

## REVIEW

regarding the selection procedure for the academic position of **FULL PROFESSOR in the Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy (Civic Education, Anti-corruption Education)**, announced in the *State Gazette*, issue 22 of 16 March 2021

**Candidate: Associate Professor Lilyana Ivanova Strakova, PhD**, Faculty of Education, Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski"

**Reviewer: Professor Lyubomira Simeonova Popova, PhD**, Faculty of Education, St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo

### 1. Information concerning the selection procedure

The only candidate in the announced competition for the academic position **Full Professor** in the Area of Higher Education 1. Pedagogical sciences, Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy (Civic Education, Anti-corruption Education) is Associate Professor Lilyana Ivanova Strakova, PhD

**The documents** submitted as evidence of the Candidate's academic expertise comply with the requirements of the current regulations. Associate Professor Strakova has met the minimum national requirements according to the *Law for the development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria* (ЗПАСБ) and the additional university requirements for *Collecting, Updating and Using of Scientometric Data*. The competition is based on the required academic workload and the scientometric requirements, with a total score on all indicators: 540.

### 2. Information concerning the candidate

Associate Professor Lilyana Ivanova Strakova, PhD was born in Bansko, Blagoevgrad province. She has completed her secondary education at Vladimir Poptomov Vocational School, Razlog. Associate Professor Strakova has earned a master's degree in Education at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski".

In 1990, having successfully defended her thesis *The moral development of students in grades 1-3*, under the academic supervision of Professor Dono Vasilev, PhD, she received her doctoral degree.

Between 1989 and 1991, Associate Professor Strakova worked at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Secondary School and 135<sup>th</sup> Secondary School in Sofia as a teacher and as a school counsellor. Between 1991 and 1993, she was a teaching assistant at UNWE. From 2000 to 2002, she was a lecturer at New Bulgarian University,

teaching on the master's programme *Human Resource Management*. From 2000 to 2003, she taught Experimental Pedagogy at the South-West University.

From 1993 to 2000, Dr Strakova was an Assistant Professor at Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski", and since 2000, she has been an Associate Professor. In the period between 2007 and 2014, she was Head of the Department of Social Work. Since 2010, she has been Director of the master's programme *Contemporary educational technologies*. She has also been working as Head of the *Center for Civic Education* since 2010. She was Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Education over the term 2014-2019. Since October 2019, Associate Professor Strakova has been Dean of the Faculty of Education.

As a scholar in an academic exchange programme, she gave lectures at Jules Verne University, Amiens, France in 2010, and was a member of the curriculum development team in Economics Education at Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany in 2005.

Associate Professor Strakova serves as a member of the editorial board of the *Annuaire de l'Universite de Sofia "St. Kliment, Ohridski"* (volume *Education*). Since 2013, she has been a member of the editorial board of the electronic journal *Social Work*. She has also been a member of the Coordination Council of the *Center for Human Resources Development and Regional Initiatives* of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy since 2012 until now.

Conclusion: The information detailing Assoc. Prof. Strakova's professional activity clearly indicates that she has an outstanding experience in the theory and practice of educational science and education management, which shapes her professional profile as a teacher, researcher, and manager, directly involved in teaching and administrative activities at the Faculty of Education, Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski".

### **3. Publications submitted for the purposes of the selection procedure**

The Candidate has submitted the following publications as part of her application: a monograph; 3 articles published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous scientific databases; 9 studies published in non-refereed scientific journals, peer-reviewed or published in edited collections; 24 articles and conference papers published in non-refereed scientific peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collections; chapters in 3 co-authored monographs; 2 university textbooks, which are also used in the school education system and 4 other publications. The academic publications submitted for the purposes of the

selection procedure address current issues of the theory of education and didactics, and focus on the civic education of children and young people.

