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**INVESTIGATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF HEALTH
CARE PROFESSIONALS FOR WORK IN NURSERIES**

ABSTRACT

**of a thesis for award of educational and
scientific degree of Doctor**

Scientific speciality:

“Health Care Management”

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Ass. Prof. Anna Georgieva, PhD

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The thesis contains **214** pages and is structured in four main chapters. It includes **40** figures, **7** tables, **2** schemes and **7** appendices.

The bibliography contains **247** literary sources, **125** of which are in Cyrillic alphabet and **122** – in Latin alphabet.

The thesis has been discussed and referred for defence by an extended departmental council of the Department of Health Care, Affiliate Sliven of Medical University “Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov” - city of Varna on **16 February 2023**. Its public defence will take place before a scientific jury composed of:

1. Prof. Elena Grozeva Zheleva, PhD
2. Prof. Dr. Maria Anastasova Semerdzhieva, PhD
3. Ass. Prof. Emiliya Petrova Georgieva, PhD
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The official defence of the thesis will take place on 18.05.2023 at 12 h at in the Aula of Affiliate Sliven at an open session of the Scientific Jury.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BAHP - Bulgarian Association of Health professionals

USR - Uniform state requirements

MES - Ministry of Education and Science

ECEC - Early childhood education and care

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

EQD- Educational and qualification degree

EC – Early childhood

ECD- Early childhood development

Nursery - Nursery

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ACEY - Advanced Certificate in Early Years

CACHE - Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education

CMA - Childminder agency

EAJE - l'éducation et de l'accueil des jeunes enfants

ECDA - Early Childhood Develop Agency

ECE - Early childhood educator

EYFS - Early Years Foundation Stage

FINEEC - Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education

NCFE - Northern Council for Further Education

NEL- Nurturing Early Learners

NOC - National Occupational Classification

PMI - Protection Maternelle et Infantile

SPARK - Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework

WSQ HCIC - Wavelet Scalar Quantization Higher Certificate Infant Care

INTRODUCTION

Society's growing demands for quality care and education of children in early childhood, in the context of kindergartens, put pedagogical professionalism in the foreground.

In the modern model of education, focused on the development of innovations, the professional training of healthcare practitioners is seen as key and important for meeting the above-mentioned societal needs. The development of the creative potential of healthcare specialists, the affirmation and enhancement of the best pedagogical qualities and the stimulation of continuous professional development play an important role in this respect.

The Bulgarian scientific literature, dedicated to the problems of the professional training of healthcare specialists, contains a number of significant studies, among which are the works of R. Dragoshinova, M. Grudeva, E. Zheleva, B. Tornyova, G. Petrova, S. Toncheva, S. Borisova, Iv. Stambolova, G. Chaneva, M. Mitova, T. Popov, Ts. Vodenicharov, S. Popova, etc.

These studies examine only individual aspects of the problem of the professional training of health practitioners and more specifically the work in a nursery, as well as the possibilities for acquiring, maintaining and improving pedagogical competence and optimizing the pedagogical activity of the health specialists working in nurseries. There is no comprehensive, independent, thorough and systematic study of the problem. In this regard, the study of the professional training of health professionals for work in nurseries, and in particular their pedagogical training, has substantial scientific and practical significance.

This paper is an attempt to make a comprehensive study of the professional (with an emphasis on the pedagogical) training of healthcare specialists for work in nurseries.

I. PURPOSE, TASKS, MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY OF THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY

1.1. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses

- **Purpose:** To study and establish the state of professional (with an emphasis on pedagogical) training of healthcare specialists for work in nurseries and to pinpoint the possibilities for optimizing their pedagogical activity.

To achieve the goal, the following tasks are set:

1. To study and analyze the available literary sources regarding the theoretical state of the problem “professional training of health professionals for work in nurseries”.
2. To highlight the pedagogical functions and roles of nurses as an integral part of their professional profile.
3. To establish the level of training of health professionals completing their education (nurse and midwife specialists) to implement pedagogical functions and roles in nurseries.
4. To establish the level of training of health professionals working in nurseries (nurse and midwife specialists) to implement pedagogical functions and roles in nurseries.
5. To study the opinion of educators working in nurseries regarding the level of pedagogical training of health professionals (nurse and midwife specialists)
6. To determine the level of satisfaction of parents of children attending nursery with their interaction with health professionals.
7. To develop practical approaches to optimize the pedagogical activity of health professionals working in nurseries.
8. To prepare an expert assessment of the feasibility of the developed practical approaches to optimize the pedagogical activity of health professionals working in nurseries.

Working hypotheses

1. The analysis of the results will prove the absence of a unified and systematic approach to the pedagogical training of

healthcare specialists allowed to work in nurseries.

2. The majority of the participants in the study will positively assess the need for a unified and systematic approach also in solving the problems with the pedagogical training of health professionals working in nurseries.
3. The majority of surveyed future and current health professionals will express a positive attitude to additional training aimed at optimizing the pedagogical activity in nurseries.

1.2. Object, subject and scope of the study

The subject of the scientific study is the process of investigating and establishing the state of the professional training of health professionals for work in nurseries with an emphasis on the pedagogical training.

The object of the scientific study is the professional training of health professionals for work in nurseries with an emphasis on the pedagogical training.

577 persons were surveyed, distributed as follows:

- **Students – 192**, of which 97 nursing and midwifery students trained at the Departments of Healthcare at the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate, the Shumen Affiliate and the Faculty of Public Health at Medical University “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna.
- **Healthcare specialists – 164** working in nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen, 134 of which are graduates from nursing programmes and 30 are graduates from midwifery programmes.
- **Educators – 15**, working in nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen
- **Parents – 175**, whose children attended nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen in the period of the study.
- **Experts – 31**, distributed as follows:

- ✓ Managers of the Nursery Affiliate of the Healthcare Directorate in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen (n = 4)
- ✓ Directors of nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen (n = 17),
- ✓ Qualified lecturers (n = 10) participating in the professional training under the Nursing and Midwifery Programmes in General and Special Nursing Care and in the pedagogical disciplines in the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate, the Shumen Affiliate and at the Faculty of Public Health at Medical University “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna.

1.3. Logical and technical units of the study

Logical units of the study

- **First logical unit – every third and fourth-year nursing and midwifery student**, class of 2018 -2022 and class of 2019 – 2023 in the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate, the Shumen Affiliate and at the Faculty of Public Health at Medical University “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna.
- **Second logical unit – every healthcare professional working as a nurse or midwife in nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen.**
- **Third logical unit – every educator** working in nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen.
- **Fourth logical unit – every parent** whose child attended a nursery in the period of the study in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen.
- **Fifth logical unit – every expert**, nursery director in the cities of Sliven, Veliko Tarnovo, Varna and Shumen.

- **Sixth logical unit – every expert**, manager of the Nursery Affiliate of the Healthcare Directorate (n = 4) in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen.
- **Seventh logical unit – every expert**, qualified lecturer included in the study, participating in the professional training under the Nursing and Midwifery Programmes in General and Special Nursing/Midwifery Care and in the pedagogical disciplines in the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate, the Shumen Affiliate and at the Faculty of Public Health at Medical University “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna.

Technical units of the study

- **Medical University – Varna** – to study the perceptions and attitudes of third and fourth-year nursing and midwifery students as well as the perceptions and attitudes and expert assessment of qualified lecturers from the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate, the Shumen Affiliate and at the Faculty of Public Health.
- **Nursery Affiliate of the Healthcare Directorate** in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen for conducting the expert assessment to study the perceptions and attitude of heads of the Nursery Affiliates at Municipal Directorates of Healthcare, directors of nurseries, educators, health professionals in nurseries and parents of children.

1.4. Sources for collection of information

- **Opinion** of third and fourth-year nursing and midwifery students trained at the departments of healthcare in the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate, the Shumen Affiliate and at the Faculty of Public Health at Medical University “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna.
- **Opinion of educators** working in nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen.

- **Opinion of healthcare specialists working in nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen.**
- **Opinion of experts:**
- Directors of nurseries in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen;
 - ✓ Sliven, Varna, Shumen, Veliki Preslav, Novi Pazar, Veliko Tarnovo;
 - ✓ Directors of the Nursery Affiliate at the directorates of healthcare in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo and Shumen;
- Qualified lecturers participating in the professional training under the Nursing and Midwifery Programmes in General and Special Nursing/Midwifery Care and in the pedagogical disciplines at the Faculty of Public Health, the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate and the Shumen Affiliate to Medical University “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna
- **Available national and international regulatory documents** on the researched problems.
- **Available scientific literature** – research on the issue by Bulgarian and foreign authors.

1.5. Tools of the study

A proprietary toolkit was used to achieve the goals of the study:

- **Survey card № 1 – to study the opinion of nursing and midwifery students** based on the investigation criteria. The survey card includes **16** questions (**4** closed, **1** open, **8** semi-closed questions and **3** identifying questions) aimed at studying the perceptions and attitude of nursing and midwifery students towards their professional training for carrying out pedagogical activities in a nursery and the need for postgraduate qualification for pedagogical activities at nurseries.

- **Survey card № 2 – to study the opinion of healthcare specialists working at nurseries** based on the investigation criteria. The survey card includes **24** questions (**8** closed, **3** open, **9** semi-closed questions and **4** identifying questions) aimed at studying the perceptions and attitude of nurses working in nurseries towards the problems related to their pedagogical activity and to the post-graduate qualification in connection with their pedagogical activity in nurseries.
- **Survey card № 3 – to study the opinion of educators working at nurseries** based on the investigation criteria. The survey card includes **27** questions (**5** closed, **4** open, **14** semi-closed questions and **4** identifying questions) aimed at studying the perceptions and attitude of educators working at nurseries towards the training of health professionals employed as nurses in nurseries for the carrying out of pedagogical activities and towards the post-graduate qualification of healthcare specialists working in nurseries in connection with the optimization of their pedagogical activities.
- **Survey card № 4 – to study the opinion of parents of children attending the nurseries** based on the investigation criteria. The survey card includes **35** questions (**28** semi-closed questions and **6** identifying questions) aimed at studying the perceptions and attitude of parents to the pedagogical interaction with and the pedagogical activity of nurses in nurseries.
- **Semi-structured interview questionnaire for expert assessment of:**
 - ✓ **Directors of nurseries:** this questionnaire contains **29** questions, (**5** closed, **4** open, **16** semi-closed and **4** identifying);

- ✓ **Heads of Nursery Departments at the Directorate of Healthcare:** this questionnaire contains **31** questions, (**9** closed, **14** open, **8** semi-closed);
- ✓ **Qualified lecturers** participating in the professional training under the Nursing and Midwifery Programmes in General and Special Nursing/Midwifery Care and in the pedagogical disciplines at MU “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna: this questionnaire contains **31** questions (**9** closed, **9** open, **8** semi-closed and **5** identifying), grouped as follows:
 - related to the perceptions and attitude of the experts regarding the main problems related to the pedagogical activity of health professionals working in nurseries
 - related to the perceptions and attitude of the experts to the approaches to resolving the issues related to the pedagogical activity of health professionals working in nurseries
 - related to the perceptions and attitude of the experts to the need for a unified and systematic approach to resolve the problems related to the pedagogical activity of health professionals working in nurseries
 - related to the experts’ assessment of the applicability of the proposed practical approaches to maintain and improve the professional training in order to optimize the pedagogical activity of health professionals employed as nurses and midwives in nurseries.

1.6. Design, stages and place of the study

Design of the study

In terms of its nature, the study is a comprehensive empirical sociological study using a survey method, a documentary method (analysis of literary sources, analysis of documents, and expert evaluation).

It covers the period **15.02.2020 - 15.10.2022.**

Organization and conducting of the study

In order to achieve greater accuracy, the most of the research activities were carried out independently by the doctoral student. The collaboration of nursery directors was used when surveying of the opinion of health professionals, educators and parents.

The collaboration of assistants from the Departments of Healthcare in the mentioned educational structures was utilized when surveying the opinion of students training to become nurses and midwives at the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate, the Shumen Affiliate and the Faculty of Public Health at Medical University "Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna. All selected collaborators were informed in advance about the purpose and methodology of the study and were trained to work with the toolkit.

The survey of the students was conducted as a complete (comprehensive) study in four typologically selected structures of Medical University "Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna: the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate, the Shumen Affiliate and the Faculty of Public Health.

The survey of the educators was also conducted as a complete (comprehensive) survey in the nurseries included in the study.

The survey of the health professionals was conducted as a representative study. To ensure random selection, the health professionals during the first shift of the working day were surveyed.

The survey of the parents was conducted as a representative study. In order to ensure the representativeness of the study, the parents of children were interviewed during the second shift of the working day.

The study had the following stages:

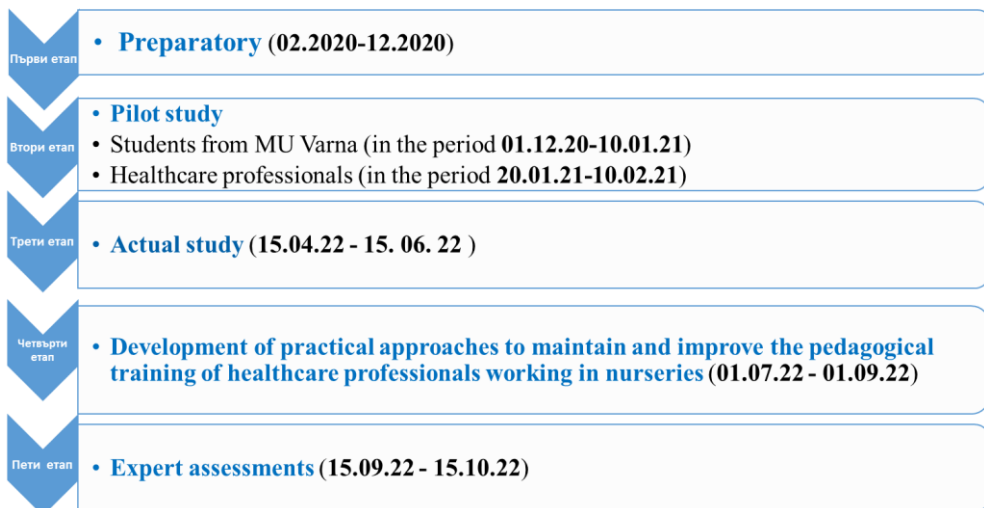


Diagram 1. Stage of the study

Place of the study

- **Nursery Affiliates to the Directorate of Healthcare at Municipality of Sliven, Municipality of Varna, Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo and Municipality of Shumen.**
- **Medical University “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna:**
 - ✓ Sliven Affiliate
 - ✓ Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate
 - ✓ Shumen Affiliate
 - ✓ Faculty of Public Health.

1.7. Methods of the study

Sociological methods

- **Survey method**

A direct individual anonymous survey was conducted with students,

health professionals, educators and parents to explore their perceptions and attitudes toward the professional training and postgraduate qualification of health professionals related to the pedagogical activity of nurses in nurseries.

