

Katowice, 9th of June, 2022

*Prof. Wojciech Dyduch
University of Economics of Economics
Department of Entrepreneurship*

REVIEW

of the PhD dissertation “Immigrant Entrepreneurship: Indian Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Poland” written by mgr Mansour Esmaeil Zaei at the University of Warsaw under the supervision of prof. Tomasz Makowski, Faculty of Management, Department of Entrepreneurship and Management Systems

1. Assessment of the selected research area, research problem, and dissertation goals

Recently, immigrant entrepreneurship has become a phenomenon of global interest, and scholars call for continued research in this area concerning unexplored country contexts (Dabić et al., 2020). Many policymakers believe that attracting immigrant entrepreneurs is a step to stimulate the level of entrepreneurship (Kerr & Kerr, 2017). However, since immigrant entrepreneurship research in Europe is dominated by studies of the Netherlands and Germany (Aliaga-Isla, Rialp, 2013) it is difficult to prepare some universal recommendation.

As research on immigrant entrepreneurship has been dominated by social scientists, who took on the perspective of ethnocultural characteristics (Kloosterman, 2000), the research on immigrant entrepreneurship in management sciences is highly sought for. What is clear is that specifically Indian immigrants have become a significant driving force in the creation of new businesses and intellectual property in the countries where they assimilate. What is unclear is the specific and context-based set of motives and entrepreneurial intents, obstacles and challenges in starting and running a business in a specific country environment.

The presented doctoral dissertation perfectly suits recently recommended research directions on country-specific immigrant entrepreneurship (Dabić et al., 2020). In Poland Indians are the fastest-growing immigrants from outside of Europe, thus analysing this group of entrepreneurs, seeking to find motives behind migrating to Warsaw, identifying opportunity recognition, looking for challenges in operating own business, definitely fills the cognitive gap.

The problem selected by the Doctoral candidate can be assessed as to-date, significant and original. The presented dissertation therefore presents an important research problem dealt with critically on a doctorate level. Mr Mansour Esmail Zaei was successful to identify the research gap, to properly define the research problem and to precisely frame the dissertation objectives. It is worth noting, that the presented dissertation has chosen qualitative data analysis, unlike majority of research studies in the field. Answering interesting research questions and identifying a conceptual framework is an added value of the thesis in question, as the methodology selection allows to present new phenomena in a natural setting, obtain direct information from research participants, and understand better the motives, reasons and intentions driving Indian immigrants' entrepreneurship in Poland.

2. Assessing the dissertation content

The dissertation is well-structured, and logically presented. The chapters create a natural sequence, from the introductory part, through theory synthesis, qualitative research, to summary, conclusions, and recommendations. The dissertation is divided into five chapters, that will be assessed below.

Chapter one serves as an introduction that provides a background for identifying the research problem. It also presents some secondary statistical data, as well as other information that frame the research problem. The introductory part presents the situation of immigrants coming to Europe, and the challenges concerning the socio-economic integration of immigrants with the local communities. It also outlines the notion of immigrant entrepreneurship and opportunities connected with this phenomenon. Mr Zaei properly and interestingly analyses the immigration flow of Indian Nationals into Poland, indicating the economic changes in Poland that accompany the process. Interesting statistical data have been presented, and some conclusions (e.g., urban concentration of immigrants) drawn. The introductory part then focuses on presenting data concerning Warsaw, as the main destination for immigrants in Poland. Finally, the introductory chapter identifies the research problem (examining the experiences of Indian immigrant entrepreneurs concerning starting up and operating in Warsaw/Poland), the research objectives (identifying new insights about Indian immigrants' activities in Poland, filling the gaps on immigrant entrepreneurship, and developing a conceptual framework as a result of qualitative analyses), and research questions (p. 8).

In my opinion Chapter one is prepared in a very good way, as it includes most of the desired fragments. Perhaps – as it is an introduction – a short indication on methodological assumptions, main paradigms, methodological approach used, as well as the thesis structure could be presented as a guiding point – the methodological aspects appear as late as in Chapter three.

The second chapter of the thesis demonstrates the results of the literature review, which is not unusual for a research approach using qualitative methods. Even though the dissertation assumes grounded theory approach as a leading perspective (research questions first), literature review can help to frame research questions and presents the existing stream of research on the key constructs, since immigrant entrepreneurship has been widely explored in the past (Dabić et al., 2020). Indeed, the second part of the dissertation presents a viable synthesis on the nature of immigrant entrepreneurship; introduces, and explores it through various perspectives and lenses (socio-psychological and economic). Every stream of the existing research has been dealt with properly and presented in a logical and detailed way. The typology of migrants presented in table 2 is a valuable proposition of the dissertation as it helps to understand the motives for migrating and somehow outlines the necessity-based and opportunity-based entrepreneurship.

The problem of intentions and motives that drive immigrants is developed further, by indicating some differences among various groups of migrants. The dissertation then naturally focuses on the entrepreneurial activity of immigrants, positing that it has gone beyond traditional small business into modern sectors and innovative areas specifically in urban areas. Next, Mr Zaei characterizes the Indian Immigrants situation in the world, basing the well-structured considerations on both reports, historical studies, and entrepreneurship literature. A similar analysis is made in the next part, concerning the entrepreneurship of Indian Immigrants in Poland.

The next fragment of Chapter two presents the immigrant entrepreneurship concepts (including the middleman minorities, enclave economies, disadvantage and cultural perspectives, as well as some models found in the literature). Some of them are really concepts, not fully-fledged theories, and some of the other concepts from the entrepreneurship field could be presented here. Perhaps it would be more natural to include these concepts in the beginning, after presenting the nature and definitions of immigrant entrepreneurship. The Indian-specific context and data then could follow. As a final part of the second chapter, the empirical studies on immigrant or ethnic entrepreneurship have been presented. Overall, the second chapter is

valuable, interesting, and written in a well-structured manner with easy-to-follow logic and style, helped by (as in other chapters) short introduction and a summary of the chapter findings.

The third chapter adequately describes the leading paradigm, research methodology and procedures applied for data collection and analysis. The doctoral candidate decided to apply grounded theory (though the dissertation starts with literature review), and to use snowball sampling for finding appropriate research participants. Fifteen interviews compose an adequate sample to fulfil the dissertation objectives, and to solve the research problem. The dissertation depicts data collection methods in detail. Designing the interview structure, theoretical sampling, conducting, and transcribing the interviews, has been designed according to the methodological rules and procedures found in the scholarly work. Similarly, the data analysis approach, the coding and categorizing done, as well as the process of theory emergence and rigor assurance leave no doubts that Mr Zaei possesses the required knowledge and competences to carry out well-designed, well-structured and rigor-based qualitative research on a high level. I can only say that I am impressed with the research workshop presented, and the logic and coherence of the research procedure that Mr Zaei has presented in Chapter three. The methodological assumptions and research methodology are very superbly presented and explored. The doctoral candidate proves to have acquired extensive knowledge concerning carrying out research in the interpretivist vein.

The fourth chapter – highly interesting as far as the whole dissertation content is concerned – presents research findings, specifically the identified codes, core categories and subcategories, as well as the emergent theoretical framework attempting to explain and interpret the nature of the entrepreneurship activities of Indian entrepreneurs in Poland. In order to follow more closely the researcher's interpretations, quotes from the interviews were included, that give an in-depth insights into the research participants entrepreneurial reasoning, motives and intents.

In my opinion Mr Zaei successfully answered the main research question concerning the reasons for Indian Natives migrating to Poland, and the entrepreneurship stories and routes that they experienced. The codes obtained, and the categories constructed are a valuable source for developing novel, research-based propositions. The research carried out and presented in the dissertation proves that entrepreneurial motives, opportunity recognition strategies, practices used for running the business, experienced obstacles and challenges are key factors that Indian entrepreneurship in Poland is composed of. It is also clear that some subcategories significantly shape the Indian entrepreneurship phenomenon, e.g. socio-economic development, pull and

push factors, Indian cultural background and traits, social capital, phases of business development, language and financial barriers, business environmental challenges, etc. What is important, the study considers the time of Covid-19 pandemic (proposition 8). Finally, the fifth chapter develops a conceptual framework, based on the theory generation process. It identifies unique findings of the study as foundations to the emerging theory. The chapter develops very valuable emergent theory statement, and presents essential implications for practice, as well as implications for future research. Limitations of the study are presented as well.

Overall, the research carried out, and the 20 propositions formulated in the study explain deeply the phenomenon of the urban-area Indian immigrants' entrepreneurship in Poland. To my knowledge, this doctoral thesis is the pioneer interpretation and explanation of the entrepreneurial activities undertaken in Poland by the immigrants from India. In this sense, the dissertation is a novel study that successfully explored the context-specific immigrant entrepreneurship research problem.

3. Assessing the research objectives completion

The dissertation in question is written in the interpretivist perspective, thus the theory interlaces with research, the new concepts evolve, and emerge as the final conceptual framework. As a result, the thesis inspires researchers, entrepreneurs and policy makers by indicating what are the experiences of the fast growing group of immigrant entrepreneurs in Poland. The original framework, based on the codes, categories and subcategories identified throughout a methodologically-adequate, merit-based and interesting study, make this dissertation a pioneer incentive in the immigrant entrepreneurship field.

The identified research gap, the research problem defined, together with the objectives proposed have been all fulfilled throughout a well-written, well-structured, logical and easy-to-follow dissertation, based on the *de rigueur* methodology. The research intent has been appropriately developed and addressed, which resulted in a new emergent concept worth further investigating.

In my opinion, all the goals defined in the dissertation have been fulfilled in the study, which has a high cognitive and methodological value. It can serve further theoretical explorations, while the propositions can be a basis for quantitative research. The dissertation is a valuable contribution for immigrant entrepreneurship theory, serves as a set of

recommendations for immigrants starting up in Poland, while for policy makers indicates some room for regulatory improvement.

Generally speaking, Mr Zaei proves to be a competent researcher in entrepreneurship, who can apply and use the qualitative methods properly. He has synthetically presented the existing theoretical findings in the field and was able to pose new research questions that allowed him to design and successfully carry out qualitative research, as well as offer a new emergent concept, together with propositions for further research.

The doctoral dissertation in question represents a significant, novel and difficult research intent concerning the experiences of the Indian immigrants' entrepreneurship in Poland. It raises many interesting questions, and I am curious of the doctoral candidate's opinion. Here are some further questions that could be tackled during the discussion on the dissertation:

1. Have you explored the role of human capital that has been acquired in the origin and host countries in immigrant self-employment? What are the strategies of Indian immigrants in Poland in comparison to immigrants from other countries?
2. Are there any specific characteristics of Indian immigrants acquired in pre- and post-migration periods (not only in Poland, but in Great Britain for example)?
3. Which entrepreneurship theory/theories in your opinion could be a starting point to design a quantitative study on immigrant entrepreneurship?
4. Are there any specific recommendations for policy makers that could enhance the economic growth and intellectual capital increase through immigrant assimilation in Poland?

4. Conclusion

In my opinion the presented doctoral dissertation is written in a scholarly and methodologically appropriate manner. The Author has proven to possess the knowledge in the field, as well as has shown the research competences. The scientific level of the study can be positively assessed, thus proving that Mr Mansour Esmail Zaei has all the necessary skills to solve original research problems on the doctoral level in the management science. Specifically, the following elements of the dissertation can be highlighted:

- Relatively extensive (as for qualitative approach) analysis of theoretical foundations concerning immigrant entrepreneurship,

- Proper identification of research gap, research intent/problem and research objectives,
- Methodologically adequate research design and empirical study sequence using qualitative methods,
- Interesting codes, categories, and subcategories identified,
- Original conceptual framework concerning Indian immigrant's entrepreneurial experiences in Poland,
- Rich content, valuable and extensive empirical data, original conclusions and recommendations.

Concluding, in my opinion the PhD dissertation "Immigrant Entrepreneurship: Indian Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Poland" written by mgr Mansour Esmaeil Zaei at the University of Warsaw under the supervision of prof. Tomasz Makowski, Faculty of Management, Department of Entrepreneurship and Management Systems fully corresponds to the 179 article, paragraph 1 of the Law of Higher Education and Science (3rd July 2018, Official Law Gazette, position 1669 with further changes).

Hereby, I am recommending the Scientific Council of the Management and Quality Studies at the University of Warsaw to accept the dissertation for the doctoral defense and further proceedings. Moreover, taking into consideration the scholarly level of the study, I would like to recommend the work for the appropriate award.



- 1) Dabić, M., Vlačić, B., Paul, J., Dana, L.P., Sahasranamam, S., Glinka, B. (2020): Immigrant entrepreneurship: A review and research agenda, *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 113, p. 25-38.
- 2) Kerr, S. P., & Kerr, W. R. (2017). Immigrant entrepreneurship. *Measuring entrepreneurial businesses: Current knowledge and challenges*, (75), 187-249.
- 3) Rocío Aliaga-Isla (PhD) & Alex Rialp (PhD) , *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* (2013): Systematic review of immigrant entrepreneurship literature: previous findings and ways forward, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development: An International Journal*.