

# Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

<b>Student:</b>	<b>Tobin Hanspal</b>
<b>Advisor:</b>	<b>Michal Bauer</b>
<b>Title of the thesis:</b>	<b>Variability among determinants of education attainment: The effect of natural resources and institutional quality in Sub-Saharan Africa</b>

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

The thesis offers an empirical investigation of determinants of education attainment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Tobin uses comparable individual-level data sets from 20 countries (Demographic and Health Surveys) and explores the existence and stability of link b/w child education attainment and parental characteristics. He is also interested in whether features of a given country (institutions and resource dependence) predict differences in intergenerational education mobility.

There are several positive features of the thesis:

- Felix read an incredible amount of literature about education in dev'ing countries and the thesis provides a very nice review of what has been done in this area.
- It's also easy to read. This is not only due to the fact that English is author's native language, but he learned how scholars write and make points.
- The thesis is based on a large amount of data analysis, findings are interpreted with caution, indicating author's knowledge of what questions these data sets can and cannot answer.

The findings are generally interesting, although they raise more questions than they answer, as Tobin readily acknowledges. I highlight two surprising results which perhaps further research may elaborate on and may be a subject for defence conversation. First, parental characteristics are stronger predictors of primary school enrollment than secondary school enrollment. Given the fact that in several African countries, the school fees for primary schools have recently been abolished (which is not the case for secondary schools) I would expect that the opposite would hold. Second, country characteristics do not provide systematic prediction in terms of classifying countries into those with high or low educational mobility. Low levels of corruption are correlated with high mobility, but for resource dependence (typically correlated with bad policies) there is an opposite relationship.

I also have one critical note. Although much progress has been made on the way, I think the thesis could have been sharper in its focus, hypotheses are still somewhat broad. I think it would be clearer if it is not motivated by overall heterogeneity in determinants of education but (only) by existence and heterogeneity in intergenerational mobility in education, and possible macro-level factors which can foster mobility.

Together, I recommend grade A or B, depending on performance during defence.

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## **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	20
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	20
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	20
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	20
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b> (max. 100 points)	<b>80</b>
<b>GRADE</b> (1 – 2 – 3 – 4)	<b>1-2</b>

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:** *Michal Bauer*

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** 16.6.2012

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**Referee Signature**

### **EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:**

**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

**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

**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

**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 POINTS	GRADE		
81 – 100	<b>1</b>	= excellent	= výborně
61 – 80	<b>2</b>	= good	= velmi dobře
41 – 60	<b>3</b>	= satisfactory	= dobře
0 – 40	<b>4</b>	= fail	= nedoporučuji k obhajobě