

REVIEW

by Prof. Silviya Borisova Dimitrova, PhD, DSc
Head of Department of Health Care
Faculty of Public Health
Medical University „Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov“, Varna

regarding dissertation work on the theme

**THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF MIDWIFE -
INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES
of Zhana Georgieva Pavlovska**

For awarding of educational and scientific degree “Doctor“
in the field of Higher Education 7. Health and sports
professional field 7.4 Public health
specialty "Health care management"

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Sonya Koleva Toncheva, PhD, DSc

Following an order No P- 109-277, July 31, 2020, by the Rector of Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University of Varna, in accordance with Protocol N 1, August 03, 2020, at a meeting of the Scientific Council, I have been assigned to present a review on a procedure for acquiring an educational and scientific degree of Doctor to Zhana Georgieva Pavlovska.

This review has been prepared according Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for development of the academic staff at Varna Medical University.

Procedure Information

Following an Order by the Rector of Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University of Varna No P-109-556, September 19, 2018, Zhana Georgieva Pavlovska applied for a part-time PhD degree under the doctoral program Health Care Management. A protocol for successfully passing the doctoral exam has been submitted. Based on an conclusion by council of the Health Care departmen, regarding readiness to defend and a proposal for Scientific Council, Mrs.

Zhana Pavlovska passed with the right of defence in accordance with the Order by the Rector of Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov Medical University of Varna No P-109-277, July 31, 2020.

A set of materials, including the required documents has been presented in relation to the procedure:

- PhD thesis
- author's abstract of the PhD thesis
- declarations for originality, for authenticity of the documents presented for the defence
- copies of the scientific publications
- autobiography, diplomas, protocols, orders, etc.

The presented set of materials on paper and electronic media is in accordance with the procedure of acquiring an educational and scientific degree Doctor and Rules of Varna Medical University.

Professional biography and career development

In 1983 Mrs. Zhana Georgieva Pavlovska graduated her basic education in Institute for training of health professionals „Dr. Nencho Nikolaev” - Varna, specialty „Midwifery”. She acquired a Bachelor's degree in Health Care (2000) and Master's degree in Health Care Management (2007) at Pleven Medical University.

Mrs. Zhana Pavlovska started her professional development right after her graduation, she began work as midwife. In the period 1987-1994, she continued her professional realization in the Neonatology Ward - Intensive Care Unit, Gynecological Ward at „Stefan Cherkezov“ multiprofile hospital for active treatment in Veliko Turnovo. In 1995 she worked as a senior midwife in the Gynecological Ward. During the professional realization Zhana Pavlovska introduced a project „Improving the quality of postoperative care in the Gynecological Ward at „Stefan Cherkezov“ multiprofile hospital for active treatment in Veliko Turnovo, by introducing a care plan and reducing postoperative stay”.

In the period 2011 - 2015 she managed as a senior midwife the Obstetrics and Gynecology Ward at „Stefan Cherkezov“ multiprofile hospital for active treatment in Veliko Turnovo, where she implemented the project "Vision for management, optimization and improvement of the quality of health care”.

From 2015 - to present, Zhana Pavlovska is an assistant professor at Varna Medical University Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov', Department of Health Care, Veliko Turnovo Affiliate. She has more than 5 years of teaching experience, and trains midwife students at the Veliko Turnovo. She actively assists in the administrative and organisational activity of Veliko

Tarnovo Affiliate. All the above shows potential for scientific development and attitude towards academic research in the area of health care.

Zhana Pavlovska participates in two projects: „Social inclusion” of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for those working in maternity wards and working directly with babies and young children with disabilities in 2014 and in the project „Closer to work ” under the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" as a mentor and trainer of freshmen midwives and nurses (2013-2014).

She features by active participation in a public activities in her professional activity.

In 2018 she held an exchange experience with students and teachers at the Macedonian High School, Bitola, Republic of Northern Macedonia (FYROM then). Assistant professor Zhana Pavlovska’s scientific interests are in the field of health care, education, pedagogy and health care management.

The list of publications, related to the dissertation contains four of them. The publications have been presented in full text to the documents for the defence. The same adequately reflect the production of dissertation research.

Descriptive characteristics of the dissertation work

The dissertation work developed by Jana Georgieva Pavlovska is presented on 220 pages, including: Title page - 1 page; Contents - 2 pages; Used abbreviations - 1 page; Introduction - 3 pages; Chapter One. Literature review - topicality of the problem - 54 pages; Chapter two. Methodology and organization of scientific research - 18 pages; Chapter three. Results and discussion - 73 pages; Chapter four. Innovative approaches for evaluation of continuing education - 32 pages; Chapter five. Conclusions, recommendations and contributions - 7 pages; References - 12 pages; Appendices - 16 pages; Publications related to the topic of the dissertation - 1 page.

The dissertation is structured in an optimal ratio. It includes all the basic elements of the generally accepted structure in our country for presenting a dissertation work. The text is illustrated with 69 figures and 8 tables.

The appendices are 6 and contain questionnaires for the studied groups, a questionnaire, a form for informed consent for participation in scientific research, information about the studied persons. The bibliographic list includes 205 titles, of which 96 in cyrillic, 67 in latin and 42 internet sources.

All the cited titles are directly related to the studied problem. The scientific work distinguishes by an academic style of presentation. The content and structure demonstrate the author's abilities to focus on a specific problem, to correctly select the materials and methods of scientific research, to analyze and work on scientific data and derivation of summaries with scientific-theoretical and scientific-practical value.

Assessment of topic's relevance

The topic of the dissertation work „**Continuing education of midwives - innovative educational approaches**“ is contemporary and significant. The problem of professional improvement, the career development, as well as the synchronization of professional competencies with European strategies, policies and practices is extremely important in scientific and practical terms. One of the key challenges for healthcare management is providing continuous updating of the knowledge and skills of the staff, thus increasing the value of human potential and the efficiency of its use. In the analysis of the literature proves that the medical professionals, successfully overcome the challenges in professional development, through specializations and continuous training for work in specific areas of medical care.

The advisability of the topic and the formulated aim and tasks are a result of the fact, that the time we live in and realize professionally ourselves, faces us to new professional challenges, what require new educational approaches to motivate midwives and ensure effective and safe obstetric practice. The PhD student has studied the continuing education of medical professionals and considers continuing education as a significant focus in the process of improvement through lifelong learning. The professional competence of Zhana Pavlovska allows to assess the need for high quality, efficient and safe health care, which are based on continuous professional development and self-improvement.

The application of professional standards of care can serve as a basis for developing innovative approaches to assessing continuing education.

Dissertation work structure

Chapter One. Literature review - topicality of the problem is presented in nine parts:

- The concept of a “learning society” and the new educational paradigm for “lifelong learning”;;
- Key regulations supporting the continuing education of medical professionals and midwives;

- Interpretations of continuing education in scientific, applied literature and practice in different countries;
- Objectives of continuing education, scope and categorization;
- Accreditation and financing of continuing education;
- Approaches to assessing the results of continuing education;
- Educational and organizational aspects in the continuing education of the regulated profession "Midwifery" in Bulgaria;
- Overview of continuing education of midwives in 30 European countries.

The theoretical overview of various theories, models and factors of the continuing education of medical professionals are presented in a logical sequence. The used literature sources - scientific publications of Bulgarian and foreign researchers, as well as official national and international legislative, normative documents and analyzes are quantitative enough. The exposition is thorough, written accurately and clearly. The literary review is of a **contributory character**. Presents the need to derive approaches to continuing education management. The factors influencing the learning process have been studied. A research of the essence of the concept „continuing education” and the vocational education system was conducted. Regulatory documents of the EU and Bulgaria are considered, different concepts of continuing education as part of lifelong learning. Accreditation systems and the process of evaluating learning outcomes are presented in detail and analytically. It is useful to thoroughly study the educational and organizational aspects in the continuing education of the regulated profession "Midwifery" in Bulgaria.

Facts about the good awareness of the author and its approach to the problems are demonstrated. The doctoral student has in-depth knowledge of the developed topic. Zhana Pavlovska's theoretical reasoning and generalizations show a comprehensive knowledge of the issues and the ability to discuss, creatively and freely citing a data and facts from the literature.

Aim, problems, methodology and organization of the research. The aim of the dissertation work is formulated precisely and clearly - based on an analysis of continuing midwife's education in European systems and surveyed opinion of different groups of respondents, a SWOT analysis of the existing reality in our country to be made and an innovative model for evaluating the results of continuing education to be proposed.

