

## **Reviewer's Opinion**

by **Assoc. Prof. Irina Nikolova Ivanova, PhD**, from the Department of English Philology at Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen; Field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional area 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching... (Methodology of English language teaching), regarding a competition for the academic position of **associate professor in integrated teaching of English for students of pedagogical specialties through cultural and human-ecological content** in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional area 1.2. Pedagogy, announced in SG no. 81/11.10.2022

Candidate for the position: **Assistant professor Anna Lubomirova Arnaudova-Otuzbirova, PhD**, from Thrace University in Stara Zagora, Faculty of Pedagogy, Department of Information Technologies, Fine Arts and Foreign Languages

### **1. Information about the candidate**

The only candidate who submitted materials for the competition - assistant professor Anna Lubomirova Arnaudova-Otuzbirova, graduated from Sofia University with a master's degree in English philology, after which she obtained a master's degree in ecology, environmental protection and management from the agrarian faculty of Thrace University in Stara Zagora. The candidate received her PhD in educational theory and didactics from Thrace University in 2016, and her thesis was concerned with using an integrative approach to teaching English through ecological content. From 2019 to 2021 A. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova studied at the University of Winchester in the UK, and obtained a qualification in animal welfare, ethics and legislation. Before joining Thrace University, the candidate worked as an English language teacher at Bels & Belin Center and AVO-3 School of English in Sofia. Since 2003, he has taught English language, English language and culture, English language and environmental education, integration of subject



content in English language learning and human-ecological education at the Faculty of Pedagogy at Thrace University. She was involved in syllabus design for students of primary pedagogy and foreign language teaching, based on the integration of foreign language learning with humane-ecological education.

## **2. Published research submitted for participation in the competition**

For the purposes of the competition, A. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova has submitted one single-authored monograph titled *English language and humane-ecological education: Interdisciplinary projections*, written in Bulgarian, and 3 articles in academic journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases (one of which co-authored). She has also submitted 18 articles published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes (four of which are co-authored), as well as a chapter in a collective monograph, devoted to the ethnic communities and identities in the process of globalization. In addition, she has included a coursebook, which is not part of the minimum requirements for the academic position, but which testifies to the author's ability to develop study materials closely related to her research experience and interests. The candidate has 5 citations in peer-reviewed monographs and collective volumes and 6 citations in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals. In the submitted report on the fulfillment of the minimum requirements for occupying the academic position of associate professor, the candidate scored a total of 610 points, which significantly exceeds the specified minimum of 400 points.

The candidate's **habilitation monograph** is dedicated to the integrated study of English and human-ecological learning content, which situates it within the established research and teaching tradition of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) education with its emphasis on interdisciplinarity and the role of language as a means for acquiring and communicating knowledge in different subject areas. In the monograph, the focus is on the extremely relevant humane and ecological education of future pedagogues and English language teachers. I acknowledge the thorough study of previous research in the field, and the extensive review of legal documentation required for this type of teacher training, as well as the critical approach in examining the strengths and weaknesses of CLIL.

Among the contributions which the monograph adds to existing research, I should



mention the author's reflections on the role of humane and ecological education in bringing to the fore socially significant topics. Another important aspect is the need for a complete rethinking of education and its orientation to real problems, and future teachers' abilities to make intelligent and informed decisions in their work. The idea of education for sustainable development is in sync with modern trends in teacher training, and its presentation in clear and accessible language makes the monograph a useful book for Bulgarian educators both as policy-makers and teaching practitioners. Presenting environmental competence as fundamental is extremely relevant in view of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education's intentions and policies for introducing a competence-based approach and promoting innovations at all levels and forms of education.

Another important focus in the monograph - humane education, also has a contributing value in view of some negative trends in the school environment, such as aggression, selfishness, and irresponsible behaviour. The information about this type of learning would help educators develop learners' empathy, compassion, responsibility, critical thinking and active citizenship. A thorough review of regulatory documents and policies at global and national level brings clarity and definitely saves time and effort in familiarizing teachers with the philosophy and practical application of this type of learning.

The candidate rightly mentioned that one of the significant problems which negatively affects the spread of humane education in different pedagogical contexts is the lack of a sufficient of in-depth research in this area. In this regard, I should emphasise the contributing nature of the candidate's empirical study, which presents a design for training primary school teachers of English with the help of an interactive electronic textbook for humane-ecological education, created by the candidate herself.

The three articles published in journals referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases, focus on issues related to the place of intercultural, civic and humane education in the training of future teachers. They indicate the candidate's persistent interest in the interdisciplinary aspects of foreign language learning, and are related to issues discussed in her monograph.

The rest of the candidate's publications deal with topics such as the use of the

folktales in education, the culture of North American Indians through the prism of multiculturalism, the importance of motivation in education and in teachers' professional development, multicultural education, the cultural adaptation of foreigners in Bulgaria, communication between teachers and students, environmental education and animal rights. A significant number of the candidate's articles since 2016 have been focusing on integrated language teaching and ecological and humane learning - topics that are further discussed and summarized in the monograph. I agree with the candidate's contributions in the key areas as identified by her in the respective document.


Anna Arnaudova-Otuzbirova's research and its original contributions are reflected in a number of citations - a total of 11, of her individual publications and co-authored works, in the published research of Bulgarian and foreign scholars.

### **3. Conclusion**

In view of the reviewed documents and research publications submitted by Dr. Arnaudova-Otuzbirova, their contributions to research in the relevant areas, and her work as a university lecturer, I firmly believe that she should be awarded the academic position of associate professor in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional area 1:2. Pedagogy.

13.02.2023 г.

Reviewer:

  
/Assoc. prof. Irina Ivanova, PhD/