- The topic of the growth of the citizen finds its in-depth and well-reasoned presentation in the main habilitation work *Civic values and civic education*, 2021, Sofia: St Kliment Ohridski University Press. The monograph is structured in two parts. The first part analyses the values of civil society that are traced back in the works of philosophers of the antiquity and the classics of the Enlightenment. The second part examines the nature, approaches and models in the study of value-based civic education. Special attention is devoted to the acquisition of civic/democratic values by students and young people in four major areas: the political and legal; the social; the socio-cultural and the economic domain. Some contemporary dimensions of European citizenship, innovative educational models, recognised nationally and internationally, are also considered in the monograph.

- The submitted three **articles** published in an abstracted and indexed scientific journal (*Journal of Education/списание „Педагогика“*, 2018; 2016; 2014) focus on civic education and children's rights in Bulgaria. The main claim of these studies is that civic education interiorises the moral foundation of children's rights. One of these articles presents the author's conceptualisation of civic education as "practising a moral code" and as an integrating factor for formal and non-formal education.

- **Studies.** The study *Theoretical and practical dimensions of civic education as a model of extracurricular activities of interest* discusses the impact of non-formal education on the formation of civic values in young people. Some classical and current goals of civic education with an emphasis on organising activities in school and extracurricular environments have been synthesised. The study also presents actual practices and experiences for educational integration of ethnic minority children and students.

The importance of entrepreneurship education is analysed in the studies *Entrepreneurship training and education in secondary schools – European experience and Bulgarian practices – first and second volume, Annuaire de l'Université de Sofia "St. Kliment. Ohridski"*, 2005 and 2006. The publications deal with the main issues, challenges and the best European and Bulgarian practices in this field.

The study *Development of research on gender and sexuality* elaborates on the specific features of sex and health education. The study identifies taxonomic

components of sex education and presents empirical data on the value orientations of young Roma people.

- **Articles and conference papers.** The article "*Civic education*" by N. Stanev – *historical and contemporary values*, 2018, discusses one of the first Bulgarian textbooks after the Liberation, which brings together the values of the enlightened man as a "good and useful citizen". The textbook is represented as an emblematic work from a historical standpoint, and in contemporary terms – as a code of "democratic citizenship".

The publication *Contemporary challenges to civic education of Bulgarian students and the fostering of their values* considers issues related to the importance of civic education for the holistic formation of students' personality. The role of the teacher for the development of students' values has been highlighted.

The article *The value approach in social work. Ways of professionalism in social work* looks at the value approach in social work, its integrating role at individual level and at social system level. It also discusses the nature and hierarchy of values in social work.

The main problems in social work with children and families have been examined in *Models of social work with children and families in an education and an extracurricular environment*. The reasons underlying the lower socio-economic status of children and families from vulnerable social groups have been analysed. Elements of the structure of *The moral social worker's code*, which contribute to increasing the level of professionalism in social work have been discussed.

A number of articles address the topic of anti-discrimination and the specific features of legal and social equality in society. Fundamental positive social measures, aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for the social inclusion of people with disabilities, the unemployed, the socially disadvantaged, the ethnic minorities, have been reported.

The article *The academic ombudsman and the quality of education process in higher education* sheds light on the institution *ombudsman*, which is new in our social reality. It dwells on the main functions of the activity of the academic ombudsman and the powerful role of the institution in improving the quality of the education process in higher education institutions.

- **Monograph chapters.** Associate Professor Strakova has chapters in 3 monographic collections published in Russian. One of them explores the nature of the diagnostic process – stages, research methods; models of educational

diagnostics; the significance of the taxonomic approach in diagnostics. The other two chapters presents the nature of sex education and child development in a pedagogical perspective. They also outline principles and mechanisms for sexual socialisation in ontogenetic terms. Negative parenting attitudes in the process of sexual education and development of children and youth are also revealed.

- **Instructional materials.** The Candidate has published a Handbook which aims to support anti-corruption education and training. One hundred answers to questions organised into five sections have been provided: Definitions, Laws and corruption, Corruption in public life, Corruption in Bulgaria, Combating corruption. The Handbook is a useful resource for training and lectures on anti-corruption topics in secondary schools and universities and will support the teaching of elective anti-corruption courses that have been introduced in Bulgarian secondary schools since 2004. This instructional resource contains basic European and national normative regulations that regulate the equal treatment of people from vulnerable social groups, regardless of gender, age, beliefs, religion, social status, etc.

