

STATEMENT

by Prof. Dr. Maria Anastasova Semerdjieva, MD

Dean of Faculty of Public Health, Medical University-Plovdiv

Member of the Scientific Jury according to the Order № P109-196/16.03.2023 of the dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Professional field of study: 7.4.Public Health, Doctoral Programme "Health Care Management"

Author: Zhivka Georgieva Margosyan

Form of PhD studies: full-time doctoral student at the Department of Health Care, Sliven Branch of Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" Varna

on the topic: "EXPLORING THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF HEALTH CARE SPECIALISTS TO WORK IN A NURSERY"

Scientific supervisor: Assist. Prof. Anna Georgieva, PhD

GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE PROCEDURE AND THE PHD STUDENT

The submitted set of materials on electronic and paper media in accordance with the requirements for obtaining the PhD degree according to the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations of Medical University - Varna.

Zhivka Georgieva Margosyan graduated from secondary special education with a specialty of nurse-child profile at IPHSSSE "Dr. Petar Beron" - Sliven, and in 1996 upgrades her professional skills in the same specialty at the Medical Institute Sliven. In 2001 she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Social Activities at the "St. Cyril and Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo. In the next three years she focused his interests on economic sciences and graduated from two master's programmes in Finance and Business Management - Health Management at the "St. Cyril and Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo. In connection with her future professional plans, in 2015 she acquired a third Master's degree in Health Care Management at MU "Prof. "Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna.

She started her professional career in 1982 as a nurse in the "Dr. I. Seliminski" Hospital, Sliven - Infectious Diseases Department. Since 2015 after successfully passing the competition, she holds the position of "Assistant" at MU- Varna, Branch-Sliven.

She speaks Russian and English at a good level.

TOPIC RELEVANCE

The Bulgarian legislator defines nurseries as organisationally separate structures in which medical and other specialists carry out the care, education and training of children from three months to three years of age. The leading role of health professionals in nurseries is emphasized. Nurses are responsible for the overall work with the group, including conducting activities with the children under the guidance of the nursery teacher and with their participation.

At the same time, the knowledge and skills of medical professionals from the basic training are oriented mainly towards the medical aspects of assistance, while topics such as specifics in early childhood, psychological needs of children and their parents, the influence of the family environment and family-centered practices, capacity development to support children and families for positive parenting and early stimulation of children are poorly addressed. The need for continuous training and updating of the available knowledge, skills and experience in medical knowledge, technique and technology is undeniable. Continuing medical education should maintain, update and extend the knowledge and skills acquired during studies and specialisation. However, there is no requirement for nursery medical staff to have additional specialisation to work with young children, focused on activities beyond purely medical care of the child. Decisions about continuing professional development are individual in nature, and research shows that nurses in general rarely participate in training.

Therefore, the topic of the dissertation can be defined as one of the important scientific and applied discussion areas related to the improvement of competences and quality of work of medical professionals in nurseries.

CHARACTERISTICS AND EVALUATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation contains 159 standard pages and is illustrated with **42** figures, **7** tables, **2** diagrams and **7** appendices. Structurally, the research paper includes: introduction; literature review (70 pages); aim, tasks, material and methodology of the research (14 pages); results and discussion (29 pages); chapter four "Practical approaches to maintain and improve the pedagogical training of health care professionals working in nurseries" (34 pages); conclusions,

suggestions, contributions and conclusion (6 pages); references used (13 pages); annexes (43 pages). The structure of the dissertation encompasses in logical and meaningful integrity the research intentions of the PhD student.

The dissertation begins with an **introduction**, in which the doctoral candidate puts the importance of the chosen topic and the need for its development.

The following is a **literature review**, the structure of which corresponds to the concept of the thesis developed by the author. 247 literary sources were used, of which 125 in Cyrillic and 122 in Latin. The literature cited is contemporary and up-to-date, relevant to the topic under consideration.

The approach to consistently examine the normative framework of the organization and activity of nurseries in countries of different economic and political nature and Bulgaria is original. Significant differences between countries and positive practices are clearly highlighted.

Particular attention is paid to the legal framework related to the categories of professionals and the requirements for their professional training to work in nurseries. What unites them all is that they stress the importance of early childhood education and care and introduce strict quality control of the care provided by the different professionals. Teams that include health care professionals are required to have additional pedagogical training in working with young children.

The regulatory framework, the structure and the activities of the nurseries in Bulgaria are presented in great detail, and PhD student Margosyan competently describes the weaknesses in their management. The absence of a unified and systematic approach in the pedagogical training of health care professionals entitled to work in a nursery is highlighted.

The presented literature review is a proof of the thorough theoretical training and scientific knowledge in the researched topic of PhD student Margosyan. A vast amount of information on the subject has been synthesized in an extremely professional manner and presented in a summarized form. This approach to presenting the literature shows high potential for research work.

The aim and objectives of the dissertation are clearly and precisely formulated. Three hypotheses related to the level and necessity of the pedagogical training of medical professionals working in nurseries are derived.

