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Review of **Agnė Diana Liubertaitė** Doctoral Dissertation in Social Sciences, Education: "Innovative Organizational Education in the Self Implementation of School Networking: Processes, Participants and Competences"

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Thank you for the opportunity to review the dissertation from Agnė Diana Liubertaitė, titled "Innovative Organisational Education in the Self Implementation of School Networking: Processes, Participants and Competences." In the review that follows, my comments are intended as both evaluative and constructive for further work in this area. Please keep in mind the limitations of this review: first, I am reviewing only a summary of the dissertation, rather than the dissertation as a whole, so that many of my questions have to do with lack of evidence offered in the summary, but that may be in the larger dissertation; second, even though the summary I was given is in English (and I speak no Lithuanian), there are likely language issues in my reading of the summary having to do with meaning and nuance that may impact my understanding of the claims. As much as possible, this review follows the template suggested in the review form provided to me, and will also offer additional comments at the end of my review. Overall, I found the topic to be timely and significant. I believe the title matches the content, although I must admit to some confusion over the term "innovative organisational education." Perhaps this is meant to distinguish innovation at the organizational level (I might say "administrative level") from the classroom level, or to highlight networking across organizations? In American English, I think we would understand

this as "innovative educational organizations" (since I do not understand "organisational education"), but I assume that we have the same conception of the intended topic. The information provided in the summary was comprehensive even though, as noted above, many summative claims did not include supporting evidence, which I assume is in the actual dissertation. I did not see a list of keywords in English, so I apologize that I cannot comment on the suitability of those that were in Lithuanian. The dissertation draws on extant research, synthesizing much of it into a new contribution to our collective knowledge on innovation processes. Moreover, it indeed broadens the context of empirical analysis by applying this to an area that has not been studied as often. The organization of the summary is aligned with structures commonly used in research reports in this field. Likewise, the formulation of the problem, aims and objectives were clear and well organized. The review of the extant literature was comprehensive if not exhaustive, and the research methodology and approach were coherent, well-grounded, and appropriate. The dissertation clearly explained the justification for the organization of the research presentation, and the illustrative materials were useful, clear, and effectively presented, although I do not know enough about APA requirements for illustrative materials to comment on their alignment with those standards. The references, though, certainly did follow APA standards. With few exceptions (noted below), I found the discussion of the empirical evidence, analysis and findings to be appropriate, and the conclusion and recommendations were well-grounded in the evidence and literature presented in the summary. As noted, the summary in English was excellent and very comprehensible. What follows, then, is additional notes from my review of the summary. I would have benefited from a clearer definition of innovation. Is it "improving"? "changing" (p. 2)? Is it "to find novelties" (p. 12)? Is an "innovative school" one that is a RESULT of innovation, or one that PRODUCES innovation? If an innovation is "proven," is it still innovative? At one point, the summary notes that there are many understandings of the term, which is correct. But it would be useful to have a better understanding of what the author intends as the working definition for this research. However, the summary is correct in noting that extant research typically focuses on innovation at the classroom level. But for that reason, I was confused by the concluding recommendation that such solutions be "embedded at the managerial level" (p. 34; perhaps the confusion has to do with the vague term "embedded," since that may mean they are generated there – which I would doubt – or that they be institutionalized there, which I would not recommend). I would question the claim (p. 2) that "different positioning of schools…naturally leads to competition," since schools can be positioned in ways that promote cooperation instead. Likewise, the assertion that trust is "increasingly related to competition" may be true as a trend (although no evidence for that trend was provided in the summary), but that does not reflect the logic of competition, where a lack of trust may motivate competing parties. However, I agree that there is a lack of evidence that competition has provoked desirable responses in

schools (p. 4), and that trust can be related to innovation. Overall, the dissertation is focused on innovation processes. The author appears to assume that these processes can be efficiently managed to produce innovation. That may be true. However, in my own research, which focuses more on innovation in quasi-markets, I have found that the key is not structuring the particular processes, but instead is a question of institutional environments, opportunities, (dis)incentives, and the type of "good" that we assume education to be. Therefore, I am a bit more skeptical that innovation can be "strategically managed" or its stages prescribed, nor that distinct models can be identified ("the innovative educational process"), since over-institutionalizing processes for innovation may instead impede possibilities for innovation, in my view. Indeed, innovation itself can be a messy and unpredictable process, with the outcomes not always clear or predictable. Most importantly, in the summary, I was never clear as to the empirical basis for the focus on networks, networked leadership, nor related claims about the importance of personalization, for instance (an important value, but innovation can also occur in standardizing services). Perhaps that evidence is offered in the dissertation but not the summary. Nevertheless, I would like to know more about the empirical evidence as to why networked leadership is critical for innovation. I certainly agree that networks can be useful for the dissemination of innovation, but would like to see evidence as to how networks are crucial for the production of innovation. It wasn't clear to me from the summary if the first stage of the study is based on quantitative data (as per p. 8) or qualitative data (as claimed on p. 30). Also, I did not understand the conceptualization of Image 1 (in Section 1.2.3). Is this suggestion that a school needs vocational training along with all of the other factors in order to be innovative? If a school has an "innovative learning process," might that not be enough to characterize it as an innovative school in some understandings? Similarly, some of the factors in the OECD criteria for a "good school" (Section 2.3.1) seem self-evident. If a school is "well-rated" or has a "high level of education," is it not then necessarily a good school? Additionally, it seems self-evident that networked leadership is "directly related" to the "openness of the school leaders to networking" (p. 31). It would be useful to show evidence OF and FOR networking between schools, since there are many school networks in countries from Sweden to India to Brazil, which should provide some evidence of the efficacy of such networks. Moreover, the summary asserts that "the most important features" of innovative organisational education are "human resource management and complex problem solving." I would like to see evidence for that, as well as justification for the claim that they necessarily require shared network leadership (p. 30). Without evidence, the logic of that claim is not clear to me. The summary concludes that "9 features are highlighted that describe the process of innovative education", p. 37). Again, I would question whether a single, clear process is always necessary to generate innovation, but I was unclear about the use of the word "describe." Does this mean that the presence of (some of) those features predict

innovation, or are all required for innovation to take place? At the same point, the summary asserts that parents "appreciate a unique approach that encourages experimentation." Do they? In my research, many if not most parents are suspicious of the idea of subjecting their children to innovation, and prefer established and traditional methods for their children. Later, the conclusion holds that "[i]innovative organisational education is directly related to the well-being of the students and teachers," and that "networked leadership [was] established as key concepts." I would really like to see the evidence for these claims. All that said, despite these suggestions for clarification, I would conclude overall that this dissertation – as evidenced in the summary – is a worthy contribution to our shared understanding of innovation in education. It offers a useful summary of the extant research literature, and provides descriptions of appropriate methods for generating new insights onto this issue. It was a pleasure to read, and an honor to be invited to provide this review.