

## **OPINION**

**by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Yordanova Dimova, New Bulgarian University**

on a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**"

in field of higher education: **3. Social, economic and legal sciences**

professional field: **3.8. Economics**

doctoral program: "**Marketing**"

**Author: Valeria Emilova Toncheva**

**Topic: "Impact of dual education on the brand image of vocational high schools"**

**Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teofana Dimitrova - Staneva**

### **1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student**

In the competition for the ONS "Doctor" the only candidate is Valeria Emilova Toncheva, who has submitted all the necessary documents, including an abstract and publications.

The author is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations according to Order RD-21-267/03.02.2022 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "P. Hilendarski". The dissertation work contains an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, 1 appendix, a reference to scientific contributions and directions for future research. It uses 168 literary sources, of which 16 are in Bulgarian and 152 are in foreign languages (147 in English, 3 in German, 1 in Indonesian and 1 in French).

### **2. Relevance of the topic**

The changes in the educational system in the Republic of Bulgaria are dynamic and continuous, but one is of essential, interesting and important importance, namely dual training.

An indisputable fact that the doctoral student notes is that the development of dual secondary education is one of the most important priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of Bulgaria, described in the "Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030)" (MES, 2021) and "Strategic Vision for the Development of Dual Vocational Education and Training (dVET) in Bulgaria

– 2030" (MES, 2023). These changes should meet the objectives of the European Union, noted in the "Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training for the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)", namely - "The share of recent VET graduates who benefit from work-based learning during their vocational education and training should be at least 60% by 2025". Through the prism of the above, the relevance of the dissertation topic is undeniable.

### **3. Knowledge of the problem**

I believe that the doctoral student knows the researched issue very well, because he appropriately uses both the sources and the professional and academic style of terminology, and what is impressive is the correct formulation of the hypotheses and their appropriate proof. And in fact, the ability to determine the following limitations of the study proves the thoroughness through the prism of knowledge of the issues, namely:

- The scope of the research program includes educational institutions only in the settlements of Plovdiv District.

- Secondary schools that offer dual education, but are not vocational high schools, are excluded from the study.

- The opinions of other stakeholders such as partner companies of the schools; parents of prospective high school students and students in vocational high schools; experts from ministries, municipalities and regional governments, etc. are not covered.

- Due to the large volume of respondents, a questionnaire containing closed questions was constructed, which eliminates the possibility of discussing and explaining other aspects of the subject area under consideration.

All author's opinions are well-founded and the conclusions are correct and correct.

#### **4. Research methodology**

The doctoral student has implemented in his research methods for recording data in accordance with the established two-phase research program, which are: conducting unstructured in-depth interviews and conducting written surveys on site in the primary units. Data processing was done using software products – Excel, IBM SPSS V26, SmartPLS 4. The statistical analysis of the doctoral student was implemented using descriptive statistics and the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method.

#### **5. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions**

The presented dissertation work by doctoral student Valeria Emilova Toncheva

#### **6. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student**

The publications are three in number, fully correspond to the researched issues, interesting and important in their significance and mandatory nature.

#### **7. Abstract**

The presented abstract by the doctoral student is excellently structured and prepared entirely in accordance with the requirements and regulations.

#### **8. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results**

I would recommend that doctoral student Valeria Emilova Toncheva publish a monograph based on the monograph.

I also fully admire her intentions for future research, which she has quite successfully formulated, namely:

1. Expanding the comparative analysis of education systems (Chapter I), covering all countries with dual education and examining how the method is adapted to the local economic environment.

2. Additional research on the brand image of vocational high schools (Chapter III), including:

- Conducting in-depth interviews with students from the target group to confirm the results;

- Expanding the survey to a national level for greater representativeness;
- Comparison with opinions of students from other countries to assess the effectiveness of different education systems;
- Incorporating perspectives from all stakeholders - business, parents, experts, etc.;
- Conducting periodic research to track trends and the impact of changes in the system on the image of high schools.

## CONCLUSION

The dissertation work of doctoral student **Valeria Emilova Toncheva** on the topic: "Impact of dual training on the brand image of vocational high schools" contains scientific, scientifically applied and applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements(s) of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADSRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ADSRB and the relevant Regulations of the PU "PAISIY HILENDARSKY".

The dissertation work shows that doctoral student **Valeria Emilova Toncheva** possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty "Marketing" by demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the esteemed scientific jury **to award** the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to **Valeria Emilova Toncheva** in the field of higher education: **3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics doctoral program "Marketing"**.

23.05.2025

**Prepared the opinion:**

Sofia

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Dimova/

