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Ph.D.SCHOOL

**REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT AND INCREASING EMPLOYMENT RATE.
ANALYSIS OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING - CASE STUDY ON MUREȘ COUNTY**

(Summary)

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Keywords: active and passive labor market policies; active measures; unemployment in Romania; employment on the labor market; vocational training; unemployment Mures county.

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1. Purpose and research objectives

The present paper is situated at the junction between the economic and social sciences. By the nature of its subject, the thesis gains multidisciplinary attributions. The originality of the paper is derived from studying and analyzing the active labour measures with an emphasis on vocational training, identifying both its strengths and its vulnerabilities. The labor market together with the problem of unemployment are and will always be topical issues, issues always present in the thematic study of researchers, theorists and practitioners, since the causes and methods of combating this negative effect are subjects that bring real challenges. The importance of the theme and the problematic issue derives from the multitude of studies, from the strategies and programs existing at the level of European Union and, consequently, in Romania as well.

The characteristics emerge from the readings studied and from the primary and secondary sources analyzed; the paper trying to offer them a structure, an interpretation and even come up with solutions proposals to the identified problems regarding unemployment. The novelty of this analysis topic is confirmed by the few written sources available regarding Romania and Mures County. During the present study I used primary sources to extract the raw information, and their interpretation was consolidated by the specialized literature. The references consists of both primary sources (official documents issued by European institutions, international institutions or national and local institutions) as well as secondary sources (volumes, articles within edited volumes, electronic articles). I have tried to consult the most current publications in the field of research, hoping that the research paper will be as accurate as possible.

The aim of the paper is to analyze the reintegration policies on the labor market for the unemployed in general, in Romania, compared to the situation registered at the European

Union level, with an emphasis on active labour measures and, in particular, of the vocational training courses applied in Mures County.

The main objectives of the research have been fully achieved and relate to:

O1. Determining the situation at national level regarding the reintegration measures on the labor market and identifying the programs of the active labour measures that work best.

O2. Identifying common and concurrent points with the active European policies for reintegration on the labor market designed to bring into question the applicability of certain active measures according to the common challenges.

O3. Outlining examples of good practice in the field of labor market and drafting a comparison between the European countries (model) to follow in terms of high level of attendance in active programs that reduce unemployment.

O4. Evaluating the success, impact and results of the programs of the active measures and especially of the vocational training courses on the people who have followed them in general and especially in Mures County.

O5. Proposing a set of recommendations based on the research in order to eliminate the non-productive practices in the field of active measures used by the National Agencies for Employment in Romania.

The **secondary objectives** include the following:

- Identifying possible elements, such as the person's gender or age and checking if they are the basis for faster employment for the people who have attended vocational training programs.

- Establishing a dependency between the gender of an unemployed person and the degree of satisfaction towards a vocational training course taken.

- Pointing out if there is any correspondence between the satisfaction towards a vocational training course and acquiring of a job.

- Determining the relationship between attending several vocational training courses and the increase of the employability rate.

- Establishing the connection between the level of the last graduated school and the period in which the person finds a job.

- Verifying the connection between vocational training programs and the qualitative effects on employment as well as the relationship between a prolonged period of inactivity and the speed with which a person finds a job after attending a vocational training course.

The idea of the present research project has as its starting point the dissertation work submitted at the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences in 2014 and consequently, it is in fact a continuation that wants to reiterate the topic and amplify it. The dissertation paper was titled *The Social Impact of Reintegration Programs on the Labor Market for the Unemployed* and focused on highlighting the dimensions, structures and characteristics of the unemployment.

The interest for the unemployment issue and its methods of combating it increased with the research grant received at the European Parliament in October 2014. For approximately nine months, in this framework, I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the topic. By participating at the working sessions of the Commission for Employment and Social Affairs, I found out that in the debates of the members of the European Parliament and in the studies and articles published by the Research Institute of the Parliament, there was no clear and general situation about Romania regarding the results of the active measures taken to reduce unemployment.

Also, most of the time the emphasis is placed on economic studies and on the assessment of the tendency of unemployment. Moreover, I decided to broaden my area of research, to try to observe what the situation is at the moment, to see what can be changed and to improve in this regard, to conduct a new study, compared to other European member states,

so that in the end to be able to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of Romania's situation regarding unemployment.

In the last ten years, a large number of European member states have significantly improved their situation on the labor market, by an increased number of unemployed persons who have been reintegrated into the labor market, while other countries have registered a higher number of unemployed people. What are the reasons for the success of the countries that have improved their situation? Can other countries learn from their experience? Is there a pattern, a guide of good practices designed up so far?

This paper aims to analyze the successful labor market policies registered by different countries in Europe comparatively to the situation noted in Romania. Among the objectives I included sharing knowledge of countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Germany, countries that represent a model to follow in terms of high level of participation in active measures to reduce unemployment.

Given that the problem of unemployment is on the daily agenda of the European institutions empowered in this regard and knowing the differences of applying from state to state the labor market policies, it is necessary to evaluate the impact of each national program addressed to the unemployed in terms of proposed objectives and finding the most appropriate policies for achieving the goals, especially in our country.

The fight against unemployment has become a priority over the last decade and the idea that is becoming more and more prevalent concerns the orientation of labor market policies from predominantly passive measures to active measures, which support employment. The notoriety of the active labour measures is found in the increased efficiency of the labor market, as well as on the possibility of reducing unemployment by ensuring the correlation of the demand with the supply of labor force and of maintaining the unemployed

person in contact with the labor market, increasing in the same time, the skills and competences needed to reintegrate into the labor market.

Beyond the experimental character of those mentioned above, I will focus on monitoring the implementation of active measures to combat unemployment at national level, compared with the European Union and finally at the local community level in Mures county.

Through these measures it is being pursued at the level of supply on the labor market, respectively at the level of the target groups, of the unemployed / potential unemployed, of an active behavior, consisting of their direct and sustained participation on the labor market. At the same time, the active measures also address to the demand level of labor force, in order to develop an entrepreneurial environment as well as to encourage the creation of new jobs.

2. Structure and thesis content

Starting from these considerations, the introductory chapter focuses on identifying the problem and deals with policies that reduce unemployment and increase employment in Romania, presenting active and passive measures to reduce unemployment so that in the end to be able to carry out an analysis of the categories of the measures that define the employment policy. Also, the first chapter aims to observe how the budget allocated to active measures contributes to the results, and if there is a connection between the amounts allocated for the active measures and the number of people integrated in the labor market.

The second chapter (*Unemployment structure and dynamics. Reforming approaches in employment policies in Romania*) defines the sector of labor market policies. In this way, we speak of unemployment as an imbalance of the labor market but also as a social policy meant to stabilize the public sector that is in a continuous process of reform. In the same time, I found it useful to review the aspects related to the characteristics of the New Public Management and its implications regarding the traditional public management.

The third chapter (*Measures to improve the opportunities on the labor market for the unemployed in the European Union*) comes as a natural continuation of the second chapter and directs the work towards active employment policies at European Member State level, focusing on the pattern found in Germany, Sweden and Denmark.

Chapter four (*Methods and models for evaluating the active measures programs with references in the present research*) offers a perspective on the possible effects of the programs of active measures on the people who have followed them and implicitly on the labor market. The basis for this process was the meta-analysis, a statistical tool that involves synthesizing, analyzing and summarizing multiple research results in a sample of individual studies that analyze the impact of active measures on employment.

Chapter five (*Considerations in regard with the vocational training as an active measure for reintegration on the labor market*) defines the relevant aspects related to the evaluation of vocational training programs, starting with the history of training, concepts and classifications and moving towards the performance of vocational training programs.

The final part that includes the sixth chapter (*Analysis of employment policies applied by AJOFM Mureş*) leads us to the analysis of vocational training as an active measure of re-integration into the labor market at the level of Mureş County and concludes the present work with practical elements. The basis of this analysis is the data collected from the Mureş County Agency for Employment, which organizes free vocational training / re-qualification courses for the unemployed in order to increase their chances of getting a job. The thesis ends with a series of conclusions and proposals, followed by a list of bibliographic references and a series of four annexes.

The reason behind this project idea was, among other things, the awareness of the problem of unemployment, as well as identifying different problems faced by the unemployed, among which we mention: the lack of professional training, the failure to obtain

qualification certificates in school, lack of work experience or the presence of a qualification that has no search on the labour market.

As the methods of intervention of the European member states are different, I considered being of a great significance the knowledge of the strategies adopted by different European states, constituting in this matter a rich source of information for those interested in aspects regarding the active measures for employment.

To expand the problem, the definition of unemployed persons has brought with it the awareness that they can identify with a group of stigmatized persons, a group in which their needs and abilities are not correlated or it is felt the existence of more or less objective obstacles in the process of getting jobs.

As a result of the quantitative analysis, I understood that the unemployed want and need in addition to a job and a remuneration, advice and help in the problems they face, as well as counseling as a method of avoiding social exclusion and setting out ways to achieve professional qualification.

The field of unemployment is very well known and debated nowadays. There are plenty of definitions, but it is important to remember that unemployment cannot be defined so simply, just as representing that number of people without a job. Such a general and simple definition would also include children who are too young to work and retirees, who are about to cease working, or other categories of people who do not want to work. Unemployment refers to all the people who want and can work but are unable to find a job.

It is known that unemployment is a complex, social phenomenon, which has had and has effects in various fields (social, psychological, economic). The scale of the phenomenon and the increase of the number of unemployed people worldwide have focused the European Union's attention on labor market and employment issues, developing a series of strategies (Amsterdam 1997, Lisbon 2000, Stockholm 2001, Lisbon 2005, Brussels 2010, Brussels

2010) so that today to be outlined an European Employment Strategy¹, which aims to combat unemployment at the level of the European Union.

A separate field within social policies is represented by the policies for reducing unemployment, whose main objective is to maintain and increase employment, through direct or indirect actions, aimed at providing jobs for young people who enter the labor market, for the unemployed or other persons who want to be employed.

There is a certain degree of unemployment and it is an inevitable feature of any free market economy. As a result, Romania is trying to maintain unemployment (at the lowest possible levels), rather than preventing any form of it.

In general, the increase of unemployment rate have inevitably brought labour market policies back into spotlight, where we can find two types of social policy, namely:

- passive policies – unemployment insurance and related welfare benefits paid to the unemployed and
- active policies - whose objective is to support the unemployed in finding a job (Osoian, 2005, p. 156).

The active measures refer to the interventions on the labor market regarding the participants whose main activity is to search in an active manner for a job and which is concluded by modifying their status on the labor market (Guț, 2009, p. 157). The active measures concern, first of all, those governmental interventions that provide financial but temporary support, to the disadvantaged groups on the labor market, because this type of measures have as main objective the supporting of the active persons through different forms, from involuntary inactivity to employment or more, while maintaining jobs for people threatened by unemployment.

From another view, active policies aim to:

¹ Currently is it now an integrated part of the *Europe 2020 Strategy*

- reduce the period of job search through a better matching between the number of job vacancies with the number of job seekers (between the demand and supply of the labour force);

- training and qualification with the role of improving or diversifying the qualifications of the workers;

- direct creation of jobs (Calmfors, 1994, p. 8 adjacent. Guț, 2009, p. 165).

Active measures contribute, both to improving the skills and qualifications of the unemployed and to encourage the mobility of the workforce, due to the emphasis placed on financing the vocational training.

In our country, according to the law on unemployment insurance system and the stimulation of employment², the active measures are based on two major objectives:

- ✓ increasing the employment opportunities for people that are looking for a job;
- ✓ stimulating employers to hire unemployed persons and creating new jobs.

Passive measures refer to interventions that provide financial assistance, directly or indirectly, to disadvantaged people on the labor market. Those who benefit from this type of intervention are the unemployed and who are actively seeking a job, but also early retirees (Guț, 2009, p. 157). Passive labor market measures refer to financial aid granted directly or indirectly to disadvantaged people on the labor market, the main passive measure referring to unemployment benefits.

In the passive measures are included the unemployment benefits (unemployment benefit and social assistance in the event of unemployment) and compensatory payments. The unemployment benefit was established on the basis of Law no. 76/2002 as a monthly, fixed and non-taxable amount that represents 75% of the minimum basic gross wage in the country

²Law no. 76/2002 on the unemployment insurance system and the stimulation of employment, O. M. no. 103 from February 6, 2002.

valid at the date of its establishment, to which is added a percentage amount, depending on the seniority in work. The payment of compensations is granted to the persons whose individual employment contracts are cancelled following collective redundancies.

The reason for choosing the analysis of the active measures to reduce unemployment comes from the fact that the passive measures granted with good intentions, do nothing else but to sustain from the psychological point of view and even materially the assisted ones, the passivity - as defined in the dictionary (DEX, 2009) - lack of activity, initiative, interest, giving up action, inactivity, resignation. From my point of view, a measure that develops an attitude of passivity is not at all beneficial in trying to help the unemployed looking for a job and moreover it will not help to achieve the stated objective of the social policy assumed by Romania and other European Member States to promote the employment of people capable of work, to improve living and working conditions and to alleviate the framework conditions for development and for more work places. I also add the idea that an educated person (either in apprenticeship schools, through training or through programs for integrating workers on the labor market, programs to facilitate the transition from school to work), with one or more specializations is more likely to reduce long-term or cyclical unemployment than a person to whom is allocated money over a fixed period of time.

