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**The review of Orit Rivka Lehrer Kanfo's PhD thesis 'Application on Feedback Conversation for the Efficiency of Interpersonal Communication in Teaching in Higher Education' written under the supervision of prof. UAM dr hab. Barbary Jankowiak**

The topic of Ms. Orit Rivka Lehrer Kanfo's PhD thesis concerns the application of feedback conversation for increasing the efficiency of interpersonal communication in academic teachers' teaching process. This topic is important and has significance for the development of teaching in higher education contexts. Academic teachers' didactic competencies, including communication competencies, remain a relatively underexplored area (Blömeke et al. 2013), as most research on teaching concerns levels below higher education. Academic teachers often combine the spheres of research and education in their work. It is worth noting that it is usually the former which is subject to tight control and evaluation, whereas the latter - teaching - is usually evaluated based on student ratings, which tend to be very general.

Studying academic teachers' didactic competences is thus a challenging task for an early-career researcher. In this context, the Author's use of the action research methodology is of particular note. Action research requires knowledge and reflection, both on the part of the researcher as well as their subjects. Social imagination, which determines the accurate perception of problems in a given environment and the design of their solution, is also important in such studies (Smolińska-Theiss, Theiss 2013, p.15). It is worth noting that the Author has met the goals of their research project very efficiently.

The dissertation totals 262 pages, out of which 230 comprise the main text. The main text is divided into the introduction and four chapters. The fifth chapter presents the discussion and conclusions. The dissertation also includes a list of tables, graphs, the abstract, the reference list, and the appendices. The dissertation also opens with the acknowledgments, which were not included in the table of contents.

The dissertation is comprised of three main parts. The first is the introduction, together with two theory chapters, where the Author introduces the reader to the dissertation's topic.

The first chapter, 'Quality of Teaching in Higher Education,' presents the current state of the modern institution of the university and the main challenges it is facing. As the Author writes, 'Client orientation is the approach in higher education in the Western world. The students today are defined as clients, and they consider it to be their right to receive quality teaching' (p. 12). A learner-centred approach requires academics to focus on didactic competencies necessary for providing high-quality education. In this aspect, the Author characterizes two approaches to education quality. One is focused on the students' achievements, while the other - on the teaching process itself. Next, issues related to the traditional approach to academic education and a learner-centred approach are discussed. As the Author writes, 'Learner-centred teaching' is the perception of quality teaching in higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The learner must create a learning environment that enables the students' development (Blumberg, 2016). The quality of the teaching is the key in the students; quality of education' (p.16-17). The learner-centred approach currently dominates, due to a demographic decline which universities have been struggling with for several years. Thus, recognizing the needs of the student/client is crucial. This problem is also highlighted by the Author, who characterizes contemporary students belonging to the Z and Y generations. They also discuss the principles of teaching in the digital age, as well as the question of motivating modern students.

The second chapter discusses issues of improving the quality of the teaching process. The Author presents elements of interpersonal communication as well as the role of feedback and dialogical feedback in teaching quality. The topic of reflection in the teaching process is also discussed. The Author writes, after Van Woerkoem (2003), that 'Reflection enables to learn from their [academic teachers] professional experience in a conscious and systematic manner' (p.39-40). This chapter also presents the ACTA Model of Reflection and Kolb's experimental learning theory.

Summing up the theoretical introduction of the dissertation, it bears noting that it is coherent and concise. The Author leads the reader through subsequent important theoretical aspects of the research problem. It testifies to their selective and analytic competences.

The second part of the dissertation is the methodological chapter. The Author begins with a rather extended discussion of the qualitative methodology in social sciences research. They also present the basic assumptions of action research studies. It is worth noting that the methodological chapter describes each subsequent stage of the research process, which shows the Author's methodological knowledge. The study aims and detailed research questions are derived from and justified by the approaches introduced in the theoretical introduction. The method, techniques, and tools used in the project have been selected appropriately for its subject

and aim. The description of the sample and a clear description of the procedure are also worth mentioning. Here, I would like to point out that the methodological chapter is written carefully and with forethought. It is logical, precise, and in accordance with the procedure of creating the methodology of the research process. The Author shows clear awareness of the aim and rationale of their study.

The subsection devoted to research ethics contained in this part of the dissertation also bears mention. There, the Author shows a careful axiological reflection and sensitivity towards issues related to human rights within the action research methodology. Such an approach is evidence of the Author's concern for the study participants, who should not be harmed in any way due to their engagement in the data collection process (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2013).

In the third part of the dissertation, the Author presents and analyses the study results. I would like to highlight the fact that the presentation of the results is very clear and logical. The Author presents data obtained from ten participants, related to the following dimensions: organization of the lesson, the clarity of messages, contact with the target audience (students), the creation of interest, the creation of value, and the feedback conversation meaning for the lecturers. This way of presenting the results makes it easier to track the changes (or lack thereof) occurring in the individual participants. Fragments of the participants' utterances, which the Author collected at the beginning and at the end of the interviews, as well as during the feedback conversations, are also very helpful in documenting their attitudes. The Author's decision to present the data from each participants' individual feedback conversations in a table also bears mention. This is a very clear way of presenting a large amount of data obtained via conversations. An important element introduced by the Author are the summaries which conclude each subsection. They briefly present the most important conclusions of the analyses of each of the individual dimensions of interpersonal communication in the teaching process in a higher education institution.

In the final chapter of the dissertation, the Author concisely summarizes the study, discussing the results in three areas: '(1) consistent examination of the change that occurred in the dimensions of interpersonal communication during the lecture after the feedback conversations, (2) interaction of components that promote improvement in the lecturer's performances, and (3) implementation of the elements essential to the professional development' (p. 215). The discussion is presented appropriately. The chapter also mentions issues related to the practical implementation of the results. It is worth noting that the Author is aware of the fact that the suggested changes will not have immediate results: 'When the change in the lecturer's performances did not happen in the lesson after the feedback

conversation, it cannot be concluded that there will be no change; rather it is necessary to understand that the implementation takes time' (p. 218). This is an important quality of a researcher who is aware of the nature of the change process.

The final chapter also reviews the shortcomings of the research project. The Author seems to be aware of the limitations of the chosen method, which testifies to their critical reflection on the study. They also present a list of recommendations for further areas of study within the discussed topic.

In sum, the dissertation is rich in content and has a good, clear structure which allows the reader to follow the Author's argumentation. It is written in a correct style and contains all the elements typical for research works. This is evidence of the Author's methodological and research competences. They also display an analytic mindset and extensive knowledge on the topic in question. Additionally, they show proficiency in the action research method. They are conscious of both the advantages and limitations of this approach. It is worth noting that the dissertation also has significant applied value, as its results can be implemented in everyday teaching practice of academic teachers.

I recognize the scientific and organizational worth of the dissertation. However, I offer a few suggestions which the Author should, in my opinion, consider when preparing a book:

- the work contains grammar and style errors which should be eliminated. The text contains many typos.
- It is worth paying attention to the Author's language. In many instances in the dissertation, the male grammatical gender ("he") is used without including the female gender ("she") or using gender-neutral terms ("they"). Academic works should pay particular attention to issues of gender equality; therefore, I suggest revising the text with this in mind.
- Page 5 repeats the same fragment.
- It would be worthwhile to expand the section presenting the current state of universities. There exists a rich literature on the problems currently faced by universities. I suggest consulting such publications as, among others, F. Furedi, B. Readings, H.A. Giroux, H. Menzies and J. Newson, A. Whelan et al., Z. Melosik, O. Szwabowski. It would be interesting to include a critical analysis of the current situation of universities.
- The title of Chapter 5 is incorrect, 'Final conclusions and discussion.' It suggests that the conclusions appear before the discussion, which is unwarranted and which does not reflect the actual order of information presented in this chapter. I suggest dividing this

chapter into two separate ones, with one devoted to the discussion of the results. In my view, this part would benefit from an expansion and the inclusion of a critical analysis.

Summing up, I can state that the PhD dissertation of Orit Rivka Lehrer Kanfo, written under the supervision of prof. UAM dr hab. Barbara Jankowiak, meets the requirements for dissertations contained in Art. 187 paragraph. 1 and 2 of the Law on Higher Education and Science from July 20, 2018 (Journal of Laws 2018, item 1668, as amended). I am applying for admission of Orit Rivka Lehrer Kanfo to further stages of the procedure.

Anna Babicka-Hirkus

#### References:

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