

Aleksandar Bulajić, Tamara Nikolić, Cristina C. Vieira (Eds.)

Navigating through Contemporary World with Adult Education Research and Practice



**Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia
ESREA - European Society for Research on the Education of Adults
Adult Education Society, Serbia**

NAVIGATING THROUGH CONTEMPORARY WORLD WITH
ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Editors

Aleksandar Bulajić, Tamara Nikolić, Cristina C. Vieira



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УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У БЕОГРАДУ
ФИЛОЗОФСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

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Belgrade, 2020

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CONTENTS

<i>Aleksandar Bulajić, Tamara Nikolić and Cristina C. Vieira</i> Introduction: Contemporary World and Adult Learning and Education	9
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(RE)CONCEPTUALIZING ADULT EDUCATION — FOLLOWING EMANCIPATORY AND TRANSFORMATIONAL PATHWAYS

<i>Steffi Robak</i> Adult Education in Late Modernity: Research and Practice between Welfare State and Neoliberalism	33
--	----

<i>Ivan Kirchgaesser</i> Renewal from the Margins: Change-Oriented Adult Education in Do-It-Yourself Learning Spaces	59
--	----

<i>Magali Balayn Lelong</i> Value Formation, Value of Adult Education: Study of Emancipation and Authorization Processes in Adult Learning	75
--	----

REACHING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACKNOWLEDGING DIVERSITY THROUGH/IN ADULT EDUCATION

<i>Cindy Hanson</i> Apologies and Affronts: Decolonizing and Reconciling Memories from Canada's Indian Residential Schools	93
--	----

<i>Satya Brink</i> A Customized Social Contributory Policy Rationale for Learning of Older Adults	105
---	-----

<i>Lyn Tett</i> Policy and Pedagogy: Pushing Back Against Neoliberal Ideologies in Family Literacy Programmes	119
---	-----

<i>Jo Forster</i> 'Exit, Loyalty and Voice': The Experiences of Adult Learners in the Context of Deindustrialisation in County Durham, North East England.	133
--	-----

Rachel Bélisle and Évelyne Mottais

Recognition of Prior Learning: Between Social Justice and Privatisation
of Education 151

EMBRACING INCLUSION AND VULNERABLE GROUPS WITH ADULT EDUCATION — SEEKING NEW HORIZONS

Vasiliki Karavakou, *Anastasia Kefala and Theofanis Papastathis*

Reversing the Neoliberal Agenda in Times of Crises: Universities Educating
Socially Vulnerable Adults 169

Shanti Fernando, Alyson King and Kathryn Kunkel

“I Came from a Lifetime of Teachers Giving up on Me”: Finding Motivation
in a Canadian Supported Education Program during Neoliberal Times 187

Jana Mišović

Educational Situation of Migrant Families in Serbia 203

Natalija Gojak and Zorica Milošević

Educational Support to Families with a Member Suffering from
Alzheimer’s Disease 219

ADULT EDUCATION THEORY AND PRACTICE — MOVING THROUGH AND BEYOND POLITICS AND POLICIES

Philipp Assinger

A European Integration Perspective on the History of Education
in the European Economic Community 239

Martin Kopecký

Active Citizenship and Adult Learning as an Oscillating Priority
of EU Policy 257

Reka Toth

Individual Learning Account – an Efficient Way to Contribute Boosting
Participation in Adult Education 273

ACADEMIA IN TRANSITION — ADULT EDUCATION PRACTICES INFLUENCING HIGHER EDUCATION

Maja Stojanovic and Petra A. Robinson

Brain Drain, Brain Gain: Why Do Non-Native English-Speaking Students Decide
to Enroll at a Graduate School in the Southern United States? 289

<i>José M. Barroso-Tristán, Rodrigo Matos de Souza and José González-Monteagudo</i>	
Perceptions of Students in HE on Teaching Ideology and Authority by Lecturers: Questioning Neutral Viewpoints about Academia	307
<i>Natassa Raikou</i>	
Approaching Contemporary Higher Education in Greece Through the Lens of University Pedagogy: What is the Role of Adult Education in this Context?.....	319
<i>Clotilde Lechuga Jiménez</i>	
Arts and Academia in Málaga: The Concerns of Social Science Education Regarding Social Engagement and the University's Third Mission	337
<i>Anett Jolán Kovács</i>	
Survey on Validation of Learning Outcomes Acquired in Non-Formal Learning Context in Hungarian Higher Education.....	351
PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ADULT EDUCATION, WORK-RELATED AND NON-FORMAL/FURTHER EDUCATION: MAPPING THE PAST, ENCOMPASSING PRESENT AND DISCOVERING NEW PERSPECTIVES	
<i>Clara Kuhlen</i>	
Implications of Diversity in Program Planning — A German Perspective.....	373
<i>Vesna Fabian and Miomir Despotović</i>	
Quality of Vocational Trainings as a Factor for the Employment of the Individual in the Labor Market	387
<i>Zorica Milošević and Ljiljana Dimitrijević</i>	
Work-Based Learning for Higher Level VET Provision.....	403
<i>Anita Pachner and Christina Baust</i>	
Drawbacks and Opportunities of Reflection-Centered Concepts for the Further Education of Teaching Professionals.....	417
<i>Dubravka Mihajlović, Aleksandra Pejatović and Edisa Kecap</i>	
Concept of Dynamic Careers from Students' Perspectives – I Will Try It by Myself, but Don't Leave Me Alone.....	433
<i>Viktória Beszédes</i>	
The Most Important Characteristics of Adult Learning Professionals in Serbia: Research in Progress Report	449

Éva Farkas

Invisible Profession: Facts and Tendencies about 30 Years of Adult Education
in Hungary..... 467

THE ROADS OF DIGITALIZATION — SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY AND DATA IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF ADULT EDUCATION

Robert Smith and Vicky Duckworth

Digital Research as a Resource for Reimagining Further Education 489

Kristinka Ovesni, Nataša Matović and Saška Janković

The Work-Related Usage of Informational Communication Technology
and the Learning of Employees..... 505

Nikola Petrović and Jelena Anđelković Labrović

Learning Resistance and Defense: A Data-Driven Approach 519

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ADULT EDUCATION — MEETING NEW CHALLENGES

Jean-Michel Mégret and Jérôme Eneau

May “Entrepreneurial Andragogy” Be a Response to the Challenges
of Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies?..... 539

Pierre Faller and Eric Bertrand

Professional Development at the Crossroads of Economic and Social
Development Examining Multi-Dimensional Shifts in Perspective and
Sense-Making by a Group of French Leaders..... 557

Vukašin Grozdić

Entrepreneurship Education – New Content for the New Paradigm..... 575

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QUALITY OF VOCATIONAL TRAININGS AS A FACTOR FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE LABOR MARKET¹

Abstract

The question that this research aims to answer is whether short-term vocational trainings are a significant determinant in changing the position of the individual in the labor market, i.e. if there is a correlation between the quality of short-term vocational trainings and the employment of an individual in the labor market. For the purpose of this research, the quality of the realization of short-term vocational trainings was analyzed through four broad sets of organization and realization of short-term vocational trainings: quality of the realization of short-term vocational trainings, quality of career guidance and counselling services, characteristics of short-term vocational trainings and andragogical characteristics of the trainees. The research uses a non-experimental method, where the basic measuring instrument consists of a battery of instruments made up of several types of scales and questionnaires. The research was conducted on a sample of 306 participants.

The results show that the quality of the realization of vocational trainings represent a significant determinant in changing the position of an individual in the labor market, that is, it can be understood as an important factor that is in the function of the employment of the trainees upon the completion of a vocational training. Additionally, the employment of the trainees is determined by the characteristics of the trainees themselves and vocational trainings. Better position in the labor market have the trainees with work experience relevant to the attended vocational training, or the trainees attending vocational trainings based on the needs of the local labor market.

If we analyze the employment of trainees on the jobs for which they were trained, it is interesting that the research recognizes the importance of some other factors such as the quality of connecting the individual to the needs of the local labor market, the relevance

1 This paper is a constituent part of doctoral thesis *Vocational trainings and the position of the individual in the labour market*.

of formal education to the attended vocational training and the motivation of trainees to attend the training. Observed in this context, the participants who found employment on the jobs they had been trained for, compared to those who did not, have better assessed the quality of career guidance and counselling services, their formal qualifications were more related to the attended vocational training and as a motive for participation in training in a greater degree they had the desire for personal development.

Keywords: quality, short-term vocational trainings, employment

Introduction

In recent years in the labor market of the Republic of Serbia have been recorded employment growth, increase in activation and reduction of unemployment (Program ekonomskih reformi za period od 2017. do 2019. Godine / Economic Reform Program for the period 2017–2019). However, despite positive trends, the labor market remains characterized by a large number of informal employees in total employment, high structural unemployment, gender inequality in the labor market, and limited resources for active employment policy measures. This is accompanied by the lack of harmonization of human capital in respect to the social and economic needs, an unregulated system of qualifications acquired by education, hampered mobility of workforce, etc. (Program ekonomskih reformi za period od 2017. do 2019. Godine / Economic Reform Program for the period 2017–2019).

