

Toruń, 2 July 2026

**Review of the doctoral dissertation by Inna Balahurovska, MA
entitled “*Development of methodological bases for evaluating the effectiveness of leadership style*”, written under the supervision of Dr hab. Aleksandra Kuzior, Professor at the Silesian University, and Prof. Dr Hanna Shvindina**

1. Formal information

I was entrusted with the review of the doctoral dissertation by Inna Balahurovska, MSc, with a resolution of the Discipline Council for Management and Quality Sciences at the Silesian University of Technology dated 27 May 2026, of which I was informed by letter No. ROZ-RD:512.3.2026.1, from the Chair of the Council, Dr Lilla Knop, Prof. SUT, dated 28 May 2026.

The basis for the assessment of the dissertation is Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018 the Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742, [should be: Journal of Laws 2024, item 1571]), which stipulates that *1. The doctoral dissertation demonstrates the candidate’s general theoretical knowledge in a discipline or disciplines and their ability to conduct independent scientific or artistic work. 2. The subject of the doctoral dissertation is an original solution to a scientific problem, an original solution concerning the application of the results of the candidate’s own scientific research in the economic or social sphere, or an original artistic achievement.*

The typescript comprises 268 pages, including: a 7-page introduction, four chapters of 60, 43, 53 and 30 pages respectively, a 5-page conclusion, lists of references, tables, figures and attachments.

The structure of the dissertation is sound and includes a review of the state of the art in the subject area, the methodology of the empirical research conducted, a presentation of the research findings and a summary thereof. The dissertation is based on a carefully selected, very extensive body of literature on the subject (405 items), published over many decades (the oldest cited work was published in 1938, the most recent in 2025), reflecting the current state of knowledge in the subject of the dissertation and meeting the standards for the selection and use of sources. From an editorial point of view, the work is correctly prepared.

My overall assessment of this dissertation is positive. Later in this review, when discussing specific aspects of the work, I shall refer to the statutory criteria, namely the scientific problem addressed in the dissertation, the Candidate’s demonstrated theoretical knowledge, and her ability to conduct independent academic research. Bearing in mind the role of a review as feedback supporting further academic development, I shall place particular emphasis on comments of a critical or debatable nature.

2. Assessment of the research problem addressed

The research problem addressed in the dissertation and its objectives have been outlined in very broad and ambitious terms. The main objective of the dissertation is to develop a tool enabling the assessment of leadership styles, which in turn is intended to increase management effectiveness and improve an organisation's operational performance (p. 6). The PhD candidate sets herself the aim of *"...expanding knowledge in the field of leadership theory, analysing its impact on organisational processes, and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of various leadership styles. The primary aim of the study is to provide organisations with tools enabling an informed choice, development and planning of leadership strategies, thereby increasing leadership effectiveness and overall organisational performance, as informed by the study's results"* (pp. 6–7). These aims have been operationalised in the form of a series of specific objectives and tasks, which I shall not list here.

Both the objectives and tasks formulated in the study suggest a vast amount of work and the resolution of fundamental problems in management and quality sciences (e.g. *a comprehensive assessment of the influence of leadership style on organisational outcomes, employee psychological state, motivation, emotional perception of managerial practices, and financial stability*, p. 9). Knowledge regarding leadership is very extensive; this also translates into a large number of concepts relating to it. The Author's intentions, as described in the Introduction, suggest an attempt to find a universal framework for characterising and evaluating leadership styles and their effectiveness. In my view, such a task exceeds the scope of a doctoral dissertation undertaken by a single person. However, the question also arises as to whether such an endeavour is necessary at all. Neither the Introduction nor the subsequent sections of the work provide any justification for the need to undertake such an endeavour. The lack of justification, based on the current state of knowledge, also applies to other objectives defined in the dissertation. Is it really necessary *"To develop a scientific and methodological approach to qualitative research of the relationship between leadership style and employee performance"*? The methodology of qualitative research, in relation to this and other issues, appears to be sufficiently well-developed. The lack of a justification for the proposed research, grounded in the relevant literature, reinforces the impression – to put it colloquially – of *"preaching to the converted"*, that is, seeking answers to questions that have already been answered. For example, the author describes the relationship between leadership style and employee performance as the 'missing link' (in section 1.3) and identifies its mediators, including motivation, self-esteem and individual psychological characteristics (incidentally, it seems she is conflating the concepts of mediator and moderator: *"The lack of a clear relationship is often explained by the influence of mediating factors – a «link» that moderates or strengthens this relationship"*, p. 58). These issues have long been the subject of analysis.

