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Contemporary risks concerning young adults' adaptation to the labour market

The labour market is an indivisible component of each and every market economy. Manifestations of disproportions between the demand for work and its availability over the long-term recurrent in certain sectors – are a problem for every market-oriented society. In recent years, the public debate in the Czech Republic has been increasingly turning to the deteriorating situation of young adults on the labour market. This article is focused on secondary school students and their personal attitude toward employment. It was prepared using both primary and secondary research methods. The primary data was obtained through external research carried out among secondary school students in the form of a survey in 2013. The research was focused on their attitude toward their future job prospects and expectations regarding their future professional lives. The data so acquired was processed using statistical methods. The secondary data was used to track the developmental trends on the Czech labour market in the recent past and, especially in the area of unemployment, as well as the problems involved in the employability of graduates of schools of different levels of education. The research results showed that the majority of secondary school students do not have a clear idea of how to achieve success in the labour market. For most of them, the studied field does not play a significant role in their future expectations about the labour market. The majority of them have most unrealistic ideas about the real needs of the Czech labour market. Their expectations of success in the labour market are mainly based on the simple fact that they are economically supported by other people and they would rather be doing work that they find entertaining. The research results can be used for the purpose of further comparison with the results of similar research in other countries in Europe as well as in the world.

Keywords: labour market, unemployment in the Czech Republic, school graduates on the Czech labour market, employability of secondary-school graduates

JEL classification: D12, E21

Współczesne ryzyko związane z adaptacją młodych ludzi do rynku pracy

Rynek pracy jest nieodłączną częścią każdej gospodarki rynkowej. Powtarzające się w określonych sektorach zatrudnienia dysproporcje pomiędzy zapotrzebowaniem na siłę roboczą a jej dostępnością są problemem, z którym boryka się każde rynkowo zorientowane społeczeństwo. Debata publiczna w Czechach skupia się w ostatnim czasie coraz częściej na kwestii pogarszającej się sytuacji młodych, poszukujących zatrudnienia absolwentów szkół na rynku pracy. Niniejszy artykuł koncentruje się na uczniach szkół średnich oraz ich osobistym nastawieniu do zatrudnienia. Opracowano go przy użyciu podstawowych i uzupełniających metod badawczych. Dane pierwotne uzyskano w drodze badań zewnętrznych przeprowadzonych w formie ankiety wśród uczniów szkół średnich w 2013 r. Badania skupiały się na ich postawie względem przyszłych perspektyw zatrudnienia oraz oczekiwaniach dotyczących życia zawodowego w przyszłości. Uzyskane w ten sposób dane opracowano z wykorzystaniem metod statystycznych. Dane uzupełniające wykorzystano do prześledzenia ostatnich trendów rozwojowych na czeskim rynku pracy, szczególnie w zakresie bezrobocia, oraz problemów związanych z niezdatnością do zatrudnienia wielu spośród absolwentów szkół różnych szczebli systemu kształcenia. Wyniki badania wykazały, że większość uczniów szkół średnich nie ma jasnego pojęcia o tym, jak odnieść sukces na rynku pracy. Bardzo niewielki odsetek uczniów szkół średnich wiąże swoje przyszłe nadzieje zawodowe ze studiowanym przedmiotem. Większość z nich ma bardzo nierealistyczne wyobrażenia rzeczywistych potrzeb czeskiego rynku pracy. Oczekiwanie sukcesu na rynku pracy bierze się u nich głównie z prostego faktu, że są oni finansowo wspomagani przez inne osoby, główny cel pracy upatrują zaś w przyjemności. Wyniki badania można wykorzystać do celów przyszłego porównania z wynikami podobnych badań w innych krajach europejskich, jak również na całym świecie.

Słowa kluczowe: rynek pracy, bezrobocie w Czechach, absolwenci szkół na czeskim rynku pracy, zdatność absolwentów szkół średnich do zatrudnienia

Klasyfikacja JEL: D12, E21

Introduction

Development trends in the labour market, whether in the Czech Republic or any other European Union country, are being increasingly discussed in political and economic debates. Globalisation has brought a number of social and economic changes which are constantly influencing the performance of labour markets in all functioning economies. In the long term, labour markets remain in a state of imbalance, where labour supply exceeds the demand. Different risk groups are being formed which find it difficult to succeed (validate themselves) in the current labour market. Graduates of schools at all levels of education are one of such groups.