- **Documentary method**

National and international literary sources, documents and legal acts have been studied regarding the professional training and post-graduate qualification of healthcare professional, related to the pedagogical activity of nurses in nurseries.

- **Expert assessment**

A a semi-structured interview questionnaire was used to study the perceptions and attitudes of the experts (nursery directors, Heads of Nursery Affiliates at the Municipal Directorates of Healthcare and qualified lecturers participating in the professional training under the Nursing and Midwifery Programmes in General and Special Nursing/Midwifery Care and in the pedagogical disciplines in the Sliven Affiliate, the Veliko Tarnovo Affiliate and the Shumen Affiliate and the Faculty of Public Health at Medical University “Professor Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna regarding the following:

- ✓ the main problems related to the pedagogical activity of health professions working as nurse and midwife at nurseries;
- ✓ the approaches to resolve the issues related to the pedagogical activity of health professions working as nurse and midwife at nurseries;
- ✓ the need for a unified and systematic approach to resolve the problems associated with the pedagogical activity of health professions working as nurse and midwife at nurseries;
- ✓ an expert assessment was made regarding the practical applicability of the proposed practical approaches to maintain and improve the professional training in order to optimize the pedagogical activity of healthcare specialists working in nurseries.

Statistical methods for processing and analysis of the information

- ✓ Alternative analysis – to develop measurable qualitative criteria.
- ✓ Correlation analysis – to reveal the relationship between factors such as age, education, etc. for the different groups of respondents and their opinion on the investigated problem.
- ✓ Non-parametric analysis – when taking into account the presence of outlier types of distribution as well as for the statistical analysis of complex combination tables – Pearson's acceptance criteria (χ^2 - chi-square) for category features.
- ✓ Parametric analysis – to compare mean values in two independent samples.
- ✓ Variation analysis – to calculate the main parameters of the quantitatively measurable signs. The U-test for normal distribution is applied when comparing mean values. Existing differences are considered statistically significant and confirm the alternative hypothesis H1 at $P \geq 0.05$
- ✓ Graphical analysis to visualize the observed processes and phenomena (volumetric, linear, sector and bar diagrams). Microsoft Office Excel 2013 software package was used to create the graphs.
- ✓ The data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 19 statistical package.

The study was conducted after permission was obtained from the Commission for Ethics of Research at MU-Varna – minutes/decision #115, meeting held on 31.03.2022. All study participants have signed an informed consent.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Characteristics of the surveyed groups of respondents

The results of the four main groups of respondents – students, health professionals working in nurseries, parents and educators – were studied and compared.

Characteristics of the surveyed students

192 nursing and midwifery students were included in this study. All participants were female. The average age of the students is 25 years (± 3). Most of the surveyed students are under the age of 29 (76.7%). Students studying in nursing and midwifery courses were surveyed and their distribution was approximately even (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the students studying in nursing and midwifery courses

Characteristics		Number	%
Sex	Men	0	0
	Women	192	100,0
	Total	192	100,0
Age	Mean age (\pm SD)	25 y \pm 6.4 y (19 – 46 y)	
	up to 29 years	144	76,7
	30–39 years	42	21,8
	40–49 years	6	1,5
	Total	192	100,0
Programme	Nurse	98	51,05
	Midwife	94	48,95
	Total	192	100,0

Characteristics of the surveyed health professionals

There were 164 health professionals included in the study. All health professionals surveyed were women. Approximately one third of them are in

the 30-39 age group (29.0%), and approximately one quarter are over 60 years of age. The mean age of health professionals is 51 ± 10.8 years (22 – 73 years).

The proportion of health professionals with semi-higher education (34.6%) is the largest, followed by those with higher education with EQD Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Midwifery. Every fifth respondent holds a specialist degree (20.6%). It is worth noting the fact that some of the surveyed nurses were with EQD Bachelor of Health Care Management (2.9%) and with EQD Master in Health Care Management (9.1%), as well as with EQD Bachelor and Master in other specialties. The indicated results testify to the presence of high professional competence among the surveyed healthcare specialists and imply awareness and experience of the studied problem.

The surveyed health professionals have an average total work experience of 19 years (± 10 years). This implies a thorough knowledge of the nursing profession in all its aspects – duties, rights, activities, roles and functions. The average length of service in the particular nursery is 15.7 years ± 13.1 (1-50 years).

According to the results of our study, health professionals are mostly nurses (85.9%) with two main profiles - General Specialization and Pediatric Specialization.

These results show two trends – the first is the aging of the health professionals who work in nurseries and the second trend is related to the choice of nurseries as a place of work: first they are chosen as a place of work near retirement age and secondly they are unattractive as a place of work for young professionals (Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of surveyed health professionals

Characteristics		Number	%
Sex	Men	0	0
	Women	164	100,0
	Total	164	100,0
	Mean age (\pm SD)	51 г. \pm 10.8 (22 – 73)	
Age	up to 29 years	3	1,8
	30–39 years	47	29,0
	40–49 years	36	21,5
	50–59 years	38	23,5
	Over 60 years	40	24,2

	Total	164	100,0
Education	Specialized secondary education	5	2,9
	Semi-higher education	55	34,6
	Higher education – specialist degree	36	20,6
	Bachelor of Nursing/Midwifery	53	33,3
	Bachelor of Health Care Management	4	2,3
	Bachelor’s degree in another speciality	3	1,7
	Master of Health Care Management	5	2,9
	Master’s degree in another speciality	3	1,7
	Total	164	100,0
Work experience	Mean work experience (±SD)	19 (± 10)	
	up to 5 years	50	30,0
	5–9 years	14	8,4
	10–19 years	54	32,4
	20–29 years	20	12,0
	over 30 years	26	15,6
	Total	164	100,0
Speciality	General Nurse	69	42,31
	Child Nurse	72	43,59
	Midwife	23	14,1
	Total	164	100,0

Characteristics of the surveyed parents

The survey analyzed the opinion of 175 parents of children attending nurseries (Table 3).

Table 3. Characteristics of the surveyed parents

Characteristics		Number	%
Sex	Men	18	10,3
	Women	157	89,7
	Total	175	100,0
Age	Mean age (\pm SD)	33.2 \pm 5.4	(17 – 59)
	up to 29 years	97	55,44
	30–39 years	49	28,0
	40–49 years	21	12,0
	50–59 years	8	4,56
	Over 60 years	0	0
	Total	175	100,0
Education	Higher	138	78,86
	Semi-higher	0	0
	Secondary	33	18,86
	Primary	4	2,29
	No education	0	0
	Total	175	100,0
Profession	Unemployed	9	5,23
	Production worker	8	4,65
	Clerk	49	27,33
	Manager	27	15,7
	Teacher	18	10,47
	Freelancer	20	11,63
	Student	4	2,33
	Other (please specify)	40	22,67
Total	175	100,0	
Child's mother tongue	Bulgarian	163	93,0
	Turkish	7	4,1
	Roma	5	2,9

	Armenian	0	0
	Друг	104	28,9
	Total	175	100,0
Proficiency of the child in Bulgarian language at the time of enrollment in nursery	No/does not understand and does not speak	3	1,8
	Understands but cannot speak	53	30.1
	Yes/can understand and can speak	119	68.1,
	Total	175	100,0
Nationality	Bulgarian	172	97,6
	Turkish	1	0,6
	Roma	3	1.8
	Armenian	0	0
	Other	0	0
	Total	175	100,0

The group is dominated by persons with higher education (78.9 %), and one fourth have an administrative job (27.3 %).

The questions related to ethnicity and the language that parents and children use to communicate within the family contributed to the assessment of the pedagogical training, more specifically in the communication section. In this regard, three additional questions are asked.

According to about two-thirds of parents, their children understand and speak Bulgarian when entering kindergarten, another 30.1% report that their child understands but does not speak Bulgarian, and only three parents admitted that their child does not understand or speak Bulgarian language.

Characteristics of the surveyed educators

The fourth group are the educators at the nurseries (15 people). The average age is 49.7 years \pm 13.3 years (33-69 years), and the average work experience in the particular nursery is 9 years \pm 11.6 years (1-37 years).

The following conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the characteristics of the surveyed groups: The proportion of young health professionals who chose to pursue a professional career in nurseries is relatively small. There is a trend towards ageing of the pedagogical staff in nurseries. There is a positive trend in terms of the age indicator and the educational level for the parents, and there were no parents without education.

2.2. Professional training of health professionals to carry out pedagogical activities in nurseries

The professional training was studied in the two main groups of respondents – the students and the health professionals working in nurseries.

According to the analysis, 78.1% of health professionals share that they obtained the necessary pedagogical training as early as their basic course of training, and more than half of them (54.8%) define the level of training as very high and high. The students (47.6%) give a similar assessment on this issue. A difference was observed however in the opinion of the two groups regarding the basic training ($\chi^2=79.26$; $p<0.05$) (Fig. 1).

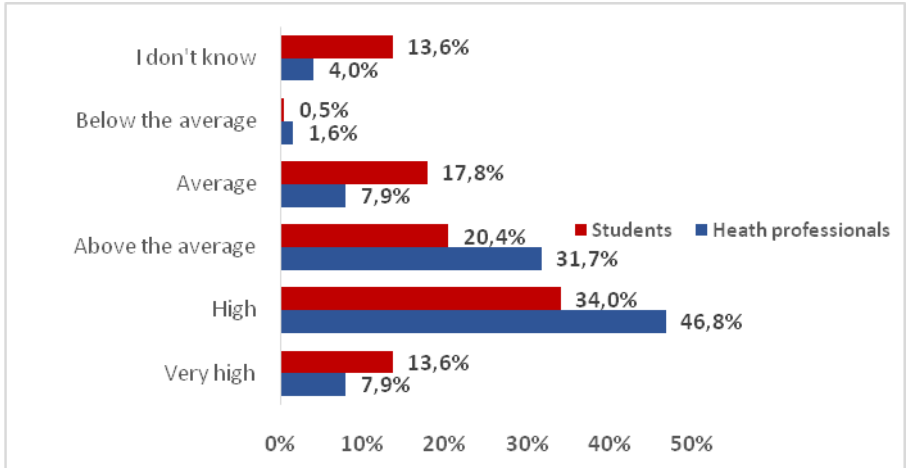


Fig. 1. Assessment of the basic training for the pedagogical activity

A statistically significant correlation was found between the students' assessment of their pedagogical competence and the course in which they study. Midwifery students who expressed hesitation and indicated that they could not assess the level of their pedagogical competence were three times more than nursing students (Contingency's $C = 0,236$; $p < 0,001$).

The analysis of the opinion of health professionals has also demonstrated a statistically significant moderate correlation between the existence of pedagogical training in the basic course of study and their specialization (Contingency's $C = 0.445$, $p < 0.001$). As the data in Fig. 2 have shown, the majority of those with basic pedagogical training are Pediatric Nurses (54.6%), followed by General Nurses (38.7%). In contrast, the share of midwives confirming such training is insignificant (6.7%).

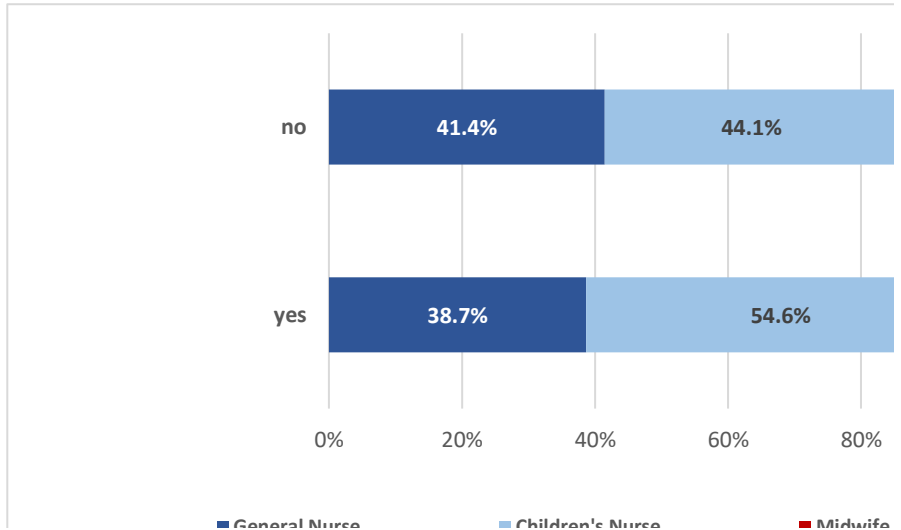
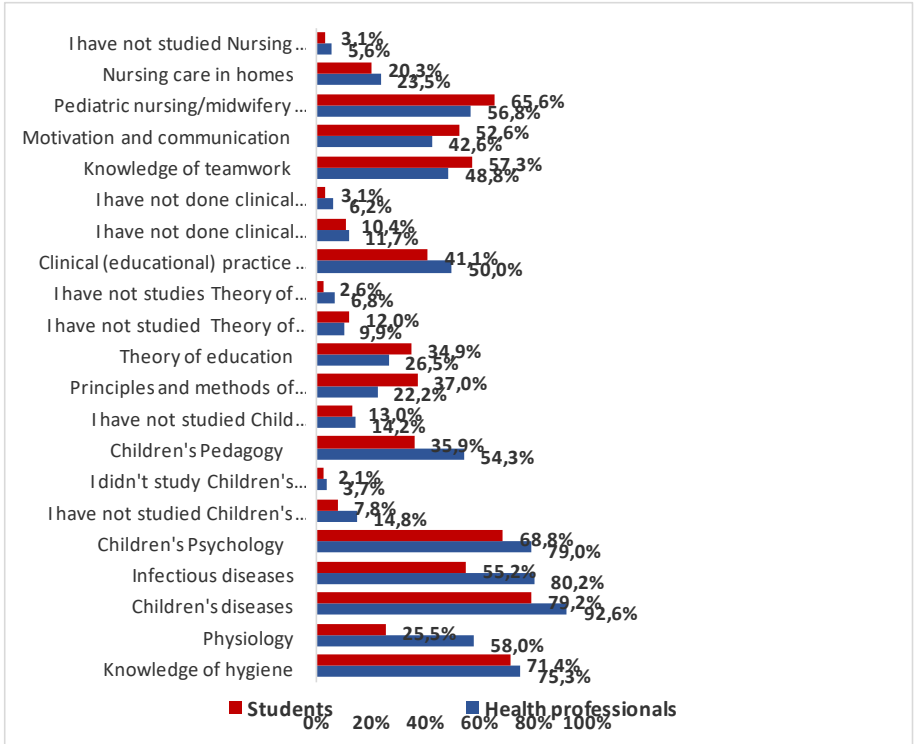


Fig. 2. Pedagogical training in the basic course of study of nurses and midwives

According to the results presented in Fig. 3, there is a significant difference in the acquired basic knowledge between the two investigated groups of respondents ($\chi^2=22.09$; $p<0.001$), especially in relation to physiology, children's diseases, infectious diseases, children's pedagogy, principles and methods of teaching and theory of education.



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 3. Acquired basic knowledge, contributing to work in nurseries

A statistically significant correlation between the opinion of the students regarding the contribution of the studied disciplines to the formation of their professional pedagogical competence and their specialization was also proven. Although the students in both courses study the discipline “Principles and methodology of education”, the number of midwifery students who stated that the discipline in question contributed to the formation of their pedagogical competence was twice lower than the nursing students (Contingency’s $C = 0.250$; $p < 0.05$).

The midwifery students who indicated that they had not studied “Children’s Psychology” in their basic professional training but believed that they would need knowledge in this area were four times more than the nursing students who made the same statement (Contingency’s $C = 0.179$; $p < 0.05$).

Identical results were established in relation to the discipline “Children’s Pedagogy”. The midwifery students indicated once again that they did not study “Children’s Pedagogy” in their basic professional training, but considered that they would need knowledge in this area (Contingency’s $C = 0.308$; $p < 0.001$). At the same time, when asked about the contribution of the studied disciplines to the formation of their professional pedagogical competence the midwifery students again were those who stated that they did not have clinical practice in a nursery (Contingency’s $C = 0.179$; $p < 0.05$).

With regard to the knowledge acquired in “Children’s Pedagogy” in the course of the basic training, a statistically significant moderate correlation was found between the existence of basic pedagogical training of health professionals and their specialization (Contingency’s $C = 0.367$; $p < 0.001$). The majority of the Pediatric Nurses categorically confirm that they have acquired pedagogical training in their basic professional training thanks to the study of the discipline “Children’s Pedagogy” and it has contributed to their professional competence for working in a nursery (70.0%). The majority of General Nurses also emphasize the importance of “Children’s Pedagogy” (75.4%) for the formation of their pedagogical competence. In contrast, the majority of midwives indicate that they did not have training in “Children’s Pedagogy” in their basic professional training (90.9%). (Fig. 4).

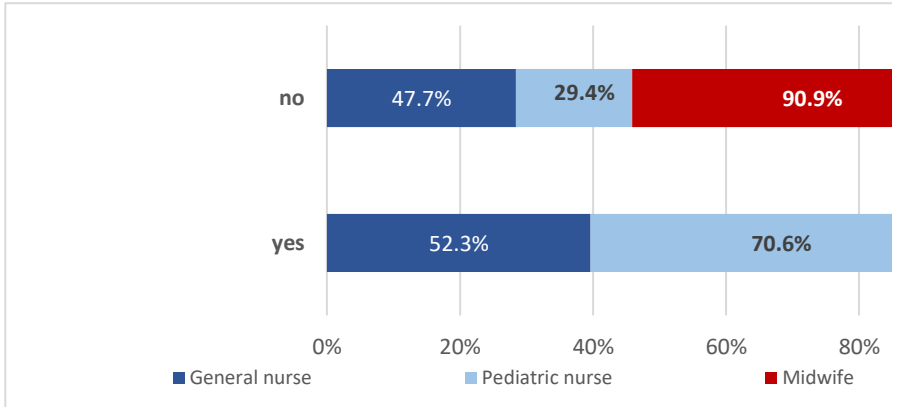


Fig. 4. Acquired basic training in “Children’s pedagogy”

Similar results were found in connection with the basic training in “Children’s Psychology”. A significant moderate correlation was found between the study of the discipline “Children’s Psychology” in the basic training of healthcare professionals and their specialization (Contingency’s $C = 0.453$, $p < 0.001$).

Almost all of the Pediatric Nurses categorically confirm that they studied “Children’s Psychology” in their basic course of training and that it contributes to their professional competence for working in nurseries (95.6%). A significant number of General Nurses also confirm that they have knowledge in “Children’s Psychology” (75.4%) in contrast to midwives, most of whom deny having basic training in this discipline (68.2%) (Fig. 5).

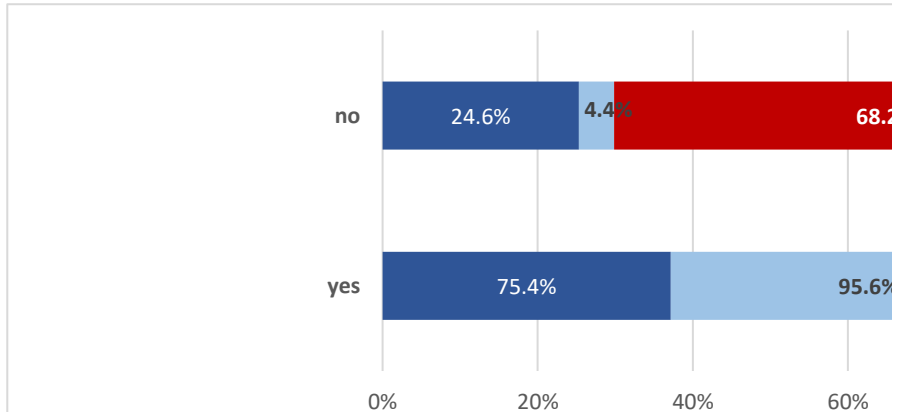


Fig. 5. Acquired basic training in “Children’s Psychology”

The clinical (learning) practice in a nursery is also important for the formation of the professional competence of health professionals. The statistical analysis confirmed a significant moderate correlation relationship between the presence of clinical (learning) practice in a nursery in the basic course of training of healthcare professionals and their specialization (Contingency’s $C = 0.453$, $p < 0.001$). A large number of Pediatric Nurses emphasize that doing clinical (learning) practice in a nursery during their basic course of training has contributed to their professional preparation for work in nurseries (66.2%). In contrast to them, the majority of General Nurses (56.9%) and Midwives (81.8%) stated that they did not have clinical (learning) practice in a nursery during the course of their training (Fig. 6).

No statistically significant relationship was found regarding the contribution of the other disciplines studied in the basic course of training and the specialized training of the health professionals ($p > 0.05$).

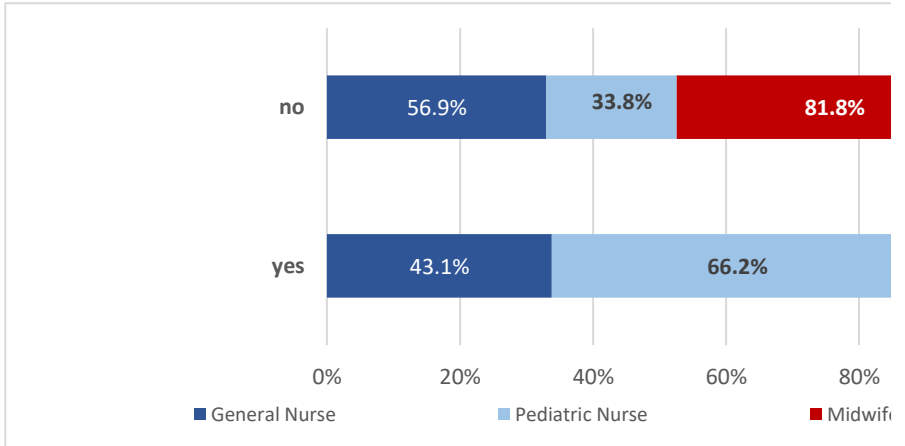


Fig. 6. Conducted clinical (learning) practice in a nursery

The majority of educators and directors working in nurseries consider that the pedagogical training of health professionals (nurses and midwives) working in nurseries is partly sufficient for the effective pedagogical activity (53.8% and 41.2%), and more than a third consider that it is completely sufficient (38.5% and 35.3%) (Fig. 7).

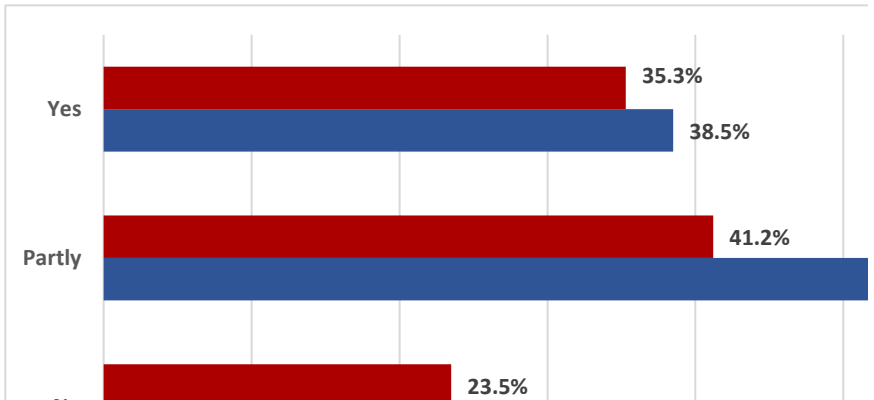


Fig. 7. Pedagogical training of health professionals working in nurseries for the conducting of effective pedagogical activities

(opinion of directors and educators in nurseries)

2.3. Pedagogical activities carried out by health professionals working in nurseries

The pedagogical activities were examined from the perspective of students during the pre-graduation internship and from the perspective of health professionals who have already started work.

Half of the health professionals in nurseries share that they participate in the planning of the pedagogical activities in the nursery. In contrast, more than half of the students say they are never involved in such planning. There is a statistically significant difference between the participation of professionals and students in the planning of pedagogical activities ($\chi^2=80.196$; $p<0.001$). At the same time, there is divergence in the opinions of directors and educators on that matter. While the majority of nursery directors (70.6%) categorically confirm the participation of health professionals in the planning of pedagogical activities in nurseries, the share of educators expressing the same position is significantly smaller (46.7%) (Fig. 8).

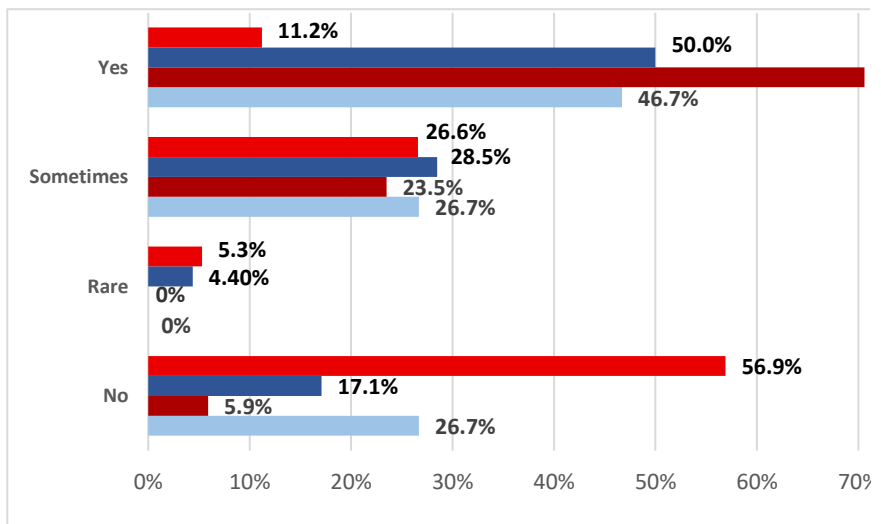


Fig. 8. Participation of health professionals in the planning of pedagogical activities in the nursery

In their freely expressed opinion, a large number of the educators emphasize that health professionals actively participate and give suggestions in the planning the pedagogical activity in the nursery at the level of routine activity based on the holiday calendar. According to the educators, health professionals are also the main actors in the pedagogical process in nurseries. Educators also consider that health care professionals upgrade their knowledge about the organization and conducting of the pedagogical process.

A significant difference was found in the opinion of health professionals and students regarding the difficulties in the implementation of pedagogical functions and roles at work or during the pre-graduation internship ($\chi^2=78.27$; $p<0.05$). A substantial share of health care professionals do not mention that they have difficulties and problems during their pedagogical activity (80.1 %), while approximately half of the students (44.3 %) share that they have not done an internship in a nursery at all (Fig. 9).

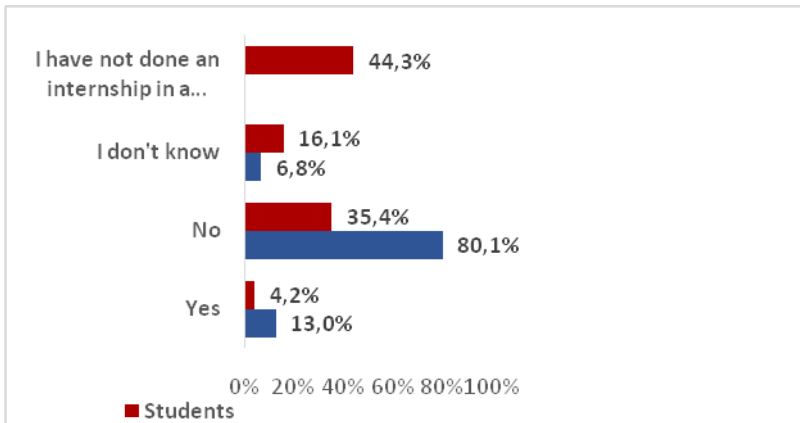
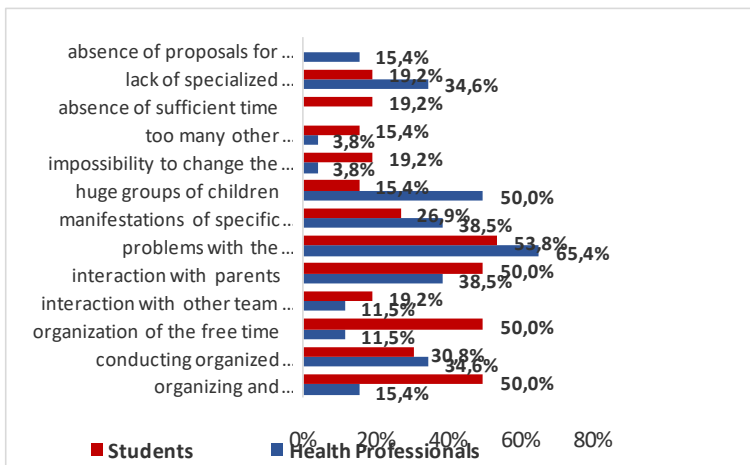


Fig. 9. Difficulties in the performance of pedagogical functions

and roles

The question concerning the difficulties experienced by students when performing pedagogical activities in a nursery also points to a statistically significant correlation between the opinion of the students and their specialization. It is mainly the midwifery students who state that they did not do a pre-graduate internship in a nursery (Contingency's C = 0.179; $p < 0.05$).

According to a large percentage of the surveyed health professionals (65.4%) and students (53.8%) The main problems related to the performance of the pedagogical activities by the health professionals at nurseries are due to problems with the children's behavior, as well as the due to the large size of the groups of children, as half of the health professionals and every tenth of the students (Fig. 10) point out.



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 10. Areas with difficulties in the performance of the pedagogical activities

A significant difference was found in the difficulties encountered by the two surveyed groups in carrying out the pedagogical activity ($\chi^2=79.15$; $p < 0.05$), which is primarily due to the fact that the health

professionals have already practical experience while the students encounter these problems in their studies and still have more to learn until they complete their education.

Regarding the help provided by the educator in the pedagogical activity, the majority of students are of the opinion that the assistance provided was sufficient for them to competently carry out their pedagogical activities during their pre-graduate internship (59.7%). The share of health professionals who expressed satisfaction with the educator's support in relation to their pedagogical activities is also substantial (81.2%). (Fig. 11).

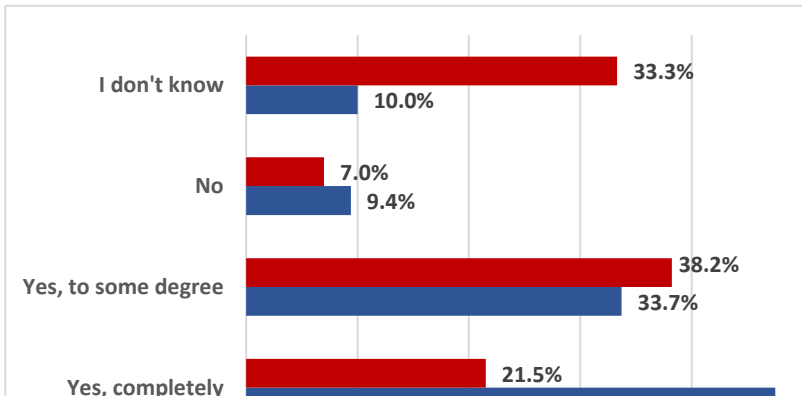


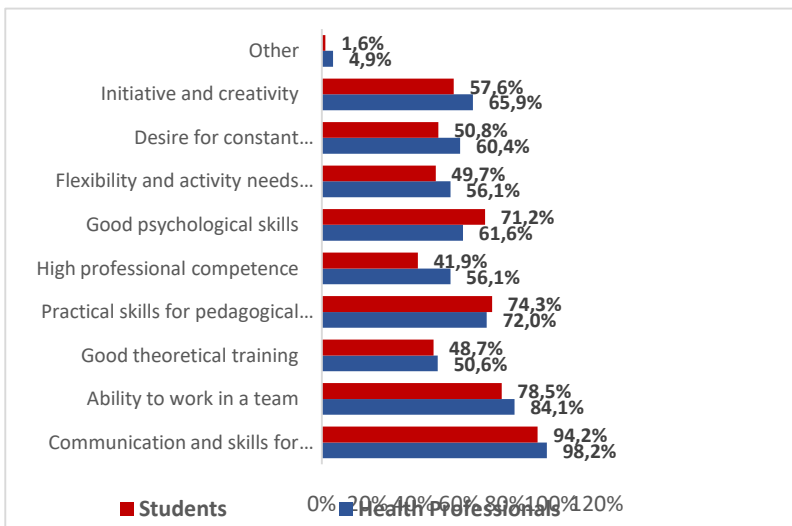
Fig. 11. Assistance provided by the educator in the pedagogical activities of the students and health care professionals

There is a statistically significant difference between the responses of students and health care professionals regarding the support provided by the educator in the pedagogical activity ($\chi^2=39.33$; $p<0.001$).

A statistically reliable straight line moderate correlation between health professionals' opinion on the matter and their education was proved (Contingency's $C = 0.435$; $p < 0.05$). Among those who are completely satisfied with the help provided by the educator are health care specialists with specialized secondary education (60.0%)

and semi-higher education (63.%), as well as all with the educational qualification Master in Health Care Management (100%). We can explain the obtained results with, on the one hand, the fact that most probably the respondents who have specialized secondary and semi-higher education have specialization for work with children and have pedagogical training. Holders of a Master's degree in Health Care Management also have such training. At the same time as the level of education increases, the share of those confirming their satisfaction with the educator's support also increases (Contingency's $C = 0.436$; $p < 0.05$).

Interesting is the opinion of the respondents regarding the basic qualities and skills that health care professionals working in nurseries should possess to perform efficiently the pedagogical activities. Such qualities and skills, according to the majority of students and health care professionals, are communication and skills for working with children (respectively: 94.2% and 98.2%), teamwork skills (respectively: 78.5% and 84.1%), practical skills for pedagogical work (respectively: 74.3% and 72.0%) and good psychological skills (respectively: 71.2% and 61.6%) (Fig. 12.).



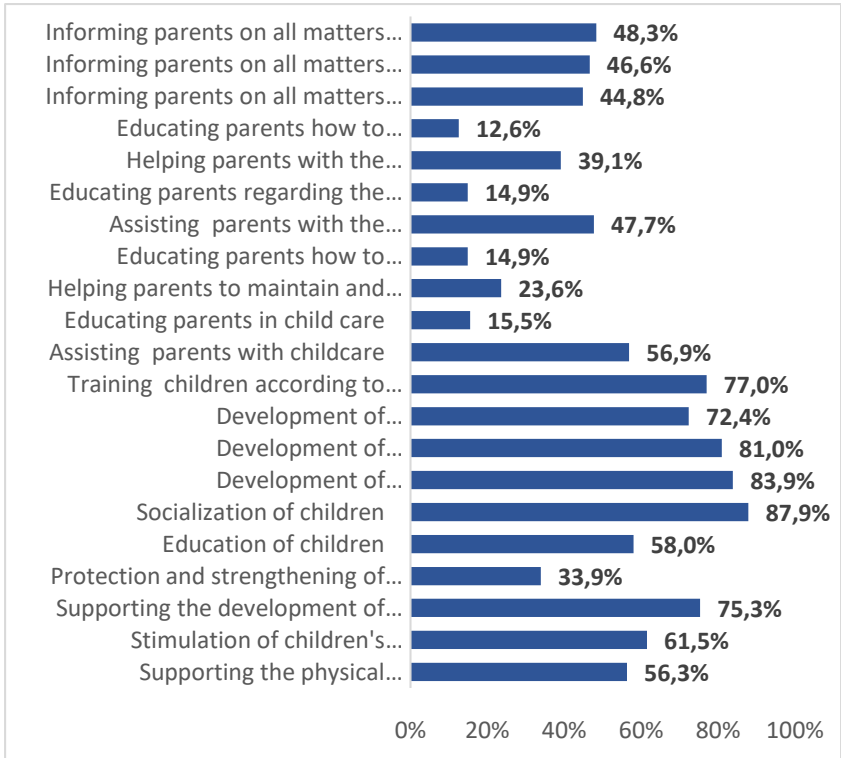
Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 12. Qualities and skills that health professionals should possess in order to carry out effective pedagogical activity

No significant difference was found in the opinion of health professionals and students regarding the qualities they should possess in order to perform the pedagogical activities effectively ($p > 0.05$).

2.4. Pedagogical interaction of health care professionals working in nurseries with parents

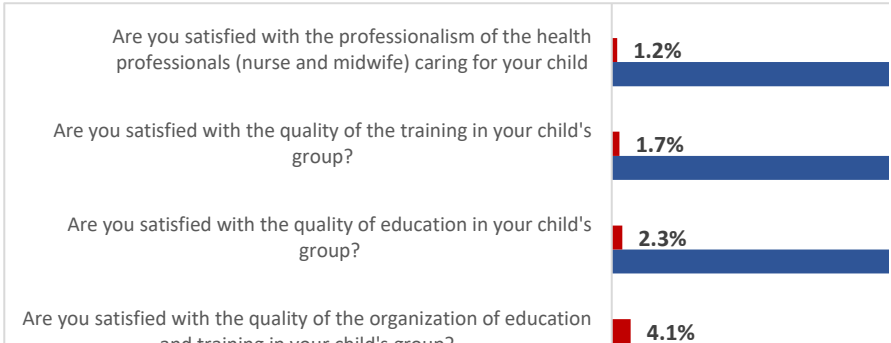
The pedagogical interaction of health care professionals working in nurseries with parents was assessed through the opinion of parents (175 individuals). In this regard, the parents' idea of the purpose of a nursery was investigated in the first place. The main purpose of the nursery is for the socialization of children (87.9 %), followed by the development of knowledge, skills and communication habits (83.9 %) and the development of knowledge, skills and habits to work as a team (81.0 %) (Fig. 13).



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 13. The purpose of nurseries according to parents

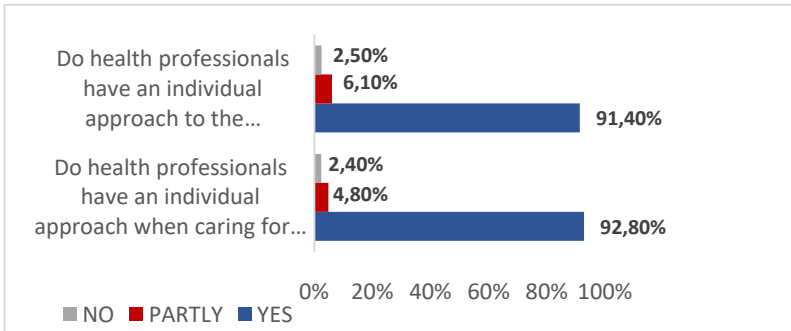
According to the results in figure 14 parents are satisfied with the educational work, its quality, the quality of the training and the professionalism of the health specialists. According to 92.6% of parents, their children go to nursery with pleasure (Fig. 14).



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 14. Parents' satisfaction with the professionalism of health care professionals, the quality of training, education and the organization of educational activities

Again, according to a significant number of the parents, the professionals use an individual approach both in terms of caring for their children (92.8%) and in terms of educational work (91.4%) (Fig. 15).

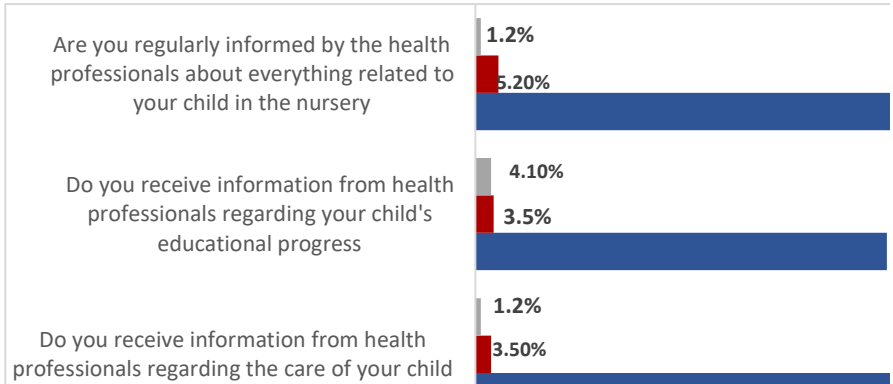


Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 15. Application of an individual approach in the educational process and child care

The majority of parents report that they are regularly informed by health professionals regarding the care and the educational progress,

as well as about everything related to their child (Fig. 16).



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 16. Provision of information to parents

Education has moderate influence on the parents' opinion regarding the information received about their child's educational progress (Contingency's $C = 0.348$; $p < 0.001$). As the level of education increases, so does the satisfaction of parents regarding the information provided in this respect.

The parents' opinion regarding the information received about their child's educational progress also correlates with their determination of the child's mother tongue. As evidenced by the data in Fig. 17, predominant among the parents who state that they receive sufficient information about the child's educational progress are those who indicated that their child's mother tongue is Bulgarian or Turkish, and they are three times more than the Roma speaking parents (Contingency's $C = 0.402$; $p < 0.001$).

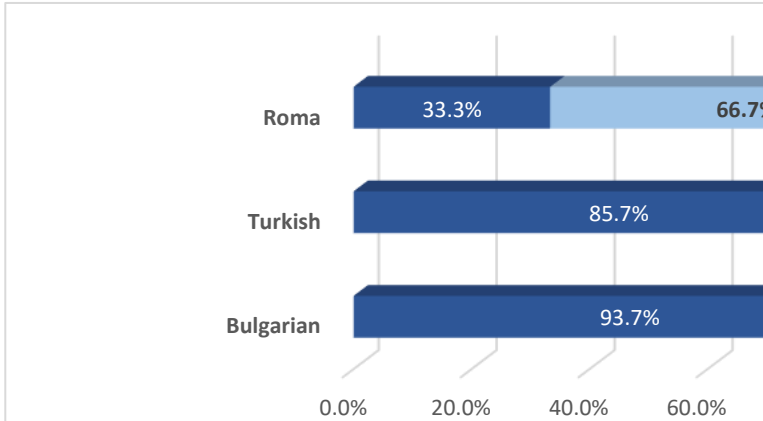


Fig. 17. Parents' satisfaction with receiving information about their child's educational progress depending on their child's mother tongue

The data from the statistical analysis prove identical results also in respect of the parents' answers to the question concerning the information they receive about their child's educational progress and this correlates with their self-determination of ethnicity (Contingency's $C = 0.315$; $p < 0.001$). Predominant among the parents who consider that they receive sufficient information about their child's educational progress are those who have identified themselves as Bulgarians and Turks. They are twice as many as the Roma parents who made the same statements (Fig. 18).

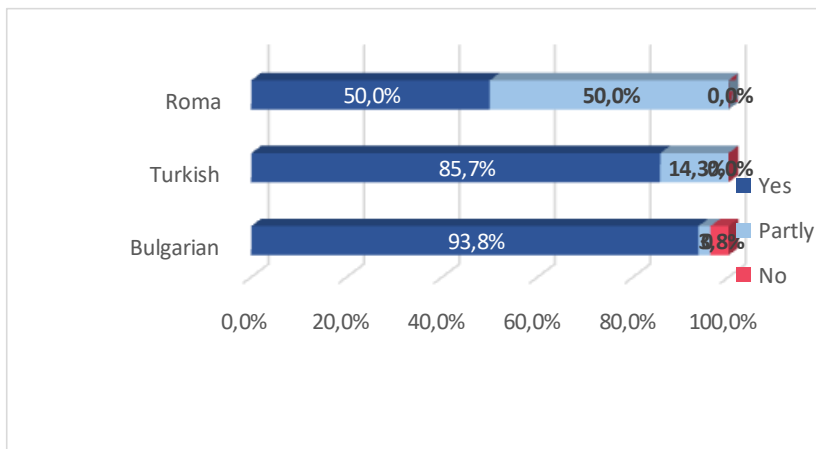


Fig. 18. Parents' satisfaction with the information they receive about their child's educational progress depending on their self-identification of ethnicity

According to the data from the statistical analysis the parents' opinion on the information they receive about everything related to their child in the nursery also correlates with their self-determination of ethnicity. This time majority among the parents who consider that they receive enough information have those who have self-identified as Bulgarians and Roma. They are twice as many as the parents who have self-identified as Turkish and who have given an affirmative answer (Contingency's $C = 0.316$; $p < 0.001$).

The indicated results have drawn a lot of interest and could serve as a basis for future in-depth studies in this respect.

