

R E V I E W

of Prof. Dr. Tsvetan Iliev under the procedure for acquiring 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 program) “Administration and Management (Business Administration)”.

This expert opinion has been prepared in my capacity as a member of the scientific jury, determined by Order №143/04.07.2024 of the Rector of IBS – Botevgrad, and meets the requirements of Art. 10 para. 1 of LDASRB and art 32 para. 1 of the Regulations for its application.

Candidate for the procedure: Milka Hristova Nanova

Topic of the dissertation: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

SCIENTIFIC SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Prof. Daryan Boykov

I. Evaluation of the structure of the dissertation

The dissertation presented by Milka Nanova is in the volume of 183 standard pages, including 177 pages of main text and 6 pages of appendices. Structurally, it is balanced, with the content distributed as follows: introduction, three-chapter exposition, conclusion, bibliography, list of scientific contributions and one appendix. The dissertation includes 25 tables and 42 figures. The bibliographic reference covers 73 titles, of which 5 in Bulgarian and 68 in English.

Regarding the structure, I can say that the dissertation has wholesome and a complete form, corresponding as requisites to the requirements for such development.

II. Evaluation of the content of the dissertation

The application of the approaches, methods, principles and tools of project management in solving problems and achieving goals at every level – personal, business, social and international is indisputable. That is why I believe that the research problem chosen by PhD student Milka Nanova is relevant. Moreover, the development of information and communication technologies, which have become a hallmark of our time, predetermine the need to clarify the role and importance of communications in project organizations.

For **the purpose of the dissertation**, the PhD student determines: **research on the role of communications and communication processes in project management**.

To achieve the goal of the dissertation research, 4 tasks are presented:

1. Setting a theoretical framework and overview in the context of communications in project management;
2. Research in the field of communication management as a key area in project management;
3. Conducting empirical research to determine the importance of communications and their role in project management;
4. Making guidelines and recommendations for improving communications in project management after reporting the results of the study.

The formulated tasks seem to me to create a prerequisite for achieving the above-mentioned goal of the dissertation.

The **subject** of the study is the management of communications and communication processes in project management, and its **object** is communication as an area with a key role and importance for project management, related to their management and overall success.

The stated purpose, tasks, object and subject of the dissertation are well-synchronized and help prove the author's thesis that at the present stage communications and communication processes have a key role in project management. Their key role enables them to occupy a central place in project management by combining different communication approaches and activities to achieve the objectives of the project.

To prove this thesis, PhD student Nanova has determined **three working hypotheses** for research:

1. For the successful management of the project, a set of competencies is required;
2. The lack of competence of the manager is a barrier to the successful management of the project;
3. To achieve management effectiveness, the project team and stakeholders also need a specific set of competencies.

In view of the above-mentioned goal and objectives, the PhD student defines **the limitations of the research** in several directions:

1. The study does not claim to cover all aspects of communications in project management, but only those that are significant for the effectiveness of communication processes related to the effective management and successful application of communication techniques and approaches;
2. The study does not claim to be the exhaustive with regard to all aspects in project management and its main components (scope, schedule, budget, quality, etc.), risk management, etc.;

3. The survey claims to describe and analyze (therefore, to give recommendations for improvement) only that sample (this type of respondents) who are included in the study.

In order to achieve the goals, perform the tasks and prove her thesis PhD student M. Nanova uses two main groups of methods – scientific (literary review, synthesis, analysis, comparison, generalization, induction and deduction) and empirical (quantitative and qualitative).

CHAPTER ONE. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND OVERVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNICATION IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT.

Form the first chapter of the dissertation presented in its contents, I can say that it is entirely theoretical. It sets the theoretical framework of the dissertation research. It provides overview of the conceptual apparatus of project management and the related communication management processes. The view of a number of foreign authors on these issues are shared. The conceptual framework for the nature and role of communications in project management, as well as the approaches for effective project management are outlined. For this purpose, the PhD student bases his research on such communication concepts as: the theory of group thinking, diffusion theory, the theory of communication adaptation, the theory of social information processing, the theoretical framework of J. Munby, the Canale-Swain model, the Bachman-Palmer model, the model of communication competence in project management, etc.

In addition, the role and importance of project manager in the formation of the team and the application of certain methods and approaches for communication within the team, as an organizational structure, are characterized. In this way, PhD student Nanova demonstrates, on the one hand, that she is familiar with the theoretical foundation of project management. On the other hand, her critical look at the positions of different authors regarding the concepts of project, team, communication, etc. stand out. In this regard, I believe that in terms of content, this chapter stands well as a theoretical framework of the study. At the end of it, some more important conclusions are made on the basis of what is presented in it in terms of content.

