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Introduction

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Slovak national research report brings a meta-analysis of 2004 – 2009 research in four areas:

- VET and employment-related mobility and migration;
- Benefits of VET;
- Labour market groups at risk; and
- Professionalisation of pedagogical workers in vocational education and training.

The first two areas make the central topics which are obligatory for all EU Member States, and the other two ones have been selected as being recently of relevance for Slovakia. In exceptional cases, research carried out between 2002 and 2004 was taken into account.

The research in migration and mobility is not considered of fundamental importance in Slovakia, with regard to the traditionally very low numbers of asylum seekers, low labour immigration and the steeply increasing labour migration to EU countries following the EU accession. The issues of brain drain and brain gain have since then become increasingly pressing, especially because the immigrants staying in Slovakia are rather interested in being integrated in the wealthier EU countries. Moreover, in a particularly multi-cultural country like Slovakia, the coexistence issues of indigenous minorities draw a significantly higher attention than the integration issues of immigrants. No surprise that the research is funded predominantly by the European Integration Fund and the European Refugee Fund. The first comprehensive analysis of foreign migration in Slovakia was published just in 2005 by Divinský who is the leading expert in this research area and who, together with Bargerová, has significantly influenced policy making with regard to migration and integration of immigrants. He was the first to specifically go into labour migration and to analyse the relationship between the current demographic trends and labour force developments in Slovakia after its accession to the EU. The first comprehensive survey about the needs of migrants in Slovakia called “Needs of migrants in Slovakia” was commissioned by the International Organisation for Migration and published by Popper et al. in 2006.

The research in VET benefits is still embryonic in Slovakia. The only research falling straight into the area is that by Hronec, on the costs and benefits of investment in education at humanitarian, technical, agricultural and art programmes at universities.

The overview of research in labour market groups at risk has been structured into five sections by their focus at the various groups at risk: young people, especially new school graduates, members of segregated Roma communities, persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed, and elderly persons aged 55 – 64. The sixth subsection introduces the only study on labour market risks with regard to vocational education. Over the monitored period, research was dominated by descriptions of the standing of various social groups and by studies of efficiency of the respective active labour market policy tools. The positive thing is that the Ministry of

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Labour, Social Affairs and Family felt a need of such research before implementing legislation changes and introducing the follow-up corrective measures in employment policy. That is the main impact of the work done by of researchers in the Institute for Labour and Family Research. The lack of funding did not allow any research in the risk phenomenon per se and the lack of joint commissioning by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Ministry of Education may have contributed to the fact that the links between labour market risks and vocational training and the VET potential in risk prevention are still not examined.

The overview of research in the professionalisation of pedagogical workers in vocational education and training has been structured into four areas: initial training of VET teachers, teacher profession in the direct practice of education, teacher profession in the context of the negative phenomena related to their profession, and research and career development in teacher profession.

Development of the VET teacher training standards for complementary pedagogical studies (CPS), allowing graduates from non-teacher master and engineering studies acquiring pedagogical competences, deserves appreciation. Development of standards was finalised under project “Innovations in complementary pedagogical studies of vocational subject teachers at secondary schools” headed by Ivan Turek and funded by KEGA grant agency. Standards for VET teacher training within CPS were the first example of an explicit shift from content-based to competence-based education/learning in Slovakia.

The need to change in-service training of teachers and establish its link with the initial training has been a subject of political discussions for a long time. The research in that area was supported by the Ministry of Education intent to draft a law stimulating the career growth of teachers combined with their continuing professional development (CPD). Černotová et al. (2006) developed a new CPD concept in the career system, taking the existing theoretical analyses and comparative research in CPD career systems and models applied in the EU countries as its basis. Subsequently, Porubská et al. developed draft teacher profession standards including secondary VET teachers, and Valent drafted trainer profession standards.

With inadequate funding and an institutionally incomplete basis, the research in Slovakia is relatively humble. According to GERD indicator of the EUROSTAT, Slovakia invested 0.78 % of GDP in research and development in 1997. That share decreased over the preceding decade to only 0.46 % in 2007; which is deep below 1.85 % of EU27 and far from 3 % - the proclaimed European benchmark for 2010.

There are three grant agencies available for Slovakia: VEGA, KEGA and APVV. While the first two extend very low grants – even though for a higher number of projects, APVV provides support by amounts allowing extensive research of good quality. Yet the number of projects supported is so very low that researchers are reluctant to submit new projects as a result of their frustration.

Slovakia still lacks in a research project database which not only calls in question the potential for evidence-based policy making but impedes the research per se, not to speak about the research meta-analysis. The authors of the different chapters saw a serious problem in an inadequate quality of literature retrieval services.

We have to express a hope that the meta-analyses for which the authors were sincerely striving would help stimulating the research in areas still without a research coverage and, moreover, would be instrumental in exerting pressure on authorities which have still been underestimating the need and significance of VET research in those areas.

Theme 1: VET and employment-related mobility and migration

PETER DRÁČ²

Abstract

This background paper introduces key research issues explored in the Slovak scholarship on migration and mobility with a specific focus on vocational training and employment. It provides a review of the completed and ongoing research initiatives commissioned and/or conducted by the Slovak state agencies, non-state research institutes, non-governmental organisations and individual researchers in the period 2004 - 2009. The most important research topics which are currently explored include: overall migration flows after the accession of the country to the European Union with a specific focus on various instruments for increasing labour mobility; labour mobility of the Slovak workers with a specific focus on the phenomena of brain drain and brain gain; labour and asylum immigration to the country; policies, tools and indicators of immigrants' integration; and public attitudes about migration and migrants.

1. Introduction

Long-term research on migration and mobility in Slovakia has been underdeveloped until recently (Popper et al., 2006, Divinský, 2005, 2007, 2009). This situation was caused primarily by the absence of a comprehensive state migration/integration policy and the corresponding lack of funds for the migration research which would link to, build on, analyze and attempt to improve systemic policy measures and activities pursued within the migration management of the country. Migration did not feature as an important topic of public policy and the overall socio-political discourse either. Nor is there broader societal consensus on migration and integration issues which could underpin the official “stance” of the country to migration and direct the development and implementation of both state policies and independent initiatives.

The situation has partly changed with the accession of the country to the European Union in 2004, mainly as a consequence to the increased labour immigration which only then complemented relatively high and ongoing labour emigration. Another incentive for commissioning new research projects in this area emerged in the years 2008/2009 due to the establishment and initial operation of new funds, predominantly the European Integration Fund and European Refugee Fund which currently represent major source of funding for the migration/integration research.³

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³ Before the establishment of the abovementioned Funds the main funding for research projects was provided especially by the European Social Fund.

For a longer period of time (since 1996)⁴, the only authoritative policy document dealing with migration/integration was the Concept of Migration Policy in the Slovak Republic (2005). Even if the document itself refers to migration as such it dealt primarily with asylum migration. Partial justification was caused by the unprecedented inflow of refugees and asylum seekers in the years preceding the adoption of the Concept. However, the Concept was limited not only in regard to the addressed target groups but also in the scope and variety of measures which focused primarily on irregular and asylum migration. Long awaited document that would deal comprehensively with the integration of immigrants in Slovakia was approved only in 2009 as The Concept of Foreigner Integration in the Slovak Republic.

Taking this broader context into consideration, **only a limited number of research initiatives have been conducted in Slovakia by 2009 and basically no comprehensive research has been implemented specifically for the area of VET and employment-related mobility. Therefore, this report deals primarily with those analyses and surveys whose components at least partially include research of migration in relation to VET and/or employment.** As these aspects are usually not analyzed separately, it is not possible to disentangle them in this report either. For better orientation the report divides the analyzed material into two broad categories: the completed and the ongoing research and besides general descriptions of their scope it also attempts to identify major findings especially in relation to vocational education and employment. While the analysis of the first research set focuses on aims, methodologies and outputs, the second set contains only *envisioned* outputs.

2. Completed research

The first comprehensive analysis of foreign migration in Slovakia was published only in 2005 (Divinský, 2005). Besides providing a pioneering overview of major issues linked to migration in Slovakia it also concisely introduces major theories, concepts and typologies of foreign scholarship on migration into the Slovak scholarly production. The account provides both qualitative and quantitative exploration and identifies main problem areas: insufficiency of migration data, phenomenon of illegal migration and shortcomings of asylum procedures. In his scrutiny of the consequences of foreign migration, Divinský describes its impact on demographic development, position of migration in the education and health care systems and besides cultural and social contributions of migrants to the host society he also mentions the occurrence of socio-pathological and criminal behaviour among migrants in Slovakia.

A brief account about migrants in the Slovak education system discusses the relative decrease of foreign students at Slovak universities in the late 1990s, although in certain areas the proportion of foreign students remained stable. At the same time, the share of foreigners at other levels of the education system was gradually increasing, although remained marginal both in absolute numbers and shares on the total school age population. The author also informs about the pilot project on education of children of refugees and asylum seekers which was launched in 2000. After its successful testing the language preparation was incorporated into legislation and made a mandatory requirement provided by the state. Another pilot project – language course for the children of foreigners (in general) and the development of the

⁴ In 1996 the Slovak government passed the Complex Solution of the Process of Integration of Foreigners with Refugee Status.

respective curricula – was launched shortly before the accession to the EU.⁵ Similar projects of teacher trainings followed after the country's accession in 2004.⁶

The author complements his findings with a brief summary of the survey among the stakeholders (representatives of state institutions, international and non-governmental organisations, journalists, experts and representatives of migrant communities). The set of questions was aimed at gathering insights about the level of integration or social exclusion of migrants in the country. The views of state representatives differed from those representing non-state organisations. While the former considered the existing instruments of integration as well arranged and sufficiently implemented, the latter pointed to rather symbolic support of the state in the integration process and the lacking infrastructure, funds and awareness about the complexity of integration.

Migrants themselves perceive the Slovak regulations as very restrictive, mainly in the area of residence and work/entrepreneurship permits and naturalization. Economic integration is seen as hampered by the limited access to the labour market; several migrants mentioned also discriminative practices of employers. Cultural interaction and dialogue are seen as insufficient and language acquirement as complicated due to high costs of language courses. Political integration is viewed as very improbable and most migrants claimed that the vast majority of foreigners does not have any political aspirations.

In the conclusion, **Divinský provides the prognoses of migration in the national context and specifies recommendations for policy-makers, including the articulation of the state migration doctrine, specification of priorities in the area of foreign migration, allocation of necessary funds for the migration management, implementation of the adopted Concept of Migration Policy (2005) and adoption and implementation of the Concept of Integration of Foreigners (accomplished only in 2009).** The author also urges for the appropriate institutionalization of the state migration management and establishment of efficient cooperation between the state bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations and the private sphere (especially employers and migrant communities). Finally, the need for the elaboration of a comprehensive labour migration policy with specific programmes and schemes, statistical collection of migration data and the support of migration research are highlighted together with the awareness raising activities targeting the media and general public.

The first comprehensive survey about the needs of migrants in Slovakia was commissioned by Office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Bratislava (Popper et al., 2006). It was conducted with the aim of promoting integration of migrants to the labour market and into broader society.⁷ Its major contribution stems from the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods and from the linking

⁵ Both projects were implemented by the National Institute for Education. The main output was published as a methodical manual for teachers which introduces basic terminology of migration and multicultural education and provides practical guidelines for teachers in their instruction and evaluation of the educational progress (Žáčková and Vladová, 2005).

⁶ More recently the National Institute for Education published the curricula and methodical guidelines for the education of children of foreigners in the Slovak language on basic and advanced level. (Jovankovič et al., 2008).

⁷ It followed partial researches of the same institution on human trafficking (Bianchi et al., 2003) and on the increased emigration to the Great Britain which was accompanied by the fears of the British policy-makers about the scope of the unprecedented inflow of labour workers to the country (Popper et al., 2004).

of the collected data to various migration and cultural theories (social networks; push and pull factors of migration; etc.).

The research focused on the following areas: needs of immigrants in the labour market; attitudes and experiences of state and non-governmental representatives with the employment of immigrants; attitudes and needs of employers; attitudes and needs of the majority population (employees having regular contact with immigrants). The survey was conducted on the sample of 43 immigrants (individually interviewed or participating on four focus group discussions), 13 representatives of institutions, 8 employers and 94 respondents in the quantitative survey based on questionnaire. The sample contained various categories of migrant, accounting for different type of migration, residence status and citizenship. All respondents resided in Slovakia for more than one year and were thus considered as long-term migrants. The pool of employers, even if relatively low in numbers, still comprised a varied profile of participants: employers of both low- and highly-skilled workers; employers of students for brigade/voluntary work, employers of illegal workers.

The survey component was based on a questionnaire which was distributed to individuals having direct experience with immigrants at their workplace. Qualitative component was implemented by individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Interviews and focus discussion with migrants covered the following areas: reasons for migration and coming to Slovakia; language proficiency (both in Slovak and foreign languages); experience with different institutions in the host country and awareness about the legal conditions; employment and self-fulfilment; participation in social networks and civic participation; use of public services (education, health care); housing; cultural and religious self-fulfilment; plans for the future; recommendations about the operation of the (then to be established) Migration Information Centre.

The research areas with representatives of institutions and employers covered their attitudes towards migrants and migration, experiences with the employment of migrants, expectations about migration flows in the future and overall preparedness of the country in this regard. Research areas with majority citizens (employees) comprised questions mostly with scaled answers which focused on the needs of migrants and opportunities for institutional support. The collection of data was conducted in Bratislava and Košice from November 2005 to January 2006. The data from questionnaires were processed using first and second level frequency analysis of questionnaires.

Content analysis of qualitative data was accomplished in three steps:

- (a) clustering of responses into major themes and formulation of paraphrases supported by real testimonies;
- (b) categorization and re-arrangement of responses according to the identified frequencies;
- (c) triangulation – comparison of responses to the same topic by different categories of respondents and identification of similarities and differences.⁸

⁸ Representatives of migrant communities were not usually invited into the process of policy-making until the preparation of the Concept of Foreigner Integration in the Slovak Republic in 2009. The document largely benefited from the comments and suggestions proposed in the area of legal status, housing, employment, social services and other areas (Personal communication with Mária Čierna, National Contact Point on Integration at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The needs expressed by migrants also stimulated the

The authors maintain that the gathered data support the theory of pull and push factors⁹ operating in the migration context of Slovakia and specify them for different categories of migrants. The scrutiny of different acculturation models (integration, assimilation, separation and segregation) of individuals and communities is also provided. The authors conclude that within the three-level indicator scale for integration Slovakia sufficiently meets the requirements of the first level (human rights and citizenship) less of the second one (obtaining language and culture, ensuring stability and security), and much less of the third level as identified social interactions are satisfactory in work and informal relations while relations with institutions are largely frustrating for immigrants. Fulfilment of indicators of the fourth level (accessibility of work, housing, education, health care) is varied according to the category of migrants (different from the majority population in the case of the first two levels and similar in the case of the last two levels).

Based on the research findings the authors consider migrants as a group at risk of social exclusion. They also confirm the theory of networks functioning among immigrants in Slovakia, according to which settled migrants facilitate migration of their compatriots. The theory of cultural proximity and distance (influence of cultural similarities/differences on migration and integration) were also largely approved by the collected data.

In sum, immigrants come to Slovakia for various reasons. However, increasing significance of pull factors (characteristic for the developed countries) has not been confirmed. Integration of immigrants in Slovakia is only at the incipient stage; more action is needed in ensuring security of immigrants, facilitation of their interactions with institutions, harmonization of housing and employment opportunities and cultural and religious self-fulfilment. Social exclusion endangers migrants oscillating between the host country and home country (no pursuit of integration) and separated and closed communities (Chinese, Vietnamese). Labour integration of migrants seems to facilitate overall social and cultural integration; prejudices among citizens who have experience with migrants at their workplace are lower. (Popper et al., 2006, pp. 81-86).