As a result of the statistical analysis, it was proven that education significantly influences the parents' answers also to the questions related to the most common ways of providing information. As the level of education increases, so does the share of parents who answered that they most often receive oral information from health professionals about everything related to their child in the nursery (Contingency's $C = 0.552$; $p < 0.001$). At

the same time, there is an inverse moderate correlation between education and parents' inclination to receive information at parent meetings. As the level of education increases, the proportion of parents who pointed parent meetings as the preferred way to receive information from health professionals about everything related to their child in the nursery decreases. These results can be explained by the fact that, most likely, higher education is also associated with greater engagement of parents and they prefer to be informed on a daily basis when they bring or pick up their child, rather than attending periodically parent meetings (Gamma $\gamma = -.426$; $p < 0,001$).

A significant proportion of the parents of children attending a nursery are satisfied with the interaction with health care professionals, confirming the possibility to receive advice and recommendations from them related to the development (95.3%), upbringing (91,9%) and education (94.1%) of their child (Fig. 19).



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 19. Advice and recommendations regarding the development, upbringing and education of the child

Most of the surveyed parents state that they have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making related to the education of their child in the nursery (61.9%). In contrast, a quarter of the parents claimed that they did not participate in such decisions, and the

remaining 13.7% participated sometimes (Fig. 20).

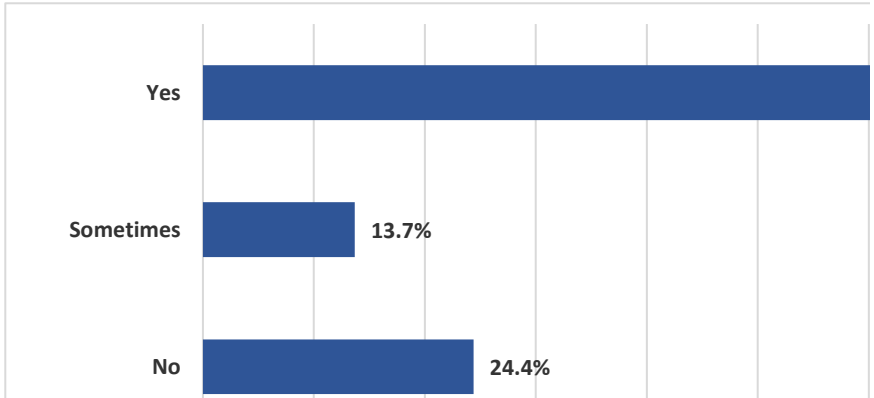
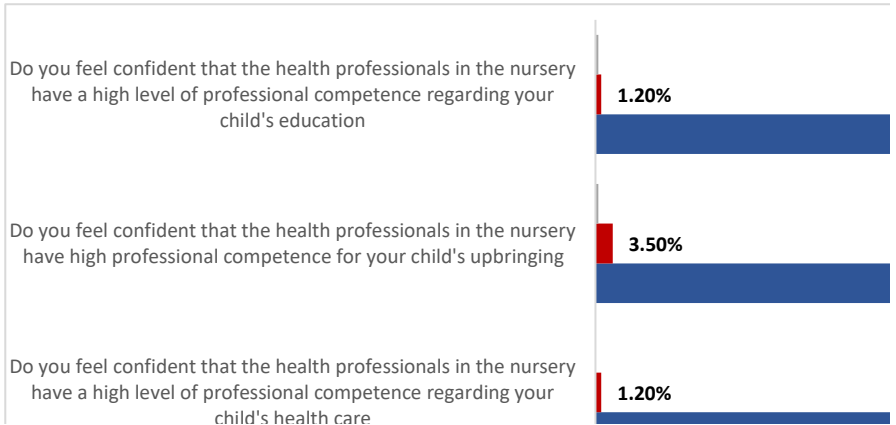


Fig. 20. Participation of parents in decision-making regarding the educational process

On the other hand, the majority of parents point out that mutual trust has been built between them and the health professionals (97.1%), and the rest claim that there is such trust sometimes. It is noteworthy that not a single parent has given a negative answer to this question.

We find similar results regarding the good attitude that health professionals show towards the children. In this regard, the majority of parents express confidence that there is good attitude towards their child (98.3 %) (Fig. 21).



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 21. Parents' confidence in the professional competence of health professionals

As can be seen from the data in figure 21 a large number of parents express their confidence that health professionals have high professional competence related to the care (98.8%), education (95.9%) and training (98.2%) of their children in the nursery.

Parents consider as most important the communication and skills for working with children (97.7 %), the good psychological skills (82.1 %) and the practical skills for pedagogical activities (78.0 %) (Fig. 22.).



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 22. Professional qualities and skills of health professionals

Most of the parents (90%) state that they have no recommendations for changes in the educational, training and overall process in the nursery.

2.5. Need for post-graduate qualification of health professionals to carry out pedagogical activities in nurseries

The survey of the respondents' opinion on the need for postgraduate training begins with a survey of their willingness to continue upgrading their basic training by enhancing their pedagogical competence. In this regard, the majority of students pointed out that they have not yet decided to continue their education (64.7%) (Fig. 23.).

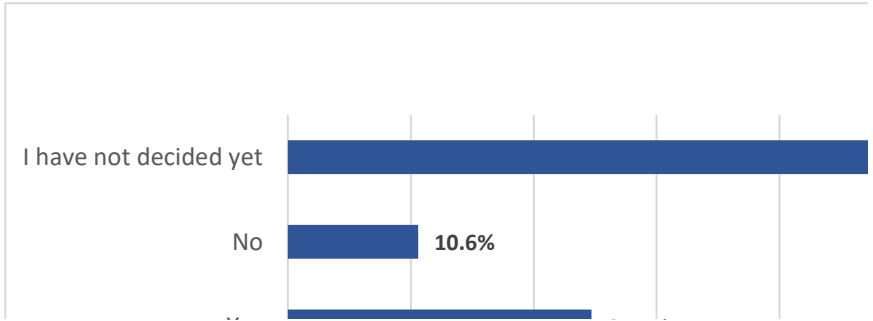


Fig. 23. Students' attitude towards continuing education after they complete their basic education

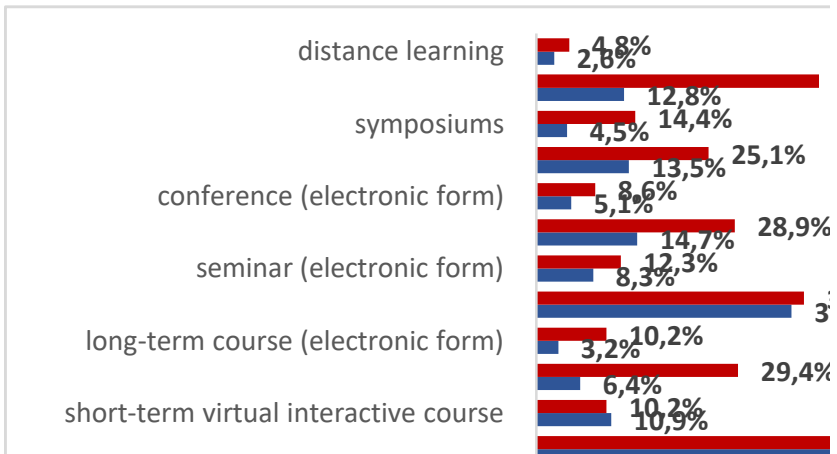
According to the students, the main forms for further training are enhancement of the educational level (45.2%), systematic continuing education (44.1%) and specialization (44.1%). Specialized literature is not among the most preferred forms (6.9%). On the other hand, health care professionals prefer most systematic continuing education (40.4%), followed by specialized literature (34.0 %), while increasing the educational level and specialization are less favoured (respectively 15.4% and 19.2%). There are differences between the opinions of the two groups ($\chi^2=62.39$; $p<0.05$).

On the other hand, about two-thirds (64.2%) of the health care professionals note that there are specific forms for internal qualification activities in nurseries, consisting mainly of discussions (91.3%). Other common forms are seminars (25.2%), discussion clubs (8.7%), methodological associations (9.7%) and training groups (1.0%).

A large proportion of the students (79.5 %) believe that it is necessary to constantly improve the knowledge and skills of health care professionals in order to carry out successful pedagogical activities in the nursery.

In this regard, it was important for us to explore the forms of postgraduate training preferred by students and health

professionals. It was established that health professionals and students have different preferences for the forms of postgraduate education ($\chi^2=107.41$; $p<0.001$). The majority of respondents in both groups expressed a preference for inhouse qualification activities (58.3% of health care professionals and 70.1% of students) followed by a short-term, face-to-face course (51.3% of health care professionals and 43.3% of students) (Fig. 24.).



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 24. Preferred forms of postgraduate study

Most of the health care professionals (44.4%) and students (32.3%) point out that the desired duration of the forms of training is from 1 to 3 days. The opinions of the respondents differ regarding the one-day training. More than a third of the health care professionals and only 8.9% of students prefer one-day training (Fig. 25.).

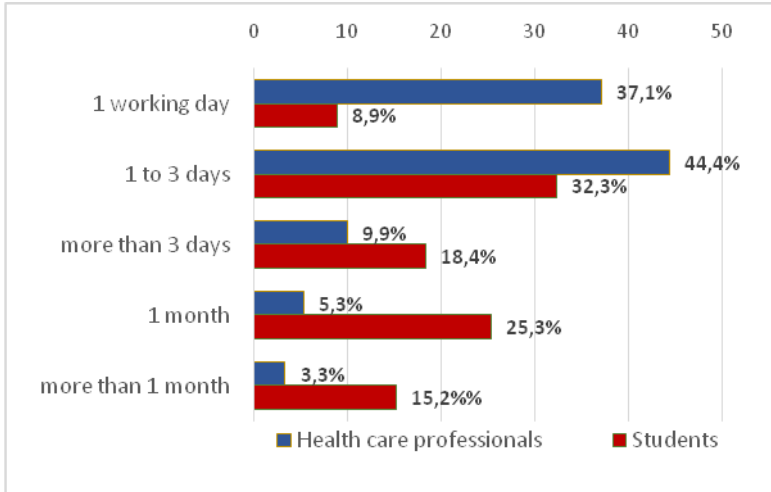
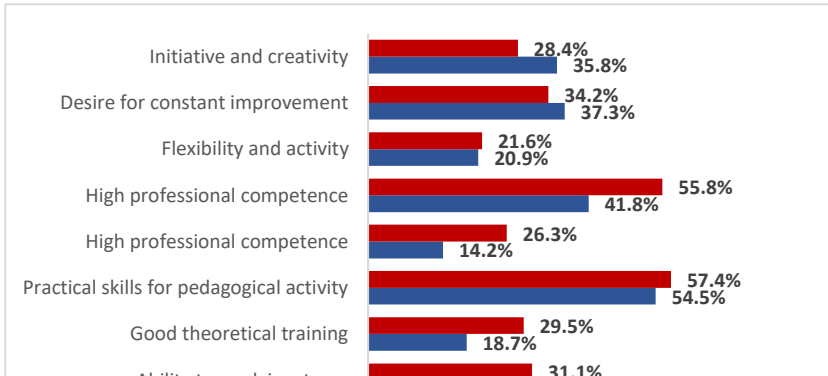


Fig. 25. Preferred duration of training

There is a statistically significant difference between the professionals and the students regarding the desired duration of the forms of training ($\chi^2=65.48$; $p<0.001$).

The preferred areas of study for two-thirds of students are communication and skills for working with children (65.8%), practical skills for pedagogical work (57.4%) and good psychological skills (55.8%). In contrast, most of the health professionals emphasize on the practical skills for pedagogical work (37.3%), the good psychological skills (41.8%) and the desire for constant improvement (54.5%). As can be seen from the data in figure 26 health care specialists in nurseries prevail over students only in terms of desire for continuous improvement and initiative and creativity.



Results exceed 100% because respondents indicated more than one answer

Fig. 26. Preferred areas for training, improvement or acquisition of skills

The results from the investigation of the preferred fields of study show that there is a significant difference between the two groups of respondents ($\chi^2=131.68$; $p<0.01$), and the students' need for study in the specified fields is more pronounced (Fig. 26).

III. PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN NURSERIES

3.1. A SYSTEM FOR ASSESSING THE PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN NURSERIES

The system for evaluating the pedagogical activity of medical specialists working in nurseries is designed to ensure good quality of the educational activities in nurseries.

The assessment of the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists in the nursery covers all management functions, guarantees the effectiveness of management, allows for assessment of the state of the pedagogical process at any time (for control).

Assessment of the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists in nurseries means the activities aimed to ensure the management of the nursery, based on a systematic analysis of the quality of implementation, the provision of resources and the results of the educational process.

The measures for the implementation of the goals and tasks of the assessment of the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists in nurseries are planned on the basis of a problem analysis of the educational process in the nursery.

3.2. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN NURSERIES

Table 4. Criteria and parameters for evaluating the pedagogical activity of health care professionals working in a nursery

Section	Criteria	Parameters	Scores
Influence of the pedagogical activity of the medical specialist on the development of the nursery	1. Contribution of medical specialists to the formation of a positive image of the nursery	- participation of medical specialists in the development and implementation of projects for the promotion of nurseries as preschool educational institutions in the educational services market	
Professional competence of the medical specialist	2. Professional competence relevant to the specifics of early childhood education	- ability to plan, implement and analyze the training and the educational work with children in accordance with the specifics of early childhood education	
	3. Methodological competence	- creative approach to the organization of pedagogical situations and joint activities, according to modern requirements - creation and use of own intelligent products in the educational process, development of manuals	
	4. Information and technical competence	- openness of the educator to information (availability of a regularly updated portfolio, participation in updating the official website of the nursery school)	

	5. Psychological, communicative competence recommendations by experienced pedagogical specialists in relation to the quality of education	- ability to plan and correct educational tasks, taking into account the individual characteristics of each child's development and recommendations by experienced pedagogical specialists in relation to the quality of education	
	6. Results aimed at forming integrative qualities	- positive dynamics in the development of integrative qualities and the level of mastery of the necessary skills	
	7. Organization of the object-spatial environment supporting development	- the object-spatial environment supporting development corresponds to the requirements, personal contribution of the medical specialist	
Protection and strengthening of physical and mental health	8. Reduction in the frequency of illness among children – prevention of illnesses in the autumn and winter period, dynamics of the children's health index		
Work with parents	9. Results of work with parents - ability to build partnerships, interaction with parents to solve educational goals. Self-realization		
Professional development	10. Professional achievements - participation in scientific forums, scientific-practical conferences, seminars, round tables, etc. - availability of publications - participation and wins in		

	professional competitions, grants		
	11. Self-education - development and implementation of own pedagogical projects - effective training in courses to improve qualifications, active participation in the work process, seminars, pedagogical advice		
Public evaluation of the activity of medical specialists	12. External audit	– satisfaction of parents with the quality of care, education and upbringing - evaluation of the medical specialists by the directors of the nurseries in respect of the results of the measures for control	

3.3. SHEET FOR EVALUATING THE PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY OF A MEDICAL SPECIALIST DURING A PEDAGOGICAL SITUATION

SHEET FOR EVALUATING THE PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY OF
HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
DURING A PEDAGOGICAL SITUATION IN A NURSERY

- Date:.....
- Group:
- Evaluation made by:
- Evaluated:

1. Setting the goal of the pedagogical situation

- 0 - the goal is not specific
- 1 - the goal is specific, but there is no criterion for verifying its achievement
- 2 - the goal is specific and there is a criterion for verifying its achievement

2. Creating motivation in children

- 0 - no efforts are made to create motivation in children
- 1 - external stimuli are used to create motivation in children
- 2 - to increase the motivation, the medical specialist makes changes during the pedagogical situation depending on the mood and activity of the children

3. Knowledge of the material

- 0 - material is taught but no more than the level laid down in the preliminary syllabus
- 1 - the material of the programmes is sometimes supplemented by other factors
- 2 - the material of the programmes is constantly supplemented by other factors

4. Differentiation of contents

- 0 - no differentiation
- 1 - differentiation without prior diagnostics
- 2 - differentiation based on diagnostics

5. Application of training and educational methods

- 0 - uniformity of methods
- 1 - combination of 2-3 methods
- 2 - a broad spectrum, flexible combination of methods

6. Types of cognitive activity

- 0 - reproductive
- 1 - partly creative
- 2 - creative with elements of micro research

7. Style of managing children's activities, nature of pedagogical communication, nature of interaction with children

- 0 - authoritarian
- 1 - democratic
- 2 - personality-oriented

8. Effectiveness of the pedagogical situation

- 0 - the goal is not achieved
- 1 - the goal is partially achieved
- 2 - goal is fully achieved

3.4. SYSTEM TO OPTIMIZE THE PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY OF HEALTH CARE SPECIALISTS WORKING IN NURSERIES

The growing demands of society to the quality of education in the context of nurseries put the pedagogical professionalism in the spotlight and emphasized the priority of the process of increasing the qualification of health care specialists working in nurseries for development of professional competences, to ensure conditions for constructive solution of the problems of pedagogical practices and for implementation of the innovative development of the pedagogical activities.

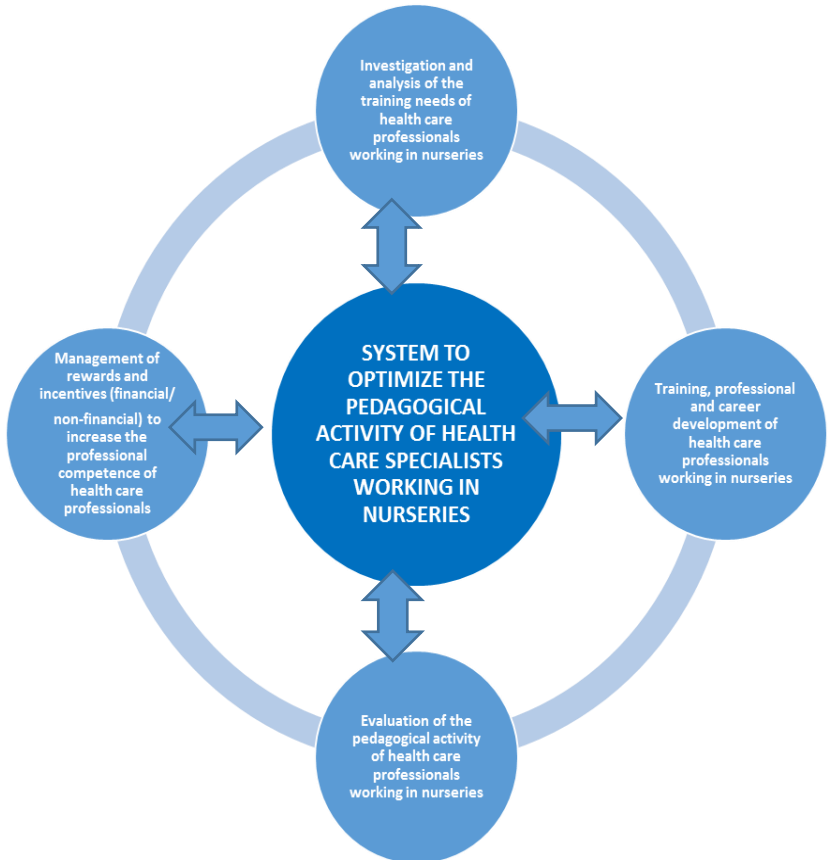
This necessitates the implementation of significant changes in the system of professional development, continuing and postgraduate training of medical specialists working in nurseries.

In the modern model of education, focused on the development of innovations, it is necessary to encourage the continuous professional development, to affirm and increase the best pedagogical qualities, to develop the creative potential of health professionals working in nurseries.

The development and improvement of the professional skills of health care professionals working in nurseries should be differentiated, taking into account their initial (basic) professional level. That level is characterized by their professional competence, creative potential, mastery of pedagogical technologies, a set of professional skills that determine the educational success of the pedagogical communication and interaction with the children.

The main innovative vector of the System for Optimizing the Pedagogical Activity of Health Care Specialists Working in Nurseries is the quality of education as a strategy to improve their professionalism. At the same time, the management of the System for Optimizing the Pedagogical Activity of Health Care Specialists Working in Nurseries is aimed at creating conditions in which the participants in the educational process achieve their goals: health

professionals – innovative and transformative goals; children – goals of the activity (play, communicative, cognitive, productive, etc.); parents – socio-pedagogical goals.



Scheme 2. System for Optimizing the Pedagogical Activity of Health Care Specialists Working in Nurseries

The main components of the system for optimizing the pedagogical activity of health care specialists working in nurseries are:

- Research and analysis of the training needs of medical professionals
- Training, professional and career development of medical specialists
- Evaluating the pedagogical activity of medical specialists
- Management of remuneration and incentives (financial/non-financial) to increase the professional competence of medical specialists

The proposed system for optimizing the pedagogical activity of health care specialists working in nurseries can function both within each specific nursery, as well as at the municipal and national level.

At the national level, we propose that a Centre for Pedagogical Competence of Health Care Professionals is set up which would provide a unified system for post-graduate and continuing education for health care professionals working in nurseries. Regional Centres for Pedagogical Competence of Health Care Professionals can also be set up at the municipal level.

Centre for Pedagogical Competence of Health Care Professionals working in nurseries – activities

Study of the knowledge, needs and interests of the medical specialists working in nurseries, as well as the degree of satisfaction of the trainees

Organizing, conducting and preparing analyses of the needs for specific trainings based on a study of the knowledge, needs and interests of the medical specialists working in nurseries, as well as the degree of satisfaction of the trainees

Preparation of an annual plan for the postgraduate and continuing training of medical professionals working in nurseries

Planning, management and coordination of the organization of the postgraduate and continuing training of medical professionals working in nurseries

Organization, presentation and popularization of good pedagogical practices and introduction of innovations in the organization and management of the pre-school education in nurseries

Organizing the development and updating of teaching materials

Planning and organization of the selection of educators and maintaining a database of educators;

Preparation of a report on the educational activities and proposals for their improvement;

Assisting the director in the preparation of the annual report and analysis of the activity of the Centre;

Organization of the keeping of the databases

Development and updating of job descriptions of the Centre's employees

Ensuring the pedagogical competence of health care professionals

3.5. PLAN FOR CONTINUING/POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Health care professionals working in nurseries need to continuously improve their professional competence:

- In compliance with the latest European directives for continuing education in accordance with the continuous development and achievements of health care, pedagogy and psychology of infancy and early childhood.
- According to the BHP Continuing education Qualification Framework.

Investigation and analysis of the training needs of health professionals

- Study of the professional competence of health professionals working in nurseries, formed in the process of basic training (presence of knowledge and skills in Children's Pedagogy, presence of knowledge and skills in Children's Psychology)
- Analysis of the activities for increasing the professional competence of health professionals in nurseries.
- Study of the level of professional competence of health professionals formed in the process of continuing education
- Description of the main deficits in the professional competence of medical specialists
- Description of the main deficits in the pedagogical competence of health professionals
- Identifying the training needs of health professionals

Goals:

- Enrichment and improvement of the pedagogical competence of the health professionals working in nurseries;
- Career development and satisfaction with the professional activity of health professionals working in nurseries;
- Effective cooperation of the health professionals working in nurseries with the children's families;
- Increasing the motivation of health professionals working in nurseries for active inclusion in the learning process and creating opportunities for mutual encouragement;
- Stimulating and designing opportunities for professional improvement and career growth;
- Creating opportunities to increase the remuneration of health professionals in nurseries in parallel with the professional improvement, career growth and increased responsibilities.

The pedagogical competence of health care professionals working in nurseries is enhanced according to the individual choice of the health specialist and includes various forms and programs aimed at:

- Upgrading, improvement and updating of the professional competences and/or acquisition of new professional competences, in accordance with the professional profile of the position held, the professional development of the health specialist working in a nursery, the result and recommendations based on the assessment of their activity, as well as with the national, regional and municipal policies.
- Deepening of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills based on the modern achievements of science and the scientific and technical progress.
- Improving the forms, methods and means of training.

- Improvement of the pedagogical technologies and implementation of modern technologies.
- Development of leading professional skills, professional personal qualities, creative capabilities of health professionals working in nurseries and increasing their scientific potential in accordance with the social development and the educational requirements.
- Practical implementation of the acquired qualification.
- Implementation of the institutional policy of the nursery to ensure the quality of education and development of children.
- Development of specific proposals to improve the educational process, to introduce the latest achievements of science in the educational and professional practice.
- Spread and development of innovative technologies in professional education.
- Exchange of experience with colleagues in connection with the acquired new knowledge and skills and professional competence.
- “Lifelong learning” - increasing the professional competence and personal improvement of each member of the team.

Main tasks:

- To organize the continuing education of medical specialists during the academic year 2023/2024 in order to cover the detected deficits.
- To encourage the educational activities by applying existing and innovative pedagogical technologies and approaches.
- To stimulate the health professionals to enhance and improve their knowledge and skills for care and training of children in early childhood.

- To stimulate the development of possibilities and conditions for the creation of a creative environment and transparency and openness in solving difficulties and problems, as well as in sharing successes and failures.
- The enhancement of the pedagogical competence of health care professionals working in nurseries should lead to high-quality and effective education and training of children, acquisition of basic competences and development of their problem-solving skills, in accordance with the age groups.
- To stimulate the interaction and partnership between the nursery team and the parents.
- To assist in increasing the knowledge and skills of parents in order to share responsibility in the care, education and training of children.

Forms of continuing education in the nursery:

- discussion
- conversation
- lecture
- presentation
- training
- seminar
- team meeting
- methodological association
- practicum
- role games
- solving cases
- open practice
- work in a group

Organization of activities

- Continuous in-house training.
- External qualification activities in continuous/postgraduate studies.

- continuous training according to the timetables of training organizations and the regional association of BAHP;
- qualification activities with other qualification institutions (chosen by the medical specialists working in a nursery).

Activities:

Table 5. Schedule of activities for continuing education in the nursery

TOPIC	FORM	DEADLINE/PERSON IN CHARGE
Acquaintance of newly appointed nursery health care professionals with the basic documentation at a nursery, the rules and responsibilities for its completion and storage.	Conversation	September 2023 Person in charge: D. Dimitrova - Director M. Miteva - educator
Organization of the regimen in the nursery.	Seminar	October 2023 Person in charge: D. Dimitrova - Director M. Miteva - educator
Planning and organization of a pedagogical situation.	Lecture	November 2023 Person in charge: M. Miteva - educator
The period of early childhood - characteristics and features.	Presentation	December 2021 Person in charge: K. Doncheva - psychologist
Challenges in communicating with young children.	Training	January 2024 Person in charge: K. Doncheva - psychologist

Importance of play and its place in the education and upbringing of children.	Discussion	February 2024 Person in charge: D. Dimitrova - Director M. Miteva - educator
Challenges in communicating with parents.	Workshop	March 2024 Person in charge: D. Dimitrova - Director
Importance and role of play in the development of a child's personality.	Practicum	April 2024 Person in charge: K. Doncheva - psychologist
Integration of Bulgarian language learning in games.	Training	May 2024 Person in charge: K. Doncheva - psychologist

Internal rules for participation in qualification activities and financial support mechanism.

Qualification is a stage in continuous training which supports the full professional realization of the medical specialists working in nurseries through various forms of training. The rules regulate the activities in the qualification activity in nursery "....."- city of The purpose of the internal rules is to achieve a change in the attitudes and values of the medical specialists working in nurseries.

Main forms of continuing/postgraduate education:

- in-house qualification (on the job training)
- short-term course (face-to-face training)
- short-term virtual interactive course
- long-term course (face-to-face training)
- long-term course (e-learning)
- seminar (face-to-face training)
- seminar (e-learning)
- conference (face-to-face training)
- conference (e-learning)
- forum of health care professionals
- symposia

- postgraduate specialization
- distance learning

Depending on the purpose, they can be:

- Courses
- Seminars, pedagogical and psychological trainings, schools, workshops, lectures, etc.;
- Specialization related to the methodological, pedagogical, psychological training of medical specialists working in nurseries; professional-pedagogical specialization;
- Master class of training for medical specialists working in nurseries conducted by teachers - experts and medical specialists working in nurseries - innovators by presenting their pedagogical success, successful professional experience, sharing and application of innovative practices;
- Forums for presentation of results and studies, research and creative activity, for professional performance and presentation of good, innovative practices or achievements.

Principles and criteria:

- Multilevel and multistage training.
- Adequacy of training in accordance with the rapidly changing conditions of the surrounding social environment.
- Each trained health professional has a broad spectrum of choices for setting their own pace of educational development.
- Upgrading of basic and postgraduate professional and pedagogical qualifications.
- Flexibility of professional education programs.

- Continuity of professional education programs and continuous harmonization of these programs at all stages - from initial training to postgraduate education.
- Integration of professional educational structures and creation of opportunities to form a unified space for education.
- Flexibility of the organizational structures, providing the most flexible and diverse forms of training suitable for each trainee.
- Dynamics, variability, freedom of choice and self-determination for each trainee.
- Stimulation of the independence and self-study of the trained health professional and motivational support for their individual training.
- Supporting the individuality of the trained health professional so they can become independent.
- Ensuring the subjective position of the trained health professional in the training process.
- Stimulation of introspection, reflection and self-assessment of the trained health professional in the training process.
- Stimulation of professional and career development in line with the training.
- Creation of conditions for equality of nursery staff in terms of access to continuing education depending on their position.
- Ensuring the effectiveness of the training by applying what was learned in the process of the employees' work in the nursery and increasing the quality of care, training and education of children.
- In case of limited opportunities for inclusion in certain training, the management of the nursery selects the employees who have expressed a desire to participate

according to specific criteria, for example: methodological need for additional qualification; personal professional needs of the relevant health professional; participation in forms of postgraduate training in recent years; recommendations by experts; presence of prominent health professionals who have shown positive results in the process of care, education and training of children in a nursery.

