



Международно Висше Бизнес Училище  
International Business School

## **EXPERT OPINION**

by Prof. Dr. Lalka Borisova

Scientific specialty: "Economics and management (by industry)",

Mon 3.7. "Administration and Management"

**About:** Dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor", field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, by professional direction 3.7. Administration and management

**Author of the dissertation: Bozhidar Georgiev Babadzhанov**

**Dissertation topic: Development of functional strategies in public sector organizations**

**(Following the example of the municipality of Burgas)**

**Reason for submitting the Review:** Participation in the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation, according to Order No. 224/05.11.2024 of the Rector of the IBS - Botevgrad

### **I. Summary data on the candidate's scientific output and activity**

#### **1. Information about the PhD student**

Bozhidar Babadzhанov is a doctoral student in an independent form of study at the International Higher Business School, according to Order No. 263/13.12.2023 of the Rector of MVBU. The development of the doctoral student's creative biography eloquently shows the concentration of research activity in a well-structured direction in the field of functional strategies in the public sector and management

#### **2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation work**

The doctoral dissertation is 228 pages long. The structure consists of an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography (a total of 73 sources, from Bulgarian and foreign authors and in Appendix 67 Laws and by-laws). The text includes 18 figures and 10 tables. There are 2 Appendices in a volume of 15 pages to the dissertation work.

**The title** of the dissertation is clearly formulated and closely related to the doctoral thesis. The chosen topic is relevant from the point of view of the role of the main guidelines in public policies and planning at the municipal level - the development of municipal strategies, plans, programs and projects. The emphasis that the author places in this work on the functional strategies developed at the municipal level is conditioned by the understanding that they regulate the policy of the organization from the public sector regarding the performance of the various functions that are attributed to it by the legislation and by-laws. The dissertation is distinguished by thoroughness of the conducted research, insight into the essence of the investigated problems, objective analysis and reasoned conclusions, own definitions.

The research logic and structure of the dissertation are well constructed. When structuring, the traditional approach for writing similar works is followed - first, the theoretical positions on the topic are clarified, secondly, the different models are presented and classifications are made, and thirdly, the own research is done, analyzing the data from it and revealing possibilities, proposals and guidelines for improvements are made.

**The object** of research is the municipal administrations, as organizations from the public sector, with the specific functions defined by the law, and more specifically, their planning function according to the example of the municipality of Burgas, and **the subject** is the functional strategies developed by the municipal administrations, and more specifically, by Burgas municipal administration, as specific instruments for the implementation of their policy in various functional areas.

**The main goal** is to examine the scope of the functions performed in a municipal administration, the practice of the administration in developing planning documents, including of strategies and from there to analyze the procedures and the quality of the functional strategies developed and adopted by the administration and the municipal council.

**The doctoral thesis** is based on the statement that "The role and place of functional strategies as documents regulating the policy of local authorities in various

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areas is insufficiently realized, and the practice - underdeveloped to the necessary degree of conformity of public interest and scientific achievements." The "white fields" in this regard can be filled with the adoption of effective models and good practices offered by scientists and related organizations. This position is supported by 6 research tasks, subsequently developed and proven in the overall statement.

**I believe that the thesis** is defended in the dissertation research.

**The first chapter (The development of functional strategies in the public sector as part of the strategic planning process)** is in volume of 50 pages. It contains a total of 4 paragraphs.

**The first paragraph** (Features of planning in municipal administrations) has a theoretical character. The author clarifies exactly what the specifics of planning in public sector organizations and in particular in municipal administrations are, by first defining the basic essence of planning, determining the structural arrangement in the direction of creating a management functional structure. The author's views in this direction are highlighted. The specifics of the "planning" function applied in the management of public organizations are clarified.

Reviewing the literature, the doctoral student clarifies that in order to plan independently an organization must have the characteristics of a "strategic business unit" (SBU), thus explaining the reasons for including municipal administrations in this category.

The doctoral student traces the historical development of planning science and practice, the logic and sequence in formulating goals and means (policy – strategy – tactics) is graphically illustrated; documents developed for the formation and implementation of policies (general strategic plan - sector strategies - programs - projects - action plans). The main goal of a municipal strategy is systematized.

**In the second paragraph (Classification of strategies. Specificity of functional strategies in the public sector)**, the doctoral student makes a classification of strategies according to different characteristics, and the focus of the dissertation work is placed on functional strategies developed by municipal administrations as specific tools for implementing their policy in different functional areas. A parallel is drawn between functional strategies in business organizations and those in the public sector.

