

HABILITATION BOARD DECISION ON THE NOMINATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Masaryk University	
Faculty	Faculty of Education
Procedure field	Pedagogy
Applicant	RNDr. Hana Svobodová, Ph.D.
Applicant's home unit, institution	Department of Geography, Faculty of Education MU
Habilitation thesis	Outdoor education as a powerful way of teaching and learning

Board members

Chair

prof. PhDr. Tomáš Janík, Ph.D., M.Ed.

Faculty of Education, Masaryk University

Members

Prof. Dr. rer. nat. habil. Péter Bagoly-Simó

Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

doc. PaedDr. Hana Horká, CSc.

Faculty of Education, Masaryk University

doc. RNDr. Pavel Mentlík, Ph.D.

Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia

doc. PhDr. Jana Stará, Ph.D.

Faculty of Education, Charles University

Evaluation of the applicant's scholarly/artistic qualifications

The applicant has chosen the topic of outdoor education as a profiling theme of her research and didactic activities. Because of her systematic interest in the topic, she became the head of a research group at the Department of Geography of the FED MU on outdoor education in geographical education and other subjects and on work with gifted students.

Within this group, the applicant has significantly contributed to the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) project *Fieldwork as a strong educational strategy* (principal investigator E. Hofmann, 2016-2018) and the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (TAČR) project *Fieldwork Education System for Elementary Schools* (principal investigator D. Mísařová, 2018-2019). Both projects built on each other - the GAČR project created a methodological background and provided partial research results that were subsequently used in the applied research of the TAČR project in the development of the *Concept of Outdoor Education at Elementary Schools*. Hana Svobodová was one of the leading creators of this concept. She designed its structure and content. For the first time in the Czech Republic, the Concept of Outdoor Education comprehensively defines both the formal aspects of outdoor education, i.e. the external conditions as well as its procedural elements (content, didactic principles and methods) and has been certified by the National Institute for Education. Within both projects, interdisciplinary relationships and continuities were developed, both between natural science and social science subjects, but also linking geographical education to physical education (the intersection of which is the outdoor education), as well as the subject continuity of outdoor

education activities between the science curriculum lower elementary schools and the geography curriculum at higher elementary schools.

The topic of outdoor education is also explored and developed on an international platform within the Erasmus+ KA2 project. The research group headed by Hana Svobodová was approached by the Belgian university VIVES with an offer of international cooperation. Gradually, a partnership of universities and primary schools from four countries - Belgium, Ireland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic - was formed; together they submitted and were awarded the project Teaching, Learning & Adventurous Play Outdoors in Primary Schools (principal investigator for MU H. Svobodová, 2022-2025), which focuses on the practical impact of learning and play outdoors.

Other research topics that the applicant deals with are the concept of geography as a field in education (involvement in the project GAČR Teachers' Perceptions of Geography and Geography Teaching, investigator P. Knecht, 2018-2020), environmental processes and decision-making in the landscape (TAČR project Visualization of the spatial relationships – a tool for understanding landscape function, investigator for MU H. Svobodová, principal investigator Mendel University, 2019- 2021), implementation of geoinformation technologies (GIT) in teaching at schools (participation in the TAČR project The implementation of the Geographic Information System to the elementary school and high school education, investigator D. Mísařová, 2019- 2021).

Published results of the applicant's research activities:

- 44 original research articles published in peer-reviewed journals, of which 21 are listed in the WoS database and 6 are listed in the Scopus database
- 13 scholarly book publications and 3 chapters in scholarly book publications
- 36 articles in conference proceedings (of which 15 proceedings are listed in the WoS database)
- 1 legislative and 1 strategic document
- 8 certified methodologies
- 2 specialized maps
- 1 software
- 9 editorships of thematic proceedings

Hana Svobodová's research results have a great response and are often cited in the scientific community, there are 364 citations to papers, of which 246 are in the international databases WoS and Scopus, and 4 citations to pedagogical works.

Involvement in project activities can be summarized as follows:

- 2x Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (TAČR) project investigator
- 6x member of the TAČR project team
- 2x member of the Czech Science Foundation project team (GAČR)
- 1x investigator of the Erasmus+ project
- 4x member of the project team of projects financed by ministries of the Czech Republic (MMR, MŠMT, MOH, MFA)
- 4x member of the development project team (OP VK, OP VVV)

In addition, the applicant was / is involved in 7 educational or development projects with research focused on pedagogical and didactic topics (development of key competences of teachers, outdoor education system for primary schools, science teacher).

For the results of her creative activity, Hana Svobodová has been awarded several times, repeatedly with the Award of the Dean of the Faculty of Education of MU for the purpose of creative activity (in 2013 and 2019) and in 2022 for the purpose of exemplary pedagogical

work, exceptional project (TA ČR The implementation of the Geographic Information System to the elementary school and high school education).

International cooperation of Hana Svobodová is primarily associated with the international C.A.L.M.A.Z network, of which she became a member in 2014. This network of experts of physical education and geography from different European countries (Czech Republic, Slovenia, Denmark, Croatia and Poland) aims to innovate teaching and research both in both subjects separately and especially in an integrated form. As part of this network, Hana Svobodová on the preparation of a monograph and professional articles and participated in organising of an international conference and summer school in 2018 and 2019.

Among her non-university activities, it is worth mentioning Hana Svobodová's membership in the Czech Geographical Society (since 2010), in which she is a member of the editorial boards of two magazines published by this society - the magazine *Geografické rozhledy* and *Informace České geografické společnosti*.

The habilitation board acknowledges that the applicant is involved in various international research teams and has published extensively both in national and international journals. The habilitation board appreciates that the applicant has over than 21 articles listed in the WoS database covered the fields of geography and pedagogy. Still, the coherence of the research programme could be more consolidated as it bridges a range of heterogeneous topics.

Based on the provided documentation, some members of the committee see unresolved issues concerning co-authorship and share/originality of the candidate's contribution, particularly concerning the work with Petr Vlček. The habilitation board members urge the candidate to provide the missing documentation as soon as possible to clear any concern and doubt.

Conclusion: The applicant's scholarly capabilities **meet** the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Pedagogy.

One member of the habilitation board does not agree that the applicant meets these requirements.

Evaluation of the applicant's pedagogical experience

The applicant has been involved in teaching at the Faculty of Education MU since 2011. She leads professional seminars, exercises and laboratory courses for students of bachelor's and subsequent master's programs, among her main lectured topics are Geography of Production/Non-production Sphere, Geography of Population and Settlements, Regional geography of continents, Social Geography of the Czech Republic, Urban and rural geography, Geography of Education. She taught many exercises outside in the field (Integrated Field Education, Field Practice, Integrated Fieldwork in Abroad).

Hana Svobodová is the guarantor of the bachelor's study program Geography for Education. She has 59 successfully defended bachelor's theses and 32 diploma theses successfully defended. She is the supervisor of one doctoral student.

The applicant's pedagogical activities are also long-term focused on talented secondary and elementary school students. Since 2012, she has taken part in the preparation and realization of the summer camp of the Geographical Olympiad whose aim is to prepare the gifted students for international geographical olympiads. She is also a member of the International Board of the iGeo International Geographical Olympiad and, since 2020, is the chairwoman of the Central Commission of the Geographical Olympiad. For the annual preparation of students to

international competitions, she was awarded six times with a commemorative list from the Minister of Education and in 2021 was awarded the Jaroslav Heyrovský Foundation.

The applicant has created many teaching and study materials and educational texts. Of particular note is the publication "Czech Republic - thematic atlas", an interactive atlas enabling the use of multiple map layers, as well as the publication "Concept for the development of GIT skills in teaching at primary and secondary schools" (at the same time also the website <https://gitdoskol.ped.muni.cz>) to support teaching with GIT in primary and secondary schools. The publication "Concept of Outdoor Education at Elementary Schools" was recognized by the National Institute of Education as a certified methodology for teachers at lower elementary schools and higher elementary schools.

The habilitation board appreciates the applicant's works in topic (Geographical Olympiad) which is relevant in different fields of practice and at the same time is fruitful for research. The habilitation board recognizes the pedagogical activities of the applicant from 2011 which were done in high extent, and across various levels of study programmes. Her teaching bridges Human Geography and Geography Didactics. She is co-author of many textbooks which are close to practice.

Conclusion: The applicant's pedagogical capabilities **meet** the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Pedagogy.

Habilitation thesis evaluation

Hana Svobodová's habilitation thesis is a collection of previously published scholarly works with commentary, namely four research articles and two chapters in scholarly books, published in 2016-2021. The works deal with curricular issues of outdoor education, were written in collaboration with co-authors and were created in connection with projects. The six texts document the development of the applicant's research aims, methodological approaches and methodological practices between 2016 and 2021. The papers are arranged to document the broader context of the author's research interest in outdoor education, demonstrating her contribution to pedagogical practice, educational research and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The reviewers of the habilitation thesis particularly appreciate the following qualities of the habilitation thesis.

Associate Professor Slavík:

"The whole concept shows a clear orientation towards research procedures in the direction from research and its theoretical-methodological background to methodological applications in school practice."

"The overall conception of the research is mainly directed towards the application level with an emphasis on applicability to educational practice or aimed to support the argument in favour of the application of OE in the designed and implemented curriculum. I consider the research procedures and the results and conclusions derived from them to be correct."