Poorer labor market performances researchers often explained as a consequence of an insufficiently flexible labor market (Layard, Layard, Nickell, Nickell & Jackman, 2005; Lindbeck, 1996; Blanchard & Wolfers, 1999). However, empirical evidence does not give a unique confirmation of this thesis (Arandarenko, 2004; Avdagić & Salardi, 2013), so in the context of labor market policies and performances, the significance of education and its interaction with other labor market policies and institutions is increasingly emphasized (Avdagić, 2014). Certain authors go even further and emphasize the importance of the quality of education, namely, that for economic growth and development the quality of education is far more important than quantity (Kulić, 2011).

The significance of the quality of education is also emphasized in strategic documents where adult education is viewed as one of the key instruments for the development of a knowledge-based economy that is able to ensure employment of the population (see: Strategija razvoja obrazovanja odraslih u Republici Srbiji / Strategy for the Development of Adult Education in the Republic of Serbia in 2007; Adult Education Subsystem Development Strategy: Strategija razvoja obrazovanja u Srbiji do 2020. godine / Strategy for Education Development in Serbia 2020; National Employment Strategy for the period 2011–2020). Adult education is expected, in a relatively short period of time, to enable an individual to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies, to put what he has learned into practice at the end of the training, thus improving his position in the labor market.

The recommendations of numerous researchers also point to the necessity of assessing the quality of the realization of the training itself (Arandarenko & Krstic, 2008; Betcherman, Dar & Olivas, 2004; Dinkić, Đurić, Ognjenovic, & Savčić, 2006; Marjanovic, 2015; Martin & Grubb, 2001; Ognjenović, 2007). It is however interesting that, despite numerous recommendations, training as an active labor market policy measure whose effects are assessed is not systematically varied or researched, especially not in terms of quality. Consequently, the explanations of contradictory results regarding the effects of trainings lack (Arandarenko & Krstić, 2008; Lehmann, 2010; Marjanović, 2015; Ognjenović, 2007) as well as the answers to the question how the trainings should look like in order for the workforce to be more competent and more employable.

Trainings as an active labor market policy (ALMP) measure

In their original form active labor market policy (ALMP) measures first appeared at the beginning of the 20th century, while modern measures that worldwide practice recognizes today in the developed OECD countries appeared in the second half of the 70s and in the 80s (Arandarenko, 2011). In the Republic of Serbia more importance to the active labor market measures was given only in 2005 with the adoption of the National Employment Strategy for the period 2005–2010 (Ognjenović, 2007).

At different stages of social development and different economic circumstances ALMP measures were an instrument for achieving different goals. In recent European documents, which consider the role of ALMP measures in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy, it is emphasized that one of the key roles of an active labor market policy is to ensure conditions for a more secure transition in the conditions of intense technological and social changes (European Commission, 2007). It can be noticed that, in addition to achieving economic and social goals that are reflected in the increase of the probability for unemployed persons to find a job, further chance of inclusion and participation accompanied by productive employment, ALMP measures are increasingly regarded as an instrument for “adapting” to the new demands of the modern world of work, especially in the domain of innovation of knowledge and skills due to intense technological changes and increasingly intense global competition.

In addition to influencing the characteristics of the available workforce (workers’ skills improvement, productivity improvement, etc.), the implementation of ALMP measures is put in the function of influencing the labor demand itself (Jandrić, 2011; Betcherman *et al.*, 2004; Boeri & Ours, 2008; Estevao, 2007), that is, improving the functioning of the labor market, increasing workforce demand, reallocating work between the labor sub-markets, creating jobs, mitigat-

ing cyclical declines, reducing structural imbalances etc. (Jandrić, 2014; Betcherman *et al.*, 2004; Boeri & Ours, 2008). According to the authors each of these goals implies the realization of one or more ALMP measures. Nonetheless, the view of Betcherman and his associates that training is the only group of ALMP measures that can achieve goals related to both labor supply and demand is interesting (Betcherman *et al.*, 2004).

However, the implementation of ALMP measures of educational character is followed by numerous challenges. An example is the difficulty in monitoring and comparing the effects of individual educational programmes since dominantly in practice a number of generic classifications of ALMP measures is present, where all educational programmes (no matter how different) are classified into one category (e.g. educational and training measures, programmes focused on investment in human capital, labor market trainings, etc.) or in different categories together with other non-educational measures oriented towards specific target groups (youth, people with disabilities, etc.).

The use of generic classifications blurs the results of the implemented (meta) evaluations just as it reduces the possibility of their better understanding and application in practice. Additional issue opens when trying to compare two or more countries since researchers often do not have information about individual educational programmes that are crucial to understanding one country's labor market policy and, therefore, to their comparison. In this context, the conceptual comparability of aggregate data is vital to the quality of the analysis, since even within a certain category of aggregates, such as "training", can dominate programmes which, despite the same name, can be very different in characteristics in different countries. A particular challenge for researchers is also the fact that countries continually change ALMP measures including educational ones, just as it is possible in practice to redefine the categories of ALMP measures, that is, to shift measures from one category to another. Therefore, the results of (meta) evaluations need to be prudently interpreted.

The effects of trainings on the position of the individual in the labor market

In accordance with their significance and social expectations in the previous period, the effects of short-term trainings were the subject of attention of a larger number of researches (Arandarenko & Krstić, 2008; Betcherman, Dar & Olivas, 2004; Bonin & Rinne, 2006; Kluve, 2006; Lehmann, 2010; Mamaqi, Miguel & Olave, 2011; Marjanović, 2015; Martin & Grubb, 2001; Ognjenović, 2007). In the last ten years a significant number of meta-analyses that provided overviews of the evaluations conducted in different countries and in different periods has been carried out (Arandarenko, 2011; Zubović, 2011). Evaluation

researches were related to the employed and the unemployed persons and their position with employers, i.e. in the labor market after completing training.

When it comes to the employed persons, the research results show that short-term trainings have impact on the position of individuals with the employer. This primarily reflects in the improved internal mobility, employability, career advancement and/or achieving professional success in general and job satisfaction (Mamaqi *et al.*, 2011; Sanders & De Grip, 2004). However, the impact has not been identified in the part related to the increase in employee productivity and the improvement of their external mobility (Mamaqi *et al.*, 2011; Sanders & De Grip, 2004). Mincer (1991) came to similar results. As the author states, the results of the effects study of vocational trainings show that the relationship between trainings and quantitative parameters (employee productivity before and after training, cost-effectiveness of training per participant) is less important (in terms of statistical significance) than qualitative parameters in terms of increased mobility opportunities, career advancement and/or professional success in general and work performance/satisfaction (Mincer, 1991). The existence of internal and absence of external mobility among employees who attended training programmes could largely be explained by the development of specific skills that are relevant to the given employer but which are not entirely transferable to similar job positions in other firms. Besides, employers will endeavor to retain workers if they have participated in the costs of their training.

The position of the unemployed persons in the labor market after attending a training was the subject of interest of numerous researchers (Arandarenko & Krstić, 2008; Bonin & Rinne, 2006; Lehmann, 2010; Marjanović, 2015; Ognjenović, 2007;). Generally speaking, the two most frequently discussed issues in the literature related to the evaluation of trainings regard the effectiveness of programmes, i.e. their performance overview when it comes to the employment of programme participants and the amount of funds that are being allocated, i.e. the cost-effectiveness of the programme.

When it comes to international evaluations, through several large meta-studies conclusions have been made about the effectiveness of the basic types of programmes. For OECD countries the results show that training as an active labor market policy measure is one of the most expensive measures, while on the other hand in terms of their effectiveness researches give different results (Lehmann, 2010). Furthermore, in the previous period a meta-study of evaluations that examined the impact of measures on the position of participants in the labor market as well as their impact on earnings was conducted. Over 150 evaluations were taken into account. The results show a positive impact on employment, but not on an overall effect on earnings (Martin & Grubb, 2001). According to the authors, even for those participants who felt positive benefits, the estimated annual income was not enough to get families out of poverty (Martin & Grubb, 2001). The results are also unfavorable when compared with other

ALMP measures, as some evaluations show that it is 40–50% more likely for evaluation studies to show positive impact of programmes such as employment assistance with sanctions (mainly related to the right to receive unemployment compensation), subsidizing earnings and self-employment assistance, than it is in the case of training programmes (Kluve, 2006).

When it comes to trainings for the labor market needs for the unemployed in the Republic of Serbia, the evaluation results also give different findings. The evaluation carried out within the EUNES 2011 project shows that the employment rate among the participants six months after the completion of trainings is 25.06% (Bjerre, Emmerich & Milosevic, 2011). On the other hand, the impact evaluation conducted at least two years after the completion of training shows that labor market trainings have a poor impact on employment but have a positive impact on further job search (Marjanović, 2015). The tendency for the number of the employed persons to decline after the completion of training is also indicated by the research of the centers for adult and continuing education (Pejatović, 2007).

Particularly interesting are the recognized non-economic effects of trainings. Despite the results of some studies suggesting that the educational experience does not necessarily lead to a subjective perception and assessment of the quality of life as higher (Tuijnjam, 1990), the results of evaluations show something different. Namely, participants in trainings, compared to non-participants, on average became happier, expanded their social contacts, reported better health, had a more positive attitude regarding their perspective and more confidence in their knowledge and skills (Bonin & Rinne, 2006; Follow-up survey of the graduated FEEA participants, 2013; Marjanović, 2015; Pejatović, 2007). We can say that after the educational intervention participants were psychologically stronger, they perceived that they were better positioned in the labor market than they had been before joining the programme, that new perspectives opened up for them with regard to keeping/changing/finding a job. Thus, the educational experience had contributed to participants' better assessment of their general living situation and personal well-being.

Starting from the often contradictory results of the conducted evaluations, from their beginnings to the present day ALMP measures have had their advocates and their opponents. Advocates of the implementation of ALMP measures, including educational ones, claim that participants of measures, especially youth, acquire basic skills, get introduced into work and acquire basic work experience, which certainly influences the improvement of their position in the labor market (Kerovec, 1994). On the other hand, ALMP measures critics emphasize that they most often offer only temporary employment, that most participants return to unemployment after a certain period of time, that the results are inadequate compared to the funds invested (Kerovec, 1994), that represent to a large extent the dissipation of public funds and that any benefit for the participants is realized exclusively at the expense of other workers (Zubović, 2011). Undoubtedly, the results of evaluations show that it is extremely difficult to deal with the prob-

lems of high unemployment through ALMP measures and that it is necessary for them to be a part of a comprehensive strategy to address the unemployment problem. Furthermore, it is realistic to expect that ALMP educational measures have a much greater impact if the labor market is characterized by a mismatch between supply and demand relative to qualifications, knowledge and skills, and not if the market is characterized by a deficit of demand.

Methodological framework of the research

The subject of research

The subject of interest of our research is the relationship between the quality of short-term vocational trainings and the employment of trainees after the completion of vocational training. We tried to determine whether there is a correlation between the quality of short-term vocational trainings and the position of the individual in the labor market, that is, whether short-term vocational trainings represent a significant determinant in changing the position of an individual in the labor market in terms of higher employment. Furthermore, we searched for an answer to the question whether it is possible based on the quality of vocational trainings to predict the employment of the trainees after the completed vocational training.

For the purposes of this research, the quality of short-term vocational trainings was analyzed through four broad complexes of organization and realization of short-term vocational trainings as follows: quality of realization of short-term vocational trainings (observed through quality dimensions: Lecturers and instructors, Spatial conditions and health protection, Equipment and tools, Training process, Training organization, Location and Total quality of the realization of short-term vocational trainings), quality of the realization of career guidance and counseling services (observed through quality dimensions: Career guidance and counseling, Administrative support and Total quality of the realization of career guidance and counseling services), characteristics of short-term vocational trainings and andragogical characteristics of the trainees. When it comes to employment, within the research it was operationalized as a working engagement of the trainees (with or without contract including self-employment) within a period of six months after the end of the training, with special attention paid to the participants who found employment in the jobs they were trained for.

The research sample

The research was conducted on an apposite sample of 306 individuals who completed vocational training in the organization of the employment service. The gender structure of the sample is balanced (50.3% men, 49.7% women). The

least represented are the highly educated with 13.7%, while non-qualified and trainees with secondary education are almost equally represented with 42.2% and 44.1% respectively. The average age of the trainees is 36 years.

Method and instrument of research

Starting from the subject of research and the characteristics of research variables, a non-experimental method was used during research, where the basic measuring instrument consists of a battery of instruments made up of several types of scales and questionnaires.

Statistical analysis

After conducting the empirical research, during the processing a number of relevant statistical procedures was applied. For the description of important parameters and depending on their nature, frequencies, percentages, mean value of the sample – arithmetic mean (M) were used. Standard Deviation (SD) was used as a measure of deviation from the average. Chi squared test was used to examine the interrelationship between two categorical variables. In addition to the Chi squared test, the result of the Likelihood Ratio test, as more adequate for a small number of subjects in the cells of cross tabulation tables, is also shown. One-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the differences between three and more modalities, and to test the difference between two modalities the T test for large independent samples was used. To determine whether independent variable/s explain/s a significant part of the variability of the dependent variable, the logistic regression analysis was used.

Research results

Quality of short-term vocational trainings and the employment

The results of the conducted research show that of the total number of trainees in the sample, the highest percentage of them (44.4%) is still unemployed after the completion of vocational trainings. They are followed by the employed regardless of the type of work engagement and the jobs they perform with 41.5%, that is 27.8% of the trainees that are engaged in the jobs for which they attended vocational training. Interestingly, out of the total number of respondents from the sample, after completing the training, as many as 14.1% moved (or returned) to the inactive category.

Taking into account the obtained findings, we were interested whether the position of an individual in the labor market after the completion of vocational training was determined by the quality of vocational training, that is, whether

there is a statistically significant relationship between the employment of the trainee upon the completion of training and the quality of the immediate realization of short-term vocational trainings, career guidance and counseling services, the characteristics of short-term vocational trainings and andragogical characteristics of the trainees.

Quality of the realization of short-term vocational trainings and the employment

In order to determine a connection between *the quality of the realization of short-term vocational trainings* and the employment, the relationship between the identified dimensions of the quality of vocational training with the employment status upon the completion of training was examined. The results of the T test show that the employed and those trainees that did not find employment are very similar in assessing the quality of the realization of vocational trainings. The one statistically significant difference between these two categories exists when it comes to quality dimension *Training process* ($t=2.403$, $p<0.05$), where the quality of the training process is better assessed by those who are employed after the completion of training with respect to those who did not find employment. However, if we analyze the quality assessments of the trainees who found employment in the jobs for which they were trained, the results of the T test indicate the existence of statistical significance in a number of quality dimensions of the realization of vocational training. Thus, in addition to the quality of the training process ($M=-0.93$ vs. $M=-1.31$), the trainees employed in new jobs better assessed the quality of training organization ($M=-0.27$ vs. $M=-0.54$), the quality of the work of lecturers and instructors ($M=-0.39$ vs. $M=-0.57$), quality of equipment and tools ($M=-0.75$ vs. $M=-1.10$), as well as the overall quality of the realization of short-term vocational trainings ($M=-0.45$ vs. $M=-0.68$).

The existence of a statistically significant link between variables confirms that the quality of the realization of vocational trainings is a significant determinant in changing the position of the individual in the labor market, that is, it can be understood as an important factor that is in the function of the employment of the trainees upon the completion of vocational training. It is noticeable that the quality of the realization of vocational trainings gains significance when it comes to the employment of trainees in the jobs for which vocational training is organized, which is in line with expectations, since the quality of the training process ensures the acquisition of labor market relevant knowledge, skills and competences, their application and operationalization to perform concrete jobs in a real working environment with an employer.

The findings are consistent with the assertions in a number of national and international strategic documents in which the quality of vocational trainings is referred to as the basic instrument for improving the position of the individual

in the labor market (European Training Foundation, 2013; European Commission, 2013). Viewed from the employment policy perspective, we can say that the research results are encouraging taking into account the role and significance of the quality of the realization of vocational trainings for the development of competence as a key comparative advantage in the labor market that ensures greater employment of an individual upon the completion of vocational training. Hence, by improving the quality of labor supply their equality in the labor market is ensured and more favorable conditions for employment are created and not only in jobs that they were trained for. The findings of the research testify that the quality of practical work based on practicing work operations in a real working environment, that is, practical mastering the “secrets” of the craft during vocational training ensures a better position in the labor market in terms of employment in numerous jobs, including those different from the jobs for which the training was organized.

Quality of realization of career guidance and counseling services and the employment

When it comes to the relationship between *the quality of career guidance and counseling services* and the employment, the results are somewhat different. The results of the T test show that the identified quality dimensions are not in a statistically significant relationship with the employment status after the completion of training, i.e. that the employed and those who did not find employment very similarly assess the quality of the provided career guidance and counseling services. On the other hand, if we analyze the quality assessments given by the trainees who found employment in the job positions they were trained for, we can notice that the trainees who are employed in new jobs, in respect to those who are not, better assess the quality of career guidance and counseling service ($M=-1.24$ vs. $M=-1.50$), administrative support ($M=-0.69$ vs. $M=-0.98$), and the overall quality of the realization of career guidance and counseling services ($M=-0.96$ vs. $M=-1.24$).

Similarly to the realization of vocational trainings, the obtained results indicate that the quality of career guidance and counseling services gains importance when it comes to the employment of a trainee in the job for which he was trained, which is in line with expectations since the provided career guidance and counseling service was useful to a greater extent when connecting with the local labor market needs at all stages of the realization of vocational training.

Viewed from the perspective of employment policy, we can say that the obtained findings are encouraging considering that, even though they cannot create jobs themselves career guidance services have a significant potential for the improvement of the position of the individual in the labor market, that is,

the development of human resources that contributes to a greater efficiency in the labor market, higher employability and employment of trainees, etc. Career guidance and counseling services gain additional importance if we take into account the results of numerous evaluations that testify that these services are relatively inexpensive and that there is a general consensus that they are very effective (Arandarenko & Krstić, 2008; Lehmann, 2010).

Characteristics of short-term vocational trainings and the employment

As a part of the research we monitored *the characteristics of short-term vocational trainings* through the number of hours and the type of vocational training attended. The results of the T test show that there is no statistically significant relationship between the *number of hours* of vocational training and the employment of trainees after the completion of the vocational training ($t=-0.161$, $p>0.05$), which is in line with expectations since the sample includes only short-term vocational trainings (97–360 hours), so almost all participants from the sample attended vocational trainings of similar duration. Unlike the number of hours of vocational training, the results indicate that the employment of the participants after the completion of vocational training is largely determined by the type of vocational training attended. The obtained results confirm the findings of the evaluations that ALMP measures have the highest success rate when labor market is characterized by a mismatch between supply and demand for knowledge and skills, that is, when it has the potential to absorb a competent workforce, and not if the labor market is characterized by a demand deficit (Betcherman *et al.*, 2004).

Andragogical characteristics of the trainees and the employment

The andragogical characteristics of the participants of short-term vocational trainings we observed through the correspondence of work experience and formal education of participants to the jobs for which vocational training was organized and through the motivation of participants for taking part in the vocational training. We were interested in whether the characteristics of the trainees are one of the determinants of his position in the labor market after the completion of vocational training, i.e. his employment.

The research results show that, from all analyzed variables, only when it comes to the variable related to the *correspondence of work experience* and attended vocational training a statistical significance was determined both for employment in jobs that are same or similar to those for which the training

was organized ($\chi^2=26.68$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$) and the employment in general, including engagement in some other jobs ($\chi^2=11.08$, $df=1$, $p=0.001$). The significance of other two analyzed variables comes to the fore only with the employment of the trainees in jobs that are same or similar to those for which training was organized.

The importance of work experience/formal qualifications related to vocational training attended for the employment of trainees in the jobs they were trained for can be explained by the transfer of knowledge and skills acquired through work/education, that is, by putting them in the function of new learning and employment. Viewed from the perspective of the employability concept we can say that the listed categories of trainees “entered” the training process as more employable and that their training was more of an instrument in the function of improving and perfecting their knowledge and skills, that is, their systematization and upgrading. The result is the development and improvement of competencies at a higher level, ensuring independence in the workplace on the jobs they are being trained for and better integration in the labor market. However, the transfer of knowledge and skills does not happen spontaneously, and since the processing of the previous (work/educational) experience, i.e. putting it in the function of learning requires the appropriate type of professional support and guidance (Kolb, 1984), we can say that to a certain extent the merit for their employment goes to the lecturers and instructors whose quality of work is rated with a high mark.

Analyzing the motivation of trainees to take part in vocational training, the research findings indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the employment of trainees in the jobs for which training was organized, when taking into account various reasons for attending the training: the desire for personal improvement ($\chi^2=21.13$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$) and the possibility of a gratuitous training ($\chi^2=13.98$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$). The results show that the participants who were employed in jobs they were trained for were more motivated by the desire for personal improvement (37.3% vs. 13.2%), that is, they put professional training in the function of personal development, improvement of their competitiveness and comparative advantage over other job seekers. At the same time, participants who did not find employment in the jobs for which they were trained to a greater extent attended the vocational training programme motivated by the possibility of a gratuitous training (34.8% vs. 14.8%), vocational trainings were put in the function of filling out free time during long-term unemployment.

The obtained results indicate that the educational and work experience and the motivation of trainees for attending vocational training can be seen important resources of an individual for his better positioning in the labor market, and that their potential should be used and put in the function of career development and learning.

Prediction of the employment of trainees upon the completion of vocational training

In addition to answering the question whether the quality of vocational training is a determinant of the employment of trainees upon the completion of vocational training, we were also interested in whether employment can be predicted, i.e. whether it is possible based on the quality of the realization of short-term vocational trainings, quality of career guidance and counseling service, characteristics of short-term vocational trainings and andragogical characteristics of trainees to predict employment.

The results of the regression analysis testify that the *Type of vocational training (work area level)* (OR: 1.05 (1.004–1.11), $p=0.034$) is the most important predictor of the employment of trainees after the completion of vocational training. The obtained result suggests that the existence of demand for certain knowledge and skills in the labor market, in other words the labor market's potential to absorb competent workforce, is crucial for the possibility of employment of the trainees upon completing vocational training. Therefore, in addition to the competitiveness of the workforce, the competitiveness of the "environment" is also required, the presence of economic trends that assure the potential for the employment of a competent workforce. Observed through the prism of the education system, the results point to the importance for vocational trainings to be founded on the real local labor market needs, planning of trainings, in other words, to the importance of the quality of the process of determining and foreseeing the needs of the local labor market for knowledge and skills. We can say that the quality of direct implementation of vocational trainings contributes to the integration of trainees into the world of work, but only if there is a need for knowledge and skills in the local market. Otherwise, ensuring the quality of the direct implementation is not enough for the employment of trainees.

The situation is somewhat different if we analyze the employment in the jobs for which vocational training is organized. The results of the regression analysis show that the following variables were statistically significant: *Training process* (OR: 2.19 (1.098–4.384), $p<0.05$), *Work experience related to vocational training (years)* (OR: 1.115 (1.022–1.215), $p<0.05$) and *Motive – desire for personal development* (OR: 0.271 (0.144–0.512), $p<0.001$). The obtained result indicates that the quality of the training process, that is, the quality of practical work based on practicing work operations and mastering the "secrets" of the craft through the number of hours put in the function of a training of a good quality is the key determinant of employment in jobs for which vocational training is organized. In addition to the training process itself, the results point to the relevance of quality of the selection process of the trainees, i.e. the necessity to include motivated participants with relevant work experience in short-term vocational trainings. Therefore, although the quality of career guidance and counseling services is not recognized as a predictor of employment in new job positions, we can say that its significance is vis-

ible through the predictive value of these two variables, that is, through the quality of the selection of trainees. Thus we can say that horizontal workforce mobility in a short term, which is understood as one of the strengths of vocational trainings, can be ensured by practical teaching and quality of the process of selecting trainees that takes into account the work experience and motives of trainees as one of the key resources of an individual and one of the most significant determinants in assessing an individual's "distance" from the labor market. By including trainees in vocational trainings with respect to their existing competences, through practical training of a good quality, short-term vocational trainings are put in the function of improving and perfecting existing knowledge and skills, and therefore employment in jobs for which vocational training is organized.

Final considerations

The results indicate that short-term vocational trainings have largely justified their role as one of the important labor market policy instruments focused on harmonizing labor market supply and demand. Although competencies and skills alone do not create jobs and are not a universal remedy for unemployment, it is beyond doubt that their development should be an important part of the reform package with a view to prepare individuals for a knowledge-based society.

When it comes to the quality of short-term vocational trainings the findings indicate that quality is a significant determinant of the change of an individual's position in the labor market, and it can be understood as an important factor in the function of the employment of trainees after completing vocational training. It is important to emphasize that the analyzed variables of the quality of vocational trainings are of importance when it comes to employment in jobs for which vocational training has been organized, and that only for a few analyzed variables a statistical significance was established for employment in general, including jobs different from those they were trained for.

The research results are largely in line with the recommendations of numerous researchers (Arandarenko & Krstic, 2008; Betcherman *et al.*, 2004; Dinkić *et al.*, 2007; Marjanović, 2015; Martin & Grubb, 2001; Ognjenović & Savčić, 2006) that after the conducted evaluative studies related to determining the economic effects of trainings, have identified the room for improvement of their effects precisely in improving (some elements) the quality of trainings. Therefore, the need for vocational trainings to be in line with the needs of the local labor market, to be market-relevant, to conduct targeted selection of trainees and to put existing trainees' competencies in the function of further learning, employment and career development in general was reaffirmed.

Viewed from the perspective of employment policy, we can say that the research results are encouraging considering the role and importance of the quality of vocational trainings has in improving the quality of the workforce supply,

which ensures their equality in the labor market and creates more favorable conditions for employment, not only in jobs for which they were trained.

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