Finally, the authors provide a set of recommendations, including the need to declare an official state position to migration and different categories of migrants and to create specific conditions adjusting needs of migrants and state interests; harmonization of procedures for obtaining residence permit, citizenship and visa which are time-wise incompatible; organisations of trainings for police to enhance their communication and language skills. Provision of language courses for migrants is seen as outmost precondition for their full-fledged integration.¹⁰

establishment of the Migration Information Centre (MIC) at the Office of the International Organization for Migration in Bratislava (www.mic.iom.sk) which provides legal, social and employment-related counselling for migrants in Slovakia.

⁹ In short, the theory of push and pull factors explains global migration flows by forces or motivations of migrants to leave the country of origin (push factors) and forces or motivations which attract migrants to come to a particular country (pull factors).

¹⁰ Appendix of the research contains excerpts from testimonies of migrants and concrete recommendations gathered from interviews and focus discussions.

2.1 Labour migration

The first account dealing specifically with labour migration analyzed the relation between the current demographic trends and labour force developments in Slovakia after the accession to the EU (Divinský, 2007).¹¹ The author explores general migration trends with a specific focus on both the inflow and outflow of labour force from/to the country. He also provides varied socio-economic profiles of major categories of immigrants and emigrants with the aim to document the possibility of brain drain. The analysis is based on extensive desk research of economic, demographic and migration sources and does not contain input from the original empirical research, although the author also conducted individual interviews with the representatives of the Slovak institutions.

Chapter 4 dealing with in-migration to Slovakia documents positive net migration of the country since its establishment in 1993. After the accession of the country to the EU the number of immigrants doubled, but the net migration still remained low.¹² Out of all incentives/motivations to migrate, family reunification and labour dominate the migration flows. In 2004 the dominance of Czech immigrants (former citizens of the same country) ended and since then the highest proportion of immigrants comes from other, predominantly European countries. Divinský documents different types of migrants in relation to their residence status and naturalized persons. More importantly, he identifies major problem in the reliability of data on labour immigrants (residence permits and work permits) which he conceives as insufficient, imprecise and mutually overlapping. Due to these complications the author provides only qualified estimates on the total number of immigrants residing in the country and deals also with the problem of undocumented (irregular) migrants. In the end, Divinský introduces two groups of migration forecasts of different sources: the “pessimistic” one (initial negative net migration gradually replaced by the positive one) and the “optimistic” one (positive net migration for the whole projected period until 2050). The author also envisions continuing immigration of EU-country nationals with the parallel increase of third country nationals. For the future decades, he foresees that that labour immigration to Slovakia will rise in absolute numbers and also in the share of immigrants on the total labour force; the Slovak labour market will get more globalized; the demand for highly skilled workers will continue; labour market will be restructured and firstly absorb highly skilled workers from the highly developed countries and later on low-skilled workers from less developed ones. He also anticipates greater disparities in the regional distribution of immigrants in Slovakia and the rise of illegal work of the low-skilled immigrants.

Divinský concluded his analysis with the overall assessment of migration management in Slovakia. He maintains that no strategy or conception which would deal with the causes, manifestations and consequences of labour migration in the country is currently available.

¹¹ Updated and shortened analysis of labour migration is presented in Divinský, B. (2008): *Chapter Eight – Slovak Republic*, in Hönekopp, E. – Mattila, H. (Eds.): *Permanent or circular migration? Policy choices to address demographic decline and labour shortages in Europe*, International Organisation for Migration, Budapest, pp. 259-299

¹² In 2004, the number of foreigners with legal residence in Slovakia reached 22 108 individuals; in 2008 it was 52 706. The proportion of foreigners on the whole population thus increased from 0.4% to still relatively marginal 1%. Data of the Bureau of Border and Alien Police at http://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/policia/hranicna_a_cudzinecka_policia/rocnky/rok_2008/2008_rocnka-uhcp-en.pdf.

Therefore he proposes a number of concrete policy measures to be taken by the state authorities in order to benefit from the existing labour migration flows.¹³ The common denominator or precondition of their success is the inclusion of labour migration into the overall economic management. Specific measures should complement the existing legislation which is so far the only tool of (labour) migration management in the country. Finally, he introduces some concrete instruments which could increase accessibility of labour market and harmonize it with the existing education system, including bilateral agreements on employment, favourable domestic institutional setting and complementary initiatives and debates which would engage political representatives, media and the general public.

Thorough analysis is complemented with an empirical survey among 50 senior representatives of employers' organisations, professional industrial and non-industrial associations, small business associations, chambers of commerce and entrepreneurship agencies. The questionnaires¹⁴ were returned only by 12 representatives whereas their responses highlighted the following standpoints:

- (a) state educational system (especially vocational education) requires radical change in order to adjust the structure of graduates to the needs of the labour market¹⁵;
- (b) investments to the infrastructure, research and advanced technologies is absolutely necessary;
- (c) long-term unemployed should be more stimulated to take up jobs;
- (d) both emigration and immigration of highly skilled workers should be tackled by various incentives to motivate them to stay or come to the country;
- (e) immigration from geographically and culturally close countries should be promoted and bilateral agreements on employment should be enforced;
- (f) comprehensive labour migration policy of the country should be adopted.

The account of Divinský (2007) also represents the first analysis of labour emigration published in Slovakia. Similarly to immigration, the author mentions problems with available statistical data, primarily due to the unregistered emigrants who do not cancel their permanent residence before moving out of the country.¹⁶ He maintains that the migration potential of the Slovak citizens compared to citizens of other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe is relatively high, although the proportion of long-term migrants is still relatively low.

¹³ Several suggestions were incorporated into the Concept of Foreigner Integration in the Slovak Republic and their implementation is currently awaited. Specific recommendations related to labour migration presuppose the adoption of comprehensive policy of foreigner employment which is still not in place.

¹⁴ The questionnaires comprised four thematic areas: overall situation in the area of employment/labour market; proposal for policy strategies and measures to be implemented by legislation and reflected in the institutional setup; assessment of the impact of both immigration and emigration of the labour force in the respective segment/branch; ideas on labour migration strategies and policies for the next decades.

¹⁵ The author himself in his recommendations adds better language preparation, extensive use of distance and lifelong learning and other measures in this area.

¹⁶ Qualified estimation of the number of Slovak labour migrants abroad is provided by Divinský and Popjaková (2007).

Labour emigration was researched also by the Institute for Labour and Family Research (ILFR).¹⁷ Extensive survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF) and its main aim was to map the trends of international labour migration flows in relation to the developments at the domestic labour market. Two empirical surveys were included in the assignment: analysis of the migration force of Slovak citizens (primarily clients of the European Employment Services – EURES) and the analysis of the migration potential of the Slovak college and university graduates.

The first research (Hanzelová et al., 2006) provides an overview of the most important trends in labour migration from Slovakia to other EU member states, particularly its scope, specification of the most popular target countries and their labour force demand (structure of job opportunities within particular economic branches, educational and language requirements). Socio-demographic and qualification profile of labour emigrants from Slovakia is provided together with the list of main motivations to work abroad. The analysis was conducted among the EURES clients; altogether 938 respondents filled in the questionnaire. The sample was selected randomly and maintained even distribution of respondents registered at employment offices in all regions of Slovakia. Empirical research was conducted from July to August 2006.

According to the authors, **typical labour migrant from Slovakia is a single male without children up to 34 years of age with the completed secondary education and good command of English. He will most likely apply for jobs within hotel and restaurant services, in industry or transport. Main motivations for labour migration are the opportunity to earn money, the lack of employment opportunities in Slovakia (lack of job positions, low wages or older age), new employment experience and improvement of language skills.** Attributed significance of various factors differs along some socio-demographic characteristic, especially age, level of attained education, employment/unemployment status, the command of foreign languages and to some extent also gender and region.

Out of various factors which motivate or inhibit migration the authors list: communication in foreign language, long-term separation from the family and friends, unknown environment, need to adjust to new employment conditions, making of new contacts and adjustment to new customs and traditions. Migration potential was scrutinized on the scale: declared interest to migrate (but no concrete steps taken yet) – steps actively taken to find the job abroad (contacting agencies, job interviews but no definite decision made yet) – firm decision to migrate and at least some arrangements accomplished. The majority of applicants intend to stay abroad up to one year; intention to migrate permanently remains marginal. Most potential migrants are currently unemployed and declared willingness to take any job. The most popular destination countries are the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Austria and Czech Republic.

¹⁷ ILFR also organised a conference “Migračné trendy v SR: otázky a výzvy” (Migration trends in the Slovak Republic: questions and challenges) which was held on 22 November 2006 in Bratislava within the 2006 European Year of Workers’ Mobility. It gathered domestic experts on migration, employment, education and social integration representing several institutions (ILFR, MoLSAF, Slovak Academy of Sciences, local employment offices) as well as independent experts. The conference dealt with migration issues after the accession of the country to the EU in the context of the opened labour markets of several old EU member states and application of temporary labour force restrictions on the part of some other states. Presentations from the conference are available on the website of the ILFR <http://www.sspr.gov.sk/index.php?nodeid=240&lang=>.

Separate empirical research was conducted also among students in the last year of bachelor or master studies. Altogether 802 students from 16 public universities submitted the questionnaire from May to June 2006. **The results demonstrate certain specificities of respondents – prospective highly skilled workers – who seek employment not only for financial reasons but attribute high significance also to the enhancement of their potential and qualification.** Willingness to take jobs requiring different or lower qualification is presented more by graduates in social sciences and some technical disciplines in comparison to students of natural sciences. This option is not considered by graduates in medicine. Almost 60 % of all graduates expressed interest to work abroad whereas the highest proportion is represented by medical students. The most popular destinations for university students are Great Britain, Ireland and the Czech Republic. Most respondents plan to stay abroad for 1-5 years, the highest tendency to stay permanently was identified among students of medicine and pharmacy. Those students who do not intend to migrate believe they can find jobs at home. Family is the second most important factor inhibiting migration. Insufficient language command or fears of failure are the least significant barriers of labour migration of university graduates.

The follow-up research conducted by the ILFR (Kešelová et al., 2007) scrutinized the migration potential of the Slovak citizens who already work and live in other EU/EEA states. Included are not only those states which made their labour markets fully accessible but also those which apply transitional periods and restrictions to the inflow of labour migrants from the new member states. Following the results of the Eurobarometer study Mobility in Europe (2006) the analysis describes socio-demographic characteristics and migration potential of the Slovak citizens and introduces the attitudinal and motivational specificities of geographical mobility of migrants from the new member states. In addition, it presents the results of the secondary analysis of data gathered from the EURES statistics which point to the decreasing dynamics and scope of the registered applicants for job positions from May 2006 to April 2007 and thus indicates relative saturation of labour markets with the imported labour supply. It also provides typology of offered job positions and information about job mediation and employment agencies.

The research was complemented with an empirical study conducted from May to November 2007 on the sample of 743 respondents. The data were collected from questionnaires distributed to Slovak citizens who live and/or are employed in other EU countries. **The survey confirmed the findings of the research conducted in 2006 on the socio-demographic profiles of potential migrants. Similarly to potential migrants, citizens already residing outside Slovakia were mostly single younger men with secondary education. The majority of respondents worked in Great Britain and Ireland. Those who were staying abroad for more than three years expressed willingness to prolong their stay more often than those who live abroad for less than six months. Economic reasons were the most represented among the key motivating factors irrespective of gender, age, attained education or marital status.** Additional factors were significant for the respondents with university education, namely improvement of language skills, following the partner (more frequent among women), gaining new work experience, but also willingness to live outside the home country.

More than one third of respondents had not decided in the time of the survey how long they want to stay abroad. Those who had decided to stay intend to live abroad one to three years. Residents in Great Britain and Ireland intend to stay mostly for a short period. Permanent residence is the highest among respondents in the Czech Republic.

The survey also comprises a case study of the Prešov region which scores the highest in the proportion of economically active population working abroad and is simultaneously the region with the highest unemployment rate in Slovakia. In October 2007, structured interviews were conducted with the officers of the employment office in the town of Humenné. The collected information indicates that the region provides one of the most significant stocks of emigrant labour force. The main reason for emigration is not primarily the lack of job opportunities but low wages offered. Short-time migration dominates whereas economic motivations differ according to age and family status. Younger and single clients seek new experiences, independence and improvement of language skills whereas older clients with family ties have mostly economic motivations for emigration.

Divinský (2007) forecasts that labour emigration will remain a predominant type of emigration from the country, it will be mostly of temporary nature and permanent emigration will remain relatively marginal. Acute shortage of labour force due to emigration will most likely not be the case, although negative impacts on economy may be felt in those regions which are affected by labour emigration the most as well as in those professions in which labour market offers significantly lower wages. No radical changes are expected in the socio-economic profile of emigrants (younger, mostly men usually with secondary education). Labour emigration flows will be constant in terms of their extent, structure and target countries (the most significant shift is anticipated after Germany and Austria repeal labour market restrictions for workers from the new EU member states).

2.2 Brain drain

Various researchers deal specifically with the phenomenon of brain drain. The scrutiny is, however, hampered by the unavailability of data and reliance solely on qualified estimates. Some authors claim that one fourth to one third of all graduates emigrate annually from the country (Baláž and Kollár, 2003, 2004) and serious shortages in some professions are expected (Košta, 2006). Specific and indirect brain drain was also studied by Halás (2007) who accounted for temporary or permanent emigration for university studies, especially to the Czech Republic.

Even if no expert questions the scope of emigration of highly skilled workers (or university students), some authors are rather hesitant to label this development as brain drain. (Hanzelová et al. 2006, Košta, 2006) It is argued that emigration of this category of labour migrants is both necessary (especially in the case of researchers) and temporary and several experts expect that the majority of them to return home after certain period of time. Surveys on attitudes of highly skilled workers (Baláž et al., 2004; Williams and Baláž, 2005) revealed acquirement of significant human capital, improvement of their language skills, enhanced qualification and know-how as well as increased self-confidence and social recognition. The authors interviewed a sample of 64 highly skilled workers, 55 potentially highly skilled workers (students) and 67 highly skilled workers occupying jobs which require lower skills (au-pairs).

In sum, researchers in general do not see emigration of professional workers from Slovakia as a sign of brain drain caused by the lack of opportunities on the domestic labour market. At the same time, positive impact of emigration of highly skilled workers can be attributed to the increasing significance of remittances, both in absolute figures and in shares on the GDP. (Divinský, 2007, Baláž et al., 2004; Williams and Baláž, 2005).

On the other hand, **Divinský (2007)** mentions the issue of brain waste as highly skilled emigrants from Slovakia mostly take job positions which require lower qualification. It thus remains an open question to what extent Slovakia suffers from brain drain or brain waste and to what extent such trends may be balanced by brain gain through return migration or immigration of highly skilled workers, especially from the old EU member states which has been steadily increasing since the accession of Slovakia to the Union. Divinský thus proposes a list of recommendations for policy makers to avoid brain drain and achieve brain gain, including the elaboration of a comprehensive state policy to reduce the emigration of university graduates, introduction of special programmes to attract highly skilled immigrants, simplification of bureaucratic procedures (especially related to residence permits), provision of an opportunity for foreign students to enter the labour market during and after the completion of university studies; introduction of incentives for highly skilled emigrants to return to their home country, and other instruments.

