

STANDPOINT

by Professor Ivanka Stambolova, PhD
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CONCERNING: THE DEFENCE OF A DISSERTATION WORK FOR AWARDING THE SCIENTIFIC DEGREE OF 'DOCTOR OF SCIENCES' IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION 7. 'PUBLIC HEALTH AND SPORTS', PROFESSIONAL DIRECTION 7.4. 'PUBLIC HEALTH' AND SCIENTIFIC SPECIALITY OF 'PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT'

According to Order R-109-371/November 4, 2024, of the Rector of the Medical University 'Prof. Paraskev Stoyanov' of Varna, Professor Dimitar Raykov, MD, PhD, DSc, as external member of a scientific jury I am assigned by the Chairman of the scientific jury to prepare a standpoint in relation to the defence of a dissertation work for the acquisition of the scientific degree of 'Doctor of Sciences' by Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Atanasova Varneva, PhD.

I received all the materials necessary for the preparation of the present standpoint. The standpoint of mine complies with the Law for the development of the academic staff in Republic of Bulgaria, the Statute-book for its application and the Statute-book of the Medical University of Varna.

Biographical data

Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Atanasova Varneva, PhD, was born in 1963 in the city of Varna. In 1983, she graduates in medicine from the Institute for Training of Health Cadres with Secondary Specialized Education of Varna in the speciality of 'dental technician' and in 1990, in the Institute for Teachers in Practice 'M. Kalinin' in the town of Sliven where she acquires lecturer's qualification. In 1994, based on a qualification examination, she acquires a high medical education in the High Medical Institute of Varna in the same speciality. During the period from 1983 to 1986, she works as dental technician in the District Stomatological Polyclinic of Varna and in 1984, she becomes part-time lecturer in the High Medical Institute of Varna, while during the period from 1986 to 2006, she is lecturer in practice in the High Medical Institute/Medical College of Varna, too.

In 2000, Assoc. Prof. Varneva successfully graduates with the educational and qualification degree of 'bachelor' from the Higher Medical Institute of Plovdiv in the speciality of 'Public health management' with a professional qualification of 'Head of Nursing Care and Lecturer in a College'. During the next year, she receives training and successfully graduates from the National Academy of Sports 'Vasil Levski' in the speciality of 'sports psychology' with the educational and qualification degree of 'master'. Since 2011, she is included as independently training PhD student at the Faculty of Public Health of the Medical University of Varna and in 2013, she acquires the educational and scientific degree of 'Doctor' in the scientific speciality of 'Social medicine and organization of public health and pharmacy' with a dissertation

work on the theme of 'Retrospection, analysis and socio-psychological problems during the training and realization of the 'professional bachelor' in the speciality of 'dental technician'. Since 2015, she is 'Associate Professor' in 'Public health management' at the Department of Clinical Medical Sciences of the Faculty of Dental Medicine at the Medical University of Varna, and since 2021, she is also 'Associate Professor' in the Educational Sector of 'dental technician' at the Medical College, Medical University of Varna.

Member of the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians.

Winner of Medical College of Varna awards in 2017.

According to the academic information of the University Library of the Medical University of Varna under No 629/July 29, 2024, the following publications, citations and scientific profiling of the scientific output necessary according to the requirements for the scientific degree of 'doctor of sciences' have been presented:

1. A dissertation work for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of 'Doctor'
2. A dissertation work for the acquisition of the scientific degree of 'Doctor of sciences'
3. Publications in the indicator of G8 - 14 items
4. Total in the indicators of G5-G9 - 480 scores
5. Citations in the indicators of D10-D12 - a total of 30 items, 170 scores.

Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Varneva, PhD, participates in the present competition for the acquisition of the scientific degree of 'Doctor of sciences' with a dissertation work on the theme of 'Professional uniting and development of the activity of the dental technicians in Bulgaria'.

General aspects of the dissertation work

The dissertation work is elaborated in four chapters and contains 239 pages. It is illustrated with 19 tables, 24 figures, 24 photographs, four schemes, and nine appendices. The bibliographic list includes 281 literature sources, of which there are 204 in Cyrillic and 77 in Latin.

