

R E V I E W

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Regarding: Dissertation thesis for a candidature
for a "PhD" degree in Professional field: 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Public Relations).

Reason for review: Order of the Rector of Sofia University № RD / 38-449 on the work of a PhD student Plamen Stoilov Bobokov on the topic "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the mission, vision and practices of business organizations" with scientific adviser Assoc.

Prof. Svetoslava Kovacheva.

1. General information about the PhD student and the dissertation. Mr. Bobokov has been enrolled in a doctoral program for PhD researcher in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences, PhD Program in Media and Communication - Public Relations at the Department of Communication, Public Relations and Advertising at the Faculty of Faculty and Mass Communication. The dissertation contains an introduction, a presentation (in three chapters), a conclusion and a bibliography. The academic work has a total volume of 317 pages and 13 figures (tables). The cited literature includes 270 sources with a cited author, of which 58 are in Cyrillic (Bulgarian and Russian) and 212 are in Latin (English). Also cited are 94 non-explicit sources, mainly institutional and / or regulatory documents, as well as corporate sources, of which 17 are in Cyrillic (Bulgarian) and 77 are in Latin (English). In connection with the dissertation, the PhD student has indicated 4 publications and 1 participation in an international round table devoted to problems related to his research. The abstract of the dissertation accurately conveys the basic idea of the research in details and reflects its contribution moments, thus covering the requirements for referring to such work. The topic chosen for investigation is relevant and relates to important communication and ethical aspects of the economic activities of business organizations. At the outset, I can note the high degree to which the PhD student is familiar with the theoretical and practical aspects of the problems and the tasks that he sets out in his research. In addition to theoretical knowledge, the PhD student knows business as a practice, as evidenced by his CV, which, apart from numerous honors for him as a successful entrepreneur, is honored, as well as his acknowledgment of his activity as a philanthropist and facilitator of philanthropic

causes.

2. The main content of the work is presented in a coherent, comprehensive and logical way in three chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. The goals and the subject of the study are outlined at the beginning. It has the primary purpose of examining "Corporate Social Responsibility in the context of the philosophy of doing business" (p. 8). Business as a social phenomenon and an academic discipline is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers from various fields. Moral regulation and the moral meaning of business itself and their public communication are some of the most current problems of contemporary ethical and communication knowledge, both theoretically and practically. How ethical theory that describes the highest goals of human behavior relates to the business practice of business, and what lies behind its visibility as responsible only for profit is a question that is perfectly legitimate. And second, the PhD student focuses on "reviewing (in fact analysis – N.M.) the different types of institutional frameworks in which CSR is defined and acts as a set of regulations and self-regulation" (ibid.). Indeed, in recent years, public expectations for business have been associated with socially, politically, environmentally and even personally responsible behavior. "CSR is a dynamically evolving theoretical and practical system in which processes are particularly profound and subject to rapidly growing public interest over the last decade (2009-2019)" (p.12). The methods chosen and described in the Introduction are relevant both to the tasks assigned and to those defended by the PhD student. The first chapter of the dissertation represents a successful attempt at theoretical substantiation and historical analysis of the idea of CSR, which ends with a reasoned conclusion by the author. Perhaps most important is that it permeates all areas of social, political and moral evaluation and expectations for business organizations on the part of the public. In addition to reviewing the numerous definitions of CSR, the author also offers his own definition in section 1.2. which I will not cite, but will point out its legitimacy because of the essential characteristics of 'strategic management', 'moral - ethical commitment' and 'public well - being' noted there (p.46). The chapter is rich in typologies and classifications that clearly arrange and systematize the author's ideas. As an example, I can cite section 1.4, which contains a coherent statement of the factors that preceded the emergence of the concept of CSR, including Max Weber's ideas about the specific ethos of Protestant morality. Although the Calvinist Protestants, for whom Weber writes, have now lost their religious enthusiasm, their pursuit of success here on earth, which began as a religious faith, has gradually become a moral requirement for work, profession, business - so I read author's ideas. In part 1.5.4. *On social capital*, I would only recommend an analysis of Bourdieu's ideas regarding the