Based on proven results a Model for assessment of continuing education, with appropriate tools to ensure objectivity to be proposed.

They are formulated **8 tasks**, for the implementation of which are used documentary - content method, quality content - analysis of documents, sociological and statistical method. The research were conducted in the period 2017 – 2020 in medical and educational institutions.

The organization and methodology of the study are described in detail and in conscientiously. The opinion of three groups of respondents was surveyed. Signs are defined for each of the groups. The opinion of midwives was researched (n=324); the opinion of students was researched from the specialty "Midwifery" in MU - Sofia, MU - Pleven, „Angel Kanchev” University of Ruse, MU – Varna and the affiliates at MU in the cities of Sliven, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen (n=104); health care managers (midwives/nurses) (n=58); habilitated lecturers with basic medical education "Midwifery" and "Nurse" from MU - Sofia, MU - Pleven, „Angel Kanchev” University of Ruse, MU - Varna and the affiliates of MU in the cities of Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen (n= 12).

The methodology with stages of fulfilment of the research has been presented, as well as the methods of gathering the information and its processing.

The materials and methods are presented for each task. Objective methodologies are substantiated, providing an opportunity to obtain real and reproducible results. The methodologies are described in detail. The study was conducted conscientiously and consistently structured and documented. The presented material is reliable, convincing and sufficient for the logically presented results and summarized conclusions.. Modern statistical methods such as correlation, variation, comparative and χ^2 analysis are used.

The results of author's own research are presented in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. They fully cover the set tasks and are correctly presented.

Chapter three is developed in six sections, corresponding to the research goals and objectives.

The results of the first task present an overview and comparative analysis of the systems for continuing obstetric training in Bulgaria and Europe in terms of legal regulation, licensing, organization, control, financing and stimulation of activities. Accreditation systems and the process of evaluating learning outcomes are skilfully analyzed. It is useful to thoroughly study the educational and organizational aspects in the continuing education of the regulated profession "Midwife" in Bulgaria. The importance of continuing education of midwife is derived.

The results of the second task present competence, attitude and readiness to participate in activities related to professional development and continuous professional development. The

opinion of the heads of health care on the quality, advantages and difficulties in conducting continuing education has been studied and analyzed.

The opinion of students studying in the specialty "Midwife" for continuing education has been analysed. An object of survey and analysis is the opinion of health care managers regarding the quality, advantages and difficulties in conducting continuing education. The results of the fourth, fifth and sixth tasks present a study of the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the threats and opportunities for continuing education of midwives in Bulgaria.

Continuing education is a necessity to supplement professional knowledge and skills. Based on a thorough analysis, the PhD student outlines the need to encourage structures in the professional field to increase the competencies of medical professionals in the workplace.

The obtained results prove the need to develop and implement new approaches for control and evaluation of continuing education.

The acquisition of additional theoretical and practical training for obstetric care would lead to an increase in the quality of health care.

Based on extensive research experience, the doctoral student identifies the main components for effective management of the learning process, according to which an Algorithm for effective management of continuing education has been developed. The algorithm includes five main steps to achieve the desired quality results. They are defined needs have been identified and the necessary components for achieving organized control and evaluation have been identified..

With high commitment Zhana Pavlovska looking decision for the full and quality continuing education. As a result of the performed analyzes on the seventh and eighth task, a **Model for assessment of continuing education** has been proposed. The proposed Model is a self-developed methodology, adapted to the process of ensuring the quality of training.

Skillfully deduces the need to change current practice. A toolkit for assessing continuing education has been developed. A professional development assessment card and a professional development plan are proposed.

The model for assessment of continuing education is presented as part of an overall quality system in continuing education and reliable information for making decisions on professional and career development of midwife.

Expected changes are clearly and precisely outlined - awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of activities; planning long-term strategies for professional performance and development; personal responsibility for the implementation of the planned

activities and achieving the goals; planning of activities according to the short-term and long-term development goals.

The proposed Model for assessment of continuing education and the developed tools will help to increase the awareness of the realm of Midwifery and will increase the motivation of midwives for more active involvement in continuing education activities. This will guarantee quality results in obstetric practice, which will serve as a basis for an objective model of remuneration linked to professional competence.

The results achieved by the PhD student in the overall study allow to make a number of summaries and conclusions on each of the tasks.

