Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Social Sciences
Social Sciences Programme

BACHELOR THESIS REVIEW

Type of review: *thesis supervisor*

Author: Subin Han

Title: Understanding the Challenges of Waste Management in Vientiane

Supervisor: Mirna Jusić, M.A., Ph.D.

Reviewer: Mirna Jusić, M.A., Ph.D.

Please explain the reasons for your evaluation (especially reservations and criticisms) according to the criteria listed below.

1. Is the aim of the thesis (research question) clearly stated and do the conclusions correspond to it? Is the thesis appropriately structured?

Comments: The author clearly states her research aim and questions. The main aim is "to look at potential SWM difficulties in Vientiane, understand the core causes of the waste problem, and evaluate how well the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots communities' relationships function in SWM." (p. 10)

Furthermore, the author poses two research questions:
"1. Why does the capital of Laos face challenges in its system of waste management?
- Are the problems the policies themselves, a lack of resources to support the policies, or other potential reasons?"
"2. How successfully do government agencies, NGOs, grassroots groups, and other organizations in Vientiane collaborate on waste management initiatives?"

The conclusions of the thesis are clearly in correspondence with the aim and the research questions of the thesis.

The thesis is properly structured. The author first introduces the problem, and her research aim and questions. A literature review follows, containing information on the regulatory framework concerning waste management in Laos, background on the city of Vientiane, some of the challenges mentioned in literature to date, as well as a theoretical framework. A methodology section (research aim and questions; data collection; data analysis; ethical considerations and limitations) follows. The author subsequently showcases the findings, followed by a discussion section and a conclusion.

One minor comment – the theoretical framework could have been a separate chapter. Moreover, the theoretical framework starts on page 21, but the author has effectively already been announcing it starting with page 19. I understand that the purpose is to bridge the two sections (background on Vientiane and theoretical framework), but it appears somewhat redundant.

2. Is the thesis based on relevant research and literature and does it accurately summarize and integrate the information?

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Comments: The author has studied and referred to relevant research and literature in her work. The work appears to accurately summarize and integrate information. The author has made use of both international literature and literature on Laos in her literature review, and also refers to relevant sources in her discussion section. She provides an extensive overview of relevant international theoretical literature in her theoretical framework and relays it clearly to the problem she is studying. Moreover, the author is very systematic in her presentation of information – for instance, she provides an overview of key stakeholders in the waste management system in Vientiane in a table on pp. 16-17.

3. What is the quality of the data or the other sources? Are the sample method, data collection and data analysis appropriate?

Comments: The thesis makes use of primary and secondary sources of information. The author has generated her own primary data through 4 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders from the waste management sector in Vientiane, Laos. She also makes use of secondary sources, such as government policies and strategies, as well as different reports on waste management challenges in the country/city when discussing the waste management system in the literature review / discussion sections.

The data collection is discussed in a detailed and systematic manner. The author also explains how she has analyzed the data (using thematic analysis and inductive coding). The author also includes sections on ethical considerations and limitations of the methods used. I appreciate that the interview guide that was formulated and used has been included in the Appendix, as has a thematic map created based on the themes stemming from the interviews.

The sample is somewhat small, with four persons (stakeholders from government and civil society) having been interviewed. The author also recognizes this in her section on limitations. However, given that these are in-depth interviews with relevant informants, and that the author also combines insights from the interviews with other sources of information, it appears sufficient to meet the research aims. It could have been explained why a representative from VCOMS wasn't interviewed (as they also appear to be an important actor in the process of waste management).

4. Are the findings relevant to the research question? Are the conclusions of the thesis based on strong arguments?

Comments: The findings are directly relevant to the research questions that the author poses in her work. The conclusions of the thesis are based on sound argumentation.

5. Are the author's thoughts distinguished unambiguously from the borrowed ideas?

Comments: In the analysis and the discussion of findings, the author reflects upon her research results with own original thoughts, interpreting the results with a reference to different theoretical concepts and the results of relevant studies in the realm. Her thoughts are unambiguously distinguished from the ideas of other authors that are referred to throughout her work.

6. What is the quality of style and other formal requirements?

Comments: The style of the paper is academic. It meets the formal requirements in terms of layout, page numbers, spelling/grammar and punctuation (with a few minor grammar mistakes, such as

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sentence fragments, our unnecessarily capitalizing some words), and the use of references. Minor note: it would have been good to differently format the interview responses on p. 36 (e.g. putting them in quotation marks, integrating them into the paragraph).

7. Are there any other strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, which are not included in the previous questions? Please list them if any.

When top-down vs. bottom-up perspectives (p. 38-39) are discussed, it would have been good to mention whether and how CSO actors collaborate with the local government / VCOMS, and what the implications of such potential collaboration are on implementation successes - or failures.

8. What topic do you suggest for the discussion in the thesis defence?

One question:
- How does the collaboration between different stakeholders in the waste management system in Vientiane, which is presented as quite strong, contribute to improving waste management, despite all the challenges that you mention in your thesis?

9. I declare that I have checked the result of the originality check of the thesis:
[ ] Theses [**x**] Turnitin [ ] Ouriginal (Urkund)

Comment on the result of the check: The Turnitin similarity score is low (17%), with all potentially used sourced similar in the extent of less than 1%. There are no evident problems with referencing.

Overall evaluation of the thesis:

(Please, state clearly whether the thesis is or is not recommended for a defence and write the main reasons for the recommendation).

This is a well-written, systematic BA thesis studying the challenges of waste management in Vientiane, Laos. The student has met her research aim, has included an in-depth overview of literature on the subject, has applied relevant theoretical concepts from the public policy and governance literature, and has chosen appropriate research methods that have allowed her to gather relevant findings to answer her research questions. Relevant literature has been used, the work is well-written and no referencing issues are recorded. I thus recommend the thesis for defense.

Proposed grade: *(A - F)*
A

Date: 13/6/2024   Signature:

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