

REVIEW

of a dissertation paper for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in PhD Programme “Organisation and Management Outside the Sphere of Material Production (Public Administration)” at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov

Review prepared by: Prof. Ivalinka Pencheva, PhD, “St. Cyril and St. Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo, Faculty of Economics, Department of Business Management

Author of the dissertation paper: Izabela Filipova Yonkova

Title of the dissertation paper: “The Impact of Ethical Infrastructure upon the Performance of Public Sector Organisations”

Scientific advisor: Assoc. Prof. Evelina Parashkevova - Velikova, PhD

Grounds for submitting the review: Order No. 364 from 28th May 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 dissertation “The Impact of Ethical Infrastructure upon the Performance of Public Sector Organisations” seeks the solution to an issue that is significant for Bulgarian reality and discusses the correlation between the development of ethical infrastructure and the performance of the public sector.

The **subject** of the research is studying the level to which the elements of ethical infrastructure have been developed in public sector organisations so far.

The **volume** of the dissertation paper submitted for reviewing is 278 pages, of which 189 pages are the body text, 27 pages provide a list of references, and 62 pages are appendices. In terms of its structure, the dissertation has an introduction, a main text consisting of 3 chapters, a conclusion and a list of used **literary sources** – 243 in total, of which 104 are in Cyrillic and 139 are in Latin. The ideas presented in the main body are illustrated with **16 figures and 10 tables**. The volume of each chapter is proportionate to the volumes of the other chapters.

The subject of the research, its volume and structure, as well as the studied and used literary sources fully meet the standards established for developing a PhD thesis for acquiring

the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in PhD Programme “Organisation and Management Outside the Sphere of Material Production (Public Administration)”.

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

The topic of the dissertation submitted for reviewing, “The Impact of Ethical Infrastructure upon the Performance of Public Sector Organisations”, seeks a solution to a problem that is relevant to contemporary society, namely, identifying various methods and mechanisms for improving the ethics in government administration. The solutions provided in the PhD thesis will contribute to dealing with negative phenomena like corruption, conflicts of interests, abuse of office, etc. This, in turn, will contribute to improving the image of and raising the confidence in public sector institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria, which renders the research relevant and significant.

The underlying thesis of the PHD thesis is the author’s view that a highly developed ethical infrastructure in public sector organisations is fundamental for better quality of work processes and contributes to accomplishing the goals of administration.

Hence, the formulated **purpose** of the dissertation 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 it has on the performance of public sector organisations. The **tasks** which the author sets relate to the accomplishment of the main purpose of the dissertation.

The **object** of research in the developed PhD thesis is ethical infrastructure in administrative structures that are part of the executive power system in the Republic of Bulgaria. The **subject** of research is the level to which the elements of ethical infrastructure in public sector organisations have been developed.

The **methodology** of the research is based scientific research methods like a thematic analysis of scientific literature; a content analysis of normative and strategic documents and methodological achievements; deduction; induction; abduction; critical and comparative analyses of scientific literature, good practices and data from researching secondary sources of information.

Based on these, a conceptual model of ethical infrastructure is designed and a methodology for qualitative self-assessment of its impact upon the performance of public sector organisations is proposed.

The empirical research is based on an electronic survey card; unstructured in-depth interviews and a focus-group discussion conducted after an extensive survey. Collected data are

analysed by employing statistical methods. The author applies the structural, the graphical and the correlation method and univariate and bivariate descriptive distributions. I am therefore positive that the relevance and the significance of the dissertation paper are supported by sufficient evidence; the purpose and the tasks are accurately and clearly formulated; and the object of research is material.

As for **previous scientific research into the main issue** of the dissertation, the topic is not new. Nevertheless, the skill with which the author analyses and evaluates various processes and activities in different environments, allows her to arrive at findings and conclusions that are relevant to the objective reality. Based on them, the author demonstrates her own awareness of and attitude to the issues discussed in the dissertation and offers possible solutions.

The volume of the dissertation paper (278 pages) and the elements of its structure (an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and appendices) follow the standard for this type of research work.

The formulated **topic** is clear and relevant to the issues discussed in the dissertation.

The Introduction follows a logical structure and explains why the research is relevant and significant. It also presents the object and subject of the research accurately and states a clearly formulated research thesis, the purpose of the research and the main tasks for accomplishing that purpose. The introduction also reveals the constraints faced by the research.

Chapter One of the dissertation paper discusses ethics and ethical infrastructure in the public sector. The chapter provides an outline of ethics and models of ethical infrastructure in the public sector and reviews related good practices. The author arrives at the conclusion that the observance of ethical values, standards and norms is a complex process that is not always sufficient for creating an adequate ethical environment, and employing ethical principles in administration processes is indicative of the quality of administration performance and provided public services and should therefore be facilitated through various instruments and mechanisms which relate directly to the development of ethical infrastructure elements.

The author arrives at conclusions which indicate in-depth knowledge of ethics and ethical infrastructure in the public sector.

Chapter Two of the dissertation paper deals with the managerial aspects of ethical infrastructure in public organisations. The focus of attention is on issues related to the normative, strategic and methodological frameworks which determine ethics in the public sector in Bulgaria and their impact on practice. Major acts and by-laws related to ethics in the public sector are analysed and assessed. The author reviews the conditions for the ethical performance of administration as set in normative acts and regulations. The chapter also

provides a content analysis of major strategic documents which regulate ethical issues related to administration performance and the methodological basis of ethics in the public sector.

