

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

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

Student:	Bc. David Švenka
Advisor:	Petr Janský, M.Sc.
Title of the thesis:	Social learning among Ghanaian cocoa farmers: Choosing the optimal amounts of inputs

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

The aim of this thesis is to analyse how Ghanaian cocoa farmers choose and learn about optimal amounts of labour as well as non-labour inputs. It is crucial for policy in countries such as Ghana to know what leads farmers to adopt or drop the use of advanced inputs such as fertilizers and (social) learning is one of the obvious determinants. David Švenka fulfilled this objective in a very good way.

The thesis followed the approach of a similar research carried out in India that suggested that heterogeneous returns among farmers might cause the farmers to rely on their own considerations rather than on observation of behaviour of their village neighbours, i.e. social learning. David hypothesises that since the heterogeneous returns are similarly present among the Ghanaian cocoa farmers, these farmers should also prefer individual learning over the social one. In his thesis, David shows that the farmers tend to prefer individual learning in case of the non-labour inputs but rather rely on social learning in case of the labour inputs.

David did a very good job reviewing the existing literature. The second chapter is not very useful from the academic point of view and it should probably be shortened or made more relevant or it should discuss policy more directly (or all of these at the same time).

In his empirical analysis made use of data as well as methods established in the literature. He used the data from the Ghana Cocoa Farmer Survey data gathered by the University of Oxford's Centre for Study of African Economies. As a main methodological approach, he very appropriately chose to use Munshi (2004), a paper published in the leading (development) economics journal, Journal of Development Economics.

Although the use of the existing methods might imply less novelty in the thesis (and the thesis would need improvement in both the execution and presentation of the empirical methods before being ready for publication in an academic journal), in my view it definitely is also a signal of what empirical economics needs a lot: replication. I think that it is crucial - and it should happen much more often - to replicate existing methods and studies and to examine whether relationships or trends established in one context hold in another. David's work is partly about these worthwhile objectives and he does come up with some interesting findings.

David Švenka did a good job of writing a thesis and I recommend a grade of **good (velmi dobré, 2)**.

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
Literature (max. 20 points)	16
Methods (max. 30 points)	20
Contribution (max. 30 points)	20
Manuscript Form (max. 20 points)	18
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	74
GRADE (1 – 2 – 3 – 4)	2

NAME OF THE REFEREE: Petr Janský, M.Sc.



DATE OF EVALUATION: 17th August, 2013

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	= dobré
0 – 40	4	= fail	= nedoporučuje k obhajobě