Stages for the implementation of the plan for continuing/postgraduate training of health professionals:

- Analysis of the situation in relation to the professional qualification of the employees.
- Determination of the needs for improvement of qualifications.
- Formulation of the goals and priorities of continuing/postgraduate education.
- Drawing up a plan of continuing/postgraduate education.
- Provision of financial resources, organization and place of continuing/postgraduate education.
- Analysis and evaluation of the results and effectiveness of the continuing/postgraduate education and updating on that basis the plan or elaborating a new one.

Rules for the participation of health care professionals in programmes for professional competence development:

- The continuing training of the health professionals in the nursery is led by the director and the teacher.
- The continuing education of the health professionals in nurseries at the intra-institutional level takes place in accordance with the Plan for Continuing/Postgraduate Education of the Health

Professionals in the nursery. This plan is elaborated at the beginning of each year and is approved by the team in accordance with the strategy for the development of the nursery and its underlying priorities and policies. The expressed priority needs for enhancing the qualifications of health professionals are also taken into account during the preparation of the plan as well as the possibilities for financing and involvement in project activities in this respect. After discussion with the educator and the Head of the Health Directorate the Nursery Director approves rules for conducting and organizing the intra-institutional qualification training and for reporting the participation of health care professionals in the relevant forms of the programmes for professional competence development.

- The purpose of the continuing education of the health professionals in the nursery is:
 - to stimulate the continuous upgrading of the professional competence of the health professionals in the nursery in accordance with public needs, educational requirements and results and also in compliance with the national, regional, municipal policy and the policy of the nursery;
 - to stimulate the professional development and to meet the individual and professional needs of health care professionals;
 - to lead to an increase in the quality of care, education and upbringing of children in the nursery and stimulation of their harmonious development
 - to create conditions for the nursery institution to become an environment for the expression of all its employees, as well as for the children taught by them,

by employing creativity and innovation and by exchanging good practices;

- to increase the attractiveness of the profession and the social status of the health professionals in the nursery.
- The continuing/postgraduate training of health care professionals at the municipal, regional and national level is carried out through the Centre for Pedagogical Competence of Health Care Professionals, through participation in projects and programmes for the development of human resources.
- All health professionals who work in nurseries should participate in forms of continuing/postgraduate education.
- Health professionals who work in nurseries can join organized forms of continuing/postgraduate education:
 - at the employer's discretion and recommendations;
 - on the recommendation of experts from the Centre for Pedagogical Competence of Health Care Professionals;
 - of their own will.
- The improvement of the qualification of health professionals can be organized by the nursery through the exchange of good practices in various forms of training, as well as through international and national programmes. Intra-institutional training is measured in academic hours and is not awarded qualification credits.
- Within the framework of the intra-institutional qualification, it is necessary for each health care professional working in a nursery to have no less than 16 academic hours per year to increase their professional competence.
- **Increasing the qualification and training of health professionals working in nurseries should also take**

place according to the Qualification Framework of BAHF.

Motivation to stimulate staff to participate in qualification activities:

- Health care professionals who hold qualification degrees of Bachelor and Master in Health Care Management, have the right to lead activities for further training of employees at intra-institutional level.
- Health care professionals who have acquired a specialist qualification should be recognized as having a higher professional level when evaluated for payment for their work.
- Stimulation of employees with outstanding professional achievements during the year through appropriate awards.
- Career development possibilities for health care professionals.

Mechanism for financial support:

- The annual funds for the inclusion of health specialists in further training to upgrade their qualifications should also be set at not less than 1.2% (similarly to pedagogical specialists) of the annual salary funds.
- The intra-institutional qualification activities should be conducted as volunteer work by employees and management personnel and be financed from the budget of the nursery.
- The financing for the extra-institutional qualification activities should be provided from the budget of the nursery, by means of donations, funding for projects and programmes for further training, etc.

Expected results:

- Improvement and development of programmes for upgrading the professional qualifications.
- Positive changes in the attitudes and activity of employees for participation in various forms of continuing and postgraduate education.
- Continuous improvement and development of the professional and, in particular, the pedagogical competence, as well as upgrading the methodological competence of health care specialists working in nurseries.
- Optimization of the pedagogical activity of health care professionals working in nurseries.

3.6. PLAN FOR THE INTERACTION OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN A NURSERY WITH PARENTS

Parent Engagement Plan for school year 2023-24

Goal: Creating conditions for adequate adaptation and socialization, quality care, effective training and education of each child, creating a partnership between the parents and the nursery.

Main tasks:

- Informing parents about the internal rules, the daily schedule and other questions related to the rules, organization and activities of the nursery.
- Timely, systematic and purposeful interaction with parents and informing them about the progress of their child in terms of their neuro-psychological and physical development and the achieved educational progress.
- Acquainting parents with the programme system of the nursery and the expected outcomes of the education, socialization and training of the children.

- Training and support of parents on issues related to child care, disease prevention, maintenance and strengthening of children's health.
- Training and support of parents in relation to the proper upbringing, training, socialization and specifics in children's development.

Expected outcomes:

- Familiarity and understanding between the nursery team and the parents.
- Mutual partnership in the interest of the children and their proper development.
- Collaboration for the development and prosperity of every child.
- Provision of equal conditions for education to all children.

Activities to achieve the goal and tasks:

- Individual forms of cooperation with parents:
 - Informing parents through conversations about the children's development and behaviour, about the skills they acquired in the educational areas.
 - Individual consultations - in case of difficulties in upbringing and educating the child.
- Cooperation with parents:
 - Meetings with parents
 - Information boards for parents
 - Holidays and entertainment
 - Open pedagogical practices
 - Discussions
 - Trainings
 - Solving cases
 - Practicums
 - Participation of parents in basic and additional forms of pedagogical interaction.

Table 6. Parent Engagement Plan for school year 2023-24

<u>September</u>	
Parental meetings in groups - familiarization with the internal rules, presentation of the program system of the nursery; nomination of parent club.	Director; Health professionals, educator
Adaptation of newly enrolled children in the nursery – role and importance	Director; Health professionals, educator, psychologist
Difficulties in the adaptation of newly enrolled children in the nursery – role and importance of the interaction between the nursery team and the family	Director; Health professionals, educator, psychologist
Children from 1 to 3 years old - emotions, feelings, fears.	Director; Health professionals, educator, psychologist
“Books for entertainment” - organization of corners with books in groups, as well as for the exchange of books and magazines for parents related to the care, education and upbringing of children.	Parent clubs
"Mom (dad, grandma, grandpa) reads fairy tales..." - Presentation of various fairy tales read by a parent/grandmother/grandfather.	Health professionals, educator, parents
<u>October</u>	
Formation of habits in children aged 1 to 3 years - role and importance of the interaction between the nursery team and the family - discussion	Health professionals, parents
What are the working arrangements in our group? - development of rules, together with parents, children, the Director, Health professionals and the educator	Director; Health professionals, parents, educator
"I do sports and I'm healthy!" – organization of sports events together with children and parents.	Health professionals, parents
“Open Door Days” - open pedagogical situations with children on health topics - talks, discussions, practical activities, pedagogical games.	Health professionals, educator, parents
<u>November</u>	
Organization of a thematic parent meeting “The mutual benefits of educational integration”.	Director; Health professionals, educator
“Let's welcome autumn” - a family workshop for making and exhibiting pieces of work made with natural autumn materials	Health professionals
3. Practicums and entertainment “Autumn - golden, bountiful”	Health professionals
4. “School for parents” - talks, discussions, practical activities, pedagogical games.	Health professionals, educator, psychologist

<u>December</u>	
"My child's health" - information corners by groups on the importance of immunizations	Health professionals
"Christmas is coming" - practical workshops for making Christmas decorations and toys.	Parents, Health professionals
Involvement of parents in the preparation of the children for the Christmas holidays. Christmas party.	Health professionals, educator, parents
<u>January</u>	
"New year - new luck" – organization of open days for parents, planning joint events	Health professionals, educator
"My child wouldn't listen!" - organization of training with parents	Health professionals, educator, psychologist
<u>February</u>	
"How to recognize signs of abuse, violence and aggression against children?" - discussion with parents	Health professionals, educator, psychologist, parents
"My child's health" - organization of information boards and corners on topics related to the healthy nutrition of children at an early age	Health professionals
"Rules for children!" – teaching parents how to raise children to follow certain rules	Health professionals, educator, psychologist
"Let's deal with emotions and understand their importance for the development of our children" - training for parents	Health professionals, educator, psychologist
"Open days" - an invitation to parents to attend various pedagogical situations	Health professionals, educator, parent clubs
"I am a participant in Puppet Theater" - organization of puppet plays together with parents and children	Health professionals, educator, parents
"White and red martenitsi for happy children with rosy cheeks" - martenitsi workshop - together with parents and children	Health professionals, educator, parents
<u>March</u>	
"Baba Marta hurried, martenichki tied" - organization of a celebration to welcome Baba Marta	Director, Health professionals, educator, parents
"My child's health" - organization and arrangement of information boards and corners of topics related to the prevention of diseases of children at an early age	Health professionals
"Tales of the peoples" - read or told by parents	Health professionals, educator, parents
"Spring has come" - walks and entertainment events with the participation of parents	Health professionals, educator, parents
<u>April</u>	
"My child's health" - organization and arrangement of information boards and corners of topics related to immune	Health professionals

boosting of children at an early age	
“My little book, tell me...” – organization of a book festival for the children	Health professionals, educator, parents
“Open Door Days” - Spring holidays and customs - participation of parents in familiarizing children with traditions related to the holidays of the spring cycle.	Educator, parents
4. “Colourful Easter” organization of a celebration to celebrate Easter	Health professionals, educator, parents
May	
1. “He who does not work should not eat” - the meaning of work in the eyes of children	Health professionals, educator, parents
2. “May sports holidays” - organization of sports competitions by groups	Health professionals, educator, parents
“Spring is so beautiful!” - a walk to a nearby area with the participation of parents.	Parents
“How to prepare three-year-old children for kindergarten?” - parent meeting	Director, Health professionals, educator, psychologist
“Goodbye nursery!”- sending off children who have turned three years old.	Health professionals, educator, parents

3.7 Expert assessment

The practical approaches that we developed for maintaining and improving the pedagogical training of health care specialists working in nurseries were proposed for assessment by experts with a view to their application in practice, after inclusion in regulations and approval by the relevant institutions.

It was important for us to study the opinion of the experts whether the basic pedagogical training of health care specialists working in nurseries is sufficient for them to perform the pedagogical activities effectively. As can be seen from the data in figure 27 the majority of experts give an affirmative answer, but emphasize that there should be a uniform approach in the educational process to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and professional competence among graduating health professionals for work in nurseries. Some of the qualified teachers also support this idea and almost half of the directors of nurseries expressed hesitation, as well as the directors who stated that the basic pedagogical training of the health care professionals working in

nurseries is not completely sufficient to implement effectively the pedagogical activities (Fig.27.).

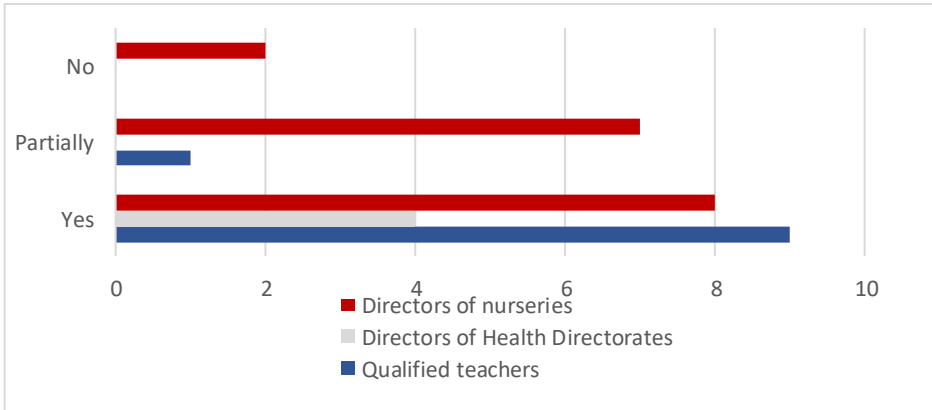


Fig. 27. Opinion of the experts regarding the basic pedagogical training of health care professionals

In this regard, we asked the experts the question “Do you think that a unified and systematic approach is necessary in solving the problems related to the pedagogical activity of health care professionals working in nurseries?”

All experts participating in our study unanimously agreed on the need for a unified and systematic approach to solving the problems related to the pedagogical activity of health care professionals working in nurseries (Fig. 28).

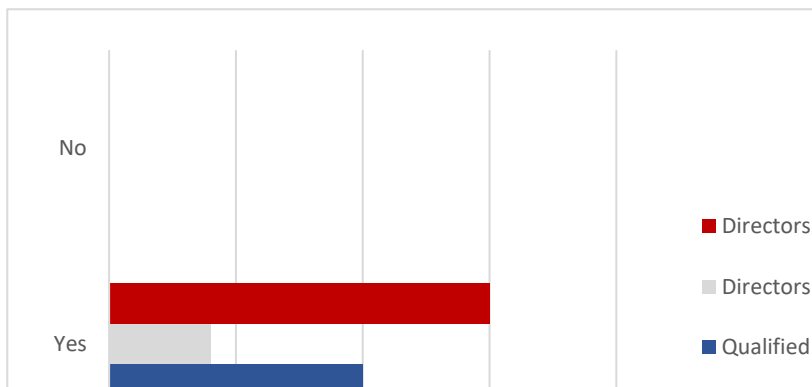


Fig. 28. The need for a unified and systematic approach to solving problems related to the pedagogical activity of health care professionals working in nurseries

In connection with the results above, we studied the opinion and assessment of the experts regarding the presented practical approaches for maintaining and improving the pedagogical training of health care professionals working in nurseries.

Table 7. Opinion and evaluation of the proposed practical approaches by the experts

Practical approaches		Experts		Qualified teachers		Directors of Health Departments	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
The proposed postgraduate training system will help to optimize the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists working in the nursery	Yes	9	90	3	75		
	Partly	1	10	1	25		
	No	0	0.0	0	0.0		
	Total	10	100,0	4	100,0		

The proposed system for control and evaluation of the pedagogical activity will be adopted for use by the health care professionals working in the nursery	Yes	10	100	4	100
	No	0	0	0	0
	Total	10	100,0	4	100,0
The proposed tools for control and assessment of professional qualification will be adopted for work by the health care professionals working in the nursery	Yes	10	100	3	75
	No	0	0	1	25
	Total	10	100,0	4	100,0
The proposed system / program for interaction with parents will be adopted for work by the health care professionals working in the nursery	Yes	10	100	3	75
	No	0	0	1	25
	Total	10	100,0	4	100,0

A significant part of the experts consider that the postgraduate training system proposed by us will help to optimize the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists working in nurseries (Table 7.). When asked about its possible contributions to practice, the experts pointed out that it would contribute to the introduction of precise and clear requirements to the necessary pedagogical competence of health care professionals working in nurseries, to the introduction of uniform requirements regarding the necessary pedagogical competence of health care professionals working in nurseries and also to the continuous upgrading and improvement of their pedagogical competence (Fig.29.).

