

# REVIEW

By Prof. Tsvetan Iliev, PhD, in the procedure for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “PhD” in the field of Higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.7 “Administration and Management”, scientific specialty (PhD programme) “Administration and Management (Business Administration)”.

**Topic of the dissertation work:** THE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN MANAGING PROJECT TEAMS

**Author of the dissertation work:** Stefan Predrag Djordjevic

**Scientific supervisor:** Associate Professor Darian Boikov, PhD

## 1. General presentation of the materials received

This expert opinion has been prepared in my capacity as a member of the scientific jury, appointed by Order No.61/02.04.2024 of the Rector of the International Business School-Botevgrad in accordance with Art 10(1) of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and Art. 32(1) of the Regulations for its implementation

The documentation provided to me for the competition includes: dissertation, abstract, list of scientific publications, abstracts of publications for participation in the procedure, reference for fulfilment of the scientific-metric requirements, CV, declaration of authorship and conscientious development of the dissertation. In compliance with the requirements of Art. 6(1) and (2) of the LDASRB there is evidence of a Master’s degree and a dissertation on “Leadership in Project Team Management”. This gives me grounds to state that the legal requirements for admission to the dissertation defence procedure for the award of the scientific and educational degree “PhD”.

## 2. Brief biographical data about the PhD student

PhD student Stefan Predrag Djordjevic was born in the Republic of Serbia. In the period 2012-2016 he graduated from the faculty of Electronic Engineering of the University of Nis with a Bachelor’s degree. In 2021 he obtained a Master’s degree at IBS – Botevgrad. He is currently studying for a Master’s degree at the aforementioned faculty of the University of Nis.

The professional path of PhD student Djordjevic is oriented entirely in the field of project management and more specifically- software development and project management. He is fluent in written and spoken Serbian and English.

### **3. Evaluation of the structure of the dissertation work**

The dissertation submitted by PhD student Stefan Djordjevic is 186 standard pages long. Structurally, it is relatively well balanced, with the content distributed as follows: introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography and two appendices. The bibliographic reference comprises 234 sources, 119 of which in Bulgarian, 100 in English and 15 Internet resources. 15 tables and 21 graphs, charts and diagrams were used to illustrate the analysis.

In terms of structure, I can say that the dissertation is relatively well balanced, has a complete appearance, conforming in terms of requisites to the requirements for such work and meets the accepted practice in IBS.

### **4. Evaluation of the content of the dissertation work**

The research problem chosen by PhD student Djordjevic is topical and dissertationable. The relevance of the research is outlined – the dynamic development of processes in the modern world gives rise to the need to search for new flexible solutions to increase the effectiveness of organizational forms of work in business and non-profit organizations. In the search of the most rational organizational solutions, project-oriented structures and economic units have become increasingly popular in recent years. Team actions are intrinsic to this type of structure. That is why project teams are formed as independent organizational units, which have specific characteristics corresponding to the tasks and functions set before them. A confirmation of this is the statement of PhD student Djordjevic (p.6) that “Modern management is now unthinkable without the implementation of teamwork, not because of some managerial fashion, but because of the increased efficiency of work.”

For team work to be effective, the team leader has the main credit. In this sense, the question of the leadership of this type of organizational structure is today the subject of numerous scientific studies examining its various aspects.

**The object** of the study is the leadership in team in management in a project-oriented organization, and **the subject** is the peculiarities in the correlation with the multifactorial conditions of the external environment, the type of project and its life cycle. The subject and object of the thesis, in my opinion, are well defined.

The main thesis of the dissertation is the sustainability and effectiveness of project team management is linearly related to leadership experience, competencies, skills, behaviors and personality characteristics applied to a specific situational business environment.

Two working hypotheses are formulated to prove the above thesis:

Hypothesis 1. The choice of organizational structure and management requires consideration of multiple variables of the business environment, the specifics of the project



being executed, the competencies and expertise of the team, and the leadership and management style of the manager.

Hypothesis 2. The effectiveness of team management is highly variable value, dependent on the experience, knowledge and skills of the leader to motivate team members to maximize the discovery of specific individual competencies, the rational use of available resources and expertise and the use of the capabilities of modern technology to achieve alignment between the project goals, mission and long-term goals of the organization.

The aim of the dissertation – to investigate more fully the relationship “personality characteristics of the leader – team performance”, in order to identify the strength of influence of factors determining team performance, as well as possible innovative models of leadership behavior in a specific team business environment.

In order to achieve the defined goal, the PhD student has defined 6 tasks:

1. An analysis of the status and nature of project management as an effective management concept in project-oriented organization.
2. Exploring the key characteristics of an effective project team as a critical success factor for the organization in light of the nature of project management.
3. Exploration of the relationship between management and leadership, and contemporary trends in their development as theory and practice;
4. A theoretical analysis of the specifics of the leadership role in managing project teams and identification of the competencies, approaches, management style, mechanism and activities required for successful management of project teams in order to effectively deliver projects and organizational objectives.
5. Exploring the impact of different leadership styles and clarifying the role of leaders in the success of team and organizations and the motivation of staff to achieve set goals.
6. Identify and analyze the relationship between the type of leadership style and management approaches with the situational conditions of the business environment and possible management solutions to increase project effectiveness by concluding a survey with participants in project teams in real multi-project organizations

The tasks are well defined and are fully relevant to the aim of the dissertation, enabling its achievement.

In view of the object, subject, working hypotheses, aim and objectives defined in this way, the PhD student has also defined the limitations of the research.

The introduction does not specify the research methods that have been used. However, it is clear from what is presented in chapters that methods such as: literature review, comparative analysis, induction and deduction, factor and simulation analysis, etc. have been applied.

## **CHAPTER ONE. NATURE AND PERSPECTIVES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

This chapter is entirely theoretical in nature. In it, the PhD student demonstrates knowledge of the basic conceptual frameworks of project management. By carrying out a



comparative analysis, the advantages and disadvantages of each are skillfully determined. The contributions that eminent researchers have left in shaping the principles, methods and tools of the design approach to problem solving and goal achievement are presented. This shows that the PhD student is familiar with the variety of ideas in this scientific field and is able to form his own position based on them.

Paragraph 1.1 presents the essence of project management with its approaches and, in particular, team action as a factor for successful project management.

Paragraph 1.2 discusses the features and characteristics of teamwork, the problems faced in teamwork.

In paragraph 1.3, the PhD student focuses on management techniques to increase team effectiveness. In their presentation and evaluation for effectiveness, the opinions of leading researchers such as J.R. Heckman, Katzenbach, Smith etc. On their basis, Stefan Djordjevic identifies the prerequisites for forming and the factors for developing effective teams. The benefits of teamwork and ways to improve it are also presented. Based on review of various classifications of criteria for evaluating teamwork effectiveness. Djordjevic proposes one of his own.

At the end of this chapter, reasoned conclusions are drawn regarding the issues addressed in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIFICITY OF THE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN MANAGING PROJECT TEAMS**

In paragraph 2.1 the focus of PhD student Djordjevic's attention is to clarify the nature of leadership in the creation, management and functioning of the project team.

With the development of paragraph 2.2 Djordjevic rightly attempted to identify the difference between the terms "manager" and "leader". Here it is also worth noting that the PhD student takes as a basis for forming his position the opinions of number of Bulgarian and foreign researchers on this issue.

Paragraph 2.3 is devoted to the review and comparative analysis of different leadership styles. For this purpose, the theories of chance, trait and power and influence are taken into account. They allow him to identify the distinctive characteristics of leadership styles. In particular, attention is paid to Krut Levin's theory of the three leadership styles- authoritarian, democratic and liberal. To determine the features in a leader's behavior that make him successful, attention is paid to Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory. The review of leadership traits and qualities is complemented by the PhD student's review of Leadership Trait Theories. Here the PhD student demonstrates a good knowledge of the work of its founders, Thomas Carlyle and Francis Galton. They reveal and present the qualities that a successful leader must possess and demonstrate. In addition, Djordjevic's attention has also been drawn to classifications of leadership qualities developed by Ralph Stogdill, Edwin Giseley, James Coase, Barry Posner, Warrence Benny and others. To systematize the



leadership qualities, the PhD student applies a rich illustrate toolkit – charts, tables and diagrams.