2.3 Integration of immigrants

The issue of migrants' integration is the most recent focus of the research and scholarship in Slovakia. In 2007 the civic association People in Peril published an integration handbook for asylum holders (Nováková and Zbořil, 2007) which contains basic information on the integration policy of the country, detailed account of the whole asylum procedure and chapters dealing with specific areas of integration: social system, health care, housing, education (including vocational training and education), employment and entrepreneurship and citizenship/naturalization. The most common barriers of integration in regard to education and employment are also mentioned: non-recognition of attained education, non-recognition of vocational qualification, insufficient command of the Slovak language and the lack of work experience with Slovak employers.

The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights published a report from the monitoring of the adaptation of children of foreigners living and working in Slovakia with a specific focus on the opportunities for the provision of social services and legal counselling (Guráň et al., 2007). The analysis summarized the available data on the number and structure of this target group according to which 1091 children of foreigners resided in Slovakia by the end of 2006. The monitoring was conducted using the questionnaire distributed to schools with higher proportion of enrolled children with foreign origin. Overall school performance as well as relations of children with their schoolmates and teachers and relations of parents with the school were explored. In addition, case studies of children living in Bratislava were included into the annex of the report.

The results of the monitoring highlight the complicated integration of these children within the formal education system due to the language barrier, needs to apply specific educational methods and various individual problems with adaptation. In the end, the report provides a set of recommendations for better integration in schools and overall social integration, including the preparation of textbooks and methodical manuals for teachers, higher funding for schools with higher proportion of foreigners' children and special procedures for the school enrolment preceded by the completion of the preparatory course in the Slovak language.

The most recent publication commissioned by IOM focuses on the integration of all categories of immigrants in Slovakia (Bargerová and Divinský, 2008). It provides definitions of integration, its main components and target groups as well as various models

and policies which can be implemented in the context of Slovakia. The authors introduce the international context of immigrants' integration and list fundamental norms and mechanisms of the Council of Europe and the European Union, including the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union.

One of the major contributions of the analysis for the Slovak research context is the introduction of integration indicators. Even if most of them cannot be regarded as ready-made for the actual measurement of progress, the lists can still be viewed as useful specifications of major areas and subareas in which developments can be tracked after policy decisions are made and corresponding measures undertaken. In addition, **the analysis introduces the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) and positions Slovakia within the list of 28 countries. The publication also briefly explores experiences and good practices of integration from various European countries with a longer tradition of immigration.** Another benefit stems from the clarification of main concepts, including the concept of integration itself, which tends to be vaguely used and loaded with various different, even mutually conflicting meanings.

Separate chapters deal with various facets of integration of immigrants in Slovakia, including the areas of residence, employment, health care and citizenship. The choice of areas was, according to the authors, informed by the most frequent problems articulated by the clients of the Migration Information Centre. In terms of methodology, the authors built on the existing research and the experiences from the operation of IOM in Slovakia. Preliminary conclusions were confronted with the opinions of the state representatives, gathered either in the form of interviews or questionnaires.

The analysis of the broader international context and of the current national state of affairs is complemented with a comprehensive list of policy recommendations, both general and specific which are clustered around the areas mentioned above. General recommendations deal with the basic policy framework and institutional setup of integration; international, national and regional/local cooperation; empowerment of migrant communities; the role of media; the need of statistical findings and further research; and other areas.

Employment, which is one of the two focal points of this analysis, is presented in chapter 7. The authors consider it as one of the crucial tools for the full-fledged integration of migrants and assert that exclusion of migrants from the labour market is the primary barrier of integration. **Two processes are considered crucial to avoid failed integration in the area of employment: eradication of inequalities between different labour market participants and the opportunity to obtain qualification.**

The authors follow these principles and screen the Slovak legislation related to employment and recognition of professional qualifications of both EU-citizens and third country nationals. Major inequalities are identified in differentiated conditions and procedures for the temporary and permanent residence permit for the purposes of employment (initiation, change and termination of employment status). Furthermore, practical obstacles are documented even if legal provisions are not different for citizens and for various categories of immigrants. The authors account for varied statuses, circumstances and related provisions/requirements and conclude the chapter with the list of eleven specific shortcomings related to employment and recognition of qualifications of migrants in Slovakia (complemented with a corresponding list of recommendations in the last chapter of the publication).

Even if the publication does not deal with the area of education extensively in a separate chapter it still articulates several recommendations with the primary aim of brain gain: language courses for both immigrants and representatives of state institutions; awareness raising among the general public and curricular adjustments of the formal educational system to the migration issues and the development of incentives for university educated immigrants to stay in the country after completing their studies.

The main objective of the survey of the Society Development Institute was to identify the needs of the third country nationals living in Slovakia. It was carried out from March to July 2009. Altogether 193 respondents from 33 countries participated on the survey which explored their educational attainment, employment status, plans to apply for the Slovak citizenship as well as the experiences during the first days of their stay in Slovakia, including the experience at the Alien and Borders Police and other institutions. Another set of questions was dedicated to the personal encounter with discrimination, corruption and bureaucracy.

Vast majority of migrants mentioned language barrier as the most significant problem, especially in regard to the poor command of English on the part of officers in state institutions. Majority of migrants also declared that Slovakia is not open towards foreigners. The research also explored views about the most suitable ways of learning Slovak language and the delivery of other courses for further enhancement of migrants' knowledge and skills. The analysis includes concrete recommendations of respondents in the fields of employment, education and health care.

2.4 Focus-specific individual research

Partial researches were accomplished also by individual researchers, usually Ph.D. candidates, who focused on various aspects of migration and/or dealt with specific communities of migrants.

Chinese immigrants in Slovakia were studied in regard to the preservation of their cultural identity (Gregušová, 2005). The author also analyzed the extent of integration of Chinese migrants into the Slovak society taking into consideration their command of Slovak language, place of residence of their closest relatives, legality of performed activities, relationship to the host society and the ways of maintaining their cultural identity. She also studied intra-community relations as well as interactions with the majority population. One of the main conclusions of the study is the finding that the Chinese migrant community remains socio-economically heterogeneous and closed to the host society.

Individual research of attitudes of young people towards refugees in Slovakia was conducted from November 2006 to March 2007 (Pukančík, 2007). It was based on a questionnaire distributed to 315 students of the Slovak elementary and secondary schools as well as universities. The author focused on the degree of acceptance and the expressed fears from the presence of refugees in the country. The substantial part of the questionnaire comprised statements and respondents were asked to express their partial or full agreement or disagreement (5-level Likert scale). The responses were processed by using the 2-level frequency analysis and variation was explored in relation to gender, age and residence.

One third of all respondents considered themselves to be sufficiently or almost sufficiently informed about the issue. More than half of all respondents expressed lack of information about the topic. The majority of respondents considered refugees as people who need help and

should thus be accepted and provided necessary assistance. Acceptance and assistance to refugees was mostly expressed by pupils of elementary schools and young people living in the countryside. Girls and young women are more interested in the topic, expressed positive attitudes more frequently and are more willing to provide help to refugees.

Common views, stereotypes and fear were also explored, namely transmittance of infectious diseases, increase of crime rates, taking job positions to the detriment of the domestic population and even penetration of the country by terrorists (fear expressed most often). Based on the findings the author recommends intensification of activities aimed at awareness raising among youth and broader population and inclusion of this topic also to the curricula of humanities and social sciences.

2.5 Public attitudes about migration and migrants

Representative surveys linked primarily to asylum migration were repeatedly commissioned by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bratislava and conducted by the agency Focus in 1998, 2001 and 2005. The last survey was conducted on the sample of 1 038 respondents in the form of face-to-face standardized interviews which were recorded into questionnaires. Quota selection was ensured in relation to gender, age, attained level of education, ethnic origin, size of the place of residence and region. The sample is representative for the Slovak population above 18 years of age. The surveyed topics included awareness about and attitudes towards humanitarian organisations, attitudes towards refugees and asylum policy and willingness to assist the humanitarian organisations working with refugees.

Attitudes towards migrants represent a mixture of declared solidarity and fears from the presence of refugees in the country. However, the results of the last survey indicate certain moderation of negative attitudes in comparison to the earlier ones. Nonetheless, fears from the increase of crime, infectious diseases and occupying job positions are still far from negligible. Many respondents also voiced the opinion that the presence of refugees is very costly for the public finances. Acceptance and willingness to help increased with attained education and was more characteristic for women than men.

The first media analysis was conducted before the launch of the campaign aimed at raising public awareness about foreigners, with a specific emphasis on asylum seekers and illegal migrants (VVMZ, 2005). The main objective was to identify prevailing stereotypes and prejudice towards refugees. The material was gathered in the period from January 2003 to October 2005 from 21 Slovak media (print, radio, television and internet). Entries were collected from the internet websites and divided into domestic and foreign sources of information. Quantitative analysis screened the occurrence and frequency of information about refugees and migration policy. Qualitative analysis scrutinized the prevailing depiction of the topic and expressed opinions and clustered them to three categories: positive, negative and neutral. The analysis revealed that the coverage of the abovementioned topics is neither sufficient nor predominantly positive and respectful. Negative perception of refugees is sometimes constructed and disseminated by the media themselves. Refugees were depicted mostly in cases of criminal activities and illegal trespassing of borders.¹⁸

¹⁸ The project also identified educational needs of various target groups and proposed the framework for the development of curricula for educational interventions in both formal and informal educational settings.

Institute for Public Affairs (IPA) conducted a survey about citizens concerns about overall development and about their perception of minorities in April 2006. Among various topics listed in the survey questionnaire respondents were also asked about their attitudes to migrants.¹⁹ More recent survey reveals significant social distance of Slovak citizens towards various groups of immigrants. Muslim family received the third highest share of respondents who would mind or feel uncomfortable to have them as neighbours while the Asian, migrant (in general) and Ukrainian family were placed on the 5-7 position.²⁰

Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture explored attitudes of elementary school pupils to cultural diversity and various minority groups, including particular groups of foreigners. (Kriglerová Gallová and Kadlečiková, 2009) The research was commissioned by the Open Society Foundation in Bratislava. The data were collected in March and April 2008 among the pupils of the last two grades of elementary schools whereas the sample of 955 respondents was representative in terms of age, size of the place of residence and region. Explored areas included the overall stance towards cultural diversity, knowledge about traditional and new minorities (migrants), personal experience with cultural diversity and the perception of the seven selected groups, including Vietnamese, refugees, foreigners and Muslims. The questionnaire comprised scaled as well as open questions.

The results of the survey point to the mildly positive attitude towards diversity and particular groups which was more a result of individual value “setup” than of personal experiences with people of different cultures. Gender differences were also observed – girls expressed positive attitudes more often than boys. At the same time, the research pointed to the limited impact of the level of awareness/knowledge and the frequency of contacts with particular groups on the attitude towards them. In other words, higher amount of information or contacts does not necessarily lead to more positive attitudes.

3. Ongoing research

As was mentioned in the introductory part, **several research activities in the field of migration have been initiated by the establishment and operation of the new funds, primarily the European refugee fund and the European integration fund.** The following

Interviews with school principles and students as well as questionnaires mapping knowledge and most common public attitudes were also collected. The results of the survey point to very low awareness about refugees and asylum policy. General perception of respondents was not favourable about their presence in the country, although willingness to help in the form of financial or in-kind donations was frequently mentioned. For more information see www.ludiaakomy.sk.

¹⁹ The section was introduced with a statement: “In the upcoming years increasingly higher number of foreigners will come to Slovakia to find work and new home.” Respondents were asked to respond to several questions, including “In your opinion, will it be rather good or rather bad for Slovakia?” The respondents could express their stance to two options: (a) „Rather good. It will be a benefit to our economy and enriching our culture“; (b) „Rather bad. It will be to the detriment of our population and will bring difficulties of coexistence.“ Partial or full consent with the first option was expressed by 28 % of respondents while partial or full consent with the second one by 66 %. Another question was phrased: “How should we behave to those foreigners who stay in Slovakia as legal immigrants?” While 33 % of respondents agreed with the statement „We should respect their culture and religion“, 52 % opted for „We should insist on their adoption of our culture“.

²⁰ Institute of Public Affairs (IPA)/Centre of Excellence for Research on Citizenship and Participation (COPART) - Department of Social and Biological Communication of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, May 2008.

section briefly introduces institutions currently carrying out research in the area and identifies their main aims, methodologies and, if available, preliminary outcomes.²¹

IPA implements the project of for the exchange of best practices in integration indicators with partners from the Czech Republic (Multicultural Centre Prague) and Belgium (Migration Policy Group) and independent Slovak expert Boris Divinský. Main objectives of the project are the initiation of expert discussion about the research on immigration and integration processes, sharing of experiences and best practices, re-assessment of the existing integration indicators in Slovakia (in terms of their relevance and effectiveness) and the proposition of optimal and effective recommendations for the research on the integration process.

Slovak Governance Institute (SGI) conducts comparative research of integration policies in the neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Hungary) with the specific focus on their migration management. Other countries with similar conditions as Slovakia will be also scrutinized. The prognosis of further development will be elaborated on the basis of similar experiences with migration and integration processes in the selected countries. The research will pay specific attention also to the performance of various actors (state and self-governing authorities, universities, non-governmental organisations) and to the varied level of integration of different groups of legal migrants from both geographically and culturally close countries as well as other countries with significant immigration (Vietnam). Specific parts of the research will be dedicated also to the disadvantaged groups, such as children, women and students which will be complemented by the qualitative empirical research among legal migrants in Slovakia. The envisioned outcome of the research is the introduction of the set of indicators aimed at improving the development and assessment of integration policy measures. Relation of the explored integration measures will be compared with the measures employed by the existing state policy of social inclusion which targets some traditional minorities and marginalized groups.²²

Euroiuris – European Legal Centre explores the procedures of recognizing professional qualifications, vocational education and training of the third country nationals and the level of implementation of the communitarian law in the Slovak legislation. In addition, comparative analysis of the legislation from the selected EU member states (France, Germany, Austria and Czech Republic) which have rich experience with migration will also be scrutinized. The main aim of the research project is to identify major shortcomings which lead to the low proportion of the submitted and approved applications in Slovakia and to propose changes of the existing legal provisions accordingly. One of the main outputs of the project will be information website www.migracia.euroiuris.sk which will contain information about the procedures of recognition of the third country nationals in Slovakia, including the samples of applications, contacts to the relevant state institutions and Slovak as well as EU measures adopted in this area. Information leaflets for migrants and expert publication are also planned to be published.²³

²¹ Information was kindly provided by Oľga Gyarfašová (Institute for Public Affairs), Ctibor Košťál (Slovak Governance Institute), Galya Terzieva (Labour Pool for Migrants). Other information was gathered from the websites of the respective organisations. All projects should be implemented by the end of 2009.

²² For more information about the project see www.governance.sk.

²³ For more information about the project see www.euroiuris.sk.

The establishment of the Labour Pool for Migrants is the main activity of the project run by the Public Policy Institute at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of the Comenius University in Bratislava. The project *Skills without borders* aims to steer the public and expert debate about the priorities of labour immigration in Slovakia and various ways of stimulating immigration of highly qualified workers to the country. It also promotes flexible forms of acquiring knowledge and skills by immigrants and simplification of procedures for the recognition of qualifications. In this regard, the project comprises research on the practices of recognizing qualifications in the selected European countries and Canada and screens the existing legal provisions in Slovakia in order to propose more efficient ways of their implementation). The project also identifies services which are absent in the Slovak labour market but proved to be efficient in other countries. On-line counselling for immigrants and e-learning tools as well as the establishment of the information portal for migrants and employers are also pursued.²⁴

Milan Šimečka Foundation and the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture implement the research project mapping preparedness of Slovak teachers to cope with the presence of children of foreigners at schools. Research component of the project employs qualitative methods for both the collection of information about the experiences of teachers as well as pupils of foreign background (individual interviews, focus group discussions, oral history techniques). Educational component comprises trainings for teachers and the development of curricula accounting for the presence of cultural differences in classes, schools and local communities.²⁵

One of the Slovak cities – Nitra – has joined the project of the British Council OPENCities which aspires to map the ways migration contributes to the prosperity of cities.²⁶ The main objective is to develop a conception of open cities and to set up a list of indicators for the assessment and measurement of openness which is understood as a capability to attract an international community of residents. Openness index measures combined data on the attractiveness of the local economy, broader legal conditions, accessibility of social facilities, connectedness to the neighbouring countries and regions. Nitra region was placed on the sixth place out of 10 cities in the level of internationalization, i.e. the potential to attract foreigners, investors and tourists.²⁷

4. Conclusions

National research questions in Slovakia cluster around two broader dimensions:

(a) overall migration management of the country with a specific focus on the development of tools to attract qualified labour immigrants and

²⁴ For more information see www.migration.sk.