The research questions and hypotheses addressed or tested by this dissertation are defined in Chapter 3. As with the objectives of the dissertation, these have not been unequivocally supported by the relevant literature, particularly that highlighting existing research gaps. The relationship between the research questions and hypotheses and the preceding theoretical content, presented in Chapters 1 and 2, is not clearly indicated. Furthermore, there is inconsistency in the use of terminology. For example, it appears (though one has to infer this, which should not be the case in

an academic paper) that an equivalence is drawn between “*industry*” (p. 113) and “*field of activity*” (RQ1, p. 117). RQ3 (*How does leadership style affect the ratio of tangible and intangible rewards?*) refers to the theories of motivation discussed in Chapter 1, but it is not clear why leadership style would influence the tangible and intangible elements within the incentive system. RQ4 introduces the context of Ukraine, which was not addressed in earlier discussions (and this context is certainly significant, and may also allow us to broaden our understanding of leadership). RQ6 concerns talent development (i.e. it relates to talent management), while RQ7 concerns team effectiveness; neither of these issues was described in the theoretical section of the study. The formulation of the hypotheses is also not without its shortcomings. For example, H2: “*Each leadership style is characterised by a unique configuration of parameters that distinguishes it from other styles*” is a statement that is difficult to refute, yet it is not a hypothesis. H3: “*Leadership style significantly impacts the development of team talents , and overall performance*” has been formulated in a very general manner, making unambiguous verification difficult.

The author rightly notes that leadership is one of the key topics addressed in management studies (p. 12). It certainly continues to present interesting issues and abounds in research gaps. It would be to the advantage of the work to “narrow down” the scope of the research, identify a research gap on a smaller scale, and address it in the author’s own study.

Despite the comments outlined in this section of the review, I consider that the statutory requirement stating that *the subject of a doctoral dissertation is an original solution to a scientific problem* has been met in this case.

3. The candidate’s theoretical knowledge and ability to conduct independent research

In undertaking the challenge of systematising knowledge on leadership, the author conducted a systematic literature review and a bibliometric analysis. The results of these are presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 1, in turn, presents a narrative review. The editorial decision to present the literature reviews in this order is not a good solution. Given the vast scope of this work, it would have been easier – and would have led to more reliable results – if the content of the current Chapter 1 had been derived from the systematic review and bibliometric analysis. In the current version of Chapter 1, the method used to select the content presented is unclear; for example, Table 2 presents the evolution of leadership concepts, yet it is unclear how the definitions included here were selected; a systematic review or bibliometric analysis could have served as the basis for this selection. In turn, sub-section 1.1.2. presents contemporary approaches to leadership, dating them from 2010 – what determined this cut-off point? If it had resulted from a bibliometric analysis or a systematic literature review, it would have been more credible. Other examples of this problem: on what basis is the following statement made: “*In 2010–2025, leadership began to be viewed as a dynamic process beyond the traditional idea of it as a purely managerial function*” (p. 32)? Furthermore, with regard to the evolution of leadership styles (from static to dynamic) and its individual phases (starting from p. 36), the question arises as to how they were identified and where their names came from (e.g. ‘*flexible styles*’). On p. 40: “*Within the criterion of «impact on the organisation and team», five types of leadership have been identified: constructive, destructive, critical, instrumental, and positive*’ – it is unclear how these types were identified; the proposed types raise doubts in any case

(e.g. “According to the «structure of interaction» criterion, leadership is categorised as collaborative, hierarchical,...” – does a hierarchical structure preclude collaboration?). A proper justification for these and other claims would be the results of a bibliometric analysis or a systematic review of the literature.

With regard to the use of the relevant literature, it should be noted that the content described is not always accompanied by footnotes. For example, on pp. 26–28, the text commenting on the table should include references to the literature; on p. 40, the statement “*Scientists have proposed different criteria for classifying leadership styles – by the level of centralisation of power, by the leader’s orientation, by flexibility in decision-making, by the situational approach, by the influence on subordinates, by the nature of interaction with the team, by the influence on the emotional state of the team*” should be accompanied by footnotes referring to those scientists. The work also employs a rather unusual approach, namely the simultaneous use of two different styles of footnotes.

The vast body of knowledge on leadership means that the author does not always manage to navigate its complexities. This applies, for example, to the distinction between the concepts of a manager and a leader. The author describes the complex relationship between these concepts (illustrated in Figure 1), but does not define her position on the matter, nor does she use the concepts clearly in her subsequent discussions. For example, on p. 117, she writes: “... *the research task is to move beyond abstract typologies of leadership styles and to capture real managerial practices embedded in concrete organisational contexts...*”, i.e. an equivalence is drawn between what leaders do and managerial practices.

The dissertation covers too many issues, not all of which are relevant to its objective; for example, in the context of leadership assessment, it discusses the 360-degree method or Belbin’s team roles model, whose connection to leadership assessment seems questionable, and is in any case unclear. It appears that an equivalence is drawn between the effectiveness of a leader and the effectiveness of a leadership style, yet these are not the same thing. For example, the use of personality tests, as indicated on p. 56, seems more appropriate for assessing a specific leader as a person rather than a leadership style (moreover, the text lacks relevant footnotes).

