Oponent's review on master thesis
Marlen Sikhayev: Forecast of the pre-school education needs in Astana until 2030

The goal of presented thesis is to evaluate the needs of pre-school education in Astana in a near future. The research is based on population forecast for capital Astana till 2030. The topic of the research is rather complex to take into account the political and economic situation and their possible impact on the demographic behaviour of urban population in Astana.

The master thesis consists of nine chapters including Introduction and Conclusion and its extent is 111 pages. The first chapter is devoted to the definition of the problem, structure of the research and basic terminology. The research aims and objectives are also included but in rather brief way (continuation in chapter 3.2). Literature dedicated to the problem under study and data sources are discussed in the second chapter. The extent of the literature overview (only one page) does not correspond with the number of titles given in References (6 pages). Theoretical framework of master thesis is given in third chapter, but it concerns only population theories. I miss theoretical consideration about the role of pre-school education, its conception and principles, legislative and institutionally implementation etc. Research questions and hypothesis are discussed in the second part (3.2) of this chapter. Fourth chapter has methodological character and is oriented on population forecasting. Pre-school education system, its trends, development and structure (on national level and in Astana) are presented in fifth chapter. The analyses of population development in the period 1999-2008 is the topic of chapter number six, the results of population forecast till 2030 are given in chapter number seven. The author considers these two chapters as a core of thesis (see chapter 1.3). But the title of thesis is "Forecast of the pre-school education needs…." and from this perspective the core of thesis ought to be chapter number eight which is devoted to the pre-school education needs. This chapter is limited only on one page of text and one figure and one table. In fact, the table is only a part of general forecast for Astana by age and includes ages 1 – 6. There is no discussion about the future structure of pre-school education needs, about the "places" needed for different types of pre-school education etc. Only the total number of children in individual ages till 2030 is included. From this point of view the chapter does not correspond with the presented contents given in chapter 1.3. The presented master thesis has all requirements need for good orientation in text: lists of abbreviations, tables, figures and appendices are included.

Additional remarks:

• There is no distinction between calendar year and school year. The number of children by age is not the same as the exact number of children which fulfil the requirement for entering a type of pre-school education institutions.
• I miss more detailed explanation what author means by "needs of pre-school education"? In the master thesis "the needs" are limited on the number of children in relevant ages. No information about "needs" of pre-school education institutions is included.
• I miss at least general information about educational system in Kazakhstan.

The research concerns two topics: population forecast and pre-school education. The stress on pure demographic issue is evident but it does not influence the quality of the work. The presented thesis of M.Sikhayev fulfils demands put on master thesis and I recommend it for defence.

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