"The results of the candidate's research work are well applicable to educational practice, as can be evidenced, among other things, by the successful application of the methodology developed within the project TJ01000127 Field Education System for Primary Schools and by the specific applications of other methodological materials documented in the habilitation file. I think highly of the emphasis on the educational quality of OE in school practice, which is represented by the term curriculum-based outdoor education."

Professor Porubský:

"By presenting and summarising the papers, the author has demonstrated sufficient insight into the subject, based on her own research as part of her participation in the projects she has

conducted. In terms of methodology, this is mostly applied research with the use of a mixed methods research design. Its stated aim is to link research findings to real educational practice, in order to develop a purposeful methodology for the implementation of OE in the curriculum of geography education in primary schools and its application in teaching processes, with emphasis being put on the need for interdisciplinary links with other fields of education."

"The individual papers presented here were written over a period of time within different projects and by different teams of authors. It is therefore natural that their content and methodological aspects or their standard may be different, but in principle I note well prepared papers, which is confirmed by the fact that they have been peer-reviewed and are registered in reputable databases (WoS papers No. 1, 3 and 6). Thus, the author demonstrates her competence to design, implement and conduct educational research at the required, internationally accepted level."

Professor Uhlenwinkel:

"Overall, the applicant shows that she can use quantitative and qualitative research methods accurately and knows of their respective limitations."

The reviewers point out the shortcomings of the habilitation thesis.

Associate Professor Slavík:

"Considering the candidate's emphasis on interdisciplinary integration and taking into account the trans-didactic overlap between disciplines, I would have welcomed more focus on a generalizing theoretical elaboration of the relationships between transdisciplinary concepts (e.g. place, movement, space, time, environment, organism), domain-specific concepts (physical-geographical sphere, socio-economic sphere; movement activities, physical load) and the way they are integrated through key curricular constructs (educational objectives, content, methods, learning tasks)."

Professor Porubský:

"I note that the lack of further specification of what is behind the term 'problem-oriented tasks', which can have diverse connotations, as is the case of the term 'curriculum-based outdoor education', is detrimental to the cause, despite the fact that it is implicitly included in the publications presented."

Professor Uhlenwinkel:

"The six papers show a varying research quality. The three papers published in peer reviewed journals (papers 1, 3 and 6) certainly meet international standards. The presentations are mostly concise and precise. The description of aims, research design, data collection and interpretation are all accurate and hence transparent. This is also true for paper 4, which has been published in the students' section. It is not true for the two book chapters. Paper 2 does not offer any research, but a teaching unit for teacher trainees. Paper 5 first presents a lengthy description of the Czech educational system including the reproduction of curricula content. This is followed by a descriptive table whose content is literally repeated in the text. In summary, one third of the papers does not meet international standards for a habilitation thesis, but two thirds do."

All reviewers agree in the conclusion of their reports that the habilitation thesis meets the requirements for habilitation thesis in the field of Pedagogy. Prof. Uhlenwinkel is also concerned about the level of the applicant's authorship in four papers. Following this objection, all the co-authors of the publications were contacted for their comments.

In the perspective of the habilitation board, the cumulative thesis bridges more than one topical research area. There is a certain methodological variety emerging from this structure, ultimately leading to various degrees of detailedness. Because of this structure, the variety of contributions is also heterogeneous. The committee agrees with reviewer Uhlenwinkel's

assessment that apart from the two book chapters, the candidate's contributions certainly meet international standards.

As previously mentioned, there are certain open queries concerning Petr Vlček's contribution to the book submitted as part of the habilitation thesis. Furthermore, the board advises the candidate to critically review the share of her contributions that, in some cases, seems surprisingly high (even above the required standards in this habilitation field). Still, the committee is under the impression that the candidate might have overestimated some of her contributions, reason why it would be necessary to re-evaluate the values. Given the cumulative nature of the thesis, several topical areas require contextualization and linking. This, in the reading of the habilitation board, has not been sufficiently done. The thesis remains heterogenous in a stronger additive manner.

Conclusion: The applicant's habilitation thesis **does not meet** the requirements expected of habilitation theses in the field of Pedagogy.

Three members of the habilitation board believe the applicant does not meet the requirements. Two members of the board agree that the applicant meets the requirements.

Secret ballot results

Number of board members	5
Number of votes cast	5
Number of votes in favour	2

Board decision

Based on the outcome of the secret vote and following an evaluation of the applicant's scholarly or artistic qualifications, pedagogical experience and habilitation thesis, the board hereby submits a proposal to the scientific board of the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University to

appoint the applicant associate professor of Pedagogy.

terminate the procedure.

Date: Brno, November 3, 2023

prof. PhDr. Tomáš Janík, Ph.D., M.Ed.

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