

R E V I E W

by Assoc. Prof. Emanuela Ivanova Raycheva Mutafova, PhD.

on a dissertation "Circular migration of health professionals - attitudes, challenges and perspectives in Bulgaria" of Iliana Ancheva Georgieva

for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 3.7. Administration and Management

A rationale for the review: Order No. R – 109-479/16.11.2023. of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna and Protocol No. 1/28.11.2023. of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury

General presentation of the procedure

The presented materials are in accordance with the Procedure for PhD Defense of MU – Varna.

The PhD student has successfully passed the examinations for the criteria for acquiring a PhD degree.

Brief biographical data about the PhD student

Iliana Georgieva was born on 1992. She graduated University of Economics – Varna majoring international economic relations – bachelor and public finances – master degree. Since 2014 she has been working as a project activity expert at Medical University-Varna. In 2019 she was enrolled in PhD studies at the Department of economics and healthcare management. Since 2023 she is an assistant at the same department and leads seminar classes in marketing disciplines

General characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation has a total length of 188 pages, contains 29 tables and 29 figures, two appendices and a bibliography of 220 sources, of which 20 are in Cyrillic. Its structure contains three chapters, an introduction and a conclusion.

Relevance

The migration of healthcare professionals is an indisputable fact and a completely real challenge to healthcare systems, to the management of human resources in healthcare. And since health professionals are the most important resource of the system, in-depth study in order to manage the process takes on special importance. The lack of registration of migration processes on an international scale gives particular importance to such studies.

This determines the topicality of the topic and the high expectations from such research.

Evaluation of the literature review

The literature review unequivocally shows the good knowledge of the problem and its coverage in the available literature. In the first chapter, the author examines the theoretical foundations for researching the migration of health professionals, focusing on the definition of the concept and the classification of the forms of migration, examines its causes and effects, and focuses on circular migration and its importance for health systems. Excellent knowledge of the theory and literary sources are grounds for the self-confidence of the doctoral student to compare the migration theories in table 4 on page 37.

In the literature review and in the bibliographic reference, sources are indicated and discussed, located in time in such a way as to allow both the reference of fresh data from recent studies and also the following of the process from afar.

Evaluation of objective, tasks and methodology

The purpose of the development is to investigate the migration of health professionals in Bulgaria and, based on the results, to formulate recommendations for stimulating circular migration.

To achieve the goal, 6 research tasks are set, well thought out and formulated, logically and consistently connected.

The object, subject and restrictive conditions of the research, the main thesis and the research hypotheses are correctly presented.

The methodology of the study is presented in detail in the Second Chapter "From permanent to circular migration - opportunities for stimulation and dynamics of migration movements".

The methodology contains qualitative and quantitative methods - systematic analysis, descriptive and comparative health-policy analysis, analysis of data from secondary sources, sociological methods, statistical methods. This makes the methodology rich and adequate to the set goals and tasks. The design of the questionnaire is presented, the planning and sampling, the survey parameters and the instruments to stimulate circular migration are described, with a particular emphasis on EU policies on this issue.

In item 2.3. "Migration profile of health professionals in Bulgaria" the PhD student presents in dynamics and comparison with the EU the provision of medical specialists, professional-profile and territorial disparities. Of interest are the dynamically examined flows of medical graduates in our country /doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives/ and practitioners in OECD countries.

Evaluation of results and contributions

The results of the research are presented in the Third Chapter "Attitudes towards the migration of medical specialists in Bulgaria". In item 3.1. the results of the survey are presented. The demographic, socioeconomic, and occupational characteristics of the sample, which includes 446 respondents, are described. The received data on the opinion of the respondents regarding the opportunities for

professional realization and living conditions in Bulgaria have been correctly analyzed. The restraining and dissuasive factors that influence the respondents' decision to work in Bulgaria are examined at three levels: country and health system, medical facility and individual level.

The analysis of the factors for migration and remigration of medical specialists in item 3.1.3 deserves attention. Of interest is the study of the factors that influenced the decision of medical specialists to return to Bulgaria, as well as the comparative analysis of the factors that led to the decision to migrate medical specialists with and without professional experience abroad. In the same chapter, attitudes towards and conditions for participation in circular migration and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health system are presented.

The results of the interviews conducted with 7 participants in circular migration provide information about the repelling and attractive factors for remigration, about the motives for participating in circular migration, about the benefits and negatives of it. I find it valuable the analysis of the relationship between the results of the survey and the interviews / p.138/.

The data points to economic reasons as the reason for migration and personal motives as the main factors for remigration. They give reason to the author to confirm the first and second research hypotheses.

The binomial logistic regression, three regression models were used to examine the factors that lead to circular migration. Profession, age and professional experience, having a recognized specialty and place of residence, along with financial motives, are statistically significant.

An achievement of the PhD student is the model for stimulating circular migration /item 3.3./, presenting the relationship between the factors and effects of circular migration. It is based on research findings and on modern theories and conceptual models from the available literature. The main idea in the model / paragraph 3.3.2./ is that, through appropriate policies, migration factors can be transformed into motives for circular migration. The model is aimed at "developing mechanisms to stimulate circular migration". The goal of the PhD student is thus to reduce the negative and increase the positive effects of the process.

The author draws attention to the presence of dependence between the factors for and the effects of circular migration at different levels, i.e. there is a relationship between micro-, meso- and macro-level effects. This conclusion has important

implications in attempts to manage processes. The PhD student emphasizes the need for mechanisms to stimulate the phenomenon to be implemented first at the highest level to ensure their success.

At the end of the Third Chapter, the main conclusions of the study are formulated and recommendations are made to stimulate circular migration, adequately addressed at the national, regional and institutional levels, which I evaluate positively.

Evaluation of conclusions and contributions

I agree with the conclusions drawn, which follow logically from the results obtained, are correctly interpreted and serve as a basis for the recommendations made.

I accept the said contributions without remark.

Evaluation of the Abstract and publications

The Abstract reflects the essentials of the dissertation work, systematized and structured in an appropriate manner.

The 5 publications presented under the procedure are based on the main results of the dissertation work. They have been published in scientific journals and collections that meet the criteria for the award of scientific degrees.

Conclusion

In the reviewed dissertation work and the presented publications, Iliyana Georgieva shows in-depth knowledge of the subject and skills for organizing and conducting independent scientific research, ability to systematize and make sense of scientific theses, as well as correct interpretation and appropriate presentation of the results of scientific research.

The presented dissertation work is an independent study and has a scientific and practical value. There are substantial practical and theoretical contributions that enrich the scientific literature on the problem and support the development of specific policies in the direction of circular migration.

The dissertation work reviewed by me "The circular migration of health professionals - attitudes, challenges and perspectives in Bulgaria" fully meets the criteria for the scientific and educational degree "Doctor". I recommend to the members of the Scientific Jury to vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.7. Administration and management of Iliyana Ancheva Georgieva.

Reviewer:

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§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
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/Assoc. Prof. Em. Mutafova, PhD /