

REVIEW

By Prof. Dr. Eng. **Dimitar Hristov Tenchev**, University of Chemical Technology and Metallurgy - Sofia, 3.8 Economics and Management, appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury by order No. 3-PK-123./20.02.2024 of the Rector of NBU - Prof. Plamen Doynev, Ph.D, for the defence of the doctoral dissertation by **Elena Todorova Hinova-McNamee**, a self-study doctoral student in the doctoral program "Business Administration" – NBU, with dissertation topic "*Thriving Leadership - Concept, Factors and Coaching for Leaders and Teams Development*", for obtaining a Doctor's degree in the professional field: 3.7 *Administration and Management*, scientific specialty "Social Management" (Business Administration).

1. Scientific and scientific-applied significance of the research problem.

The presented dissertation possesses high relevance, adequately justified in the introduction. It clearly outlines the key role of managers in managing organisations and the people within them. The diversity of the approaches to "managing," motivating, inspiring, etc., the employees is great but their application in everyday work often proves to be a high barrier for the leaders who have to change not only their management and communication styles but also overcome their ego and provide a personal example for emulation. The author has argued in a full and relevant way that external assistance in the form of leadership coaching is necessary for such transformation.

2. Clearly formulated aim and objectives of the dissertation.

The main practical question "How does intrapersonal transformation occur?" and whether in this context, coaching of leaders will accelerate leadership, team and organisational thriving is the keynote of the dissertation. The positive response is fully supported by adequate reasoning and relevant evidence, as well as by the appropriately formulated object, subject, aim, 5 objectives, research thesis and three working hypotheses. At first glance, they seem to create a restrictive framework for the free interpretation of existing knowledge and practice in the field of coaching, including leadership, but the author's deep understanding of the issue and her rich practical experience allow her to unfold her research talent and outline an almost perfect new picture of the future of this approach.

I gained a clear impression that the dissertation has come as a result of the serious scientific interest of Elena Hinova-McNamee and that the relevantly focused literary

and theoretical studies, as well as the toolkit created for the purpose of the study, its results and the drawn conclusions are entirely her contribution, of course, with some intervention from her academic supervisor.

3. Level of understanding of the problem and relevance of the used literature.

The paper contains 64 figures, 23 tables, 3 Appendices and 89 correctly cited literary sources.

Elena McNamee demonstrates an exceptionally deep understanding of the issues related to thriving leadership and the role of coaching for the development of team leaders.

As evidence of this claim, I allow myself to mention that the author makes a well-argued distinction between the concepts of mentor (mentoring) and coach (coaching). Actually, the two concepts are often understood as synonyms, even in consulting circles, which is incorrect. In addition, the author very skillfully comments on the entire issue through the prism of leadership, thereby avoiding the "trap" of associating the leader with the manager (team leader), even though in practice these two are freely interchanged in management concepts.

Chapter One is dedicated to the chronological and conceptual systematisation of leadership. Different directions in the context of leadership are correctly demonstrated through well-argued reasons and references to literary sources. The personal critical thinking and opinion of the author are emphasized throughout the dissertation.

I dare say that the function of thriving leadership is clearly and correctly derived, thus the symbiosis between intrapersonal transformation and leader development and interpersonal transformation and development of leadership teams.

I was particularly impressed by the author's exploration of the relationship between thriving leadership and the theories of Psychological Well-being and Subjective Well-being. The conclusions from this interrelationship are successfully integrated with the guidelines for improving the adequacy of thriving leadership.

I would like to express my satisfaction with the wide range of world researchers referenced by Elena McNamee in her reasoning. Her comments on the results of their studies and research are relevantly incorporated in the scientific work.

I will note that in 1.3 Charismatic Leadership, the author refers to one researcher - Yukl. In 1.4 Leadership and Psychological Well-being....., the comments **mainly**

revolve around the collective work of Hannah, Perez, Lester, and Quick (2020). The same applies to 1.5, where she comments on Alvesson and Einola (2019). The relevant comments in these points are evidence of a very good understanding of the issues but, in my opinion, they are in a way "one-dimensional." Presumably, other renowned authors have also contributed to the discussed topics. It might be appropriate for the author to explain why she has chosen these specific publications and mention some other authors who have addressed these issues.

She also pays adequate attention to "exotic" forms of leadership and comments on new paradigms, biological leadership, neuroleadership, limbic leadership, etc.

Leadership and coaching have been skillfully interpreted in the context of modernity – remote teams and their virtual management and support for exceptional performance.