**In the third paragraph (Scope of the functions of the municipal administration)**, the topic is upgraded, the doctoral student systematizes the areas for which the functional strategies are developed by the local self-government bodies (the

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administration of the mayor (municipal administration) and the municipal council). Systematization are the areas of competence of the mayor, as the head of the municipal administration, with the clarification that these are also the areas in which development strategies can be developed, since they fall within the sphere of the management powers of the local self-government bodies. In this paragraph se follows a **logical** connection between powers, units, functions and strategies of the bodies of the municipal administration.

Emphasis is placed on the functions of budgetary organizations.

In **the fourth paragraph (Methodologies and models for developing strategic documents in the public sector)** it is stated that there are methodological guidelines for monitoring and evaluation of public policies, programs and strategies, but not for their development. Famous authors on the subject are cited, according to which the lack of methodologies for developing strategic documents in public sector organizations is the reason why many of these documents are not of good quality. The doctoral student cites data from a survey conducted among 180 civil servants studying in "Strategic Planning in the Public Sector" courses at the NBU, which indicate a number of weaknesses and shortcomings of the analyzed strategies. **The main conclusion** that the author draws based on the results of the conducted survey is that the absence of a Methodology for Strategic Planning in the Republic of Bulgaria until 2010 is the reason for the presence of such great diversity in the content, structure and scope of the analyzed strategic documents.

The doctoral student makes a critical analysis of the current methodologies and methodological guidelines in the system of strategic planning, the innovation strategy of Bulgaria since 2003, makes justified conclusions and conclusions, which **I consider a scientific contribution**. On this basis, **planning models and** the process of developing and implementing strategies are also systematized. Conclusions have been drawn on this chapter.

In **this chapter**, the doctoral student demonstrates an excellent knowledge of the theoretical statements related to public organizations and the system of planning and development of strategic documents, shows the ability to *evaluate and outline* problem areas, draw *reasonable conclusions* and *formulate* expedient conclusions.

The **chapter (Analysis of the practice of municipal administration - Burgas, on the development of functional strategies)** is in a volume of 80 pages, in three paragraphs. The doctoral student skillfully builds on the content of the dissertation

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research, emphasizing the practice of the municipality of Burgas in the development of functional strategies.

**First paragraph (Critical review of the functional analysis of municipal administration - Burgas)** the practice of developing functional strategies is followed.

As a result of the study of the regulatory framework, 428 powers of the mayor as head of the municipal administration were identified in the Report on the Functional Analysis of the Burgas Municipal Administration. Gaps were found in relation to the areas of general competence of the mayor by groups of policy areas, normative acts were highlighted by type and policy areas and sectoral policy determination functions.

In the performed functional analysis of the municipality of Burgas, the functions in the areas of the mayor's powers as the head of the municipal administration are distinguished, which are defined as **introverted functions**, since they concern the exercise of his powers aimed at the activity of the administration itself and functions related to his special powers in the various policy areas defined as **extroverted functions** as they are directed at people and structures outside the administration. The administrative units that have commitments regarding the implementation of introverted and extroverted functions are systematized and graphically displayed.

As a result of the functional analysis of the municipal administration of the municipality of Burgas, the strengths and problem areas of the administration were determined. Critical notes and comments were made on the prepared Report on the functional analysis of the municipal administration of Burgas municipality.

**The second paragraph (Content analysis of the strategies and programs of the municipal administration - Burgas by policy areas)** examines the plans and programs of the municipality of Burgas. Introverted and extroverted functions are highlighted, which are not ensured by the development of strategic documents. According to the doctoral student, it is a positive fact that the implementation of the Strategy for the management and disposal of the municipal property of the municipality of Burgas is guaranteed through the development of the Annual programs for the management of the municipal property and the budget of the municipality. An analysis was also made of the Risk Management Strategy of the Municipality of Burgas 2021-2023, finding that in the document under consideration there is nothing specific about the risks that are typical for the activity of the municipality of Burgas. In the absence of clearly defined and assessed risks, concrete measures for an adequate response and prevention of their negative consequences cannot be foreseen. According to the doctoral

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student, in this form it cannot serve as an effective tool for defining and directing the policy of the municipal administration in relation to this very important function of its. Weaknesses were also highlighted in the other analyzed documents, incorrect wording in the SWOT analysis, and the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism in the Municipality of Burgas, 2018-2023, as the best from the point of view of the requirements for a strategic document.