The conclusions, recommendations and contributions from the dissertation are presented in the conclusions, recommendations and contributions from the dissertation work are presented in Chapter Five. Assistant Professor Zhana Pavlovska formulates 8 main conclusions related to the system of continuing education. The PhD student makes recommendations for evaluation and control of the continuing education. The recommendations are addressed to the Bulgarian Association of Healthcare Professionals and Employers.

The contributions of the dissertation work are relevant and of great importance for the training of medical specialists and in particular the professional competencies of the midwife. The contributions are the personal work of Assistant Professor Zhana Pavlovska, result of her teaching, scientific and practical activities. I accept the contributions formulated in this way, reflecting and at the same time maximally synthesizing the essence of the dissertation work submitted for evaluation.

Contributions of theoretical character:

1. An analysis of the current regulations in Bulgaria and Europe, regulating the issues of continuing education of midwives and the safety of obstetric practices, is done.

The international experience in 30 European countries concerning the regulation, organization, accreditation, financing and stimulation of the CE for midwives is studied.

3. A detailed SWOT analysis of the continuing education of midwives in Bulgaria is executed.

4. A survey of regular midwives, students and health care managers is conducted and the leading motives for participation of midwives in continuing education and the attitudes of students to be included in the process concerning their professional growth are determined.

5. The leading factors hindering the effective continuing education of midwives are identified.

6. A Continuing education quality assessment model for midwives is theoretically substantiated and the need for introduction of unified accreditation of continuing education is proved through an executed standardized interview with habilitated lecturers.

Contributions of practical applied character:

- The importance of the ongoing training of the midwife for providing quality and safe care in the obstetric practice is proven.
- An Algorithm for effective continuing education operation is developed.
- A Continuing education assessment model and tools are created, including a Professional development assessment card of the midwife and a Professional portfolio.
- A proposal for unified accreditation of continuing education is done, which contains: accreditation body, procedure for its establishment and accreditation standards.

In connection with the dissertation work, the PhD student Zhana Pavlovska presents 4 publications, of which three are independent author and one is a leading co-author. The publications are published in the "Nursing" Journal, the "Health Care" journal, as well as a collection of conference reports.

I accept the author's abstract of the PhD thesis, which in terms of structure presents its substantial points. It is developed in a volume of 60 pages, illustrated with figures and tables. Properly structured, written in clear and precise language reflects the full developed problems and conclusions.

Personal impressions

I have known Assistant Professor Zhana Pavlovska since her inception of Affiliate in Veliko Tarnovo at MU-Varna and I have witnessed her professional development. I highly appreciate her purposefulness, precision and responsibility. Assistant Professor Zhana Pavlovska stands out with loyalty, correctness in relations and research. Her qualities such as calmness, confidence and goodwill establish her as a good professional, teacher and colleague.

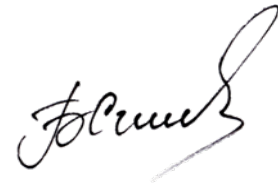
In conclusion

The dissertation work „**The continuing education of midwives - innovative educational approaches**“, presented by Zhana Georgieva Pavlovska for awarding of educational and scientific degree of **Doctor** has been developed on a current topic, well placed and executed as a scientific research, there are contributions of cognitive, confirmatory and methodological

character. It contains scientific and applied scientific results, which represent an original contribution and correspond to Law on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Regulations with it for development of the academic staff at Varna Medical University. She has presented materials and dissertation results fully comply with the requirements of Law on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The dissertation work shows theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the doctoral student in the specialty, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent research.

The aim and tasks are clearly formulated and developed. Research and scientific judgments are correct, based on statistical evidence. Significant contributions and conclusions have been made to the practice.

I believe that the dissertation meets all the requirements of awarding of educational and scientific degree Doctor, Specialty "Health care management", professional field 7.4 Public health in Higher Education 7. Health and sports and I give my positive assessment, and suggest to the respected Scientific Jury that Zhana Georgieva Pavlovska should be awarded the educational and scientific degree of Doctor, for 'Health Care Management', for the needs of the Department of Health Care, Veliko Turnovo Affiliate.



September, 11, 2020
Varna

Reviewer:
Prof. Silviya Borisova Dimitrova, PhD, DSc