

R E V I E W
of a dissertation paper
for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in PhD Programme "Organization and Management Outside the Sphere of Material
Production (Public Administration)"
at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Hristo Sirashki, PhD

Author of the dissertation paper: Izabela Filipova Yonkova

Title of the dissertation paper: "The Impact of Ethical Infrastructure upon the Performance of Public Sector Organizations"

Grounds for submitting the review: Order No. 364 from 28.05.2024 of the Rector of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov, for membership in the Scientific Panel for the defence of the dissertation thesis

I. A General Presentation of the Dissertation Paper

The topic of the dissertation is relevant and significant, since compliance with ethics in government administration is beneficial and of crucial importance to society. Violations of ethical norms or instances of ethical misconduct undermine public confidence in public sector organizations, create prerequisites for corruption, expose the operation of government institutions and the accomplishment of public objectives to risk.

The purpose of the dissertation paper "The Impact of Ethical Infrastructure upon the Performance of Public Sector Organizations" is to study ethical infrastructure in general and the impact of its elements and, based on an integrated approach, to propose a conceptual model of ethical infrastructure and a methodology for self-assessment of the impact which ethical infrastructure has on the performance of organisations in the public sector.

The object of the research is ethical infrastructure in administrative structures that are part of the executive power system in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The subject of the research which the PhD student has selected is the level to which the elements of ethical infrastructure in public sector organizations have been developed.

To accomplish the purpose of the dissertation, the author identifies 6 research tasks which are successfully fulfilled during the research.

The volume of the dissertation paper is 278 pages, including an introduction, three chapters of main text, a conclusion, a list of references, and 6 appendices. The list of references contains 243 sources, of which 104 are in Bulgarian and 139 are in English. This extensive bibliography indicates painstaking work on behalf of the author in conducting her research. The number of used literary sources is sufficient and they are cited correctly.

The author uses 16 figures and 10 tables to illustrate and emphasize key points in the main text.

The dissertation paper has an optimum volume in which a good balance of the content is achieved.

II. Evaluation of the Structure and Content of the Dissertation Paper

The main text of the dissertation paper consists of an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion.

The conclusion has all required main attributes: evidence that the topic is relevant; a clearly formulated purpose, object and subject of the research; research tasks; the research thesis; the methodology and the constraints of the research.

In Chapter One, the PhD student presents some theoretical aspects of ethics and ethical infrastructure in the public sector. She pays attention to the different models of ethical infrastructure and conducts a comparative analysis of the content of these models. The chapter also reviews good practices in developing ethical infrastructure. Finally, a summary of the findings of the research on ethics and ethical infrastructure in public sector is presented, followed by a theoretical transition to Chapter Two of the dissertation paper.

In Chapter Two, “Management Aspects of Ethical Infrastructure in Public Sector Organizations”, the focus is on the managerial aspects of ethical infrastructure in public organizations. The author reviews the normative, strategic, and methodological frameworks related to ethics in the public sector in our country to design a conceptual model of ethical infrastructure. The chapter presents the empirical survey which the author conducts to establish the level to which ethical structure has been developed in public sector organizations in Bulgaria so far. Based on that research, the author makes an analysis and defines 7 research hypotheses which she then verifies to identify existing correlations. At the end of chapter two, the PhD students summaries the findings of the conducted survey and analysis and her views regarding the lack of a straightforward definition of ethical conduct or misconduct, and hence, the need of a common definition that would state clearly the essence of the conduct required from

administrative staff. The author claims that the conditions for developing a highly ethical environment are not sufficient at present in a scientifically correct manner and properly supports her observation with the specific reasons accounting for that.

Chapter Three, “Conceptual Constructs of Ethical Infrastructure in the Public Sector” presents a conceptual model of ethical infrastructure in the public sector; a methodology for qualitative self-assessment of the impact which the ethical infrastructure has upon the performance of organizations in the public sector, and recommendations for improving the ethical environment in these organizations. The conceptual model which the author proposes is defined as a result of the scientific research work of the PhD student in Chapter One and Chapter Two. The author presents possible interrelated iterations for introducing the elements of the conceptual model into public sector administrations. At the end of the chapter, the author presents her findings and conclusions in terms of possible actions for improving the ethical environment in public sector organizations.

The conclusion of the dissertation paper summarizes the tasks which the author has accomplished and proves the research thesis.

The report provided from StrikePlagiarism does not indicate any violations of academic ethics.

The abstract of the dissertation paper meets relevant requirements and truthfully presents the key points in the developed PhD thesis.

With reference to the defence procedure, the PhD student, Izabela Yonkova, lists 4 publications in which she makes her scientific views and accomplishments known to the scientific community.

III. Scientific and Scientific-applied Contribution of the Dissertation

The dissertation paper has scientific and scientific-applied contribution related to the tasks which the PhD student has accomplished. I agree with the contribution declared by the author of the PhD thesis:

- ✓ Based on a thematic analysis of ethical infrastructure models in the public sector which are described in scientific literature, a comparative analysis is conducted of the author’s views about the contents of the models and the various interpretations of the nature of ethical infrastructure as a concept, contents and the way it is applied in practice, which reveals that a model of a single comprehensive and efficiently operating ethical infrastructure has not been designed so far and there in no model to meet the demands of practice.

- ✓ The normative, strategic and methodological frameworks of ethics in the public sector are studied and issues related to their impact are analysed through an empirical survey of the level to which ethical infrastructure is developed in public sector organizations in Bulgaria by employing quantitative and qualitative methods, which provides comprehensive information about the state of ethical infrastructure and its impact upon the performance of public organizations.
- ✓ The author suggests a conceptual model of ethical infrastructure which consists of a set of formal and informal elements identified on the basis of the conducted comparative analysis of existing ethical infrastructure models; the content analysis of the normative, strategic and methodological frameworks of ethics in the public sector and the empirical survey of the level to which ethical infrastructure has been developed so far in public sector organizations in Bulgaria. An iterative process of 8 correlated iterations for introducing ethical elements into public organizations is proposed.
- ✓ A methodology for qualitative self-assessment of the level to which ethical infrastructure is developed in public sector organizations is designed. The methodology is based on a qualitative description of the state of each element, for three possible levels of development of ethical elements in public sector organizations – low, medium and high – and three degrees of the impact which these elements have on public organizations depending on the level of their development.
- ✓ Based on the thematic analysis of scientific publications and good practices, guidelines for improving the ethical environment within the context of social functions in the public sector are suggested. These guidelines are of administrative, political and methodological nature. Some of them are wider in scope and relate to the improvement of the overall performance of administration, while others relate directly to the development of ethical infrastructure elements.

IV. Critical Remarks, Questions and Recommendations to the Dissertation

I have no specific remarks to the author of the dissertation paper. In my opinion, the PhD thesis has been developed thoroughly and at a high academic level.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

The dissertation paper “The Impact of Ethical Infrastructure upon the Performance of Public Sector Organizations” is an instance of highly relevant and exhaustive research work. I give a

positive evaluation to the submitted PhD thesis based on its merits and scientific and scientific-applied contribution and recommend awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” to Izabela Filipova Yonkova in PhD Programme “Organization and Management Outside the Sphere of Material Production (Public Administration)”, Sphere of Higher Education: 3. “Social, Legal and Economic Sciences”, Professional Field: 3.7 “Administration and Management”.

Date: 14.06.2024

Svishtov

Reviewer:

(Assoc. Prof.  Sirashki, PhD)