**Third paragraph (Reference model for the development of functional strategies of municipalities)** the stages (author's systematization) through which the development of the functional strategies must pass are considered, **which I evaluate positively.**

In his analyses, the doctoral student correctly **moves from the general to the particular. I believe** that the dissertation research is useful with the analyzes of the state and availability of a number of planning documents in the municipal administration. The doctoral student has correctly chosen the topic of her dissertation, builds on the content, draws her own conclusions and offers models for improvement.

In **this chapter**, the doctoral student demonstrates *skills* in analyzing planning documents, highlighting gaps and errors in them, and making well-founded generalizations.

**The third chapter (Discrepancies in the development of functional strategies in the Burgas municipal administration and good foreign practices)** is 56 pages, three paragraphs long and has a practical focus. The doctoral student found that the emphasis of this research, as well as its innovative importance, comes from the fact that until now no methodological sequence has been proposed for building a functional strategy in a municipality. The research goes through 3 stages, duly explained, the structure of the municipal administration - Burgas is presented:

1. Identified inconsistencies in the strategic planning process for developing functional strategies of the Burgas municipal administration;
2. The table systematizes the most frequent occasions for developing functional strategies in the administration, as well as the benefits/losses of their presence (absence);
3. The views (competencies and behavioral indicators) of the respondents regarding what competencies should be possessed by the employees involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of strategic documents are summarized;

4. Good practices for developing functional strategies are indicated (municipality of Varna, Plovdiv, etc.);

Summaries have been made on the Third Chapter, and in **the conclusion** of the dissertation, the doctoral student has made the necessary summaries and main conclusions from the dissertation research. In all parts of the dissertation research, the own presence and own handwriting of the doctoral student is clearly visible, which definitely shows qualities of *precision and skills for data analysis and synthesis*, competences and vision for overcoming proven problems and recommendations for improving the activity.

It should be emphasized that the peer-reviewed dissertation research is distinguished by its complexity, breadth, depth and justification of a wide range of expedient proposals and innovative approaches.

## **II. Scientific and scientific-applied achievements in the dissertation work**

The scientific contribution of the dissertation can be sought in several thematic directions. I accept scientific and applied contributions (6) in the dissertation research formulated by the doctoral student.

Applying these advances can improve planning practice. The indicated scientific and scientific-applied achievements in the dissertation are the personal work of the doctoral student. The statement of contributions correctly represents the scientific achievements of the dissertation.

## **III. Critical notes, recommendations and questions**

As a member of the jury for the competition for the educational and scientific degree "doctor", I have no critical comments on the presented dissertation and the research activity of the doctoral student, which would significantly affect the positive assessment of the content part of the dissertation research. A good knowledge of the theory and practice of AI municipal administration is a good basis for upgrading research in this direction. The dissertation research meets the content and requirements for the development of a similar work.

## **IV. Other questions**

**The abstract** gives an idea of the object, the subject, the thesis, the purpose and the tasks of the research, as well as the methodology used, the structure and the content of the work as a whole.

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The doctoral student indicated 10 independent *publications* on the dissertation, publications in refereed and indexed editions: studies, articles, reports, in the country and abroad.

## V. Conclusion

The dissertation is *a complete, in-depth and conscientious scientific study* of an actual and significant theoretical-methodological and scientific-applied problem, it contains *significant scientific and scientific-applied contributions* in the field of planning at the municipal level and can *definitely be positively evaluated*.

The emphasis that the author places in this work on the functional strategies developed at the municipal level is conditioned by the understanding that they regulate the policy of the organization from the public sector regarding the performance of the various functions that are attributed to it by the legislation and by-laws.

The literature used and cited is sufficient in volume and includes well-known authors on the subject.

This gives me the basis for a positive conclusion that the dissertation work **corresponds** to the requirements of ZRASRB, the Regulations for its application, as well as the Regulations for the holding of competitions for the acquisition of scientific degrees and for the occupation of academic positions at the MVBU, therefore **I offer** to the respected members of the scientific jury to **vote for Bozhidar Babadzhanov's ONS "doctor"**.

Sofia, November 19, 2024

REVIEWER: 

(Prof. Dr. Lalka Borisova)