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Critical review of the habilitation work

“Meranie úrovni a vybraných súvislostí politickej participácie mládeže na Slovensku” by the candidate for the title of “docent” Michal Garaj, Mgr., PhD

Based on the decree of the dean and appointment by the scientific council of FSV UCM Trnava, dated on 29.4.2024 as a critical reviewer of aforementioned work I provide following remarks:

Topic of the habilitation work

Political participation of the youth in any given form is of utmost importance in modern political science, namely political psychology and provides important insight into the future development of political landscape. In the world where youth is disappearing it is necessary to understand what is left of it, since only this way there is slight chance to preserve the future generations of the youth to become and to strive for further progress of the world. The topic itself addresses policy as well as political aspects on national level as well as on European and global levels. It has tremendous potential for cross-sectoral analysis as well as for further specialisation.

Goals of the habilitation work

In his habilitation work, the candidate is trying to prove systematic link between political participation of the youth and different variables (independent and dependent). In order to do so three basic hypotheses are set and further elaborated into sub-theses which are more easily tested. Candidate in general manage to justify his reasoning. However, due to some methodological issues he opens important question of methodological stability of the research; would the results be the same or at least significantly similar if he would use different sampling method, including the respondents according to the definition of “youth” and not only to convenient proximity of certain institutions.

Contents organisation

The habilitation thesis is organized in four chapters, which are further elaborated in subchapters and conclusion. First chapter elaborately develops the relevance of the research problem and provides some theoretical background. Second chapter provides elaborated and well-defined methodological framework, based on set hypotheses. Third chapter provides the results of the habilitation thesis and their analysis. Fourth chapter summarizes the results and adds the connection between empirical results and theoretical background/ other similar studies, and thus incorporates the newly gained knowledge in the frame of global knowledge in the field. Concluding chapter briefly summarizes the whole thesis and provides some additional insights.

Use of scientific methods

Candidate uses the elaborated methodological set, which is only seldomly seen in Slovak political science. Only occasionally, political scientists in Slovakia use quantitative method to this degree and proficiency (it is usually reserved to the sociologists). In this manner the habilitation thesis is of great importance to promote the use of qualitative methods in political science. Candidate shows methodological proficiency in developing the research design as well as its proper application including use of SPSS as statistical survey analytical programme. Through the selection of sources, which are plenty, candidate shows also need for connection between "classics" and up to date research results.

Final evaluation

Candidate fully demonstrates understanding and ability to conduct original research, without losing concentration on the topic or being too quickly satisfied with mediocre work. If there is any criticism it can be only connected to the size of the sample, since it is too small to be stable in performance of advanced statistical analytical methods, and given the size of population - insufficient to be able to statistically validly generalize the findings on the population. Additionally, this can be further contested due to the sampling principle, which automatically excluded certain relevant parts of population.

Conclusion

Habilitation work of Michal Garaj, Mgr., PhD is scientifically well elaborated and on the expected academic/research level that, if properly defended, serves him as a ground to reward him a title of "docent" in the field of public policy and public administration.

Questions

Why the sampling was not more ambitious in its academic strictness?

How would be results different in the case of different composition of participating institutions?

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