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### REVIEW

of a doctoral dissertation of **Moshe Margalit M.A.** written under the academic auspices of Professor Maciej Lawrynowicz Ph.D., entitled "The Impact of Founders' Military Background on Organisational Culture"

The review was written on the basis to the decision of the Council of the Faculty of Management of the University of Economics in Poznań of 3 April 2020 appointing me a reviewer of the above-mentioned doctoral dissertation.

The purpose of the review is to establish whether the doctoral dissertation meets the requirements laid down in the Act on Academic Degrees and Titles and on Degrees and Title in Arts of 14 March 2003 (Dz. U. of 2003 No. 65, item 595, of 2005, No. 164, page 2 of 7 item 1365), as amended. The dissertation is reviewed terms of: legitimacy of the topic discussed in the dissertation, the structure of the dissertation, selection of research goals research questions, the language of the dissertation, it includes formal assessment and technical assessment of the dissertation and a general assessment which concludes the review.

### Legitimacy of the topic

Organisational culture as a research topic is of constant interest. The current status of this issue results, among other things, from the statement on the importance of culture for the success of an organization. The Author of the dissertation took up an interesting and original subject of transferring cultural elements from a military organization to enterprises established by veterans. This topic is particularly interesting because it concerns enterprises of the SME sector in which the so called cohesion of ownership and management takes place, as owner-entrepreneurs manage their own companies themselves as managers, which results in the phenomenon of "the social structure of the enterprise being marked by the owner". Therefore, the owner-entrepreneur creates an enterprise by influencing its activity, behaviour and relations with stakeholders. The Author made the right assumption concerning the transfer of cultural elements between organisations in which the future entrepreneur gained experience and those which he established in his professional career. This assumption seems to be particularly justified in relation to strong cultures, which most often include military cultures, which can exert an intensive influence on their participants. In the

light of the above, in my opinion, the approach which focuses on examining the impact of experience gained from a military organisation and the question to what extent there is a transfer of cultural elements of that organisation to the business **is well-aimed and pertinent.**

Concluding, note that the topic raised in the dissertation **is of cognitive importance and value** and demonstrates the doctoral candidate's excellent orientation in the current **challenges faced by managerial sciences especially in the area of organizational behaviour.**

### **Structure of the dissertation, selection of research goals and research questions**

To achieve the purpose of the dissertation, and find answers to his research questions, the Author chose the right structure which, consists of a theoretical and empirical part. In this respect, the structure of dissertation is correct and fully subordinated to the research concept. However, one may have some doubts about the order of the content presented by the Author in particular chapters of the dissertation and the volume of some chapters. I will refer to them in the further parts of the review. What is more, the Author succeeds in keeping the right **proportion** of the empirical and theoretical part of the dissertation, in favour of the extended empirical part.

In the introduction to the dissertation, the Author formulated the **purpose of the dissertation**, defined its **scope** and indicated premises for looking deeper into its subject.

The doctoral candidate emphasizes that the research problem has emerged from his observations and fascination with the phenomenon, as well as from his contact with the group. What is surprising Author repeatedly formulates the aim of the dissertation in slightly different forms and places it in different parts of the dissertation. However, this goal is quite clear and aims at " *to investigate and look for evidence of the imprints that the retirees inherit to their enterprises.*" (s.8).

The above-quoted research goal is corresponding with **research question** *how does the founders' military service influence organisational culture?* (s.8)

In order to clarify the main research question, the Author also formulates detailed questions:

- Do they relate or reference themselves to their military background?
- Do they use methods similar to ones they used in their service to plan, manage, organise their venture?
- How do they do business?
- Do they confine themselves to topics they dealt with in their service?
- With whom they prefer to do business with?

The validity of the formulated questions and the stated purpose were confirmed by references to the literature. The purpose and research questions were formulated correctly, they are **clear and unambiguous** and demonstrate **cognitive significance**. They allow for identifying research tasks which together form the solution of the problem addressed by the dissertation, expressing the area, subject and scope of the literature studies and empirical research.

### **Assessment of applied research methods**

In my opinion, the research methodology applied in the doctoral dissertation is **correct**, both from the point of view of research intentions and when analysing the purpose and research questions presented in the dissertation. The doctoral candidate's rationale behind his choice of the research area and research methodologies is convincing.

The literature studies presented in the dissertation are based on 474 titles, which is rich and relevant literature of the subject, used by the Author both in footnotes and in the text of his paper. The Author has proven his knowledge of the literature on the subject, as evidenced by the right balance between classical and contemporary sources. Theoretical deliberations in the dissertation are concise and synthetic and conclusions formulated by the Author are highly inquisitive and comprehensive. The lack of rigour in the literature review process and the lack of readable summaries and conclusions from the review should be indicated as areas for improvement.

Summarising, the content of the theoretical part of the dissertation offers a solid basis for continuing deliberations in the dissertation, the Author's research approach.

The research was based on an interpretative paradigm and qualitative research methodology. In the empirical part of the dissertation, the Author used a narrative research approach -*working life stories* and semi-structured interviews.

Data was gathered on a sample of  $n=20$  companies' founders, who had experience of service in three different military commands. The Author carefully explains both the choice of the test method and the procedure of sample selection and description of the way to reach the informants and the premises behind these choices. In the data analysis procedure he used ATLAS.ti software, which deserves recognition and proves the professional research skills of the doctoral candidate.

According to the reviewer, the empirical value of the dissertation would most likely benefit from convincing justification of the sample size and explanation of how to transcribe and encode the test material.

Summarising, note that the research process was carefully designed with a great attention to detail and it is well-thought, consequent and methodologically correct. The analyses conducted

in the dissertation are supported show skilful use of methods convincing when it comes to interpretation of results.

The research approach presented in the doctoral dissertation is its strong point and promising for the doctoral candidate's future career as an independent researcher.

### **Formal Assessment and Language of the Dissertation**

Equally **positive** is my formal assessment of the dissertation. It consists of 269 pages including the acknowledgements, four chapters, references, an annex with interview dispositions, a list of figures and a list of tables.

The Author's style of writing is very fluent. The doctoral candidate is well read, well-acquainted with the subject area of their dissertation and his vocabulary is very rich. Note that the doctoral candidate very carefully defines some concepts of key importance for the dissertation.

However proofreading the text could help to make it more comprehensible and readable. It contains a lot of very complex sentences whose structure has the features (e.g. word order) of the Author's native language. It would be a good idea to improve the paper's cohesion and clarity. The style should be a bit more impersonal and ideas expressed in a more concise manner. There are also some minor grammatical problems (e.g. incorrectly used articles) which should be handled.

To conclude, it is worth noting that, in terms of formal requirements, **the dissertation was prepared correctly**. In his reasoning, the doctoral candidate demonstrates the skill of effective presentation of analysed phenomena, correctness and accuracy of his conclusions. Having carefully read the dissertation, I find that, as a result of literature studies and reliable qualitative analyses, the Author **achieved his goal by solving the research problem effectively**.

### **Assessment of Technical Aspects of the Dissertation**

The dissertation consists of four chapters. The content of the chapters is adequate to their titles and corresponds closely to the assumptions and the objective of the dissertation.

In the introduction, the doctoral candidate showed the cognitive gap justifying the choice of the dissertation's subject, indicated the research assumptions, posed research questions, defined the research object and presented the research method. The content of the introduction is fundamentally correct, however, there are reservations about its structure divided into subsections, where there are no smooth transitions between them. Moreover, some content is repeated, e.g. the formulation of the purpose of the dissertation. The purpose appears in a slightly different wording several times and requires unification. Moreover, it is surprising to start the considerations from

the definition problems of organizational culture, instead of, for example, from the justification of the topic. Redrafting the introduction would make it more readable.

The **first chapter** of the dissertation entitled *Literature Review* is divided into 6 subchapters. It is difficult to find a justification for separating the first of them (1.1.) as a one-page introduction. The following chapters have a more similar volume. In the next chapter (1.2), the Author has introduced the concept of organizational culture by presenting typologies of cultures according to different Authors. The literature review discusses aspects of organizational culture from sociological, psychological and anthropological perspective. In the last part of the subsection, the focus is on methodical aspects of culture research. It is surprising, however, that instead of his own summary, the Author limits himself to presenting (although quite broadly) the view of one of the quoted authors, treating her conclusions as a kind of summary of the chapter. In this chapter there is also a short subchapter explaining the relations between organisational culture and organisational climate. In the opinion of the reviewer, reading the chapter allows to get acquainted with the complexity of the issue of organizational culture with its dimensions and models to a satisfactory degree. However, sometimes one can get the impression of a random order of the presented content. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to refine the structure of the chapter in order to make the presentation clearer.

In the next part (1.3.), the doctoral candidate presented research focusing on the role of founders in creating the organizational culture of the enterprise. In the reviewer's opinion, the selection of the content of this chapter is correct. It allows to get acquainted with the richness of theory and the multitude of perspectives of considering the role of founders and its influence on the assumed organisation. The value of the chapter would be enriched by the inclusion of a synthetic summary of the conducted considerations. I also have a positive opinion of the next subchapter (1.4) concerning total institutions and the impact of their experience on professional careers. Noteworthy is the presentation of research concerning the patterns of adaptation after the end of a military career. Apart from their cognitive value, the quoted research also provides evidence for the existence of transfer of experience acquired in a military organization to the way of functioning after the end of service. In chapter (1.5), the doctoral candidate focuses on the richness and diversity of the organisational culture of military units. In addition, the factors that determine the diversity and uniqueness of the cultures under consideration are widely discussed, distinguishing among others: orientation (occupational and institutional), different ideas about how a combat mission is handled, leadership, ethnic factors, whether it is combat or non-combatant units etc. He stresses that the effect of this differentiation is the existence of subcultures within the military units. As a reviewer, I must point out that the title should not contain an abbreviation



(chapter 1.5.1), while the abbreviations in the text should be developed at first use. It is difficult to find consistency in the chapter entitled *Some special cases of the IDF*. It presents two indirectly related issues, i.e. the transfer of competences developed during service and the resulting benefits for individuals and organisations, as well as organisational changes in the IDF affecting the sub-cultural diversity of army on veteran-founded organisations. In this chapter, I find the considerations on the processes of socialisation and assimilation of common values in military institutions particularly interesting. The way the issues are discussed in the above chapters is comprehensive and the substantive level is adequate for doctoral theses. The area for improvement is also in this case the structure and readability of the chapters. Furthermore, in my view, Chapter 1.5.2. is substantially part of the considerations in Chapter 1.4. A merger of Chapters 1.4 and 1.5 could also be considered.

In the next chapter (1.6.) the Author embeds his research within two theories of legitimacy and identification. He points to the importance of the strategy of obtaining legitimacy for a newly established business, which determines survival and determines the possibility of success. In this context, he refers to two elements particularly valued in the Israeli culture related to the experience of military service, i.e. common ties and the essence of business. Another much broader subchapter concerns the theory of identification. It discusses the theories that are important for the conducted deliberations: identity theory and social identity theory. The next part of the chapter focuses on explaining the notions of organisational identity and military identity, which can be treated as an example of organisational identity in relation to a particular designation - military organisations. These reflections provide a solid basis for distinguishing the construction of military identity. The justification for considering military identity under Israeli conditions in relation to individual units like a brigade/regiment, or even a specific battalion, flotilla or air force was also indicated.

In the last chapter, the doctoral candidate once again pointed out the complexity of the issues presented and the difficulties of definition and methodology in its examination. He also stressed the importance and relevance of filling the research gap related to the influence of military service in Israel on organisational culture of a company founded by a veteran.

Reading the entire theoretical chapters of the dissertation allows us to conclude that the Author has a broad knowledge of both theoretical and practical issues raised in the dissertation. The content presented in this chapter is interesting, up to date and satisfactory from the point of view of the dissertation's objectives, as well as constituting an appropriate basis for presenting the results of empirical research.

The areas for improvement are worth mentioning: unification of the structure of the theoretical part of the dissertation and their arrangement through the inclusion of summaries and broader references integrating the individual chapters of the work, which would facilitate the following of the Author's argument.

**Chapter Two** entitled *Research Questions, Framework and Research Methodology* presents the research process and its assumptions. The Author stresses that the choice of the research method results from the adopted assumptions constituting the foundations of the research and is closely related to the nature of the research questions asked. He convincingly justifies subsequent research steps. In the first part of the chapter, he presents an interesting review of quantitative and qualitative methods used for the study of organizational culture.

In the next part it describes the research project, the process of selection of informants and description of the sample, the way of data collection and analysis. Among them, it is worth emphasizing the care taken in selecting criteria of informants: the founder or president of the start-up, having the military background of a veteran selected for research of military units. In the last part of the chapter, it also indicates the limitations of the approach used, with a division into: methodology, sample selection and the researcher.

In the description of the research methodology there is some excessive content and not fully understandable, e.g. what the Author meant by writing a sentence: *I wanted to make the sample as small as possible to make the research goal achievable and manageable from the point of view of time for interviews, transcription and analysis.* The Author is aware that in the case of qualitative methodology, the researcher should continue collecting data until the results begin to repeat themselves and no new categories appear, which is called *category saturation* and refers to this issue in the first part of the chapter devoted to the presentation of research results. However, I wonder why not in the methodological part.

In order to make the description clearer, it would be worthwhile to distinguish the stages of the research process. It would also be valuable to describe more carefully the way data is managed (the way data is prepared, the rules of transcription), the method of coding and the purpose of using ATLAS. ti. software.

**Chapter three** entitled *Research results* includes a presentation of collected empirical data. While presenting the results, the Author adopted a clear structure with a division into the results from veterans from particular units: Air Force, Navy, Signals Corps. In each of the three parts a description of particular categories describing organizational culture and narration shared by entrepreneurs whose military background was similar. Each of the parts was finished with a synthetic summary. The value of this chapter is the accuracy of the Author's conclusions.

Moreover, consistent application of the accepted terms and concepts. It is also worth noting the emphasis on showing the embeddedness of the conclusions drawn in the research results through an unquestionable selection of quotations. This part of the work is clearly positive for me.

Its value could be further enhanced by the definition of the employed descriptive categories and an attempt at a wider graphic presentation of the results obtained, e.g. summaries in the form of tables.

In the last **fourth chapter**, entitled **Discussion, conclusions and recommendations**, which is a summary of the research, the Author answers the research question by pointing out that the results obtained in the study of veterans of individual units allow concluding that military service experience has an impact on the organisational culture of the companies established by veterans. As a confirmation of this conclusion, the Author presents on page 210 a table showing a comparison of the main research findings concerning individual units in relation to the type of service provided. In the following part of the paper he discusses the results in relation to the isolated characteristics of the conducted business, i.e.: financing, planning, lean company, outsourcing and others, as well as homogeneity, narratives, and military as a total institution. It would be worth explaining the criteria for the selection of these categories as being worthy of a broader and distinct description.

Note that the Author showed **significant awareness of limitations** in his research approach which allows him also to **identify further directions of potential research** in the field. It is worth adding that in this part of the Author has included numerous tabular shots and drawings, which is a useful supplement to the text.

A valuable addition to this part of the work would also be an attempt to answer the research questions and indicate his own original contribution to the management science and practice. From the reviewer's obligation: it is surprising that the table on page 226 has not been described and included in the list of tables.

To sum up, the doctoral candidate's diligence in research, familiarity with the rules for conducting research and method used to analyse research results deserve recognition. The few reviewer's comments do not undermine the importance of the dissertation and are offered as a contribution in the academic debate with the intention of learning more about the research problem described by the Author.

It would be important to get answers to the following questions from the point of view of deepening the issues covered and better understanding the Author's views:

The direct involvement of the researcher implies the necessity to control one's own bias. The Author has repeatedly indicated in his dissertation that he is aware of these limitations, e.g. pp.



128-129. It would be interesting to summarize the initial assumptions and indicate how they could affect the way the research is conducted and the results obtained, and what actions have been taken to limit bias?

Which of the results obtained can be explained based on the characteristics of the Israeli national culture? The Author, for example, pointed out on page 217 that *modest and lean conduct* is related to the dimension of indulgence versus restraint, without explaining his position.

What practical implications can be identified from the research?

### **Final Conclusions**

Appreciating the approach followed in the dissertation and expressing my positive opinion on the results of the research and analyses, I strongly believe that Moshe Marghalit's work provides an original solution to the scientific problem and fills the existing knowledge gap on the transfer of the military background of founders to the organizational culture of the business entity he runs.

To support my position, let me only emphasise:

- the importance, relevance and cognitive relevance of the issues addressed,
- the application of a research approach and methodology appropriate to the purpose of the work,
- conducting conclusions which significantly enriches the knowledge of the undertaken

According to the reviewer, the doctoral candidate has mastered general theoretical knowledge of management sciences and has the ability to conduct independent research. Moreover, he has demonstrated the ability to: correctly formulate the original topic, research goal, competent embedding of considerations in the literature of the subject, correctly design and conduct the research, observe and analyse phenomena, formulate research conclusions, limitations and directions for further research. To sum up, the dissertation **fulfils the requirements of doctoral theses** specified in the Act on Academic Degrees and Title of 14 March 2003, as amended and **can form the grounds for awarding the degree of a doctor of social sciences in the discipline of management sciences and quality.**

On the basis of the above-presented arguments, I apply to the Council of the Faculty of Management of the University of Economics in Poznań **for accepting the doctoral dissertation** of Moshe Margalit M.A entitled "The Impact of Founders' Military Background on Organisational Culture" and **admitting the dissertation** to a public defence.

