

OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Todorka Kineva,
Department of Economic Sociology, University of National and World Economy,
Professional Area. 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences,
Scientific Specialty “Sociology”

Regarding: A dissertation presented for obtaining the academic and scientific degree “Doctor” in the field of Sociology

Justification for presenting the opinion: participation of the author in the scientific jury for defense of dissertation in accordance with Order ПД 09-466/28.09.2023 of the Director of the IPS-BAS.

Author of the dissertation: Bilyana Ivanova Ivanova

Dissertation topic: “Similarities and Differences in the Formation and Content of Legal Consciousness in an Intergenerational Perspective”

Information about the author of the dissertation

Bilyana Ivanova Ivanova has studied under the doctoral program at the Department of Social Control, Deviance and Conflicts at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology – BAS in the scientific specialty Sociology, Professional Area. 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, Scientific Specialty “Sociology”, as of 01.10.2020, under the scientific supervision of Prof. DSc Anna Mantarova. Bilyana Ivanova obtained a degree in law (1999) and a Master’s degree in political science and international relations (2004). She has undergone a specialization in European Integration and Security at the Diplomatic Academy, Vienna (2004).

General description and analysis of the dissertation

The submitted dissertation is 216 pages long. It contains an introduction, presentation in three chapters, a conclusion, a list of literature and a supplement. The contents of the work are logically coherent and balanced, demonstrating in-depth theoretical and empirical analysis, which permits achieving the goals and covers the defined tasks of the dissertation. The dissertation research is illustrated with 42 figures; as a supplement, the author has presented the questionnaire used for her empirical survey. 186 sources have been used for the dissertation,

including electronic sources. The supplementary list of literature is exhaustive and shows a balanced use of works in Bulgarian and in foreign languages (English, Polish, German).

Bilyana Ivanova's dissertation is devoted to an insufficiently studied problem, although a significant one for modern society: legal consciousness and its formation and content in an intergenerational aspect. The in-depth study of this topic is necessary in view of the fact that legal consciousness is a characteristic form of social consciousness that functions as a regulator of social action and social relations and maintains the social order. Legal consciousness is a binding element between law and legally-relevant behavior in society. The topical importance of the theme derives from the changes taking place in the social and economic environment, in the regulation of social relations, needs, attitudes, values, etc., that impact on legal consciousness.

In the Introduction, the author of the dissertation presents in an appropriate and grounded way the whole concept of the dissertation study. The basic goal is to identify and analyze the "similarities and differences in the formation and content of legal consciousness between different generations of people, whereby it is shaped in various socio-cultural contexts and by means of various mechanisms" (p. 9). The tasks pursued to achieve this goal are clearly formulated. The Instruction presents the object, subject, research thesis and methods of the study.

The first chapter of the dissertation is entirely theoretical and presents the theoretical and methodological foundation of the study on legal consciousness as a social phenomenon. The author presents a conceptual framework for the study of legal consciousness. She traces the place of legal consciousness in traditional legal positivism and the application of a legal sociology approach to the study. In order to emphasize the multiple aspects of legal consciousness, the author has made a successful attempt to synthesize the basic points in the study of legal consciousness in sociology in a historical and contemporary perspective, including a discussion on some of the legal-sociological surveys conducted in Bulgaria. She has attempted to make a brief overview of the category "generation" (according to K. Mannheim) and of some characteristics of generations. The theoretical analysis in the first chapter is enhanced by a broad presentation of the nature and contents of legal consciousness. The focus is on the general character and particularities of legal consciousness and its structure – which serves as the basis on which the author has elaborated the methodology of her empirical survey. Special attention is devoted to the specificities of the three basic components of the structure of legal consciousness – the cognitive, psychological and behavioral components.

The second chapter of the dissertation deals with the specific mechanism of the formation and functioning of legal consciousness. For the purpose, the author has clarified the nature of socialization, including legal socialization, as well as the formation of its cognitive and psychological components. She has revealed the basic specificities of legal socialization under the conditions of economic and socio-cultural changes in society. She has identified three groups of factors that determine the new aspects of legal socialization: the economic, value-normative and technological factors. The author discusses the connection between legal consciousness and legally-relevant behavior, and between legal consciousness and deviance risk. The results of the conducted legal-sociological surveys have enabled the author to focus her attention on legal socialization and the legally-relevant behavior of young people as well as on the legal consciousness of persons demonstrating deviant behavior.

Particularly interesting is the third chapter of the dissertation; it is entitled “Legal consciousness in an intergenerational perspective: empirical analysis”. This part of the dissertation deserves a high assessment in that it presents an author’s study of three generations, on the basis of which she has outlined the basic similarities and differences in the formation of legal consciousness between generations and in the course of legal socialization. The chapter consists of two parts. The first presents the concept of the research frame by which the author has formulated the goal, tasks, object, subject, basic hypothesis, four concrete sub-hypotheses, and the theoretical model, which fully corresponds to the theoretical assumption and analysis given in the first two chapters. The sample consists of 150 respondents from three generations, and is based on a “typological selection of groups of students from universities..., a survey was conducted with them, their parents and their grand-parents” (p. 140).

The second part presents the analysis of the survey. It reveals the characteristics of legal consciousness among respondents from three generations, and more concretely, the empirical characteristics of the cognitive components (sources of legal information; degree of informedness; basic agents for the formation of legal consciousness), of the psychological component (main agents for the formation of the psychological component; similarities and differences between the psychological attitudes at national level and in the context of EU law), and of the behavioral component (attitudes and motives for obeying the law; behavioral inclinations to conforming or deviant behavior).

The conclusion presents three basic generalizations and formulates recommendations.

Applied-scientific contributions

Based on the dissertation and the contributions indicated in the author's self-review (3 scientific contributions and 3 applied contributions), the following important scientific and applied achievements of the doctoral student may be identified:

- Sociological knowledge about legal consciousness is enriched.
- An innovative study, description and comparison have been made of the legal consciousness of three generations in terms of the three basic components (cognitive, psychological, and behavioral).
- A specific methodology and set of tools have been elaborated for the study of legal consciousness in an intergenerational perspective.
- The relation between the elements of legal consciousness and their differences in different generations have been established; these results should be useful in elaborating strategies for the formation of a legal consciousness inclined to law-abiding behavior.

The scientific publications of the candidate as reflected in Bulgarian and foreign academic literature

The submitted materials include a list of four publications (in Bulgarian), which satisfy the national minimal requirements. I have no information about the citations of the author's works but her participation in five conferences with papers related to the dissertation topic indicate that the results of the dissertation survey have been disseminated and presented to the public.

Critical remarks and recommendations

The author has prepared her dissertation conscientiously and thoroughly. Some well-intended recommendations could be made about the dissertation, which, however, do not put in question the quality and value of the research. First of all, it would be well to correct some grammatical, stylistic and technical errors and to delete some repetitive passages in the text. Secondly, the first two chapters present some basic theoretical concepts relevant to the topic, but the author has not taken a critical stance on them. Thirdly, I would recommend that at the end of the third chapter, the identified similarities and differences between the formation and functioning of legal consciousness in the three generations under study be presented clearly and systematically.

I would address a question to the author: in which specific settlements and in what period of time was the survey conducted?

Conclusion

The dissertation has been prepared in accordance with the requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree of “doctor”, as set down in the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the statutes of the Institute of Philosophy and Science – BAS. The dissertation “Similarities and Differences in the Formation and Content of Legal Consciousness in an Intergenerational Perspective” concerns a problem that is topical and significant for society, and contains findings that represent scientific and applied-scientific contributions.

All this justifies me in proposing with full conviction that the honorable members of the scientific jury award the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in Professional Area. 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, Scientific Specialty “Sociology”, to Bilyana Ivanova Ivanova.

23.11.2023

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Todorka Kineva