

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Nelly Andreyeva Bencheva

on a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD)

in: area of Higher education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences

professional field 3.7 Administration and Management

Author: **Lilia Nedkova Nedeva**

Topic: MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN MUNICIPAL ORGANIZATIONS
(EXAMPLE: MUNICIPALITY OF PLOVDIV)

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Petar Petrov

1. Relevance of the topic and appropriateness of the stated objectives and tasks

The dissertation focuses on the growing public significance of social capital and its role as a key factor in building quality relationships, social ties, and infrastructure. In the existing literature and scientific research, there is still a lack of clearly derived and scientifically substantiated social models that reveal the essence, role, and importance of local self-government at the municipal level, its particularities of governance, policies, actions, and behavior for building trust and fostering joint activities to achieve defined goals, with a view to creating a healthy civil society capable of meeting high public interest. Local self-government is linked to the construction of a new type of public relations in the context of the new social realities. Building social capital is foundational to solving economic, social, financial, and other development problems of municipalities in Bulgaria. In this sense, I also perceive the relevance of the presented dissertation. I believe that the doctoral student skillfully, with solid objective arguments, set the aim and specific tasks of the dissertation and argued the relevance of the chosen topic.

2. Knowledge of the problem

The dissertation comprises 190 pages. In terms of structure and content, it achieves a good and logically coherent presentation of the material. The work is organized as follows: introduction, three chapters (theoretical; methodology and methods of research and analytical; analysis and recommendations for improving governance), conclusions, scientific contributions, scientific

publications, used literature, and appendices (including a survey instrument for measuring social capital in municipalities, interviews conducted with municipal experts). A total of 136 bibliographic sources were used, 76 in Bulgarian and 60 in English. The empirical research results are illustrated in the main text of the dissertation by 13 tables and 12 figures. The survey instruments and interviews are in the appendices.

The doctoral student shows good knowledge of the literature and the theoretical foundations of social capital management, considered in light of the peculiarities of municipal governance and the competencies of experts. The student handles well the categorical and conceptual apparatus of management theory in the process of performing theoretical analysis and presenting results of the empirical study. A good impression is made by the attempt to use the practical expertise of the doctoral student, who works in the City of Plovdiv. It is shown that the author can clearly and precisely outline the positions of individual authors and take a reasoned own position.

The aim of the dissertation is clearly defined: to study the management of social capital in the Municipality of Plovdiv and to develop guidelines for its improvement. Based on the main aim, the central research thesis is developed: the development of social capital in the Municipality of Plovdiv faces a number of problems that negatively affect established social ties and interactions, which predispose to insufficient effectiveness and difficulties in coordinating actions to achieve defined goals.

To achieve the research objective, three main tasks are set, including theoretical aspects of social capital management, development of a methodology for researching social capital, and analysis of the results of the conducted study, with a view to drawing conclusions and recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of managing social capital, using the example of the Municipality of Plovdiv. The object and subject of the study are stated clearly and concretely.

To achieve the aims and tasks of the dissertation, a special methodology has been developed in accordance with the goals, tasks, and the stated research thesis.

The dissertation contains specific results and empirical evidence that objectively reflect the real achievements of the scientific study regarding the significance of managing social capital in municipalities and the studied attitudes, opinions, and positions of experts, toward achieving effective governance of social capital in municipalities. The main contributions of the dissertation

relate to studying the role and significance of social capital in municipalities for solving problems of economic, social, and financial nature, and developing basic guidelines for improving the effectiveness of its governance.

The results show that the doctoral student has good theoretical training, solid practical knowledge and skills, and professional experience gained during her career as a municipal manager. Indeed, her expert experience has enabled her to conduct the scientific study independently, fulfilling the requirements for a research work for the Doctor degree.

3. Research methodology

The conducted study is based on a specially developed and tested methodology in accordance with the aim, tasks, and hypotheses. The methodology and methods of the empirical study are described in detail in Chapter 2. The organization of the research process and the chosen methodological toolkit stem from the use of a broad information base.

The analysis of the obtained results was performed using both quantitative and qualitative methods: comparative analysis, induction, deduction, logical approach, systems approach, descriptive analysis. Statistical methods for comparing values and data processing (correlation analysis) were used. For data processing, IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and Microsoft EXCEL were used.

For the purposes of the study, concepts, theoretical constructs, models, approaches, and normative regulations that examine the essence of social capital management were employed. To achieve the stated aims and tasks, an empirical study was conducted among the municipalities of Plovdiv, Maritsa, Rhodope, and Asenovgrad, conducted through a structured (survey) study and in-depth interviews. The methodological limitations encountered during the research process are described in detail.

In summary, the research methodology rests on a developed approach that includes the use of modern quantitative and qualitative methods, enabling more reliable results and assessments by experts regarding the effectiveness of social capital governance in municipalities.

4. Characterization and assessment of the dissertation

Chapter 1 provides a thorough review of the theoretical propositions related to social capital governance. It is demonstrated that social capital is a decisive factor influencing the

effective functioning of the municipality and the resolution of numerous economic, social, and financial problems. The in-depth theoretical analysis has allowed the doctoral student to formulate the research questions, aims, tasks, and thesis of the dissertation. Key theoretical concepts and notions related to social capital governance are clarified, taking into account the specifics of local self-government and its application within municipalities. Various authorial definitions from the specialized literature are analyzed, with the author making a successful attempt to offer her own views and formulations on the role and significance of effective social capital governance in municipalities. The peculiarities of social capital and its main components are elaborated in detail. From the theoretical analysis, clear and precise conclusions are drawn.

As a summary, the thorough theoretical analysis of the effectiveness of social capital governance in the municipal system underpins the successful development of Chapters 2 and 3 of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 is devoted to methodology and methods of the empirical study. It contains the research methodology that justifies the research process at all stages of execution, along with problems and limitations.

The doctoral student presents the research process at all stages of execution, along with the problems and limitations accompanying the empirical study.

Chapter 3 focuses on the analysis of the main results of the study. Based on the analysis of the information and data from the conducted research, some guidelines and recommendations are provided for improving the governance of social capital in municipalities.

In summary, the dissertation contains concrete results and empirical evidence that objectively reflect the reliability of the material on which the contributions of the dissertation are based and the real achievements of the conducted scientific study.

5. Contributions and significance of the development for science and practice

The presented dissertation identifies the following key scientific contributions:

1. The main theoretical concepts related to social capital are systematized.
2. The components and the main indicators measuring social capital are established.
3. The specificity of social capital in municipal organizations is presented. The triangulation method is applied to identify the researched problem and deepen knowledge in the studied field.

From the scientific contributions with practical applications, the following are noted:

1. A survey was conducted to establish the opinion of employees in municipalities and municipal organizations on important issues and challenges that are the basis for achieving effective management of social capital.

2. It was found that the development of social capital in the municipalities of Plovdiv, Maritsa, Rodopi and Asenovgrad is faced with a number of problems that affect the established social ties between people, which is a prerequisite for its insufficient effectiveness and the inability to coordinate actions to achieve the desired goals.

3. Opportunities for improving social capital in municipal organizations are presented.

6. Assessment of publications on the dissertation work

Six independent articles have been published in connection with the dissertation work, of which 1 in Bulgarian and 6 in English. Total 60 points. The doctoral student meets the minimum scientometric requirements for acquiring the ONS “doctor”.

7 Personal participation of the doctoral student

The doctoral student independently develops the goal, tasks, program and methodology of the research. An analytical review of Bulgarian and foreign scientific publications and regulations on the problem under consideration has been carried out. The collection and analysis of the research materials, their statistical processing and the formulation of conclusions and proposals are entirely the independent work of the doctoral student.

8. Abstract

The abstract does not correctly and accurately reflect the structure and content of the dissertation. It includes the main chapters, results of the research, conclusions, conclusion, scientific contributions and a list of publications on the dissertation, according to the requirements.

9. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no significant critical remarks on the dissertation.

10. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

I recommend that the doctoral student publish the results of the dissertation work in prestigious scientific journals with an impact factor in English.

CONCLUSION

I believe that the presented dissertation, abstract and publications meet the requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

The presented dissertation is a completed scientific study. which gives me reason to give a **positive assessment.**

I would like to propose to the Honorable Scientific Jury to award **Lilia Nedkova Nedeva** the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences; Professional Field 3.7 Administration and Management.

1.01. 2026

Reviewer:

(signature)

Prof. Dr. Nelly Bencheva