At the end of this chapter, reasoned conclusions are drawn on the issues that have been addressed.

### **CHAPTER THREE. EMPITICAL STUDY AND FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTCS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEAM ACTIVITIES**

In Paragraph 3.1, the PhD student presents the functional relationships between managerial skills and the managerial level occupied by the project manager. To this end, it seeks to answer the questions:

- What skills should project managers have?
- What are the key qualities and characteristics required for the role of a project team leader?

On p.104, I believe that Djordjevic appropriately concludes that it is difficult to give unambiguous and definitive answers to these questions. Specifically, he demonstrates that requirements for project managers depend on various situational factors – project profile, manager style and role, organizational level etc. Therefore, concluding that there is not objective measure or indicator, which specifically assesses the manager's skills. Moreover, it is not possible to give an objective assessment of why a skill is in one case leading and in another case it is not so useful. The same research approach is applied here as in Chapter Two – taking into account the opinions and conclusions of the works on this problem by various Bulgarian and foreign authors.

In paragraph 3.2, the author uses Patrick Lencioni's test as a tool to assess the leader's role in teamwork effectiveness. The test is concluded among 168 respondents in Nis and Sofia in 2021-2022 and is a basic prerequisite for a survey. Based on the test results, 120 study participants were selected.

The questionnaire survey is the basis for the factor analysis of the impact of leadership characteristics on team effectiveness in paragraph 3.3. The object of analysis is the respondents' knowledge about leadership management in the organization where they work. According to them, it is concluded that in order to achieve high performance in teamwork, the modern leader needs highly effective organizational skills, which can be conventionally combined into three characteristic groups: Skills for understanding and evaluating the organization; Emotional and volitional influence skills and Skills to organize teamwork. Based on a review of various studies on the performance of leaders, the PhD student highlights important personal qualities, classifying them into 10 areas. They served to assess the extent of the influence of managerial qualities on the effectiveness of team performance. The questionnaire's 7 managerial leadership qualities were used to explore respondents' views on the strength of their influence on team effectiveness.

The results of the empirical study carried out by the PhD student have served for the formulation of important from a practical-applied point of view conclusions in this chapter.

**The conclusion** of the thesis presents the summary results and conclusions based in the chapter-by-chapter exposition, with an emphasis on the empirical study.

## **5. Evaluation of the Contributions in the Dissertation**

I consider the scientific contributions in six areas presented in the reference to be fully consistent with what I shown in the thesis. They could be divided into two groups: 1,3,4 and 5 with a theoretical character and 2 and 6 with a practical-applied character.

## **6. Evaluation of the abstract**

The abstract presented by PhD student Djordjevic is 45 standard pages and contains all the requisites for such a paper. It complies with the requirements and accepted practice in IBS.

## **7. Evaluation of the PhD student's publications**

In the list of publications for participation in the procedure for obtaining the PhD degree, PhD student Djordjevic has indicated 9 works, including 5 articles and 4 scientific reports. All are co-authored. The publications are entirely on the topic of the dissertation and have found a place on the pages of valuable scientific publications.

This scientific creativity, in my opinion, corresponds to the quantitative and qualitative scientific metrics for the award of the PhD degree.

In evaluating the scholarly work of PhD student Stefan Djordjevic, I have found no plagiarism practices.

## **8. Critical commends and recommendations**

My overall impression is that the work has an overall look and finished character. I have no specific commends and recommendations.

## **9. Conclusion**

In conclusion, I believe that PhD student Stefan Djordjevic meets the scientific and legal requirements for the award of the degree "PhD" in the field of Higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.7 "Administration and Management", scientific specialty (PhD programme) "Administration and Management (Business Administration)" and possesses the necessary professional and personal qualities. Therefore, I confidently give my positive assessment of the research presented by the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract, results and contributions and propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the scientific and educational degree "PhD" to Stefan Djordjevic.

**30.05.2024**

**Sofia**

**Prepared by:**



**/Prof. Tsvetan Iliev, PhD/**