

## REVIEW

From: **Prof. Dr. Dimitar Hristov Tenchev** with a professional strand of Economics, Scientific field of study: Economics and Management

**Regarding** Elaboration of a Review of a dissertation work and participation in a scientific jury for acquiring of an academic title “Doctor” in the sphere of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Law sciences, Professional strand 3.7. Administration and management; scientific field of study “Social management”.

Basis for submission of review: Order № 3-PK-250 from 29.07.2021 of the Rector of New Bulgarian University, Sofia.

Author of dissertation work: **Mariya Yosifova Tumbeva**

Theme of dissertation work: **Talent Management and Development (following the example of the international companies in Bulgaria)**

### **I. Reference of the candidate**

As evidenced by the CV presented, the PhD student has the appropriate practice and education in the context of Human Resource Management and logically her interests are deployed in the field of contemporary challenges regarding the management and development of talents in organizations.

### **II. General characteristics of the dissertation work**

The dissertation work submitted for a review is has been developed and structured in four chapters, Introduction, Conclusion and Annexes, in a total volume of 239 pages. It is professionally laid out, according to the BNS with logical coherence of reflection supported by appropriate comments, examples and arguments. It quotes 33 Bulgarian, 219 foreign literature sources, as well as 15 Internet sources, 5 annexes, lists with figures and charts. It comprises 16 charts, 16 figures.

The introduction adequately formulates the purpose, tasks, subject, research thesis and 5 (five) working hypotheses of the development. These explicitly define its validity and support the coherent presentation of the research advances, the analysis of results, the generalizations of each topic, as well as form the basis for development of relevant recommendations.

**The subject** of the development are contemporary practices and approaches of talent management in companies in Bulgaria and possibilities of transfer of successful examples from leading international companies.

**The object** of the research is the talent development and management in ours and international companies based in Bulgaria.

**The research thesis**, defined in the dissertation work, is that talent management concerns the ability of the organization to plan, assess, develop and retain its best

talents by use of an integrated approach. The emphasis is on building an organizational capacity – team skills and expert experience, which are result of investment in human resources, establishment of coaching culture, education and development, compensations, communication and other spheres, related to human resources. These key intangible assets represent the ways of uniting people and resources, with a working result.

The realization of the formulated thesis is based on **5 (five) working hypotheses**.

1. Contemporary tendencies for the necessity of talent management in companies presume the introduction of a set of specific initiatives, new approaches and priority strategies in the management and the human resources departments.
2. The development of policies for career progression are increasingly being related to the introduction of programs for talent management in companies, aiming at identification, development and retaining of employees.
3. The establishment of a proper culture in companies, targeting constant assessment of different levels of competence, achievements and personal contribution, creates an atmosphere beneficial to the continuous self-development of the employees.
4. Companies, which have introduced programs for talent management, are in the position of competitive advantage in planning – with a strategic reserve of potential successors on every level, as well as regarding the overall positive assessment, compared to those which have no such programs.
5. There is a solid basis for transfer of integrated models from leading international companies, regarding both the comparative analyses of results from Bulgarian and international research and the application of their successful example into practice.

**The purpose** of the dissertation work is a theoretical analysis and research into strategies related to talent management in different organizations in Bulgaria and the possibilities of creating an integrated frame for talent management. The research into practices of talent management in different organizations in Bulgaria is characterized with complexity – public sector, private sector, NGO and 11 state sector, and it is based on a critical literary survey as well as comparative analysis of conducted empirical research.

For the achievement of this purpose eight tasks have been formulated, each one being logically related to the defined hypotheses and systematically supporting their affirmation or rejection.

**The design of the research is accurately presented, the methods and techniques being defined. Its limits are appropriately grounded and well reasoned.**

2.1. **The validity** of the topics discussed is adequately reasoned. The necessity for suitable and committed people is relevant for every organization. The struggle for talents is in full force at this very moment and is not likely to subside. People are the biggest treasure, and the emanation of human capital are the talents. In this respect people's attraction and retention has become a key priority to everyone. Technologies can be bought, finances can be acquired, but people with capacity, knowledge and potential are hard to find and even harder to retain. Efforts are necessary both from the management to provide proper working atmosphere, and the working teams to support the development of talented people. Apparently, a new thoughtful approach is necessary for the realization of all this. It is namely the differences of actions and ways in western and Bulgarian companies in this context that will ensure the recognition and assessment of successful and not so successful ways of talent management.

In this context, the conveyed survey and research establish a body of lacks and weaknesses in the policies and practices of companies, which in the conditions of highly competitive and globalized businesses becomes a threatening factor for their good performance.

For all these reasons, the high validity of this dissertation work is indisputable.

## 2.2. **Level of knowledge of the problem**

The author demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the topic and the related problems.

The first chapter is devoted to defining the meaning of the term "talent" and its occurrence in the lexis of nations, as well as talent management as a specific function of the work of the management and HR departments. Without unnecessarily putting it forward as a personal contribution, a successful attempt has been made towards a valid definition:

*The word "talent" has turned into a word symbolizing our potential to aspire and acquire leadership positions, as well as work accomplishment. In this respect, we can say that the word "talent" is used to describe extraordinary achievements related to the ability to lead an organization.*

In the context of the purposes of this dissertation work, a very important finding is that:

*For the purposes of this research, the word "talent" will be referred to as personal belonging. **Talent is a personal belonging and it can be increased by***

*the existence of suitable opportunities, suitable environment and motivation to accomplish certain actions. The level of skill with a person can be improved through training and practice, but a talent needs more than training,*  
*which gives grounds to claim the possibility of a talent to be managed and developed.*

The topic of talent management is widely discussed through the critical analysis of the aspects presented in the research. As the author's contribution I gladly accept the definition suggested in the context, i.e.: ***talent management is defined for the purposes of this research as a systematic process of identification, development and retention of employees, possessing the necessary knowledge and high level of competence in a sphere of strategic importance for the business, with the purpose of achieving a competitive advantage.***

In my opinion, the author has correctly identified the three components of talent management – identification, development and retention. This allows a holistic coverage of the whole process, and depending on the stage of work to apply relevant actions and approaches.

A very interesting relation has been made with regard to identification of talents and their promotion in the hierarchy of the company, in terms of the interest of their direct managers. I allow myself to formulate a provocative question! **If, still, the direct managers try to “retain for themselves” talented employees, does it mean that on high positions in the company it is likely to allow not so good managers?**

With regard to talent development, there is a correct interpretation of the strong correlation between the company's goals and the employees' development.

A significant part in the research is left to the problem of talent retention, given the highly competitive business environment and the abundance of “attractive” offers from the rival companies.

Certain motivation parameters have been discussed, which allows a better way of solution to the problem of retention of the talents for the companies.

The submitted theoretical model of talent management points out 14 critical indicators which are bound to give ground for a working and practically applicable approach in this context.

The synthesized summaries and conclusions at the end of the first chapter emphasize the basic aspects of the problem and set a good basis for future developments in the dissertation work.

The second chapter presents the Methodology of the research. There is a clever commentary about the necessary integration of different methods and techniques with regard of achieving truthful results and objective conclusions after the implementation of the researches.

What makes an impression in the discussion of the Paradigm of result interpretation is the deep understanding of the fact about the “absolute” truth not practically existing, but it representing only a “point of view”. In the same context the author develops the idea of “preliminary understanding” and the researchers’ attitudes in general.

The way of conducting a research through cases is logically reasoned, with the basic principles being subsequently applied in the actual research by the author.

On the basis of the criteria formulated on page 69, three world companies have been selected as cases for the research – Hulet Pakard, Hilton Group and Macdonald’s.

An objective commentary on the advantages and disadvantages during the conduct of interviews, the sides involved and the principles that have to be observed, as well as the steps to be made, is presented in a very convincing way. It builds the grounds for creating a structural procedure for carrying out the research and analyzing its results.

In order to increase the reliability and validity of the results, five approaches are suggested to be implemented in the dissertation work. In my view, these are adequate and relevant to the aims of the research.

The formulated conclusions and summaries at the end of the second chapter state the basic accents from the comments about the organization and conduct of the survey – methods, instruments, etc., as well as the objectiveness of the out-coming data and results.

Chapter Three presents the research model and the results of its approbation in reality. The research model is constructed logically, systematically and adequately. The conveyed Preliminary survey, the Interviews with leading experts and the work with the cases of three companies have allowed to prepare the Basic questionnaire, reflecting the relevant questions for the actual

research. A very important conclusion makes an impression, namely that it is difficult to form a homogeneous model for the practices of talent management in Bulgarian companies. Comparing policies and practices, the author also identifies that the HR departments are to attain newer functions, part of which is talent management, i.e. this process is transformed from administrative into a constant practice.

For the needs of the research, the author has structured the objects of her study through objectively selected criteria – branch, size, number of personnel, form of ownership, etc., amounting to 320 people.

In my opinion, the selected title of the research – **application of integrated strategies or systems, designed to improve the processes of recruitment, development and retention of people with the necessary skills and qualities for meeting the present and future objectives of the companies**, is an exceptional psychological approach, which allows avoiding personal self-identification with the concept of talent, and in this respect avoiding “insult” or low reliability of the answers to the questions.

The processing of the survey results leads to adequate interpretations and summaries. I would not dwell on the detailed discussion of each criterion regarding organizations, which apply talent management practices and those, which do not. The formulated discussion topics would be of better interest. In my view, the first one – **A lot will depend on the availability of talents**, should have been formulated more clearly, namely – “Whether talents generally exist in a certain sphere and whether they are within the grasp of the company.” **There is a generalized viewpoint, that the main responsibility for the talent management activities falls on the HR departments.** In my opinion, the main responsibility goes to the top management, since they are the people who define the strategic purposes and plans, the policy and culture in the company and they distribute the basic resources.

In point 7, Additional research “Talent prospects”, there are interesting discussion questions, which give extra viewpoints and confirm the size and depth of the issues discussed in this dissertation work.

In point 8, Key tendencies..., the formulated conclusions are relevant and truly confirm the validity of the five hypotheses presented in the introduction of the work.

In the last point 9, three cases are discussed and analyzed – three global companies with abundant practice and experience in the development and application of talent management strategies and programs. In the conclusion to

this point a crucial problem is formulated – A Program for differentiation according to the performance of the workers. Initially implemented in General Electrics, the question arises back then: **What to do with or for the workers with a weak performance? The routine then was – dismissal. How should a situation like that look nowadays?**

In chapter four the emphasis falls on coaching and coaching cultures an adequate practice for talent management and development. A thorough overview is done of all aspects of coaching, such as aims, types, processes, interested parties, expectations, principles, etc. A distinction is made between the meaning of coaching and consulting, therapy, mentoring and training. Very clearly are major problems during the process of coaching identified. One of them is the fear of change. I would like to express my positive opinion on the objective interpretation of facts. Actually, coaching is aiming at “disposal” of harmful practices and actions, inherent in the object of coaching (the client) through respective techniques and approaches, which is expected to be beneficial to both the client and the organization. Alongside, this is related to a self-catharsis and pain, and as we know “Without pain there is no change for the better.”

This, and other aspects, provoke me to **formulate a question to the author**. If the coach is an inside person for the company (a higher and more experienced manager), should their help be necessarily positive? Such people are already in the “matrix” of the company – good, but also inappropriate practices. **Leading the process to a negative direction will apparently not contribute to the development of the client. How could that be avoided?**

At the end of this chapter, the summaries and findings are completely adequate and really confirm the reliability of the coaching approach in the context of talent management in companies. The model suggested in point 8 of this chapter, though not formulated as “theoretically applied frame”, is thorough and logically bounded. Practically, it comprises all significant conclusions and findings of the research, in all its aspects. It is adequately structured in stages and appropriate activities, interested parties, roles, etc. and is highly relevant to the purposes of the study and the formulated scientific thesis.

I will allow myself to point out that the conclusions made and the recommendations suggested are clear, concrete, well-reasoned and completely realistic and they would essentially help every initiative for preparing and implementing of coaching culture in the context of talent management in companies on a new level.

In the Conclusion all aspects of the research are codified – purpose, tasks, achieved results, thus confirming the success of this work. I express my full agreement with the declared achievements.

### **III. Assessment of the achieved scientific and scientifically-applied results**

I have allowed myself in this text to evaluate the achieved results and I do not think I should state it again here. In general, these results are adequate, objective and truly demonstrate depth, consistency and logic of the conducted research, and the formulated conclusions and guidelines for future actions confirm their relevance.

### **IV. Assessment of the achieved scientific and scientifically-applied contributions**

There have been declared four scientific and three practice-applied contributions. Of those classified as Scientific I allow myself to confirm that 3 and 4 have made a real scientific contribution.

Contributions 1 and 2 have more **scientifically-applied** character.

From the list of practice-applied contributions, I think that **1 and 3 also have scientifically-applied character** (in the context of analysis and synthesis of the existing scientific knowledge in the sphere, regarding the criterion **Enhancement of the existing scientific knowledge**). Only **Contribution 2** actually has a practice-applied character.

### **V. Assessment of the publications on the dissertation work**

A list has been submitted of 4 publications and 4 presentations of reports on the theme of the dissertation work. I will not be able to give a correct assessment, because the texts themselves are not available, however, given the authority of the publishing houses and forums, where these have been published, I presume that they constitute a significant part in the context of the dissertation work.

### **VI. Assessment of the author's summary**

The author's summary is presented in the required layout and size, and it considers the essential elements of the study paper.

### **VII. Critical notes, recommendations and questions**

In this section of the Review I would point out that almost all remarks, comments and questions appear in the main body and I do not find it necessary to repeat them here.



At the end of chapter 3 the author uses the abbreviation TM. According to the standards of scientific works it is better, when used for the first time, to write the abbreviated term in full. Talent management (TM).

What makes an impression is that the emphasis of the research falls on the people (employees) with potential in the context of managing other people. Thus, it is not clear if the workers and ordinary employees enter the general context. Can we refer to them with Suvorov's maxim "Each soldier carries in his backpack a marshal's baton". If not, in the limitations in the Introduction it is proper to define that they are excluded from the research and may eventually be of interest for future studies.

As a recommendation, I would allow myself the following. The research is extremely interesting, detailed and is based on serious and deep study of the issues and gives many opportunities for reflection and additional survey.

As talent management will be a subject of plenty of serious future studies in the world scientific guild, I would recommend that doctoral candidate **Maria Tumbeva** develop further her knowledge in this sphere and continue improving the instruments suggested hereby through seeking verification between expected benefits and achieved results.

### **VIII. Summarized conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to declare my positive evaluation of the dissertation work presented by **Mariya Yosifova Tumbeva**. It meets all the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Rules of Procedure of New Bulgarian University, covers the scientometric criteria for acquiring the academic title of "doctor".

I therefore take the liberty of recommending to the Honorable scientific jury to vote positively and to award **Mariya Yosifova Tumbeva with** an academic title of "doctor" in professional strand 3.7. Administration and Management; scientific field of study "Social Management" (Business Administration).

Date: August 2021

Signature:

