

OPINION

by Daniela Todorova Yordanova, PhD,

Professor at “St. Cyril and St. Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo

of the materials submitted for participation in a competition

for the academic position of “professor”

at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

in the higher education field 1. Pedagogical Sciences,

professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Education

in...(Methodology of Foreign Language Education – Preschool and
Primary School Age)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Sofronieva from Sofia University is a candidate in the competition for “professor”, announced in the State Gazette, issue 77 of 01.09.2020 for the needs of the Department of Preschool and Media Education” at the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts.

1. General information on the procedure and candidate

By order № RD 38-453 of 25.09. 2020 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury in the competition for the academic position of “professor” at Sofia University in the higher education field 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Education in... (Methodology of Foreign Language Education – Preschool and Primary School Age) at the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts.

Only candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Nedelcheva Sofronieva.

The set of documents and materials presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Nedelcheva Sofronieva on electronic media complies the Regulations for development of the academic staff of Sofia University.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Sofronieva participates in the competition with a total of 36 scientific publications, of which 1 habilitation thesis, published as a monograph, 1 book based on her defended doctoral dissertation, 4 articles published in scientific journals, listed in world-reowned databases of scientific information, 6 articles and reports, published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, 18 published chapters in a collective monograph, 5 published university textbooks and 1 university workbook.

The teaching and research biography of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Sofronieva are proof of her development and growth: she graduated from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” as a MA in “English Philology” in 1992; in the period 2000-2001 she completed her studies on a postgraduate qualification programme at the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Pedagogy at Sofia University and received the qualification degree of an “early foreign language teacher of English”; she was awarded the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in psychology of orientation and learning processes in 2012. Ekaterina Sofronieva began her professional teaching career at the University as a part-time assistant in English, which she held from 1992 to 1994; she worked at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology between 2000 and 2005, and from 2016 until today she has been an Associate Professor in Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching - English.

2. General review of the scientific work of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Sofronieva reads lectures and conducts practical seminars in disciplines which are closely related to the scientific and professional field of the announced competition. She is a lecturer on 5 compulsory and 3 compulsory-elective disciplines on university bachelor's degree programmes, and 6 compulsory and 2 elective courses on university master's degree programmes. In addition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. E. Sofronieva delivers lectures in English in 6 disciplines for Erasmus + students. She also lectures in English on 5 compulsory postgraduate courses.

She has been the research supervisor of the postgraduate qualification programme for foreign language teachers in nursery and primary schools since 2000. In the periods 2014 - 2016 and 2020 – 2021, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sofronieva is the scientific supervisor of the master's programme in “Educational Sciences and Intercultural Education / in English /”.

The presented scientific publications by the candidate for participation in the competition, a total of 36 in number, have their place in the scientific and pedagogical practice. They can be used in future research projects or as good practices in the training activities of pedagogical specialists, university students, and doctoral students on international programmes.

The monograph “Specific Features of Second Language Acquisition in Childhood. A Smile Matters.”, structured in seven chapters, presents methodological studies, proven to be effective in the pedagogical practice; the studies are based on the research projects, carried out by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sofronieva. In this sense, the presented scientific work enriches the pedagogical theory and practice in the field of early language learning not only in Bulgaria but also abroad. It presents traditions, models and perspectives regarding the nature, environment and tools of education for children and students, including students with special educational needs.

Another topical issue is the introduction of the narrative model for early language learning in Bulgaria, discussed by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sofronieva in her book “The Magic Teacher: Teacher Efficacy and Empathy in Foreign Language Teaching”. The book, published in 2020, is based on her doctoral dissertation. The studies carried out by the author convincingly emphasize the need to develop relevant competencies in students during their university education as well as in pedagogical professionals during their practice.

The published university textbooks and workbook /publications 31 - 36/, are designed to train students and teachers of English and center around topics, tests and tasks, related to the main research field of interest of Assoc. Prof. Sofronieva, namely, empathy and communication in language education.

The scientific articles, 28 in number, have been published in prestigious scientific journals. Four of them are published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases. All of them reflect the scientific research and practical experience of the candidate since she was elected an “Associate Professor”; they aim at researching and promoting concepts, models and new opportunities in the field of early language learning within the European and national educational frameworks.

On the whole, the cornerstones in the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Sofronieva can be summarized as:

- the submitted publications are in the designated field of professional development, announced in the competition. They are theoretically sound and substantiated by modern paradigms in linguodidactics;
- current topical issues related to the theory and practice of early foreign language learning have been studied and analyzed;
- specific studies have been carried out and projects implemented in practice, which allow innovative educational models, technologies and forms of interaction, all aiming at the improvement of early foreign language teaching of English, to be tested;
- essential teaching materials for university students have been developed and published;
- the scientific production is sufficient in quantity and is highly applicable in practice;
- the research projects are addressed to and encompass a wide range of different groups, i.e. scientists, students, parents and teachers.

I have no critical remarks or recommendations to the candidate.

Conclusion

After my review and analysis of the materials and scientific production, submitted by the candidate for participation in the competition, and taking into account their importance and scientific and applied contribution to the early language teaching of English, and after my review of the presented evidence for fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law for Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, I give my positive assessment and vote for the election of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Nedelcheva Sofronieva to the academic position of “professor” in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in.... (Methodology of foreign language teaching - preschool and primary school age), Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski ”.

17.11. 2020.

Signature:

Prof. Daniela Yordanova, PhD