

REVIEW

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Subject: Dissertation for the acquisition of a doctor's degree in Social Management (Business Administration), professional field 3.7 Administration and Management

Candidate: Elena Hinova-McNamee, a self-study doctoral student in Business Administration at New Bulgarian University.

Topic of the dissertation: *Thriving Leadership – Concept, Factors and Coaching for Leaders and Teams Development*

Academic supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kristiyan Hadjiev

Grounds for presenting the review: member of the Scientific Jury according to Order No. 3-PK-123/20.02.2024 of Prof. Plamen Doynov, Ph.D., Rector of NBU.

The review has been prepared in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulation for the Application of this Law and the Regulation on the Development of the Academic Staff of NBU.

1. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

The presented dissertation on the topic *Thriving Leadership – Concept, Factors and Coaching for Leaders and Teams Development*, developed by Elena Hinova-McNamee, a doctoral student of Business Administration at NBU, is dedicated to topical issues arising from the complex, changing, uncertain and ambiguous nature of the modern world in which organisations operate and their leaders realise the need for significant internal, intrapersonal transformation. This transformation should be directed towards creating a harmonious environment where people unfold their potential and thrive, which according to the doctoral student is a prerequisite for the sustainable prosperity of organisations. In this regard, she explores the intrapersonal and interpersonal conditions for the thriving of leaders and teams, focusing on leadership coaching as an opportunity to accelerate leadership, team and organisational thriving.

The **subject of the dissertation** is the impact of leadership and team coaching on thriving leadership. The objects of the study are two international organisations, differing in size, origin and culture. In this way, the author has managed to assess the influence of different environments

on leaders and teams. The main thesis advocated by the doctoral candidate is that sustainable organisational thriving is achieved through the leaders' and leadership teams' dedicated work towards intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation. The author convincingly reveals how this process can be accelerated through coaching.

Elena McNamee successfully defends her thesis by **aiming** to examine the internal conditions under which leaders and leadership teams thrive, as well as to provide a theoretical overview of issues related to leadership, thriving and coaching. **The research objectives** through which the doctoral candidate successfully achieves her purpose are: studying and analysing leading theories in the field of leadership, coaching and intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation; studying the intrapersonal transformation of two leaders working in two different cultural contexts; studying the interpersonal transformation of a management team and how it affects the organisation; studying how coaching accelerates intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation of leaders and their teams; revealing the significance of intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation for improving company results.

The **range of research methods and approaches** used by the doctoral candidate is diverse (case studies, assessment of Leadership Energy Indicator, assessment of brain dominance, interviews, testimonies of organisational members, documentation) and is oriented towards achieving the research aim. She convincingly justifies the choice of the *case study* method as the most suitable for studying the set questions and hypotheses. The doctoral candidate demonstrates skills in applying an interdisciplinary approach to the creative search for solutions to the objectives at hand.

I would like to note that the subject and object of the research are clearly and unambiguously defined, and together with the correctly set aim, objectives and the conditions under which the research was conducted, they determine the good logical structure of the dissertation's content. It consists of 319 pages, of which 254 are the main text, and has a classic structure – introduction, three chapters and conclusion. The content of the three chapters is visualised with 23 tables and 63 figures. The dissertation also includes 3 appendices (totalling 55 pages, visualised with 7 tables and 16 figures), containing data and evidence material allowing the verification of the scientific and practical results achieved by the doctoral candidate.

The dissertation is based on the study, analysis and systematisation of numerous scientific publications in the research thematic area. The list of literature includes 89 sources in Bulgarian and English, focusing on the researched scientific issues, appropriately used and correctly cited in the exposition of the dissertation.

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

The main results of the research are presented in the separate parts of the dissertation.

The first chapter contains a thorough analysis of some established and emerging leadership theories, as well as various perspectives on the psychological and neurobiological foundations of Optimal Experience.

In this chapter, the doctoral candidate logically derives a working definition of thriving leadership as a holistic form of leadership. The author successfully argues that thriving leadership is a phenomenon reflecting the complexity of the environment where modern organisations operate (p. 58-59). In this chapter, the candidate presents her results from the in-depth and long-term research and evaluation of the psychological and neurobiological foundations of Optimal Experience associated with thriving leadership and as a consequence she logically derives the term *Thrive Zone* (p.81-82).

In **the second chapter**, the doctoral candidate focuses on the historical roots of coaching and its impact on the intrapersonal transformation of leaders, the interpersonal transformation of leadership teams and business results.

