

Expert Opinion

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Subject: Submitted dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the scientific specialty "Administration and management (Business administration)", professional direction 3.7 Administration and management

Author of the dissertation: Bozhidar Georgiev Babadzhanov - PhD student of self-study in the doctoral program "Administration and Management (Business Administration)" – IBS.

Topic of the dissertation: "Development of functional strategies in public sector organizations (following the example of the municipality of Burgas)"

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Tsvetan Iliev, PhD

Grounds for submission of the opinion: member of the Scientific Jury, according to Order No. 224/05.11.2024. of the Rector of MVBU prof. Georgi Apostolov, PhD

The opinion was prepared in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of this Law and the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

1. General characteristics of the presented dissertation work

The peer-reviewed dissertation consists of 227 standard pages and includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and 2 appendices. The main text contains 18 figures and 10 tables. 73 literary sources and 67 laws and by-laws are included in support of the exposition.

The presented dissertation work is dedicated to an extremely topical topic related to the study of the functional strategies developed by the municipal administrations, and more specifically - by the Burgas municipal administration, as specific tools for the implementation of their policy in various functional areas. The scope of the functions performed in the municipal administration was analyzed, as well as the practice of developing planning documents, including of strategies. The procedures and the quality of the functional strategies developed and adopted by the administration and the municipal council were investigated. In this context, the statements, ideas and proposals contained in the dissertation have a practical and applied nature.

The dissertation is **balanced**, the issues under consideration are presented in their logical sequence and connection, the presentation style is scientific, the technical layout is excellent.

The purpose and tasks are bound and consistent and fully correspond to the topic of the dissertation work. The main scientific problem is correctly formulated, and its boundaries are precisely defined. The research tasks, the object, the subject and the main thesis of the

research are clearly and specifically stated. A methodology has been developed that is completely sufficient to achieve the objectives of the study. The concepts and terms used in the dissertation are specified.

The literature used is as close as possible to the topic of the dissertation and gives a sufficiently complete picture of the state of the researched problem. Literary sources are arranged and numbered according to the requirements of accepted standards.

The doctoral student analyzes and systematizes a significant volume of literary sources on the subject, which are correctly cited in the text. An own critical interpretation of the theses presented in them was made.

The text is successfully illustrated with tables, figures and diagrams, which significantly contribute to its understanding. The results of the scientific research are presented clearly, logically and comprehensibly.

From what has been said so far, I come to the conclusion that the ultimate clarity of the doctoral student on the above-mentioned issues is one of the prerequisites for the high quality of the entire dissertation work.

2. Evaluation of the obtained scientific and scientific-applied results

In accordance with the formulated goal and the detailed tasks, the structure of the dissertation work was built.

The introduction of the dissertation contains all the necessary "requisites": a convincing justification of the problem and its significance; clear and precise formulations of the goal and research tasks; of the object and subject of the research; justification of the choice of research approaches and methods. Conventions are identified, in which the research itself was conducted.

In the **first chapter**, the doctoral student clarifies the conceptual apparatus, the fundamental theoretical concepts and relationships related to the specifics of planning in public sector organizations, based on research in the scientific literature on the issue. The focus is placed on the functional strategies developed by the municipal administrations, as specific tools for the implementation of their policy in different functional areas. The key prerequisites, regularities and processes related to the development of strategic documents in public sector organizations, as well as the necessary conditions for the implementation of effective sector policies, have been studied. From the **first chapter**, the degree of development of the research problem becomes clear and the theoretical basis is formed, on the basis of which the doctoral student derives the main research thesis. The conclusions reached by the doctoral student are reasonable, supported by solid arguments. The research in the first chapter is very thorough and constitutes the necessary basis for developing the methodology of the empirical research.

In the **second chapter**, the doctoral student analyzes the practice of the municipal administration in Burgas on the development of functional strategies. The degree of compliance of the administrative structure with the requirements for the effective and efficient implementation of the functions assigned to it by the regulatory framework was investigated. The functions in the areas of the mayor's powers and administrative units, which have commitments regarding the implementation of introverted and extroverted functions, are systematized and differentiated. 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. On the basis of content analysis, strategic documents - strategies, plans and programs of the municipal administration - Burgas, were studied by policy areas, and a critical analysis and quality assessment was made according to 27 specific criteria, classified into 4 parts: introductory, analytical, strategic and final.

