

# OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivanka Georgieva Mihaylova

on dissertation entitled “Development of a Model for Evaluation of the Results from Training”

for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”  
in professional field 3.7. Administration and Management  
to full-time doctoral student Ivona Hristova Litsova

**Grounds for the opinion:** Order RD № 38 –52/26.01.2024, issued by the Rector of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

## 1. Brief presentation of the candidate

Ivona Hristova Litsova is a graduate of the High School for Foreign Languages “Exarch Joseph I” in Lovech. She has a bachelor’s degree (2016) and a master’s degree (master’s program “Business Administration – Human Resources Development”, 2018) majoring in “Business Administration” at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”. Her professional background is in the field of human resources management, and for the past eight years she has held various positions related to recruitment and selection of staff and training and development of employees. She speaks English and German.

## 2. General description of the dissertation paper

The dissertation paper consists of an introduction, two chapters, a conclusion, a list of the references and 7 appendices in a total volume of 166 pages and 136 pages without the appendices and the references. There are 50 figures included in the text, a significant number of which are actually tables. The list of the references contains 176 information sources, of which 5 are in Bulgarian and 171 in English.

In the introduction, the *relevance of the issues* related to the development of internal-organizational training of employees and the need for its evaluation is justified. The *reasons for the choice* of the topic are also substantiated by the author’s personal professional experience in the field of employee training and development. The *aim of this dissertation* is to propose and test a new model for evaluating training courses based on a comparative analysis of existing models and methods for evaluating training results. The aim is specified in *four research tasks*. The *subject* and *object of the study*, the *quantitative* and *qualitative methods* used are clearly defined. The *thesis* defended is that the results of employee training can be measurable for businesses through variables related to *Learning, Technology* and *Behaviour*. In this regard, the doctoral candidate tests *three hypotheses*. *Two limitations* of the study are defined.

## 3. Content evaluation of the dissertation paper

The *first chapter* provides an overview of the theories of the employee learning and development process with an emphasis focus on evaluation as an element of this process. Training evaluation models are presented and a comparative analysis of eight models is made, focusing on their application and elements. The theoretical framework of the dissertation paper is based on Kirkpatrick’s model (1994) and Kirkpatrick’s updated and adapted new model (2019). Based on the literature review, a model for evaluating training and learning outcomes

is proposed, which aims to demonstrate the influence of technology, learning and behaviour on performance (learning outcomes).

The *second chapter* presents the methodology and the empirical study. The research data were collected in two stages. During the first stage, a *quantitative survey* was conducted with three questionnaires: the first was aimed at training evaluators of outside the organisation, the second – at employees within the organisation (managers, leaders, experts, specialists in the Human Resources field) and the third – at employees within the organisation in expert and managerial positions. The second stage involves conducting *qualitative research* through 20 semi-structured interviews with managers and HR specialists and 6 meetings with representatives of training organisations. Based on the data obtained, an analysis was conducted to test the proposed model for evaluating training outcomes.

The *conclusion* contains a summary of the research conducted. Some research perspectives in the topic of the dissertation paper are outlined.

#### **4. Evaluation of the research and applied scientific contributions**

The author has comprehensively pointed out the contributory nature of the dissertation paper in terms of the comparative analysis of the elements, characteristics, and application of corporate training evaluation models; conducting her own research on training evaluation and applicability of the proposed model; testing a new model for training evaluation in organisations; and identifying key elements of the proposed training evaluation model that influence the final results. I accept the above contributions.

#### **5. Evaluation of the publications on the dissertation paper**

The author has submitted 4 publications on the topic of her dissertation, one of which is co-authored. Three publications are in Bulgarian and one in English. The publications present significant results of the dissertation work and are in appropriate journals. They meet the requirements for successful completion of the procedure.

#### **6. Evaluation of the abstract**

The abstract consists of 57 pages. It correctly reflects the structure and content of the dissertation paper, the research strategy, and its implementation.

#### **7. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I have a few remarks that are more like recommendations for the future work of the doctoral candidate. They are, as follows:

1) The paper would benefit from following the classical structure of a dissertation: three chapters dividing the research part from the practical-applied part in a separate structural unit.

2) As a whole, the dissertation is written in clear and understandable language. At the same time, there is room for improvement in terms of the language.

3) Some improvements could be made in the direction of strengthening the analytical-critical aspect of the text in the second chapter. The author could problematize more thoroughly and see beyond the nominally obtained results. She could also relate the results obtained from the model to the literature review to a greater extent.

4) My recommendation to the doctoral candidate is to publish more papers that present other significant results that she has reached on the basis of the empirical data collected and

that have not yet found publicity. Preferably, she should aim to publish in refereed and indexed journals in world-renowned databases, which would help to increase the visibility of the scientific results.

## **8. Conclusion**

The presented dissertation paper has the required novelty, scientific and practical significance. It is a result of serious work in the field of evaluation of learning results in organisations. An in-depth review of the contemporary literature on the chosen problem area is made. Three quantitative and one qualitative study were conducted, the data obtained were processed, and the results were summarized. Considering the importance of the feedback from the company's employee training, the research problem is undoubtedly relevant. The doctoral candidate shows a good knowledge of the theoretical and practical issues and demonstrates a correctness in referencing the information sources. The obtained conclusions contribute to the understanding of the significance of the researched problem area. The contributions made are significant and are a personal achievement of the author. The dissertation paper is proof that the author has achieved the main goal of the doctoral studies, namely to broaden her scientific horizons, to increase her professional training, to acquire skills for independent research work.

On the basis of the above arguments and regardless of the remarks and recommendations made, I highly appreciate the work done by the doctoral candidate. I recommend the esteemed Scientific Jury to award educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.7. Administration and Management to Ivona Hristova Litsova for the dissertation paper entitled "Development of a Model for Evaluation of the Results from Training".

March 25, 2024

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivanka Mihaylova)