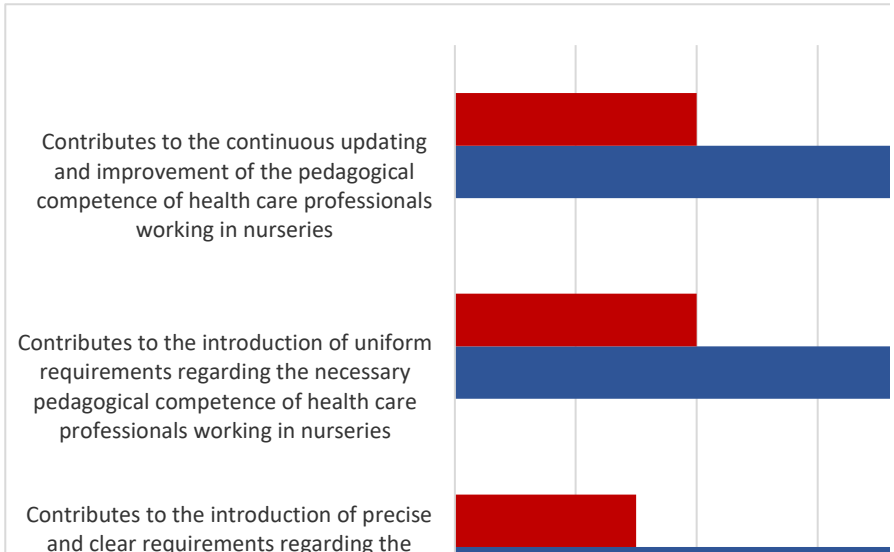


Fig. 29. Possible contributions of the proposed postgraduate training system to optimize the pedagogical activity of medical professionals working in nurseries

The experts believe that the proposed system for control and assessment of the pedagogical activity will be adopted for use by the health care professionals working in nurseries (Table 7.). The experts have given the same assessment of the presented tools for control and evaluation of the professional qualification of health professionals (Table 7.). The proposed system and tools for control and evaluation of professional qualifications are of great importance for the practice, according to the experts, because they introduce precise and clear criteria, objectivity and transparency in the evaluation of the pedagogical activity of health care specialists, provide feedback between the health professionals and the director, who evaluates the implementation of the pedagogical activity and the achievement of the pedagogical goals that are set. This, in turn, will contribute to the professional comfort and security of health care specialists when their pedagogical activity is assessed and to its optimization as a whole (Fig. 30.).

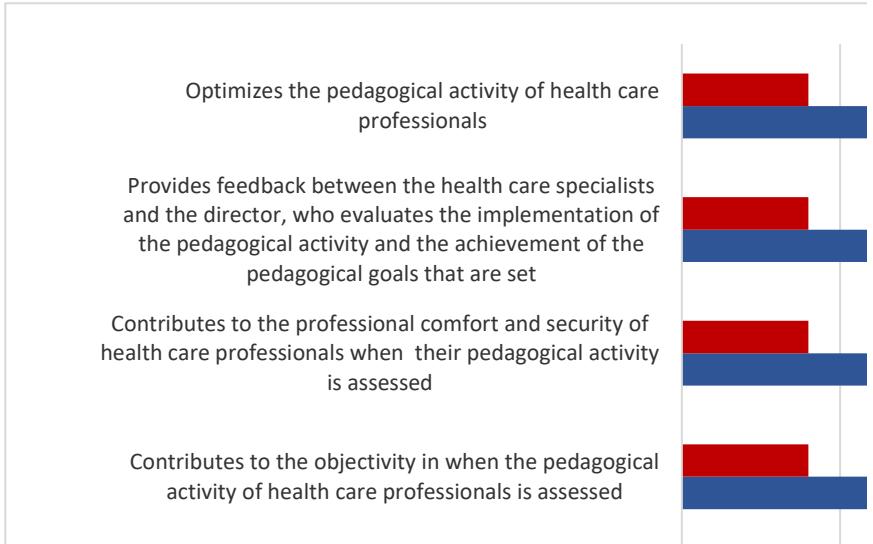


Fig. 30. Possible contributions of the proposed system and tools for control and assessment of the pedagogical activity to optimize the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists working in nurseries

The experts assess positively our proposed system/programme for interacting with parents to attract them to the educational process in the nursery as partners and believe that it will be accepted for use by health care professionals (Table 7).

In this regard, all experts support the contributory nature of the system/programme for interacting with parents and attracting them to the educational process in the nursery in relation to the opportunities it provides for the introduction of precise and clear rules, openness and transparency in the interaction with parents. Moreover, it helps, according to experts, to involve parents as partners in the process of learning and raising their children, to provide feedback and to ensure the professional comfort and security of health care professionals in their interaction with parents (Fig. 31).

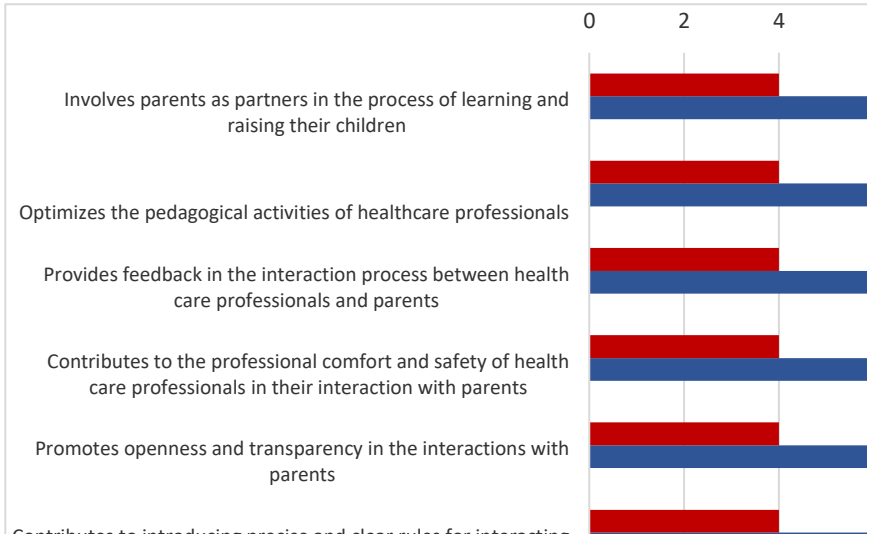


Fig. 31. Possible contributions and significance for the practice of the proposed system/programme for interaction with parents to attract them to the educational process in the nursery school as partners

When asked what the unified and systematic approach to solving problems related to the pedagogical activity of health professionals working in a nursery should include, the experts pointed to all the elements of the practical approaches developed and proposed by us in order to maintain and improve the pedagogical training of health professionals care, which once again confirms a positive opinion about the need to apply the indicated approaches in practice (Fig. 32.).

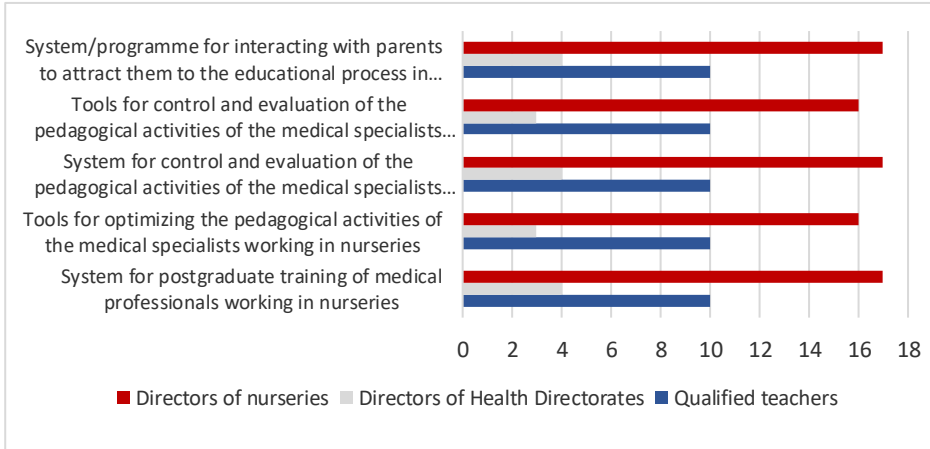


Fig. 32. Opinion of the experts on the main components of a unified and systematic approach to solving problems related to the pedagogical activity of health care professionals working in nurseries

The results of the expert assessment give reason to draw the following conclusions:

The directors of health directorates and the directors of nurseries express their opinion that:

Health care professionals:

- have very good basic professional training.
- actively participate in the process of planning the pedagogical activity in the nursery, give opinions and suggestions for work tailored to the individual characteristics and age of the children, actively interact with the nursery educator.
- The creativity of the health care specialists corresponds to their involvement in the pedagogical activity in the nursery and this has a positive impact on the development of the children.

The qualified teachers express their opinion that the proposed tools for control and assessment of professional qualification:

- will be accepted for use by the health care professionals working in nurseries,
- contribute to the introduction of precise and clear criteria for evaluating the pedagogical activity of health care professionals,
- optimize the pedagogical activity of health care specialists.
- They believe that the proposed system/programme for interacting with parents to involve them in the educational process in the nursery as partners will be adopted for use by the health care professionals working in the nursery and by the parents.

All experts assess positively the need for a unified and systematic approach in solving problems with the pedagogical training of health professionals working in nurseries.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The analysis of the regulatory framework of the Republic of Bulgaria proved the absence of a unified and systematic approach in regulating the professional pedagogical training of health care professionals who have the right to work in nurseries (this proves hypothesis 1 of the scientific study)
2. More than half of the health professionals working in nurseries (54.8%) and approximately half of the students (47.6%) (nursing and midwifery students) determine their level of preparedness to implement pedagogical functions and roles in nursery settings as very good.
3. The majority of educators working in nurseries believe that the pedagogical training of health professionals (nurses and midwives) working in nurseries is partly sufficient for the effective implementation of the educational activities (53.8%), and more than a third consider it completely sufficient (38.5%).
4. The majority of parents of children attending nurseries are satisfied with the professionalism (98.8%), the quality of education (98.3%), the training (97.7%) and the organization of the educational work (95.9%) carried out by health care professionals.
5. 6. A large number of parents express their confidence that health care specialists have high professional competence related to the care (98.8%), education (95.9%) and training (98.2%) of their child in the nursery.
6. 7. A significant proportion of parents of children attending nursery are satisfied with the interaction with health care professionals, confirming that they are able to receive development-related advice and recommendations from the health care professionals in the nursery (95.3%), the training (91.9%) and the

education (94.1%) of their child.

7. The analysis of the results proves the absence of difficulties in the implementation of the pedagogical functions and roles for a significant part of health care specialists (80.1%) and the presence of difficulties for approximately half of the students (44.3%).
8. The main problems related to the pedagogical activity of the health care specialists working in nurseries, according to a large part of the surveyed health professionals (65.4%) and students (53.8%), stem from problems with the children's behavior, as well as the huge groups of children, according to half of the health professionals and every tenth of the students.
9. Most of the surveyed students (79.5%) and health care professionals (58.3%) expressed a positive attitude towards additional training aimed at optimizing the pedagogical activity in nurseries (this proves hypothesis 3 of the scientific study).
10. All experts are united around the need for a unified and systematic approach to solving the problems related to the pedagogical activity of health care professionals working in nurseries (this proves hypothesis 2 of the scientific study).
11. All experts assess positively the practical applicability of the proposed practical approaches for maintaining and improving the professional training related to optimizing the pedagogical activity of the health care specialists working in nurseries.

SUGGESTIONS

- **To the Council of Ministers:**
To develop further and to specify the current regulations in the Republic of Bulgaria concerning the professional

(pedagogical) training of health care specialists for work in nurseries.

- **To the Bulgarian Association of Health Professionals:** Introduction of a unified model of a postgraduate training system for medical professionals working in nurseries.

- **To the directors of municipal health directorates and the directors of nurseries:**

To put into practice:

- A system for control and assessment of the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists working in nurseries;
- Tools for control and assessment of the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists working in nurseries;
- A system to optimize the pedagogical activity of the medical specialists working in nurseries.
- Stimulation of the postgraduate education of the medical specialists working in nurseries.

CONTRIBUTIONS

With theoretical importance:

1. A complex, targeted and in-depth study was made of the state of professional (with an emphasis on pedagogical) training of health care professionals for work in nurseries.
2. The level of satisfaction of the parents of children attending a nursery was investigated in terms of the professional competence related to the care, training and education of their child in the nursery, as well as their interaction with the health professionals.
3. An own model of a system for control and assessment of the

pedagogical activities, an own model of a system for optimizing the pedagogical activities and a unified model of a system for postgraduate training of medical specialists working in nurseries were developed.

With importance to the practical applicability:

1. The practical applicability of the developed practical approaches to maintaining and improving the pedagogical training of health care professionals working in nurseries has been proven.
2. The established relationships shall serve as basis for future studies following up the investigated processes.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of practical approaches, continuous training and changes in the regulatory framework will contribute to achieving a unified and systematic approach to the acquisition and maintenance of the pedagogical professional training of health care specialists working in nurseries.

This, in turn, will contribute to optimizing the pedagogical activities of health professionals working in nurseries, as well as to increasing the quality of care, education and training of children.

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN CONNECTION WITH THE TOPIC OF THE THESIS

1. Георгиева, А., Маргосян, Ж., **Ниво на компетентност на медицинските специалисти за комуникация в професионална среда, в условията на детска ясла.** XVII-Регионална научно-практическа конференция (Georgieva, A., Margosyan, Zh., Level of competence of medical specialists for communication in a professional environment in nursery settings. XVII Regional scientific and practical conference) - “Исследователският потенциал на младите ученици: Взгляд в бъдеще” – Тула ТГПУ им. Л.Н.Толстого, 2021, УДК 378.1, с.138-141; ISBN 978-5-6045159-4-5
2. Маргосян, Ж., **Готовност на студентите за работа в детска ясла с деца от уязвими групи.** Научно-практическа /on line/ конференция с международно участие “Медицинските сестри акушерките- ключов ресурс в съвременното здравеопазване”, посветена на международната година на медицинската сестра и акушерката и 25 годишнината от създаването на Тракийски Университет - Стара Загора, 29-30.10.2020 г. (Margosyan, Zh., **Preparedness of students to work in a nursery with children from vulnerable groups.** Scientific and practical /on line/ conference with international participation “Nurses, midwives – a key resource in modern healthcare”, dedicated to the International Year of Nurses and Midwives and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Trakia University - Stara Zagora, 29-30.10.2020.), pages 115-120; ISBN: 978-954-305-570-8
3. Маргосян, Ж., **„Формиране на професионална компетентност и нагласи за работа в детска ясла на студентите от специалност „Медицинска**

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