Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

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

Student:	**Vojtěch Korbelius**
Advisor:	**Mgr. Michal Paulus**
Title of the thesis:	**Life expectancy and its determining elements: A study for the Czech Republic at the beginning of the 21th century**

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

The thesis examines the determinants of life expectancy in the Czech Republic. Author uses district-level data of the Czech Republic and explores several groups of potential influential factors: socio-economic, health care and environmental pollution variables. He runs OLS regression and estimates four models: for male (45 and 65 years old) and for women (45 and 65 years old). The main findings are that there is only one significant health care variable (number of people per one doctor), some of the environmental pollution variables are significant and that the percentage of people over the age 65 is also significant.

In general the thesis contains very interesting research highly satisfying expected contribution of bachelor theses. The weakest side of the work are typos, missing additional explanations and other manuscript "errors", which I explain in more details below.

If we follow the grading categories we can evaluate the thesis in following ways:

1) Literature

The thesis contains interesting literature review which does not focus only on models examining life expectancy determinants but the author reviews the literature on life expectancy in general: the difference between life expectancy and subjective life expectancy, the role of hygiene and democracy, economic models of life expectancy determinants etc.

However, I decrease the grading in this category by four points because the author should have checked the citations more carefully. There are few minor mistakes: e.g. in the list of bibliography there are missing additional information of few works – e.g. Auster, Leveson & Sarachek (1969). Also the citation of the CzechStatisticalOffice (2013) in the text should be done more carefully.

2) Methods

The author presents and discusses all necessary OLS assumption tests. The thesis contains not only standard statistical tests but also their graphical counterparts. The author estimates the model, discusses results and also runs a robustness check. I regard the provided methodology and its testing as sufficient for bachelor level.

However some parts should have been treated more carefully. In tables 6.1 – 6.4 are missing attributes of significance levels or in tables 3.2 – 3.5 the attributes are not explained. The author´s style may be sometimes confusing. The first paragraph of subchapter 3.7.1 may suggest that (tested) normality of residuals is one of the B.L.U.E. assumptions. However in subchapter 3.7.2 the author explains that he tests the normality to use the Central limit theorem and the Law of large numbers. The author should explain this point during the defence. The general model should be written also more carefully (p.14)..

According to my opinion the mentioned mistakes do not discredit the methods at all and create an opportunity for discussion about these problems during the defence. Hence I decrease the grading only by 5 points.

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3) Manuscript

The state of the manuscript is the weakest side of the thesis. The work suffers from many typos and should be checked more carefully. Hence I decrease this category by 10 points (I have included the grading of citation problems and inappropriate methodology description into categories 1 and 2).

4) Contribution

I see twofold contribution. At first the life expectancy model is the first model of the Czech Republic of this type (empirical contribution). Then the author also extends existing literature by adding environmental pollution variables (theoretical contribution).

Secondly the state of the manuscript (typos, citation errors or other mistakes mentioned above) reveals that the bachelor thesis is the first experience with academic writing for the author. Although that the manuscript is not perfect I have been observing significant improvement of author´s writing skills during the elaboration of the thesis. Hence the bachelor thesis fulfils another aim of the bachelor thesis – to gain reflected experience with academic writing.

In general the mistakes (mainly the state of the manuscript) would suggest that the attitude of the author was partly careless. Then the author would deserve the grade good (2). However the opposite is true.

Hence the last category I would like to grade is the attitude of the author and our mutual cooperation. Vojtěch has been cooperating since the very beginning and we have consulted the thesis regularly. From this point of view I cannot complain. The state of the thesis reveals very low experience with Vojtěch´s academic writing at the beginning of the work on it. However he has been working hard to improve his skills. Even though his writing skills are still far to get 100% of points I grade his work as excellent (1) with 81 points.

The grade excellent is conditional upon his ability to persuade the commission that he has proper understanding of the methodology and the mistakes are vastly caused by the insufficient but increasing writing style. In other case I would recommend grade good (2).

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

CATEGORY		POINTS
Literature	*(max. 20 points)*	16
Methods	*(max. 30 points)*	25
Contribution	*(max. 30 points)*	30
Manuscript Form	*(max. 20 points)*	10
TOTAL POINTS	*(max. 100 points)*	**81**
GRADE	**(1 – 2 – 3 – 4)**	**1**

NAME OF THE REFEREE: Mgr. Michal Paulus

DATE OF EVALUATION: *June 9th 2014*

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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	1	= excellent	= výborně
61 – 80	2	= good	= velmi dobře
41 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= dobře
0 – 40	4	= fail	= nedoporučuji k obhajobě