This aspect is also reinforced by the matter that at European level, despite the fact that the employment policy belongs to the Member States and any attempt to harmonize it is excluded, it is nevertheless used to stimulate and support policies, and the focus is mostly on implementation of programs and projects designed to stimulate the employment of unemployed persons in different activities. In this respect, Employment and Social Innovation programme (EaSI, 2014-2020), brings together three axes that support employment, social policy and labor mobility throughout the European Union (PROGRESS, EURES and Progress Microfinance). Added to these is the Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion Package,

which among other effects promotes a more efficient management of expenditure to ensure adequate and sustainable social protection, for example by attending training courses, investing in skills and on the ability of citizens to increase their chance of integrating into society and on the labour market (Investment package, 2013).

3. Methodology

The present research is included in the field of quantitative and qualitative studies, following the scientific and methodological approach of the specialized works. The methodological aspects of the research included setting objectives and defining hypotheses. The research hypotheses were correlated and formulated starting from the research objectives, based on them being subsequently developed three dimensions, respectively: the personal, structural and of the competencies. For testing each hypothesis, several research methods were applied in several stages and consisted of different tools.

Table 1: The dimensions and hypotheses of the research

<u>The dimensions of the research</u>			
	<u>Personal dimension</u>	<u>Competencies dimension</u>	<u>Structural dimension</u>
<u>Hypotheses</u>	1. Vocational training programs lead to faster employment for men (<i>invalidated</i>)	5. Participation in several vocational training courses increases the employability rate (<i>confirmed</i>)	7. Vocational training programs tend to have insignificant but high quality effects on employment (<i>confirmed</i>)
	2. The employability depends on the age of the persons who have attended vocational training courses (<i>invalidated</i>)	6. The level of the last graduated school predicts the period of time in which the person finds a job (<i>invalidated</i>)	8. An extended period of inactivity affects the speed with which a person finds a job after attending a vocational training course (<i>confirmed</i>)

3. The satisfaction towards a vocational training course taken increases according to the gender and the age of the unemployed (*invalidated*)

4. The satisfaction towards a vocational training course taken influences the process of obtaining a job (*confirmed*)

Source: Author

Thus, the first stage, the documentation phase, consisted in the theoretical research and included the analysis of the specialized literature. The second stage, the elaboration of the analysis matrix, had as starting points the construction of the research methodology and the necessary research tools by formulating the research hypotheses, applying the research instruments, carrying out the analysis and interpreting the collected data. The last step was to synthesize the data and information obtained from the research.

The objective of the present research is to carry out a study about the impact of the active measures (of vocational training courses) and in this regard I used the questionnaire as a method of **quantitative analysis**. Concerning the **qualitative analysis**, I used the interview, the content analysis of ANOFM documents and reports, the database provided by AJOFM Mureş and the analysis of the demand on the labor market in Mures County.

Basically, the present study is divided into **three main sections**, **the first one** is carried out around people looking for a job, the future employees, **the second section** is dedicated to the interpretation of the data provided by AJOFM Mureş, the provider of training courses, and **the third section** is the section of the employers, in which we analyzed the demand of the labor market in Mures county.

In the analysis and interpretation of the both quantitative and qualitative collected data I had as starting point the hypotheses concentrated in the three big dimensions: personal, structural and of the competencies.

As a research method of the qualitative analysis, I used the interview, which was applied to two public employee of the department of "Vocational training" and four of the department of "Labor mediation, counseling, guidance and vocational training". The research tool used was the **semi-structured interview guide**, which included a number of questions, meant to help test the hypotheses.

Additionally as qualitative research, I used the method of content analysis of ANOFM documents and reports and of the database provided by AJOFM Mures, respectively the analysis of the number of applications on the labor market in Mures county.

Regarding the **data provided by AJOFM Mureş** from 2013-2017, the analysis focused on identifying the total number of participants in the vocational training courses and the number of persons on whom the vocational training courses had an impact and thus were got hired. The hiring process involves a probationary period, so we found it useful to know if, after the probationary period (which usually last up to three months), the persons who attended vocational training courses remain in the field of work.

