

РЕЦЕНЗИЯ

of dissertation work

"Labour Market Dynamics and Interlinkages in Bulgaria 1989-2021 - Quantitative and Qualitative Changes" of Milen G. Velikov
for obtaining the degree of Doctor of Education and Science in professional field 4.4 - Earth Sciences (Geography of population and settlements)

prof. PhD Rumen Yankov, University of Veliko Turnovo "St. St. Cyril and Methodius"

The review was prepared and submitted on the basis of an order of the Rector of the Sofia University for determining the composition of the scientific jury and scheduling the public defense (RD 38-120/22. 02. 2022), the decisions of the first meeting of the scientific jury, and the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for the acquisition of scientific degrees and occupation of academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Professional field: 4.4. Earth Sciences (Population and Settlement Geography)

Teaching unit: Faculty of Geology and Geography, Sofia University

Scientific supervisor: assoc. prof. PhD Georgi K. Berdarov

Title of the thesis: "Labour market dynamics and interrelations in Bulgaria for the period 1989-2021 - quantitative and qualitative changes"

Doctoral student: Milen Georgiev Velikov

1. Data on the PhD student and the PhD studentship

The candidate holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Labour Organization from the UNWE and Master's degrees from the UNWE, New Bulgarian University and Sofia University. Milen Velikov has been enrolled as a PhD student at the Geological and Geographical Faculty, Department of Socio-Economic Geography since 25. 06. 2021.

I do not find any violations in the procedure regulated in the Law on the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Academic Positions at the Sofia University. The PhD student has fulfilled his/her obligations according to the curriculum and has been dismissed early with the right to a defense due to a positive decision of the primary unit regarding the readiness for such (Order of the Rector of the Sofia University RD 20-444/17. 02. 2022).

2. Dissertation, abstract and publications data

The peer-reviewed work "Dynamics and Interrelations of the Labour Market in Bulgaria for the Period 1989-2021 - Quantitative and Qualitative Changes" is thematically focused on an extremely dynamic area of the socio-economic and socio-demographic development of the country. From a scientific-methodological point of view, the topic implies the possibility of broad disciplinary links and an effective geographical approach.

The development has a total volume of 287 p. (without annexes). The statement is developed in an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The text contains 19 figures and 24 tables, set out in preliminary lists alongside that of abbreviations. The thesis concludes with brief explanations of the benefits and contributions of the dissertation research. Three scientific publications related to the topic are presented.

The list of sources includes 195 literature sources (10 in Latin) and 82 internet sources with planning documents, announcements, data from government institutions, corporate, project and news websites. The manner of description does not sufficiently clarify exactly what was used.

The dissertation includes all required attributes. The review of the content shows the author's aspiration for a comprehensive and thorough study of the issues. The chosen topic is topical, given the need for reflection and scientific summaries of the labour market processes over the last three decades. It is also relevant in relation to the emerging new challenges of the current demographic, economic and political situation.

The introduction outlines the main conceptual and temporal framework of the study - the transition from a command, centrally planned economy to a market economy with cardinal changes in the labour market, employment structure, labour policy, etc. , reflected in their quantitative and qualitative parameters. In my opinion, this part of the introduction is unnecessarily overloaded with a domestic policy overview instead of a general overview of economic growth and sectoral restructuring, most directly relevant to labour market transformations.

The subject and object of the thesis are among the main methodological orientations. They are clearly defined, in line with the stated objective, but do not reflect an intention to study regional differences or to reveal spatial patterns in the functioning of the labour market. A similar distancing from the geographical is evident in the formulation of the tasks and methods used.

The first chapter "Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of the Study" examines the nature and main characteristics of the labour market, the content of the concept of human capital, the institutions involved, and other terms and definitions. Refinements in the conceptual apparatus are quite necessary in a complex study of a complex, multifaceted socio-economic phenomenon. The chapter devotes special space to motivational theories of labor supply. Following are labour market reviews in Bulgaria from the Liberation to the end of World War II and in the period of socialist economy. The impression of an extremely heterogeneous content of the theoretical

chapter is reinforced by the last subsections dealing with demographic and socio-economic indicators - quantitative measures used in the analysis.

This foundational part of the dissertation should have had a more synthesized content and a coherent structure. Punctuation, formatting of the text, enumerations, numbering of subsections, which are not only of technical importance in a scientific text, are a separate problem of the exposition.

The next three chapters examine three sub-periods in the development of the labour market, respectively, 1989-2001, 2001-2011 and 2011-2021. I consider this periodisation justified given the need for census data and the logical assumption of correlations with socio-demographic structures. The different titling can be attributed to the different emphases that are placed in the different chapters. Unfortunately, I did not find an authorial text that argues for this approach in the study. A more significant weakness is the discrepancy between the title and the actual content.

The second chapter, "Main stages in the dynamics and development of the labour market in Bulgaria in the period 1989-2001", is mainly devoted to a comparative analysis of the dynamics, movements and structures of the population according to the data from the 1985, 1992 and 2001 censuses, as well as daily travel data in relation to labour market performance. The subsections on economic activity and unemployment are information-intensive and reveal significant aspects of the labour market changes in the 1990s in relation to the specificities of the Bulgarian transition.

The third chapter "Trends in the demographic and economic development of Bulgaria between the 2001-2011 censuses and their impact on the labour market" pays more attention to the economic growth at the beginning of our century, the reduction of unemployment and the country's accession to the EU against the background of negative demographic trends as factors for the dynamics of the labour market.