²⁵ For more information see www.nadaciamilanasimecku.sk and www.cvek.sk.

²⁶ Other partner cities include Belfast, Bilbao, Bucharest, Cardiff, Dublin, Düsseldorf, Gdansk, Madrid, Poznan, Sofia and Vienna. For more information see <http://opencities.britishcouncil.org>.

²⁷ For more information on the demographic, socio-economic and migration profile of the region see the Baseline Study of the Nitra Self-Governing Region and the Index of Openness.

(b) immigrants' integration into the host society through a variety of incentives and in a number of cross-cutting areas (education, employment, housing, social assistance, intercultural coexistence).

The former thus focuses on domestic labour policy tools, processes of brain drain/gain/waste and linkages between the educational and labour systems (e.g. the topic of recognizing qualifications). The latter approaches the process of integration holistically and attempts to specify various policy measures which could facilitate the inclusion of immigrants into the host society and scrutinizes preparedness to accept increasing socio-cultural diversity of the country on the part of the native population itself.

However, the presented summary of research initiatives indicates a significant lack of policy-oriented investigations dealing specifically with VET and employment-related migration. All presented research projects deal with these areas only partially, either within a broader scope of exploring recent migration developments in all policy domains at once or with a narrow scope of individual explorations. **No presented research was done with a specific aim to introduce or modify concrete policy measures.** Therefore the first recommendation is **to design more targeted and more policy-oriented research projects**, especially in the domain of education where this absence is more apparent.

In addition, the linkage between the policy adoption and implementation on the one hand and broad-base surveys or impact assessments of VET and employment-related instruments on the other is largely missing. **Major migration policy documents and legislation, with the important exception of the Concept of Foreigner Integration, do not build extensively on the existing expertise and, complementarily, only few research initiatives have been commissioned with a specific aim to develop or refine the existing policies and legislation.** At the same time, general policies in the respective areas do not usually account for migrants and pay only limited attention to their specific positions and situations. The second and third recommendation is thus **to develop joint research-policy frameworks for cooperation** and simultaneously **to “mainstream” migration-related issues into the core of policy-making.**

After the period of framework policy concepts and topically extensive research projects on migration it is perhaps the right time to focus more intensively on research and policy-making *within* the respective areas. In this regard, the presented ongoing research projects of various public institutes and non-governmental organizations appear as promising steps ahead.

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Theme 2: Benefits of VET

MONIKA MARTIŠKOVÁ²⁸

Abstract

Only three topics suggested by Cedefop are at least partly covered by this report: monetary costs and benefits; labour market outcomes of VET; and determinants and outcomes of LLL for individuals.

Research of monetary costs and benefits is very rare, but there is at least one researcher focusing on measuring effectiveness of investments into tertiary education: A multi-criterion methodology based on estimations of rentability, profitability and cost effectiveness developed by the author offers an alternative point of view on financing programmes at public universities. It has the potential to change the current practice in financing and contribute to more objective allocation of sources. Interestingly, rentability of investments into medical programmes is very high, according to research findings (less than 3 years).

Labour market mismatch was a leading topic of research projects concerning labour market outcomes of VET. As one of the projects highlights, this mismatch is caused by disregarding labour market preference by students in decisions about their studies. For illustration, the biggest interest from students' side is in law programmes, but lawyers are not demanded by employers. As a reply to this situation, one of employers' organisations prepared a research about the key positions and skills expected to be most demanded on labour market in the future, to help secondary schools graduates to decide upon their future in line with labour market needs.

1. Introduction

The VET research in Slovakia addresses some problems most visible on the labour market and the system of education and training, but there is almost no research addressing benefits of VET directly. Only one researcher addresses monetary costs and benefits (private and social rates of return). There is nothing to report about specific contribution of VET to economic growth, vocational training and performance of enterprises and long-term economic and social returns to VET and LLL. These topics are sometimes subject of debates among experts, however not covered by research so far. Some information is offered in the report about remaining topics: labour market outcomes of VET and outcomes of LLL for individuals.

This report was prepared after exhaustive questioning various institutions – from those that consider research as their primary mission (Slovak Academy of Sciences and universities) to those that conduct VET research rather complementary. Grant agencies were contacted, but also many stakeholders who are not expected to do research, just in search of relevant information. The reason was simple: the national database of research projects is still pending

²⁸ Author is a junior researcher at the Employment Institute, www.iz.sk, a non-governmental non-profit organisation focused on labour market analysis, paper submitted on 11/09/09 in the draft version was revised by the author and submitted for final editing on 23/10/09.

in Slovakia, and consequently very poor literature retrieval services are available. Projects presented in this report are most known and accessible. It is possible that not all the research projects conducted within the 2004-2009 period were covered, however hardly a research directly focusing on benefits of VET. It is hoped that this report will be useful as an impulse to enrich research activities in these fields in Slovakia.

2. Monetary costs and benefits of VET

Search for the effective system of financing VET is still in progress, thus a relevant research is more than needed. Nevertheless, VET financing and governance reforms were prepared dominantly based on stakeholders' negotiations and decisions rather than on results of research. Hronec (2008), the author of the monograph resulting from the research project funded by VEGA²⁹ (Scientific Grant Agency) expressed this explicitly within the abstract written in English: "... decision making about allocation of financial means is a result of subjective judgements. A decision about educational system is being made in political process, which effects absence or surplus of financial means, their unsuitable allocation, which is not dependent on achieved performance"³⁰ Furthermore, according to the author, this influences negatively not only quality of education, but also economic growth of the country itself. The change of socio-economic system at the end of the 1980s and therewith connected transition from central planning to market economy did not bring any substantial changes in the philosophy of financing education. The result is the long-time under-financing of education system and following disrespect for labour market needs and also ineffective investment. As the author concludes, education is not fulfilling the aims corresponding to social demands. **The author analysed costs and benefits of investment in education at humanitarian, technical, agricultural and art programmes at universities.**

The publication brings the table (presented below) with ranking of programmes.

Table 1

Rank of programmes according to cost and benefit coefficients* (average for 2003-2005)

University programme/cycle		Bachelor		Master		PhD	
		Coefficient	Rank	Coefficient	Rank	Coefficient	Rank
Humanitarian	Costs	17.034	2	14.129	3	16.699	2
Technical	Costs	9.658	4	11.914	4	12.508	4
Agricultural	Costs	12.278	3	15.500	2	17.407	1
Artistic	Costs	27.358	1	19.501	1	14.145	3
Humanitarian	Benefits	19.271	3	22.270	2	18.783	4

²⁹ No. 1/0476/03 Determinanty potrieb vzdelávania a jeho zosúladenie s požiadavkami trhu práce (Determinants of education needs and its matching with labour market requirements). VEGA is a Ministry of Education affiliated grant agency providing funds from the state budget to research projects of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and universities.

³⁰ Hronec (2008), p. 156

Technical	Benefits	32.673	1	25.935	1	24.508	1
Agricultural	Benefits	25.399	2	20.506	3	18.849	3
Artistic	Benefits	12.883	4	16.544	4	22.691	2

Source: Hronec, Š. (2008), p. 139

*coefficients were calculated with respect to two alternatives without and with risk consideration (reflecting mainly risk of unemployment of graduates). Values of final coefficients with and without risk consideration do not change the rank of university programmes in the table.

The coefficients introduced in the table were calculated based on the **profitability and costs indicators**. The following **profitability indicators** were selected: profit, rentability, revenues, net present value, internal rate of return, index of rentability.

Costs indicators selected were as follows: cost per one graduates, average costs per one study programme (without consideration of wage increase), repayable period counted through profit, payable period counted through cash flow, discounted repayable period.

This multi-criterion methodology developed by the author should fulfil a function of a decision-supporting tool, by an objective allocation of sources, and support fulfilment of basic functions of public universities and the social-economic sights. It should create pressure on reduction of unemployment rate of graduates and thus respect constantly varying economic environment. It should help to ensure sufficient financial funds for universities of high quality and prospects and, on the other hand, restrict funds at universities of low quality and without any prospects. **Consequently, it could be used as a tool of more objective repartitioning of financial means among universities and at universities.**

Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that this method derived from the business market practice does not respect certain deformations on the labour market caused by the **existence of public sector**. The main obstacle is the absence of objective labour price within the public sector, as it is not formed by market forces, but by political decisions. In spite of this fact this method could become a subsidiary tool in decision-making, according to the author.

The aim of the paper about the profitability of investments in medical specializations (Hronec and Meričková, 2008), based on the research mentioned above, **was to calculate the economic value of the initial training of medical doctors** through multi-criterion method of evaluating the physical and financial investment. For that objective, authors distinguished between **static and dynamic methods of rentability**. Among the static methods they identified and defined:

- (a) rentability (in the sense of ability of producing the profit of the investments to medical education and training);
- (b) profitability of the investments (as the rate of profit in %, meaning that in this indicator the cash flow of the investment is included); and
- (c) the repay of the investments (the time when the costs are returned, the "lifetime" of the investment).

The dynamic methods of analysing the investments on future medical doctors education were used to analyze the costs and returns with respect to time. Indicators used were as follows:

- (a) net present value; the difference between a discounted financial revenues coming from investment to education and the costs of education;
- (b) index of rentability; and
- (c) a discounted payable period, which can be defined as a number of years of working life of doctors to get investment profitable (net present value).

This research paper could be seen as having a good potential for application in decision-making process. Data offered for medical doctors as representatives of tertiary VET illustrate the aforementioned **multi-criterion methodology**. Results are as follows:

The revenue of the investment in education of future doctors is SKK 31 662 750.22 (equal to EUR 1 051 010)², the total costs on education are SKK 1 420 303 (EUR 47 145), and the profit is SKK 30 242 446 (EUR 1 003 865).

The authors discovered that the rentability of investment was 1 259.42 % and profitability of investment was 1 168.723 % and the time the effects of investment last was 37 years. The average year profit from investment was SKK 483 451.54 (EUR 16 047.65). Investment repayment was estimated to be less then 3 years (2.93 years).

The net present value of the investment on medical education is SKK 2 777 392 (EUR 2 192.52). Index of rentability is 2.96. As the index is higher than 1, the investment in respective programme is recommended from the rentability point of view. The discounted payable period was 13.09 years.

The authors intend to apply this approach to the analysis of investment in education in all programmes. A new philosophy of financing tertiary programmes and adjustment of education strategies of people as well as of public authorities can result from this. This methodology can be used for introduction of **measures aimed at decreasing the number of young unemployed school leavers. It must be stressed** that the youth unemployment rate is very high³¹ in Slovakia. Authors of the aforementioned paper use this methodology within other research projects. Their results will be available in future on request.

3. Vocational training and performance of enterprises

Research on performance of enterprises has not been covered by mainstream research in Slovakia so far. There are ad hoc activities driven by particular interests of enterprises, however not going beyond their main mission - to secure and/or improve profit making. There is no research body with the history of research focused on this topic. In contrast, researchers who covered this in the 1990s within former Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family activities work in other fields and working positions now as a consequence of reorganisation of research institutions in the labour sector.

Therefore, a project of the Employment Institute that is relevant to this topic indirectly is included, however, it can help create a new basis for further studies in this field. **The main goal of the project "Regions of the Slovak Republic"**³² **is to propose the creation of new**

³¹ 26 % in July 2009, in comparison with 19.8 % EU27 average (according to Eurostat)

³² See <http://www.iz.sk/en/projects/regions-of-slovakia>; the website content is continuously updated.

administrative regions as natural units corresponding to inhabitants' mobility, working migration and commuting. The current administrative division into eight regions does not reflect the natural barriers between regions (mountains, minorities-language barriers, traditions). It results in the difficulty to identify appropriate tools and subsequently measures in support of regional development. For example, one region could have the unemployment rate 20 % in average, but in detail big differences with 10 % unemployment in the northern part and 30 % in the southern part (e.g. in the Banská Bystrica Region) can be seen.

The Employment Institute suggests **establishing 16 regions**. Criteria for their identification are as follows:

- (a) regions should be homogenous socio-economically;
- (b) regions should respect the geography of Slovakia;
- (c) regions should be closed as regards the inhabitants (including minorities) respecting their natural commuting;
- (d) regions also need to reflect the current administration system in sub-regional level (districts) in order to keep using the current statistics;
- (e) regions should be approximately of the same size.

The main contribution of the project for the sake of enterprises is the creation of better conditions for respecting their needs in terms of easier matching labour force supply and demand within natural units. As well known, Slovakia is suffering from big regional differences³³. This approach could help to identify the biggest problems at the NUTS II level and could lead to their better addressing, in particular better fighting unemployment.

4. Labour market outcomes of VET

The research dedicated to labour market outcomes of VET is quite specific with different approaches of different authors. The bigger attention is paid **to reduction of skills mismatch in the labour market but mainly in a form of ad hoc regional analyses conducted under the surveillance of department of regional development of self-governing regions.** Skills mismatch is a very serious problem of Slovak education system, and there are also ESF (European Social Fund) national projects expected to be launched in cooperation of Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF) to develop the National System of Occupations aligned to the National System of Qualifications. **The crucial partner of MoLSaF is Trexima³⁴, an organisation doing long-term research in**

³³ While the capital region was significantly over EU27 with 148.7 in 2006, all other NUTS II regions lagged behind: Západné Slovensko 62.8, Stredné Slovensko 49.2, Východné Slovensko 44.0 (GDP per inhabitant, in PPS, EU27=100). For further details see 1995-2006 data at

http://portal.statistics.sk/files/Sekcie/sek_300/330/rev_hdp/Reg_rev_hdp_1995_2006.pdf

³⁴ Dedicated project portal is at www.istp.sk; the website of the organisation is at www.trexima.sk

identification of so-called type positions³⁵. These type positions descriptions offer a valuable impuls for job descriptions of the future National System of Occupations. The National System of Qualifications should be developed within the project under surveillance of MoE making use of current experience with a curricular reform introduced in 2008 and a respective research done to transform curricular documents into competence based ones.

A study titled the “Requirements of labour market on employees in the knowledge society” (Štefánik, 2008) **focuses on requirements of employers (and type of organisations) on labour force under specific conditions of transition to knowledge based economy.** The fundamental questions attracting the author were as follows: How are the changes in economy transformed into requirements of employers? How is it with regard to type of organisations (split into eight categories)? How are requirements seen by specific human resource managers (split into seven categories)? As the author pointed out, no data were available for this kind of research until then; even any kind of characteristics of employees for knowledge-based economy existed as well as any statistics of available work force from this point of view.

18 characteristics³⁶ of future employees were identified and subjected to experts to be assessed according to their importance using a seven-level scale. One hundred experts – human resource managers from different organisations responded to a questionnaire developed by the author. Experts’ responses were studied broken by aforementioned seven categories (gender, age, level of education, field of education, years of experience in human resource management, years of employment in current organisation, years of holding current positions).

The author discovered big dissatisfaction with existing educational structure of employees in respective firms (32 out of 100 asked experts). Maybe surprisingly for VET theoreticians, general knowledge was preferred over specific knowledge and in all three education level categories specific knowledge of employees was assessed as higher than general knowledge. Also surprisingly, the research did not discover significant differences in requirements on employees in organisations of traditional and so-called knowledge-based economy.

A study analysing skills need and the structure of labour supply skills at the regional labour market and the efficiency of regional employment policy measures was conducted by the Institute for Labour and Family Research (Hanzelová, 2008). The study is aimed at elaboration of theoretical concept of skills shortages through overview of methodological approaches to anticipation of skills needs. It offers the analysis of job vacancies from the skill requirements point of view (based on establishments survey) and outlines the proposed employment policy measures to improve matching skills demand and supply.

The author concluded that under the effect of economic recession the extent of skills shortage at the Slovak labour market has been alleviated. The skill deficiencies will however continue

³⁵ Type position registry is a set of information describing the structure, contents and requirements of typical “representatives” of real jobs across all sectors of the Slovak economy, it describes job method aspects (activities, working conditions) and defines requirements to be met by a job practitioner. See <http://www.istp.sk/ktp/>

³⁶ General knowledge, Expertises, Knowledge management and management, Ability to work with computer, Communication in foreign languages, Ability to negotiate, Representative behaviour, Professional manual skills and craft skills, Driving licence, Intelligence, Emergency - fast reaction, Focusing on the situation, Focusing on performance, Ability to assume the responsibility, Self-esteem, Preciseness, Creativity, Flexibility

to affect the different establishments irrespective of size and sector affiliation and will impact the balance between labour demand and labour supply. Therefore, the author stressed that anticipation of skill needs should be one of the labour market policy priority in the near future. This is also the reason why the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family cooperates with Trexima on the aforementioned project of type positions.

The project “Professions 2010-2020” was prepared in cooperation with Business Alliance Slovakia³⁷ and Amrop Jenewein Group. **This was the only project prepared by employers identified as relevant to the topic. The main purpose of this project was to identify professions, which will be the most wanted and pivotal for Slovakia in the next decade.** One of the key assignments was the definition of employers’ needs and society of knowledge resembling to the so-called T-model³⁸.

After individual meetings with almost 50 personalities of the economic and cultural life, 18 professions have been defined under three labels – “Specialists”, “Cube mantle principle” and “Full service”. According to respondents, the “Activator – strategist” is considered to be the most important profession. Among the best-graded professions there were also “Trader – relations expert”, “Professional craftsman”, “Process analyst” and “Trend analyst”. All identified 18 professions reached a score between 210 % and 88 %.³⁹

Furthermore, three crucial requirements of employers towards graduates were identified with regard to aforementioned 18 professions:

- (a) ability to work with PC and fluency in at least one foreign language as a necessary basis;
- (b) inner motivation as a driver to work, study, grow and take responsibility for performing assigned tasks;
- (c) ability to communicate, creativity, adaptability and ability to solve problems, representing the most practical abilities enabling the academic knowledge to be used in real life situations.

Results were offered for validation to additional 58 representatives of employers, of which 50 % fully agreed with the list of professions and crucial requirements as regard forthcoming expectation towards future labour force. 30 % suggested some additional supplements.

The compatibility of graduates profiles with employers needs is the topic of the report of the employment portal Profesia.sk⁴⁰ and ARRA⁴¹. The database of Profesia.sk is a valuable

³⁷ Business Alliance of Slovakia (PAS) is a professional association representing selected entrepreneurs and employers operating throughout Slovakia

³⁸ T-model reflects requirements of employers towards higher education graduates; the horizontal part of the “letter T” refers to „key competences“ defined by employers, and in the vertical part the answers of 50 personalities of the economic and cultural life to the question “What will I be in the future, what is my future job?” are reflected.

³⁹ 100 % represents a fictional profession, to which respondents would assign the answer “key profession, a specialist in this field will always be necessary and indispensable”.

⁴⁰ “Profesia” is the biggest Slovak portal offering on line employment service for job seekers (www.profesia.sk) creating the space where the offer and demand on labour market meets. People searching for job put their CVs on that website and the potential employers react, or reversely. This service started in 1997 and since 2000 it has been considered the first option and the best instrument for assistance in finding a job.

source for analysis about the demand and supply on the labour market addressing predominantly young urban people. This study of Jakuš and Páleníková (2009) about the employability of the graduates of Slovak universities examined:

- (a) the interest of the employers in respective specializations of graduates using CVs as the source for decision;**
- (b) distribution of students by completed studies, and their interests to study respective specialization in comparison with expressed employers needs.**

The analysis is based on the database of Profesia.sk for 2006-2008. The authors focused on fresh school leavers (maximum 3 years after graduation). According to the study, this is the time, when employers take care about the field of study, because the work experience is not yet relevant. After that period, the work experience is more important and employers do not care so much about the completed school with regard the future employment. For that analysis authors used 53 972 CVs. It was 38 % of all school leavers in the examined period (2006-2008). As stressed by the authors, the advantage of this methodology is that it is based on real activity of employers and job seekers.

Ranks of universities (and their faculties) were created according to “Index of interests of employer”. This index is a share of pre-listed candidates (those who were marked on Profesia.sk as interesting for the employer and were invited for interview) in all who submitted the CVs. Only universities (and faculties) with at least 20 % of all graduates who submitted their CVs within the examined period were enlisted. Private universities were not enlisted, as data about numbers of their graduates were not available.

Table 2

Ranks of programmes according to students’ and employers’ interests

Rank	Interest of employers in graduates	Interests of students in programmes
1.	Informatics	Law
2.	Building	Economy
3.	Economy	Art
4.	Social sciences	Philosophy
5.	Art	Social sciences
6.	Nature sciences	Medicine, health service
7.	Engineering	Pedagogy
8.	Technology	Nature sciences
9.	Philosophy	Agriculture
10.	Pedagogy	Technology
11.	Law	Building
12.	Agriculture	Informatics
13.	Medicine, health service	Engineering
14.	Theology	Theology

Source: Jakuš and Páleníková (2009), p. 20

⁴¹ Academic Ranking and Rating Agency - www.arra.sk is the non-governmental organisation established in 2004. On annual basis it evaluates the quality of Slovak universities and publishes diverse quality rankings.

The subsequent comparison of graduates from Slovak and foreign universities indicated stronger interest of employers in graduates from foreign universities, however this preference is not necessarily based on the quality of respective schools. Employers prefer them as more experienced in overcoming obstacles, highly motivated and more independent in action.

There are not enough projects tackling forecasting labour market needs. The expert system prepared by the Employment Institute within the ESF project "Methods of identification and forecasting of possible directions of development of employment and unemployment, and analysis of possible ways for handling these trends with a goal of more effective active labour market policies" focused on local forecasting in Bratislava (the capital city with the country lowest unemployment) and Lučenec (city in south-central part of Slovakia with a high unemployment rate). Forecasting in both pilot cities was completed in cooperation with labour offices and based on a prediction model of the Institute of Slovak and World Economy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Kvetan, V. et al., 2006). This prediction model named ECM-ISWE06Q1, contains 29 regress equations, 54 endogens variables and 14 exogenous variables.

The second project objective led to the creation of the expert system for selection of appropriate active labour market policy tools (e.g. re-training) from those recognised by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services. The expert system helped searching for suitable active labour market policies.

The authors of the study defined the long-term prediction of macroeconomic indicators in two regions, Bratislava and Lučenec.

5. Determinants, trajectories and outcomes of LLL for individuals

There is no study directly addressing individual lifelong learning outcomes and this field of research as a whole is insufficiently covered in Slovakia.

In 2007 the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education carried out a research on the position of university graduates on labour market and their **economic activity after studies**. A survey of the economic activity of university graduates was based on questions posed to school leavers. The trajectories of school graduates were examined by posing the question about their practical experiences before completing the studies and also after studies. As indicated by Srnánková and Hrušovská (2009) **the biggest problem for the university graduates is not the impossibility to find the job, but to find the appropriate job connected with their field of study. More than a quarter of respondents have answered that their jobs do not require the university degree and more than a half of them do not work in the field of study they completed. This creates the need of further individual studying to cover employment needs.**

Another paper done by authors from the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education offers the rates of unemployment of university graduates calculated as a share of unemployed university graduates in all university graduates (Zvalová at al., 2007). Similarly, and with longer tradition⁴² the placement of secondary graduates at the labour market is studied by the same institution (e.g. Herich, 2009). The studies show how schools contribute to

⁴² Annual reports available in Slovak at the institutional website www.uips.sk

unemployment or even are “producing“ the unemployed. More attention to the results might make up the choice of students who are going to start their studies at secondary and tertiary schools.

6. Conclusions

The only research explicitly focused on benefits of VET was done by Hronec. It applies business methods of investment evaluation on investment in tertiary education. This approach can also be inspiring for secondary VET education. It can enrich the decision making process, but for wider utilization it needs to be further developed in cooperation with Education and Labour Ministries, the key public executive bodies responsible for efficiency in investment in education and training as well as dominantly responsible for fighting the labour market mismatch.

Any other research and studies identified for the purpose of this report only partly correspond with study topics.

The effort to define the future requirements of employers done in the project “Professions 2010-2020” can be considered the first step in defining relevant characteristics for all working positions. For further research it would be needed to widen the focus, as originally positions from profit-oriented businesses were preferred.

The current situation of school graduates on labour market is monitored by Profesia.sk portal. Descriptions based on data from this portal offered on an annual basis can be considered a valuable input for students and employers about the labour mismatch. The results are not very helpful for future students in deciding what to study, as only mapping the current situation is offered and there is significant lack of information on trends for future. It only tells the graduates whether his/her qualification is currently needed or not. It is necessary to provide data about anticipation of future needs to improve the match between the labour market requirements and students preferences as relevant and comprehensive data are almost completely missing now. The only relevant instrument is the aforementioned system of type positions provided by Trexima. Another instrument, the expert system under development by the Employment Institute needs to be adjusted for needs of respective labour offices. Slovakia lacks know how and experts in the field of future skill needs anticipation and forecasting.

The future research should substantially more concentrate on the contribution of VET to economic growth and on the relationship between vocational training and performance of enterprises. It is hoped, that Slovak Academy of Sciences and universities will find capacities provided funding is offered and evidence is demanded for policy making by decision makers. As already indicated a lack of experts, expertise and funding is seriously hampering further development in this field as researchers prefer to focus on fields offering additional financial benefits. It is also inevitable to attract the private sector for both co-funding relevant research and making public any research results conducted at own initiative, in order to better understand private sector research focus, and corporate policies in vocational training.

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Theme 3: Labour market groups at risk

ENEKE HANZELOVÁ⁴³

Abstract

With a steep increase in unemployment during the 1990s, labour market risks have turned out to be a pressing social issue and, consequently, a research issue. The labour market turns have developed groups at risk – young people, especially new school graduates, members of segregated Roma communities, persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed and elderly persons aged 55 – 64 facing higher risks of unemployment, long-term unemployment and marginalisation on the labour market. Those groups are summarised in the first five subsections by their dominant focus. The sixth subsection introduces the only study on labour market risks with regard to vocational education.

1. Introduction

The labour market risk has originated in the close relationship between the transformation of command-driven economy and the shaping of market economy in Slovakia. The labour market development has profiled population groups at risk which – due to various factors (in particular a low level of education and a health handicap) – are in a disadvantaged position on the labour market and which are more severely hit by the burden of unemployment and long-term unemployment.

Attention to the issues of groups at risk on the labour market, the effect of vocational education on the occurrence of risk and an analysis of practical action carried out to the end of preventing its occurrence is devoted by the most important strategic documents highlighting the national policy context. The National reform programme of the Slovak Republic for 2008-2010 in the chapter 1. Implementation of the Lisbon measures in the previous year (parts 1.1 Education and 1.3 Employment) and in the chapter 3. Reform measures for 2008-2010 (parts 3.3 Education and 3.4. Employment).

As the key strategic reference document the National strategic reference framework for the period of 2007 – 2013 provided a policy framework for the preparation of respective operational programmes. The importance of vocational education and lifelong learning for an improved employability of the labour force and a prevention of risk on the labour market has been transposed in the Operational Programme Education. Its operational axes, namely

- (a) Reform of the education and vocational training system
- (b) Continuing education as an instrument of human resource development
- (c) Support to education of persons with special education needs

⁴³ The author works as a senior researcher at the Institute of Labour and Family Research. The background study submitted on 20/08/09 has been shortened and rewritten by the editor with the kind approval of its author.

are to contribute to a higher flexibility of vocational education to the requirements of a knowledge-based society, to improve the access of the groups at the risk of being disadvantaged on the labour market to lifelong learning, and to streamline the social inclusion of the groups at risk, in particular of the marginalised Roma community members.

In relation to both national reform programmes (2006-2008, 2008-2010), the Operational programme Employment and social inclusion “fully considers the need for the development of education and training at all levels with a view to accommodating to labour market needs. In addition, it also reflects the need for a complex approach to the solution of long-term unemployment, particularly by applying the ALMP tools directly aimed at disadvantaged jobseekers and vulnerable groups of the population.”⁴⁴

Operational Programme Research and Development (R&D) is intended to support the development of research and development infrastructure and the research and development support per se. The basic strategic aim of the Operational Programme is boosting Slovakia’s research & development potential to a level making it a momentum of development in the various self-governing regions development by the end of the programming period. There is no doubt about the relevance of research aimed at the raising of employment and at the elimination of the marginalisation of social groups for identifying the economic growth potential of the various regions.

Improving the access to the labour market, raising of employment and employability of the groups at risk makes of the main priorities of the employment policy. Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services which has in the meantime been subject to several amendments, defines the scope of the groups of unemployed at risk, with aggravated access to the labour market and therefore, calls for a higher attention on the part of public employment services. A legislative definition of groups at risk is intended to the end of a higher support to their employment by means of active labour market measures, defines indirectly the scope of research in this field. Among the groups at risk on the labour market the Act includes school graduates, persons above 50 years of age, long-term unemployed, persons with family and parent responsibilities, lone parents, persons with disabilities, persons with low qualifications and persons with social adaptation difficulties (persons discharged from custody).

A distinct profilation of groups at risk on the labour market stimulated the need to reflect that phenomenon by research. A series of studies was carried out during 2002 – 2008 to analyse the standing of groups at risk on the labour market and the reasons of the risk occurrence. The research in that field was sponsored and funded in particular by state authorities (the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Ministry of Education) in order to get a deeper knowledge of the risk phenomenon and to search for instruments of its elimination. The interest in the research of groups at risk was considerably stimulated by the implementation of the Equal Community Initiative which is intended to apply new approaches to addressing the issues in combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities on the labour market, and the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources 2004 – 2006 with one of its specific objectives, namely the development of an inclusive labour market and of equal opportunities. Research studies performed over 2002 – 2008 were targeted in particular at groups whose

⁴⁴ Operational programme Employment and social inclusion (2007). Bratislava: MoLSAF, p. 179

standing on the labour market was marked by significant risks and by the risk of social exclusion. Such groups include:

- (a) young persons aged 15-24 and school graduates;
- (b) members of segregated Roma communities;
- (c) persons with disabilities;
- (d) long-term unemployed;
- (e) elderly persons aged 55-64.

2. Young people and school graduates on the labour market

The school – job transition and the placement of school graduates on the labour market has traditionally been studied by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education (the IIPE) which is a research and information providing entity reporting to the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. Starting 1999, J. Herich⁴⁵ of the IIPE has been systematically monitoring the working placement of secondary school graduates by performing a quantitative analysis of statistical data (monthly, quarterly and semi-annual) of the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family on the unemployed secondary school graduates registered with labour offices. **The analysis provides information on the share of the unemployed secondary school graduates in the total number of unemployed, on the unemployment rate of registered graduates and on the absorption index (i.e. the ratio of unemployed secondary school graduate number over a monitored period and their number over the preceding period). Those indicators are calculated and listed by types of schools, branches of education and regions.** In addition to the monitoring of trends and differences in the placement of secondary school graduates on the labour market, the main role of the monitoring is to indicate the links between the vocational school system and the labour market needs and to anticipate future development.

The IIPE also performs employability and employment analyses of graduates using the statistical data on the unemployment of graduates registered with labour offices. A study (Zvalová et al., 2007) is devoted to the graduate placement in the professional field of their studies and to an analysis of barriers encountered in getting employed and practising the education acquired. The study describes the reasons of churn off the branch studied, the subjective assessments of labour market opportunities and the satisfaction of other professional aspirations of graduates. The specific features of the graduates standing include a relatively low share of tertiary education graduate unemployment in the total unemployment of graduates, a shorter time of their unemployment and the regional distribution of unemployment copying the overall unemployment on regional labour markets. A better standing of tertiary education graduates compared to other graduate groups can also be seen in their opportunity of staffing jobs with lower education criteria. The study has indicated an absence of professional experience and undeveloped working habits as their main handicap.

⁴⁵ For analyses of placement of the secondary school graduates in academic years 2004/2005, 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008, go the IIPE web site.

The authors consider a low number of bachelor study programmes one of the main reasons of tertiary education graduate unemployment. The links between the tertiary education content and the requirements of practice are inadequate. The poorest prospects on the labour market are those of social sciences graduates. **The research study has contributed to the mapping of structural disproportions between the labour supply and the labour market needs, and has enabled to better identify the study branches with low placement prospects on the labour market.**

The causes of graduate risks on the labour market were analysed in a study of the Institute for Labour and Family Research (Kešelová, 2008), as a part of an extensive research aimed at the risk specificities of various groups and at the barriers of their placement on the labour market. The research was commissioned by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The empirical research carried over a representative sample of unemployed registered with the labour offices has disclosed the following:

- (a) the lack of professional experience and a mismatch of the professional skills in school graduates and the vocational skills profile required by employers is an employment inhibitor; yet, a considerable share of graduates is favourably inclined to continuing education and is willing to raise their opportunities on the labour market by acquiring new vocational knowledge and skills;
- (b) the active labour market measures of which school graduates take the most opportunities include the graduate practice⁴⁶. On the other hand, the less used instruments for improving the school graduate employability include retraining;
- (c) a research in the key skills necessary for school graduates to be employed disclosed that almost a third of the respondents does not speak any foreign language and only 40 % of them possess trouble-free ICT skills (including text editor, table processor, mail client and internet browser);
- (d) the participation of low-qualified young people in retraining and especially in second-chance programmes aimed at raising their level of education should be linked with the qualification needs of the regional labour demand.

The placement of graduates on the labour market is closely related to work emigration which has been dynamised upon the opening of EU Member States labour markets to such an extent that a question is emerging consequently on the acceptability of the young qualified labour force outflow and the brain-drain phenomenon. The research (Hanzelová et al., 2006a) was aimed at identifying the inclination of tertiary school students to labour emigration and at establishing the young people push factors to labour emigration. The research commissioned and funded by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic was performed on a sample of 802 students in their last year of bachelor and master studies at 16 Slovak tertiary schools. The research has disclosed high interest of the young people to emigrate for work to EU Member States – such interest was displayed by 60 % of the respondents at the time of the research. The most pronounced inclination to migration was established in the graduates of medical and pharmaceutical sciences, 80 % of whom expressed their interest in migrating for work. On the other hand, the lowest interest was established in

⁴⁶ That programme is aimed at acquiring vocational skills and practical experience by graduates in employer-based vocational practice during 6 months, 20 hours a week.

graduates from agricultural branches of studies: 6.4 % of the respondents were considering to emigrate for work at the time of the research.

According to the research results, the worries of a permanent and massive brain-drain are not justified. The interest of graduates to migrate was focused on staying abroad temporary, with the aim of improving language competences, acquiring working experience in a foreign country, learning other cultures and extending personal contacts.

3. Labour market risks of segregated Roma community members

The key research analyses focusing on the issues of standing of the Roma community members on the labour market over the monitored period include a study commissioned and funded by the UNDP regional centre in Bratislava in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in 2005. The study (Filadelfiová et al., 2005) aimed at creating a database for analysing any and all dimensions of the Roma household living conditions, i.e. their income, the structure of expenditures, housing standard, health condition, level of education, access to information, health care and social services, education and employment. The survey was carried out by face-to-face visits in Roma households and in-depth interviews of their members using an extensive questionnaire. The selected sample consisted of 720 Roma households comprised, on an equal basis, of 240 segregated households (those living in a settlement at a distance from a town or village), 240 separated households (those living concentrated in a certain part of a town or village on its outskirts or within it) and 240 mixed households (those living mixed in a town or village, i.e. among the majority population). The survey has disclosed the following:

- (a) the levels of education achieved by Roma were significantly behind the overall education of the Slovak Republic's population. While the rate for better than primary education is over 90 per cent in the Slovak Republic as a whole, in the Roma population primary education continues to dominate, and there is a sizeable percentage that has not completed primary school;
- (b) in terms of settlement type, the worst education structure was found amongst the inhabitants of segregated settlements. In these communities there was a much higher rate of incomplete primary education – up to 44.2 % – while the Roma living in mixed settlements was about half of this (23.5 %);
- (c) where the studied Roma population had secondary education, it was more than often vocational training than academic education. Approximately 15 % of the sample had an apprenticeship certificate, while the percentage of those with more than academic matura school-leaving certificate was less than 2 %. Higher diplomas were extremely rare. More than 80 % of the Roma population therefore lack any qualification for the labour market;
- (d) low levels of education represent a major barrier to successful involvement in the labour market. Only 7.6 % of the survey sample were involved in the labour market. The absolute majority in the sample, nearly 62 %, was unemployed. Old-age pensioners made up just under 9 % and those receiving disability benefits amounted to over 5 %. Nearly 15 % of the sample were home makers or on maternity leave and remaining 2.6 % had another status;

- (e) the basic factor that fixed the marginal status of the Roma population in the labour market is lack of skills. The low level of education, where a sizeable part of the Roma population has not even completed primary school, is the basic and crucial obstruction in the labour market and will probably remain so in the future.

In the view of the survey authors, it is especially educational measures which are necessary to improve the social status of the Roma community members and to improve their access to the labour market. One of the reasons of the low level of education in the Roma is their irregular school attendance, the lack of suitable school utensils, poor motivation of their children with regard to better school achievements.

In 2004, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic introduced subsidising programmes to address those issues. The subsidising programmes were intended to establish prerequisites for improving the access to education by children from socially weak families (Roma households making a significant segment in socially weak families). The programmes provided food subsidies (regular warm meals served to children at schools), subsidies for the purchasing of school utensils and a bonus for school achievements. The overall aim of the subsidy programmes was to contribute to decreasing the risk of poverty passed on from generation to generation.

A study of those subsidy programmes efficiency was undertaken by the Institute for Labour and Family Research at the request and with a financial support of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The research was based on the data provided by the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Ministry of Education. The data stemmed from questionnaires completed by headmasters, municipality mayors, officers in the social affairs departments of town offices, and parents. The study (Bodnárová and Gerbery, 2007) concluded that **the most beneficial of the programmes implemented was the programme of subsidising school utensils, which enabled equip the children of families threatened by poverty with school utensils which make a necessary part of the school-based instruction. The subsidised meals programme contributed to raising the attendance rate of children especially in kindergartens. The programmes partially contributed also to raising the children's attendance at primary schools and special primary schools. With regard to the defined objectives (raising the interest in school achievements), the least beneficial proved the school achievements financial motivation programme.** The major cause of the programme failure – in the authors' view – was the programme link to the family income level, i.e. the eligibility to receive a motivation benefit by families only whose income oscillated at the subsistence level. Numerous pupils with good school achievements were not entitled to the motivation benefit as their family incomes exceeded the subsistence amount. The experience resulting from the survey and contained in the study was used by the decision-makers to correct and better focus subsidy programmes.

4. Persons with disabilities on the labour market

In 2002, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic commissioned and financially supported a survey and study (Kondášová and Pavlíková, 2002), in which the authors analysed practical experience in employing persons with disabilities by relevant entities, i.e. by employers, providers of public employment services (labour, social affairs and family offices), supported employment agencies and the persons

with disabilities on their own. The experience enabled to indicate the following major difficulties:

- (a) inconsistencies in legislation (concerning social insurance, employment services and taxation) in the support to the employment of persons with disabilities;
- (b) low awareness of employers concerning the opportunities in employing persons with disabilities;
- (c) high administrative load related to establishing a sheltered workplace or a sheltered workshop;
- (d) absence of diagnostics and working rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities.

With regard to the role of vocational education in employing persons with disabilities it was observed that – as a rule – **the persons with disabilities dispose with a low level of education which in turn, jointly with the type of their disability, results in multiple risks on the labour market. It was also observed that the education/training supplied by public employment services inadequately reflects the specific market education and training needs for persons with disabilities and fails to contribute to improving their employability.**

The intention of another survey commissioned and funded by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (Repková, 2006) was to acquire knowledge on the socio-economic standing of families with disabled members. To that end, a field survey was carried out on a sample of 885 respondents with various disability types living with their families. The survey enabled to gather information on the economic status of persons with disabilities, their income situation, housing and perception of their own life situation. **The survey information pointed out the overall unfavourable situation of persons with disabilities on the labour market which displays in a low level of their economic activities, low level of employment and low wages.** The survey has disclosed that most respondents are dissatisfied with their life situation and they consider working (getting employed), improving their level of education and qualification and raising their economic independence to be the main sources for changing that situation.

In 2006 and 2007, a team of authors in the Institute for Labour and Family Research, Bratislava performed a research project on the social protection of persons with disabilities in the context of the social system changes introduced in 2004. The research project was commissioned and subsidised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic and was implemented in two stages.

Project stage one in 2006 was aimed at an analysis of synergies and links between and among the various social protection subsystems (i.e. the system of public employment services and active labour market measures, the social insurance system, the system of financial compensation of disabilities and the system of education) from the view of their contributions to employment raising and to raising the employability of persons with disabilities. In stage 1 of the project, special attention was given to an analysis of the system of education and vocational training for pupils and students with disabilities. It was observed that the education standard of the youth with disabilities is unsatisfactory: most of them have primary and secondary education without the matura school-leaving certificate, and only a negligible share acquires secondary education with matura or tertiary education. **A study (Bednárík et al., 2006) made a positive assessment of the opportunities for pupils and students with**

disabilities to participate in the mainstream education, yet, shortcomings were identified, which result in particular from:

- (a) fixed amounts allocated to schools upon enrolment of pupils or students with disabilities⁴⁷;**
- (b) a non-existent obligation of schools to demonstrate the efficient use of the financial benefits intended to integrate pupils and students with disabilities, which leads to inappropriate use of such benefits in reality.**

The research study considered the lack of up-to-date student books and school utensils and a restricted access of pupils and students with disabilities to information and communication technologies a pressing problem in education and vocational training of the young population with disabilities.

Project stage two (2007) was aimed at an analysis of existing instruments for the support to the employment of persons with disabilities enshrined in the employment legislation (Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services), setting up a quota system (a legally defined obligation of employers to employ persons with disabilities within a defined scope) and special labour market policy measures intended to support the employment of persons with disabilities (a contribution for establishing a sheltered workshop or a sheltered workplace and a contribution for a handicapped for operating or performing self-employment). **A study (Hanzelová et al., 2007b) pointed out the low synergy of active labour market measures aimed at a support to employing persons with disabilities:**

- (a) only slightly more than a quarter (27 %) of the total job number in sheltered workshops for establishing of which a benefit was extended existed 12 months upon the expiry of the three-year mandatory period defined for the duration of a created job and;**
- (b) only slightly more than a third (34 %) of the total number of persons with disabilities to whom a benefit was extended to operate self-employment continued such activity 12 months upon the expiry of the two-year mandatory period defined for its duration.**

Significant attention was devoted to a survey of the standing of persons with disabilities under projects of the EQUAL Community Initiative.

An important part of the EQUAL project “Quality in supported employment”⁴⁸ consisted of surveys intended to establish the views of representatives of the main actors involved in the employment of persons with disabilities, i.e. public employment services, supported employment agencies, employers and the representatives of the groups at risk, i.e. of persons with disabilities. **Those surveys have disclosed that an inadequate level of education and**

⁴⁷ The amount of the financial benefit is not derived from the disability type and gravity and fails to respect the specificities of their educational needs. For instance, the amount of benefit for pupils and students with severe disabilities does not cover the costs of establishing adequate conditions for their full integration in the process of education.

⁴⁸ The project was implemented during 2005 – 2008 with the Agency of Supported Employment, n.o., Bratislava, the Centre for Economic and Social Analyses M.E.S.A. 10, Association of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities of the Slovak Republic and the Centre for Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the role of partners.

vocational training is considered by the respondents the main inhibitor in obtaining a suitable job. On the other hand, the respondents claimed that the opportunity to improve their education and acquire vocational knowledge and skills were the basic prerequisites for a successful integration of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

The objective of EQUAL project “System of integrated employment and retraining of blind and partially sighted people”⁴⁹ was to create a comprehensive and coherent system of guidance and training programmes and services for the group of job seekers with sight disabilities. A significant part of the project activities was devoted to a survey. To analyse the standing of persons with sight disabilities on the labour market, three field surveys were carried out to establish:

- (a) The attitudes and views of the persons with sight disabilities of their own (both working and unemployed) concerning various employment and lifelong learning aspects to identify the factors with an effect on those persons’ chances to be hired and to keep a job. The research outcomes were summarised in a study (Hanzelová et al., 2006b);
- (b) The attitudes of employers to the employment of persons with sight disabilities. The research outcomes are contained in a study (Hanzelová et al., 2007c);
- (c) The readiness and capability of public employment services to render services to persons with sight disabilities as a specific client group. The research outcomes were published in a study (Hanzelová et al., 2007d).

The results of those three surveys have demonstrated that:

- (a) a double risk is typical for the standing of persons with sight disabilities, i.e. the disability is, as a rule, accompanied by a low level of education and low qualifications;**
- (b) public employment services display low adaptability to the needs of clients with sight disabilities;**
- (c) programmes of active labour market measures and in particular the labour market education and training programmes fail to reflect the specificities of this group and fail in fact to contribute to improving the employability of the group.**

The standing of persons with sight disabilities is not improved by the system of vocational training of youth with sight disabilities either: the system fails to reflect the impact of technology changes on the professional structure of labour demand and continues to provide vocational training in professions traditionally offered to this group of persons with disabilities (e.g. masseur, switchboard operator, archives keeper, upholsterer). On the basis of the aforementioned, specific measures for changes in the system of education and training have been drawn up.

The issues of the standing of persons with disabilities on the Slovak labour market were studied by other projects supported by EU funding. A survey was performed of a sample of

⁴⁹ The Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union, the Institute for Labour and Family Research, the National Agency for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprise, the Supported Employment Agency, n.o., Bratislava were involved in the project, too.

persons with disabilities and a sample of employers under the PHARE project “Equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and social partnerships for the monitoring and elimination of discriminatory phenomena on the labour market”⁵⁰, to the end of identifying the barriers in the employment of persons with disabilities. **A study (Reháková and Pavlíková, 2006) concerning vocational education and training for the labour market established that persons with disabilities:**

- (a) have access in particular to primary and secondary education with maturita school-leaving certificate;**
- (b) in fact, remain without access to tertiary education;**
- (c) most of the standard retraining fails to accept the specificities of persons with disabilities, which results in their negligible participation.**

5. Labour market risks of long-term unemployed

Despite its socio-economic relevancy and urgency, the issue of long-term unemployment used to be out of the centre of scientific attention for a long time. In 2006, the Institute for Public Affairs⁵¹ performed a project aiming at an efficiency evaluation of the social assistance system reform of 2004 and of the new instruments for active labour market policy. The project solution rested on an analysis of statistical data concerning unemployment and social need, on an analysis of the substance of key political documents and social legislation, on a secondary analysis of the existing sociological research and on semi-structured interviews of the various actors in employment services and social affairs in selected Slovakia’s counties. **(Gyarfášová et al., 2006) listed the following major shortcomings of the applied active labour market measures as follows:**

- (a) their poor targeting at local economies and local labour market needs;**
- (b) inadequate provisions for significant regional disparities and heterogeneity of the group of employed;**
- (c) low efficiency in reducing the scope of long-term unemployment and low stability and sustainability of jobs created by active measures;**
- (d) absence of active measures aimed at preventing the occurrence of long-term unemployment;**
- (e) absence of a systemic monitoring and follow-up evaluation of the applied active labour market measures.**

⁵⁰ The project was implemented by the National Council of Persons with Disabilities in the Slovak Republic in partnership with the Slovak Union of Physically Disabled People) in 2006.

⁵¹ This non-profit NGO received a financial support for the project implementation under the EU Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion 2002 – 2006 extended by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission.

The evaluation research has confirmed that a whole series of factors has an effect on the shaping of long-term unemployment: the rigid labour market, the duration of unemployment combined with a low level of education and qualifications, the underdevelopment of local labour markets and prejudices and negative attitudes of employers concerning the long-term unemployed. As the study observed, such variety of problems cannot be solved solely by labour market policy but by combining various sectoral policies.

A study of long-term unemployment (Hanzelová, 2007a), commissioned and funded by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family pointed out:

- (a) a high share of unemployment exceeding 2 years and extreme long-term unemployment exceeding 4 years in the total long-term unemployment;
- (b) a noticeable regional segmentation of long-term unemployment, as the difference between the lowest and the highest long-term unemployment rate was 37 % at the county level and 52 % at the district level in 2006;**
- (c) a higher risk of the occurrence of long-term unemployment in younger (15 – 19) and elderly (aged 50+) age groups;**
- (d) that the meritorious factor extending the unemployment period is a low level of education and its combination with other handicaps (age, disability, economically and socially disadvantaged region, etc.);
- (e) low effectiveness of the applied active labour market policy instruments in decreasing long-term unemployment;**
- (f) a need to apply measures aimed in particular at a prevention of the occurrence of long-term unemployment forms.

6. Elderly persons at the labour market risk

The issue of ageing belongs to key agendas of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic within the context of the recent demographical development and of the need to raise employment of elderly persons. As a result, the Ministry commissioned and funded a whole series of research studies devoted to the issues of elderly persons.

In 2004, the Institute for Labour and Family Research carried out an empirical survey of financial and material conditions of the lives of economically inactive elderly persons, including their subjective assessment of their own economic standing. The study (Bednárík, 2004a) confirmed that one of the major problems posing a long-term burden of the elderly persons in Slovakia is a decrease in their incomes resulting from the terminated economic activity, i.e. the low level of old-age pensions compared to the previous working incomes. The decreased income of elderly persons results in their decreased living standard and a deepened subjective feeling of poverty.

A survey study (Bednárík et al., 2004b) analysed the opportunities of elderly persons in raising their employment. The study evaluated the effect of active labour market measures on increasing the employment of elderly persons and underlined the significance of continuing education on raising the employability of elderly persons.

A survey (Kostolná, 2008) on active ageing was commissioned by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family . The survey study provided an analysis of the standing of elderly workers on Slovakia's labour market to the end of identifying the areas of intervention for retaining elderly workers on the labour market. For the study, two empirical surveys were carried out:

- (a) a survey of employer attitudes to elderly workers (hiring and firing, presence of discriminatory practices due to elderly age, use of flexible and non-standard employment forms for elderly workers, training of elderly workers and their career development);
- (b) a survey of unemployed elderly workers (reasons of unemployment, inclination to flexibility on the labour market and continuing education, re/integration activities of elderly unemployed).

The surveys have disclosed that many employers realise the need of a systemic deepening and improving of the vocational and qualifications level in elderly workers as a key prerequisite for their retaining in the working process. On the other hand, when assigning workers to training activities, many employers consider the investment made in improving the qualifications of elderly workers inefficient and prefer younger employees when selecting participants for such programmes.

The elderly unemployed themselves consider the absence of the vocational skills recently sought-for on the labour market by employers – language competences and ICT competences – one of the main obstacles of their placement on the labour market. Moreover, **a considerable part of elderly unemployed proves a low inclination to continuing education and fails to see it as an opportunity to find a job.** That fact is reflected in a low participation of elderly persons in the labour market education and training programmes. Only 2.7 % persons aged 50+ participated in such programmes in 2007.

7. Impact of vocational education on employment and labour market risk prevention

Over the period starting 2002 and ending 2008, only a single research study was devoted directly to the relationship between vocational education and labour market risks. The study (Srňanková, 2002), commissioned and funded by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family , analysed the effect of education on the shaping of groups at risk on the labour market. Following a detailed analysis of statistical data⁵², the study pointed out a decrease in the representation of groups with a lower level of education (primary education and no school-based education), groups with an apprenticeship certificate and groups with secondary education without maturita school-leaving certificate in the total number of working persons over years 1996 up to 2001. **The study observed that education plays a significant role in the distribution of chances on the labour market for the various labour force groups.** Lower education groups are gradually pushed to the secondary labour market and later, to marginal positions on the labour market. The study analysed in detail the risk specificities of the various labour market groups: graduates, women, persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed and members of segregated Roma communities. **Yet, as the study pointed out,**

⁵² Concerning the development trends of worker and unemployed educational structure, employment rates and unemployment rates depending on the level of education completed.

the significance of continuing education is underestimated in the Slovak labour market environment. That is manifested in low financial investments in employee vocational education and in retraining for unemployed. Bearing in mind those statements, the study proposed measures for raising the significance of continuing vocational education as the key factor in decreasing the risk of unemployment, marginalisation and social exclusion. Those **measures should aim at strengthening the motivation (taxation, labour law) for employers to develop on-the-job training with the aim of raising the employee adaptability, restoring and updating their vocational skills and knowledge.** As for **training provided by public employment services, the study proposed** to raise their significance **by increasing the financial allocations** for their implementation and consequently by making a higher unemployed number participate in those programmes; however, with the prerequisite of **a better targeting and quality of those programmes.**

8. Conclusions

The research of labour market risks during 2002 – 2008 represented a relatively significant segment of social research in the Slovak Republic. Its justification is derived from a high occurrence of the phenomenon of labour market risks in Slovakia and an urgent need of developing adequate and effective policies for its prevention and elimination. The surveys performed were therefore predominantly those commissioned and funded by the decision makers themselves, to draw up new or correct the existing measures aimed at a reduction of the scope of risk. Nevertheless, no small interest in the issue was devoted by the research of the non-profit sector and EU-funded projects.

Despite long-term trends in the risk group profiling on the Slovak labour market, the research practice has not arrived yet at a theoretical concept of risk and its definition. Neither includes the research carried out between 2002 and 2008 any work conceptualising the risk phenomenon per se and identifying its causes. The study of risks focused mostly at the recognition and description of specificities in the standing of persons at risk. Attention was adequately devoted neither to analysing the interaction between the labour market risks as a phenomenon and vocational education nor to the decisive role of vocational education in the prevention of risk occurrence.

Decreasing the scope of risks on the labour market will greatly depend on changes in the vocational education and training system and in building of a functional lifelong learning system. In that respect, the Slovak Government has undertaken a series of cardinal actions. From academic year 2008/2009 onwards, schools have been given more powers over their curricula and VET schools are expected to exploit a decentralised curricula design introduced by the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on education, in particular to match the graduate profiles with the labour market requirements. In 2009, Act No.184/2009 Coll. on vocational education and training came into force, which provides a comprehensive solution for the system of secondary vocational schools and opens up the room for a better social partner cooperation in the effort to combine the content of education with the labour market requirements. The newly enacted Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on LLL, which is to come into force in 2010, is expected to raise the quality in CVET as well as a better cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in labour market training. A Memorandum of Understanding between these important actors is to contribute to harmonising the design of the new National System of Occupations and National System of Qualifications.

The recent unemployment growth as a consequence of the global economic recession points at a realistic option of deepening the unemployment, long-term unemployment and social exclusion. In the forthcoming period, social research will have to react to such development by ongoing research activities. The years 2010 and 2011 will tell if research would be employed more efficiently in the implementation of new acts and in the potential reviews of measures for decreasing the marginalisation of groups at risk and, in particular, if the research capacity would be increased for this type of research. The newly adopted legislation and the available ESF funding introduce conditions significantly more favourable for evidence based policy making than before.

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Theme 4: Professionalisation of pedagogical workers

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Abstract

The paper brings an overview of research in the education, training and work of teachers and other pedagogical workers in vocational education and training in Slovakia over the period 2004 – 2009. It focuses at the key areas of the research, which are the future teacher training at Slovak universities and tertiary education institutions, in particular in regard with the so-called complementary pedagogical studies, the research in teacher profession in the context of negative phenomena related to the profession, research in teachers aimed at various areas and dimensions of teacher life in and out of school, the research in career development and the research, and development of teacher profession standards.

1. Introduction

The paper aims at bringing an overview of the existing research in the education, training and work of teachers and other pedagogical workers in vocational education and training in Slovakia over the period 2004 – 2009. Several fields of the research can be distinguished by their common features. They have been arranged in the following subsections:

- a) future teacher training;
- b) teacher profession in the direct practice of education;
- c) research in teacher profession in the context of the negative phenomena related to their profession;
- d) research in pedagogical workers aimed at their status and career development.

A shortage in funding research negatively influenced research activities in this field. A systematic empirical investigation based on quantitative research is too costly and therefore other research formats dominate. Although there are no links between research and policy making in terms of evidence based policy making, two initiatives are of crucial importance for policy making. VET teacher training standard based complementary pedagogical study contributed to the discussion on the shift to competence based paradigm in education and training by theoretical discussion, research activities as well as implementation into practice. Working on teacher (and other staff) profession standards is in the line with new legislation intentions and can contribute to the practice of initial and in-service training in the future.

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2. Future teacher training

The **future teacher training** at Slovak universities and tertiary education institutions makes the first subsection. With regard to the training of future teachers in vocational education, in particular the research and innovations in complementary pedagogical studies (CPS) is of importance, providing pedagogical competences to graduates from master or engineer studies in non-pedagogical branches.

Turek (2004) studied the efficiency of a new module & credit CPS system under the KEGA⁵⁴ project “Innovations in complementary pedagogical studies of vocational subject teachers at secondary schools”. The most significant innovations according to the study were the CPS organisation into modules and credits, organising the CPS as competence-oriented studies, drafting and experimental verification of teacher competences, of standards for CPS graduates and performance standards for the various CPS modules. The research in efficiency of the innovated CPS was performed on a selected sample of 24 newly enrolled CPS students. The research subject was the student attitudes toward the CPS and the student knowledge and skills with regard to the CPS learning content. **The innovated CPS graduates considered the studies useful for their job of secondary school teachers and marked the quality of instruction with 3 and better on a scale of 1 – 5⁵⁵. They recommended organising the studies in the module & credit system, as well as organising the final examination in the format of a portfolio submission with viva voce and case study solving.** The graduates of the innovated CPS studies marked the quality of CPS graduate standards with an average note of 1.3 and 1.4 on a scale 1 – 5⁵⁶, which is better than “very good”.

Bustinová (2004) addressed innovation in the teaching of psychology within the same KEGA research. The innovation related to the teaching content, teaching methodology and the organisation and time definition of disciplines of psychology. The project also compared the subjective student experiences from psychology teaching in the various modules and the objective results of their studies. The research involved 22 CPS students. The students considered the teaching interesting, useful, bringing benefits of a lot of knowledge and acquisition of didactic, communicational and psychological competences. The evaluation of the various teaching process aspects (content, teaching methodology, time schedule, student activation, content of student assignments) was positive for modules in psychology. Both the quantity and quality of knowledge acquired by the students was very good. The success rate oscillated within the scope of 85 – 91 %. **Moreover, the research proved that the level of remembering and understanding was better than the specific and non-specific transfer levels.** That is the reason why research would be necessary in the future, focused on teaching methodology development, to contribute to raising in particular of those levels.

Hrmo (2004) studied the characteristics of the innovated pedagogical studies for vocational subject teachers at secondary schools. The main objective of the project was a design of innovated CPS, experimental verification of the adequacy and quality of the innovated CPS teaching and – on the basis of the results obtained – an optimisation of the CPS with regard to their content, processes and organisation. The substance of CPS innovation rested in drafting

⁵⁴ KEGA – Cultural and Educational Grant Agency (Kultúrna a edukačná grantová agentúra) is an in-house grant agency of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for the financial support of applied research in education and creative arts.

⁵⁵ 1 – excellent, 2 – very good, 3 – good, 4 – poor, 5 – unsatisfactory.

⁵⁶ 1 – excellent, 2 – very good, 3 – good, 4 – unsatisfactory, 5 – failed.

teacher competences in the form of specific, demonstrable activities, and drafting the criteria – standards by which certain performance can be considered acceptable. The CPS graduate standards were designed with a support of an anonymous questionnaire for the evaluation of CPS graduate standards, containing items with detailed descriptions of the various teacher activities. The sample subject to research included 20 students of the innovated CPS, 12 CPS teachers and 21 CPS graduates, most of which are in the position of a secondary vocational school headmasters or their deputies. Only those items were included in the standards which most of the respondents (75 % as a minimum) considered highly adequate or adequate. **Almost all respondents (96.4 %) confirmed that the standards were necessary for CPS graduates. The new graduates (N=20) evaluated the various standards including indicators upon their completion of the innovated CPS. The standards were adjusted according to their evaluations and the evaluations of CPS teachers and CPS graduates. As much as 81 % of respondents considered the adjusted standards to be developed excellently or very good.**

Koláriková (2004) studied the efficiency of pedagogical practice of students in experimental CPS. For verification, questionnaires were used for students in the classes taught by students of experimental CPS. The questionnaires were completed by 150 students of branches in construction. The students saw most of the evaluated parameters of the teaching units in a positive light. The students had a less favourable view of their own activity in the lessons.

Krelová (2004) studied the application of case study solving in complementary pedagogical studies. The experimental verification was closed under the KEGA grant called “Innovations in complementary pedagogical studies”. The final examination included a portfolio submission with viva voce and solving of two case studies aimed at pedagogical problems. When closing their experimental studies, the graduates evaluated the standards by using a questionnaire. According to the results, **85 % of students considered the case study method adequate for verifying the attainment of the defined standards and 70 % of students considered the case study method adequate for verifying the attainment of the defined level for the standard “CPS graduate evaluates his/her fellow students in a valid and reliable, objective and fair manner”.** The project included an evaluation of final examinations by the innovated CPS graduates, which established that **90 % of the innovated studies graduates were satisfied with the course of final examinations and that 90 % of CPS graduates recommended that format of examining in final examinations.** That is the reason why research would be necessary in the future, focused on the development of activity-raising methods.

Kundráťová and Vašková (2004) drafted an innovated curriculum for the module “Non-material means of teaching technical subjects” under KEGA project. The module was taught and submitted to follow-up evaluation by its students. The CPS students considered the quality of teaching content and process excellent. A negative reply was returned in none of the questionnaire items. The module subject matter was considered extraordinary or highly interesting by nearly 90 % of respondents. An equally positive was the graduates’ perception of the various module teaching aspects like content, methodology, student activity, time scope and readings. **Open questions elicited also replies pointing out an overload of subject matter, extensive new terminology and theory. Experimental module teaching has disclosed its weaknesses which include a too high number of specific goals, a high number of questions in didactical tests and their prevailing focus on theoretical knowledge, limited space for feed-back, etc.** Such comments will have to be considered and eliminated when the module is improved.

Vašková and Kunderátová (2004) studied the evaluation of teaching quality in complementary pedagogical studies. Several changes were undertaken under KEGA research task “CPS innovations” which included the evaluation of teacher work. Student views of the teaching quality of various modules were established immediately upon a completion of rendering of each module by using a 16-item anonymous questionnaire which combined open and closed items. In the questionnaire, the students expressed their views on the content presented within the module with regard to its attractiveness, adequacy, utility and learning quantity; they evaluated the teacher acting and behaviour, expressed their feelings and attitudes to pedagogical situations in the various modules. The total number of statements oscillated within an interval of 246 – 254. The results indicated that CPS students were satisfied with the module attractiveness, adequacy and usefulness. 78 % respondents considered the modules extraordinarily or highly useful. 45 % of respondents considered the module content excellent, yet only 35 % of students considered excellent the reading. 88.8 % of students agreed completely with the statement that the teacher has mastered the teaching content which he/she teaches and 86.4 % appreciated the teacher’s passion for his/her module.

Kostelník (2004) informed about the draft and experimental verification of complementary pedagogical studies for teachers of technical vocational subjects at secondary schools organised within the module & credit system, which was performed in the Slovak University of Technology, Faculty of Materials Science and Technology, Department of Engineering Pedagogy and Psychology. Experimental teaching was provided for two modules: Basics of didactics and selected didactics disciplines and Chapters in education theory and methodology. In a questionnaire, the students evaluated both modules, 21 the first and 18 the second one. The evaluation has shown that the CPS participants were satisfied with the attractiveness, usefulness and quantity learned as well as with the overall course of instruction of the first module and were highly satisfied with the second one. The survey has also shown that the most negative evaluations for the teaching of module 1 (pace to be slowed down, more space for discussion, difficult to get involved in the discussion, timely consuming) resulted from inadequate time allocated to module 1.

Hambalík (2004) verified if the level of the student knowledge acquired at secondary schools and at lower courses at Slovak University of Technology can contribute considerably to a successful mastering of CPS teaching content. The survey was focused at IT and writing competences at certain faculties of Slovak University of Technology. The survey was performed in the Slovak University of Technology Bratislava, Faculty of Chemical and Food Technology and Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. The sample consisted of 81 mechanical engineering and 34 chemistry students who completed a test of 15 closed questions. The mechanical engineering students were provided a short training for the area of interest in the first semester of their first year. The chemistry students have not received such training, not even at higher courses. **The results have disclosed that, on average, the group of mechanical engineering students achieved better results than the group of chemistry students. With regard to form and content, the topics of their first written assignments were at a higher level.** The research results indicate how helpful the IT and writing competence courses are if introduced already in the initial stage of studies.

Turek (2006) studied the efficiency of teaching the subject *Quality of school* in complementary pedagogical studies for technical subject teachers at secondary schools. Before starting the CPS, an anonymous initial questionnaire for CPS students on teaching the subject *Quality of school* was to establish the student requirements with regard to instruction. An initial questionnaire was completed by 62 students. The initial student requirements were

accepted if requested by more than 50 % of respondents. The subject was taught in line with the prevailing requirements. The teaching efficiency for the subject Quality of school was studied on a sample of 306 CPS graduates who teach technical subjects at secondary schools and 68 CPS students. The CPS graduates recommended including the subject Quality of school in the CPS syllabus. In an anonymous questionnaire, the students marked the subject curriculum with 1.74 on a scale 1 – 5⁵⁷. However, as many as 65.7 % of students considered the performance standards contained in the curriculum difficult or very difficult and only one third of them considered the standards optimal. A statistically relevant student majority claimed that much or too much teaching content was covered during three of four teaching units under their evaluation. That is an illustration of a too heavy content load posed by the subject Quality of school. The CPS students marked the teaching quality of the subject Quality of school with 3 and better grades and confirmed that they mastered as much as or more than they expected in terms of teaching content quantity of the subject Quality of school. The main shortcoming in the teaching of subject Quality of school was considered its short teaching time (20 lessons only) which was reduced to 2 days for organisational reasons.

Another dimension of future teacher training was studied by Kompoltová (2007): the importance of pedagogical disciplines knowledge in developing key teacher competences. The ESF project called *Implementation of regional labour market requirements in business education* (with a focus at commercial academies in Slovakia) studied teacher views concerning the content of specialised business subjects. The study carried out in the format of a questionnaire included questions to establish the views and proposals concerning the training of teachers of specialised business subjects and involved teachers of 62 commercial academies (Slovakia except the Bratislava region). 186 questionnaires were distributed to selected commercial academies, of which 141 were returned completed. One of the aims was establishing what importance teachers assign to the various knowledge items in pedagogy. A scale of 5 points was used, between 1 (the lowest weight) and 5 (the highest weight). **The teacher views disclosed that the highest stress was laid on didactics (4.18) and pedagogical diagnostics (3.56). The general pedagogy was weighed above the average (3.31). The teachers involved in the research did not lay high stress on the knowledge of alternative schools and their specificities (2.47). Methodology of pedagogical research was marked 2.27. The least stress was laid by teachers on the history of pedagogy (1.66). The research included a question if the teachers consider it necessary to practice various skills as a part of teacher training. Using the same scale, the teacher reactions were the following: communication skills – 3.88, social skills – 3.66, self-reflection techniques – 3.59 and didactic techniques – 3.90.**

3. Teacher profession in the direct practice of education

In her survey, Koleničová (2004) devoted attention to applying creative methods in the process of instruction at secondary schools. The sample consisted of 56 secondary school teachers in western Slovakia, in the towns of Holič and Skalica. **64 % of teachers in the sample claimed to apply creative methods in their teaching. The main barrier they see in applying such methods is the too heavy load imposed by the curriculum and a lack of time. At the same time, 45 % of the respondents claimed to have had opportunities in**

⁵⁷ 1 – excellent, highly useful; 2 – very good, useful; 3 – good, neither useful nor useless; 4 – poor, of little use; 5 – failed, useless.

continuing education to familiarise themselves with new creative methods, which they in turn could apply in the teaching process. The results disclose that it would be necessary to address the issues related to the too heavy load imposed by the curriculum and lack of time.

The results of the survey concerning the use of electronic content in the teacher work were published by Pokojný (2007) who makes a quantitative evaluation of the level of teacher computer skills. He refers to the frequency at which teachers use the internet and the purpose of its use. **60 % of the teachers in the survey use the internet at least once a week; 30 % of respondents claimed to use the internet for discussing their work with colleagues worldwide. Compared to their elderly (50+) counterparts, younger teachers (up to 30 years of age) use more electronic content in their instruction and computers in teaching. As much as 100 % of the respondents believed that the ICT facilitated the access to information. Nearly 46 % of teachers in the sample indicated lack of time as the most frequent obstacle in using the ICT at school. Such statements can be found for other areas as well, for instance, in applying teaching methods for raising activity, etc.** The results disclose the necessity of providing more time for ICT use.

4. Research in teacher profession in the context of negative phenomena related to their profession

The results of research in the manifestations of secondary school student violence against their teachers at grammar schools, secondary specialised schools and secondary vocational schools in a Slovak region was submitted by Džuka and Jenčová (2005). For the research, student violence against teachers was defined by one of the following manifestations – violent verbal manifestations, violent physical manifestations, theft or manipulation of belongings, forcing a person to do something against his/her will and manipulation to elicit social isolation. The teachers exposed to one of those acts of violence at least once in the last 30 days were considered victims of violence. The intention to damage or harm was not established by the survey. The survey involved 364 teachers of secondary schools including VET schools. **5 – 35 % of teachers (depending on the type of violent behaviour) claimed to have been confronted with one of the indicated manifestations of violence against their person in the last 30 days. The respondents indicated negative verbal demonstrations to be most frequent – 35.4 % of respondents, while manipulation was indicated by 18 % of teachers and theft of belongings by 2.4 % of respondents.**

When establishing the deteriorating impacts of adolescent behaviour on the teacher – student pedagogical relationships in certain Slovak schools, Čečetka (2007) established on a sample of 600 teachers that **the teachers consider the following demonstrations the most negative in their students: inadequate eccentric student appearance and eccentric behaviour, followed by lying to the teacher, mocking the teacher, arrogance, rudeness and disturbance.**

Rohn and Kariková (2007) devoted their attention to mobbing of employees at schools. The authors tried to establish the occurrence of mobbing at schools and, consequently, to develop measures to prevent its occurrence or to eliminate mobbing at schools. The survey was performed in central Slovakia. An analysis provided a basis of claiming that **11 respondents in the total sample (N=200) have a subjective feeling of being mobbed. The most mobbing victims were married and teachers at town schools.**

5. Research in pedagogical workers aimed at their status and career development

Černotová (2004) described the results of research in the conditions of teacher work at selected secondary health care schools in Košice and Rožňava with a sample of 50 teachers. There were teachers with longer years of experience in Košice than in Rožňava. There were approx. 25 teachers with incomplete qualifications at both schools. Almost 60 % of respondents from Košice pursued out-of-school activities; almost 67 % from Rožňava did not pursue any out-of-school work. The teachers in the secondary nursing schools in Košice and Rožňava indicated 45 working hours a week on average, of which the teaching itself ranked the first and vocational preparation for teaching the second. **At the time of the survey, 87 % of respondents did not have their own working desk and 57 % of respondents did not have their own room at school.** The respondent teachers of both schools indicated equally working with youth, long vacation and sufficient spare time to be the positives of teacher profession. **They listed their low salaries, low social status, stress at work without a break and little hope for career development as negative aspects.** Should the respondents chose again the same profession, 48.2 % of respondents from Košice and 57 % from Rožňava would do so again. The research results indicate the necessity of addressing the issues of low salaries, low social status, stress at work without a break and little hope for career development.

Černotová et al. (2006) proposed a concept of teacher profession development in the career system based on analyses of the results from theoretical research, international comparisons in professional development and education, from analyses of career system and education models applied in the EU countries and from the analyses of systemic intentions of the National Programme of Education and Upbringing in the Slovak Republic for the forthcoming 15 – 20 years. The concept implementation rests on taking progressively five related strategic actions:

- (a) development of teacher profession standards;
- (b) creation of a career system;
- (c) innovation of a continuous teacher training system;
- (d) creation of a credit system; and
- (e) innovation of a teacher evaluation and remuneration system.

According to the concept, the career system should distinguish three career paths leading toward a higher financial remuneration and professional status. The first path leads to a lifelong maintenance of standard teacher competences and their necessary innovations defined by professional standards. The second path leads to the acquisition of expert teacher competences (teacher with the first and second post-graduate certificates). The third path leads to the acquisition of specialised or managerial teacher competences. All the paths are covered by accredited types of education. Teachers may achieve four career grades: grade 1 –teacher beginner, grade 2 – teacher, grade 3 – teacher with the 1st attestation and grade 4 – teacher with the 2nd attestation. It is important to develop the credit system as an instrument encouraging and monitoring teacher participation in accredited programmes of education

attended as a part of the teacher's professional development. The criterion for the credit value and number is defined by the number of lessons attended under accredited programmes of education. The career system credits are a prerequisite for the enrolment for the 1st and the 2nd attestation course and award of a career benefit. The point of departure for changes in the teacher evaluation and remuneration is the creation of national or framework professional standards for all teacher categories. Professional standards defined by teacher competence profiles make prerequisites for a more objective evaluation of their working performance. The remuneration based on competences gives an opportunity to derive the career grades and tariff salaries from the level of expected competences defined in the professional standards.

In her article on the career system for the development of teacher professionalism, Kasáčová (2006) drafted the requirements for strengthening teacher professionalism while describing the creation of a teacher career training system and making a proposal for a competence profile structure of a pedagogical worker.

Following-up the intent to newly outline the stimulation of career development, Porubská et al. (2008) prepared the **Draft teacher profession standards for teachers of lower and upper secondary education. The key competences and the derived specific capabilities characterise the teacher as a professional and are common for all teachers of both general education and specialised subjects, regardless of the type of school they teach at. A professional standard defines the pre-scribed qualification prerequisites, defines a set of demonstrable teacher capabilities in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, quality indicators along with their evaluation instruments.** A teacher profession standard distinguishes four teacher categories: teacher beginner, teacher, teacher with the 1st attestation and teacher with the 2nd attestation. There are two dimensions of the competence profile. One is made by the vertical dimension consisting of three levels: student, process of education and teacher self-development. The other (horizontal) dimension is made of rather generally defined competences, which are defined in more detail by specific capabilities. The specific competences are further sub-divided into knowledge/skills/attitudes and into indicators/instruments.

Valent (2009) designed the **Professional standards for the post of trainer, which have been based on the classification framework of professional competences of that category of pedagogical workers.** According to legislation, a trainer may achieve the following grades: grade 1 – trainer beginner, grade 2 – trainer, grade 3 – trainer with the 1st attestation, grade 4 – trainer with the 2nd attestation. Such option used to be closed for trainers; by raising their professional competences, trainers would comply with the requirements for proceeding to a higher salary grade or for receiving a credit-based benefit. The standards are divided into three basic dimensions – student, process of education and teacher self-development. Moreover, they include a proposal of instruments allowing their superiors to identify the level of competences of the individual trainers.

Another initiative comes from Sabo (2009): **draft professional standards for specific categories of pedagogical workers: educational counsellor and prevention coordinator.** The draft features several dimensions and defines the normative and strategic dimension, project management dimension, personal dimension with a specification of key competences and specific capabilities (knowledge, skills and attitudes). The draft also defines the indicators and instruments for establishing and identification of competence levels.

Lehotský (2009) presented **Draft professional standards for the category of heads of methodology teams and subject commissions,** which consists of four dimensions –

normative and strategic dimension, pedagogical school management dimension, HR and managerial dimension, and self-development of a leading pedagogical worker. Each dimension is featured by key competences and specific capabilities (knowledge, skills and attitudes) along with the indicators and instruments for establishing of competence levels.

6. Conclusions

Despite persisting efforts, Slovakia fails to perform systemic and comprehensive research, aimed specifically at pedagogical workers in vocational education and training.

The existing research focuses on key areas, which are the future teacher training at Slovak universities and tertiary educational institutions, in particular in regard with the so-called complementary pedagogical studies, the research in teacher profession in the context of negative phenomena related to their profession, the research in teachers aimed at various areas and dimensions of teacher life in and out of school, the research in career development and the research and development of teacher profession standards.

The established research results do not have almost any impact on real policies and no national priorities have been defined for the field of research in that respect.

A closer link with state policy may only be seen in case of professional standards. Their research and design is namely based in the new version of Act on pedagogical staff and specialised staff (Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on pedagogical staff and specialised staff and on the amendment of certain acts) introducing the career system for pedagogical staff.

Research and initiatives concerning complementary pedagogical studies almost exclusively relate to activities of a single university (STU) and thus, cannot be related to the whole system of this type of studies; they neither relate about nor lead to systemic changes supported by the relevant legislation.

There is a close link between practice and in particular the complementary pedagogical studies which aim mainly at a verification of the efficiency of learning modules, teaching methods and means or, which verified the efficiency of teacher's work.

The research and design of professional standards which make prerequisites for a more objective evaluation of the pedagogue's working performance is of particular importance.

Several important topics or fields are not subject of scientific research whatsoever.

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