

OPINION

For a defence procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

Professional field 3.7 “Administration and Management”,
PhD Programme “Organisation and Management Outside the Sphere of Material Production
(Public Administration)”

Opinion prepared by: **Prof. VALENTIN VASILEV, PhD**

Academic Establishment: Higher School of Security and Economics, Plovdiv

✓ No. 29680 – Register of Academic Staff and Dissertations in NACID:

<https://ras.nacid.bg/dissertation-preview/29968>

✓ <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Valentin-Vasilev>

✓ Scopus ID: 58533458600

✓ https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=J3V_gIAAAAAAJ&hl=bg

✓ <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0074-9578>

Author of the dissertation: **IZABELA FILIPOVA YONKOVA**

Scientific advisor: **Assoc. Prof. EVELINA PARASHKEVOVA – VELIKOVA; PhD**

Title of the dissertation paper: **THE IMPACT OF ETHICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
UPON THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS**

I. A General Presentation of the Dissertation

The purpose of the dissertation 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 of ethical infrastructure upon the performance of public sector organisations.

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 is the level to which the elements of ethical infrastructure have been developed in public sector organisations so far.

The research thesis is that a high level of development of ethical infrastructure in public sector organisations is the basis for higher quality work processes and contributes to achieving the goals of administration.

The dissertation paper consists of 278 pages. It has an introduction, a main body of three chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references – 243 in total, of which 104 are in Cyrillic and 139 are in Latin. There are 16 figures and 10 tables in the main text. The number of appendices is 6. The structure of the dissertation is as follows: CHAPTER ONE. *Ethics and Ethical Infrastructure in the Public Sector*; CHAPTER TWO. *Management Aspects of Ethical Infrastructure in Public Sector Organisations*; CHAPTER THREE. *Conceptual Constructs of Ethical Infrastructure in the Public Sector*; Conclusion; a List of References; Appendices.

This approach to the development of the scientific thesis and its support by conducting scientific research is commendable. It is undoubtedly influenced by the expertise of the academic advisor, Assoc. Prof. Evelina Parashkevova-Velikova, PhD, and certainly matches the established academic traditions by the Department of Strategic Planning.

The recommendations given by the author /pp. 178-183/ for improving the ethical environment in public sector organisations are a key point in the PhD research and, in my

opinion, the author and the department should continue their work both on the implementation of these ideas, and on their further elaboration within a deeper research context.

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

The author of the dissertation uses carefully selected research methods which are appropriate for the complex nature of the researched problem. By applying the dynamic, the systematic, and the evaluation approach, she attains a high level of generalizing, identifying trends and including elements of forecast in her work.

The results of the PhD thesis are accurately summarized in the conclusion. The findings are in line with the text and emphasise the significance of the research theses, in addition to being logically connected with the text and reflecting specific outcomes.

The abstract has a volume of 35 pages and is structured according to the requirements and established traditions for the specific component of the defence procedure. It reflects comprehensively all major components of the dissertation, thus making it possible to highlight achieved scientific and practical results and contribution.

The author provides a list of 4 /four/ publications related to the topic of the dissertation, of which 2 /two/ are co-authored conference papers in Bulgarian, 1 /one/ single-authored article in Bulgarian and 1 /one/ single-authored research paper in Bulgarian. The topics of the publications are relevant to the PhD thesis and present its key components.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no instances of or signals about plagiarism or any other malpractice committed in the process of developing the PhD thesis.

III. Scientific and Applied-scientific Contribution of the Dissertation Paper

The PhD thesis developed by Izabela Yonkova is a complete research work which is entirely in line with the traditions established in the development of scientific texts of this type and relates appropriately to all formal requirements for the preparation of research papers.

