in modern education, and in particular in foreign language teaching. In the referential construction of the theoretical research base Maria Neykova reveals an ability to navigate a vast scientific space, as well as a skill to select, systematize and faithfully reproduce existing research achievements. Representing other people's experience concerning the selected research topic is a clearly discernible highlight in the treatise under review, which does not belittle the desire to further problematize the topic chosen, particularly in terms of conceptual and terminological refinement.

Particularly noteworthy is the proposition that the binding up of blended face-to-face and distant teaching with modern communication theories yields higher and more lasting results in each of the four areas of communication: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The work also presents a beneficial effect of collaborative learning that goes beyond linguistic and communicative competencies – the establishment of linguistic and electronic communities. This is already an input in the sociocultural skills of the trainees, in their capacity for constructive interaction.

The lead theme of the study is theoretically illuminated in accordance with its position on top of the learning pyramid, if we use the well-known Kurt Lewin metaphor. The informative and referential nature of the text helps add substance to the idea of activity-based foreign language learning in both diachronic and synchronic terms. The attention here is focused on the concepts of *method* and *technique* and on teaching by task assignment, problem solving and project work. The key pedagogical issue of effective teaching and learning has found a modern response with practical relevance. The sample tasks, the recounted experience of preparing and delivering presentations, of planning and holding discussions, of drafting summaries mark the milestones of the activity-based type of foreign language teaching. Let us point out here that the worth of a methodological paper can be measured both by its innovativeness and by its contribution to stabilizing and adding value to practices that work. A useful aspect of the paper is the presentation of a structural model for reproductive and productive speech activities aided by up-to-date electronic technology. The described experience enriches the methodological discourse and could be useful for teachers, university lecturers, authors of textbooks, learning and teaching aids in English and other foreign languages.

2. Assessment of the contribution of the other attached publications.

Maria Neykova participates in the competition for the position of an associate professor with another monograph, 5 articles in referenced publications and 17 other ones in various widely visible collections and magazines. Most of the publications have a close thematic link. The content lines in this single research field intersect, run in parallel or grow in length following the direction of modernizing teaching and learning. One could say that Maria Neykova's publications represent an intertext of dialogic interactions that ensure unfolding of the general idea of systematic and correct presentation of tested pedagogical information. The balance between theorizing and recounting good practices imparts additional credibility to the body of research. It is also worth to acclaim the inclusion of fiction texts as well as the presentation of methodological ideas of their interpretative performance in the English language education.

Maria Neykova's works are readable, elegantly written, which is an indirect sign of mastery of the material and a prerequisite for its easy digestion.

3. Citation by other authors

According to data provided by the NBU library Maria Neykova's works have been cited by other authors 23 times.

4. Assessment of the results of participation in research and creative projects and practical application of the results obtained.

The applicant has participated in two projects with external funding and in one under a contract with the Kazakh Humanitarian and Legal Innovative University. The productive efforts to upgrade foreign language education by using modern methods, approaches and educational techniques merit positive evaluation.

III. Educational and teaching activities

Maria Neykova's statutory workload meets the regulatory requirements. The student evaluation of her teaching is high. Along with the mandatory courses she also performs additional educational projects, primarily seminars outside the university. Competitions among high school students are important both *per se* and in view of the effort to establish continuity between high school and higher education.

IV. Administrative and public activities

Maria Neykova has acted as a Programme Consultant, Member of the Programme Board, Member of the Accreditation Commission at the School of Undergraduate Studies, Member of the project review committee at the Curriculum Fund of the School of General

Studies, Director of the Applied Linguistics basic programme at the Applied Linguistics Department.

She is a member of the Bulgarian English Teachers' Association.

Based on all of the above I propose that Chief Assistant Maria Neykova, Ph.D. should be awarded the academic position of Assistant Professor.

Sofia, 22 December 2019

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