The conclusion that is necessary is that in a number of important areas there are no developed strategies and programs of the municipal administration - Burgas, which has negative effects for the society. Such undervalued areas are human resource management, communications, social policy, etc.

The proposed author's reference model for developing and implementing functional strategies is of immediate practical value in the dissertation research. It identifies the main stages (technological algorithm), as well as specific recommendations to municipal administrations, which guarantee high quality not only in the process of developing functional strategies, but also efficiency in the implementation of policies in a given area.

The third chapter presents the conducted empirical research and the immediate results of the analysis of the practice and competencies of the employees in municipal administration, regarding the development of functional strategies. The methodology and tools of the study are argued. On the basis of the proposed reference model, inconsistencies in the strategic planning process in the development of functional strategies by the municipal administration of Burgas have been identified. Specific conclusions and recommendations have been formulated based on the analysis of the results of the conducted survey. The research categorically proves the main dissertation thesis that the role and place of functional strategies as documents regulating the policy of local authorities in various areas is insufficiently realized, and the practice - underdeveloped to the required degree of conformity of public interest and scientific achievements. At the same time, these gaps can be compensated by adopting effective models and good practices offered by scientists and other municipalities.

The conclusion that needs to be drawn is that in all three substantive chapters, the doctoral student shows skills for clearly highlighting and reasoned scientific defense of his views regarding the role and place of functional strategies in public sector organizations.

In the **conclusion** of the dissertation, the doctoral student systematizes and summarizes the achieved main results and conclusions, which characterize the theoretical and practical significance of the complex research done in a theoretical, methodological and applied aspect. Dissertation research output: confirmation of the formulated main research thesis.

3. Description of scientific and scientific-applied contributions

The dissertation is a serious scientific study of an actual and significant problem. The main points of contribution can be considered and evaluated in two groups - scientific contributions and practical-applied contributions in the context of the analysis and synthesis of existing scientific knowledge in the field, regarding the criterion **Enrichment of existing scientific knowledge**. I fully accept the contributions formulated by the PhD student. The list of contributions is correctly compiled and objectively reflects the scientific results achieved by the doctoral student. The contribution points in the dissertation show that the doctoral student has in-depth knowledge in the researched scientific field and is capable of conducting independent scientific research and logically interpreting its results.

4. Impact of the dissertation work on the external environment

On the topic of the dissertation, ten publications (1 study, 2 articles and 7 scientific reports) were made in specialized Bulgarian scientific publications, which testifies that a number of the ideas and conclusions formulated in the research are accessible to a professional audience. All of them reflect specific aspects of the doctoral student's research

work and provide the necessary publicity. The publications fully satisfy the national minimum requirements.

5. Evaluation of the abstract of the dissertation

The submitted abstract correctly reflects the content of the dissertation work. It summarizes the main points of the dissertation: general characteristics; content and construction of the work; scientific contributions; publications on the issues of the dissertation.

The submitted abstract of the dissertation is 54 pages long. It is compiled according to the requirements, reflecting in a synthesized form the content of the three chapters in the dissertation, the thesis, the object and the methodology of the scientific research, as well as the achieved theoretical-methodological and empirical results.

6. Criticisms, recommendations and questions

I have no critical notes, recommendations and questions regarding the presentation of ideas and statements in the dissertation work.

I have the following recommendation for the doctoral student: to publish his research in a monographic work so that it is accessible to a wider range of readers.

7. Conclusion

The presented dissertation shows that the author has in-depth knowledge in the issues he researches. The topic of the dissertation work is current and significant in a scientific and practical-applied aspect. The dissertation is a fully completed scientific and practical-applied study that meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, the Rules for its Application, as well as the internal normative base of the Ministry of Education and Culture for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor". In his research, the doctoral student shows that he has the ability to conduct independent scientific research and obtain specific scientific and scientific-applied results and contributions.

All this gives me the reason to give a positive assessment of the dissertation work and to propose to the respected members of the scientific jury to make a decision to award the educational and scientific degree "PhD" to Bozhidar Georgiev Babadzhanov in the scientific specialty "Administration and Management (Business Administration)" in professional direction 3.7 "Administration and management".

**Sofia,
November 22, 2024**

**Signature:
/Prof. Christian Hadjiev, PhD/**