publicity of "new capital", as he calls it, on social reproduction through education, knowledge and culture. An important focus of the chapter is the idea of CSR as a way to counteract corruption. The section concludes with a review of the critique of the concept of CSR as a tool for legitimizing profit, a way of promoting the idea of the world as an endless market, and so on. Chapter Two looks at the main processes and trends that elevate the importance of CSR from a business function with mostly internal benefits to the corporation, to a factor for improving society, the economy, social relationships in general through publicity and communication. This process, as the PhD student correctly observed, "involves a wide range of stakeholders" (p.133). This chapter continues the thorough and reasoned style of presentation that the PhD student demonstrates in the first section and perhaps most importantly - demonstrates his protected personal position as a researcher. Here, development "enters" into the real field of research. That is the connection between the concept of CSR and communication technology - noting the development of this concept in terms of "emancipation" and marketing strategies and the transformation and "philosophy" of the business organization, as well as its own (of Mr. Bobokov) objections to the skeptical acceptance of this thesis by various authors (p.135). One of the skills of the researcher, Mr. Bobokov, lies in clearly distinguishing his own position from that of the cited and reviewed authors, who, on the other hand, hardly need to describe and set out in such detail. The goals of investigation imply in-depth theoretical knowledge, which the author undoubtedly possesses, but which may also be "softened" by the abundance of authors and, in places, the extensive exposition of their theories. The author's detailed knowledge of a topic, which is obvious in this case, is merely a basis, often implicit, that provides cognitive content for evaluating and building one's own concept. Rather, it is a recommendation to the doctoral student's scientific endeavors and does not substantially affect his or her thesis. I think that the section on regulation and self-regulation (2.1.) Is key to Chapter Two. In this regard, the work presented by Mr Bobokov shows an increased attention not only from academic knowledge to the concept of CSR, but also from people in business, those with immediate moral decision-making experience, affecting not only them, but many others as well as society as a whole. Changing the nature of human responsibility in those, including in communicative situations, present in the studies of Karl Otto Apel or Jürgen Habermas, also needs analysis by people for whom professional ethical regulation is also real life behavior. Here again it is a matter of making moral decisions regarding the subjects who cannot do it on their own, e.g. if slightly ahead of the analysis - in relation to the environment, as the PhD student further pointed out in his research. I think that this is one of the main contributions to the dissertation work in

general, which on the one hand gives the view of the entrepreneur, confronted with many complex and specific moral and responsible decisions, and on the other - complements the Bulgarian ethical knowledge with this specific view and analysis. According to the researcher, "the issue of CSR regulation and self-regulation should also be considered in terms of the synthesis between different types of regulatory and voluntary measures ... [but business] does not use this to circumvent regulations or abuse political influence in reformulation of Regulations" (p.143). It should be noted here that society is what creates moral norms as the most common notions of good and evil, permissible and unacceptable, and in general the regulations and expectations of its members are to be respected in the public interest or "generally desirable result" (ibid.). Among the qualities of work, I would like to mention the presentation and analysis of the UN Global Compact and related initiatives, including its acceptance in Bulgaria, on the principles of sustainable and responsible behavior of the world business. You cannot be a good businessperson in this regard if you do not know the most important documents and regulations at the official level. In general, attention to the national context of all regulatory principles and formulated conclusions described by the doctoral student, the pro domo sua attitude, in defense of the Bulgarian context of the CSR concept and its development, is among the strengths of the dissertation. As the most significant and significant scientific focus in Chapter Two, the author has identified and I fully accept the development of a CSR policy formulation and implementation strategy (Section 2.2.2). It consists of two modules and a sophisticated but logically robust construction system. I share the idea of the PhD student that in addressing the complex problems facing humanity related to social conflict, political instability, economic risks, religious and cultural opposition, environmental threats, etc., business should be involved "beyond its traditional borders" (p. 203). In my view, this means a clearly stated will on the part of the business, backed up by purposeful actions in this direction, to convince the public that the CSR approach, defined as 'instrumentalist', is already a milestone in this regard. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the new trends in the concept of CSR in the context of the social, political and economic development of Bulgaria. The more the author's research view deepens, the more emphatically he views his conviction, which I fully share, of a public-benefit management company. This also means the formation of a new moral and communicative culture among entrepreneurs and business people, as the PhD student has pointed out in his work. Chapter 3 introduces in perhaps the most interesting, independent research part of the dissertation. Based on his own business practice, the variety of factors and various aspects of this type of activity, the author in his research shows the formation and functioning of the concept of