The essence of Thriving Leadership is reached most logically. I believe that its working definition on page 58 is a manifesto that, although synthesised, presents the current challenges and the need to understand its important role in today's highly competitive market environment.

I allow myself to express satisfaction with the relevant incorporation of the emotional aspect of leadership (the personal fulfilment with the achieved intrapersonal transformation) with the team spirit and the thriving team with its results. In this sense, the holistic nature of thriving leadership is adequately and comprehensively defined.

With due respect, I'd like to emphasize the rational consolidation of the many aspects of thriving leadership into one framework called the **Core Model for Individual and Team Coaching** (CORE Model ©), which is the result of the author's extensive literature review and practical experience in coaching.

I dare to pose a challenging question to the author. The conclusions regarding flow experiences, optimal experience, optimal performance, etc., are valid not only for leaders but also for ordinary people. Is it possible for an ordinary person, by mastering and managing oneself in such a context, to become a leader and, even more so, a thriving leader?

The systematised conclusions at the end of Chapter One emphasise the main concepts later applied in the development of the subsequent tools and their application in the context of the author's scientific research.

Chapter Two is dedicated to Coaching as a modern approach to the personal growth of individuals and leaders, particularly, in the context of the dissertation, of leaders and their transformation into thriving ones.

In my opinion, the evolutionary review of the development of coaching and its meaning is entirely relevant and allows the conclusion that the author, relying on the most modern concepts of coaching but also drawing from the philosophy of ancient thinkers, has succeeded in providing fully relevant argumentation of its role in the process of achieving thriving leadership.

Well, I have one more provocative question: If the leader is not empowered (not a manager), what influence could they have on the team? In such cases, coaching likely leads to personal improvement, but what comes of that?

The process of coaching leaders (managers) and its problematic aspects are adequately presented. The author has conducted a suitable analysis regarding the focus and duration of coaching sessions and evaluated their effectiveness for clients. I shall agree with the difficulty of making a qualitative assessment of the results since satisfaction or dissatisfaction is primarily a result of emotional states and is difficult to describe with numerical (quantitative) values.

In the following pages, the author adequately argues the formulated hypotheses and thoroughly comments on them, based on the works and studies of globally recognised researchers. In this sense, the formulated research model becomes a fully relevant practical tool.

Furthermore, the semantic analysis of the discussed key terms once again suggests the glaring need for a holistic understanding of the essence of a thriving leader, characterised by passion, commitment, wholeheartedness, etc.

I have a special interest in the discussion about the thriving leader factors – meaningful purpose, wholeheartedness and brain dominance. **How could the observations, referring to global studies, be interpreted when it comes to Bulgarian organisations and leaders, taking into account the peculiarities of Bulgarian national psychology?** There is a slight hint of the answer on page 245, point 5 of the third chapter – Applying the approach in Bulgarian Conditions....

The presented arguments about the strong symbiosis between **the purpose and values of the leaders and teams and those of the organization, within the context of thriving leadership, are entirely appropriate and provide a further**

understanding of the guidelines within which both coaching processes and organisational culture develop successfully in today's world.

Next, the author presents her interpretation, analysis and evaluation of some leading experts' research in the light of Energy Coaching and Thriving Leadership Coaching. The reasonable comments and specific recommendations concerning the results published by the researchers are another proof of the author's deep understanding of the subject and justify the adequacy of the third chapter model. She also examines thoroughly her hypotheses evaluating them appropriately and in point of their suitability.

I would like to express my great satisfaction with the analyses and comments on Anderson and Anderson's Coaching Model, presented on page 144, which give answers to some of my concerns stemming from my unsuccessful coaching experience. Additionally, these comments largely address the previously raised question about the specifics of Bulgarian national psychology.

The conclusions at the end of this chapter highlight some fundamental accents that lay the foundation of the proper design and execution of the research.

Chapter 3 is mostly dedicated to the conducted research based on the applied CORE model in the context of Thriving Executive Leadership Coaching.

The author gives a careful rationale about why a case study is used as an approach in this work and in the thesis and hypotheses she outlines the research aspects focused on the Energy Leadership indicator and Brain Dominance. She also makes appropriate comments in terms of practicality, discussing the reliability of the results and the degree of applicability in case studies.

She attaches significant importance to the Interview tool, describing thoroughly its preparation and conduct, as well as those essential aspects that bring the result as close as possible to the interviewer's expectations.

