

OPINION

on

doctoral thesis for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR"

Author of the doctoral thesis: **ZORNITSA GEORGIEVA STEPHANOVA-IVANOVA**

Topic of the doctoral work: **"BENEFITS OF EXECUTIVE COACHING FOR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL SELF-REALIZATION"**

Member of the scientific jury: Prof. Ivan Yochev Boevsky PhD

Reason for presenting the opinion: participation in the composition of the scientific jury for the defense of a doctoral thesis, according to Order No. 16/07.03.2023 of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia.

1. General characteristics and relevance of the doctoral thesis

The doctoral work is spread over a total volume of 215 pages. It is structured atypically for a Bulgarian doctorate as follows: a short glossary, an introduction, an exposition in two chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography (a total of 315 sources, of which 12 are in Cyrillic and 303 in Latin), and two appendices. In addition, the doctoral thesis is supplemented with adequate, relevant and precisely selected visualization material (23 tables, 33 figures and 3 appendices), which provides a visual representation of complex and abstract concepts, processes and logical connections.

The topics of the adaptation of the individual, his communities, as well as the business to the extremely dynamic and turbulent environment, especially in the last ten years, are extremely problematic. One option for a more painful adaptation is executive coaching. In this regard, I believe that the current doctorate is undeniably up-to-date. In addition, the relevance is accurately justified by the candidate and is woven into the overall development and represents the connecting link of its individual parts.

2. Assessment of the degree of knowledge of the state of the problem and creative interpretation of the literary material

The in-depth knowledge of the theory and the significant immediate practical experience (clearly shown in the CV of the doctoral student with over 13,000 hours of coaching practice), the structure and content of the development, the clearly and precisely formulated goals, tasks, thesis and hypotheses, the correctly conducted analytical studies, verifying the research hypotheses and confirming the defended thesis, show very clearly and distinctly the

good multifaceted knowledge of the state of the problem and the possibilities of the doctoral student to both formulate and creatively interpret and defend scientific positions.

3. Correspondence of the chosen research methodology and the set goal and tasks of the dissertation with the contributions achieved

The topic of my doctoral thesis reviewed by me is multi-layered and requires an interdisciplinary and to a significant extent holistic approach. In this regard, for the purposes and tasks of the doctoral work, the candidate chooses the questionnaire (correspondence) research methodology through a seven-phase process of preparing a questionnaire containing a total of 59 questions. This research methodology (detailed and defended in the doctorate and the attached abstract) allows the doctoral student to verify his hypotheses and fulfill the set goals and tasks in his development. The methodological tools used, on the one hand, and especially the interpretation of the obtained results (also described in detail and adequately interpreted in the doctorate and the abstract attached to it) on the other, give me reason to assert that the conclusions and conclusions drawn on their basis (results and their interpretations) reflect the logical connection and conditioning of the studied phenomena, facts and problems related to the focus of the development. All this shows that the methodological toolkit is correctly selected and adequately applied.

4. Evaluation of the obtained results and contributions

The work reviewed by me contains scientific and scientific-applied results and proposals that I can define as an original contribution to both coaching and managerial science and practice. They are clearly and accurately summarized and systematized. Therefore, I consider that they represent a natural conclusion of the development I am evaluating.

Mrs. Stefanova-Georgieva presents in the dissertation (p. 187) and the author's abstract (p. 42) 5 scientific theoretical contributions and a descriptive contribution on the usefulness of using executive coaching at the level of a person, leader and organization. I highly value all the contributions presented and accept them, with the following comments:

- I believe that the work judged by me has more contributions that could be brought out;
- Contribution 1 and 2 I would combine into one contribution;
- Practical contributions could be clearly highlighted and defined.

5. Evaluation of the publications on the doctoral work

The list of publications related to the topic of the doctorate consists of 8 titles, of which 3 are in Bulgarian and 5 are in English. For all of them, the candidate is a self-author, which is currently not a common phenomenon and shows her competence. All these titles are not only

fully sufficient to cover the minimum scientometric indicators for obtaining the scientific degree "doctor", defined by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Regulations for the Implementation of the Law, but also greatly exceed them.