The present scientific work is the result of the efforts and interests of the author in the field of professional associations of dental technicians in Bulgaria since their emergence after 1878 to the present day. The topic of the dissertation work 'Professional uniting and development of the activity of dental technicians in Bulgaria' is interesting and significant, as it contains an in-depth study of the historical data about the profession from its emergence and development. In more recent history after 1990, the association 'Union of Dental Technicians in Bulgaria' transforms itself into a self-governing subject, however, for long years (until 2018), it represents the interests of the managers of dental laboratories only. In 2019, the class of the dental technicians in our country creates its own, legitimate class organization, in which all the people practising this profession in the country are members.

Being an important member of the dental team, the dental technicians have an essential role for the maintenance of the oral health and treatment of the patients. The digitalization in the profession, the new technologies and materials in the dental treatment and prosthesis require from them the performance of a continuous education and a high professional level of fulfillment of the duties.

The author has a rich own experience as lecturer for the students in the speciality of 'dental technician' and researcher in this field as well as member of the governing body of the class organization which enables her to create and propose 'Model for the development of the activity' and 'Strategy for the development of the profession'.

The dissertation work of Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Varneva, PhD, meets the requirement for a completed work. It is structured in the following manner:

Title page - 1 page
Contents - 2 pages
Abbreviations used - 4 pages
Introduction - 5 pages
Literature survey - 60 pages
Purpose and tasks - 1 page
Contingent and methods - 8 pages
Own results and discussion - 50 pages
SWOT-analysis - 2 pages
Model for development of the profession and strategy - 10 pages
Conclusions, recommendations, proposals, and contributions - 5 pages
References and appendices - 22 pages
Publications on the topic - 1 page.

Theoretical survey

In the literature survey, the origin of the class organizations in public health and their place and role in the trade-union movement in Bulgaria are considered. The literature survey presented gives rich historical information about the medical aid in Bulgaria between the 19th and 20th century as well as about the first class organizations of the physicians, medical auxiliaries, pharmacists, dentists, dental technicians, nurses, and midwives. The historical information is investigated in detail and it describes 'the dental technical art' of the members of the first associations which have own statute, publishing, governing organs, and professional holiday.

The author establishes that all the foreign class organizations analyzed organize, control and motivate their members to perform postgraduate education which aims at providing the qualitative health care to the patients in the field of dental medicine./

Assoc. Prof. Varneva follows-up the origin and development of the activity of the dental technicians in Bulgaria. She investigates the foreign experience concerning the activity and education of the dental technicians and makes a comparative analysis with that one in our country. She establishes that the professional qualities required for the practising of the profession and for the development of the activity are identical. A special education is needed for the practising of the profession, however, in some countries over the world, it is as a part-time form of education while in other ones, it is as a regular form of education with a duration from two to six years. In the literature survey, two types of dental technicians are indicated, as in one type, of those working in laboratories, specializations and certification are carried out.

The investigation and collection of historical information on the theme in such a volume and direction has not been done in our country yet and that is why it represents an interest and has significance for the scientific community.

Contingent and methods

The purpose of the dissertation work, the ten tasks set relevant to it and the instruments used are correctly and clearly formulated and described and entirely meet the requirements of such a work. The methods used include a rich complex of analyses and investigation of the experience

from contemporary international practices. Some 378 persons, practising dental technicians and lecturers, who are a representative sample of the general totality are covered.

A large volume of scientific literature from databases such as ResearchGate, Medline, Pub Med, Google scholar, eLibrary. ru, Scopus by using of the key words dental technician associations, professional organizations, dental technician activities and зубной техник is analyzed by the author. The information is comparatively scanty and insufficient for the profession of 'dental technician' as the greater part of the publications detected is related to the profession of 'dentist'.

An extraordinarily rich complex of mutually supplementing research methods which contribute to an objective and multiaspect investigation on the theme is made use of.