In the context of the author's holistic view of the intrapersonal transformation of the leader, this chapter presents results and generalisations about the essence of coaching, with particular attention to Energy Coaching. The types of coaching are discussed, as well as the main differences between coaching and other helping modalities. Significant attention is also devoted to leadership coaching, including its historical roots, essence, process, structure and its impact on organisational effectiveness. The author has reviewed trends in the field of coaching, focusing more closely on brain-based coaching and team coaching, proposing her definition of "team coaching." She also presents her own views on the practical application of neuroscientific knowledge in the field of personal development through coaching.

In this chapter, the candidate defines her three research questions and derives her working assumptions, based on in-depth theoretical analysis, her own intrapersonal transformation experience, the intrapersonal transformation of numerous leaders she has coached over the past nine and a half years, as well as the interpersonal transformation of teams coached by her.

In **the third chapter**, the doctoral candidate presents various research methods and successfully backs up their use. The research results are also presented and used to confirm or reject the working hypotheses.

The results of the in-depth case study of two leaders and a leadership team present good practice for intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation, accelerated through Executive Coaching (EC) approach and Team Coaching approach. This in-depth study, encompassing qualitative and quantitative methods, yields results achieved in real conditions and demonstrates the transferability of the approach to organisations of different size and culture.

This chapter presents the author's methodology for measuring the current state of the leader in relation to the *Thrive Zone* which she defines as *Thrive Matrix*. Here the main parameters used to assess the intrapersonal transformation of the leader are brain dominance and the leader's energy vibration. (p.177)

The chapter also introduces the author's model for individual and team coaching (Core Model©) (pages 242-247). The model is derived as a result of in-depth work on case studies and the author's

practical observations of the processes of intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation. The description of the model's applicability through systematic derivation of the factors for its application in Bulgaria allows for its easy implementation in the work of coaching professionals, aiming to inspire and guide leaders and their teams toward thriving.

In general, in all of the three chapters, the doctoral candidate demonstrates her critical use of other authors' opinions, works, and results from scientific research to outline and argue her views on the development of thriving leadership through coaching, to develop and propose her own methodology and toolkit for intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation accelerated through leadership and teams coaching. The achieved results fully correspond to the objectives set forth in the introduction which is enough reason to acknowledge the successful and detailed realisation of the main aim of the dissertation.

3. Evaluation of scientific and scientific-applied contributions

The dissertation has aroused quite an interest in the scientific community with its formulations, ideas and suggestions that enrich existing knowledge and has practical significance. *I accept Elena Hinova-McNamee's 5 scientific and 5 practical –applied contributions, formulated correctly and well synthesized, reflecting the results of her dissertation.*

4. Evaluation of dissertation publications

The provided list of publications on the dissertation includes 4 publications (two reports and two articles) in reputable specialised national journals. These publications, which popularise the main dissertation thesis, research results, and contributions, are deemed sufficient according to minimal scientometric indicators. The mentioned publications show Elena Hinova-McNamee's ability to inform appropriately about the ideas developed in her dissertation.

5. Evaluation of the Abstract

The submitted abstract spans 45 pages and is composed according to the requirements, providing a synthesis of the dissertation's content, thesis, object, methodology, limitations of the study, final results, a reference to the contributory aspects of the conducted research and a list of publications on the dissertation.

6. Critical Remarks, recommendations and questions

I have no critical remarks regarding the presentation of ideas and formulations in the dissertation.

I recommend that Elena Hinova-McNamee further deepen her research on issues of priority to her, arising from the relevance of her dissertation, and disseminate the research results in authoritative international and national journals. Considering the practical applicability of the results achieved in her dissertation, I believe it is appropriate for her to publish methodological guidelines for intrapersonal transformation of leaders and interpersonal transformation in management teams through coaching.

Conclusion

The dissertation on the topic *Thriving Leadership – Concept, Factors, and Coaching for Leaders and Teams Development* meets the established requirements for scientific research. It contains an original study of a specific topical problem based on in-depth research of various information sources and presents a well-argued scientific defence of the results obtained from the conducted research. A number of formulations, ideas, and suggestions therein can be considered contributions of a scientific and practical nature, warranting my positive evaluation of the dissertation.

In my opinion, the dissertation also meets the requirements of The Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Implementing Regulations of the said act, and the Internal rules for the development of the academic staff at NBU – Sofia.

Based on all of the above, I propose that the members of the Scientific Jury award Elena Hinova-McNamee the Doctor's degree in Social Management (Business Administration).

March, 2024

Signature:

Prof. Dr. Galina Kurteva