

REVIEW

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Todorca Stoyanova Atanassova-Kalaydzhieva,
to the "Management" department, Faculty of Economics of Trakia University, Stara Zagora,
scientific specialty "Organization and management of production (enterprise management)",
professional direction 3.7. "Administration and management", field of higher education 3 "Social,
economic and law Science".

The author of the peer-reviewed dissertation is Elena Valerieva Valcheva, assistant professor at the department of "Commercial Business", faculty of "Manufacturing and Commercial Business", SA "D. A. Tsenov" - Svishtov.

The topic of the dissertation is "STUDYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING LOGISTICS TRANSPORT SERVICES IN TRADE"

I. GENERAL PRESENTATION:

The dissertation work of Elena Valerieva Valcheva was discussed and accepted for public defense at a meeting of the Department of "Commercial Business", Faculty of "Manufacturing and Commercial Business" at the SA "D. A. Tsenov" - Svishtov.

The review was assigned to me on the basis of Order No. 231/29.03.2024 of the Rector of the SA "D. A. Tsenov" - Svishtov, as a member of the Scientific Jury, elected by the Faculty Council of the Faculty of "Manufacturing and Commercial Business", Protocol No. 8/28.03.2024. It was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff in the SA "D. A. Tsenov" - Svishtov.

The developed dissertation has a total volume of 216 standard pages.

The structure of the dissertation includes the following several parts: introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, list of figures, list of tables, declaration of originality and credibility, appendices.

The literature used consists of a total of 133 literary sources, divided into: scientific publications, of which 64 are in Cyrillic (Bulgarian and Russian) and 41 publications in a foreign language; normative documents - 21; electronic sources - 7.

The author presents the research results in the dissertation in 38 figures, 14 tables and 8 appendices.

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE FORM AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION:

1. Relevance and significance of the scientific problem developed in the dissertation:

The relevance of the topic of the dissertation arises from the importance that logistics transport services have in trade for increasing the efficiency of supply chain management, for lowering costs and reducing the time of order fulfillment in the conditions of increasing competition. The topic is also significant from the point of view of building the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), aiming at the use of more ecological transport and the application of software solutions in logistics transport services.

The problem is the focus of the research of a number of economists - not only foreign, but also Bulgarian. The previous studies could be viewed as a source of new ideas, application of new methods and approaches for research in the modern challenges facing commercial business in Bulgaria. The peer-reviewed dissertation examines an important aspect of a wide-ranging topic - opportunities for improving logistics transport services in trade in Bulgaria, on which there are not enough in-depth studies. I believe that the chosen topic of the dissertation work is relevant and significant both for economic theory and for commercial business in the country. The topic is also dissertable in scope of the research.

2. Subject and object, goal and tasks, research thesis, methods, information base of the research:

The subject of research in the dissertation work is logistics transport services in trade.

The object of research is the Bulgarian enterprises carrying out commercial activity, which offer and/or use transport services.

The purpose of the dissertation is correctly formulated. It corresponds to the content of the dissertation and is completely feasible.

The main tasks that are solved in order to achieve the set goal are five. They derive from the set goal and are logically connected to the content structure of the dissertation.

In the dissertation, the author formulates a research thesis that is provable and fully corresponds to the investigated problem.

The fulfillment of the set goal, the solution of the main tasks and the proof of the thesis in the dissertation is carried out through a complex of methods: historical, inductive, deductive, comparative methods, regression, correlation, dispersion methods, SWOT-analysis; other methods – interview, survey; a graphical method is used to visualize the results, etc.

The limiting conditions for the implementation of the research in the dissertation are presented in a theoretical and empirical aspect, as well as in relation to the territorial positioning of the surveyed enterprises.

A positive impression in the dissertation is made by the diverse information base used, which includes: a study of specialized literary sources, national and European normative documents; meetings, interviews and surveys of company representatives were carried out; up-to-date information has been collected from the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce, the Bulgarian Logistics Association, the Ministries of Transport and Finance, the National Statistical Institute, Eurostat, the European Court of Auditors, the Organization for Economic Cooperation, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, etc. Sources used are cited accurately. The information provided is a good basis for in-depth analysis and evaluation.

3. Structural and substantive evaluation of the dissertation work:

Structurally and in terms of volume, the dissertation meets the requirements for obtaining a PhD in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Trade)". The ratio between the individual structural parts of the scientific development is balanced.

The introduction of the dissertation proves the relevance and significance of the developed topic, presents the object and subject of research, the goal and tasks, the research thesis. The research methods and adopted limiting conditions are also indicated.

The first chapter of the dissertation has a theoretical character. Based on research by foreign and domestic authors on the issue, the doctoral student makes a thorough literary analysis. It clarifies the

essence of logistics and logistics transport services. Derives the conceptual apparatus of the study. The author presents her own view on the conceptually related notions of generating logistics transport services in trade. Certain characteristics according to which the types of transport services are classified are presented and clarified. Basic criteria for choosing a type of transport and for evaluating one of the main types of transport in the supply chain at the national and international level - road freight transport - have been considered. In the third paragraph of this chapter, the nature and role of supply chain management in trade is clarified, and a comparative analysis of the traditional logistics system and the supply chain is carried out. From the presentation in the first chapter, the doctoral student's very good knowledge of the literature on the subject is evident. She makes justified generalizations arising from the content of the analyzed literary sources, in which her own understanding of the issues under consideration is clearly highlighted. Based on the literature analysis, the author synthesizes true and accurate conclusions.