The chapter presents the findings of a conducted survey and analyses the impact of ethical infrastructure upon the performance of public sector organisations. It reviews the results obtained from the verification of related hypotheses by applying a set of statistical instruments.

At the end of the chapter, the PhD student arrives at conclusions which focus on identified deficiencies in the normative, strategic and methodological frameworks of ethics in the public sector and organizational omissions in the design and development of ethical infrastructure elements in administrative structures that are part of the executive power system in Bulgaria.

In **Chapter Three**, “Conceptual Constructs of Ethical Infrastructure in the Public Sector”, the emphasis is on major issues related to ethical functioning and available opportunities for creating a favourable organizational environment.

A conceptual model of ethical infrastructure in the public sector is defined. A methodology for qualitative self-assessment of the impact of ethical infrastructure upon the performance of public sector organisations is proposed. The author gives recommendations for improving the ethical environment in organisations in the public sector. The generalisations and conclusions which are made at the end of the chapter relate to possible interventions for improving the ethical climate in public sector organisations.

The Conclusion presents generalisations, conclusions and recommendations which the author makes based on the conducted research. They prove that the purpose of the research and related tasks are accomplished.

Based on the observations made above, I am positive that the dissertation paper presents complex research of the impact which ethical infrastructure has upon the performance of public sector organisations.

The underlying thesis of the dissertation paper is that a high level of integration of ethical infrastructure in public sector organisations is fundamental for improving the quality of work processes and contributes to achieving the goals of administration is proved.

The author has designed 16 figures and 10 tables to illustrate the observations, findings and conclusions made in the research.

The dissertation paper is edited meticulously in terms of linguistic accuracy and style adequacy. There are no deviations from the main issue, repetitions or logical inconsistencies.

The PhD thesis and the documents required for the defence procedure are in compliance with the rules of scientific ethics.

The abstract has a volume of 35 pages. It is appropriately structured and provides information that matches the content of the dissertation and presents accurately its results and contributions.

III. Scientific and Scientific-applied Contribution of the Dissertation

First. The conducted comparative analysis of various views about the content of the models and the different interpretations of the nature of ethical infrastructure as a concept, and in terms of its essence and manifestation, gives evidence of the need to develop an integrated and well-performing ethical infrastructure since currently there is no model to meet the requirements of practice.

Second. The impact of the normative, strategic and methodological frameworks of ethics in the public sector is analysed in terms of the performance of public institutions.

Third. The empirical survey of the development of ethical infrastructure in public sector organisations in Bulgaria which is conducted by applying quantitative and qualitative methods provides valuable insights about the current state of ethical infrastructure and its impact upon the performance of public organisations.

Fourth. Based on the conducted comparative analysis of theoretical models of ethical infrastructure, 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 in public sector organisations in Bulgaria has been developed so far, the author proposes:

- a conceptual model of ethical infrastructure with six formal and one informal elements;
- an iterative process consisting of 8 interrelated iterations for the introduction of ethical elements in public organisations.

Fifth. A methodology for qualitative self-assessment of the level to which ethical infrastructure is developed in public sector organisations is designed.

Sixth. Guidelines for improving the ethical environment within the context of social functions in the public sector are suggested. Some of them relate to improving the overall performance of administration, while others relate directly to the development of ethical infrastructure elements.

I accept the above listed instances of scientific contribution as the outcomes of the research work done by the PhD student. In my opinion, they will contribute to the optimization of the ethical infrastructure in public sector institutions.

The candidate presents four publications that are related to the topic of the dissertation: a research paper, an article, and two conference papers. The article is published in a journal

refereed and indexed in the international data base Scopus. Both conference papers are co-authored, while the research paper and the article are single-authored papers. This proves that the ideas and the outcomes presented in the dissertation have gained recognition in specialized literature.

The list of publications by the author meets the minimum national requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in Scientific field 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”, Professional field 3.7 “Administration and Management” with a score of 55 points, provided that a minimum of 30 points is required.

IV. Critical Remarks, Questions and Recommendations to the Dissertation

In this part of the review, I would like to congratulate the PhD student and her academic advisor on choosing the topic of the dissertation and its meticulous development, which would account for the lack of any critical remarks on my part.

It would be a pleasure to hear Izabela Yonkova present her view about the elements of organizational culture in public institutions that relate to the proposed conceptual model of ethical infrastructure during the defence.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

Based on the scientific analysis of the dissertation “The Impact of Ethical Infrastructure upon the Performance of Public Sector Organisations”, I consider the submitted PhD thesis to be complete and independent scientific research with theoretical and practical input on a relevant and significant issue. I am confident that the PhD thesis developed by Izabela Yonkova is valuable scientific and practical contribution and fully meets the requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” as set in the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations on its implementation. I therefore give a positive evaluation for the open procedure and recommend to the Scientific Panel to award the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” to Izabela Filipova Yonkova in PhD Programme “Organisation and Management Outside the Sphere of Material Production (Public Administration)”.

Date: 14.06.2024

Reviewer:

(Prof. Ivalinka Pencheva, PhD)