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Review of Doctoral Thesis
Knowledge Management in SME in Developing Countries (Vietnam)
by Thi Hai Hang Nguyen

The doctoral thesis in length of 179 pages follows a usual dissertation structure; it contains all the expected parts in a balanced ratio (the present state of the issue, aims, research questions and hypotheses, methods of solution, description of results, evaluation of contribution and suggestions for future research).

A) Topicality of the DT

The topicality of the doctoral thesis arises from the focus on the factors of knowledge management (KM) in small and medium enterprises (SME) in Vietnam, which is a new theme. SME enterprises are considered to be innovation initiator, and implementation of KM can contribute to that role. A similar research has not been realized yet, therefore its results can support the increase of competitiveness of Vietnamese enterprises.

B) Meeting objectives

The aims, research questions and hypotheses are covered in Chapter 4. The basic aim, which is further developed in research questions, is the research of the present state of KM in Vietnamese SME, together with the analysis of the influence of set parameters on KM development and determining the activities which support KM implementation. The research tests out 5 basic hypotheses, which are described in great detail.

To fulfill the aims, research methodology was suggested and adequate methods and procedures were specified. The methodology includes several research phases and conducting a case study. It stems from a preliminary mini-research, which preceded the actual research, testing of hypotheses and explanation of achieved results.

The method of research is sophisticated; and it leads to fulfilling of all set aims. The answers to research questions and assessment of hypotheses are relevant to the data acquired from 110 enterprises (from the total of 380 enterprises that were asked for participation in the research). The hypotheses were tested against the results of a statistical survey, and the conclusions were thoroughly reasoned.

I consider the aims of the thesis to be fulfilled.

C) Stages of solution, results and practical contributions of the author

Whilst analyzing the KM in enterprise environment, it would be appropriate to mention Tomas Bata, Zlin's memorable entrepreneur and innovator, after whom the university which the author of the thesis attends is named. Furthermore, no specification of a successful KM implementation in an enterprise, e.g. as a "learning organization", is given.

In 3.2 there is a definition of SME in Vietnam. I would expect a mention of the perception of SME in other world regions (e.g. USA and EU) and their comparison; or, prospectively, assessment of their possible influence on the doctoral thesis research.

The results of the benchmark research show that majority of companies have other problems and needs than KM implementation, which was unknown to some of them. The fact that in such a populated country with unemployment rate around 4% there is a lack of workforce – presumably of qualified specialists (which was not directly stated in the doctoral thesis) - presents surprising findings.

The core of the doctoral thesis and its biggest practical asset is a detailed analysis of the state of KM in Vietnamese SME. A well-arranged report on actual state of KM is given thanks to detailed statistical survey in given parameters, a correlation analysis of selected parameters and accurate assessment. Based on the analysis, measures that could support KM development in SME are specified.

The ability of the author of the thesis to perform independent scientific work is proven especially by her analytical and synthetic approach to testing of hypotheses. The results are fully provable.

I have only discovered one inconsistency in the text: between the number of hypotheses on pp. 54 – 56 (5) and 7.2.2 (6).

I agree with the conclusion that some hypotheses cannot be assessed due to an insufficient number of respondents.

Motivations for KM development that are stated in Chapter 8 (obtained from questionnaires and interviews) could be developed in a set of possible measures.

D) Importance for practice and development of the field of science

The assets of the thesis are assessed in the conclusion (Chapter 9), and they are acceptable. I consider the methodology of the research of KM status in Vietnamese SME to be a decisive asset in the theory development. Furthermore, the analysis of the current situation of SME and KM in Vietnam and the proposal of measures for KM use and development represent significant practical assets.

E) Presentation of the thesis and the level of language

The presentation of the doctoral thesis is at an appropriate level. In my opinion, the level of language is adequate, but I am not a native speaker of English.

F) Author's publications

The list of Ms. Thi Hai Hang Nguyen's published articles in the previous 3 years contains 7 items on the topic pertaining to that of her doctoral thesis. It is a creditable number.

G) Conclusion

In conclusion, Ms. Thi Hai Hang Nguyen has submitted a high quality doctoral thesis that proves her ability of independent scientific work, and therefore I recommend the doctoral thesis to be accepted for defense, and subsequently, after a successful doctoral thesis defense, to award the author a Ph.D. degree.

When defending thesis, please pay special attention to the following:
1. How is SME perceived in other world regions (e.g. USA and EU)? Compare to SME in Vietnam and assess their possible influence on the results of doctoral thesis research.
2. Clarify concept of a "learning organization", give an example of such organization.

Brno, October 24, 2011