Post-secondary vocational training courses: are they effective for Italian unemployed youth with high school diploma?

Paolo Severati

ISFOL - Institute for the Development of Vocational Training of Workers
The study is focused on ‘post-diploma’ (PD) training courses targeted mainly to 20-29 year old unemployed individuals with a high school degree (diploma).

This segment of the array of the training programmes co-financed by ESF in Italy is relatively homogenous than any other segment.

PD training courses are very intensive and have a strong focus on the acquisition specific job skills.

So, they could reasonably have an effect on individual employability.
Time coverage

Different from Region to Region, according to the differences in programming choices and availability of data

As an example, for Piedmont PD courses started between 2006 and 2011 were chosen (from two to seven years of coverage, outcome data being disposable until the end of 2013)

PD courses last from less than one to two years

Lock-in effect (generally absorbed after at most two years)
Data sources, accessibility and content
Main advantages in using administrative data vs. survey data

Significant savings in the total cost of an evaluation project

Reduction of the time required to collect data

Information on universes (not on samples)
Timeline of the project

Beginning of the project: 
October 2013

End of the project (diffusion of the final results): 
November 2014

Data collection, data validation and data integration: 
from October 2013 to April 2014
Possible critical points to be tackled

Engagement of the Managing Authorities and of other components of the Regions

Accessibility to the Data

Quality of the Labour Market Data (better if the Region has a proper Labour Market Informational System and a Regional Employment Agency which used it)
Our solutions to the critical points

Creation of four different Local Working Groups

Commitment of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies to invite and to solicit Regions to give micro data to the research team

Cooperation with Regional Employment Agencies where possible
Expected and reached results of the Italian Pilot Project

For each Region we registered increased awareness and knowledge of:

1. counterfactual analysis;
2. micro data requirements to build up datasets suitable to counterfactual impact evaluation;
3. limits of the actual informational systems on labour market and commitment to improve, and first of all, use them regularly

Enhanced capacity of the regional managers and officials to effectively participate in the process of evaluation and growing interest for the use of the results of impact evaluation
Preliminary impact estimates

In the aggregate (for the whole people treated) and for each of the Regions considered in the concluded evaluation exercises:

1) Significant and positive net effects on individual employability

2) Presence of a lock-in effect (during the months immediately after the beginning of the course the treatment group exhibits a lower probability of employment, but then a neat positive effect on the probability of employment emerges)
Piedmont - Trainees employment rate and counterfactual estimate
Lessons learnt with the Pilot CIE

A good evaluation design is a requirement prerequisite for a good evaluation, but a clear evaluation plan and a strong management of the evaluation process are needed too.

Quality of evaluation is highly correlated to the quality of the disposable data. Investment on data production is a risky but possibly profitable activity.