

STATEMENT

REGARDING: Public defense of a thesis for the purpose of acquiring a PhD degree in professional field 3.8 'Economics' of Adrian Georgiev, with academic supervisor Prof. D.Sc. Sonya Mileva

Topic of the research paper: DEVELOPMENT OF A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY MODEL FOR INCREASING THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF THE POPULATION OF BULGARIA FOR PROVIDING FIRST AID'

Grounds for presenting an opinion: order No. 23 /01.02.2023 of the Rector of Botevgrad International Business School for the formation of a defense committee under an open procedure for the public defense of a thesis on the following topic: 'Development of a management strategy model for increasing the knowledge and skills of the population of Bulgaria for providing first aid'.

The dissertation consists of 173 pages, 17 of which are appendices. It is structured as follows: introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, 3 appendices, 38 tables and 37 figures. The bibliography covers 108 sources, 41 of which are in Cyrillic, 67 are in Latin.

The structure of the paper includes an introduction, three chapters and conclusions, each of the chapters consists of sections and they are balanced in terms of volume. A bibliography and appendices are correctly included.

The relevance of the problem, the subject matter of the thesis, is clearly defined due to the fact that in many cases untimely actions and failure to provide first aid have extremely negative and/or fatal consequences on the quality of life of those affected, as well as placing a financial burden on the healthcare system.

The aim of the thesis is to investigate the level of knowledge and skills of the population for first aid provision by creating and approving a conceptual model for their improvement.

Tasks of the thesis provided for:

1. Situational analysis of the Bulgarian legislation in the field of first aid. Benchmarking analysis of good practices of leading European countries.
2. Conducting an empirical study on the preparation and readiness of the population of Bulgaria to provide first aid in the event of an accident or an acute form of illness.
3. Development and approval of a strategy model for increasing the knowledge and improving first aid skills tailored to the specific target group.

The object of the research is the availability of knowledge and attitudes in the Bulgarian society for first aid provision (FA), and the subject of the research are the opportunities for the formation of knowledge and skills for first aid assistance among members of the Bulgarian society, and more specifically – junior high school teachers and high school course of study and their distribution among students.

The study covers a long period of time – from the introduction of the first regulation (1995) to the present day.

Four research questions are posed which concern the assessment and/or self-assessment of the public's preparation to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation, as well as the readiness and the availability of skills for quick actions and the use of specialized equipment for the purpose of performing this manipulation.

The thesis of the research is formulated correctly – that the application of a model for the formation and development of first aid skills will lead to an increase and development of adequate knowledge and skills among the representatives of the target groups

There are three working hypotheses.

The methodological toolkit provides for:

1. Literature review and critical analysis of available secondary information on the topic.
2. Situational analysis and primary data from the author's national survey 'Society and First Aid' from 2019 (detailed in Appendix 1).
3. 2022 Society and First Aid II empirical study conducted.
4. Development and testing of a conceptual model for improving the population's training in first aid assistance based on specific target groups.

Limiting parameters of the operation are indicated.

I believe that the thesis and working hypotheses are defended in the dissertation research.

In **the first chapter** of the research paper "Analysis and assessment of the legislative and regulatory framework in Bulgaria, concerning the knowledge and skills of the population of Bulgaria to perform FA" an overview of terminological clarifications and a review of the regulatory framework, covering an approximately 20-year-long period, is made, as the economic aspects and funding of emergency aid in Bulgaria are examined and a comparative analysis of good practices from the leading European countries is made. Not only the state of the regulatory framework concerning the national health system, but also the state of healthcare is analyzed in detail, and the existing problems are brought out, including the state of the application of first aid in our country.

The object of the comparative analysis are countries with established market economies and traditions in healthcare (Germany, Norway, England, Austria), albeit each of them has its own social specifics. Each of the countries studied is evaluated based on the criteria selected. The logistical capabilities of the countries studied are also reported.

The conclusions of this chapter are that if the good practices from the examined European countries are used and adapted, they can be an effective tool for increasing the knowledge and improving the first aid skills in our country. Based on the research, the adoption of relevant legislation is recommended.

The second chapter 'Approach and methodological toolkit for conducting an empirical study on the preparation and readiness of the population of Bulgaria to provide first aid in the event of an accident or acute illness', analyzes the knowledge and skills needed for the provision of adequate first aid in the first minutes of the accident and presents a self-assessment of the population in Bulgaria.

The author conducted a study 'Society and first aid' through which to obtain a true picture of how the public perceives the preparation for first aid provision in the event of an accident or an acute form of illness, due to the lack of sufficient up-to-date data on the preparation of the population for FA assistance. The survey was conducted between February and October 2019. There were 3,334 respondents, 756 of which were male and 2,578 female, a semi-structured online questionnaire was used. The main data and conclusions about how the public perceives their first aid training are presented in Appendix 1.

This chapter also presents the approach to developing a management strategy model. A SMART goal-setting approach is used which defines specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic goals. A five-stage model for achieving goals is applied, and the model itself is described in detail. The selected model is examined with its positive aspects, as far as each model has negative elements, it would be appropriate if they were also presented and compared with the positive aspects of the model and respectively commented on.

A good solution is to present the stages of the thesis using a Gantt chart.

Chapter three 'Development and approbation of a strategy model for increasing the knowledge and skills for providing FA to the specific target group' analyzes the results of the experimental research determining the model for increasing the knowledge and improving skills of the public with regards to the provision of FA. The baseline data is obtained from the author's national online survey 'Society and First Aid' conducted in 2019.

Following the first study (2019), a cluster of problems was identified, a second study was initiated to outline areas of intervention. The second study used the same questionnaire with minimal additions. Certain fluctuations in the respondent profile were found.

Conclusions were made regarding the readiness to provide first aid and the corresponding acquisition of skills for this, as well as the need to introduce incentives for such training.

The dissertation does not develop a strategy, but rather presents an indicative model of a management strategy for increasing the knowledge and improving the skills in the field of FA, with the relevant details. An essential element of the work is the proposal to create an online tool for assessment and self-assessment of the knowledge and skills for providing FA. The PhD student appropriately considers the possible actors that will be involved in a possible globalization of the current model and the interaction between them to establish how the management strategy model would unfold beyond the boundaries of the current PhD thesis.

The necessary financing of the management model is described, as well as the possible tools for its achievement.

The proposed method was tested on the basis of a control sample. The third chapter ends with a presentation of the economic benefits, value and potential of FA training for reducing healthcare costs in the Bulgarian healthcare system.

In **the conclusion**, the results of the work are presented in a summarized form.

The following contributions are listed:

1. Based on an analysis of the Bulgarian legislation, the deficiencies in the Bulgarian legislation regarding the definition and application of the term 'first aid' have been identified, studied and systematized. As a result, the thesis defines first aid as a specific area of critical importance to be studied and developed.

2. An in-depth comparative analysis of good practices in European countries regarding the preparation of the population for providing first aid in the event of an accident or acute illness was carried out based on which guidelines are proposed for increasing the capacity of the Bulgarian society to provide first aid.

3. As a result of a representative study conducted on a national level, empirically comparative characteristics of the behavior of the Bulgarian society have been derived, trends in the behavior of the studied object have been outlined and conceptual views have been proposed for activities and trainings for the purpose of increasing the capacity of society to react in case of the need of first aid – an important practically applied contribution to a social problem unexplored in the last three decades.

4. A model is proposed for developing a management strategy to increase the readiness and confidence of the population to provide first aid. The model has been tested and the achieved success rate exceeds the initially set goal of 85%. These results form the most significant contribution with a research-applied nature of the thesis.

I believe that the contributions can be reduced to 3, and I would recommend that the first and second contributions be combined, and that the emphasis be placed on the development of an analysis of the national regulatory framework.

Abstract, reference to the publications related to the dissertation work

The abstract has a volume of 54 (fifty-four) pages and corresponds and is relevant to the main body of work. It presents the researched problems in a summarized form, including a general description of the thesis, a brief statement, a reference to the contributions and publications on the topic. The narrative part could be more compact.

Posts on the subject

The type and number of publications presented correspond to the list of publications announced in the reference section. The PhD student has presented a total of 4 publications in accordance with the subject of the thesis, three of which are independent and one is co-authored. One of the publications is pending release. One in four publications is in English, and the rest are in Bulgarian.

Questions to the PhD student:

Based on the comparative analysis, do you find that there is a good practice that can be transferred to our country without significant changes?

What do you think is the most urgent legislative change?

General conclusion

The thesis of Adrian Georgiev on the topic 'DEVELOPMENT OF A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY MODEL FOR INCREASING THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF THE POPULATION OF BULGARIA FOR PROVIDING FIRST AID' meets the basic legal and regulatory requirements for awarding a doctoral degree. All of the above gives me the reason to vote 'FOR' the awarding of a PhD degree to Adrian Georgiev in professional field 3.8 Economics

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