



REVIEW OF DIPLOMA THESIS

Review type: Opponent's Review

Author of the diploma thesis: Piyush Prakash Yadav

Title: Comparative study of the barriers of access to higher education to applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds in three different states of India – A study of New Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

Author of the review: Mgr. Jan Kohoutek, PhD.

This thesis takes up the problem of access of applicants from the socio-economically disadvantaged families to higher education in India. This is surely a thematically relevant problem for higher education policy research and analysis. More specifically, three Indian states with different core characteristics are analysed, these are: New Delhi (industrial with a service sector), Madhya Pradesh (predominantly rural) and Chhattisgarh (rich in minerals). Despite the differences in their core economies, all three states have over 60% of the population socially disadvantaged (i.e. belonging to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Castes). The choice of the three states is sensible, adequately explained with the basic relevant statistics supplied.

The goals of the thesis relevantly centre on barriers to higher education access by the socio-economically disadvantaged, including the differences among the three states. The research questions correspond to the goals set. In terms of research design, the thesis makes use of a multiple case study and uses a comparative approach to demonstrate the in-between the states' differences in support with a clear focus on application of economic instruments (different kinds of scholarships and other financial means support). The presentation of the individual, predominantly economic instruments related to the identification of differences among the three states in their (non-)provision in reality (most intensive provision in New Delhi) can be considered the thesis' strength.

However, on the other hand, the thesis shows several noticeable limitations. To start off, methodologically, no specific quantitative method is applied; this is unlike the claim made (p. 37). Even more seriously, no primary data, i.e. data acquired by the author himself through e.g. interviews, are utilised (again despite the presentation made in the text, see p. 41). The omission of any source of primary data is regrettable as, even in a covid situation, online interviews or mailing could be relied on for acquisition of standpoints typically from state (ministry) officials responsible for higher education policy-making and/or from experts in higher education for evaluation of the policies made. This should have been done in order to get a more detailed and nuanced insight into the working and application of the instruments of support (this in line with a qualitative approach chosen). Relevantly, the missing primary data-based evidence factors into somewhat shallow application of the Advocacy Coalition Framework as a theoretical underpinning to the empirical analysis. In this respect, the reader is not given any *specific* information on the actors' coalitions, differences in their underlying



values, beliefs and thus standpoints on the policy implementation. Only generic pieces of information are provided (see pp. 48-54).

In terms of the structure, the thesis also shows some limitations, with the generic description of the Indian education and higher education policy context (pp. 42-44) coming only after the literature review. The issues can also be identified with some terminological and factual unclarities (use of the terms “university”, “college”, “higher education institution”, e.g. do the colleges grant only Bachelor’s degrees? What is the difference between an aided and unaided college? Does that mean that the latter does not get any public finance support?) Finally, as far as formal style is concerned, the thesis shows many instances of a lack of editing (wrongly positioned full stops, omissions etc.)

For the above reasons, I recommend the diploma thesis for the defense.

My grading is "D".

Date: May 31, 2021

Signature: