



OPINION

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: Prof. PhD Valentina Lyubenova Nikolova-Alexieva – University of Food Technologies – Plovdiv, member of the Scientific Jury appointed by Order of the Rector of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv: RD-16-479/02.04.2026

1. General Characteristics of the Candidate

The doctoral candidate Dimitar Totev Stoenchev possesses appropriate educational and professional qualifications that correspond to the subject of the dissertation. He holds a Master’s degree in Economics from the Agricultural University – Plovdiv and has extensive practical experience as a sales manager in the real business sector. This practical experience provides a solid foundation for understanding managerial processes and contributes positively to the applied orientation of the research.

The candidate’s professional profile demonstrates a sustained interest in management, organizational development, and business process optimization, which is logically reflected in the chosen dissertation topic.

2. Relevance of the Research Problem

The topic of the dissertation is highly relevant both from a scientific and a practical perspective. In recent years, the agricultural sector in Bulgaria has faced serious challenges related to the shortage of qualified labor, demographic imbalances, and the low attractiveness of agricultural work.

In this context, strategic human resource management has emerged as a key factor for the sustainability and efficiency of agricultural enterprises. The absence of a long-term approach to personnel management leads to inefficient utilization of human capital, which directly affects production outcomes.

The dissertation addresses precisely this issue, emphasizing the need to integrate strategic approaches into human resource management. This gives the research significant scientific importance and clear practical value.

3. Aim, Objectives, Object, Subject, and Methodology

The aim of the dissertation is clearly and consistently formulated—to investigate the impact of strategic human resource management on the organization of production processes in agriculture.

The defined research tasks are logically interconnected and encompass both the theoretical clarification of the problem and its empirical investigation and practical application. The object of the research consists of agricultural enterprises with varying degrees of specialization, while the subject includes managerial activities related to planning, organization, motivation, and control of human resources.

The methodological framework is appropriately selected and includes a systems approach, comparative analysis, statistical methods, as well as diagnostic and prognostic analysis. The use of diverse methods ensures the reliability of the results and allows for a comprehensive examination of the research problem.

4. Structure and Content of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured logically and consistently, comprising an introduction, three main chapters, conclusion, bibliography, and appendices. The total length is 111 pages, with a well-balanced distribution between theoretical and empirical content.

In the first chapter, the author provides an in-depth analysis of the theoretical foundations of strategic human resource management. Key concepts and approaches are examined, including the resource-based, contingency, and behavioral perspectives. Particular attention is given to the relationship between strategic management and organizational effectiveness, with emphasis on the role of human capital as a source of competitive advantage. The analysis is well substantiated and demonstrates a strong command of the relevant academic literature.

The second chapter focuses on an empirical study of human resource management practices in agricultural enterprises. It presents analyses of organizational structures, HR practices in use, as well as identified problems and best practices. This part of the dissertation is particularly valuable as it provides a realistic picture of the state of human resource management in the agricultural sector.

The third chapter constitutes the main contribution of the dissertation. It presents a model for strategic human resource management that integrates the main managerial functions and offers practically applicable solutions. The model is logically derived from the preceding analysis and includes specific mechanisms for implementation and adaptation within a real production environment.

Overall, the structure of the dissertation is clearly organized, coherent, and fully aligned with the stated aims and objectives.

5. Discussion of Results and Literature Used

The research results are presented in a systematic and well-argued manner. The author successfully establishes a clear relationship between strategic human resource management and the efficiency of production processes in agriculture. The analysis is consistent and demonstrates the ability to interpret empirical data within the framework of theoretical concepts.

The literature used includes both foundational and contemporary sources in the field of human resource management. Renowned scholars such as Barney, Becker, Huselid, and Boxall are referenced, indicating solid theoretical awareness. However, the number of sources is relatively limited and could be expanded with more recent publications, particularly those addressing digitalization and automation in HR processes.

A notable strength is that the literature review is well integrated into the analysis rather than presented in a purely descriptive manner, demonstrating the author's competence in working with academic sources.

6. Contributions of the Dissertation

The dissertation contains clearly identified scientific and applied contributions. The scientific contributions lie in the systematization of theoretical approaches to strategic human resource management and their adaptation to the specific characteristics of the agricultural sector. A significant contribution is also the development of a methodology for studying HR processes in agriculture.

The applied contributions are related to the development of a strategic human resource management model that can be used as a practical tool. In addition, specific recommendations are formulated for improving personnel management in agricultural enterprises.

7. Critical Remarks and Questions

Despite its merits, several critical remarks may be made. In the empirical part, there is a lack of more detailed quantitative characterization of the research sample, which would enhance the analytical robustness of the results. In addition, in some parts, the distinction between theoretical statements and the author's own interpretations is not sufficiently clear.

There are also minor stylistic inaccuracies that could be improved through editorial refinement.

Question to the doctoral candidate:

1. How can the proposed model be adapted to small agricultural enterprises with limited resources and a low level of formalization of managerial processes?

8. Publications and Abstract

The doctoral candidate has presented scientific publications related to the topic of the dissertation, reflecting its main results. The abstract accurately presents the structure, objectives, and contributions of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I consider that the submitted dissertation represents an independent, complete, and scientifically sound research work. It contains significant scientific and applied contributions and meets the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and the relevant institutional regulations.

On this basis, I give my **POSITIVE evaluation** and recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury award Dimitar Totev Stoenchev the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor (PhD)** in the scientific specialty “Organization and Management”.

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