

## **REVIEW**

of the dissertation

for awarding **the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"**

in the scientific area **3.3. "Political Science (Public Administration)"**

**Author of the dissertation:** Maria Oikonomidou

**Thesis theme:** "Organizational Performance and Quality of Public Administration: Evaluation and improvement through Human Resource Management Practices"

**Reviewer:** assoc. prof. Elena Kalfova, PhD

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### 1. Overall assessment of the dissertation

From a formal point of view Maria Oikonomidou's doctoral thesis research "Organizational Performance and Quality of Public Administration: Evaluation and improvement through Human Resource Management Practices" meets all quantitative and qualitative criteria for dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

The presented paper has a total volume of 290 pages, organized in 7 chapters, an introduction, a conclusion and 2 appendices. The structure is relevant and allows for presentation of the doctoral thesis research. The doctoral thesis is developed on the basis of representative scientific literature - a sufficient number of sources have been used, supplemented with other information sources (laws, regulations, etc.). The quotations made are compatible with the fair practice and contribute to achieving the goals of the doctoral thesis.

The structure of the doctoral thesis conforms to the standards of the genre. The Introduction clearly defines the object and subject of the research, the goals, tasks, methods of the research. The framework of analysis thus constructed is logical, coherent, the goal is ambitious and addresses current issues of the development of public administration and human resources management. The formulation of research hypotheses, which are tested in the process of analysis, is illustrative of a very good research culture. The author develops and proves the thesis that the implementation of TQM and CAF practices are an organizational advantage for the public administration, which lead to higher motivation and satisfaction of the employees and hence to higher overall quality in the work of the

administration and to provision of better services in the education sector. Furthermore, the author proves the need for a unified approach and for linking the practices of human resources management to total quality management (TQM) to achieve quality education. The first chapter clarifies the basic concepts that the author uses in proving her doctoral thesis. At the theoretical level, the concepts of strategic management and strategic management of human resources are derived. The author also links the performance management approach to the strategic management of human resources, which is an interesting approach and is theoretically significant. Chapter Two expands the theoretical basis by presenting the models of total quality management (TQM) and the importance of organizational culture and human resource management for the introduction of such systems in the public sector. The third chapter examines the development of basic theoretical concepts (new public management and good governance) and the development of human resource management practices in this framework. The importance of organizational culture and policy for the development of the management practices in the public administration is also analysed. Special emphasis is placed on the adoption of CAF as a general framework for evaluating public administration in the EU. This justifies the use of such a scheme in the empirical study in the next sections of the doctoral thesis is thus justified. Chapter 4 examines the reforms carried out in Greece to achieve a better system of human resources management in public administration over the last decades. Chapters five, six and seven present the methodology and the results of the empirical study. In the fifth chapter, the methodology of the empirical research is developed in great detail. The specifics of different empirical methods are discussed. The choice of the method of data collection – surveys and interviews, and the data processing methodology – regression models, are explained. Relying on the existing tools for the implementation of CAF in Greece is appropriate and allows verification of the results. Chapter six provides an in-depth analysis of the data collected from the empirical study. The author demonstrates a very high level of knowledge of different data processing methods. They are selected appropriately in terms of the objectives of the study and the type of data collected. Chapter Seven serves as a conclusion and summarizes the overall results of the doctoral thesis research. The factors that determine employee satisfaction as well the opportunities for improving employee performance are formulated. The recommendations formulated for improving human resource management practices can be very useful.

My overall assessment of the doctoral thesis is positive. A complete and defensible text, which is the result of consistent and focused effort, is presented. The author has undertaken

significant work of good quality to identify, review and analyse a significant body of information sources. Current and important questions are raised about public administration development, the development of a strategic approach to human resource management and about the results of the adoption by Greece of some popular EU practices in human resource management. I fully share the author's understanding of the need for the system for evaluation and management of human resources to be linked to the overall evaluation of the performance results of the administration concerned. I believe that this is the line along which the research can develop in the future.

The dissertation uses a classical deductive analysis approach. Raising theoretically the questions of human resource management and organizational performance, the author analyses the relationship between the two processes. The results of the conducted empirical research clearly show the significant field work carried out. The survey was conducted only in one public sector and in one region of Greece, but due to its enviably good methodology it can be applied in other regions and in other sectors. It is a pilot study by nature, which can underpin the formulation of more in-depth hypotheses and research questions at a later stage. The data collected provide significantly greater opportunities for more in-depth analyses in the future.

The doctoral thesis research carried out proves that the author has competencies for conducting scientific research: she demonstrates in-depth knowledge of theoretical paradigms and very good skills for conducting empirical research, as well as for analysing scientific facts.

## 2. Relevance

The issues analysed in the doctoral thesis are simultaneously relevant in several areas: for the practices of public administration, for the problems related to the management of human resources in administration and, to my mind, of particular importance is the question of how to improve the quality of education. This is one of the hot topics not only for the development of public sectors, improvement of education is perceived as a key element in ensuring sustainable growth. In this line of thought, the study of all aspects of the education management system is one of the most important issues for science, as well as for the practice of public administration. Of course, the doctoral thesis does not pretend to and cannot address all these problems at once. It is a very good study of the introduction of innovative practices in human resource management and an evaluation of the results on the basis of modern scientific approaches. This provides a good basis for general conclusions and especially for future research.

### 3. Qualities of the methodology

The methodology used in the doctoral thesis research is suited for the subject analysed. It consists basically of two components: analysis and synthesis of existing scientific research and empirical research. The methodology is properly implemented, the data collected from the empirical study are analysed with appropriate methods. The results of the empirical study are appropriately summarised and serve as a basis for the formulated recommendations for change.

### 4. Scientific and Applied Contributions

I accept the contributions formulated by the author and believe that they are the result of her independent work. In my opinion, Maria Oikonomidou has successfully attained the objectives set in the doctoral thesis research and has managed to prove to a significant degree the theses defended. The contributions of the dissertation include systematization of research in the field of development of human resources management, adoption of the strategic approach in that specific field as part of the concept of good governance. In addition, a detailed analysis was made of the development of the public administration in Greece and particularly of the administrative system for education governance. The experience of the Greek administration in the application of models for management and evaluation of human resources is systematized and evaluated. Very interesting is the empirical research, which combines the parallel study of the relationship between HR innovative practices and the satisfaction of internal customers on the one hand and including the perceptions of administrative officers with regard to a TQM model future implementation, on the other. It has to be pointed out that the development of a structural model and the formulation of a practical framework for measuring the impact of 'supporting' HR practices on employee satisfaction and efficiency is a valuable contribution.

### 5. Personal contribution.

The dissertation, the results and the contributions received are a personal contribution of Maria Oikonomidou – they are result of significant amount of work done by the PhD student.

### 6. Evaluation of publications.

Maria Oikonomidou presents 4 articles related to the topic of her dissertation. The publications are in English and have been published in prestigious journals. This is a proven track that the necessary publicity of the research process in relation to the issues under consideration has been fulfilled. The trend towards publishing mainly electronic publications provides better visibility of the results of the dissertation research. Quality of

the papers is at the required level and corresponds to the good achievements in the research field.

#### 7. Autoreferat

The dissertation abstract has a volume of 34 pages and presents a synthesized content of the dissertation. It is fully compliant with the Act for Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The abstract is developed appropriately so that it gives a complete and accurate idea of the main topics and achievements of the dissertation.

#### 8. Considerations, questions and recommendations

The doctoral thesis, like any in-depth study, raises some questions and provokes some observations. The development of the human resources management practices is theoretically linked to the overall concept of the organizational development. As I have already emphasised, I believe that this is one of the main merit of the doctoral thesis research. However, this aspect is not examined in the empirical study. This is not mandatory, but it would contribute to expanding the scope and relevance of the results. In this line of thought, I would like to ask the following question:

In what specific aspects does the introduction of new models in human resource management improve the quality of education?

The author supports the thesis that the introduction of certain practices in human resources management is the result of the adoption of models developed by the European institutions. Such transfer of policies and practices is common for many sectors and it often does not produce the same results in the different countries. In the case in point, to what extent are the different practices (for example, CAF) adapted to the specifics of the public administration in Greece and do they produce similar effects and results to those in the other EU Member States? If not – what are the main differences and the main difficulties in implementing the models analysed?

#### 9. Conclusion

The doctoral thesis discussed clearly speaks of the research competence of its author. Given the advantages of the doctoral thesis research, I give my vote "for" awarding its author - Maria Oikonomidou, the scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field 3.3. "Political Science (Public Administration)".

27.08.2020

Reviewer:

Assoc. prof. Elena Kalfova, PhD