

OPINION

by Associate Professor Sylvia Atanasova Velikova, PhD

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Regarding the selection procedure for the academic rank *Associate Professor* in the area of *Integrated English language teaching to students of education through cultural and humane ecological content*, announced by Trakia University (Stara Zagora) in State Gazette, issue 81 dated 11 October 2022, area of higher education 1. *Educational Sciences*; professional field 1.2. *Education*; at the Department of Information Technologies, Fine Arts and Foreign Languages, Faculty of Education, Trakia University

The opinion is submitted in compliance with Order No. 3407/24.10.2022 of the Rector of Trakia University – Stara Zagora.

The only candidate in the announced selection procedure is Assistant Professor Anna Lyubomirova Arnaudova-Otuzbirova, PhD, full-time lecturer at the Faculty of Education at Trakia University. The documents submitted by Dr. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova correspond to the requirements of the *Regulations for the development of the academic staff at Trakia University* and the *Law for the development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria*.

First of all, the candidate's university education in three different fields of study (languages, ecology and education) is impressive since it builds a solid foundation for her overall teaching and research activity. In 2000, Dr. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova graduated from Sofia University with a Master's Degree in English Philology and professional qualification of *philologist-teacher in English language and literature*. In 2009, she acquired her Master's degree in *Ecology – Environmental Protection and Management* at the Faculty of Agriculture in Trakia University. In 2016, Dr. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova defended a dissertation on *An integrative approach to learning English through ecological learning content for student teachers* and obtained a doctoral degree at the Faculty of Education, Trakia University, in Theory of Education and Didactics; area of higher education

1. *Educational Sciences*; professional field 1.2. Education. In 2020, Dr. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova completed a postgraduate course in *Animal Welfare, Ethics and Legislation* at the University of Winchester (England).

For the purposes of the present selection procedure, Dr. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova has submitted a published monographic work titled *English language and humane ecological education: Interdisciplinary projections* (2023). The book is a publication of the Faculty of Education, Trakia University. The study has been reviewed by Prof. Romyana Todorova, PhD and Assoc. Prof. Vanya Petrova, PhD. The author unfolds her work on the basis of modern interdisciplinary perspectives in the spectrum of linguistic and humane ecological education and the ideas of the “harmonious unity of man, society and nature” (Arnaudova-Otuzbirova, 2023). A major contribution of the study is the proposed “humane ecological curriculum content” for integrated English language learning. A comprehensive historical overview of the concept of environmental and humane education is provided in Chapter 3 of the book. Its immanent characteristics are summarized and a specific definition of *humane ecological education* is offered. It outlines the parameters of the concept as “value-oriented, anti-anthropocentric and non-discriminatory education, aimed at the education of ‘sympathy and respect for all living beings through awareness of the existing interrelationship between people, animals and ecosystems’ in the context of ecological issues (Fraser et al., 2017: 5)” (Arnaudova-Otuzbirova, 2023: 104). It should be emphasized that the methodological approach adopted by the author, based on the philosophy of *CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING – CLIL* currently has significance both in the European educational space and on a global scale. Dr. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova empirically confirms the efficiency of the approach in the field of higher education and in the preparation of future primary teachers. Particularly indicative in this regard is the fifth chapter of the monographic work, in which the results of an empirical study on the teaching of English through humane ecological content to students majoring in *Primary*

school education with a foreign language (English) are formulated and discussed. The research methods used include *language knowledge and skills test, a questionnaire, Pearson correlation analysis, ANOVA, Student's t-test*. The study also examines the impact of the adopted methodology not only on students' knowledge and skills, but also on their interest in learning and their readiness to teach humane ecological content. The validity the findings and the conclusions of the study is supported by statistically significant results. Some of them confirm the observations in the research literature in the field of CLIL that the approach is particularly effective when teaching learners with a lower level of language proficiency. This can be explained by the fact that since subject-oriented learning content in itself is a prerequisite for building "meaningful" and "contextualized" content, which stimulates the processes of foreign language acquisition (Arnaudova-Otuzbirova, 2023: 160).

In addition to the monographic work, the Candidate has submitted research papers which include 3 publications in academic journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information; 18 publications in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or edited collections; 1 published book chapter; 1 published university textbook. All of them testify to the research contributions of Dr. Arnaudova- Otuzbirova in the interdisciplinary areas, which she herself identifies as "integrative projections of foreign language learning, English language and culture, humane and environmental education".

The research impact of the Candidate's publications can be estimated through their citation (a total of 11 citations) in monographic works and collective volumes.

The submitted documentation for the selection procedure also provides evidence that Dr. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova has the relevant teaching experience to acquire the academic position *Associate Professor*. She has developed curricula for the following courses: 1. *English language and culture*; 2. *Integration of subject content in English language learning*; 3. *English language and*

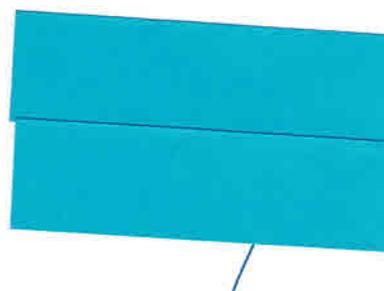
environmental education; 4. *Humane ecological education*. Indicative of the candidate's teaching competencies are her participation in international mobilities for teaching (within the Erasmus+ program) at the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre, Portugal (2014); the Polytechnic Institute, Santarem, Portugal (2012) and at the Faculty of Education at Trakya University in Edirne, Turkey (2012).

Dr. Anna Arnaudova-Otuzbirova actively participates in national and international research and educational projects (3 national and 1 international). She is a member of *the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria – Stara Zagora branch*.

Considering all of the above, I recommend that Dr. Anna Lyubomirova Arnaudova-Otuzbirova be awarded the academic position *Associate Professor in Integrated English language teaching to students of education through cultural and humane ecological content* – area of higher education 1. *Pedagogical sciences*; professional field 1.2. *Pedagogy*; at the Department of Information Technologies, Fine Arts and Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education, Trakia University.

February 23, 2023

Veliko Tarnovo

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(Assoc. Prof. Sylvia Velikova, PhD)