CHAPTER TWO. COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT AS A KEY AREA OF KNOWLEDGE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In paragraph 2.1 “Effective Communication Management in Project Management” highlights the process of planning communications in the project, which finds practical

expression in the development of a project communication plan. The role and functions of the project team leader regarding the development of the communication plan are clarified.

A good impression is made by the demonstration of capabilities by the PhD student for visual presentation of processes and their systematization through appropriate graphic tools.

As an important element of the communication plan, various models for assessing stakeholders in the project are considered. A comparative analysis of their advantages and disadvantages has been carried out in relation to them. Based in the results of research conducted by various authors, PhD student Nanova has presented a scheme of communication tools applied in a project environment.

Another important aspect addressed by the PhD student in this paragraph is the development and implementation of effective communication technology. It includes methods of transmitting information, means of communication and communication purposes.

In paragraph 2.2 “Communications in International Project Management” special attention is paid to the specifics of the communication management process in international projects. Among them, PhD student Nanova has focused on intercultural differences and virtual teams. As she notes on page 91 “... Intercultural differences have an impact on the way each team member engages in interaction with other stakeholders in the project.” For this purpose, the results of a number of studies by foreign authors were used as evidence for the PhD student’s claims.

Paragraph 2.3 “Communication Skills for Efficiency and Communication Strategies of Leaders” study examines leadership as “one of the special project management techniques that allows the project managers to manage the team, project stakeholders and other participants” (p.107). In addition, an attempt has been made to present the project environment and the relationship between project management and leadership. The main characteristics of leadership are outlined, as well as its functions related to the author’s assessment of the difference between leadership and guidance.

At the end of Chapter Two, some important conclusions are drawn from the research presented in it.

CHAPTER THREE. EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

In the title of the third chapter of the dissertation, the PhD student gives a request for an empirical study of the problem posed. In paragraph 3.1 “Research Methodology” M. Nanova presents the purpose, tasks and hypotheses of the study. It is disclosed how the data for study was collected, as well as the methods for their collection. The methodology also highlights the tools for conduction the survey, including how the data form it is processed, presented and analyzed. In empirical research, three hypotheses are put to the test.

A survey is used as a tool. The sample of the survey covers 143 respondents. They are representatives of business organizations, institutions and various business and public circles that are participants in certain projects, incl. as project managers/ leaders, team members or stakeholders.

Paragraph 3.2 presents the results of empirical study carried out. At the same time, the author skillfully uses a rich graphic toolkit for their visualization. On its basis, paragraph 3.3 defines that main conclusions determined by the results of the study. According to them, PhD student Nanova emphasizes that all three hypotheses posed at the beginning of the study are confirmed.

The content of paragraph 3.4 outlines the guidelines and makes recommendations for improving and refining communications in project management.

At the end of the chapter, more important conclusions are drawn from the empirical study.

The **conclusion** summarizes the conclusions of what is stated in the content of the individual structural parts of the dissertation, with predominance given to the results of the empirical research and the recommendations formulated in their basis.

III. Evaluation of the contributions of dissertations

On the basis of what is presented in the dissertation, I accept as the author's achievement the six scientific contributions defined in the reference. In my view, they could be grouped into two aspects. The first and second are of a theoretical nature and the rest are of a practical and methodological nature. During the evaluation of the dissertation and the contribution point identified on its basis, I did not find the presence of plagiarism practices. The literary and informational sources that served as its basis are used correctly and are duly cited.

IV. Evaluation of the abstract

The abstract presented by PhD student M. Nanova is in a volume of 47 standard pages. It fully reflects what has been achieved in the dissertation and contains all the requisites necessary for such development.

V. Evaluation of the publication activity of the PhD student

In the list of publications for participation in the procedure for acquiring the degree "PhD", M. Nanova has indicated a total of three developments: one articles and two scientific

reports. They are related to the topic of the dissertation and reflect various aspects of it. The three developments are co-authored and have been published in international journals.

VI. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no critical remarks to address to PhD student Nanova. However, I would like to make one recommendation – to publish more independent scientific papers, those in English, in journals with impact factor and impact rank.

Conclusion

The dissertation, developed by PhD student Milka Nanova, has a complete and wholesome form. There are important theoretical and practical and applied achievements. An independent research approach to the problem under study is demonstrated. In this sense, I believe that **PhD student Milka Nanova meets the requirements for acquiring 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 (doctoral program) “Administration and Management (Business Administration)” and has the necessary qualities. In view of this, I propose to the honorable member of the Scientific jury to support the awarding of the educational and scientific degree “PhD” to Milka Hristova Nanova on the basis of Chapter Two of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.**

Date: 02.08.2024

Sofia

Prepared the expert opinion:



/Prof. Tsvetan Iliev, PhD/