

O P I N I O N

on a dissertation for acquisition of Doctor's Educational and Scientific Degree in the professional field: 3.8. Economics, Doctoral Program in Economics and Management (Industry), at Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov

Prepared the opinion: Assoc. Prof. Emil Borislavov Nikolov, PhD, Department of Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship, Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov, scientific specialty 05.02.18 Economics and Management (Industry).

Author of the dissertation: Feim Azem Brava, PhD student in part-time at the Department of Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship, Doctoral Program Economics and Management (Industry)

Thesis topic: "Impact of entrepreneurship education on the acquisition of competitive advantages by small and medium-sized enterprises "

Reason for preparing the opinion: Order No. 662 of 5 July 2024 on the opening of a procedure for public defence of a dissertation and approval of the composition of the scientific jury, as well as a decision of the scientific jury at the first meeting held on July 5, 2024.

I. General presentation of the dissertation

The dissertation is 196 pages long. Structurally, it consists of a title page, table of contents, introduction (6 pages), main text of three chapters (160 pages), conclusion (4 pages), list of references (a total of 136 literary sources, of which 3 in Cyrillic and 133 in Latin) and two appendices (the survey card and aggregated data). The information is visualized through 9 figures and 61 tables. A Declaration of Originality and Authenticity is also attached.

The **object** of research in the dissertation is entrepreneurial training, and its **subject** – its influence on the acquisition of competitive advantages by small and medium-sized enterprises. In line with them, the **aim** of the dissertation is to investigate the impact of entrepreneurial training on the acquisition of competitive advantages of small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, the current research emphasizes the role of entrepreneurial

identity and defines the necessary entrepreneurial competencies, the acquisition of which will enable entrepreneurs to achieve a competitive advantage. To achieve the main research objective thus set, three **research tasks** have been defined. The research **thesis** that the author defends is that entrepreneurship education, which develops entrepreneurial competencies for personal effectiveness and workplace competencies, leads to the acquisition of competitive advantages of small and medium-sized enterprises. To prove it, one general hypothesis, two special hypotheses and eight individual **hypotheses** (four for each of the special hypotheses) were tested. The main research methods, sources of information and limitations within which the research was conducted are clearly outlined. In my opinion, the set goals and objectives have been achieved, and the research thesis has been defended.

II. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation

Entrepreneurship, also perceived as the fourth factor of production, is of key importance for the development of economies and societies. It can increase economic growth, provide employment, and accordingly reduce unemployment, alleviate poverty, create innovation, satisfy unmet needs. That is why the interest in this topic is unceasing both on a theoretical and a practical level. Currently, the prevailing opinion in the scientific community is that entrepreneurship can be learned, i.e. that it is not entirely determined by a person's genetic predisposition. In this regard, the need for entrepreneurial training as a tool for its stimulation, development and improvement comes to the fore. This makes the dissertation significantly relevant and relevant for theory and practice. It examines a very important link - between entrepreneurship and the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The dissertation is well structured, logically sound and in line with good research practices. It is important to note that low-level analysis (comparing ranks and/or mean scores in tables and graphs) is not relied upon solely, but statistical methods are used to test hypotheses that allow statistically proven conclusions to be formulated.

The **introduction** emphasizes the relevance of the research and defines its object, subject, purpose, and thesis. The main sources of information and perceived limitations are also presented.

The **first chapter** is theoretical. In it, the author clarifies basic issues related to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, training and entrepreneurial training, and the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. The chapter ends with well-formulated summaries.

The **second chapter** presents the methodological foundations of the study. Within seven points, the author presents the problem-subject framework of the research and justifies

its relevance. The conceptual-categorical model of the study, its goals, objectives, and hypothetical framework are also clarified. The last two points are devoted to the methodological approach and research tools used.

The **third chapter** presents the results of the empirical study. The profile of the respondents is presented, and the hypotheses adopted are tested using the Chi-square test and correlation coefficients (Pearson, Kendall and Spearman). In the last point of the chapter, the hypothetical framework is interpreted, and the conceptual-categorical model proposed in the second chapter is confirmed.

In the **conclusion**, some generalizations are formulated about entrepreneurial characteristics and their influence on the competitiveness and success of SMEs. The role of entrepreneurship education in the formation of these characteristics is emphasized.

The **abstract** correctly reflects the dissertation work. It has a total volume of 56 pages and contains a general description of the dissertation work, structure and content of the dissertation work, a synthesized presentation of the dissertation work, a reference to the main contributing points in the dissertation work, a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation work, a reference to the implementation of the minimum national requirements in connection with the procedure for acquiring the ONS "Doctor", a list of participations in national and international scientific conferences and forums, a declaration of originality and credibility. The presented scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation include five articles, three of which are co-authored. All of them have been published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes. From the presented report it is clear that the minimum national requirements for acquiring the ONS "Doctor" have been met, in accordance with the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation

The scientific and scientific-applied contributions presented in the abstract reflect the author's achievements in the dissertation work. I accept the fully defined contributions which are:

1. Based on a wide-ranging literature survey, the theoretical knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial competencies has been enriched. An approach was applied in which the entrepreneurial identity was examined through the lens of entrepreneurial learning. The competitive advantages of small and medium enterprises are systematized.

2. A research toolkit was developed and tested to assess the impact of entrepreneurial training on the acquisition of competitive advantages of small and medium-sized enterprises.

3. An author's systematization of entrepreneurial competencies, the acquisition of which in the process of entrepreneurial training will allow the achievement of a competitive advantage for small and medium-sized enterprises, has been made.

4. A conceptual-categorical model has been developed for the impact of entrepreneurial training on the competitive advantage of SMEs through entrepreneurial roles, entrepreneurial orientation and competencies for personal effectiveness and workplace competencies.

IV. Dissertation Questions

1. What is your opinion on the often-discussed question about the genesis of entrepreneurial abilities - are they the result of genetic endowments or of purposeful training?

2. Do you think that the questions formulated in the questionnaire provide sufficient volume and quality of information to test the research hypotheses adopted in the dissertation?

3. Why did you choose to simultaneously use Chi-square test, Pearson correlation (parametric method), and Kendall and Spearman correlations (non-parametric method) to analyze the empirical information generated by the survey?

V. Summary assessment of the dissertation and conclusion

The dissertation of Feim Azem Brava, submitted for evaluation, is a comprehensive, up-to-date, and original scientific research, with achievements of scientific and scientifically applied nature. It meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Academy of Economics "D. A. Tsenov". All this gives me grounds to declare my **positive opinion** and to propose to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to support the award of the degree of Doctor to Feim Azem Brava in the professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Industry)".

Date: 26.07.2024

Svishtov

Prepared the opinion:

(Assoc. Prof. Emil Nikolov, PhD)