

REVIEW
by Assoc. prof Dr. Nevyana Georgieva Feschieva, PhD

on a dissertation

prepared by

Yana Toshkova Tosheva

on

**"Professional communication of public health inspector -
opportunities for improvement"**

Supervisors:

Assoc. prof. Stanislava Pavlova, PhD

Assoc. prof. Tsvetelina Tarpomanova, PhD

for awarding of educational and science degree "PhD" in a field of higher education:

7. Health and Sports, professional filed: 7.4. Public Health and scientific specialty "Health
Care Management"

By Order No P-109-486 / 18.11.2021 of Prof. Valentin Ignatov - Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Parashkev Stoyanov" - Varna, based on a report having ref. No 102-2877/04.11.2021 of Prof. Silvia Borisova, PhD and Decision of the Faculty of Public Health of Medical University Varna by Protocol No 173/09.11.2021, I was elected an external member of the Scientific Jury and by Protocol No 1 of the Scientific Jury to submit a review for the dissertation on **"Professional communication of public health inspector - opportunities for improvement"** - for awarding of educational and science degree "PhD" in scientific specialty "Health Care Management", professional filed: 7.4. Public Health and area of higher education 7. Health and Sports

Yana Tosheva was born in 1978. She graduated in 2000 as a Sanitary Inspector (professional bachelor) from the Medical College - Varna and in 2015 as a bachelor in Health Care Management from Medical University - Varna; she completed her Masters degree in the same specialty in 2016. In the period 2001-2016 her professional experience was gained in state

institutions specialized in sanitary control - Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Regional Inspectorate for Protection and Control of Public Health, District Directorate of Food Safety. Since 2016 she has been Assistant at the Medical College to Medical University-Varna. She has postgraduate training in the field of state sanitary control, as well as in pedagogical and psychological issues. She is enrolled for specialization in Medical Pedagogy. She develops in scientific-teaching direction- conducts seminars and practical exercises of the students from the specialty Public Health Inspector (PHI) at the Medical College Varna. She has 11 full-text publications in Bulgarian journals and 2 in foreign journals, as well as co-authorship in a teaching aid. She uses English and Russian languages for scientific communication – both written and spoken. She is a member of the Bulgarian Scientific Society of Public Health and the Bulgarian Society of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Information about the PhD procedure. She was enrolled by Order of the Rector of the Medical University-Varna R-109-431/16.07.2018, on 22.07.2021 a second supervisor was appointed. On 28.10.2021 by a decision of the Departmental Board of the Health Care Department (Protocol No 235/28.10.2021), she was given the right of defence. No irregularities in the procedure were found.

.....General description of the work

The paper submitted by Asst. Yana Toshkova Tosheva contains 175 pages and is illustrated by 11 tables, 62 figures and 6 annexes. The bibliography includes 178 literature sources, of which 126 are in Cyrillic, (including 28 in Russian), 18 are normative documents and 26 - in Latin.

The work is structured in the following well-balanced main sections: Introduction, Chapter I - Literary Review - 48 pages; Chapter II - Objective, tasks and methodology - 6 pages; Chapter III - Results and Discussion - 55 pages; Chapter IV - Approaches to optimizing PHI professional communication - 11 pages; Chapter V - Conclusions, Suggestions, Contributions - 7 pages; Appendices-22 pages; Bibliography-10 pages

The relevance of the dissertation is assumed firstly by its focus on the activities of the main institution for protection of public health at a medium level - the RHI, which in recent years has been rather neglected as an object of studies. The focus of the PhD's research attention on the figure of the Public Health Inspectors (PHI) comes to fill a niche: despite their promotion to the status of a public official and the fact that they largely create the face of state health control to citizens and operators, the problems of their functioning remain in the background. The COVID-19 pandemic in the last 2 years has shown in practice the negative consequences of this underestimation and reinforces the relevance of this thesis. The

PhD student has selected the professional communication of PHI as a framework within which to explore and discuss the issues of this important professional group in the public health sector. There is sufficient ground to obtain results that will benefit future optimization of its activities.

Evaluation of the dissertation

In the dissertation **introduction** the PhD student clearly justifies the importance of the researched problem.

The literature review is geared towards the two essential elements of the problem under consideration: communication theoretical issues in the work environment and public health inspector as object of study- characteristics of professional activity, factors influencing their professional communication.