CSR. He thinks about it as a new moral culture, linked simultaneously with the use of technological achievements, the pursuit of economic efficiency, but also with significant social and environmental (in a general sense) dimensions. The specificity of the African economic space in which business is carried out requires new and decisive action on the part of the business, both in terms of economic objectives and in terms of the concept of CSR. There is a good knowledge of the PhD student on the topic; through appropriate examples, the business relationship dynamics and its responsibility to achieve sustainable social goals on the African continent through successful communication approaches have been thoroughly demonstrated. Examples include multinational corporations operating in African countries that are considered environmentally hazardous, but also about the rights of local populations such as the automotive and oil industries. This part also shares the doctoral student's personal experience as an entrepreneur in the subject of his research. I will not dwell on the numerous examples, carefully selected in the context of the author's points, as well as his arguments, proving that in Bulgaria the "public opinion that business has not always succeeded in being" on the side "of society" (p. 264) is something that the new moral culture of entrepreneurs is seeking to refute and overcome. What is important and relevant in this chapter is actually the investigated model for the ethical and applied nature of the moral problems that arise in the practice of business. In this sense, ethics refers to the study of some part of moral practice or moral reality (A. Guseynov), which in this case also requires relevant knowledge and responsible behavior (primary experience) on the part of those acting in it, which lead to generalizations with philosophical. The parts of the study indicated by 3.4. and also 3.5. confirm this observation by describing those practical solutions of Prista Oil Group that arise from the common ethical principles of responsibility and ownership of the business to the important problems for the public good - education, environmental care, infrastructure, well-being. Both locally and globally, they must be clearly stated and made public. I would say that for me as an ethicist I am interested in that change in ethical regulation, which describes how the tradition in this particular activity is replaced by a conscious intention, and spontaneity (or the non-institutionality of morality, as it was called by one of the best Bulgarian ethicists) of moral regulation - with the conscious decision of the moral figure (or as the PhD student describes it in the Conclusion - "Encouraging Institutional Framework" (p. 297).

3. The dissertator has submitted 4 articles and reports on the topic of the dissertation, published in scientific journals and journals with scientific review. This fact leads me to positively evaluate not only the results of his dissertation research, but also his efforts to

disseminate these results not only among practitioners, but also among researchers, scientists and people with a theoretical interest in corporate communications, PR , ethical research, etc. The publications deal with important and related topics of the study the problems of responsible business activities such as the protection of cultural heritage, public-private partnership, and combating corruption by building an ethical mechanism, trying to overcome inequalities, building reputation and more. They are a continuation of the doctoral student's analysis and argumentation in the direction of confirming his doctoral thesis, but also show additional fields of interest and competence provoking additional interest in the topic by specialists, practitioners, students and all those interested in the moral and communicative business context. According to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing acts, including tables for the minimum required points by groups of indicators and the number of points in area 3. 5. Public communications and Information sciences candidates for the acquisition of educational and the doctoral degree in the field must have submitted a dissertation (50 points) and printed production bearing at least 30 points according to national scientific criteria. The articles submitted by the PhD student bring him a total of 40 points, with which he exceeds the required points in accordance with the provisions of the Bulgarian national criteria.

4. I support the requested scientific contributions by the doctoral student. Undoubtedly, the involvement of a co-owner and board member of a corporation to develop a CSR strategy and its impact through successful communication is key to its realization. And it also outlines an innovative form of "doing" business related to its new social role that society expects from it. And that changes the definition of business as a form of social action, seeking profit, but also in accordance with moral norms, affirming the public interest, manifested in specific actions and actions by entrepreneurs. Aristotle also states that ethics is needed not to know what is good (virtue) at all, but to be virtuous in our actions. This is, a characteristic of modern business ethics, in which decisions are often dependent on individual moral motivation, in the case of management. People who are trusted by the public as individuals - perhaps this is the image of a responsible businessman and everyone who deals with him, an idea also shared by Francis Fukuyama in his book on trust. As one of the biggest names in the corporate IP field claims, Arthur Page - no corporate strategy can be implemented unless its possible impact on the public is taken into account. And therein lies the link between corporate responsibility and obligations to the public and their assessment by the public (or everyone concerned, as the saying goes), which shows the relevance and dissertation of the doctoral student's topic in the

context of public communication. The Prista Oil Group case study is rightly cited as a contribution, because in this context of ethical decisions, the rule follows from the relevant situation, from the single case, from a specific communicative situation. Finally, the whole study, although devoted to analyzing the public communication of business organizations with regard to CSR, carries a strong ethical and philosophical charge, aiming at innovative development and the formation of a sustainable entrepreneurial culture, incorporating values, beliefs and evaluations, affirming responsible and voluntary behavior in accordance with the public interest.

5. Conclusion. The content of the proposal for a dissertation review gives me reason to conclude that it possesses the necessary qualities of a conscientious, consistent and critical scientific research on an important and current topic. The placement of theses and conclusions in the field of corporate communications covers the profile of the department in which the PhD student has worked in his field of work and from which his scientific supervisor was elected. The development contains scientific and applied scientific contributions, analyzes and appropriate methodology, as well as a protected author position and demonstrated skills for independent scientific research, which will undoubtedly enrich and expand the Bulgarian communication and ethical knowledge. They will also help practitioners in the field of business . I very much appreciate the dissertation entitled Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the mission, vision and practices of business organizations. I propose to the distinguished Scientific Jury to confer on Plamen Stoilov Bobokov PhD degree in professional direction 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Public Relations).

Reviewer:

(Prof. Nikolai Mihailov, PhD)

1.12. 2019