



С.А. "Д.А.Тсенов" - Свищов
Ож.№ 93.00 - 23/24.08.2024

**D. A. TSENOV ACADEMY OF ECONOMICS –
SVISHTOV
DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING**

REVIEW

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in doctoral
programme "Planning"

D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov

Review prepared by: Assoc. Prof. Evelina Parashkevova-Velikova, Ph.D., D. A. Tsenov
Academy of Economics – Svishtov, Department of Strategic Planning

Dissertation topic: Strategic Solutions for Poverty Reduction in the Northwest Planning Region

Author: Tanya Minkova Nikolova

Scientific advisor: Assoc. Prof. Anastasiya Marcheva, Ph.D.

Grounds: Order No. 490 / June 10, 2024 of the Rector of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics
– Svishtov for approving the scientific jury under the open procedure for public defence of a
dissertation

I. Information about the PhD student

Tanya Nikolova got her Bachelor's degree in "History and Geography" and Master's degree in "Finance" from VTU "St. St. Cyril and Methodius".

It is evident from candidate Nikolova's submitted CV that she has 16 years of professional experience related to management and project activities. In the period 2012-2015, she held the position of head of the "Development and management of programs and projects" department in a municipal administration. From 2018 to 2019, she was a "Training and Qualification" expert, and since April 2019, she has been the head of a business department and a senior consultant in an international company.

The information in Tanya Nikolova's CV shows that she has practical expertise, which has grown into an interest in scientifically solving real cases.

II. General presentation of the dissertation

The grounds for preparing the review is Order No. 490/10.06.2024 for approving the scientific jury under the open procedure for the public defence of a dissertation on the topic "Strategic Solutions for Poverty Reduction in the Northwest Planning Region" with author Tanya Minkova Nikolova, for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional direction 3.8. Economics, in the doctoral programme "Planning".

The review is written in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

It is clear from the documents submitted under the procedure that the doctoral student has the necessary knowledge and skills, both on the specific topic and for conducting independent scientific research and disseminating the results among the scientific community.

The author focuses on poverty, which is a current topic and is interpreted by numerous authors and in scientific research of various professional fields. The topic is multi-layered, interdisciplinary and wide-ranging. As the candidate points out, the multitude of factors that affect and predetermine the phenomenon of poverty make it difficult to manage on a national and global scale. She also presents the multidimensional poverty that is projected in low education, high crime rate, deteriorated health status and low living standards, and points out that research on the subject of poverty is important for understanding socio-economic differences, formulating public policies and implementing interventions that contribute to improving the well-being of the population.

The **object** of the dissertation is poverty in the Northwest Planning Region (NWPR), and the **subject** – the strategic solutions for poverty reduction.

The research thesis states that "poverty in the Northwest Planning Region can be overcome with clear, purposeful and innovative strategic solutions, expressed in: a regional principle when developing the strategic national projects and directing investments; a regional principle of taxation; empowerment and partnerships with citizens and businesses for efficient and effective participation in joint activities; legislative changes for transforming the economy towards a socially responsible one; a holistic approach and digitalization in strategizing and implementing anti-poverty policies".

The doctoral candidate's aim is to examine the implementation measures and perspectives of the strategic solutions to reduce poverty and social exclusion in the Northwest Planning Region. To achieve the intended aim, five research objectives have been defined, which the author correctly fulfills within the framework of the conducted scientific research.

The author has applied an adequate methodological toolkit, which includes traditional research approaches. The research is based on a study of scientific literature, with a systematization of the achievements in the considered area through analogy, comparative

analysis and summaries of the achievements. A statistical study was conducted using an electronic survey questionnaire, and statistical methods and the software capabilities of Excel and SPSS were used to process the results. The results are interpreted and visualized correctly.

The submitted dissertation is 204 standard pages in length, including 187 pages of main text. 7 appendices are available to the main work, which bring clarity and enrich the main text.

Structurally, the material proposed for review includes an introduction, 3 chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and appendices.

The list of references comprises 187 sources. The paper includes a total of 22 figures and 46 tables in the main text.

The scope, structure and main foundations of the proposed dissertation are characterized by thoroughness and scientific logic. The work covers the established standards for a dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional direction 3.8. Economics at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov.

III. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation

Structurally, the dissertation includes an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion, which provide the logical construction of the paper. The length is balanced in terms of structure and content.

The **introduction** is comprehensive and contains the basic elements for a scientific study. It presents the relevance of the issues, the achievements in science to date, the theoretical-methodological framework of the conducted research, as well as the tools used in the implementation of the research aims and objectives achieved. Aim, object, subject, research thesis and objectives are clearly and unambiguously defined. The methodology and limitations of the research are indicated and the author's intentions to solve the problem are mentioned.

Chapter One discusses basic issues related to poverty and the prospects for overcoming it. Basic definitions, tools and key foundations within the framework for addressing poverty are presented. A content analysis of publications dealing with fundamental issues of poverty is made, relating them to the prospects of their applicability in Bulgaria.

A critical analysis of studied good practices for overcoming poverty is carried out, resulting in the conclusion that there is a lack of standards and universal approaches to overcome it. However, a mechanism is outlined that must be observed in the search for strategic solutions to combat poverty.

The first chapter ends with the author's interpretations in the form of conclusions.

Chapter Two makes a descriptive analysis of the specifics of the Northwest Planning Region, and the information is interpreted in the light of the dissertation topic. The territorial aspect of poverty in Bulgaria in general and in the Northwest Planning Region is presented. The

intra-regional differences in per capita household income, the labour market, investments, financial and demographic aspects, health and legal systems, waste and transport management are outlined in the socio-economic analysis presented, and the need for targeted efforts to improve the economic conditions in the region is argued. Conclusions are drawn.

Chapter Three analyzes policy and business solutions to reduce poverty in the Northwest Planning Region. Data from a survey of stakeholders in the fight against poverty as well as the research methodology are presented, with the survey questionnaire available in the appendix. The survey contains 22 questions. The author has presented the assumptions and hypotheses that are the basis of the defined questions. As a result of the analysis, conclusions are drawn. On this basis, in the third point, the measures to overcome poverty in NWPR are highlighted. An author's model of the strategic solution to combat poverty is also presented. It is a holistic approach that allows for the development of a strategic solution based on multivariability.

Also of interest is the comparative analysis of the existing software solutions in the context of the author's idea for such, as the fundamental goal of this proposal is to seek a way to implement intelligent solutions to deal with poverty in general, and in NWPR, in particular.

A list of strategic solutions that can be implemented in the NWPR in the presence of political will and which would contribute to overcoming the negative socio-economic trends in the NWPR, including addressing the various dimensions of poverty, is also proposed.

The conclusion makes an overview of the main conclusions and statements that are presented in the separate chapters of the dissertation and traces a logical connection between them. Thus, the author's research thesis stated in the introduction of the dissertation is supported.

The dissertation is adequately visualized and precisely edited in terms of linguistics and style. No deviations from the content, repetitions and logical contradictions are found.

No violations of the rules of scientific ethics are found in the candidate's materials submitted under the procedure.

All of the above mentioned gives me reason to conclude that the submitted dissertation is the work of the author. It has a clearly expressed research and practical-applied character and meets all the requirements according to the LDASRB, and the Internal Regulations for its application at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics.

The submitted author's abstract is 33 pages in length. It is properly structured and contains information that corresponds to the content of the dissertation, reflects the results achieved by the author and the contributions of the dissertation.

IV. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions

The Information on scientific contributions outlines six contributions, which are correctly formulated, reflect the actual achievements of the doctoral student and are sufficient to acquire the ESD "Doctor". I acknowledge the thus formulated scientific contributions. I believe that the developed model of "Success of strategic solutions to fight poverty in the NWPR" and the proposed system of evaluation indicators have high scientific value and practical applicability, and should be widely disseminated among interested parties.

With the submitted list of publications, the doctoral student proves that she has fulfilled the minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Field 3. Social economic and legal sciences, PD 3.8 Economics, gaining 48.75 points out of the required 30.

The doctoral student has participated in various forums (1 roundtable, 1 doctoral session, 5 conferences, including international ones) for disseminating the research results among scientific community.

V. Critical remarks, questions and recommendations on the dissertation

I have no critical remarks on the dissertation, as such have been given on an ongoing basis, during the training process of the candidate within the Department of "Strategic Planning" at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics.

In the context of the dissertation, the following question is of interest:

1. What interventions are the most urgent to implement in the NWPR in the context of the fight against poverty and who are responsible for their implementation?

I recommend that Tanya Nikolova deepen the research on the topic in the future, upgrade it with more facts and publish the results in journals indexed and refereed in the world's databases.

VI. Summarized assessment of the dissertation and conclusion

The submitted dissertation entitled: "**Strategic Solutions for Poverty Reduction in the Northwest Planning Region**" bears the characteristics of independent research with scientific and practical contributions. In terms of structure and content, I consider that it covers the requirements for a dissertation, as well as the requirements of LDASRB, the regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov. The reviewed materials are characterized by thoroughness, logical coherence, scientific style and argumentation, in-depth research, author's view and proposals for the development of theory and practice in the field of the dissertation topic. This gives me the reason to give *a positive assessment and to propose to the scientific jury to award Tanya Minkova Nikolova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field*

of higher education: 3. "Social, legal and economic sciences", Professional direction: 3.8. "Economics", doctoral programme "Planning".

Date: 22.07.2024

Reviewer:

(Assoc. Prof. Evelina Parashkevova-Velikova, Ph.D.)