Discussion

The discussion enclosed is profound and presents the results from the examined opinion of experts in terms of the awareness and attitudes to the development of the profession as well as an analysis of the normative order regulating the professional activities which the dental technician can accomplish according to administration or independently. The language and style of the discussion are scientific and corresponding to this work. The discussion leads to concrete conclusions and standpoints which are well-grounded and logical.

Conclusions

Based on the profound investigations of the literature sources, documents, in-depth interviews and the other results from the own studies carried out, the author deduces ten comprehensive and logical conclusions in terms of the origin and development of the associations of the dental technicians during the 19th and 20th century in our country, the creation of BADT in 2019, the experience of other countries concerning their professional associations of the dental technicians which goals and activity are similar - preservation of the working places, enhancement of the professional qualification by means of continuous postgraduate education, and control of the activity being their basic priorities. The lecturers in the speciality meet the contemporary requirements and keep up their qualification by means of the forms of the continuous education as they by themselves express a desire to participate as mentors of the courses for the continuous postgraduate education in order to share their experience and skills on desired problems. The results from the SWOT-analysis of the activity in the speciality of 'Dental technician' elaborated by Assoc. Prof. Varneva demonstrate a predominance of the strengths over the weaknesses and of the opportunities over the threats. This enables a further successful development and improvement of this professional activity in Bulgaria.

As a result from the profound investigation carried out and from the conclusions deduced from it, Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Varneva, PhD, addresses concrete recommendations to the Bulgarian Association of Dental Technicians and its governing body, to the medical universities and colleges where the speciality is taught, to the professionals in dental technique themselves and to the legislator, in order to enable the realization of legislative initiatives concerning their activity. It should be given full consideration if this association could independently perform a sufficiently strong defence and education of the dental technicians in case they are not members of the Bulgarian Association of the Professionals in Nursing Care, and why it is necessary that they are not members of it, too, which, in a democratic society like our should follow their free will and desire.

Contributions

Contributions of theoretical nature:

1. The theory and knowledge of the historical development of the professional association and the class organization of the dental technicians during the period from 1910 to 2022 are enriched.
2. The historical periodization of the development of the Central dental technical association, Union of the Dental Technicians in Bulgaria and BADT enables their identification, the follow-up of their priorities and their activity and, to a certain extent, of their mass of members.
3. The characteristics, policies and strategies of the professional organizations of the dental technicians abroad are studied which can help in improving the work of BADT.
4. The original methods for postgraduate education of the dental technicians in our country are elaborated.
5. The original methods for the tutorship within the education of the dental technicians during the learning practice and the pregraduation probation are elaborated.
6. The short methods for the accreditation of the ITML/MTL at the MDC as a basis for postgraduate education and two corresponding forms are elaborated.
7. The programme in 'Introduction into research' for PGE of the specialists in dental technique is elaborated.

Contributions of practical and applied nature:

1. The concrete recommendations towards BADT, the three Bulgarian medical universities and the medical colleges at them aiming at fulfilment of the statutory orders in response to the expectations of the association of the dental technicians are addressed.
2. It is proved that the postgraduate education of the dental technicians can be performed either in the same educational institutions, or in centres for postgraduate education by proven specialists who have been certified by BADT.
3. The SWOT-analysis of the activity in the speciality of dental technician is carried out.
4. The model for the development of the activity in the speciality of dental technician is elaborated.
5. The strategy for the development of the profession of dental technician is elaborated.

Author's dissertation summary

The author's dissertation summary enclosed is of a volume of 76 pages and completely meets the requirements.

Candidate's scientific publications related to the dissertation work on the theme

The candidate submits 12 publications related to the dissertation work on the theme.

In conclusion:

The dissertation work of Assoc. Prof. Mihaela Varneva, PhD, meets the criteria listed in the Law for the development of the academic staff in Republic of Bulgaria, the Statute-book for its application and the Statute-book for the development of the academic staff in the Medical University 'Prof. Paraskev Stoyanov' of Varna and I recommend that she should be awarded the scientific degree of 'doctor of sciences' in the speciality of 'Public health management'.

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
2016/679

December 11, 2024.

Prof. Ivanka Stambolova, PhD