- A comparative analysis is conducted of the author's views about the content of the models and the various interpretations of the nature of ethical infrastructure as a concept, content, and its application in 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 organisations in Bulgaria.
- A conceptual model of ethical infrastructure is proposed by the author. The model 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 conducted empirical survey.
- A methodology for qualitative self-assessment of the level to which ethical infrastructure is developed in public sector organisations is designed. Based on the conducted thematic analysis of scientific publications and good practices, administrative, political and methodological guidelines for improving the ethical environment within the public sector are given.

I agree with the scientific contribution described in the dissertation abstract which is, beyond doubt, the outcome of the research work of the PhD student and which, in my opinion, is a truthful reflection of her scientific achievements.

A remarkable scientific construct is presented on p. 154 of the dissertation – *Figure 16. Iterations of the introduction of ethical infrastructure elements*. The visual framework presents practice-oriented ideas, which is indicative of the excellent scientific background of the candidate and her profile of an accomplished scientist.

I am confident that in the future the author will elaborate further the issue about the significance of leadership in education, especially that of finding solutions to practical issues through the education provided by schools. I would like to draw a parallel with a quotation from *Richard van Hooijdonk from his book “The World of Tomorrow” /published by Kragozor, 2019/*, “...obviously, today’s education, which is overly standardized, does not meet today or tomorrow’s special needs in the various sectors of business life. They require more creativity, innovation, cooperation and problem-solving skills.” And this is only possible through leadership!

IV. Questions to the Dissertation

Recommendations and scientific and methodological remarks to the PhD candidate:

- ✓ I recommend that the author of the dissertation continue and expand her research and find appropriate means for presenting her scientific ideas and output in foreign journals and scientific forums.
- ✓ It would be worth paying more attention to good practices abroad as this would add to the scientific significance of the PhD thesis and its underlying ideas and could be the foundation for further research work.
- ✓ I recommend to the author the books “The Good Life” by R. Waldinger and M. Schulz /published in Bulgarian by Iztok-Zapad, 2023/ and “Permission to Feel” by M. Brackett /published in Bulgarian by FDEI, 2024/. The main ideas in these books brilliantly match some of the theses and findings of the dissertation and could broaden the scientific prospects in front of the author.
- ✓ It would be appropriate to elaborate further the ideas related to the concept of the “learning organisation” which are only mentioned in the dissertation. Based on those ideas, the model proposed by the author of the PhD thesis could be adapted to become more flexible.
- ✓ I recommend that the author present at a scientific and, perhaps, a public discussion, some of the findings of her PhD research work and verify its main ideas or some of them in practice next year.

I would like to emphasise that these recommendations should not be approached as underestimating the worth or significance of the dissertation, but rather as ideas that could contribute to the further elaboration of presented views and conclusions in future.

V. Summary of the Opinion and Conclusion

Based on the previous points in this opinion, I conclude that the dissertation paper with the title “**THE IMPACT OF ETHICAL INFRASTRUCTURE UPON THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS**” prepared by **IZABELA FILIPOVA YONKOVA** is scientifically significant and definitely contributes to the theoretical knowledge and practical expertise that are related to the topic of the research.

It indicates that the PhD student is able to explore independently scientific and applied-scientific issues which are highly relevant to the practice. The formal requirements of the defence procedure are fully met, required documents are duly prepared and this facilitates the process of evaluation.

The organisation of the procedure and related documents, as prepared by the academic establishment, fully meets all normative requirements as set in applicable Bulgarian legislation.

All these give me sufficient grounds to evaluate the dissertation as complete and prepared in compliance with the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Regulations on the implementation of the DASRBA, and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov.

As a member of the Scientific Panel, I give a positive evaluation to the PhD thesis, **“THE IMPACT OF ETHICAL INFRASTRUCTURE UPON THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS”** prepared by **IZABELA FILIPOVA YONKOVA** for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 3.7 “Administration and Management”, PhD Programme “Organisation and Management Outside the Sphere of Material Production (Public Administration)”.

Date: 15.06.2024

Opinion written by:

(Prof. Valentin Vasilev, PhD)