Appropriate **logical units** have been selected for the realization of the set goal and the formulated hypotheses. On the one hand are the group of people who have the opportunity to assess the pedagogical knowledge of the working medical professionals in the nursery - students and specialists in health care, educators from the respective institutions and parents with children in nurseries (546 people). The second category includes 31 experts working as nursery directors; managers of the Nursery Branch of the Health Directorate; habilitated teachers involved in the process of formation of professional competence of the specialties in health care, whose task is to evaluate the approaches proposed by the doctoral student for improving the pedagogical skills of medical professionals caring for children in nursery age.

The scale of the study ensures very good representativeness of the samples and significance of the results obtained.

The technical units of the monitoring are the Medical University-Varna and its affiliates, as well as affiliates "Nurseries" in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen. It is an excellent decision of the author to focus his studies on units from one region of the country, which ensures homogeneity of the sample.

A wide range of methods was used to collect and process primary information:

- Documentary method - the national and inter-national regulatory framework regarding the professional training and postgraduate qualification of health care professionals related to their pedagogical activity in a nursery was studied.
- Survey method - four original research questionnaires were developed for the different logical units - students, health care professionals, educators and parents. Based on a thorough knowledge of basic and applied research in the field, PhD student Margosyan selected an appropriate set of questions to answer her hypotheses.
- Semi-structured interview to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of experts on the main issues related to the pedagogical activity of health care professionals occupying the position of "Nurse" and "Midwife" in a nursery and the applicability of the proposed practical approaches by the PhD student.
- Statistical Methods - A wide range of statistical analyses have been applied as appropriate.

The **Results and Discussion** section presents the body of the paper. In the course of the study a large number of results were obtained and successfully analyzed, systematized and illustrated with tables and figures. The discussions are built entirely on the results obtained. The work

would have been more valuable if a connection had been made with the literature known so far, which would have highlighted even better the contributions of the presented thesis and the relevance of the topic.

Chapter four is a logical extension of the results of the previous chapter. A range of practical approaches to maintaining and improving the pedagogical training of health care professionals working in nurseries are presented. Detailed criteria and a fiche for the evaluation of the pedagogical activity of the health care professionals, a system for the optimization of the pedagogical activity, a plan for the interaction of the health care professionals working in the nursery with the parents and a plan for the continuing postgraduate training of the health care professionals have been developed. Very interesting is the decision of doctoral student Margosyan to seek an assessment of their relevance and applicability by exploring the expert opinion of competent specialists in the field. For the sake of greater depth it would be good to include more questions in the questionnaires concerning the proposals made, to ensure a logical link between them and the results described in chapter three.

As a natural conclusion from the results obtained and their interpretation, a number of **conclusions** are drawn. Based on them, doctoral student Margosyan formulated specific **recommendations** to all institutions directly related to the activities of the nurseries - the Council of Ministers, the Bulgarian Association of Health Care Professionals, the Municipal Health Departments and the Directors of the nurseries.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS AND PRACTICAL RESULTS IN THE DISSERTATION

The contributions of the thesis can be grouped into three main areas:

Theoretical contributions

- A comparative analysis of the normative framework of the organization and activity of nurseries in a number of countries and Bulgaria, as well as the requirements for professional training to work in nurseries of different categories of professionals is carried out.
- The state of professional training (with emphasis on pedagogical training) of health care professionals to work in a nursery has been studied in depth.
- The level of satisfaction of parents of children attending a nursery school with the professional competence related to the care, education and training of their child in the nursery school, as well as their interaction with health professionals was studied.

Methodological contributions

- An original research methodology has been developed to investigate the professional preparation (with emphasis on pedagogical) of health care professionals to work in a nursery.

Practical-applied contributions

- The authors developed a model system for control and evaluation of pedagogical activity, an author's model system for optimizing pedagogical activity and a unified model system for postgraduate training of medical professionals working in the nursery.
- The practical applicability of the proposed approaches for maintaining and improving the pedagogical training of health care professionals working in a nursery is demonstrated through their expert evaluation.

ABSTRACT AND PUBLICATIONS ON THE DOCTORAL WORK

The structure and content of the abstract (92 pages) meet the requirements and reflect the main results obtained in the fulfillment of the set aim and objectives. In connection with the dissertation, 3 scientific articles have been published and presented as scientific works in two national and one international forum. In two of the research papers, PhD student Margosyan is an independent author, which highlights her scientific growth in the ability to independently unfold a scientific problem.

CONCLUSION

Doctoral student Zhivka Margosyan has managed to organize and analyze a thorough and comprehensive scientific study. The dissertation work is extremely relevant for our country, with a good scientific research setting, executed precisely and providing new knowledge that contributes to the development of science and practice.

Due to the above, I propose to the Honorable Scientific Jury to award to PhD student Zhivka Georgieva Margosyan the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the post-doctoral program "Health Care Management", field 7.4. "Public Health".

18.04.2023.

Reviewer:

/ Prof. Dr. Maria Anastasova Semerdjieva, MD /