

REPORT ON MASTER THESIS
CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND GRADUATE EDUCATION

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| STUDENT: | Sijia Liu |
| ADVISOR: | Andreas Menzel |
| TITLE OF THE THESIS: | Effects of one school meal program on mother's labor supply: Evidence from China |

OVERALL ASSESSMENT (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

Please provide your assessment of each of the following categories, summary and suggested questions for the discussion. The minimum length of the report is 300 words.

The thesis estimates the effects of a school meal program in China on labor supply by women. It uses two identification strategies to identify the causal effect, both based on the difference-in-differences approach. First, the author compares treated counties (that started the program earlier and were selected due to being particularly poor) against counties in which the program was implemented only later. And second, she compares women whose children were just too old vs still young enough to profit from the program when it was implemented. Both strategies show positive effects of the program on female labor supply.

Overall, the thesis offers original analysis on an important question and from a relevant setting. The student conducted all steps on the analysis fully independently, from identifying the research question, to the data, and the two estimation approaches. One minor irritant is that the student initially presents a lengthy discussion of the literature on the effects of school meal programs on future outcomes of the children who benefitted from them, while this literature is not relevant for her later analysis (which focuses on the effects of school meal programs on mothers, specifically their labor supply).

CONTRIBUTION: 28 / 30

The thesis contains well-crafted novel and primary analysis on an important research question. The level of contribution would be adequate for a submission to a scientific journal (as would be the whole thesis, if polished slightly more and adjusted to the typical shorter length of scientific articles).

METHODS: 26 / 30

The methods are adequate, two complementary Difference in differences approaches, with the methods reasonably well explained.

LITERATURE: 18/20

Overall good, but significant parts of the review are devoted to an ultimately irrelevant literature (effects of school meal programs on children, not on mothers). One or two paragraphs on this tangential literature would have been sufficient.

MANUSCRIPT FORM: 18/20

Overall well developed.

SUMMARY AND SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION DURING THE DEFENSE:

Proposed questions for defense:

Generally, I had already provided Sijia with questions I had when I reviewed her thesis before its submission, and these questions were generally answered in the thesis before the submission. Further questions I can offer are thus rather of big picture nature:

- Is there a trust aspect? Do parents readily trust that the meals are healthy?
- Are there people that are vegetarian in China, and have they been accommodated in the program? Could they be identified in the data (based on religion or ethnicity), and checked if they profited from the program to the same, or less extent?
- Have there been reports of corruption issues? Food went missing, or input quality was subpar? Were there any measures taken to prevent this?

Please indicate whether you recommend the Thesis for defense or not.

I recommend the thesis for defense.

TEXT ORIGINALITY CONTROL

I confirm that I acquainted myself with the report on the originality of the text of the thesis from

Theses Turnitin Ouriginal (Urkund)

Comments on the reported results: There are sometimes sentences that very strongly resemble those from a paper that estimates the effects of the same school meal program on child outcomes. These are often sentences discussing the methodology, which are similar between her thesis and that paper. I believe the extent of overlay is permissible.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, please see the page 3)

| CATEGORY | POINTS |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Contribution (max. 30 points) | 28 |
| Methods (max. 30 points) | 26 |
| Literature (max. 20 points) | 18 |
| Manuscript Form (max. 20 points) | 18 |
| TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points) | 90 |
| GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F) | B |

NAME OF THE REFEREE: **Andreas Menzel**

DATE OF EVALUATION: **23.08.2023**



REFEREE SIGNATURE

EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:

CONTRIBUTION:

The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.

| | | |
|--------|---------|------|
| Strong | Average | Weak |
| 30 | 15 | 0 |

METHODS:

The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.

| | | |
|--------|---------|------|
| Strong | Average | Weak |
| 30 | 15 | 0 |

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.

| | | |
|--------|---------|------|
| Strong | Average | Weak |
| 20 | 10 | 0 |

MANUSCRIPT FORM:

The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.

| | | |
|--------|---------|------|
| Strong | Average | Weak |
| 20 | 10 | 0 |

OVERALL GRADING:

| TOTAL | GRADE |
|----------|----------|
| 91 – 100 | A |
| 81 – 90 | B |
| 71 – 80 | C |
| 61 – 70 | D |
| 51 – 60 | E |
| 0 – 50 | F |