The developed and presented by the author *Thrive Matrix* is yet another proof of the relevant integration of the selected indicators in achieving the aim of this scientific paper.

The author presents her work on both case studies/objects of research/ accurately and consistently, adding correct commentaries on the steps, results and difficulties and the way of mastering them to gain full objectification of the process and results.

Sharing of experience and results from the conducted team coaching in case A is surely an additional strength of the dissertation.

The comparative analysis between the two cases highlights the specificity of the challenges in different companies and is a good benchmark for other researchers or coaches aiming to implement this or similar models.

4. Correct citation of a representative number of authors.

The discussed works and their authors, I dare say, have been correctly cited.

5. Well-justified and developed theoretical research model.

The author has developed and adequately justified the use of the presented essential CORE model.

6. Correspondence between the chosen methodology and research methods and the set aims and objectives of the dissertation.

Full correlation, synchrony, and harmony between the chosen methodology and methods clearly defining the study limitations in the introductory part.

7. Personal contribution in collecting and analysing empirical data.

I venture to say I haven't noticed any plagiarism elements and that the entire process of the research design and data collection and interpretation are the author's work.

Description of contributions:

1. A brief description of the nature of the material on which the dissertation contributions are based and assessment of its credibility.

As mentioned above, I have no doubt that this scientific work is the personal work of Elena Hinova-McNamee, and in this sense, the claimed scientific and practical-applied contributions are fully relevant.

2. Description and classification of the candidate's contributions.

McNamee defines five scientific contributions that enrich scientific knowledge with new aspects of the researched topic and provide new conceptual elements for understanding it.

Regarding the five practical-applied contributions, I would allow myself to disagree with this categorisation and define them as scientific-practical, as they are specifically

in the context of analysing and synthesising the existing scientific knowledge in the field, that concerns the criterion of Enriching existing scientific knowledge and its practical application.

3. Assessment of the degree of the author's participation in the contributions. As noted previously, I confirm my impression that the dissertation is entirely the result of the author's participation.

4. Evaluation of the correspondence of the abstract with the main provisions and contributions of the dissertation.

The abstract is presented in the required format of the New Bulgarian University and meets the criteria for a synthesised presentation of the author's rich theoretical research and practical- applied work.

Impact of the dissertation on the external environment.

1. Assessment of the publications related to the dissertation – number and journals, where they have been published.

Elena Hinova-McNamee presents four independent publications, entirely within the context of the dissertation, all published in reputable scientific journals and forums.

1) Hinova-McNamee, E. (2022). *Thriving Leadership - Reality or Utopia?* Economic Thought Journal, 67(4), 473-502 (in Bulgarian)

2) Hinova-McNamee, E. (2023). *Thriving Young Leaders in the New Turbulent Environment*. Pages 145-160. Academic Values and Digital Transformations. Purpose, Standards and Leaders in Education. NBU Sofia. ISBN 978-619-233-268-6.

3) Hinova-McNamee, E. (2023). *Thriving Leaders and Teams: The Case of Intra and Interpersonal Transformation in Business*. Pages 470-510. Sociocultural Codes of Contemporary Development. Collection of Scientific Reports VI International Scientific-Practical Competition. ASKONI-IZDAT Sofia. ISBN 978-954-383-148-7.

4) Hinova-McNamee, E. (2023). *Why Real Team Coaching Can Positively Impact Business Results Using the Power of Collaboration*. Economic Thought Journal, 68(5), 521-553.

2. Other authors' quotes or reviews in the scholarly press, etc.

No quotes of the author's scientific work are provided.

Personal qualities of the author (if known to the reviewer).

I do not know the author personally and cannot share any impressions.

Opinions, recommendations and notes.

Most of the notes and issues that provoked me are mentioned in the review, and I do not think it is appropriate to repeat them here.

I would like to pose an additional question:

Could Artificial Intelligence, which self-learns from the vast database of cases and information on the World Wide Web, replace a coach in the coaching process?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to give my **absolutely positive assessment** of the dissertation presented by **Elena Todorova Hinova-McNamee**. The achieved results, the conclusions and generalisations, as well as the contributions are completely adequate. The dissertation meets the requirements of The Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Competitions for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and the Holding of Academic Positions at New Bulgarian University and covers the scientometric indicators for obtaining **doctor's degree**.

I suggest that the esteemed Scientific Jury **vote positively** and **award Elena Todorova Hinova-McNamee** a doctor's degree in the field of "3.7. Administration and Management", scientific specialty "Social Management" (Business Administration).

Date: April, 2024

Signature: