

RETRAINING AS A CHANCE TO SUCCEED IN THE LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract

The article deals with the possibility of completing retraining courses and a consequent greater chance of succeeding in the labour market within the development of a region. Through the questionnaire survey, the public's views on retraining courses were obtained. The data obtained was the basis for quantitative research. The method of semi-structured interviews with the participants of a relevant retraining course was chosen to obtain information for qualitative research. The range of questions identified the state of employment before retraining, the perceived quality of the education course and its subsequent impact on the labour market, including the identification of the employment priority in the monitored region. The proposal for the possibility to apply lifelong learning is to change the system of monitoring the effectiveness of retraining courses and the related established records, thereby increasing the success of the placement in the labour market in the given field.

Keywords: Adult education, employment, employment policy, lifelong learning, unemployment, region, retraining

1. INTRODUCTION

An important component of a life cycle is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience (Barták, 2008; Plamínek, 2010; Průcha, Veteška, 2014). The concept of lifelong learning is generally characterized as a significant change from adult learning to lifelong learning (Barták, 2008; Knotová, 2008; Průcha and Veteška, 2014; Rogers and Horrocks, 2010). The main goal of lifelong learning and education is to create a competitive and dynamic economy, flexibly responding to innovation, knowledge and the development of information and communication technologies.

In connection with changes in society, labour market demands are on the rise; demand for new jobs is increasing and is becoming more and more specialized. The demands for good education are higher and, therefore, adult education is increasingly becoming the core of attention and a natural part of most people's lives. According to the authors of economic theories, raising the level of education, reducing illiteracy and providing training for employees are part of projects that accelerate the development of economies around

the world (Mužik et al., 2004).

A study by the Centre for Vocational Education and Training, Enterprise Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Leuven, Belgium, also highlights the fact that in today's society knowledge changes rapidly and needs to be continually updated. David and Foray (2002) state that knowledge has always been the heart of economic growth and a gradual increase in the level of social well-being. Without lifelong learning, today's society cannot succeed. Quite on the contrary, its support and development will be of great importance in the future and is the right investment for the society.

By approving the Strategy of the Czech Republic's Education Policy until 2020, the National Programme for the Development of the Educational System expired (White Paper, 2002). The document outlines three key priorities, namely reducing inequality in education, promoting quality education and teaching, and responsible and effective management of the education system (MEYS, 2013-2017).

Employment policy is usually the result of state efforts, employers, companies, employees and trade unions. It is closely intertwined with economic, regional, social and educational policies. It pays attention to maintaining the quality of human capital as well as preventing social exclusion during the period of unemployment growth so that in the restored economic growth the labour force is employable and capable of responding flexibly to new revival of economy. This policy is increasingly being developed in line with the measures adopted within the European Union. The employment policy in the Czech Republic is implemented in accordance with applicable legal standards. It focuses on the active and passive components of employment policy and since the end of the 1990s it has been more inclined towards active components (Dvořáková, 2012; Krebs, 2005).

Retraining as a vital tool of active employment policy is one form of non-formal education in the lifelong learning system, providing balance between supply and demand of the labour market. Retraining is an important change in the qualification of the unemployed or job seekers. Gaining new knowledge, skills and practical experience makes it easier to succeed in the labour market. Retraining programmes are targeted at risk groups (handicapped - disabled workers, single mothers, mothers taking care of young children, graduates of secondary schools, long-term jobseekers or recurrently registered at labour offices, etc.). Persons over fifty years of age are currently a significant and highly-represented group. These specific programmes are aimed at returning the long-term unemployed to the labour market. (Dvořáková, 2007; Mareš, 1994, Steinichová, 2010).

Deepening existing or gaining new qualifications by individuals is closely linked to their labour market success, which is rapidly evolving and places increasing demands and emphasis on skilled labour in each region, including rural areas. Husák and Hudečková (2017) identify the demand for educational activities provided by schools of rural communities as a positive factor in their development. The results of the study by Husák and Hudečková (2015) show that schools in rural communities are pioneering in the Czech Republic, with only a small part of their activities focused on local development issues. David and Fohray (2002) studied the education of low-skilled persons. Several findings from their study regarding the education of the population will be the starting points for the field survey, especially when collecting information from the participants in the "Warden" retraining course. The course is designed for a broad target group, not only in terms of age and health, but also education. Individuals with basic education can participate.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim is to propose the possibility of using retraining courses as an important factor in the development of a region. Partial research objectives will be achieved by determining the partial research questions. The partial research questions were formulated as follows: 1) Monitoring the effectiveness of the selected course in the Central Bohemian Region and the subsequent success of the course graduates in the labour market in the selected area. 2) Analysis of public opinion on the area of retraining courses and opinions of educational activity participants.

The task of the research questions is to examine in more detail the general public's awareness of retraining courses and to gain an opinion on the importance of this educational activity and the possibility of succeeding in the labour market directly from the participants in the retraining course. The field survey addressed the staff of the regional branch of the labour office.

For the quantitative survey a questionnaire survey was selected. The questions were intended for the general public and aimed at gaining views on retraining courses, both in terms of general awareness and the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of this educational activity. The sample of respondents was randomly selected and addressed in this case.

The qualitative survey was implemented through semi-structured interviews. Questions for the interviews were predetermined, divided into several sections, following a certain pattern. They provided information on the employment status of the respondent before the retraining course, the educational process itself in relation to the quality of the acquired knowledge and skills and subsequent influence on the possibility of succeeding in the labour market. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with job seekers who were registered with the employment office in the Central Bohemian Region and who were also participating in the "Warden" retraining course.

Determination of hypotheses

Existence of dependence between answers to relevant questions was determined using a correlation coefficient.

H1 Hypothesis: Respondents who think that job seekers should subsequently work in the field they have retrained for also share the view that current monitoring of the effectiveness of retraining courses is inadequate and should change.

Hypothesis H2: Respondents relying on a change in the current system of monitoring the effectiveness of retraining are also of the opinion that graduate of retraining courses paid by the state have a legal duty to report the position they have found in the labour market.

Hypothesis H3: The choice of the respondents' answer that the system of monitoring the effectiveness of retraining courses should change depends on the learner's education.

Hypothesis H4: The respondents' opinion that job seekers should succeed in the labour market in the area in which they were re-educated depends on the learner's education.

The data for the quantitative survey were collected through the questionnaire survey during the summer of 2017 in the Central Bohemia Region. Specifically, the data were collected at the Prague-West and Prague-East Labour Office contact departments and in the shopping centres of the towns of Čáslav, Kladno, Kolín, Kutná Hora, Mladá Boleslav and Neratovice. A total of 110 respondents answered. Of these 41 were men, which accounted for 37% and 69 were women, which accounted for 63% of the respondents. The age structure of the respondents can be characterized as follows. Most respondents (35 - 32%) were between 45 and 55 years of age, with the least represented group interviewed between 27 and 40, who accounted for 9 (8%) of the total. Each age category was mostly represented by women, except for the 41-44 age group, represented by the same number of men and women. Regarding the education of the respondents, it ended with a school-leaving examination which was reported by 42 (38%) respondents, followed by 34 (31%) holders of the university degree, 20 (18%) with vocational training, 12 (11%) graduates of higher education while two respondents had primary education only. In the primary education category, 100% women were represented. Of the total the women surveyed, most of them 28 (25%) reported achieving school-leaving examination. The largest proportion of men (80%) was represented in the "less educated" category, also most frequently reported by men (16% - 14%) of all the respondents. In terms of social status, the groups of respondents were represented as follows: 9 students, 16 pensioners, 30 unemployed. 4 persons responded from their household. In the survey thirty-nine persons were employed. Businessmen and entrepreneurs were equally represented by six interviewees.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public opinion on retraining in the labour market (Table 1)

As for the public opinion, is it a priority for individuals who successfully completed retraining courses and are subsequently looking for a job in the labour market to be placed in the field for which they were retrained?

Question 5 identifies this view. A large proportion of the population 57 (52%) relied on retraining, 53 (48%) put more importance on the fact that the re-qualified individual found work and was not kept at the labour office. In this case the public is divided almost in two halves, with the majority prevailing over the minority very closely. Neither of the variants offered a strong predominant view. The public, on the one hand, is aware of the funds spent on a clearly focused activity and, therefore, prefers its subsequent comprehensive use. On the other hand, the public is also satisfied with the fact that the re-qualified individuals have been integrated into the work process, thus becoming a society's benefit not dependent on state support.

Table 1. Public opinion on the field of retraining in the labour market and monitoring the effectiveness of retraining courses

Area of job opportunities and effectiveness of monitoring	Responses
Question 5 - job opportunities in the field of retraining	
Yes, he/she should work in the field.	57
No, it is mainly necessary for him/her to be employed.	53
Question 6 - the state should monitor the cost effectiveness of retraining courses	
Yes	106
No	3
Lack of interest	1
Question 7- current state of effectiveness evaluation	
It is suitable.	41
No, it should change.	63
I do not know.	6
Question 8 - the introduction of an obligation to report position in the labour market	
I agree.	68
I disagree and consider it red tape.	42

Source: authors' own investigation

The area of monitoring the effectiveness of state resources (Table 1)

Questions 6 to 8 focused on the area. The public opinion on the state obligation to be aware and to monitor the effectiveness of the money spent has been dealt with by Question 6. The majority of respondents (106 - 96%) was positive. Such a result was to be expected. It is indisputable that the state should play the role of a good farmer, and therefore should have an overview not only of the flow but of the expedience of the funds it manages. Question 7 briefly outlined the current system of monitoring the effectiveness of retraining courses and ascertaining whether this status is acceptable to the public, whether it is sufficient or whether the public would welcome a change in the system. The majority of respondents (63 - 58%), was inclined to change the system, 41 (37%) respondents considered the current state satisfactory, and 6 (5%) gave a neutral answer. The distribution of the public in selecting the answer to this question was similar to question 5, though not so narrowly. Some respondents were satisfied with the state of control, although it was unclear where the re-skilled individuals worked. Most of the respondents did not consider the current state satisfactory and were inclined to change the system. Question 8 should provide information on the public's view of introducing a statutory duty for retrained persons. The majority of respondents (68 - 62%) prefer the introduction of the obligation to submit to the labour office information on the position of recruited retrained persons, while 42 (38%) considered it unnecessary red tape.

Statistical dependencies

To test the hypotheses, calculations of the statistical dependence between the variables were performed. The correlation coefficient reached the following values in individual cases (Table 2):

Table 2. Correlation values of individual hypotheses

Dependency between	Value
question no. 5 and question no. 7 - Hypothesis H1	0.26
question no. 7 and question no. 8 - Hypothesis H2	-0.39
question no. 7 and education - Hypothesis H3	0.31
question no. 5 and education - Hypothesis H4	-0.08

Source: authors' own investigation

In the case of dependence between respondents' answers to question 5 and question 7, a direct dependence was found; the value of the correlation coefficient was 0.26.

The hypothesis H1 has been confirmed. Respondents who think that job seekers should subsequently work in the field they have retrained in also share the view that current monitoring of the effectiveness of retraining courses is not sufficient and should change. The value of the correlation coefficient in the calculation of the dependence between respondents' answers to question 7 and question 8 was -0.4, which expresses an indirect dependence.

The hypothesis H2 has been confirmed. The respondents who believed that the current system of monitoring the effectiveness of retraining should change also held the view that graduates of retraining courses paid by the state should have a statutory obligation to report on the position they took up. The relationship between the respondents' answer to question 7 and their education was evaluated as a direct dependence, as the correlation coefficient was -0.31. The higher the level of education the respondents had, the more likely the option was that the system for monitoring the effectiveness of retraining courses should be changed.

H3 hypothesis has been confirmed. The choice of the respondent that the system of monitoring the effectiveness of retraining courses should be changed depends on the education of the respondent. The relationship between the respondents' answer to question 5 and their education was not found, the correlation coefficient in this case was -0.08.

Hypothesis H4 does not apply, no dependency was detected. The respondents' opinion on whether job-seekers should find jobs in the labour market in the area they re-trained for is not dependent on the education of the respondent.

The aim of the qualitative survey was to obtain valuable data and views of the actors involved in the education process, i.e. direct participants of the retraining course and the lecturer. In particular, gain data from the retraining course participants about unemployment, education process in relation to the quality of the acquired knowledge and skills and the subsequent influence of the course on the possibility of succeeding in the labour market. Another important factor was a practicing lecturer who perceived the motivation of course participants as a major factor influencing the success rate of the course and the associated possibility of subsequent use. The information was obtained from the lecturer through the survey. And last but not least, the aim of the survey was to obtain the views of employees of the Regional Labour Office in Pířbram on preparing the offer of retraining courses and evaluating their effectiveness. Qualitative research was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews. Respondents were persons living in the Central Bohemian Region and participating in the "Warden" retraining course. In total, data from fifty-six respondents were collected over one year (from summer 2016 to summer 2017). The basis for the realization of the interviews contained predefined sets of questions that followed a certain sequence. In Section II, IV and V several sub-questions were created to clarify or expand some of the answers. Section I contained five questions on demographic data needed for post-processing. The second set of questions consisted of four queries to determine the status of the participants prior to the retraining course. The third most comprehensive part consisted of seven questions concerning the quality of education. The fourth area tackled the employment priority in the Central Bohemian Region and included two questions. The last part, which also consisted of two questions, dealt with the subsequent contribution of the educational activities in finding a job in the field of retraining.

The questionnaire survey also focused on monitoring the effectiveness of state resources. The recruitment of

the retrained in the labour market was examined, with the public inclined to employ the retrained in the field. The public's opinion diverges from that of the Labour Office, which considers sufficient if applicants place themselves in the labour market. The public also discussed the current system of monitoring the effectiveness of retraining courses. The evaluation of the information provided by the participants in the training course yielded the following results. Most of the respondents did not work before the retraining course, and were listed as job seekers in labour office for a maximum of half a year. Most of them were already in the database for the second time. Based on the results, the respondents clearly preferred to work in the Central Bohemia Region. One of the weak sides of the region is the outflow of people into the capital city where there are many job opportunity. However, the results of the survey do not confirm this fact. As far as the profession of warden is concerned, there is not such a great outflow of the workers to Prague, as it may seem. The results of the survey contribute to the fact that the Central Bohemian Region has long been one with the lowest unemployment, even in comparison with the average in the Czech Republic. A relatively large group was formed by those who did not start the profession at all, most often due to inappropriate working conditions and wage levels. The participants' fear of not mastering the subject matter and failing the final test is mentioned by the course lecturer. This is confirmed by the findings of Rogers and Horrocks (2010) which show that low-skilled adults are affected by bad memories and learning experience during initial education, resulting in reduced motivation, fear of failure and unwillingness to educate.

As was mentioned a number of times in the theoretical part, education is an important factor. For the region its influence is crucial. It is a major contributor to the development and stability of the region. Therefore, if the efficiency of retraining courses is better monitored, then this educational activity will be utilized better in further education and will have a positive impact on a given area.

4. CONCLUSION

Thanks to lifelong learning provided by the "Warden" retraining course, people who have for example lost their ability to work in their current profession for health reasons, have an opportunity to work again in the region where they live. The proposal for the possibility to apply lifelong learning consists in changing the system of monitoring the effectiveness of retraining courses and the related established records, which would be another tool of labour offices for a more accurate analysis of the demand for retraining courses. Consequently, more efficient use of selected educational activity would take place. The results of the field survey revealed that it would be appropriate for graduates of retraining courses successfully placed in the labour market to introduce an obligation to document a contract of employment indicating the position to which the individual was admitted. Subsequently, this information would be kept in the labour office records. Given that labour offices cannot impose obligations on job seekers by law, the relevant department of the Czech Labour Office, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, should initiate the amendment of the Employment Act and impose job seekers registered in the Labour Office with an obligation to prove their employment contract to the labour office after completing their retraining.

In connection with the proposed obligation to submit documents specifying the subsequent inclusion into the labour market, it would be appropriate to introduce a system for the registration of data on the placement of retrained individuals in labour offices. Through the data obtained, labour office staff would evaluate the effectiveness of retraining courses. This would be both an opportunity to monitor the state and European funds spent on this kind of education in terms of subsequent success in placement in the labour market, i.e. whether the expended funds were used appropriately and efficiently. At the same time, the possibility of refining the analysis of demanded retraining courses could also be explained.

At present, the compilation of retraining courses according to job vacancies is satisfactory, but there are basically no significant changes. It is based on an analysis of the labour market and statistics conducted by labour offices. Suggested records of retrained individuals in the field would also be beneficial for a more accurate assessment and subsequent compilation of the retraining course plan to be implemented in the next period, for the courses for which tenders will be announced.

The state should fulfil the role of a good manager when spending taxpayers' funds, including re-qualification funds. The state should further be aware of the flow of this money, including the efficiency of its use. This is in line with the majority opinion of the general public. Increasing the success of placement in the labour market through more effectively selected retraining courses would thus strengthen the stability and development of regions.

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