

REVIEW

by **Prof. Donka D. Dimitrova, MSc, MSSc, MPH, PhD**

Department of Health management and health economics, Faculty of Public Health at MU-Plovdiv, external member of scientific committee appointed by order № P-109-337/05.08.2022 of the Rector of the Medical university of Varna for the defense of a PhD thesis in the scientific specialty "Public health management", professional field 7.4 Public health, field of higher education 7. Healthcare and sports,

PhD student: Petya Stoilova Boncheva

Department: „Social medicine and organization of healthcare “, Faculty of public health, MU-Varna

PhD thesis: „Health promoting universities – initiative development and prerequisites for implementation in the higher education in Bulgaria “

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Klara Dokova, MD, PhD

General review of the procedure

The right of defense of the PhD thesis is in compliance with the state regulations and the regulations of MU-Varna. All documents related to the procedure have been submitted for review, allowing the evaluation of the fulfilment of requirements for awarding a PhD degree.

Petya Boncheva has master’s degrees in “Public health” (MU-Varna, 2018, graduated with honors from the state exams), „Healthcare management “(MU-Varna, 2016) and “Social pedagogy” (University of Shumen, 2003). She has over 20 years of work experience in the public administration in the field of public health and disease control (RHI - Varna) and more than 5 years of teaching experience in social medicine epidemiology and health promotion that most probably accounts for the choice of topic and approach to her PhD research.

The dissertation addresses an up-to-date socially significant problem especially in the context of on-going and recent global public health challenges on the one hand and the ineffectiveness of a number of health policies in Bulgaria on the other.

The PhD student has designed her work based on a fundamental public health concept – health promotion and the practices related to it in different settings (living spaces, work and educational environment, healthcare establishments, etc.), focusing on the role of universities in creating a healthy and health improving environment for

students and faculty and their responsibility for transferring cultural effects on larger communities.

Characteristics and evaluation of the thesis content

The presented thesis meets the academic criteria for volume, structure and style. The material and results are well presented in 21 tables and 8 figures; appendixes contain the tools used in the study as well as other reference materials. The review and discussion of results chapters are based on over 230 current publications by Bulgarian and mainly foreign authors, including on-line resources.

The introduction provides rationale for the choice of the topic while the literature review presents extensive data on the historical development of the main concepts and the practice worldwide, revealing extensive knowledge of the topic. Particular attention is paid to the existing study tools. The summary of the review unambiguously defines the purpose of the studies carried on by the PhD student.

The objective of the thesis is specified in 6 tasks, the first two of which are completed by presenting a comprehensive review on the topic in the first part, which is by itself a contribution of the dissertation and may serve to educate larger audiences. The formulated work hypotheses set the framework for the studies presented further on logically and in a structured and informative manner. What should be noted is the diligence in presenting the methods, despite some deficiencies in the description of the sampling and the recruiting of respondents.

The obtained results have provided grounds for drawing conclusions consistent with the tasks. The limitations of the study related to the profile of the higher school and the representativeness of the results are stated correctly.

Contributions of the dissertation

The thesis contributes by corroborating to and enriching the findings on the topic and by thoroughly and systematically presenting interesting data on the theoretic and practical foundations of the health promotion programs in higher education worldwide.

I agree with the self-assessment of the contributions made by the PhD student and consider the validation of the Bulgarian version of the tool the most important among them in view to future feasibility and possibilities for expanding the studies to include higher education schools with different profiles.

So far the findings from the studies have been published in 3 papers by P. Boncheva as the first author. The summary of the PhD thesis reflects the structure and content of the thesis in a correct manner.

Comments and recommendations

The reference list indicates a limited number of publications by Bulgarian researchers, thus omitting studies on dietary patterns and healthy behaviors in university students in Bulgaria, including those in MU-Plovdiv (Vasileva R., Smerdzhieva M. et

al., Justinyanova B.). Nevertheless, the work of Petya Boncheva fully meets the expectations, and I would strongly encourage her to continue with her research.

Conclusion

The thesis presents an accomplished independent study on an up-to-date topic, which testifies to the academic achievements of the candidate in accordance with the criteria for awarding a PhD degree. **The above mentioned gives me grounds to confidently propose to the esteemed members of the scientific committee to grant Petya Stoilova Boncheva the educational and scientific degree "Philosophy Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Public health management", professional field 7.4 Public health, field of higher education 7. Healthcare and sports**

21.09.2022.


Prof. D. Dimitrova