NEED FOR QUALIFICATION OF MASTERS IN HEALTH MANAGEMENT AT THE FACULTY OF PUBLIC HEALTH SOFIA

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Abstract

The health management is a specific section of the general theory and practice of the management. It enters widely in the management practice of developed European countries and in recent decades became an independent autonomous function and professional career. The article studies and analyzes the opinions of Master's courses students in Health Management at the Faculty of Public Health at the Medical University - Sofia regarding their motivation for choosing the specialty, employment prospects and career as health managers, the need for an additional qualification in different areas of health management and their suggestions for a more stable and effective career as health managers.

Keywords: *health management, training, needs, career*

The management in the healthcare system is an area of scientific management, which always has a high attention according with economic and social policy changes. Nowadays, the importance of effective and competent manager is essential for solving problems related to the functioning and providing services by health organization in a constantly changing environment. In the contemporary conditions of profound changes in the health care system health managers from different levels of management stood face to face with many regulations unknown economic, political, social, psychological and technological problems that have no solutions.

Bulgaria is in the process of reforming the health care system. Of paramount importance in building a more modern and efficient health system is the formation of human resources, which is responsible for the implementation of change. In the process of reform health managers are one of the most important components of the system, whose actions determine the changes and their subsequent effect. The Healthcare reform in our country brings to the fore issues of the healthy management related to the introduction of a new management style, new values and ways of thinking, new management technologies.

Healthcare institutions are constantly looking for new approaches to increase its competitive advantages as essential in this process occupy the invisible values of the organization - corporate culture, organizational identity, preparedness of staff, leadership skills of managers and motivational mechanisms. Objectively the need of a new generation of health managers prepared for the challenges of dynamic emerging market and health services, media entrepreneurship and respecting universal ethical principles are formed.

The purpose of this article is to examine and analyze the opinions of Health Management master students at the Faculty of Public Health in the Medical University - Sofia regarding their need for qualifications, employment prospects and career as health managers

To achieve this aim, we define the following tasks:

1. Clarify the nature of health management as a career

2. Survey of graduate students in health management on their motives for choosing the specialty

3. Study of prospects for professional development and career as health managers

4. Analysis of the need for additional training in various areas of health management

5. Establishment of their proposals for a more stable and effective career as health managers

To achieve that aim a survey method is used. The 80 students trained in masters programs Faculty of Public Health in Medical University of Sofia are covered in a pilot survey. Most of the interviewed students / 43.75% / are aged between 31 and 40 years, followed by those in the age group of up to 30g / 37,5% / and third / 18.75% / are aged over 41 years. / Figure 1 /.

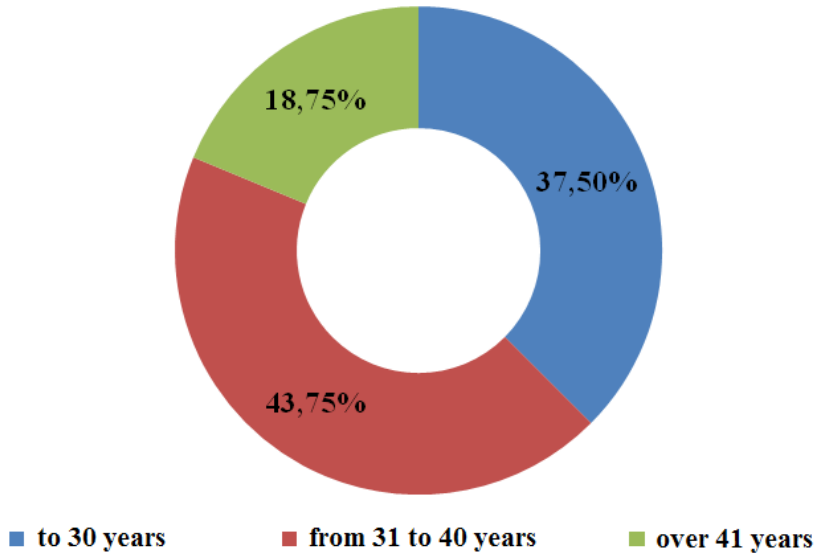


Figure 1. Distribution of respondent students by age

The health management is not only science and practice, but also a separate independent profession. Nowadays there are opportunities for autonomous professional career and development in the field of health management. Development of health management theory and practice logically lead to the formation of an independent profession - the profession of health manager. The need health management functions of activity arise from "by the way" to a specific activity of a certain type of professionals who devote themselves full of complex, unconventional and unusual activity management of the health organization. These professionals are namely health managers.

In developed countries officially is regulated health professional management, ie management in health are profession with compulsory training in health management. This qualification is certified with certain qualifications – a master of Health Management.

The most common starting points for the formation of health managers have a degree in medicine, economy, law, nursing, public administration, and another profile of education (sociology, political science, environment science and others.). This diversity is natural and it relates to non-traditional integrative nature of health management

For the developed countries is typical that most often the way of professional management take no doctors but other official profile starting higher education - economics, law and nursing. In Bulgaria, now the situation is completely different - here still prevails so called medicracy (absolute dominance and monopoly of doctors in the management of the health system). Should be aware that medicracy a barrier to the development and strengthening of professional health management in our country (3). In this direction the essential role play the Faculties of Public Health in our country. In Bulgaria, now the situation is twofold. Already have created conditions for university training of health managers - in the Faculties of Public Health, but there is no adequate legal framework for the implementation of the prepared health managers - bachelors and masters. In practice still dominates so called - medicracy.

In modern Europe health management is not a by the way activity. It is an independent profession. The legislation realized the need for a certain type of professionals to devote not temporarily and

accidental, but overall the complex, unconventional and unusual health organization's management activities.

The training in health management in Bulgaria is not in short courses but university type of Masters Degree. Master graduates often have another basic higher education.

The systematic university preparation in health management and regulation of the magistracy in health management as a condition for a management career in health system will have a positive impact on the realization and professional route of future health managers. This will overcome the accidental including of incompetent persons in management positions and will increase professional motivation for the development of new management knowledge and skills among existing health managers in practical healthcare.

Over the last decade the Faculty of Public Health became a very important incentive for the development of professional health management in Bulgaria, because they form a new type of management professionals and charting the real strengthening of managerial professionalism in the health system at all levels.

Table 1 presents the responses of students surveyed about their motivation for choosing of specialty health care management. The results show that the most common motive is the pursuit of self-realization (about a third of respondents - 30%), which is in line with the famous E. Maslow's model of hierarchy of needs..

Self-realization as a need and as a motive for choosing the profession is undoubtedly a positive factor for the effectiveness of future professional activity of each specialist, in this mean for health manager too.

The second and third among the reasons for choosing of health care management specialty is the desire for a future career as a health manager (27.5%) and increasing of the managerial culture (25%). These varieties of reasons reflect a lack of regulated professional management in the country. Obviously the leading motive for university studies in health management in Bulgaria at present is not the pursuit of a professional career in health management. We believe that this aspiration is more background desire to improve management culture and higher education.

Table 1. The Reasons for the choosing of master's degree in health management

Reasons	**Count**	**Percent**
Self-realization	28	**30,0 %**
Increasing of the managerial culture	20	**25,0 %**
Future career as a health manager	22	**27,5 %**
Friend and colleagues advice	7	8,7 %
Accidentaly	2	2,5 %
Others	1	1,3 %
TOTAL	80	100,0

To identify any change in students' motivation for choosing of specialty health care management asked the next question of the survey. The data show that motivation for the choice of specialty health care management in training students is characterized by a certain dynamic that is presented in Figure 2. It was found that in more than half of the surveyed students / 55% / this motivation is increased, but not insignificant rate / 45% / it is reduced, again related to the gradual clearer idea that Bulgaria still missing guaranteed conditions for the full realization and career as health managers.

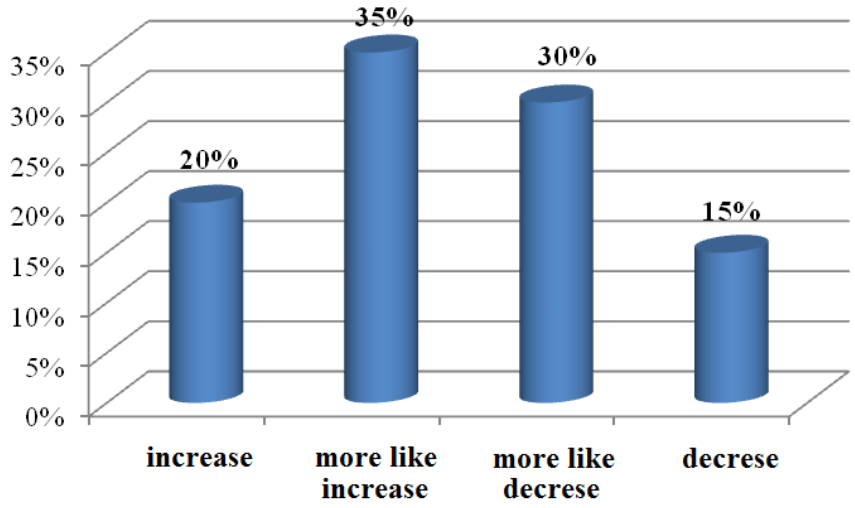


Figure 2. The change in professional motivation for choosing the health management

These data correlate with the results of the next question of the survey, which sought the opinion of the respondents on their view of the existence of real prospects for professional development and career as health managers. The surveyed students consider that the opportunities and prospects for professional development and a stable career in health management are not particularly good. Almost half of them do not see the existence of real prospects for future development as health managers in the current legislation on health and the established practice of selection of management staff in hospital and out of hospital sector.

