



REVIEW

on a dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor (PhD)** in:

Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,
Professional Field 3.8 Economics,
Scientific Specialty “Organization and Management”

Author of the dissertation: Dimitar Totev Stoenchev

full-time doctoral candidate at the Department of Management and Marketing, Agricultural University – Plovdiv

Title of the dissertation:

“Strategic Human Resource Management in the Organization of Production Processes in Agriculture”

Reviewer: Professor DSc Petar Borisov Borisov

Agricultural University – Plovdiv, Field of Higher Education 3.0 Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.8 Economics, Scientific Specialty “Organization and Management”

Appointed member of the Scientific Jury by Order No. RD-16-478/02.04.2026 issued by the Rector of the Agricultural University.

1. Brief Presentation of the Candidate

The doctoral candidate, Dimitar Totev Stoenchev, obtained his Master’s degree in Economics from the Agricultural University – Plovdiv in 2022. Professionally, he works as Sales Manager at Tedtrans Ltd., Plovdiv, which has provided him with practical managerial experience and a solid foundation for researching organizational and management issues. His professional biography demonstrates a sustained interest in management, planning, and organizational development.

2. Relevance of the Research Problem

The topic of the dissertation is highly relevant and significant both theoretically and practically. In the context of increasing labor shortages in the agricultural sector, demographic decline, and the low attractiveness of agricultural labor, issues related to strategic human resource

management have become crucial for the sustainable development of agricultural enterprises. The author correctly emphasizes the necessity of a strategic approach to planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling human resources as a factor in improving the efficiency of production processes in agriculture.

3. Aim, Objectives, Hypotheses, and Research Methods

The aim of the study is clearly formulated: to determine the impact of strategic human resource management on the organization of production processes in agriculture. Six specific objectives have been defined, logically aligned with the aim and subject of the research.

The central thesis—that a strategic approach to human resource management is a prerequisite for securing and improving production outcomes in agricultural enterprises—is well argued and consistently defended throughout the dissertation. Appropriate scientific methods have been employed, including systems approach, retrospective analysis, comparative analysis, statistical methods, diagnostic analysis, and prognostic analysis, all of which are consistent with the nature of the research.

4. Visualization and Presentation of Results

The dissertation comprises 112 pages, of which 106 pages constitute the main text, and includes 12 tables and 10 figures, providing clear and effective visualization of the analysis. The structure is logically coherent and consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, and appendices. The presentation of results is clear, systematic, and supported by tabular and graphical material that facilitates comprehension of the main findings.

5. Discussion of Results and Literature Used

The theoretical section presents an in-depth analysis of contemporary concepts in strategic human resource management, including universalist, contingency, resource-based, configurational, institutional, and critical approaches. The author demonstrates sound knowledge of the scientific literature and the ability to critically assess various scholarly perspectives.

A total of 26 bibliographic sources have been used, including both classical and contemporary authors in the field of HR management and organizational management. The

literature review is relevant to the topic, although it could benefit from the inclusion of more recent publications from the past 3–5 years.

The dissertation demonstrates consistency and coherence in the interpretation of the findings, as the author successfully combines theoretical propositions with empirical observations. The analysis is structured in accordance with the research objectives and enables clear tracing of the relationship between strategic human resource management and the efficiency of production processes in agriculture.

In Chapter One, the doctoral candidate conducts a comprehensive critical review of scholarly concepts related to strategic human resource management, covering the principal theoretical schools and approaches. Particularly commendable is the author's effort not only to present different theoretical models but also to compare them and identify their advantages and limitations in the context of the agricultural sector. This reflects analytical depth and critical engagement with academic literature.

Chapter Two is of substantial practical importance, as it presents an analysis of real HR management practices in agricultural enterprises. The author identifies several major problems: shortage of qualified labor, limited opportunities for staff motivation and retention, lack of long-term HR planning, and insufficient implementation of performance appraisal systems. At the same time, positive practices are highlighted, such as internal training, incentive mechanisms, and adaptation of HR policies to the seasonal nature of agricultural labor. The analysis demonstrates the candidate's understanding of the specifics of the agricultural sector and his ability to interpret results within their organizational and economic interrelations.

Particularly valuable is Chapter Three, in which the author proposes an original model for strategic human resource management in agriculture. The proposed model is logically derived from the preceding theoretical and empirical analyses and constitutes a complete conceptual framework, including strategic workforce planning, recruitment, training, motivation, performance evaluation, and adaptive risk management mechanisms. The model has practical applicability and potential for implementation across various types of agricultural enterprises.

Regarding the discussion of results, it should be noted that the author successfully links the identified problems with specific proposals for improvement. The conclusions are logically reasoned and correspond closely to the main thesis of the research. It is convincingly established that the strategic approach to human resource management has a positive impact on the

organization and efficiency of production processes in agriculture, thus confirming the dissertation hypothesis.

The literature used is thematically relevant and includes foundational and contemporary sources in strategic human resource management. Internationally recognized scholars such as Barney, Becker, Huselid, Boxall, Purcell, Ulrich, Schuler, Jackson, and others are cited, demonstrating the doctoral candidate's strong theoretical awareness. Although the 26 references are sufficient for building the theoretical framework, the scientific rigor of the dissertation would be enhanced by incorporating a broader range of recent publications, especially empirical studies related to the digitalization of HR processes and automation in agriculture.

The literature review is well integrated into the exposition; sources are not cited merely formally but are organically embedded in the analysis and support the author's argumentation. This demonstrates the candidate's competence in academic work with scholarly sources and his ability to synthesize different scientific viewpoints.

In summary, the dissertation results are interpreted thoroughly, convincingly, and in close connection with the stated aims and objectives. The theoretical analysis, empirical observations, and proposed model together form a comprehensive and complete scientific study with a clear applied orientation and practical significance for the agricultural sector.

6. Contributions of the Dissertation

The dissertation contains both scientific and applied scientific contributions, as follows:

Scientific Contributions:

1. The main theoretical approaches to strategic human resource management in the context of the agricultural sector have been systematized.
2. A methodology for studying human resource management in agricultural enterprises has been developed.
3. A conceptual model for strategic human resource management adapted to the specifics of agricultural production has been formulated.

Applied Scientific Contributions:

1. Good practices and problematic areas in HR management within agricultural enterprises have been identified.

2. Specific recommendations have been formulated for improving HR strategies in agricultural organizations.
3. The proposed model can serve as a practical tool in the management of agricultural enterprises.

7. Critical Remarks and Questions

Several critical remarks of a recommendatory nature may be made, which do not diminish the merits of the dissertation but would contribute to further enhancing its scientific value. In the empirical section, there is a lack of more detailed quantitative characterization of the research sample; it would be useful to present more clearly the number of agricultural enterprises included, the criteria for their selection, and their regional distribution. This would strengthen the representativeness and analytical persuasiveness of the conclusions drawn.

Furthermore, in certain parts of the dissertation, theoretical propositions based on the literature review could be more distinctly differentiated from the author's own interpretations and analytical generalizations, thereby making the doctoral candidate's personal contribution more explicit. In addition, there are occasional stylistic and linguistic inaccuracies, as well as repetitions of previously presented ideas, which should be editorially refined to improve the overall linguistic and structural coherence of the dissertation.

Question to the doctoral candidate:

How can the proposed model for strategic human resource management be adapted for small family-owned farms with limited administrative capacity?

8. Published Articles and Citations

The candidate has presented publications related to the subject of the dissertation, reflecting key aspects of the research. The publication activity meets the minimum requirements for dissertation defense. No citation data have been provided.

The submitted abstract accurately reflects the structure and content of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION

