

OPINION

Of: Assoc. Prof. Katia Zhivkova Mihailova, PhD
UNWE, Department of Economic Sociology

For: Dissertation thesis “Strategic Aspects of Media Representations of the Bulgarian Chief Prosecutors (2006-2020)” in the professional direction of 3.5. “Public Communications and Information Sciences” at Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, SU „St. Kliment Ohridsky“

Author of the dissertation: Borislav Radoslavov Georgiev

The Opinion is presented based on the Order № ПД 38-671 / 21.12.2023 of the Rector of Sofia University.

1. Information about the dissertant

The PhD student was enrolled in a doctoral program in professional direction 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Image in Strategic Communications), at SU "St. Kliment Ohridsky" - FJMK. The scientific advisor of the dissertation is Prof. D.Sc. Milko Petrov.

2. Overview of the dissertation

Borislav Georgiev presents a dissertation on "Strategic aspects of the media images of the Bulgarian chief prosecutors (2006-2020)". From the point of view of the social and political times in which we live today, the relevance of the chosen research topic is indisputable. The research is also relevant from the point of view of the development of science and the methods of scientific research, insofar as it offers an understanding and a methodology for researching the relationship between what exists (Bulgarian prosecutors) and its media images (prosecutor images in the media). The relationship "real - media image" is an indisputable factor in the formation of public opinion, collective ideas, and consciousness. In this plan, the presented dissertation research was developed. Here is the place to emphasize the long-time span of the study - 14 years, from 2006 to 2020, with the images of three Bulgarian prosecutors examined.

The dissertation has a classic dissertation structure with three chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. A list of references is presented. Appendices have also been developed, providing clarity on specific methodological issues of the research.

The introduction is a methodological introduction to the dissertation. The methodological elements of the scientific research, which are followed and developed in the following content of the dissertation are clearly formulated here. The choice of research methodology is argued.

The first chapter has a theoretical character, it builds the theoretical-methodological coordinate of the dissertation. The basic concepts of "image", "journalism", "information", "censorship", "statute of the general prosecutor" were examined. The created theoretical framework clearly shows two main semantic connections in the dissertation. First - in the dissertation, the concept of "media image" is considered as an element of "image". Therefore, the research is not limited to media monitoring and content analysis of media publications, but also includes the study of other factors that build the image, e.g. the expert assessment and opinion explored through a survey and a series of in-depth interviews. Second, the thesis establishes the relationship "prosecutor" - "information" - "censorship". On the one hand, the media image is built through the information in the media and its limitations, on the other hand, the author indicates precisely "information" and its limitations through censorship or self-censorship as a strategic aspect in the media image of the chief prosecutors. In this regard, problems related to access to information and denial of access to information were also considered.

The second chapter presents an analysis of selected "key" cases from the biography of the Bulgarian Prosecutor General in the period 2004-2020. The specific cases are presented on the background of an analysis of the development of the state prosecution in our country. Each of the selected cases is analysed in two planes - objective situation and media image. The approach undoubtedly yields good results. Only one question remains to be clarified - what are the criteria for selecting exactly these case studies.

The third chapter presents the results of empirical research conducted on public opinion about chief prosecutors and their media images. 603 respondents were surveyed through an online survey, 15 experts (court journalists, magistrates, and lawyers) were interviewed. The obtained research results allow conclusions and generalizations not so much about the media images of the chief prosecutors themselves, but about the opinion, assessment of the interviewed persons and groups about the media images of the chief prosecutors. Here, the research focus is not on the objective manifestation of the Prosecutor General, nor on the media reflection of this manifestation, but on the third level – the perception of the media image among the public and expert circles. I consider this idea as an original research achievement. Questions of a methodological nature remain to be clarified - how the researcher arrives at exactly these questions (indicators) that he asks the respondents; how the qualitative information obtained through the in-depth interviews is processed.

The conclusion of the dissertation research presents the main conclusions and generalizations made during the research work. In essence, it represents the author's reference from the theoretical and empirical verification of the research hypotheses posed in the introduction of the dissertation.

The content of the dissertation shows strict adherence by the author to the chosen methodological basis. The aim of the research has been achieved; the specific tasks have been fulfilled. In this situation, the author can also make relevant recommendations both for the development of future research on the subject and for optimizing the process of image building, in which the media image is a main component, of the Prosecutor General. Similar recommendations have been made. Their value lies in the fact that they are derived on the basis of aggregate research information, including expert opinions and assessments. The reliability of the research information is fully verifiable, as the author has presented in the appendix the full texts of the conducted in-depth interviews, as well as the one-dimensional distributions of the survey data.

All this gives grounds for the conclusion that the dissertation research was developed in the context of good methodological prescriptions, but also in sync with the ethical requirements for conducting scientific research on social issues. It is not just about respect for copyright and intellectual property, which the dissertation practically shows. But also, for adherence to standards in research ethics, which is also visible in the present dissertation.

3. Evaluation of the scientific contributions

The author formulates five contributions of his dissertation. They are presented in the Abstract and in the dissertation itself. The contributions are primarily scientific and applied in nature, insofar as they lead to the author's proposals for optimizing the currently operating models investigated in the dissertation study. It is in this scientific-applied plan that I accept the contributions of the present study.

4. Evaluation of the publications

The dissertation student presents 8 scientific publications, the last one is in print. This is sufficient in response to the quantitative requirement for admission to the defence and awarding of ONS "Doctor" according to this criterion. The presented scientific publications are research of the doctoral student on separate scientific problems in the thematic framework of the dissertation research. The results achieved in them were also used in the dissertation work.

5. Evaluation of the Author's Abstract of Dissertation

The abstract reflects the dissertation research. It presents a clear and scientifically based methodological infrastructure of the dissertation research, the author's approach in structuring the dissertation as well as a summary of the main content points.

The doctoral student has also proposed a formulation of the research's scientific contributions. A list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation is indicated.

6. Critical Remarks

The presented dissertation has indisputable advantages. Some of them are set out above, and next to them are indicated questions, the clarification of which would better highlight the contributions of the dissertation. Critical remarks or questions can be raised regarding the presentation in the dissertation of the methodological information and the development of the methodological tools of the research. As was said above, questions of a methodological nature remain to be clarified - what are the criteria for selecting the cases analyzed in the second chapter; how the researcher arrives at precisely those indicators that he applies in the survey and in-depth interviews; how the qualitative information obtained through the in-depth interviews is processed.

7. Conclusion

The presented dissertation shows theoretical knowledge and ability to apply theoretical and methodological constructs in the study of a selected problem field, in the analysis of social

phenomena and phenomena. is a basis for the successful completion and award of the Educational and Scientific Degree of "Doctor".

I propose to the respected members of the scientific jury to vote for awarding the ESD of „Doctor" to Borislav Radoslavov Georgiev.

15.02.2024

Подпис: