Book Review

Guide of Good Practices Regarding the Preparation of Graduation Theses for Bachelor and Master's Degree Cycles. Author: Vasile Dinu

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The role of a teacher is to provide his disciples with professional knowledge and guidance, to contribute to the configuration of their cognitive skills, to guide them in the process of selecting what is valuable and useful, and to shape characters. A scholar once said that "*The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts*" (Lewis, 2014). This is the true role of quality education, carried out by dedicated trainers, who have the vocation of a job well done and did not get lost in the educational landscape, but had a real calling for it. The modern teacher in higher education who serves the valuable field of economics must be a facilitator of vocational training processes, demonstrate the ability to make students integrate the knowledge they have access to and not only accumulate information about a particular field of advanced knowledge, but to know what to do with them, by understanding why economic phenomena and processes occur in that way and not otherwise. Specialists in the field of modern education have concluded that a devoted servant of this societal landscape must be equipped with qualities such as: a manageable volume of teaching methodology tools and advanced pedagogical practice; an effective handle on communication tools, so that they can attractively transfer the knowledge related to the taught subject; negotiation abilities in relation to scientific solutions reached alongside students; ability to achieve consensus and minimize the impact of tense situations that may arise; ability to listen to different opinions from their own, and to properly value the best; endowment with modern attributes of critical and creative thinking that they can transmit to those they teach; good management skills of the courses they teach, proving rapid adaptability to the specific requirements of the study

group they work with; belief that being an educator means continuous and permanent learning. Because true teachers can play important roles in the professional careers of those they teach, they must be role models, and valuable examples to follow.

From another perspective, a modern teacher must know how to identify the opportunities and threats associated with this vocation and turn them into ways to adapt to the faster and deeper change that is taking place in today's society. We must never forget that the roles of the modern university are: creator of advanced knowledge, centre of its dissemination and services provider with great added value for the society of which it is part. In order to answer this strategic mission, today's university must have a teaching and research staff with the following features: to be adaptable to the change that is fuelled by the advancement of the digitization processes in society; to be the teacher-student superimposed over the teacher-guide in knowledge; to prove confidence in himself and in those with whom he collaborates; not only to invite students to work in a team, but to convince by personal example that he is an assiduous supporter of this way of working; to demonstrate that it can turn vulnerabilities into strengths, seemingly negative aspects into positive manifestations, to inspire students by showing them what is necessary but also what is enough; to teach students both how to connect in a world of mass communication networks and how to protect themselves in an era of information offensive of impressive proportions. The words of the world's first great climber, Edmund Hillary, are extremely expressive, advising us that "it is not the mountain we conquer, but *ourselves*". From this perspective, if we identify our weaknesses in time, we will become stronger, and this goal is fulfilled by learning, understanding who we are, and being confident.

Academic reality has shown that books written by them speak best about teachers' qualities, and so do the scientific papers presented at valuable conferences, the articles published in journals of great national and international relevance and, obviously, the appreciation given by students and members of the academic community to which they belong. Professor Vasile Dinu, Ph.D. successfully crosses all these thresholds. I can only mention here the determination with which he coagulated around himself the creative potential required by the founding of the *Amfiteatru Economic* journal, which became emblematic in the landscape of scientific journalism of the highest level in economics and business. To this success there is added his meritorious quality to coagulate and coordinate teams of specialists who successfully complete ambitious projects. In this material, I will refer to the recent publication in Editura ASE of the book coordinated by **Professor Vasile Dinu, Ph.D.** entitled "*Guide of Good Practices Regarding the Preparation of Graduation Theses for Bachelor and Master's Degree Cycles*" and to which also contributed Professor Cristinel Vasiliu, Ph.D., Delia Băbeanu, Ph.D. and lecturer Radu Ioan Petrariu, Ph.D. The words of Professor Nicolae Istudor, Ph.D. and Rector of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies are suggestive of the important role that this paper can play in the editorial landscape of our university, and can be found on the book cover: "*I consider that this guide highlights the essential aspects related to the elaboration of a scientific paper, interesting in content and attractive as a form of presentation, having increased chances of being accepted and presented in order to complete undergraduate and master's studies.*" It can be said, since the beginning of this analysis, that this paper, published in 2019, is placed on the axis of thematic, analytical and methodological continuity, adding and updating valuable contributions in the same thematic area included in a previous paper also published in Editura ASE, Bucharest in 2017, by a team of researchers composed of Vasile Dinu, Gheorghe Săvoiu and Dan-Cristian Dabija, titled "*Designing, Writing and Publishing a*

Scientific Article. An Approach in the Context of Economic Research", Second edition, which was granted in 2019 the "Victor Slăvescu" Award by the Romanian Academy.

As he did in the case of all the other academic approaches that define his professional and scientific profile, again on this occasion Professor Vasile Dinu, Ph.D. proves abundantly that he was concerned with the implementation of the idea that the completion of an editorial approach involves ensuring coherence between the content and form of presentation of the paper, nuanced knowledge of writing principles, care for the accuracy of the writing, all on the background of meticulousness regarding the entire process of elaborating the text, and including elements of ethics and academic integrity. The paper is one of the most important result indicators of the research project *CNFIS-FDI-2019-0300 on improving the quality and efficiency of teaching activities within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies*, having as project manager Professor Roxana Sârbu, Ph.D. A quality academic teaching material must be an analytical and methodological elaboration containing curricular incentives, but also to offer a correct and to various fields of specialization, and incentives to do more and better in the development of this very important component of the certification process of specialized and transversal competencies with which graduates proceed on to the labour market.

From the very first pages of the paper, structured in a *first chapter* entitled **General Framework**, the authors define the type of paper they have developed, placing it in the position of good practices guide useful in the processes of choosing the general theme, agreeing on the title with the coordinating professor, drafting the various versions and presenting the bachelor's and master's dissertations in front of the examination commission.

The key terms of this first part of the reviewed paper are: *synthesis, minimum consensus, homogenous approach, competencies, knowledge, cognitive abilities*. We find in the paper a very useful positioning of the authors in relation to the concepts of a bachelor's thesis and master's dissertation, insisting on their curricular purpose, namely "*the certification of the student's theoretical and research competencies and skills*". In its pages, the reader of this book finds sufficient arguments on the basis of which to will understand that the author of the theses and dissertations will have to critically relate to scientific publications in the thematic field chosen for the paper, to argue thoroughly the relevant ideas it contains and to approach in an applied and applicable way the chosen topic, based on an elevated and relevant methodological design. Based on the reading of a carefully selected range of specialized works, the authors address the readers with useful recommendations regarding: the need to carefully choose the analytical and methodological hypotheses; the bold outlining of research objectives; the multi-parametric radiograph of the state of the art in that thematic area; the adequacy of the research methodology to the specifics of the approached topic; hypothesis testing; positioning the author in relation to the approaches in the literature; formulating useful conclusions and recommendations for those who develop and implement public policies or for actors participating in the economic game. The recommendations that emerge from reading this first part of the paper mainly focus on issues such as: possible structures of the content of dissertations and theses; steering performed by the student, together with the advisor or coordinating professor, of the analytical approach towards providing sufficient elements for the final evaluators of the paper to find that the graduate has solid certifying scientific accumulations; the obligation for the dissertation or thesis to be an original ideational construction that defines its author and passes the test of analytical ethics.

In the *second chapter* of this book, the authors make a comprehensive reference to the **actual preparation of the paper**, and the main analytical vector describes how the aspects that define the quality of the student's preoccupations regarding the *pre-text*, *text* and *post-text* elements can be guided and attested. The analytical journey undertaken by the authors, which allowed them to collect a solid panel of arguments in favour of the dynamic balance between formal and informal, appearance and essence, detailed analysis and conclusive and clarifying synthesis, should be appreciated. The authors state and argue thoroughly, invite to the inventorying of defining scientific paradigms and to providing solutions, ask and answer, invite reflection but also leave enough space for the reader to personalize his stance in terms of originality and creativity. The main analytical pillars of this part of the paper are: dynamic balance between necessary and sufficient; careful management by the student and his scientific coordinator of the temptation to quote without reading; avoiding situations in which attractive analytical hypotheses are announced but they are abandoned or are not tested convincingly. The style of writing the paper is elevated, the defining feature is the accuracy, which makes the reading enjoyable and promises the maximum educational effectiveness possible. The paper is structured very interestingly, the authors using several analytical and methodological axes, the most important being the time axis, the axis of editorial logistics, the axis of coherence in terms of content and the axis of relevance and robustness of results, both epistemologically and in terms of praxiological planning. Being a valuable methodological guide available to students as well as teaching and research staff, this book comprehensively addresses all the content elements of a graduation thesis and invites its readers to correctly and beneficially place a balance between a few "*inseparable opposites*", of which the most important are: theoretical description versus empirical testing; ideas derived from the radiograph of the specialized literature versus the original and personalized contribution of the author of the graduation thesis; analytical objectives versus result indicators of the methodological approach; desirable versus possible; what has already been said and verified empirically versus what has changed significantly or has not been empirically validated robustly enough. The revealed added value of the paper increases significantly with the inventorying of the range of issues that should be avoided when selecting, processing and citing references. The contributions of the authors of this paper regarding the praxiological part of the research must be placed in the same analytical register, in which the main analytical pillar is the methodological one. We find in this paper a very useful synthesis of the main methodologies of scientific research, and the binomial axes to which the authors of the book invite us are: *fundamental research versus applied research*, *purely economic versus economic-disciplinary research*, *private research in one of the economic subdomains versus research within a separate economics discipline*, *qualitative versus quantitative research*, *meta-theoretical work*, *case study*. The academic utility of the paper also derives from the analysis of the research methodologies available to students who prepare their bachelor or masters theses or dissertations. In addition to the added value of this methodological journey, the readers can also take note of the valuable messages from a curricular point of view that are directed towards them by the authors of the paper. Of these, the following stand out as useful: *the methodology must be clear and direct, concise and to the point; the empirical part of the paper must be completed with a section of results and topics for discussion; a smart combination of text, tables and figures must be promoted; it is very important that in the results analysis section the author makes strong and credible arguments, accompanied by bibliographical references that support them; the conclusions must represent the quintessence of the research carried out, these having the role of briefly highlighting the author's contributions.*

A part with a high specific weight in the economy of the paper is the one summarized in the *third chapter* and which refers to the model of writing the paper. The recommendation of the greatest substance of the authors is for the student to ensure the maximum possible level of coherence between the content of the paper and its form of presentation (editorial aspect). The authors of this book make a convincing plea in favour of the careful approach by students of the stylistic and lexical component, which must be limited to a set of rules and operations aimed at optimizing and adapting the content, as well as refining the presentation of the manuscript. The key terms of this analytical approach are *clarity*, *precision*, *conciseness*, and *coherence*. I appreciate as extremely useful for those who will use the valuable ideas contained in this book the principles recommended to be followed carefully by the authors of bachelor's or dissertation thesis. The meticulousness with which the authors of the book acquaint the reader with the angles from which the clarity, precision, conciseness and coherence can be approached is emblematic, and the same can be said about the high professionalism with which they refer to these features of an analytical approach of authentic curricular value, and the illustration of ideas with formulations, examples and symbolic aspects of great relevance. The aspects related to the technicality of the subject are treated amicably, for the readers' understanding, with great rigor, without diminishing in any way the advanced research component of the paper. The above assessment is reinforced by the abundance of elevated terms (fluency; efficiency; semantics and lexical density; accessibility; originality; euphony), the careful selection of casuistry for the examples that support the ideational architectures used, stylistic accuracy while maintaining a high scientific standard for the narrative and analytical approach. The content of this paper is developed both to maximize the curricular usefulness of the ideas approached and to please the readers, leading them to recognize that they have been presented with an editorial product that happily combines the useful with the pleasant, the need with the intellectual relaxation, the prosaic and the metaphorical. This paper offers us many arguments to say that we find between its covers a series of editorial premieres. It is one of the books in which the reader can find an integrative mix of all the ingredients required by its high and comprehensive documentation regarding aspects related to writing a graduation thesis, the correct citation of references, and use of phrases and lexical constructs that pass the test of rigor and correctness, respectively. The authors' approach in this valuable book, directed towards the combination of generating added value between general and particular, between formal and informal, between the explicit message and its implicit component, between intentions and actual achievements, between citation and effective reading of references is commendable.

The authors' contribution to nuance, reasoned redefinition, their plea for rigor and soundness, individualism versus collectivism, and the delimitation between the real and the virtual space cannot be underestimated. It is very clear from every page of this book that its authors are academics of the highest professional and scientific background, who have solid professional profiles, have experienced most of the analytical and methodological vectors referred to in the paper, know what they say and do it with pleasure and with the preservation of scientific rigor. The multitude of boxes with extremely beneficial examples for the reader, the novelty of the ideas synthesized in the paper, the originality of some of the approaches used and the solidity of the arguments offered in support of each of the thematic openings considered are valuable ingredients of a truly successful editorial approach. The experience gained by the authors as a result of the process of guiding generations of students who have successfully developed and defended their graduation theses is evident in all the

pages of the book, proving their understanding of the fact that modern information and knowledge are currently configured on a palette of increasingly diverse media. For these reasons, the authors' decision to show how they can be used concretely and how to make a correct reference to sources ranging from emblematic scientific treatises to daily publications or blogs of various individuals is commendable. From reading this book there can be decrypted the message that the most important thing is not the support on which an idea, statistical information or phenomenological descriptions are found, but their originality, their marginal utility, the support they can provide to outline ideas, argue and present them attractively to those who access them.

An important place in the economics of the paper is given by the authors to aspects related to word editing and the ideational topic. The solidly structured references, consistently garnished with suggestive examples of how to write text, use acronyms and abbreviations, write numbers, formulas or algorithmic architectures, configure footnotes or designing and graphically presenting tables, figures or expressive graphs for the conceptual elaborations that constitute the substance of a graduation thesis are extremely useful for students. The dedicated approach of the authors of this book to the certifying details and aspects that seem minor, but prove to be fundamental is also successfully proven in the part regarding the use of grammar rules, especially aspects related to gender, tense, case, and punctuation. This part of the paper is also a compelling in favour of its interdisciplinary dimension. This part of the research shows the idea that a good economist must place, from time to time, the analytical journey in the thematic area of modern linguistics, deep semantics and advanced lexicology. I believe that, by reading this paper, students and teachers will understand that in addition to Adam Smith, Paul Samuelson, Paul Krugman or Dani Rodrick, they must also read Iorgu Iordan, George Călinescu or Nichita Stănescu. Sequentiality and the iterative dimension are defining features of this valuable scientific creation, the authors also conveying the message that after successfully completing the efforts to develop a graduation thesis and successfully passing the exam, as described in full detail in previous chapters, fine-tuning is mandatory, i.e. the completion of a final stage, neglected by most students, that of reviewing the content and form of the graduation thesis. In this part of the book, the analytical vectors are: *organization and logic; style and manner of expression; originality and creativity*.

The work continues with a very interesting radiograph of a sensitive subject, which kept the front page of the press and the centre of debates in Romanian society, that of unfair practices in terms of appealing to the scientific work of others. We find in the *fourth chapter* a plea in favour of originality, which is mandatory for any paper prepared at the end of the academic studies. Drawing on a suggestive literature in this field and the regulatory and institutional framework that incriminates plagiarism, the authors offer students not only bibliographic references, but also very useful examples of unfair retrieval of parts or passages from other works. In order for students to not make the mistake of not providing the required level of originality in their work, the authors of this book make numerous recommendations and exemplify in detail with cases that have been proven to be in violation of ethics and scientific deontology. This analytical and methodological elaboration that I appreciate as one of high curricular relevance and sustainable scientific value ends with the

fifth part, dedicated to the moment of truth, namely the presentation of the bachelor's thesis or masters' dissertation before the jury to evaluate, appreciate, and grade. This last chapter begins with a useful logistical summary whose procedural pillars the authors consider to be: *originality of conception, rigor of argumentation, selection of bibliographic material, relevance and correctness of information, quality of expression, correctness and rigor of writing and, last but not least, form of oral presentation*. From this part of the paper the reader will learn that he must be a good trader who knows how to "sell" the product of his work (graduation thesis) at the best possible price (grade at the graduation exam), using attitudinal ingredients such as: persuasive power, coherence of expression, diction, gestures, posture.

Given the valuable content of the paper, the messages that can be deduced from reading the chapters, the undeniable usefulness of conceptual elaborations, instrumental architectures and expressive case studies, presented as support for the ideas described in all five chapters of the paper, I strongly recommend students, teachers and the entire academic and societal environment interested in real-quality analytical work to read this paper, from which many useful lessons can be learned.

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He is a founding member and Editor-in-Chief of the *Amfiteatru Economic* Journal, indexed and quoted by Clarivate Analytics Web of Science in Social Sciences Citation Reports. In May 2020, the citations report highlights a total of 68 published articles and a H-index (Hirsch index) of 11. The Google Scholar h-index is 15, and the i10-index is 28; the ResearchGate index is 13, and the Scopus index is 11. He is the author of over 20 books and textbooks in economics, as well as more than 150 articles. One of the remarkable books is **“Conceiving, Writing and Publishing a Scientific Paper. An Approach in the Context of Economic Research”**, First Edition, 2016 (Vasile Dinu, Gheorghe Săvoiu and Dan Cristian Dabija), which was granted the award *The Best Book in the Economic Field* (2017) by the Association of Faculties of Economics in Romania (AFER); the 2017 Second Edition was granted in 2019 by the Romanian Academy the “Victor Slăvescu” Award, section Economic, Legal and Sociological Sciences.

He was awarded the title of **Distinguished Professor** in 1989 by the Ministry of Education in Romania. In 2014, the Senate of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE) awarded him the title of **Professor Emeritus for Teaching and Research Excellence in Economics** and in 2015, the Association of Faculties of Economics in Romania granted him the **Excellence for the Entire Activity Award**. He is a member of the editorial boards of journals indexed and quoted by Clarivate Analytics Web of Science, as well as of journals indexed in international databases. He is also a member of the Association for Innovation and Sustainable Business Quality (BASIQ), Faculty of Business and Tourism, ASE Bucharest.

Links to relevant publications' referencing webpages

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