



REVIEW

From Prof. Dr. Sc. PhD. Sonia Varadinova Mileva-Bojanova,

Department of "Industrial Economics and Management"
at the Faculty of Economics of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski "

Referring the participation in a scientific jury, determined by order No. 394/06.7.2022 of the Rector of the SA "D. A. Tsenov" - Svishtov and decision of the first meeting of the scientific jury from 17.06.2022.

Regarding public defence of a dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor** in the field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction: 3.8. Economy

Topic of the dissertation: "Measuring the level of financial literacy among high school students in Israel, and its impact on their economic pattern"

Author of dissertation: Yakov Itah, d03021895, doctoral student in doctoral program "Finance, money circulation, credit and insurance" (Finance)

Scientific adviser: Assoc. Prof. PhD. Anelia Radulova

This review was prepared in compliance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, the Rules for its Implementation, as procedurally all requirements were met and according to Art. 61 and Art. 64 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of the SA "D.A. Tsenov", Svishtov.

I. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

The dissertation work of doctoral student Yakov Itah is dedicated to an extremely important topic related to the measurement of financial literacy, as part of education and the building of skills and knowledge responsible for making financial decisions, managing personal financial flows, forming economic and financial stability. The narrow focus is the need to measure the financial literacy of adolescents in schools in Israel, as a prerequisite for decision-making and policies for financial education in the country and personal financial prosperity in the future. The dissertation has a volume of 227 pages. Structurally, it consists of an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, references with a total of 270 sources in English and appendices. The three chapters are well balanced, in a logical connection between each other, and each ends with formulated conclusions and summaries related to the defended thesis. Illustrative materials include a total of 16 tables and 9 figures.

The dissertation has a clearly defined object, subject, goals and objectives of the scientific research and a formulated dissertation thesis. The subject of research is the level of financial literacy among students aged 15-18 in Israel. The object of research are the problems of acquiring financial knowledge for managing personal cash flows and measuring the degree of financial literacy.

The main goal of the dissertation is to measure the level of financial literacy of students aged 15-18 and its impact on the formation of an economic decision-making model. The defended thesis is that the availability of indicators and criteria for measuring the level of financial literacy among students will support the process of acquiring specific knowledge and skills for managing personal finances, respectively financial prosperity of the individual in the future. A total of six tasks corresponding to the objectives of the dissertation were derived - measuring the level of financial literacy among students in Israel aged 15-18; bringing out the interdependence between financial knowledge, attitudes and models of financial behavior, including comparison between students with financial education and those without; survey, determination of impact factors and formation of effective and responsible financial behavior, including as part of the scope of educational programs for financial training in secondary education.

The methodology used corresponds to the specifics of the research, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, namely: observation, comparison, analysis, synthesis, inventory, systematization, classification, evaluation, critical analysis. The research was conducted online, and the sample size included 618 students from all over the country based on an author's questionnaire to assess the level of financial literacy.

II. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation.

The dissertation is devoted to a significant, topical economic problem relatively little studied in Israel. The topic is extremely complex and comprehensive, both in terms of the causal relationships between financial literacy and education in this area, and in terms of some socio-demographic and ethnic and religious characteristics of the population of Israel. The dissertation work is supported logically with a transition from the general to the particular.

The first chapter examines the role of personal finance in the financial system from a theoretical point of view in the context of institutional and neoclassical theory. Special attention is paid to personal finances and the leading factors responsible for the formation of financial literacy in a national context (cash flow management, credit, savings, investments, etc.). The data for Israel are analyzed in terms of consumer and financial behavior of households, compared to the banking system according to official statistics. Separate attention is also paid to the impact of Covid-19 on the economy and household finances, including loan repayment relief. The final part is devoted to the transition from personal finance management to financial literacy education, with a focus on OECD recommendations and tools for measuring financial literacy in education. Specifics in Israel are highlighted, including the establishment of a specialized financial education unit in the Ministry of Finance (2011), whose role is to coordinate the issue of financial education and prepare a comprehensive national policy plan to promote financial education and increase financial literacy.

The second chapter is devoted to financial literacy as a prerequisite for effective management of personal financial flows. A comparative analysis of secondary data from research conducted in the country and in the world was made. The PhD student demonstrates a high level of familiarity with the subject, results of similar studies conducted in other countries (Germany, USA, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Italy, Finland, Brazil and others) and studies at the international level by such organizations as the OECD, PISA and The World Bank. This provides a broad overview of the various financial literacy assessment tools and indicators, as well as outlining prior assumptions and hypotheses about the level of financial literacy in Israel. Attention is paid to the degree of correlation between financial literacy, financial education and economic behavior. Financial education programs in Israel are subject to critical analysis as being responsible for forming patterns of economic behavior among students.

The third chapter is entirely practical and includes the presentation of the results of an empirical study conducted to measure the level of financial literacy of students and its impact on economic patterns of behavior. The questionnaire includes three dependent and independent variables. The results of the study show that socio-emotional skills mainly have an influence on the behavior pattern. A weak correlation was found between financial literacy and behavior and that there was no significant difference between those who received financial training and those who did not. Deficits in terms of thrift are highlighted, as well as the existence of significant differences in financial maturity in relation to the socio-economic status of the respondents. Based on these results, the PhD student makes recommendations for the scope of personal finance curricula and training. The PhD student demonstrates a good level of knowledge in the use and processing of statistical data, including their tabular presentation.

Stylistically and linguistically, the text is not without deficiencies. Nevertheless, the language is robust, understandable in terms of the terminology and stylistics used. Citation of the used sources is correct.

The abstract is 44 pages long and reflects the content, main results and conclusions in a synthesized form. It contains all the necessary elements for an abstract of a dissertation work, including justifying the topicality of the topic, the degree of elaboration, outline of the object, subject, goals and tasks, the research thesis, structure and content of the dissertation, as well as a reference to the contributions, a list of publications on the topic and a reference to compliance with the national requirements under the Application Regulations of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff.

The four publications included in the abstract are on the subject of the dissertation. All are in English. Of these, one is under seal as an official note has been provided, and another is co-authored with the scientific supervisor.

III. Scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation work.

The dissertation submitted for review is an independent and completed study on the topic of financial literacy of students (15-18 years) in Israel, behavioral patterns and the need to update financial education programs. The doctoral student convincingly demonstrates his skills for scientific research work on significant and current issues, including to systematize and formulate problems and seek guidance for their solution.

The main contributions of the dissertation are the determination of the main factors influencing the patterns of financial behavior at the national level. The theoretical statements regarding the need to increase the financial literacy of students in Israel and to update the finance curricula are expanded. From a methodological ch. t. merit of the dissertation is the author's questionnaire, indicators and metrics for assessing financial literacy factors specific to Israel. The questionnaire used can also be used for future studies with a view to measuring the dynamics and progress towards the set goals. Based on a survey of 618 students aged 15-18 years, the level of financial literacy was measured, including deficits and the need to update curricula to increase financial literacy and manage personal finances.

The proposed ideas and results have been echoed in four publications, one of which was at a scientific conference. However, I believe that the managerial utility of the thesis deserves a much greater level of attention at the national level in Israel.

IV. Dissertation critical notes, questions and recommendations.

A significant part of the detailed description of the results in chapter three could be summarized in an appendix, which would allow shortening of the volume. Illustrative material, especially in the appendices, is given as screenshots, which makes them difficult to read and not particularly useful. In terms of style, some deficits in the scientific style of speech are found, including through the use of the first person, singular.

The methodological part of the dissertation needs substantial improvements in terms of determining the sample of respondents and the justification and choice of instruments for conducting the research and comparative analysis against the available secondary data. To achieve greater transparency of the analysis of secondary data and studies on financial literacy, I would recommend tabulating and summarizing the results, which are quite different in terms of sample, scope, indicators and evaluation metrics. This would help to highlight the author's contribution more clearly in the proposed questionnaire.

Questions for the PhD student:

1. You point out that the relationship between financial literacy, education and economic behavior is controversial (p. 83), and this is confirmed by the research conducted. Which factors shaping economic behavior can be part of financial literacy and sustainable financial behavior programs?

2. Is it possible for students' financial education to change the pattern of behavior as economic agents?

V. Summary Conclusion and Opinion.

The dissertation submitted for review meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the additional requirements of the Regulations of the CA "D. A. Tsenov". It represents a completed research paper that contains scientific and applied contributions on a current and important topic regarding the measurement of financial literacy of adolescents in schools in Israel, as a prerequisite for decision-making and policies for financial education in the country and personal financial prosperity in the future.

Bearing in mind that the dissertation is work of the doctoral student, as well as the fact that the candidate possesses the qualities, experience and competences to conduct independent scientific research and fulfils the minimum national requirements for obtaining the title of Doctor jury to vote positively and make a decision to award Yakov Itah the educational and scientific degree DOCTOR in PN 3.8 Economics.

01.07.2022

Sonia
Reviewer: Mileva
Prof. Dr. Sc PhD Soni