

OPINION

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Department of Economic Management
Scientific specialty 05.02.18 Economics and management (industry).
on: dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree
“Doctor” in scientific field: 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”,
professional direction: 3.8. “Economics”, scientific specialty: “Planning”

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

Author of the dissertation: Tanya Minkova Nikolova

Grounds for presenting the opinion: member of the scientific jury for the defence of the dissertation according to Order No. 490/10.06.2024 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. General presentation of the dissertation

The chosen dissertation topic is undoubtedly relevant and significant, focusing on one of the gravest issues of our time – poverty. The exceptional dynamism, the impact of multiple factors on its current levels, the different options for measuring it, etc., make it a complex and multi-layered category, having economic, social, demographic and other manifestations important for the development of our societies. The dissertation emphasizes the importance of strategic solutions for poverty reduction, taking into account the lack of universal models for combating it and giving priority to the regional, particular and specific aspects. The doctoral student successfully involves herself in the search for solutions to deal with poverty and social exclusion by focusing her attention on the planning region in Bulgaria that is systematically characterized by negative economic indicators. The aim and objectives of the submitted dissertation correspond to the growing needs of the present, and their consistent implementation outlines political and business solutions for poverty reduction in the studied planning region. The object and subject of the research are well defined, and the methods include adequate tools to reach the essence of the studied subject matter. The research thesis is correctly formulated and consistently developed and proved in the main body. The limitations of the study are clearly stated.

The dissertation is 204 pages in length and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of a total of 187 sources used, of which 116 are in English. There are 7 appendices in the dissertation, and the analyses are richly illustrated with 46 tables and 22 figures, duly described in an added appendix. A Declaration of Originality and Authenticity is also available.

II. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation

The dissertation follows the classical form of presentation, consisting of an introduction, three chapters, conclusion and appendices. The first chapter examines theoretical justifications of the nature and contemporary dimensions of poverty, followed by its national

and global dimensions. Adequately and consistently it studies the intervention of the state to deal with poverty, following the European Union-Bulgaria logic. As a final point of analysis, good global practices for overcoming poverty are identified and studied.

The second chapter focuses on the object of the research – poverty in the Northwest region, and based on statistical data, normative acts and strategic documents, the doctoral student highlights the main characteristics of the Northwest Planning Region. Despite the slight positive trends, it emphasizes that there is an ongoing significant lag in key indicators compared to the national averages, which once again proves the need for adequate, consistent and systematic impacts on poverty, unfortunately impossible as a manifestation in the short term. Chapter Two concludes with an outline of the socio-economic potential of the Northwest Planning Region for overcoming poverty by seeking an interpretation of indicators related to income and living standards; labour market; investment and business; tax rates; administrative capacity, etc. Chapter Three has a practical and applied aspect, looking for specific solutions to overcome the phenomenon of “poverty” in a systematically economically declining planning region of Bulgaria. An empirical study of stakeholders in the fight against poverty is conducted. Within this chapter, a conceptual model for the strategic solution to combat poverty is also developed. Specific measures for poverty reduction and social inclusion in the Northwest Planning Region are identified. At the end of the dissertation, a model of the strategic solution to combat poverty is proposed, considering its applicability to reduce poverty in the Northwest Planning Region. For each separate part of the dissertation, conclusions are drawn, serving as a basis for its next part.

The presentation of the dissertation is smooth, well-structured and logically correctly constructed in order to achieve the aim and prove the thesis statement. The applied scientific toolkit is synchronous with the topic, aim and supports the thesis statement.

I think that the author’s abstract correctly reflects the dissertation. It has a total of 33 pages and contains the required information regarding the author’s contributions, a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation and participation in scientific forums.

The attached dissertation publications are 6, of which 3 are papers presented at scientific forums (2 independent and 1 co-authored), 2 independent articles and 1 co-authored study. They fully treat problems subsequently developed in the dissertation or are the results of theoretical-practical research done in the field of the dissertation. According to national and intra-university scientometric indicators, the doctoral student fully meets the requirements for publications.

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation

As can be seen from the contributions presented in the author’s abstract, these are outlined in six points, and I acknowledge each of them. The doctoral student demonstrates capabilities to derive contributions both theoretically: deriving basic conceptual subcategories to be observed in developing and implementing policies to combat poverty at the regional level; proposal of an equation to serve as a basis for developing a system for measuring the factor influence of the Strategic solution to fight poverty; a model of “Success of Strategic Solutions to Fight Poverty in the NWPR” to be used in the visualization of the decisions taken, as well as contributions in a practical-applied aspect such as: analysis of secondary data on the status and trends of main poverty indicators in the NWPR; an empirical study of the opinion of respondents from the NWPR regarding the causes, consequences of poverty, institutions that have a role in the fight against poverty, and possible tools for the implementation of the policies and a derived system of indicators for evaluating the success of the strategic solutions to combat poverty following the example of the Northwest Planning Region.

IV. Questions on the dissertation

I have no questions to the doctoral student.

V. Summarized assessment of the dissertation and conclusion.

Summarizing the above said, it can be concluded that the submitted dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and indisputably enriches theory and practice. In this regard, it should be assessed positively. I propose to the members of the scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Tanya Minkova Nikolova in the field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.8. "Economics", scientific specialty "Planning".

15.07.2024
Veliko Tarnovo

Member of the scientific jury:
Assoc. Prof. Veneta Hristova, Ph.D.)

