

REVIEW

by **Prof. Dr. Anastasia Milanova Bankova,**

member of a Scientific jury for defense of dissertation (Order of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” RD № 38-52/ 26.01.2024)

on the topic: **“Development of a Model for Evaluation of the Results of Teaching (Qualification/ Training) and Learning”**

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

in scientific field 3.7. Administration and management

to **Ivona Hristova Litzova**, PhD student at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”

(the defense will take place on 26 -th of April 2024)

I. General assessment of the candidate.

Ivona Litsova has a degree in Business Administration – Bachelor's and Master's degree at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". During her studies, she showed excellent results. Since graduation, she has worked on the selection, training and development of human resources in a large company. Ivona Litsova has also studied in the doctoral program of the same faculty, which she has successfully completed.

II. Evaluation of the dissertation.

a. Technical characteristics of the dissertation

The presented dissertation on **“Development of a Model for Evaluation of the Results of Teaching (Qualification/ Training) and Learning”** has 166

pages – about 215 standard typewritten pages, 136 pages of basic text, 15 pages of annexes (7 issues) and 15 pages of bibliography.

Structurally, the work contains an introduction (it outlines the importance of the topic, the purpose and goals of the study, the research tasks), two chapters, the first dedicated to the review of the theories that underlie the study, developed by the author model for the aspects of evaluation of planned trainings in organizations. The second chapter is devoted to an examination of the model developed by the author for the aspects of assessing the success of training projects. Relevant analyses and conclusions have been done.

The work is illustrated by 50 figures and tables. The list of information sources contains 5 titles – in Bulgarian (one of which translated from English), 177 – in Latin, a total of 182 titles.

Publications on the dissertation have been made.

The summary in a volume of 57 pages correctly reflects the content of the work, includes an assessment of the contributions of the work by its author, a list of the author's publications on the topic.

Based on the documents submitted it is obviously that Ivona Litzova has fulfilled the requirements of the doctoral program and the state requirements for the doctor's degree (LDASRB (Low on the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic Bulgaria) for the scientific field "Social, Economic and Legal Sciences", professional direction 3.7. "Administration and Management").

The technical characteristics of the dissertation make it possible to conclude that the work meets the formal requirements for such work.

Regarding the content of the dissertation, the following assessment can be given:

b. Actuality of the topic.

Assessing the results of trainings is important for the success of any organization, but difficult to do and it's accompanied by many mistakes and weaknesses, as the PhD student points out.

The PhD student has chosen this topic to update the aspects in which the assessment is made in the conditions of the use of information technologies in the preparation, conduction, application and maintenance the results of trainings.

c. Clarity of the goals.

The PhD student has chosen this topic to update the aspects in which the assessment is made in the conditions of the use of information technologies in the preparation, conduction, application and maintenance the results of trainings, conducted in medium-sized and large companies from different sectors in Bulgaria.

The author stated the purpose of the study: "*... on the basis of comparative characteristics between existing models and methods for evaluation of training projects, to propose and test a new model for evaluation of training courses...*" (summary, p. 6). In fact, from what has been presented in the work, it is clear, that this model contains the main aspects in which the assessment should be made and they (the aspects) are subject to research.

After all, from what the author said, it is clear that she is considering:

- planned training of employees of organizations,
- in courses of training offering firms (outside the organization in which the trainees work),
- aimed at achieving knowledge, skills and appropriate behavior,
- useful for the trainee, the organization in which he works and society.

Further, the doctoral student correctly drew 3 main hypotheses of the study, as well as set out the main research tasks.

In fact, she wants:

- to check in which aspects it is reasonable to evaluate training projects,
- and
- by studying theory and experience in the world and Bulgaria,
 - to drive an enriched model for aspects of assessment in the conditions of active use of the opportunities provided by information technologies, aiming, in turn, to improve and make more effective all phases of work on such a project – from the preparation, definition of training objectives, study of the training needs, development of a curriculum, conducting training, evaluation of results, monitoring the application of results in practice.

The hypotheses are related to the validation of the aspects included in the author's model. Based on all this, the author has also brought out the research tasks.

d. Evaluation of the structure of the dissertation.

The dissertation has a clear, traditional structure for such a work, which has already been described above.

e. Content description of the dissertation.

Chapter one of the dissertation is an overview of the theoretical and empirical research published on the subject. Models known in the literature and practice for evaluation of the trainings are presented, their enrichment and development over the years are traced. Then, based on the analysis of modern trends, the PhD student offers a model in which the assessment related to the application of information technologies in all phases of the preparation, conduction, evaluation and monitoring of learning outcomes also takes place.