The worsening situation of school graduates in the labour market is usually discussed in relation to the deteriorating economic situation of a given country. Since the onset of the economic crisis in the Czech economy in 2008 and up until now, employing fresh school graduates has been a big problem, and secondary school graduates are no exception [Trhlíková et al., 2008; Trhlíková, 2009]. In the Czech Republic, secondary school graduates are considered to be young adults up to 20 years of age, that is, a maximum of 2 years after the completion of their secondary school education. In comparison to other job-seekers, they are disadvantaged by a lack of experience, a lack of regular work habits and minimal work experience. Since 2008, the Czech labour market has seen more and more distinct risk groups. Their personal approach to professional life – already formed during

their studies – may also play a significant role in their lack of success in the transition from secondary school students to employees in the labour market.

The current social and economic conditions in which secondary school students shape their future work habits are formed by a number of factors that negatively affect their ability to adapt to the labour market [Vojtěch et al., 2013]. This article is thus focused on research into trends in school (especially secondary school) graduate unemployment rate. It also contains the results of the research carried out in 2013 in the Czech Republic.

The Czech labour market in comparison with other EU countries

In 2015, there was a year-on-year increase in unemployment (age category: 20–64) in almost all EU countries. The EU experienced an average employment rate of 70.4% in the last quarter of 2015, as the employment rate of men averaged 76.3% and the far lower employment rate of women – 64.6% [Czech Statistical Office, 2016]. The Czech Republic is one of the countries with the highest employment and definitely above the mentioned average in the EU, with the employment rate of 75.4%. The employment rate of men (83.7%) is the highest in all EU countries. The employment rate of women is also not bad, as in 2015 it reached 66.9%. The Czech Republic is thus among the top 7 countries with the highest ratio of employed people within the whole EU [Czech Statistical Office, 2016].

The unemployment rate of people aged 15–64 in the CR is considered to be very low – below the average unemployment rate of the EU as a whole. In the last quarter of 2011, it amounted to 6.2%. Since then, it has begun to increase moderately, averaging 7.1% in 2012, yet still remaining more than 3 p.p. below the average rate of unemployment in the EU – 10.6% in 2012 [Czech Statistical Office, 2011–2012]. In 2013, a similar trend could be observed. The average unemployment rate was 7.0%, which was even 4 p.p. lower than in the EU (11.0%) [Czech Statistical Office, 2013].

2014, however, was a crucial year when the total unemployment rate in the CR as well as in EU countries began to decrease. The unemployment rate in the CR was 6.2% in 2014, which means that it decreased by 0.8% in comparison with the year 2013. In EU countries, the situation was similar. The unemployment rate was 10.3% [Czech Statistical Office, 2015]. In 2015, the unemployment rate in the CR reached 4.5%. The average unemployment rate in EU countries was 9.5% in the last quarter of 2015 [Czech Statistical Office, 2016]. The average rates in the CR and the EU in the years 2011–2015 are shown in Table 1.

	Handana da					
Year	Quarter	Unemployment rate in the CR, %	Unemployment rate in EU, %			
			Tate III EU, /0			
2011	4.	6.5	10.0			
	1.	7.2	10.7			
2012	2.	6.8	10.4			
2012	3.	7.0	10.3			
	4.	7.2	10.8			
	1.	7.5	11.5			
2013	2.	6.8	10.9			
	3.	7.0	10.6			
	4.	6.8	10.7			
2014	1.	6.9	11.1			
	2.	6.1	10.2			
	3.	6.0	9.8			
	4.	5.8	10.1			
2015	1.	6.0	10.3			
	2.	5.0	9.6			
	3.	4.9	9.1			
	4.	4.5	9.2			

Table 1. Average unemployment rates in the CR and in the EU

Source: [Czech Statistical Office, 2016].

1.1. The Czech labour market and school graduate unemployment

The labour market is a natural part of every economy. From the general economic theory perspective, the market is generally understood as a mechanism through which buyers and sellers can interact with the intent to exchange. The labour market, just like any other market in the economy, is driven by the market forces of supply and demand. Supply is provided by households or the owners of workforce who are willing to offer their time and abilities at different levels of labour cost in the labour market. Demand is created by firms which hire labour as an input into their production processes, willing to hire additional labour units only if the demand for a given asset in the final markets grows [Pindyck, Rubinfeld, 2005; Dohnalová, 2014; Samuelson, Nordhaus, 2005; McKenzie, Lef, 2010].

As the success or validation of a person on the labour market is conditional to a number of characteristics (e.g. age, health status, education, personality traits, gender, ethnicity), certain groups of people are subject to a higher risk of job loss and predisposed to long-term and repeated unemployment. Their members usually make a living working low-paid jobs in the secondary labour market and their future is marked by a degree of uncertainty. Thus, unemployment is more a threat

to certain groups of the population than to others, which confirms the experience of almost all industrialized countries [Buchtová et al., 2013; Burda et al., 2003; Trhlíková, 2013].

Graduates of secondary schools and universities seeking their first job are greatly disadvantaged in their competition with other applicants. They do not yet possess practical experience and basic working habits; they also lack certain professional contacts which facilitate orientation in the labour market [Buchtová et al., 2013; Burdová, 2013].

The unemployed graduate rates reflect the economic developments in the country. For a long time up until 2008, the number of unemployed graduates was declining. In September 2008, 28,885 unemployed graduates registered in labour offices [Czech Statistical Office, 2014]. With the advent of the economic crisis and the subsequent recession, employers' interest in school graduates severely decreased [Dohnalova et al., 2013]. There was a significant decline in vacancies, which decreased graduates chances of getting a job. In the following years, 2009 and 2010, the number of unemployed school graduates increased. Between 2011 and the first half of 2012, the situation improved slightly. The situation deteriorated significantly in the last quarter of 2012, when the graduates registered in labour offices were almost unable to find jobs and still remained unemployed even in April, 2013. The shares of school graduate unemployment in total unemployment rates in the Czech Republic are given in absolute terms and in percentage terms in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The share of school graduate unemployment in CR's overall unemployment in 2008-2013

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
on April 30, thous.	19.1	26.7	32.8	32.0	26.6	34.4
on April 30, %	6.0	5.9	6.1	6.2	5.8	6.1
annual average, %	6.6	6.0	6.2	6.2	5.8	_

Source: [Czech Statistical Office, 2013].

The development of the share of school graduate unemployment in total unemployment rates in the Czech Republic in the years 2008–2013 is shown in Figure 1.

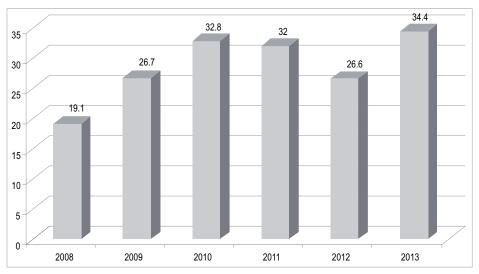


Figure 1. School graduate unemployment in CR in 2008–2013 (April 30, in thousand) Source: [Czech Statistical Office, 2013; 2014].

1.2. Unemployment rates for secondary school graduates in the CR

Secondary school graduates have, over the long-term, created the largest group of unemployed adults in the Czech labour market. Up until 2007, their employability rates recorded a favourable development trend. Since 2008, the position of this group in the Czech labour market has been deteriorating. In April 2013, the unemployment rate of registered secondary school graduates in the Czech Republic reached the following values:

- graduates of secondary vocational education with a vocational certificate (3-year or 2-year vocational courses preparing them to find work in manual professions as labourers and in the service sector, vocational certificate after graduation): the unemployment rate in this category is traditionally the highest and in April 2013 it amounted to 27.4% [Eurostat, 2013; Infoabsolvent, 2014];
- graduates of secondary vocational education with GCSE and vocational training (4-year vocational study, secondary school diploma and vocational training, prepared for demanding industrial work or activities in the service sector, with a potential to perform lower management functions): un until 2008, the unemployment rate in this category showed a long-term decline (7.8% in April), which stopped in the following years. In 2013, it reached 19.3% [Eurostat, 2013; Infoabsolvent, 2014];

- graduates of secondary vocational education with GCSE (4-year vocational study, secondary school diploma, no professional manual training): until 2008, the unemployment rate in this category showed a year-on-year decline, which then stopped. In 2013, it reached 19.3% [Eurostat, 2013; Infoabsolvent, 2014];
- graduates of grammar schools (gymnasiums) (four-year or multi-year education in grammar schools): from 3.2% in 2008, the unemployment rate in this category reached 4.1% in 2013 [Infoabsolvent, 2014].

From the data it is clear that almost a quarter of the graduates have not achieved success nor found a place for themselves in the labour market. The unemployment rate of high school graduates in the CR in 2013 in percentage terms is shown in Figure 2.

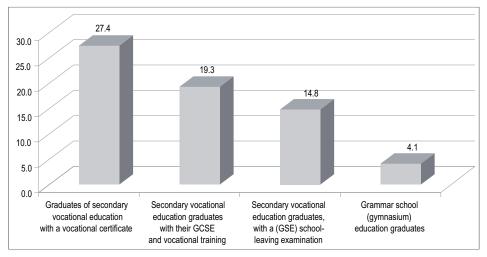


Figure 2. Unemployment rate of high school graduates in the CR in 2013, % Source: [Eurostat, 2013; Infoabsolvent, 2014].

2. Methodology

In 2013, a research was conducted throughout the country concerning secondary school students of all disciplines, focused mainly on their attitude toward their future success in the labour market. Its main objective was to determine the factors that influence the work offers for secondary school students in the course of their transition to the labour market, with an emphasis on a comparison of the current trends in the Czech labour market and the students' vocational orientation.

For research purposes, the following research questions (RQ) were formulated:

- RQ 1: Do secondary school students have a clear understanding of their future professional orientation? To what degree this understanding is dependent on the group from which the students come (what is the professional classification of respondents)?
- RQ 2: Do secondary school students want to find a job in a profession that is in line with their chosen field of study?
- RQ 3: Is gaining economic independence the main motive for achieving success and validation in the labour market in the shortest time frame possible?
- RQ 4: What is the level of secondary school students' financial literacy?

Primary data collection was conducted by means of an electronic questionnaire. A significant portion of the questionnaire was filled out in the context of organized school work during lessons on vocational and career counselling, with the support of counsellors. The electronic questionnaire was available on a website; it was anonymous but contained information about the school and the field of study which helped to identify the geographic and occupational classification of the respondents. In all, a total of 1,480 questionnaires were filled out. The data was automatically stored in an SQL database and then processed using statistical methods, i.e., classification/grouping, relative frequencies of attribute values and test of independence in contingency table (Categorical Data Analysis) [Levine, 2013; Lynch, Scott, 2013].

For research purposes, classification of economic activities according to Roe [1954; 1956; 1957], later elaborated by other authors (e.g.: [Roe, Klos, 1972]), was chosen. Eight occupational groups were distinguished: services, trade, organisation, technique and technology, outdoor activities, science, general culture, arts and entertainment.

Table 3. The structure of respondents according to the type of secondary school

Type of secondary school	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	
apprenticeship, technical	133	9	
apprenticeship, non-technical	15	1	
'maturita', gymnasium	133	9	
'maturita', economics	592	40	
'maturita', technical	222	15	
'maturita', other	266	18	
not completed	118	8	
total	1,480	100	

^{* &#}x27;maturita' – GCSE equivalent.

Source: Own elaboration based on own research.

The set of 1,480 respondents was divided according to the studied fields (Table 3). The set was largely dominated by respondents from gymnasiums and other secondary school graduation institutions (82%); almost half of them (40%) chose an economy-related field of study. The representation of students with a vocational certificate amounted to only 10%. 8% of secondary school respondents did not provide their branch or field; despite this fact, their answers were included in the evaluation of the other data obtained; thus, their authenticity was not contested.

3. Results

3.1. Professional orientation

A selection of 62 professions pertaining into one of the eight above-mentioned occupational groups was offered to the respondents, who indicated 6,052 professions in total (an average of 4 per respondent). It turned out that the choice in each occupational group differed significantly. The greatest number of realizations was recorded in arts and entertainment – 1,204; further, in organization – 1,180; in general culture – 829; in technique and technology – 799; in business – 781; in science – 544; in services – 527; in working outside – 188 (Figure 3).

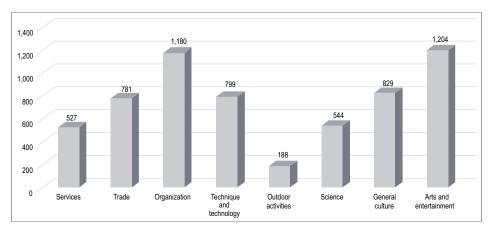


Figure 3. Choice of profession according to occupational groups

Source: Own elaboration based on own research.

In order to be able to determine the dependencies (or the independence), the categorical variables (attributes), professional orientations, and inclusion in the peer group, Pearson's Chi-squared Test was used in the contingency table based

on a comparison of empirical frequencies with the theoretical frequencies, i.e., those which would be expected in the case of independence. The theoretical frequencies are determined as corresponing to the product of the respective marginal relative frequencies (in the case of two independent categorical attributes with associated probabilities equal to the product of the respective marginal probabilities). For evaluation we used the MS Excel add-on package XLStatistics [Rodney, 2012].

The independence of professional orientation from inclusion in a peer group was not rejected. It would not still be rejected at a significance level of 0.0858 (p-value), i.e., with a probability of 91.42%; we would not be making a mistake as we do not reject the null hypothesis.

3.2. Professional restrictiveness

Out of the overall number of 1,480 respondents, 302 did not know what profession they were interested in and did not pick any. 531 respondents chose one to three professions; the remaining 647 respondents opted for four or more professions. The quantitative view of the respondents' professional choices is shown in Figure 4. The independence of professional restrictiveness from inclusion in a peer group was not rejected (p-value 0.0961).

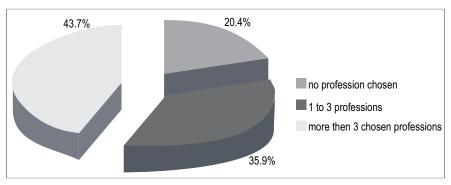


Figure 4. Quantitative view of the respondents' professional choices Source: Own elaboration based on own research.

3.3. The economic situation

The vast majority (1,154) of the respondents declared complete financial dependence; 252 respondents declared partial dependence; 59 respondents declared complete independence; 15 respondents did not respond to the question. The shares of their answers is depicted in Figure 5. The independence of economic situation from inclusion in a peer group was not rejected (p-value 0.0733).

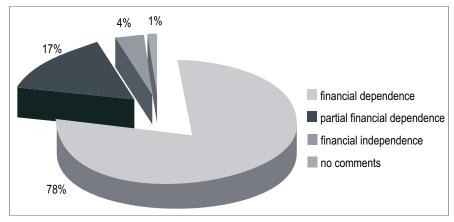


Figure 5. Respondents' current economic situation

Source: Own elaboration based on own research.

3.4. The time-frame for achieving economic independence in the labour market

304 respondents would like to achieve economic independence within two years from graduation; 279 respondents – within three years; 224 respondents – within four years; 316 respondents – within five years. 268 respondents consid-

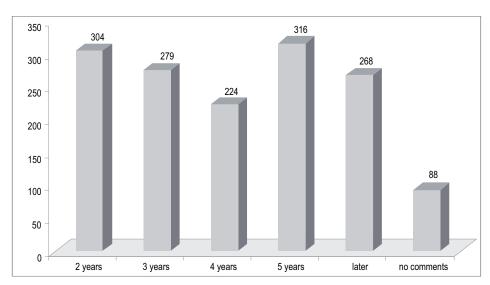


Figure 6. Time horizon for reaching economic independence (employability) in the labour market

Source: Own elaboration based on own research.

ered a longer, unspecific time-frame; 88 respondents did not respond. Only 21% considered achieving economic independence in the shortest time-frame. The results reflected in Figure 6 summarise the responses. The dependence of achievement of economic independence was not confirmed neither from inclusion in a peer group (p-value 0.795) nor from economic situation (p-value 0.0696).

3.5. Financial literacy and the ability to manage financial resources

The ability to independently manage funds was confirmed by 1,171 respondents. 207 respondents said they did not know whether they would be able to manage their funds on their own; the remaining 84 did not want to deal with this issue; 18 respondents did not answer the question at all. The respondents' answers are shown in Figure 7. The independence of financial literacy from inclusion in a peer group was not rejected (p-value 0.0912).

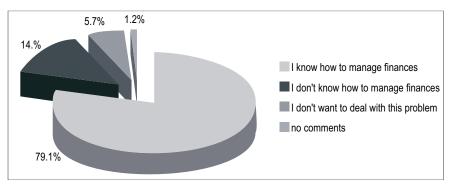


Figure 7. The respondents' ability to manage finances

Source: Own elaboration based on own research.

4. Discussion

The results of the research showed that the majority of secondary school students do not have a clear idea of their future success and professional orientation in the labour market. They do not restrict their choice to one field of study – the majority chose more than three professions from different disciplines. They were mostly interested in working in the area of culture and art, as well as in management positions. For most of them, the field of their studies does not play a major role in the choice of their future profession. The ideas of secondary school students are in conflict with the real conditions in the Czech labour market.

The vast majority of secondary school students are economically dependent on other people, mainly their parents. Only a small group has a need to, or is forced to, procure funds on their own. For most of the respondents, gaining economic independence in the shortest time-frame possible is not a motivational force to be successful in the labour market.

The ability of the respondents to independently manage financial resources gives more reason to be optimistic. The majority of them stated that they know how to manage finances. The paradox in this case is the fact that although most of the respondents are economically dependent, they consider the management of these resources as their natural ability.

The survey results show that the majority of secondary school students in the Czech Republic do not have a clear idea of their future in the labour market. Only a quarter of them have a clearer idea about the profession that they would like to devote themselves to in future. The remaining three-quarters have only a vague idea about the labour market – and this despite the fact that they are already studying in a specific field. What is striking is that there is a small group of students who are uninterested in or even don't care about their future transition into the real labour market.

From the research results it can be summarized and noted that the different approaches of secondary school students to the labour market may also reflect their different approaches to the work effort. For employers, then, the education level alone can be misleading; it can also fail as an indicator of the employability of secondary school graduates, as the labour market is entered not only by occupationally capable young people, but also by graduates who do not want to work in their field of study. For employers, the actual issues related to the employment of secondary school graduates are thus non-transparent, as they are unable to identify their quality. The experience in the Czech Republic shows that employers are losing willingness to employ fresh secondary school graduates, and if they do hire them, they offer them much worse wage conditions than to those employees who have some degree of work practice. The standing of graduates in the Czech labour market in recent years has thus been continuing to deteriorate.

Conclusions

The conducted research showed that the majority of secondary school students have most unrealistic expectations about their future professional life and their success in the labour market. In most cases, it results from the fact that they are economically supported by other people and that they would rather work for fun, preferably in the world of art or in executive positions – very contrarily to their chosen branch of study. These attitudes toward a working life lead to the fact

that their quality in terms of job performance differs considerably. The unwillingness of employers to recruit secondary school graduates have continued to intensify in recent years. One of the options for addressing this situation is an intervention of the corresponding state authority into the education system – where already during secondary school education students would be regularly offered information about the trends in the labour market, not only in the Czech Republic, but also in other countries of the European Union. The research results will be definitely used for the purpose of further comparison with the results of similar types of research in other European countries as well as countries in the world.

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