In the first, smaller part of the review, the PhD student, with good knowledge, presents the styles of communication. In the second part, she analyses the "public health inspector" as a statutory position, position of a civil servant, types of roles in society and in the state health inspection team. This analysis is contributory, primarily not only it is lacking in our literature, but also it has been extended to take into account external and internal factors: impact of changes in health legislation, reforms in the structure of the RHI, public perceptions and attitudes towards the PHI, workload, and workplace conflicts. Using analysis the PhD student has structured a clear scheme of the functions and activities of the PHI, corresponding to the Bulgarian legislation. On its ground she has derived the requirements for their personality and preparation with emphasis on communication skills. National and international experience in training related to professional communication of PHI (both in HEIs and as lifelong learning) is discussed. The PhD student personal attitude towards the issues discussed enriches the literature review. A very important merit of the work is that for the first time, the activities of PHI are explored in the fullest possible way, and the result obtained can have an individual existence and be a starting point for future research and practical solutions in the field of public health. In this particular case, it has become the basis for development of an adequate dissertation methodology.

Assessment of objective, tasks and methodology.

The purpose of the dissertation is formulated: *To investigate the professional communication of PHI in order to reveal the possibilities of optimizing their communication skills throughout their work.*

To accomplish this objective, five tasks have been planned which include identifying factors of the professional environment affecting professional communication, exploring

opinions of PHIs and experts on the same issue, outlining PHI professional and personality profile as controlling body in the process of professional communication, developing approaches to optimize professional communication of PHI at work.

Four hypotheses are introduced. The subjects and objects (PHIs and experts) of the study are well described. The study covers: i. PH inspectors (n = 116) working in the Regional Health Inspectorates - Varna, Ruse, Dobrich, Shumen, Razgrad, Silistra, Yambol, and the studied subjects represent 78% of the PHI manpower in the respective inspectorates, which is an achievement in the current epidemic situation; ii. experts - doctors and chief inspectors (n = 16) working in the system of the Regional Health Inspectorate or other institution related to public health. The stages of the study are very well presented.

The **research methods** used - documentary, questionnaire, in-depth interview, SWOT-analysis are relevant to the set tasks. I positively evaluate the combination of quantitative with qualitative methods and especially the in-depth interview use, as well as the subject areas under review upon its conducting. A wide range of statistical methods was applied - descriptive and estimation methods, hypothesis testing methods -four types, correlation analysis (Pearson and Spearman coefficients) and logistic regression analysis. Examination of the thesis showed that each of these was adequately applied and enriched the analysis of the results.

The methodology of the dissertation meets the contemporary requirements, proves the PhD student's preparation for research work and guarantees the reliability of the obtained results.

The results and discussion are presented in five paragraphs according to the objectives and methods applied. The results are statistically sound, very well illustrated. Data from the in-depth interviews, which go beyond the task on professional communication and provide a direction for future research on PHI and public health work of the Regional Health Inspectorate are of particular interest.

Chapter four "Approaches to optimizing PHI professional communication" is an essential part of the dissertation because, based on the concrete results of her research, the PhD student has developed practical approaches and proposes solutions that can make a difference in managing processes at the level of Regional Health Inspectorate.. Two models are developed: 1. *A model to optimize professional communication*, which is a system for monitoring, controlling and analyzing behavioral characteristics of PHI and prevention of occupational stress; 2. *A model of PHI training* through introduction of specialized programs for development of communication skills and conflict resolution.

The conclusions of the dissertation are based on its results. The missing system of building professional communication skills in PHIs can be compensated through interventions on psycho-social factors and provision of training. In this regard relevant suggestions have been made to various institutions- educational and career venues of public health inspectors.

I agree with the formulated contributions and I would like to highlight only the most important features of the work that are the basis of the contributions:

- Current, neglected topic so far, good design of the study, incl. combining qualitative and quantitative methods, precise statistics, identifying dependencies that give new ideas for research and practical work;
- For the first time, the activity of the PHI has been subjected to a comprehensive analysis and the influence of professional environment factors on its communication process and activity has been studied;
- A professional and personality profile of PHI is outlined;
- A SWOT analysis of PHI professional communication and behavior is done;
- Factors influencing PHI professional communication are identified and approaches and models for its improvement are developed.
- The ideas of usefulness of the research work have resulted in a number of practical-applied contributions

➤ **Abstract and publications on the work**

The abstract to the dissertation reflects the structure of the work precisely and contains the most important results and conclusions of the research.

There are three publications related to the dissertation topic which first author is the PhD student.

Personal impressions. Accurate, scientifically conscientious, she has proved her ability to learn and apply new research methods and to develop herself in the research and teaching field.

Conclusion

I consider that the dissertation work of Yana Toshkova Tosheva on "**Professional communication of public health inspector - opportunities for improvement**" in terms of relevance, volume and quality of work, as well as the significance of the contributions meets the requirements of the Law for the development of academic staff in the

Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation of Medical University-Varna.

Given all of the above, I give my positive assessment with conviction and recommend the the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to award the educational and science degree "PhD" in the scientific specialty "Health Care Management" to Yana Toshkova Tosheva.

23.12.2021

Reviewer:

/Assoc. prof Dr. Nevyana Georgieva Feschieva, Phd/