

EXPERT OPINION

In connection with the defence of dissertation for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “PhD” in the Field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences.

Professional field: 3.8. Economics

Doctoral Program: “Finance and Insurance”

Topic of the dissertation: „FINANCIAL OPTIMIZATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH LEAN THINKING”

Author of the dissertation: Nikola Nikolov Dimitrov

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Julia Dobрева, PhD

Author of the expert opinion: Prof. Tsvetan Ilieva, PhD

1. General description of the received materials

This opinion was prepared on the basis of Order №50/05.02.2024 of the Rector of the University of Insurance and Finance (VUZF) – Prof. Boris Velchev, PhD, D.L.S., in accordance with Art 4 (2) of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Art. 30 (2) of the Regulations for its implementation, as well as in accordance with Art. 47 (7) of the Rules for admission and training of PhD students at VUZF.

The documentation submitted to me under the competition includes: dissertation, autorefer, list of scientific publications, abstracts of publications for participation in the procedure, reference for compliance with scientific requirements, CV, declaration of authorship and conscientious development of the dissertation. In compliance with the requirements of Art.6 (1) and (2) of LDASRB there is evidence of possession of a Master's degree and a dissertation on “Financial optimization of organizations through Lean thinking”. This gives me grounds to point out that the regulatory requirements for admission to participation in the procedure for awarding a training and scientific degree “PhD” have been met.

2. Brief biological data about the PhD student

PhD student Nikola Dimitrov was born on 27.11.1986. In the period 2004 – 2007 he graduated from with Bachelor's degree in Computer Science at The University of Sheffield in Thessaloniki. In 2009 he acquired a Master's degree in Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the same university.

The professional path of PhD student Dimitrov started in 2011 as Manager CRM and Process Optimization Specialist at Raiffeisen Bank Bulgaria. Since March 2016 he has been a

Business Process Optimization Specialist at Ingram Micro Bulgaria, and to date he is a Continuous Improvement Consultant (LEAN) at Lean Institute Bulgaria. He is fluent in written and spoken English, Greek as well as French.

3. Topicality of the theme and appropriateness of the set goals and objectives

The research area chosen by PhD student Dimitrov can be defined as up-to-date. The understanding that organizational sustainability and proper scale of activity, often engulfed in internal chaos, can be achieved through strategic planning based on the principles of lean management. In this sense, the PhD student is guided by the thesis that the implementation of Lean systems and tools could have as a final result not only mitigation of operational and financial security. This gives me reason to define the research problem identified by the PhD student as topical.

On this basis, I find out that PhD student Dimitrov has realistically and in terms defined the purpose of his dissertation - to explore and shed light on the role of Lean management as a strategic factor for financial optimization in organization, for the realization of the so defined goal in the dissertation study are observed to perform 5 tasks. I see them as creating a real opportunity to achieve a goal.

In view of the set goal and tasks, the PhD student defines as an **object** of research the financial optimization of organizations through Lean thinking. The **subject** of the dissertation is the possibilities for applying the principles of Lean Management as strategic tools for financial optimization. In particular, the focus is on the analysis of the relationship between organizational chaos and financial resources.

4. Knowledge of the problem

A good impression is made by the fact that the PhD student is familiar with the research works of a number of foreign authors. Nikola Dimitrov aptly emphasizes that despite the huge volume of research, new aspects that arouse scientific interests always arise. From what is presented in the presentation of the dissertation I can find that the PhD student is familiar with the different aspects of a problem and that gives him the opportunity to understand it in depth.

5. Methodology of the study

In order to achieve the goal defined in the development, PhD student N. Dimitrov uses adequate research methods: induction and deduction, comparative analysis and synthesis, literature review, etc. To a significant extent, they make it possible to simplify research tasks.

6. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation

The dissertation has a total volume of 151 standard pages and correspond to the subject, object and purpose of the study. Structurally, it consists of: an introduction, a statement in four chapters, a conclusion and a bibliographic reference, including 192 English language sources, and three annexes.

In Chapter One of the dissertation PhD student Dimitrov gives his understanding of the complexity and chaos in organizations. It emphasizes the practical need for business leaders to understand and manage the factors that challenge them in order to create the prerequisites for achieving financial stability and growth in organizations. According to the PhD student, “organizational chaos” is characterized by unpredictable, nonlinear dynamics that lead to unexpected results, while “complexity” arises from a network of interconnections between organizational components. Reviewing the views of various authors on this issue concludes that management principles can streamline chaotic and complex processes in order to improve financial performance.

Another important feature of the dissertation study in this part is the characterization of the concept of “organizational complexity” in paragraph 1.3. the view of PhD student Dimitrov is that organizational chaos complexity is a network of interconnected components in business, leading to unpredictable emerging behavior. On this basis, its key characteristics are outlined: non-linearity, inter connectedness, adaptation and emergence. At the same time, the capabilities of Lean principles to address this complexity are defined, turning it into a force that contributes to the financial results and strategic flexibility of organizations.

In Chapter One, the presented way of interaction between organizational chaos and complexity deserves attention. The PhD student defines them as reciprocal, which often leads to a dynamic that contains both challenges and opportunities for business.

Another circumstance that I think should be noted is the considered role of leadership in managing chaos and complexity. Various aspects of leadership are presented such as decision-making in complex environments, adaptability, promotion of sustainability and the use of complexity to generate and implement innovations. The roles of leaders in creating agile and sustainable cultures are assessed, guided organizations to achieve strategic advantages.

Chapter Two of the dissertation gives a literary review of the works of a number of authors on the thesis of chaos management and lean thinking. The focus is on key theories and empirical research on these topics. In addition, the development and application of lean thinking since its inception, as well as its role in managing chaos, are evaluated.

Furthermore, the review identifies research gaps, particularly related to the financial impact of lean principles in chaotic settings. In this way, the PhD student determines the place of his development among other authors exploring these problems.

In this part of the dissertation, it is worth noting the review of the traditional concepts of chaos management and the comparison made between them and the concepts of traditional management. In this way, the place of lean approach to reducing chaos and creating value in organizations is determined. Its basic principles are identified – value, value flow, flow, pull and perfection. A good impression is the ability of the PhD student to draw reasonable conclusions about the effects of the application of these principles in organizations. In particular, in terms of improving responsiveness, accelerating decision-making, streamlining flexibility operations, innovating, etc. in support of his conclusions, PhD student Dimitrov presents a number of practical examples: Lean Transformation in healthcare – Virginia Mason Medical Center, Complexity of Production – Lean the Boeing Path, Financial Services – Lean at ING Bank, Telecommunications – Lean at Verizon.

Chapter Three of the dissertation is methodological in nature. It starts with an introduction to the types of data used in research, highlighting the distinction between primary and secondary data, as well as qualitative and quantitative data. The survey included both primary and secondary data, using the latter as a basis for comparison with findings from primary data obtained through questionnaires and interviews. It targets specific demographic group within organizations – supervisors, frontline managers and middle managers – with the exception of CEOs and general employees due to practical restrictions. The focus is on service and retail sector organizations with diverse lifecycles and number of employees to explore different complexity management strategies.

Chapter four presents the analysis of questionnaire data and the implications of the findings for understanding organizational chaos and complexity. The analysis is divided into three sections, each detailing various aspects of the study.

The conclusion of the dissertation contains more important conclusions than that presented in the four chapters. It summarizes the author's findings, conclusions and recommendations, while offering directions for future research into the relationship between lean thinking and financial performance in organizations. This gives me reason to define PhD student Dimitrov as an author with a critical research view.

7. Contributions and relevance of development to science and practice

In my opinion, the three scientific contributions of the PhD student mentioned in the report correspond to what is shown in the dissertation. I see it as a complete author's achievement.

8. Assessment of publications on the dissertation

Scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation, in which the author's ideas are promoted – three articles – are also talking about a formed research view. On the basis of the

reference provided to me in the documents of the PhD student, I can confirm that the research work of the author complies with the requirements of the procedure for the acquiring the PhD.

9. Autoreferat

The autoreferat is devoted according to the requirements and has all necessary requisites for such a development. It fully reflects the structure and content presented in the dissertation and has a volume of 68 standard pages.

10. Personal participation of the PhD Student

I accept the dissertation, autoreferat and publications of PhD student Nikola Dimitrov presented to the attention of the scientific jury as a personal achievement of the author. The literature and information lists listed in the bibliographic reference have been used correctly.

11. Critical remarks and recommendations

Like any such work, the dissertation presented by PhD student Nikola Dimitrov has some drawbacks. They do not diminish PhD student's achievements.

12. Personal impressions

I do not know the PhD student and have no personal impressions of him. In preparing my opinion, I was guided only by what was presented in the dissertation and his publications.

13. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

The main recommendation I make to PhD student Dimitrov is to focus more on assessing the practical aspects of the processes and problems studied

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I believe that PhD student Nikola Dimitrov meets the scientific degree “PhD” in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8 “Economics” and has the necessary professional and personal qualities. Therefore, I firmly give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the dissertation reviewed above, autoreferat, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to include the educational and scientific degree “PhD” of Nikola Dimitrov.

25.02.2024

Signature:

/Prof. Tsvetan Iliev, PhD