The analysis of the demand on the labor market started from the idea of finding out to what extent the demand on the labor market in Mureş county "requires" persons with a certain qualification for the available vacant positions. Because of the evolution of technology and the emergence of the Internet, often it is more useful to publish and search for possible vacancies on the Internet. Thus, the collecting of the requirements of the valid jobs on the labor market in Mureş county was carried out by evaluating employment announcements via Internet portals as well as from the AJOFM Mureş platform, from the "Vacancies" section. Thus, during the period 13.07.2016-21.11.2017 a number of 444 employment announcements

were subject to analysis and the main purpose was to check the requirements demanded for the vacant positions.

The research methodology used in the paper is based on the formative evaluation, being an intermediate evaluation, being carried out during the implementation of the programs of the active measures, in order to analyze the situation and to facilitate the improvement of the programs offered by AJOFM Mures.

Starting from the ideas mentioned above, I believe that on one hand, by conducting this research, new data have been revealed and will be useful both theoretically and practically. On the other hand, I appreciate that a special attention will need to be paid to the active measures on the labor market at national level in the process of risk management and of the evaluation of unemployment, which must go through many stages to achieve convergence towards possible existing European models. In this way we will respect the provisions of art. 147, of Title IX, Employment, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU, 2012, p. 66), which states that "the union contributes to achieve a high level of employment by encouraging cooperation between Member States" with the aim of facilitating the exchange of information between the Member States but especially of the exchange of good practices in matters of combating unemployment.

4. The main results obtained

The main results of the present paper refer to the fact that sometimes the need for certain measures results from both their use and their success, more precisely from the number of people employed as a direct result of participating to these measures. The reorientation of passive policies towards the active ones, underlines the success of the labor market policies, especially of their positive factors that contributes to the quality improvement

of the workforce, to an increased job offer and a more active participation of the unemployed in the process of searching for new work places.

The allocated budget for the active measures is particularly important. The results are reflected in the positive and strong relationship between the number of people integrated back on the labor market and the amount allocated to that measure. Thus, the larger the budget is, the greater the number of people integrated back on the labor market is.

Whether we are talking about unemployment as a social, financial or economic cost, this is a negative factor that imposes costs on society. As can be expected, the social cost is probably the most important indicator but also one that is impossible to be calculate, being for the individual a demoralizing factor that can take different forms depending on the type of unemployment or its duration. The consequences of short-term unemployment are somewhat lower, whereas the long-term unemployment can seriously affect the person and can lead to an advanced social degradation, that involves family members as well.

In a brief comparative look at labor market policies and measures adopted in countries such as Sweden, Germany or Denmark, we note the Danish flexicurity model, as well as the role of social security as a defining element for stabilizing the Swedish labor market, and the reformed German model regarding the reduction of unemployment incentives. This shows the importance of applying measures to reform the social protection systems, such as: conditioning the granting unemployment incentives for the active search of a job and for participating in vocational conversion programs, as well as reducing the amount of unemployment incentives and duration.

In Romania:	In Europe:
- progress made on vocational training programs, especially for people coming from rural places;	- vocational training programs are the most used active measures on the labor market in Europe;
- career counseling and work information have made a significant contribution to the integration of people on the field of work, being the most frequently used measures during 2014-2016;	- vocational training programs have the highest share with a positive effect on the participants, followed by the guidance/carrer counseling services;
- the number of unemployed persons who were hired as a result of vocational training increased significantly from 35% to 44.30% (2014-2016) (Europe 2020 – State of Implementation in Romania, 2014)	- bigger impact on women participating in active measures and lower on men. (Kluve, 2006, p. 10)

Figure 2: The results of the comparative analysis on the implementation of the active measures in Romania and the EU

The evaluation of the success of the active measures programs point out that the measures of vocational training in general show modest but positive effects but with a big impact on the long-term. Added to these are the effects of the measures that are mainly found on the duration of the unemployment period, with important results recorded on the increase of the employment rate. On the other hand, the effects are lower in terms of providing stability on the labor market and on the transition from unemployment to employment.

In order to improve the qualification and competence of the workforce, everything should starts from the source, from the first level of education, and the increase of the quality of the primary education, through the improvement of the preschool curricula programs.

The direct relationship between the unemployment rate and the level of education should no longer be proven, but it can easily be seen from the data that indicates that the unemployment rate decreases as a higher level of education is reached.

The analysis started from a set of questions, which, during the present research, I tried to answer them either from a theoretical or a practical perspective. The questions referred to the following aspects:

a) are the vocational training courses attended by the unemployed and what is their impact on the persons who took them?

b) how many unemployed people have succeeded in being hired as a result of participating in vocational training courses?

c) to what extent does the acquiring a job by the unemployed depend on the participation in vocational training or individual education?

d) does the satisfaction towards a vocational training course and the way of obtaining a qualification has an impact on employment for an unemployed person?

e) does the time frame between acquiring the unemployed status and participating in a vocational training course has any impact on the subsequent employment?

Thus, based on the aforementioned questions and in relation to the three major dimensions, the personal, the one regarding competences and the structural dimension, on which the analysis of the research paper was supported, revealed in the **quantitative data** terms, that:

- in general, the active measures, and here I refer strictly to the vocational training courses organized for the unemployed, are frequented.

- a significant number of people surveyed (42.5%) found a job after about a year and another 31% found a job within 2 to 5 months, a possible cause for these periods is the inconsistency of the supply with the actual demand for labor;

- of all 96 persons surveyed, as a result of attending the qualification courses, the rate of the people who were employed was 55.21% (representing 53 persons) and only 20.8% (totaling 20 persons) have declared that did not get hired after attending those courses;

- from the personal dimension perspective, I found out that between employment, gender and age of the people who attended vocational training courses there is no significant connection, we have to take in consideration the fact that the sample of people who answered the questionnaire was composed of 96 persons where the dominant age was 26-35 years old and the gender of the questioned persons inclined towards the masculine one (51 persons of the male gender and 39 of the feminine gender); At the same time, I understand that gender and age are not important factors in terms of satisfaction with the course followed, however, there is a strong connection between the satisfaction towards a vocational training course and employment. In other words, people who got a job are a little more satisfied with the vocational training course than those who didn't get a job.

- regarding the competence dimension, it turned out that most often the participation in several vocational training courses is an important condition in terms of employability and the level of studies counts in relation with shortening the time in which a person is employed, fact what strengthens the primordial idea of the present research;

- regarding the structural dimension, with reference to external environmental factors, the following minor but qualitative effects turn out on those who have taken courses, thereby, most respondents see in the training courses the advantage of having an additional chance upon employment, followed by the benefit of acquiring a qualification diploma and easier adaptation to the current requirements in the field of work. We also note that a prolonged period of inactivity affects the speed with which a person finds a job after participating in a vocational training course.

- a person's education overcome the qualification when it comes to a job that requires a vocational training course, but also, results the marginal role played by the qualification in the recruitment and retention of people in the work field.

The qualitative analysis was based on the answers to the interview questions of the public employee of the departments of "Labor mediation, counseling and guidance and vocational training" and "Vocational training" within the AJOFM Mures. The general conclusions are the following:

- the labor market in Mureş county is one held in normal range, being registered a sufficient number of available jobs, in different branches of activity from the field of telecommunications, construction, trade and up to the field of services;

- vocational training programs are essential active measures in reintegrating people who are in search of a job. These trainings are seen as being a great opportunity to acquire new skills or even to completely change their field of activity;

- regarding the structural dimension, we note that the main advantage of these vocational training courses are the reintegration into the labor market, but also the development of professional skills free of charge, the sustainable employment, the extension of the active life and of course advantages at social, psychosocial and psychological level, to which the financial benefits are added (received from the Unemployment Insurance budget) as well as the possibility of employment in different and multiple qualifications, obtained along the professional route;

- as regards to the competence dimension, professional abilities become ineffective when a person's basic training is deficient;

- relating to the personal dimension, it is observed the need to eliminate the age differences with regard to a certain kind of occupational activity (without effort) and to

emphasize the age differences to other types of activities without creating discriminatory situations.

Following the analysis of the vocational training system in Mures county, the subsequent main aspects are highlighted:

- ✓ During the analyzed period of time, from 2014 to 2017, we notice that a number of new jobs and qualifications have been updated according to the demand on the labour market, but is it sufficient?
- ✓ there is no correlation in the true sense of the word regarding the anticipation of the skills required on the labor market and this can only be seen from the planning of the initial vocational training curriculum. But can they anticipate in the future the needs of vocational training?
- ✓ on one hand we can think of the fact that initial vocational training is not attractive for students and on the other hand continuing vocational training is not motivating for adults. How can this "trend" be solve? Are the awareness campaigns and the promotion of the initial and continuous vocational training enough, or is there a need for another kind of intervention?
- ✓ there is a lack of a national data collection system or a mechanism for evaluating the development in the field of active measures offered to the unemployed persons in order to reintegrate them into the labor market, being also the first reason underlying this paper. So, do we have the capacity to develop such an interinstitutional collaboration system?
- ✓ we notice the absence of a regulatory and implementation framework for quality assurance of vocational training which majorly discredits this type of training. What would be the steps to take for such an arrangement?

Summarizing the above, we note that the vocational training for the unemployed is not only a factor of (re) professional integration, but also a factor of reducing their vulnerability to unemployment. These courses are also relevant for the maintenance and support of the professional skills of the long-term unemployed persons but are also relevant in putting up to date the skills of the active persons and their adaptation to the labor market; the process of integration through vocational training guides people in search of a job for professional autonomy and sustainable employment.

5. Public policy recommendations

As recommendations, a first proposal is for the diversification and multiplication of occupational education through different specializations in schools, high schools and even faculties taking into account the demand for jobs at local and regional level. The final goal is to strengthen the community role of schools and high schools by developing relationships with the external environment and local development actions, through small, well-defined, achievable steps. Moreover, the development of partnerships between economic agents, public institutions and schools is particularly important, in order to ensure and guarantee that education remains essential for the demands of the labor market. Professional guidance and counseling should be carried out in a realistic manner, in order to ensure the balance between theoretical studies, technical and professional skills.

It is easy to understand that an educated person has more chances to integrate into the labor market, to find a job according to their level of competence. Economically and socially, his performances are superior and his chances are multiple.

By concentrating the information presented we identify the need for a coherent, flexible and modern legislation in the field of labor market policies, which includes both stable, general norms regarding the unitary application of the law but also specific norms with

zonal and temporal applicability in relation to the immediate demands of the labor market and immediate assimilation of the labor force. We refer to the vocational training of the unemployed not only as a factor of professional (re) integration, but also as a factor of reducing their vulnerability to unemployment, as the importance of these courses lies both in maintaining and supporting the professional skills of the long-term unemployed whose career retains in some areas the contemporaneity but also in the improvement of the competences of the active persons and their adaptation on the labor market. This whole process represents a realistic desire for the labor market of any modern economy.

6. Potential future research

The specialists began to study unemployment only when it became a problem that could not be hidden. The implications for a person are multiple and can have major consequences. It is too early to adopt rigid conclusions and put an end to a debate that has not started well. Therefore, through this research, I considered important to be able to know as many different approaches as possible and ask the right questions.

Employment and unemployment are two basic components of the labor market that enjoy great attention at national level, in each country as well as on the international level. The results of these increasingly combined efforts are extremely different from one country to another, some succeeding more, others less, some obtaining quantitative and less qualitative results, etc. depending on a multitude of factors including the economic dimension, the economic and financial possibilities of a person, the orientation of investments and social protection resources, the efficiency of the mechanisms used in the process of adjusting human resources, etc.

An important role is played by the vocational training of the unemployed in order to restructure and modernize the situation on the labor market, in response to the inadequacy of the job supply to the requirements of the demands on the labour market.

The problem of unemployment must be treated from the root therefore an increased importance must be given to education, as the main driver in terms of developing a person. Moreover, in the long-term perspective we must be able to look to the future once we ensure that the development and training has taken place since the early education of a person.

Another important aspect, which is the responsibility of the county employment agencies, is to inform population regarding the opportunities on the labour market. Informing as a measure to prevent unemployment and to adapt the demand for work with the supply. In this context, an additional effort is needed in developing cooperation between economic agents, labor agencies, as well as collecting and disseminating information about job vacancies to the unemployed persons.

Thereby, it is easy to understand that a diversified and complex system of measures must be promoted within the framework of employment policies, in order to establish a real and viable mechanism for reducing unemployment.

To propose now, at the current state of Romania, one model or another, without taking into account the national specificity, appears as a rhetorical analysis of a several successful models that had their basis years before conducting the present study.

Thus, the Danish and Swedish models are approximately 100 years old and the German model is over 60 years old. These models have been improved over the years, which lead us to say that the gap at the moment for Romania and the three countries is far too large and too difficult to overcome. We dare to propose to take over the schemes already experienced and to go beyond the intermediate stages. This means:

- a real decentralization;

- dynamic and permanent management, adaptable to change;
- sustained efforts in the implementation of diversified, flexible and useful programs at micro social level;
- reducing unemployment benefits both as a period and in terms of the amount;
- major investments in programs regarding the health status of the population, its education, increasing work capacity, and changing mentalities regarding the social utility;
- attractive salaries, guaranteed and correctly correlated with the real contribution to the national economy.

The fluctuating and syncopated political influence regarding employment as well as the elimination of the tendencies of undervaluation of physical work, productive work, useful work for the benefit of communities, societies in general must also be seriously addressed.

A topic that represents an interest refers to the situation often encountered in local, national and even European contexts, when there are jobs and financial availability to support unemployed people but there are no job seekers. The data show that at the job fairs and job exchanges in general, the number of demands on the labor market is lower in contrast of the job offers, resulting the lack of interest of the unemployed people for the available jobs. The question that arises is from what resources do these people ensure their existence?

Migration is another factor that reduces the available labor force in Romania, a trend that has continued in recent decades, mainly encouraged by the higher earnings offered. The national offices of the labor force are having real problems regarding the organization of the flows of the demand and the supply of labor, on the reconversion and the vocational training.

The proposal of a unique model to be followed in the issues discussed during the present research comes out of the equation due to the diversity of national unemployment situations, the diversity of the educational, social and cultural system in general. In the context of European policy focused on identifying and sustaining action guidelines and taking

responsibility for national, regional and local authorities, the aim of this paper was not to find a set of common rules to be applied in the future, but rather to identify common and convergence points meant to bring into question the applicability of certain active measures based on current, common challenges.

To go beyond the limits of this study we must go further and **as future research directions** I propose to include in the analysis and context of the problem of unemployment women and young people as a target group. The economic crisis of 2008-2009 caused a shock for millions of citizens and among the affected persons were women and young people. The Europe 2020 strategy came as a solution to turn the EU economy into a smart, sustainable and inclusive one, characterized by high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. In this regard, Europe 2020 proposes three priorities that support each other:

- smart growth based on knowledge and innovation;
- sustainable growth aimed at the efficient allocation of resources;
- favorable inclusive growth that aims to achieve high levels of inclusion, with a high rate of employment, which will ensure social cohesion.

To these priorities were added a series of objectives that lead to a green economy and a competitive growth. In this manner, in order to connect with the topic of the present research and the correlation with the fulfillment of the national objective of having a rate of 75% for the population aged between 20-64 years, we must have a greater involvement of women, elderly workers and young people, vulnerable groups who have been severely affected by the crisis.

The actions to be taken in order to solve these situations were mentioned during the present paper work, respectively: the need to modernize and strengthen policies regarding employment, but also education and training, as well as the social protection system, according to the Danish model. In this way, the results will consist in increased labor market

participation and a reduced structural unemployment, as well as in an increased social responsibility of the community with reference to all stakeholders (economic agents, enterprises, organizations, etc.).

As future directions, I believe it will be important to implement the principles of flexicurity and to give to the citizens the opportunity to acquire new skills that will enable them to adapt to new conditions and possible career changes.

Looking in perspective, it is very difficult for us to project the future and to say what the next 50 or 100 years will look like regarding the labor market. If, however, we dare to imagine this, on the one hand we can think that, artificial intelligence and robotics will exist in all sectors of work and billions of people will be dismissed. On the other hand, a slightly more optimistic forecast could lead us to think that automation will continue to generate new jobs and perhaps more prosperity for humanity.

As Yuval Noah Harari mentions in his book *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (Harari, 2018, pp. 33-37), fears that automation will generate massive unemployment date back to the 19th century and until now they didn't materialized. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, for every job lost in favor of a machine, at least one new job has been created, and the average standard of living has increased remarkably.

I believe that the volatility of the new jobs will make it difficult to guarantee the rights of the workers and the creation of new jobs and the professional conversion of the people for their employment will not be a singular effort. I am just thinking that we will no longer be able to speak of "life jobs" due to the speed with which the labor market sectors will evolve against the background of robotization or artificial intelligence. Even if we could constantly invent new jobs and retrain the workforce, we might wonder if the average man would be able to withstand the changes marked by such endless transformations?

Of course, much of the previous statements remain for the moment just speculation because no one can know for sure what kind of impact automation and robotization will have on different professions in the future and it is difficult to estimate when they will occur because they rely upon political, social and cultural decisions and not only on the technological advances but still is an idea that needs to be explored.

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