The second chapter of the dissertation is distinguished by its theoretical and methodological nature. It is structured in three paragraphs. In paragraph 2.1. based on analysis and interpretations of the literature on the issue, supplemented with her own views, the author offers a complete system of indicators for the study and analysis of logistics transport services in trade, differentiated on three levels: micro level - 9 indicators; meso level – 6 indicators; macro level – 7 indicators (fig. 14, page 77). In paragraph 2.2. the methodological framework, including five phases of the study of logistics transport services at the micro level (enterprise level - fig. 16, p. 91), is specified. A positive impression is made by the structure and content of the own questionnaire, which provides the research with up-to-date empirical information from Bulgarian enterprises, differentiated by size, according to the indicators of the number of employees and annual turnover. In paragraph 2.3. the methodological framework for meso- and macro-level research of logistics transport services in trade is presented, also including five phases (fig. 17, page 96). Each of the specified phases is explained in detail. The exposition in the second chapter is logically connected, distinguished by accuracy and precision in developing and revealing the content of each of the methodological aspects of the research.

The third chapter is analytical-constructive in nature. It approves the methodology developed in the second chapter based on the received empirical and statistical information, in order to indicate the possibilities for improving the logistic transport services. Structurally, this chapter of the dissertation consists of three logically related paragraphs.

In paragraph 3.1. a situational-constative analysis of the results obtained from a survey of initially selected 53 enterprises carrying out commercial activity was carried out. Of them, 18 (34%) answered the questions. The enterprises that responded have a variety of cargo capacity and to a certain extent can be considered as typical representatives of the studied region. The results of the companies that answered are very well interpreted and visualized. All the results of the analysis are presented in the form of figures and tables. The generalizations and conclusions made are correct.

Paragraph 3.2. represents a step-by-step application of the methodology defined by the previous chapter of the dissertation, concerning researching the possibilities for improving logistics transport services in trade at the meso- and macro-level. Based on correlation, regression and dispersion analysis, the author establishes relationships and dependencies between selected indicators. The interpretation of the obtained results is distinguished by accuracy and shows a very good knowledge of the researched topic and applied scientific methods.

In paragraph 3.3, a SWOT-analysis of the used freight road transport in trade was carried out. Its strengths and weaknesses are accurately represented. The opportunities and threats facing logistics transport services are correctly highlighted. On this basis, recommendations are made for the improvement of logistics transport services and the possibilities for the development of commercial enterprises in the future are indicated.

The exposition in the third chapter is generally distinguished by accuracy and thoroughness. Here, too, the author's very good knowledge of the researched topic is evident, and the presented conclusions and recommendations are correctly derived. I consider the results of the survey of the selected enterprises to be the original side of the dissertation work.

In the conclusion, the main summaries of the research results are presented.

I summarize the overall assessment of the structural and content characteristics of the doctoral student's dissertation work as follows: The set goal has been fulfilled and the initially set tasks have been solved; The research thesis is proven; The style of the exposition is scholarly and comprehensible; The rules of scientific ethics were observed when developing the dissertation work. Authors used are cited accurately and correctly. The dissertation is very well laid out, and the results are visualized through a large number of tables and figures. I can confidently say that I have no information and I have not found any plagiarism in the dissertation work.

4. Publications on the dissertation work:

Assistant Elena Valerieva Valcheva, on the topic of the developed dissertation, applies an independent scientific study, published in the Annual Almanac of the Scientific Research of Doctoral Students, publishing house of SA "D. A. Tsenov", Svishtov. Also two scientific reports presented at an international scientific conference and a round table in the country. Published scientific reports are self-contained. The published scientific works prove that the results of the dissertation have gained the necessary popularity in the country. The topics of scientific publications fully reflect the content of the dissertation work.

The abstract is developed on the basis of a dissertation, meets the requirements and objectively reflects its structure and content.

III. SCIENTIFIC AND SCIENTIFIC-APPLIED CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION:

I accept the four contributions presented by the doctoral student, allowing myself to summarize them as follows:

✓ A contribution that results from supplementing and enriching the scientific literature with inferred author definitions and justified importance of supply chain management.

✓ A contribution that has a theoretical-applied nature and is based on a developed and applied methodological model for researching the possibilities of improving logistics transport services in trade, including a scientifically based system of evaluation indicators.

✓ An original contribution of a practical-applied nature, arising from the results obtained from the conducted survey of eighteen enterprises carrying out commercial activities in Bulgaria. Through the micro-, meso- and macro-level analysis, general and specific conclusions have been systematized, connections and dependencies between the investigated indicators have been revealed, recommendations have been proposed for improving logistics transport services in trade in our country.

IV. CRITICAL NOTES, QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The qualities of the peer-reviewed dissertation, which meet the requirements for obtaining the title of doctor, are indisputable, therefore I mainly relate the notes and recommendations to the doctoral student to her future scientific development:

- The scope of research can be expanded by including other enterprises from Bulgaria and comparing the obtained results with those studied in the dissertation work.

- The author should publish the results of the research in an international scientific publication with an impact factor and/or impact rank in order to promote them outside the country

I have a question for the doctoral student:

What is the perspective for the development of railway transport in Bulgaria after the country's full membership in Schengen?

V. SUMMARY CONCLUSION:

In summary of the above, I believe with full conviction that assistant professor Elena Valerieva Valcheva has developed the dissertation at the necessary scientific level. With full reason, I confirm that the author knows very well and successfully applies modern methods of analysis in the field of economics, in particular when researching logistics transport services in trade. Accurately and correctly interprets the obtained research results, has proven scientific and applied contributions.

I allow myself to propose to the respected Scientific Jury to highly evaluate the dissertation work and to vote positively for the awarding of assistant **Elena Valerieva Valcheva** the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" in the doctoral program "Economics and Management (Trade)" in professional direction 3.8. "Economics", area of higher education 3 "Social, economic and legal sciences".

05/09/2024
Stara Zagora

Reviewer: 
(Prof. Dr. T. Atanassova-Kalaydzhieva)