The fourth chapter is entitled "Labour market dynamics and interlinkages 2011-2021". A novelty in the section is the analysis of the relations between the participants in the Bulgarian labour market in the conditions of entry of foreign companies, the development of social networks, teleworking, etc. The author takes competent attitude on the evolution of motivational attitudes, based on primary information from own surveys.

The conclusion contains the main conclusions arising from the dissertation research. The statement concludes with "Benefits of the research part of the dissertation". This short section

presents the importance of fieldwork in collecting empirical data and interpreting it (based on the candidate's professional experience) for the benefit of employers, managers, experts, etc.

Despite some shortcomings, M. Velikov's dissertation has the character of a comprehensive, independent and complete doctoral research. A sound methodology is applied on reliable data to achieve an original scientific interpretation of a significant social phenomenon. The remarks are partly about the style of the presentation, some digressions and underdeveloped issues, lack of deeper geographical analysis, etc.

The abstract (59 p.) corresponds in content to the submitted dissertation and reflects in an abbreviated form the methodology and achievements of the research.

On the topic of the dissertation 3 scientific publications have been presented, one of which is in a geographical edition.

3. Scientific yields

The scientific contributions of the dissertation work of Milen G. Velikov are related to the results of the complex analysis of the development of the labor market in Bulgaria in recent decades, i. e. to the synthesis of expanding knowledge in a quantitative data-rich area, studied by different authors and from the point of view of different scientific fields. On the other hand, the series of preliminary surveys and summaries carried out by the PhD student provide additional information about the labour market with quantitative and qualitative expression - motivation, satisfaction, professional values, etc. The third direction, in which the contributions of the work are revealed, is the scientific-applied one - in the conclusions and recommendations to the economic practice and management of the labour market.

The candidate has formulated four scientific contributions in the self-report. I accept in spirit the above contributions, but some clarifications and comments are needed. The applicant states that a detailed "spatio-temporal" analysis of the labour market has been carried out, taking into account "all factors and interrelations". This is only partly true. First of all - the spatial component is absent. The stated aspiration to interdisciplinarity has been broadly realised, albeit with some obvious imbalances.

It is unlikely that even the most detailed study can fully capture all factors and interrelationships in sufficient depth. Every study has limitations, and publicized or not, they exist. The contribution of the present study is the relatively successful linking of labour market problems with those of demographic development and the state of economic activity of the population.

Moreover, the dissertation covers a key period in the transformations and is representative in duration.

In themselves, research approaches and analyses are not distinct contributions unless they represent an enrichment of the research methodology. Contributions are their results, i. e. conclusions, revealed regularities, recommendations, estimates, forecasts, etc. Specifically, the dissertation research analyzes the dynamics and reproduction of the population, demographic and social structures in Bulgaria in their relationship with the main subjects of the labor market. In this respect, the work of Milen Velikov has contributed to the refinement of the assessment of the state of the labor force, for forecasting the dynamics of supply and demand on the labor market with quantitative and some qualitative parameters.

A number of theses are worthy of attention: the regions with high unemployment with a simultaneous shortage of personnel, the role of state intervention, the ambiguous effect of foreign investment, the return to the country of specialists who have received education and practical experience in Western Europe, the different dynamics of jobs in public administration and business, the impact of corruption, information technology and flexible workplace and working time schemes, et al. In general, they are not new, but their integration to one degree or another in the study is a credit to the author and underlines its relevance and complexity.

Contributions of scientific and applied nature are presented in section 3. and 4. in the reference. Their scope, in fact, is broader, given the collection of new data on labour market attitudes through surveys, and from a scientific-methodological position - the experience in fieldwork and, in particular, the application of the survey method and the interview in labour market research. This transfer of empirical data and knowledge from professional experience is extremely useful.

The PhD fieldwork covered over seven thousand surveys and interviews between 2018 and 2021. The results have enabled original, well-reasoned conclusions about motivations, values, expectations and labour market turnover. The scientific and applied contributions of Milen Velikov's dissertation are the result of a thorough analysis of independently obtained data and a long experience in the field of human resource management. A hierarchical model for their formation is derived, which can be applied to human resource management. Findings on occupational satisfaction and labor market realization risks are essential as an algorithm to stimulate productivity in different business domains. The work advocates an understanding of the

workforce as a slowly forming valuable capital as opposed to its mechanical conception as a finite, and inexhaustible, resource.

The conclusions and recommendations in the dissertation are addressed to a potentially wide range of users, direct and indirect participants in the labour market - managers, labour intermediaries, experts in recruitment and personnel management, consultants in career development and recruitment, researchers and trainers, state structures involved in the labour market, etc.

4. Conclusion

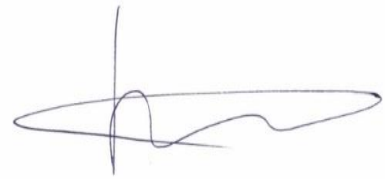
The presented work of Milen Georgiev Velikov is a complete, independently executed and thorough dissertation research on a topic of great public importance and interest. The scientific contributions of the dissertation are in the interdisciplinary scientific and applied field of the labour market in Bulgaria. The author has presented some of his research theses in scientific publications.

The peer-reviewed dissertation complies with the requirements of the Law and the resulting regulations. I will vote in the affirmative for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to the dissertant, and I urge the members of the distinguished scientific jury to also vote in the affirmative.

11 apr., 2022

VTU, Veliko Turnovo

Reviewer:



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/ prof. PhD Rumen Yankov /