

# OPINION

ON THE WORKS

OF EKATERINA NEDELICHEVA SOFRONIEVA, PHD

SUBMITTED FOR AWARDED "PROFESSOR" ACADEMIC TITLE CONTEST

IN SCIENTIFIC AREA 1. PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

PROFESSIONAL FIELD 1.3. THE PEDAGOGY OF EDUCATION IN...

(SUBJECT AREA: THE METHODOLOGY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING –  
PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE)

**OPINION BY ASSOC. PROF. VESELA SLAVOVA, PHD**

Department of Language Teaching and Information Technologies

National Sports Academy „Vasil Levski“

Scientific area 1. Pedagogical sciences

Professional field: 1.3. The Pedagogy of education in...

## CONTEST DATA

The contest documentation presented for acquiring the "PROFESSOR" academic title is related to the professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in... (Subject area: The Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching - preschool and primary school age). The contest is announced in the State Journal, issue № 67 of 28.07.2020 and correction in State Journal, issue № 77 of 1.09.2020, in accordance with the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

## CANDIDATE DATA

The only applicant for the announced by “St Kliment Ohridski” Sofia University contest, **Ekaterina Nedelcheva Sofronieva** was born on June 17, 1968. She obtained a Master's degree in English Philology at Sofia University and completed an English interpreter specialization. In 2001 she completed a postgraduate qualification – an English teacher of preschool foreign language teaching at the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Pedagogy at Sofia University. In June 2012, Ekaterina Sofronieva completed her doctoral studies at the Faculty of Medicine and Psychology at the University of Rome "Sapienza", Italy.

Ekaterina Sofronieva's pedagogical work experience began in 1992. From 1992 to 1994 and from 2000 to 2005 she worked as a part-time assistant at the Faculty of Classic and Modern Philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski”. From 2005 to 2007 Ekaterina Sofronieva worked as a full-time assistant, then in 2007 she became a Senior Assistant Professor in English. In 2016 she was awarded Associate Professor academic title in subject area The Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching – English at the Faculty of Education sciences and Arts, Department of Preschool and Media Pedagogy at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski”.

All mentioned above related to the educational qualifications and pedagogical experience of Assoc. Prof. Ekaterina Sofronieva, PhD fully meets the requirements of announced contest.

## TEACHING WORK EXPERIENCE

Assoc. Prof. Ekaterina Sofronieva has participated in serious teaching activities through the establishment of a school of young people certified and working in the Narrative Format, in collaboration with Prof. Traute Tashner from the

University of Rome "La Sapienza", creator of the method and Mrs. Julia Solanes, Director of Dinocrox International Training Center.

The elaboration of tests and assessment of academic achievements at the end of students' training in the programs of "Preschool pedagogy and foreign language", "Primary school pedagogy and foreign language" and "Media pedagogy and art communication" is an essential part and a serious practical-applied contribution of the applicant Ekaterina Sofronieva to the modern pedagogical theory and practice.

Other significant contributions to the teaching experiences are the development of the topic of educational measurement and classical testing theory (CCT) in the field of languages, the selection of basic criteria for ensuring the quality of the testing in second language teaching, offering a comprehensive set of procedures for educational assessment, as well as many good practices for qualitative validation of testing in the field of second language teaching.

## RESEARCHES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In connection with his application for the contest Assoc. Prof. Ekaterina Sofronieva, PhD has submitted 36 scientific works. These include a monograph, a published book based on a defended dissertation, as well as 4 articles published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information, 6 articles and reports published in unrefereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, 18 chapters published in collective monographs, 5 published university books and 1 published university textbook.

Her major scientific works regarding the scientific specialty of the contest are the published monograph "Particularities of foreign language learning in childhood. The Smile matters" and the published book based on the defended dissertation on the topic: "The Magic Teacher. Teacher Efficacy and Empathy in Foreign Language

Teaching” as well as a number of publications that clarify key issues related to some features of language acquisition at early age. An overview of significant achievements in modern theory and practice of early language learning in Bulgaria and abroad has been made and presented in texts useful in didactic and practical perspective for students-pedagogues and philologists, as well as for teachers (publications № 1 -6, 9).

The influence on teachers’ motivation and students’ learning achievements has been studied by defining various characteristics and teacher profiles and relating them to psychological constructs such as empathy, locus of control and others. (publications № 1-5, 19, 31, 32, 36).

A study of the factors influencing the successful learning of a second language in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of pedagogical interaction has been conducted. Experimental studies have been conducted in order to clarify the influence of learning strategies and learners’ personal qualities on their learning achievements in a second language acquisition, which is a valuable practical contribution to pedagogical science (publications № 8, 10-12, 14-20).

Modern research projects have been developed and implemented by the candidate related to the acquisition of children's language skills in monolingual and multicultural environments in terms of tracking the manifestations of children's ability to play with language and registering children's transformations of sounds and word forms in a family environment. The usage of expressive forms in different classroom language activities designed for preschool children and conducted by students assistant teachers support language acquisition in children and create a positive emotional environment for communication (publications № 1-5, 9).

A significant contribution to the theory and practice of inclusive education in the field of language learning are the conducted longitudinal researches. The collected data in two-year experimental training has evaluated and validated the

implementation of Narrative Format as a pedagogical model for integrating children and students with special educational needs (publications №1, 6, 7). The major scientific contribution of Assoc. Prof. Ekaterina Sofronieva, PhD is her participation in the creation of a Bulgarian version of the Empathy Rate scale - Systematization Rate, published on the website of the Autism Research Center at Cambridge University, which is a significant research contribution to the methodology of foreign language teaching, as well as the inclusion and social integration of children with special educational needs through foreign language learning (publications № 1, 2, 19, 31, 32).

## CONCLUSION

Assoc. Prof. Ekaterina Nedelcheva Sofronieva, PhD is an established university lecturer, researcher and expert in the field of pedagogical science, as well as in the methodology of foreign language teaching. Her candidacy for this contest meets all requirements and criteria set by the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations for acquiring scientific degrees and awarding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". I would recommend with great conviction the Honorable Members of the Scientific Jury to award Assoc. Prof. Ekaterina Sofronieva, PhD the academic position "PROFESSOR" in scientific field 1. Pedagogical sciences, Professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Education in..., (Subject area: The Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching - preschool and primary school age).

19.11.20

Assoc. Prof. Vesela Kirilova Slavova, PhD