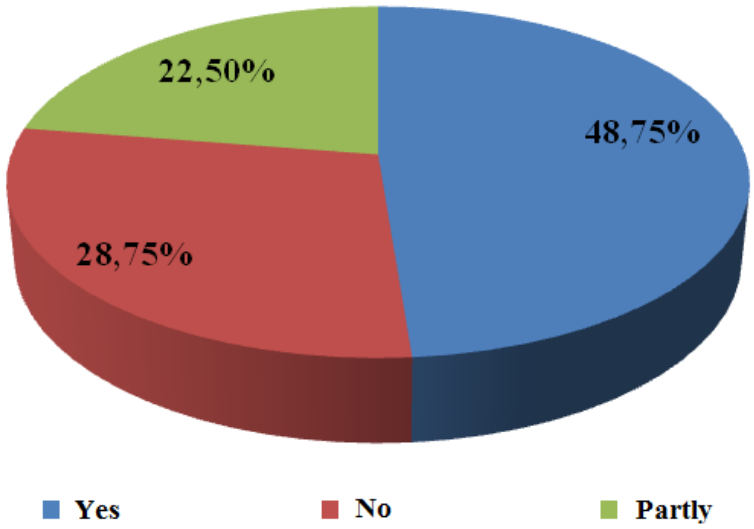


Figure 3. Assessment of the prospects for development and career in health management.

Nowadays there is an increase of requirements towards health managers on their qualifications and skills. This is especially true for the hospital sector (D. Dimitrov). The health management as an independent career management requires a certain degree of proficiency in mastering the managerial

vision and skills. A number of authors point out that in our health care system has a certain deficit of managerial knowledge and skills.

In this connection also asked a question of the survey aimed to identify the needs of the additional qualification of graduate students in health management. Respondents feel the need for higher skills mainly in the following areas of health management:

- Human resource management / 31.25% of the respondents /;
- Management of financial resources - 27.5%;
- The marketing methods and approaches - 26.25%
- Management of the time - 20%

These data show that the interest of future managers to general strategic issues of management theory is low - especially on the issues of health policy, strategic management, management of change and informatics. The interest in quality management is low too.

This shows that it is necessary a more targeted and systematically programming their continuing education in accordance with the dynamics of topicality, relevance and priority of diverse problems of health management. Above all, it is desirable, among other issues to focus on more stable formation of strategic thinking and skill of leading health managers in our country.

Table 2. The need for additional training in various areas of health management

Health management areas	**Count**	**Percent**
Common principles of management	**3**	**3,75**
Health policy	**4**	**5**
Strategic management	**4**	**5**
Management of change	**8**	**10**
Мениджмънт на времето	**16**	**20**
Management of financial resources	**22**	**27,5**
Human resources management	**25**	**31,25**
Statistical methods and informatics	**5**	**6,25**
The marketing methods and approaches	**21**	**26,25**
Others	**9**	**11,25**

* Note: The number of responses is greater than the number of respondents as it could give more than one answer to this question.

Respondent students give a number of proposals for a more stable and effective career of the health manager, which essentially will lead to improved professionalism in our health care.

The proposals of the respondents are summarized in Table 3. Analysis of the results shows that these proposals stand out first of all two major accents:

- Introduction of the requirement for education level "Master of Health Management" for the position of Director or Deputy Director of the hospital;
- Competition for directors of hospitals by independent committees composed from experts in health management.

Table 3. Proposals for a stable and effective career of the hospital manager

Answers	**Count**	**Percent**
Regulate the requirement for education level "Master of Health Management" for the position Director and Deputy. Director of Hospital	**23**	**28,75%**
Competition for directors of hospitals by independent committees composed from experts in health management.	**19**	**23,75%**
Creating the conditions for qualification and periodic training on health management and broader opportunities for enrollment of PhD degrees in this area	**17**	**21,25%**
Regulating the requirement for a certain qualification in health management for chief departments and senior nurses	**12**	**15%**
Conducting a periodic attestation of the quality of the activity managerial staff in healthcare	**11**	**13,75%**
Facilitated conditions for qualification (education in FPH.)	**9**	**11,25%**
Periodic conferences of health managers	**9**	**11,25%**
More frequent exchanges of experience in the country and abroad	**7**	**8,75%**

* Note: The number of responses is greater than the number of respondents as it could give more than one answer to this question.

From the presented results we can draw the following conclusions:

- The leading reasons for entering into FOS are striving for self-realization (30%), the desire for a future career as a health care manager (27.5%) and increasing the managerial culture (25%).;
- The motivation for choosing of specialty in health management trainees students tolerate certain dynamics - more than half of the surveyed students / 55% / this motivation is increased, but not insignificant rate / 45% / it is reduced;
- Respondents students feel the need for higher qualification in first place in the field of Human Resource Management / 31.25% /, followed by management of financial resources / 27,5% / and third are marketing methods and approaches / 26.25% /.

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