



REVIEW OF DIPLOMA THESIS

Review type: Opponent's Review

Author of the diploma thesis: Henry Dominguez

Title: Marijuana regulation in Colombia and Uruguay: A Comparative Policy Analysis

Author of the review: Jan Morávek, Ph.D.

1)

Henry Dominguez's work seeks to describe and evaluate the marijuana regulatory regimes of two Latin American countries using an existing multi-criterion framework. It presents the framework, collects some data to populate the categories, presents the results, and draws conclusions.

The benefits are unclear since no similar studies are mentioned in the literature review. A Google Scholar search of papers published over the past decade yields 168 hits on marijuana policy with Uruguay in the title and 760 with Colombia in the title. The main benefit of the thesis compared to the existing body of knowledge remains unclear. And as a mere scholastic exercise to accompany one's rite of passage, the benefits of the thesis in its present form seem to be outweighed by its harms.

2)

The two research objectives related to the main goal of describing and evaluating policy regimes are to identify the differences and similarities in marijuana use in both countries "according to the drug policy regimes of each country". Here, I perceive a tension in the focus on *use*. In the multi-criterion framework, drug use is only secondary to the main criteria of harms and benefits to users and society as a whole. Later in the text, these two objectives are not addressed explicitly and the extent to which they have been met is not evaluated. I am not sure how important the objectives were and whether they might even be just a residue of some previous draft.

3)

The text is structured adequately.

4)

Without attempting to crosscheck the myriad facts mentioned in the empirical section, I make it clear below that I do not understand the relevance of some of those facts and, more generally, I do not find the presentation convincing.



5)

The word theory is mentioned once: in the bibliography. But this is not my concern as I believe the thesis could work as purely empirical one as well.

6)

I believe the goal was to establish a multi-criterion framework and to obtain data to describe and evaluate the policy regimes for each criterion. The framework seems to have been adopted okay, but I am concerned with the rather untransparent data collection. How did the student go about collecting data to answer his research questions?

The empirical sections take the form of a vast collection of random declarations and statistics of variable relevance sourced from available policy documents. It would have been appropriate to start by operationalising the actual criteria and how those might be measured, and only then to delve into the empirical details. The operationalisation exercise is missing, and therefore the data cannot be evaluated, the analysis cannot be replicated, and the result strikes me as arbitrary.

Section 5.5.2., supposedly devoted to acquisitive crime, is an example of how the author would have benefited from operationalisation: instead of acquisitive crime, the author discusses the illicit purchasing of marijuana. I am afraid the author did not quite understand the concept – which would have certainly been remedied had he taken the time to examine each concept while operationalising his framework.

7)

The vast majority of the sources seem to be properly cited. The author seems to distinguish between his and other people's work in line with academic standards.

8)

(I hereby declare the following conflict of interest: I earn my living translating from Czech to English and proofreading English social science papers.) At first sight, the thesis exhibits an abundance of lexical and syntactical errors, plus some spelling mistakes and typos. To name a few:

- “captures” instead of *arrests*,
- “large profitable profits”,
- “it can be described, assessed and discussed policy regimes” (word order: *policy regimes can be described, ...*)
- “it has been identified a relationship both in Colombia and Uruguay a close relationship” (*a close relationship has been identified...*),
- “Wilson suggest that...” (conjugation)
- “the impact to others people” (*on other people*),
- “Likewise, chronological approach has been using to describe how the development of the policies regarding the marijuana policy was develop in each countries” (*a chronological approach is used to describe how marijuana policies developed in each country*).
- “a new Government *stablished* in 2018”,
- “colombian” with a lower-case c,
- a space after open parenthesis or before close parenthesis, space before comma,



- one word in the main title is not capitalised (*regulation*).

What position should be taken with regard to language standards? Apparently, some faculty institutes have imposed stricter rules than others. While the Institute of Sociological Studies has no explicit language conventions to my knowledge, a [student guide](#) circulated by the Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism states in bold: “It is absolutely unacceptable for an educator to be given a text full of misspellings and grammatical errors to read.” In my opinion, it is an educator’s duty to supervise a student’s growth with patience – and providing feedback on poorly written texts is part of that duty. Then again, a Master’s thesis is supposedly an accomplishment to prove one’s academic skills, with writing being an indispensable part of those skills.

It is, therefore, a worthwhile consideration just how many linguistic errors a thesis can exhibit to pass a defence. A strict position is, once again, taken by our journalism colleagues: “If the consultant and opponent find repeated violations of Czech spelling and grammar rules, the thesis shall not be admitted to defence at all.”

The situation might certainly be different in a second-language context. Second-language academic staff could be expected to tolerate a greater amount of mistakes to a second-language student than would be tolerated in Czech. But of course, the result should not be giving up on all standards. In my opinion, students should exercise due care using the means available to them. Therefore, I recommend that the student explains if he has taken advantage of the free in-house [academic writing consultations](#) available and, if so, how those have shaped his further writing.

I recommend rejecting the thesis on the grounds of arbitrary empirical work and excruciating presentation.

My grading is “F”.

Date: February 3, 2021

Signature: