

**UNIVERSITY OF LOWER SILESIA**  
**FACULTY OF APPLIED STUDIES**  
**EXAMINER'S REVIEW OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

**Name of Student:** Marta Gontarska

**Title of Doctoral Dissertation:** Social learning for critical global citizenship. An ethnographic research of selected social movements in Poland.

**General comments:** The dissertation submitted by Ms Marta Gontarska is one of the most interesting PhD theses I have ever read and examined inside and outside my university. It was a great pleasure reading it, as I have personally learned a lot out of this process. The thesis is an innovative, original and significant piece of research that explores activists' learning and participation in social movements through active and engaged observation and reflects on this form from an adult education perspective. It presents activism as a radical form of lifelong learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and contributes, among others, to adult education (research, theory and practice) for social change by bringing together academic and activist perspectives. It unfolds around a basic research question: what and how do activists learn to change a global world within the social movements? In what follows some more detailed comments on the thesis are presented:

<p><b>Organisation of Work:</b></p>	<p>The thesis is very well organised and has a clear approach throughout.</p> <p>There is coherence and clarity in the different sections of the work. Both the summary and the 'Introduction' part of the thesis give a very clear and concise picture of the work included. Rationale, aim, contribution of the project, researcher's engagement, structure of the thesis are presented in the Introduction. They well prepare the reader for what follows. The same with the introductory paragraph at the beginning of each chapter that briefly presents what is to follow and helps the reader being focused on the project.</p>
<p><b>Reference/Engagement with literature:</b></p>	<p>There is breadth and depth of engagement with the relevant literature that is appropriate to the level of a PhD thesis. A diversity of sources are used that are appropriate and timely.</p> <p>The 'Theoretical Framework' chapter is one of the strongest chapters in the thesis. It develops around: social learning, new social movements, critical global citizenship and learning activism and presents the theoretical framework of the research project. It would be interesting to</p>

	<p>know why chapter 2 was titled 'Theoretical Framework' and not 'Literature Review', as in this the relevant literature in adult education and sociology, is reviewed, with the aim to identify the theoretical framework employed in the research project.</p>
<p><b>Research perspective and project design</b></p>	<p>The basic research question and the three in-depth, sub-questions of the study are clear, coherent and they guide the research throughout.</p> <p>The research perspective and project design chapter is very well organized and explains in detail how data and information necessary to address the research questions were obtained and applied. It justifies adequately choices made in the thesis regarding epistemological, methodological and ethical considerations. It also analyses the five selection criteria of social movements based in Poland for the research project and presents the social movements selected. The challenges and limitations of the study, due to COVID-19, are also explained as well as another important aspect, the role of the researcher as a 'citizen-researcher'. I found this, and section 1.2.3. ('What this project is, and what it is not') as being crucial in understanding the discussion of the findings and the conclusions drawn.</p> <p>The use of Appendices are indicative of the thoroughness with which the research was organised and managed.</p> <p>It would be interesting to know if there is any evidence of a pilot study conducted prior to the main research.</p>
<p><b>Data Analysis and Interpretation:</b></p>	<p>There is depth in the analysis of all the research material and the interpretation of the results that is appropriate to the level of studies and within a clearly articulated thematic analytic framework supported by a sound theoretical framework and review of the literature.</p> <p>The results of the analysis are presented in the identified research areas, followed by interlocutors' responses, under four separate parts: the 'Holistic educational approach in the selected social movements', the 'Value based &amp; critical approach to status quo', the 'Strategies and tactics to act: learning by doing/acting, learning activism', &amp; the 'Global context/perspective'.</p> <p>The process of analysis is adequately explained in Chapter 1, p. 25 of the thesis and the detailed mind maps illustrating coding, grouping and categorisation based on the Alta.ti 8 are presented in Annex 3 of the thesis. It would be interesting to know more about how the researcher created the initial list of codes (analytical categories) related to the topics, structure and forms of activism. Then it would be also very interesting to know why the researcher has not chosen to identify any subsections/parts under each of the four separate parts, based on the sub-categories identified in Annex 3. These subsections would further help emphasise/highlight the sub-categories identified in the analysis</p>

	and, furthermore, they would help the reader follow the discussion in the data analysis chapter.
<b>Professional Relevance/Contribution of the Study:</b>	<p>The study is valuable, original and relevant to the diverse professionals working in (adult) education and related areas, as well as activists, researchers, academics, practitioners. It has much to offer to the Polish society and elsewhere, particularly when considering that it has bridged critical academic theorising and activist practice and has paved the way for more activists to want to work with the academy and for more academics to engage with activism. The ultimate purpose is to change the world to become just, one that is more critical of power relations and guided by values such as the common good, equality, diversity, by introducing learning activism as a radical form of lifelong learning, as the learning of critical global citizenship.</p> <p>The contribution and implications of the study are eloquently analysed in the concluding chapter of the thesis.</p>
<b>Presentation:</b>	<p>The thesis is written in very good English, with clear structure and in a way that enhances reader-friendliness.</p> <p>As mentioned earlier, the introductory chapter presents a layout of the dissertation and gives a good grasp of what is to follow. Moreover, in each chapter there is an introductory paragraph that guides the reader and highlights the main points to be discussed. The introductory paragraphs are also used to link the chapters and maintain coherence.</p>
<b>Final Comments:</b>	<p>In concluding, the study represents work of excellent quality. It shows originality, innovativeness and a comprehensive and critical engagement in social science research, in the field of adult learning. Ms Marta Gontarska's work fully meets the criteria of doctoral dissertations. Magda is a thorough and independent researcher as well as an activist that published and presented her research project in various audiences and received excellent comments. Her thesis is a valuable research work that deserves distinction. Of course, the dissertation is qualified for the final public defense and I conclude that the research should be distinguished as an outstanding dissertation in social sciences and education.</p>

Examiner: Prof. Dr. Maria Gravani, Open University of Cyprus, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Republic of Cyprus.

Examiner's Signature

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Presentation:

The thesis is written in very good English, with clear structure and in a way that enhances reader-friendliness. As mentioned earlier, the introductory chapter presents a brief of the dissertation and gives a good grasp of what is to follow. Moreover, in each chapter there is an introductory paragraph that guides the reader and highlights the main points to be discussed. The introductory paragraphs are also used to link the chapters and transition between them.

Final Comments:

In concluding, the study represents work of excellent quality. It shows originality, inventiveness and a comprehensive and critical engagement in social science research, in the field of adult learning. Ms Marta Gontarska's work fully meets the criteria of doctoral dissertations. Ms Marta is a thorough and independent researcher as well as an activist that published and presented her research project in various audiences and received excellent comments. Her thesis is a valuable research work that deserves distinction. Of course, the dissertation is qualified for the final public defense and I conclude that the research should be distinguished as an outstanding dissertation in social sciences and education.