The above-mentioned facts and assessments convince me and give me reasons to conclude that Mrs. Zornitsa Georgieva Stefanova-Ivanova possesses the necessary abilities and skills to successfully defend her work for the scientific jury.

6. Criticisms, recommendations and questions

The doctoral student uses clear, understandable and precise scientific language, defines the concepts important to the work, structures it adequately, uses appropriate analytical tools and methodology. All this allows her to obtain significant scientific results, to answer the scientific research questions and to verify the scientific research hypotheses and thesis. In this regard, I consider that the mentioned characteristics are fully sufficient for the requirements of a doctoral program. Therefore, in my opinion, it is not necessary to make critical remarks and raise questions, although the scientific process is continuous and there are always elements that could be improved and further developed, as well as scientific research questions to be asked and answered. My argument for this is: I believe that the PhD phase may now be over and the next one should begin. In this sense, I would only allow myself to make the following statement:

Mixing different citation styles in the text and bibliography: In support of this finding, several citations: pp. 8-10, Citation start: (Gallup 2022); (UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2022); (Chernigovskaya 2020); (Maslow, The Farther Reaches of Human Nature 1971); (M. Merzenich 2018); (Rogers, The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change 1957); (Cox 2010) (R. Dilts, From Coach to Awakener 2003) (J. V. Segers, Structuring and Understanding the Coaching Industry: The Coaching Cube 2011); Bibliography p. 202: 1. Ackerman, S., and Hilsenroth, M. "A review of therapist characteristics and techniques positively impacting the therapeutic alliance." *Clinical Psychology Review*, 2003.; 2. Adams, S. Forbes. 2013. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/08/05/ceos-just-want-to-get-coached/>.; 3. Aldrin, N., and Utama, A. "Analysis of the Effect of Coaching. Quote end. This finding in no way (1) casts doubt on the results achieved, (2) does not belittle the scientific merits identified in my opinion, and (3) does not devalue the theoretical-practical substance that the candidate possesses. Choosing a uniform citation style and implementing it in the entire scientific work would contribute to its further refinement and improvement.

All of the above implies the expectation, which also forms my proposal, that in her further research and practical-applied activity, the PhD student Stefanova-Ivanova will continue to develop her theories, concepts and those related to coaching and executive-coaching, in an increasingly complex, uncertain and turbulent business environment, and will attempt to publish the results of her research (present and future) in high value journals.

7. Summary conclusion and proposal

The relevance, the appropriately selected and correctly used research methods, the correctly formulated and defended thesis, the adequately and precisely formulated and verified hypotheses, the adequately made summaries and conclusions on the one hand, as well as the obtained solid scientific and scientific-applied results and contributions of the doctoral work on the topic "Benefits of executive coaching for professional and personal self-realization" on the other hand, give me the reason to make the well-founded conclusion that the doctoral work is a fully completed and comprehensive scientific product, enriching both science and practice, and which meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and gives me reason to evaluate it POSITIVELY.

In addition, I believe that the doctoral student Zornitsa Georgieva Stefanova-Ivanova possesses in-depth both theoretical and significant practical knowledge (visible from the indicated 13,000 hours of coaching practice) on the subject and demonstrates sufficient abilities to conceptualize, conduct and successfully finalize independent scientific research. These qualities allow her to search, find and report, as well as to analyze, summarize and interpret scientific data in an adequate way. In addition, she can formulate relevant scientific conclusions.

The aforementioned merits of both the doctoral work on the topic "Benefits of executive coaching for professional and personal self-realization" and the doctoral student Zornitsa Georgieva Stefanova-Ivanova, give me convincing and unequivocal arguments to propose to the scientific jury to award the candidate an educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in professional direction 3.7 "Administration and management" scientific specialty "Economic management".