PhD student's interest in these current developments is fully justified, as the known research is still rare and not enough.

Chapter two is devoted to the study and evaluation of the model proposed by the author. The importance of the aspects in which training evaluations should be conducted is checked. The author developed 3 surveys (questionnaires). The first survey examines the opinion of trainers-evaluators from training companies and other evaluators - managers and experts in human resource management from companies using training services on the importance and use of these aspects. The second is filled in by managers and those who deal with human resources management in companies whose employees have undergone training, for their opinion in what relations the organization should evaluate trainings. The third inquiry is oriented towards managers of the trainees, who have to express their generalized opinion, on the results of training, how far the cost of training, in their opinion, was justified for the firm. All statements in the polls were rated on the five-point Likert scale.

Then about 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted to further clarify the attitude of the managers to the questions studied.

The data collected from the surveys (about 100 people per survey) were processed statistically using the SPSS package, the results obtained were analyzed in detail and conclusions were drawn. These are supplemented with the results of the semi-structured interviews. The study ends with a discussion on the summarized results and conclusions.

The research presented in this way is the essential part of the dissertation.

f. Evaluation of the scientific contributions of the dissertation.

I accept the contributions formulated by the author in the text of the dissertation and in the summary (p. 40) with some further concretizations, namely:

-an overview of models (and their development) for training evaluation has been prepared, the models have been compared;

- on the basis of this, an author's model of the aspects in which training evaluations should be made has been developed;

-a study was conducted to verify the model in medium sized and large Bulgarian companies from different industries;

-the hypotheses related to the characteristics of the author's model have been confirmed;

-conclusions are drawn to improve the practice.

g. Critical remarks and recommendations.

1. The dissertation suffers from insufficient precision of expression. In the future, the author should be more careful in this regard.

It is known that there are difficulties in accurately translating different management concepts, that different authors put different meaning into them. This even more requires careful attitude to their use.

I will give a few examples.

The title of the dissertation in Bulgarian contains "teaching (educating, qualifying) and learning" (learning outside of teaching is also assumed), the translation in the title of the summary in English is only "training", and in the text itself there are clarifications that we are talking about planned educational projects by specialized companies through courses (whatever that means). Either way, these are three quite large in scope and overlapping in significant parts, but not coincident, spheres of knowledge and activity.

I am not sure that all respondents have understood the questions of the questionnaires in a related way.

Another example of problematic expression. The author says (Dissertation, p.166):

'11. What training assessment methods do you use:

-Survey, questionnaire, individual or group interview.

-Training on-the-job.

-Job review, skill watching, observing behaviors, on-the-job training.

-Key indicators of business and human resources.

- Kirkpatrick's model."

What is a method of evaluating training? Is "on-the-job training" such a method? In this case, the latter is repeated twice in the listed options for answers. Are "key indicators" an evaluation method? Do respondents know who Kirkpatrick is?

2. Having learned that training evaluation is a profession (in general – it can), it remains a secret to me how managers and HR experts as such professionals (survey 1) differ from those completing the other two surveys in this work, how were they selected and addressed? If they are the same people, isn't it too much for them to participate in 3 surveys and possibly one interview? Perhaps there would have been some clarity if the necessary information about the participants in the study had been provided.

3. Assessing the impact (results) of an individual and specific training event over time is difficult and usually indirect, because it depends on the complex learning system of the organization and many other factors inside and outside it. In addition, the training itself (its preparation and implementation, which are the basis for indirect assessment) may be impeccable (perfect), but the expected positive results for the employee, the group and the organization (not to mention society) may for various reasons not appear, on the contrary – the results may be negative. At the same time, even rated as insufficiently good educational projects in their preparation and implementation, can lead to unexpected good results for people and organizations in different directions. That is why a systematic view is imperative.

4. The studied bibliography shows only four publications in Bulgarian by Bulgarian authors and none in Bulgarian or any other language by members of the training department. I would not even dwell on this note, despite the need to make it, if I were not convinced that a good knowledge of the works of the department's members would contribute useful ideas in the creation of the author's model and approach to the study.

III. Conclusion.

Regardless of the remarks made,

based on the quality of the essential part of the presented study, to which I give a positive assessment,

I find that the author **Ivona Hristova Litsova** has proven that she can recognize significant problems, conduct independent research, develop recommendations to practice,

that's why I recommend awarding to her the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor**.

Reviewer:.....

/Prof. Dr. Anastassia Bankova/

Date:

15-th of March 2024, Sofia