Conclusion: The publications submitted for the purposes of the selection procedure are in many ways influenced by the Candidate's extensive practice as a teacher, lecturer, participant and leader in numerous research projects. Associate Professor Strakova's publications are of high scientific value and are a significant factor in her professional development.

#### **4. Evaluation of the significance the Candidate's publications**

- The submitted publications exhibit an internal unity with the main monographic work *Civic values and civic education*. In my opinion, of particular significance is the monograph, which appears as a logical round-up of the teaching and project activities of the Candidate. The study also has a theoretical and practical relevance and a future orientation.

- The in-depth analysis of the conceptual and practical aspects of the formation of civic culture and civic values in children and youth stands out with its scientific significance. I fully support the author's ideas on civic education as an integrating factor for the formal and non-formal education and its interpretation as "practising a moral code".

- With scientific expertise and reasonable pragmatism, the author outlines practical solutions for social work in the context of the value approach and its integrating role at the individual level and at the level of the social system. *The*

*moral code of the social worker* and the highlighted value aspects of social work are significant contributions.

- Associate professor Strakova actively participates in national and international scientific conferences, in numerous national and international projects as an educator, trainer, team member, and leader. All these capacities and activities are logically integrated in her teaching and publishing activities, as well as in the management of the *Center for Civic Education* at Sofia University.

- The submitted record of citations of Assoc. Prof. Strakova's texts indicates that she has received recognition in the research community. Her publications have been cited in monographs, in peer-reviewed scientific collections, in peer-reviewed journal articles with scientific peer-review – a total of 33 citations.

In summary: In my opinion, Assoc. Prof. Strakova's contributions should be commended and her research has both theoretical and applied merits. The submitted record of publications and citations accurately represents the actual achievements of the Candidate and her research activities over the years.

### **5. Teaching activity**

Associate Professor Lilyana Strakova is involved in curriculum development and delivers courses across several faculties – the Faculty of Biology, the Faculty of Philosophy, and the Faculty of Physics at Sofia University. She also teaches Theory of upbringing, Experimental pedagogy, Civic education, Anti-corruption education, Sexual and pedagogical problems in the childhood and adolescence.

The Candidate has been designing curricula for the master's programme *Contemporary educational technologies* and teaches the following courses: Interaction between the family and the school, Working with children with aggressive behaviour, Educational values in the school curriculum, Strategies for improving the effectiveness of the teacher as a class teacher.

It should be emphasised that through her teaching activity over the years, Associate Professor Strakova has had a valuable contribution to the degree programmes of the Faculty of Education at Sofia University.

Her extracurricular commitments are diverse – she is an academic advisor of two doctoral students, participates in a number of international and national research projects as an expert, lecturer, and an author of curricula.

She is the leader of numerous national research projects, some of which are as follows: *A survey of the preparation of doctoral students in the field of social*

work (2015), *Civic education and civic competencies in the Bulgarian school* (2009–2011), *Social work with adolescent Roma mothers* (2010), *Civic education of secondary school students – European experience and perspectives* (2006–2009).

Conclusion: Associate professor Strakova is extremely active as a lecturer, researcher, expert and administrator. She successfully combines all these capacities and stands out with her innovative thinking and professional expertise.

## 6. Conclusion

The review of the documents and the analysis of Associate Professor Strakova's research output clearly indicate that her academic activity is a harmonious combination of extensive scientific interests, rigorous theoretical and applied research, active work in research projects, successful participation at scientific events, teaching and administrative activities.

Considering all of the above, without any reservations, **I strongly recommend** the appointment of Associate Professor Lilyana Ivanova Strakova, PhD as **Full Professor** in the Area of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy (Civic Education, Anti-Corruption Education).

21 July 2021  
Veliko Tarnovo

Member of the Academic Selection Committee:  
/ Prof. Lyubomira Popova, PhD