

## REFeree's REVIEW

<b>Program:</b>	Master of International Technology and Innovation Management (MITIM)
<b>Student:</b>	Naumov Egor
<b><u>Title of thesis:</u></b>	Knowledge modeling for innovative companies: the case of business incubator

<b>Justification of the topic choice. Accuracy in defining the aim and objectives of the thesis.</b> Justification of the topic choice; accuracy in defining the aim and tasks of the thesis; originality of the topic and the extent to which it was covered; alignment of the thesis' topic, aim and objectives.	5	4	3	2
<b>Structure and logic of the text flow.</b> Logic of research; full scope of the thesis; alignment of thesis' structural parts, i.e. theoretical and empirical parts.	5	4	3	2
<b>Quality of analytical approach and quality of offered solution to the research objectives.</b> Adequacy of objectives coverage; ability to formulate and convey the research problem; ability to offer options for its solution; application of the latest trends in relevant research are for the set objectives.	5	4	3	2
<b>Quality of data gathering and description.</b> Quality of selecting research tools and methods; data validity adequacy; adequacy of used data for chosen research tools and methods; completeness and relevance of the list of references.	5	4	3	2
<b>Scientific aspect of the thesis.</b> Independent scientific thinking in solving the set problem/objectives; the extent to which the student contributed to selecting and justifying the research model (conceptual and/or quantitative), developing methodology/approach to set objectives.	5	4	3	2
<b>Practical/applied nature of research.</b> Extent to which the theoretical background is related to the international or Russian managerial practice; development of applied recommendations; justification and interpretation of the empirical/applied results.	5	4	3	2
<b>Quality of thesis layout.</b> Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defense, correct layout of tables, figures, references.	5	4	3	2

Each item above is evaluated on the following scale, as applicable: 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor.

### **Additional comments:**

Business incubators are important initiatives aimed to support new venture development and, what is even more important, their safe growth. This activity is in emergent phase in Russia, and, therefore, any research that could help to improve performance of the business incubators, and, therefore, support new ventures, is extremely topical. Therefore, the focus of the current master thesis is relevant and important. The author carried out qualitative empirical research, which is challenging in Russia due to general companies' resistance to reveal any managerial information, and author's efforts for empirical data collection need to be appreciated. Practical recommendations on how to improve the work of a business incubator that the author developed based on his empirical study appear important and applicable not only for the particular business incubator that was involved in the current research project but also to other business incubators. Therefore, the author's study has a potential for a positive impact on managerial practice in business incubators. However, a number of critical comments arise from this study. They are groups in several sections as follows:

#### Literature review/theoretical background:

The literature review lacks depth and coherence to support the main focus of the study. The reviewed literature on business incubation is predominantly 20-25 years old, though this field of study has been vastly developing recently. The literature on knowledge processes in business incubators is barely touched. Also, a number of topics covered in the review appear to be redundant to the current focus of the thesis. E.g., the impact of business incubation on performance of incubator residents' performance is not addressed in empirical data at all. Or, it is unclear why author pays special attention to on knowledge acquisition process (p.22) in the theoretical part, as in the empirical part he seems to talk of more generic term of "knowledge flow" that, according to the author, includes "sharing, acquiring, transmitting, and receiving" (p.42). Anyway, the discussion of knowledge acquisition literature is very superficial (p.22).

To summarize, such discrepant literature/theory review sections lead to the fact that after reading the theoretical part, it remains unclear what aspect of business incubation the author actually wants to study.

Structure and the logic of the text flow:

While empirical part of the thesis appears quite coherent and logical, the other parts give an impression of a hectic mosaic of pieces of the text that are not linked to each other, neither by the author's efforts nor by the main focus of the study itself. E.g.,

- it appears very illogical to discuss first knowledge visualization tools (pp.14-19), and only after that discuss what is knowledge, why it is important, and what types of knowledge exist (pp.20-24).
- it is unclear why the theoretical part is divided into 2 subsections, first being "Literature review", and second - "Theoretical background of the study".
- The discussion of knowledge visualization tools, as well of knowledge capture and acquisition models (if the author could argue clearly how the latter are related to the focus of the thesis) should have been moved to the research methodology section, as they are used by the author as tools to reach the aim of the thesis, but are not related directly to the key research question posed.
- There is a number of unnecessary repetitions, both re-iteration of similar content (e.g., discussions of what is knowledge and what types of knowledge exist, pp. 20-21 and then pp. 23-24) and exact replication of pieces of the text (e.g., pp.12 and 13)
- after the "Storytelling" sub-section the text unexpectedly jumps back to incubator studies (p.19).

Research methodology and design:

Research methodology is not justified enough, the thesis lacks proper references to research methodology literature. It remains unclear what were the research questions that were asked during the interview. There are few comments to research design as well:

- the author mentions he interviewed 5 consultants, but naming 3 of them he says they were ALL consultants working for the business incubator the time of the research. So it is unclear who were the other 2 interviewees (p.35).
- it is also unclear why the business incubator residents were interviewed only on the last stage, and whether the interviewed companies (11% of the whole population) form the representative sample. Both issues undermine the reliability of the study.

Findings:

Findings lack analytical depth. E.g., when the author presents the types of knowledge that entrepreneurial companies have to deal with being in incubator (p.39-40), they are presented as unstructured and unsorted list. Further the author proposes the classification of these types of knowledge, but lists of items in the initial list and in the classification map (p.41) do not fully coincide, and this fact raises a lot of questions both on methodology and analysis procedures.

Another important comment is the lack of discussion of how the author's findings are related to existing studies. The author mentions that the knowledge flows between business incubator residents appeared as "unexpected" finding of the research (p.43). This statement demonstrates the lack of author's knowledge of the business incubator literature, where such flows are widely discussed. Therefore, the theoretical contribution of the thesis remains unclear.

Master thesis of Naumov Egor meets the requirements of Master of International Technology and Innovation Management (MITIM) program, and deserves a "satisfactory" grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

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