The analyses (systematic literature review and bibliometric analyses) presented in Chapter 2 indicate that they, too, covered too broad a thematic scope. If the aim of the study concerns the assessment of leadership styles, was it appropriate to use the keywords: *leadership AND performance AND assessment*? The distinction between leadership and leadership style is blurred here, and these concepts are not synonymous. Doubts regarding the selection of keywords—and, consequently, the publications included in the analysis—are compounded by the list presented in Table 14 (e.g. Haas, T., & Sander, H. (2020). Decarbonising Transport in the European Union: Emission Performance Standards and the Perspectives for a European Green Deal. *Sustainability*, 12(20) does not appear to concern leadership). Some of the publications, whilst relating to leadership to some extent, do not concern leadership style (e.g. Colquitt, J. A. (2001). On the dimensionality of organisational justice: A construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 386–400; Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological Safety and Learning Behaviour in Work Teams. *Administrative*

Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350; Hu, Q., Bai, Y., Mo, Y., Ma, R., Ding, L., Zhou, M., Zhang, Y., & Ma, F. (2025). The application of an escape room teaching method in the training of new ICU nurses: A quasi-experimental study. *BMC Medical Education*, 25(1)).

To achieve the aim of this study, both qualitative and quantitative research was conducted. The use of diverse research methods is a strength of this study.

Semi-structured individual interviews (a qualitative approach) were conducted with 22 individuals in managerial roles – thus, an unstated assumption was made that holding these positions implies being leaders. The selection of interviewees was well justified, and the method of data collection and analysis was also well described. However, the latter lacked a more precise definition of the coding procedure. The information on p. 120 indicates that mixed, deductive-inductive coding was used. If so, the description should be supplemented with a codebook. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations of the study and its relationship to the current state of knowledge. This is important, given the very broad thematic scope of the interviews. As in the theoretical section, the topics covered in the interviews also appear to be overly broad. I believe this is the reason for the relatively superficial nature of the questions and answers. For example, interviewees were asked to describe their leadership style, and most described it as democratic (although the democratic–autocratic scale is generally used in relation to management style); whether it can actually be described in this way should be determined by answers to more detailed questions concerning the leadership practices employed.

The results of the qualitative research were used to answer the research questions and to verify the hypotheses. I am not in favour of verifying hypotheses based on qualitative data. Moreover, given that the nature of the interviews—due to their broad thematic scope—was not in-depth, verifying the hypotheses seems questionable. In any case, the author's own words serve to confirm this assessment: *"Hypothesis 3 is supported, but the support is partial and nuance"* – meaning that, in reality, the hypothesis was not verified.

The quantitative study was designed on the basis of the results of the qualitative study. According to the author, *"... fifteen leadership components were identified through thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with managers (see Table 19). These components represent stable, conceptually distinct dimensions of leadership behaviour observed in managerial practice"*; however, neither the stability nor the distinctiveness of the identified dimensions is substantiated by the qualitative study conducted. A proprietary questionnaire was used in the quantitative study, but the validation procedure was not presented. *"Each leadership component was represented by one to three survey items reflecting its key behavioural manifestations"* – how were these defined? Was it really necessary to develop a proprietary tool and use it in the study despite the lack of validation? Knowledge on leadership is extensive, and the literature abounds with reliable measures of leadership components.

It was a good approach to collect responses from both leaders and employees, although the term “360-degree method” was incorrectly applied in this context.

A range of statistical methods was applied in the analysis of the data collected, demonstrating the author’s expertise. It is a pity that the lack of a clear theoretical framework for the study renders the results less reliable. Among these results, the identification of hybrid leadership styles is particularly interesting (p. 181). The author has identified four style configurations: innovative-decision-making, strategic-crisis, humanistic-visionary and communicative-inspirational.

The dissertation lacks a scholarly discussion of the findings of the entire research process. Elements of such a discussion appear only in the analysis of certain findings from the qualitative research. The findings obtained are merely summarised, and – partly as a result of the absence of scholarly discussion – conclusions that are too far-reaching are drawn. For example, with regard to practical implications, the following statements appear: *“the tool can serve as the basis for a scientifically informed selection of managers and succession planning, ensuring consistency between individual leadership styles and the organisation’s strategic goals”* or *“An essential consequence of using the tool is increased organisational resilience...”* – such conclusions are not supported by the results of the research conducted.

The doctoral dissertation is written in rather convoluted language, which often appears to be a ‘carbon copy’ of another language, probably Ukrainian. I would also like to draw attention to the lack of inclusivity in the language; the paper refers to leaders using the masculine gender (*he, his, him*), which is not appropriate. In English, a good and simple solution is to use the plural form, which does not indicate gender.

4. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the comments made in this review, I conclude that the dissertation by Inna Balahurovska, MA, meets the requirements for a doctoral dissertation as specified in Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018 The Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742), i.e. this dissertation presents an original solution to a scientific problem, demonstrating the candidate’s theoretical knowledge and her ability to conduct independent scientific research. In view of the above, I hereby propose that Inna Balahurovska, MA, be admitted to the defence.

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