

# **Effectiveness of Retraining Programs As A Social Construction: A Critical Discourse Analysis**

Martin Brezina

University of Ostrava, Faculty of Social Studies, Department of Social Sciences,  
Ostrava, Czech Republic

## **ABSTRACT**

The research presented in this paper aims at identifying the ways in which officers in Labour Offices construct their interpretations of retraining programs effectiveness and how this understanding translates into their approaches to clients in labor offices. The epistemological position of the research is social constructionism. This perspective is combined with a critical approach. The research part of the thesis is based on critical discourse analysis methodology by Norman Fairclough. Data analysis is carried out using the tools of discourse analysis, developed by James P. Gee. Subsequently, four kinds of sub-discourses of retraining effectiveness are introduced: disciplining discourse, bureaucratic discourse, pragmatic discourse and allied discourse

*Keywords: social construction, critical discourse analysis, retraining effectiveness, unemployed, officers, labour offices.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Modern systems of European public policies (especially education policy and employment policy) offer a range of measures and tools designed to effectively combat long-term unemployment through policies focused on employability and development of human capital. Strategy to support vocational education and retraining is generally considered as a key tool to promote flexibility of the workforce as it helps public employment services to prevent structural imbalances and strengthen the chances of vulnerable groups in the labour market. The effects and effectiveness of the individual instruments of vocational education and retraining have been the subject of many analysis and evaluations. Aside from these respectable analyzes and evaluations, however, remains the research 'black box', which is the implementation of retraining programs, i.e. activities and attitudes of their implementers and similar 'internal' conditions of their functioning. The presented research intends precisely to this less explored part of employment policy. I'm interested in how the effectiveness of retraining is understood by officers in Labour Offices, who carry it out and who therefore know its attainments and benefits from immediate experience.

## **1. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **1.1 Research strategy and methods of data analysis**

The theoretical foundation of the research is a social constructionist theory as for as its epistemological position is concerned. Qualitative research strategy was thus chosen as a relevant research instrument for this study. A critical discourse analysis was then chosen as a tool for data analysis. I share the key social constructionist assumptions, i.e. supposition that knowledge is socially constructed and about the key role of communication in social processes (Berger, Luckmann 1991, Boghossian 2001). At the same time, I take a reserved position to the "strong" version of social constructionism, which disregards social conditionality of interaction and communication. In my opinion, this is closer to Bourdieu's concept of constructionism which assumes that human behavior is significantly shaped by the man's place in the social structure (Bourdieu 1989). For it is obvious that the various actors in the construction of the social world participate in different degrees and with unequal power (Keller 2013).

Foucault's concept of discourse represents important influence for my research and especially the concept of discourse within the context of critical discourse analysis. Gee (2008, 2011), whose version of critical discourse analysis was the primary tool of my text analysis, identifies two types of discourse:

(1) He writes about the so-called Big "D" Discourse, which is broadly comparable to Foucauldian discourse. It contains a set of rules that regulate possible representations of knowledge about a certain object or matter. In my case, it was, therefore, a discourse worker office work relating to the issue of efficiency of retraining.

(2) Gee assumes that it is possible to identify also partial discourses (with small "d"), which are discrete parts of Discourse, and that are related to actual expressions and their groups. These discourses have different sub-functions; they may overlap each other and have a dynamic variable nature.

### **1.2 The research setting and methods of gathering data**

The research was conducted in 2014 and 2015 in the regional branch of the Czech Labour Office in Ostrava and its sub-regional offices in Ostrava, Frydek-Mistek, Karvina, Havirov, Opava and Novy Jicin. For the selection of participants, a purposive sampling technique was used. I led semi-structured interviews with 18 communication partners, which aimed to uncover the participants' views on the subject area based on their experience with it. Interview with officials was structured around the topics, which correspond to internal "factors" the effectiveness of active employment policy measures defined by Sirovatka (2003) that also apply to the effectiveness of retraining: (1) a sufficient range of active measures; (2) the appropriate structure of active measures; (3) suitable targeting of active measures; (4) sufficient quality of active measures. Ancillary methods used were observation and study of documents.

## **2. FOUR DISCOURSES OF RETRAINING EFFECTIVENESS**

Labor office officers that were informants of research interviews constructed the effectiveness of retraining in different ways. These constructions differ mainly in what limits the attainments and benefits of retraining. This chapter is devoted to the analysis of these differences, through the identification of discourses which relate to the effectiveness of retraining.

### **2.1 Bureaucratic discourse**

Participants of the research had some tendency to blur or even explicitly deny that they themselves, from their own intention, offer selected clients of Labour Office to participate in retraining. They also had trouble to specify what criteria they use when making this decision and recommendation. The following communication partner is trying to bypass this sensitive spot by describing the evaluation of the suitability of the applicants as a pure expert and administrative process:

(Q: When you, on your own, offer the retraining to someone. How do you, on what basis, do you determine: I should offer it to him or her?). *"Well, of course. We offer them this on the basis of a personal analysis or their interest and eventually they are sent to the department of retraining. "(Q: A personal analysis, it's quite a wide topic...) "Well, then, do not push me to talk about a professional diagnosis. Obviously, it has to be. And we have a psychologist there, who will do it. Or, simply, these people often come alone. "(Z12)*

The formulation "are sent" signals a desire of the official to separate or depersonalize an act of sending those interested in retraining from the fact that someone had to make some consideration and the decision about it and follow in this consideration certain criteria which are in question. Communication partner is also trying somewhat to prevent having to worry about the details of „professional diagnostics“, which should already be part of the offering the retraining to the client, not the stage where decisions about the suitability of the candidate psychologist Labour Office. This tendency can be characterized as bureaucratic buck-passing and tendency to dodge from the substance of the problem. Herzfeld (1992) wrote in this context that the bureaucracy creates the system of indifference and irresponsibility because it allows transfer decision-making to a higher intention or impersonal rule.

Next communication partner describes the rationale, which was repeated by several other participants: why to give a course to someone who has already completed the training and should have adequate current information. On the one hand, she says that every recommendation was "judged" individually, on the other hand, she notes that people who had completed a high school diploma after about 2000 was not been included. But this is clearly inconsistent with the principle of individual assessment of individual cases because not every one of these graduates actually had to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. Relatively complex problem of how to assess whether someone is better employable thanks to the specific course or without it is narrowed to verifying the year of the candidates' graduation. Similarly, another justification is

too generalized. By far not every worker in social services works in shifts and again the generalized, categorizing aspect is favored over the substantive assessment of the individual situation is applied in the latter example:

*"Selection of people to the course also depends on whether the applicants are employable in their profession even without the retraining." (T: It means that if they are employable without that course, they would not get the course.) "It would not be justified. There should be the good reason. For example, there was a course named Company Economist, Economist of a small company. When people, who graduated after a year, lets' say, 2000, applied for it, they weren't chosen. They should be equipped with up to date information during their previous education. They do not need more, more retraining. It should rather be given to people who did accounting or studied business school in the 80s or so. Or it may be necessary for women after maternity leave. So, I would say that every recommendation is considered individually. Whether the person is physically fit to perform that profession, for example. Or some professions demand work in shifts; workers in social services are among them. When the person has limitation due to the care and he or she cannot work in shifts, then we shouldn't recommend the course of a worker in social services. They cannot effectively work in a continuous operation. "(P2)*

In another passage, the repetition of the word "milestone" is apparent at first sight. This striking phenomenon could be explained by the nature of spoken language when the speaker in the flow of speech has limited possibility to refine his discourse and similar repeat unit may sometimes occur. However, communication partner relates the individual references of "milestones" to the content of the laws and institutes, which to him seemed to represent the axis of what was going with retraining throughout the time and how that field was transformed. Initial question conceived the nature of the changes far more complex. I was interested in information on how the organization of retraining transformed its conditions and availability of retraining for job seekers. As a further sign of bureaucratic discourse, I can, therefore, identify adherence to the administrative aspect of processes and ritualism. Merton (2000) wrote in his analysis of bureaucracy dysfunction about this confusion of means with objectives, which is typical for the bureaucracy.

(Q: Conditions under which the retraining courses were organized have been changing, including which types of retraining have been available. Is there some chance to trace how these tools and their conditions have changed and how it changed their availability for clients?) *"Well, more or less, in my opinion, the biggest turning point was in 2004, but it was in the context of the new Employment Act. And I would say that since then nothing has significantly changed ... Well; of course, there were significant milestones. One important milestone was in 2006, when came into force a law on Recognition of Further Education, which created the so-called professional retraining, previously it was a partial qualification. When was somehow standardized the content of retraining and content of the tests? So it was such a milestone, when actually retraining would - , or in fact, just part of the retraining, the greater part, became the constituent of the standard national qualifications. And there was also a milestone in terms of how to get the retraining and that was the so-called chosen retraining, which appeared two years ago. But that doesn't change the actual substance of retraining, just the nature of how the client can get it. "(Q: Okay. But you are talking basically about those institutions. I am also interested in what has changed it terms of*

<http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

their availability for clients.)" *So, I would say that from this point of view, there was only one such a milestone, since 2004, and that was the mentioned institute of chosen retraining. Until then, more or less, all the matter was arranged by Labour Office.*"(P1)

The interviews also focused on the question of how the communication partners perceive the effectiveness of retraining as a tool, the effectiveness of their implementation, and according to what it could be determined. Or whether the Labour Office is actually able to process the corresponding data for the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of retraining and generally active employment policy. Respondents generally defended the way the data were currently being processed without trying to openly problematize this model; therefore they tended to rely on a formal approach.

The discourse, which connects with the above-characterized characters (alibism, generalization, ritualism, formal approach) can be justifiably labeled as bureaucratic because it shares these characteristics with features that are connected with a bureaucratic model of organization (Keller 1997, Iedema, 2003). The essential view expressed by the bureaucratic discourse to the effectiveness of retraining can be briefly described as follows: the effectiveness of retraining can be achieved by compliance with the standards and procedural rules. In addition to the trust and loyalty to the institutions and rules, the way in which bureaucratic discourse understands the meaning and the effects of human activities also exhibits a tendency to tokenism and dodging from the core of the problem. Finally, we can also speak about the signs of the need to cling to authority, in this case to the authority of the state or to the senior authorities.

## **2.2 Pragmatic discourse**

In the following excerpt, the communication partner from the counseling department speaks about herself as a responsible worker. She doesn't confine their duties only to tasks that formally make up her work but she conceives herself as an active co-creator of its content. She is doing something 'extra' because she believes it helps fulfill the purpose of her work - securing employment to her clients. Effectiveness in the field that she is responsible for, is related not only to clients but also to the employers.

*"Let's say, the employer would come and ask if I can design some training for his company. It's not really part of my duties, of course, but I know that he will be able to create a new job, so I will do it for him. Basically, it is something extra, but I think that it is something I should do. Or these chosen retraining. I'm trying to help those people with searching for the suitable course, although it is actually just their thing. And for me, it has the effect that the person goes to work, a new job was created."* (P8)

One of the contact centers had in the past certain practice in which officers organized meeting for graduates after completion of retraining course. That event offered vacancies and contacts with potential employers. It was a minor activity of workers beyond their normal duties that helped jobseekers in their return to the labor market. At present they are not able to provide such activities because of insufficient personnel capacities:

<http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

*"There were more of us in the past. Just after retraining we invited people, en masse. We always had a group of invited people here, they had the vacancies prepared. Then they had presentations during group work. All this cannot be done today, it has been degraded. The new system just dissolved a lot of staff, so that's why we are not able to organize such activities anymore." (P15)*

The following excerpt presents an account of communication partner about selecting suitable participants to the retraining course. Decisions that she has to take, reveals a relatively high degree of autonomy of workers at counseling department, but also the influence of their values and "economic" judgments:

*"There were times when we were under the regional district. Then I had to choose. From those that were sent to me. For example, I had 12 people sent from the girls, and I had four positions. So I kept an eye on their professional experience, what school they had, maybe if they are able to work in shifts. Because I will not give a course to a woman who has small children and can work just in the morning. I won't give her a course of social service worker when it needs shifts, Saturdays, Sundays. I think it's inappropriate and it is also not economical, to give that such a woman. But when it comes to those computers I had the practice that I used to search for people that didn't have such a course. Because some people had already IT courses, so just to make it at least a little bit fair. I looked into that database and I made my kind of ranking. Well, in most cases it was ... when they came, I did not need to select, because half the people just dropped out. They had this or that, one person had to have an operation, another should go with the child somewhere or had already job promised. Eventually, in most cases, it came off that from these twelve people who were sitting there I did not have to deny anybody."(P3)*

Communication partner perceives deciding on placement of job seekers into the course as her own thing ("I won't give her..."), and combines this decision with regard to economic aspect (use of scarce resources) and effectiveness (to adequately fulfill the purpose of retraining, because the woman in her opinion will not be able to join the job). This reflection on the effectiveness (the concepts of "economy" and "effectiveness") in her speech is extended with aspect of justice: some clients already have had courses, others have not. Therefore, she created a ranking of job seekers' suitability as a specific tool on its own initiative.

There is an interesting method presented in the following excerpt that the communication partner developed in order to prevent erroneous actions of the client. He sends the client to examine possible workplace and find out whether possible employers would be interested. Formulations such as "we want these people somehow like stir into something" or "this is important" can be interpreted in such a way that it is not an attempt to shift the responsibility and time burden on the client, but as an effort to activate and motivate them into finding their own career path.

*"But when a woman come here and says that she wanted the course of a social service worker, but she had never been to such an organization, she was unaware of what was going there, not knowing where she should look for a job. So I tell her: 'Walk around the facility, see what is going there, look, ask if they would be interested in you.' That is all I want from them. Then she comes back and says, I've been in a nursing home, there's this and that, there is no real prospect,*

<http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

*but then I was in a shelter, they told me that I might start as a volunteer. Great. So we want these people somehow like stir into something. They should not only seek re-qualification on the boards, but they are supposed to know what is meaning of the retraining and, which is the most important, what they really can do. This is important."*(Z7)

In this case, a 'pragmatic' discourse was identified that accentuates practicality, economy, and autonomy. But there is also the certain dimension of personal responsibility for the work and genuine effort to help clients. The position of 'pragmatist', which indicates explored discourse, expresses a specific approach to the role of "street-level bureaucrat" (see Lipsky, 1980, Musil, 2004), a social worker at branches of public and government. The perils and shortcomings of the administrative system are not, in fact, barriers only to clients, but also to the officers themselves. If they want to carry out their work at a level that is expected from them by an administrative system itself and from the various categories of clients (including employers), they have to, in many cases, create a variety of methods and strategies that are not presumed by standards and procedural rules. In a way, they help to "save" poorly thought-out and set-up system.

### 2.3 Disciplining Discourse

The following utterance is an example of the blending of disciplining discourse with pragmatic discourse. Communication partner explains who should be given retraining. She disagrees with the opinion that unemployed should be forced into retraining. She is also she is against the practice when a client enters retraining just in order to gain support during the course (usually higher than the standard unemployment benefits or poverty benefits). The pragmatic level of discourse indicates a belief in the formulation of the communication partner that is not appropriate to compel client into the course.

*"I stick to this principle, always the same, that retraining should be given to the person who really needs it, who wants it. On the basis that they **alone** (with emphasis) should feel the need to be further educated or change their qualification. So we do not, or I do not, I would never want to force these candidates into retraining, it basically does not work. And I would not want to do give retraining to the candidate that uses it as a source of financial benefits which are associated with it. Everyone is entitled to support during the course. They obviously know this and so sometimes they even calculate and choose longer courses. Of course, we try somehow to avoid this behavior; it is not always easy to prevent it. "(P8)*

From the linguistic resources is striking correction of wording from "we do not..." , representing a collective group, through "I do not want", when spokesman relates opinion to herself, to toughening "I would never want." A distance from calculating clients who enter the courses due to financial benefits indicates the use of the pronoun "they" in conjunction with "obviously", that evokes that the behavior of these clients is normal and predictable. It is, of course, necessary to take into account that officers at labor offices can have such an experience with "calculating" jobseekers, the problem starts when sticking to this approach becomes the general rule.

In another passage, it is evident that the communication partner has no doubts about the retraining course, which, judging by her own testimony was not well prepared. She does not admit that the source of difficulties could be on the side of the Labour Office or a procedure. She shifts the core of the problem solely on the side of the job seekers who ignored such a course:

*"Recently I've been doing the course named carpenter for the manufacture of windows and doors. This is something non-scheduled. I do not know where the money came from, all of a sudden. So I do not know where it came from, I've received it by mail from Karvina. I have four positions and I have certain criteria for who I can invite as no one did ask for such a position. So I found a database of several people into the forties. I know that they need a basic education as they have difficulties to find a job. So I sent the SMS to about fifty people. No one has come to me (with great emphasis). Not one person." (Q: And how do you explain it?) "I do not understand. I just can't understand these things. When I told that to my husband, he couldn't believe it. That something is given for free, and nobody wants that. And there is still on the television that nothing is done for those people. I suspect that such those, mainly men with basic education, that they have simply no interest. I do it for twenty years, yeah; I've been here for twenty-three years. And this is a nightmare for me to fill courses for men with basic education. This is unreal. And some of them are such... they are scared. They agree with you because they are afraid of the officer. Even if I tell him that I can't exclude him from registration. But they are afraid and enter the course. After that, they seek excuses or take sick leave. Money wasted and the position is already impossible to redeploy. "(P3)*

The discourse that this participant uses, doesn't take into account the extent to which this course was prepared with respect to the needs and possibilities of the target group and the needs of the local labor market. The communication partner doesn't perceive as problematic that it was incorporated into the program of retraining suddenly and funded from sources that are not known to officers (one can consider, for example, whether it wasn't not the only source of revenue for the selected educational institution).

A group of utterances in this section can be interpreted as representatives of disciplining discourse. The concept of this discourse is based on the theory of Foucault (1998, 1999). According to him, the society has developed with the use of legitimating discourses wide range of numerous and diverse techniques to ensure control over people and population (Foucault 1999). The disciplining discourse as a reflection of the need can be, according to my findings, identified in the formulations of communication partners from the local Labour Office. The relationship of this discourse to the effectiveness of retraining can be simply formulated by the following sentence: effective implementation of the programs can be ensured through control of clients and the application of sanctions against their uncooperative behavior. An interesting aspect of the disciplining discourse is that although it respects authority (especially state authority) applying control and repression it may be critical towards authority if these control and instruments are applied unsatisfactorily or inappropriate.

## 2.4 Allied Discourse

People without a job, with which the officers of Labour Office work, have varied human and professional "profile". Among them are highly skilled people and also completely unskilled persons, men, and women who have worked for decades, and people repeatedly unemployed, healthy and disabled persons, people of diverse ethnicity, etc. In fact, the situation of Labour Office officers somewhat differs in that aspect from most state-employed social workers and social administration worker, who usually work with more homogeneous groups of clients.

*"As there are no suitable jobs offered, there is nothing to talk about. Projects in which millions are spent annually, the effect is absolutely zero. We have these people here every day at the desk. They are sitting here and they are disgusted. And we still have to look nice and tell them that maybe it will be good and that perhaps, simply, they will manage it. But we do not believe it. And we cannot tell them: yeah, that's a mess, it's terrible. This is just a reality that nobody wants to hear. Now the mother sits down and asks: 'for God's sake, where should I go and what can I do? I am actually not entitled to anything. This is horrible, nobody wants me.' And it would be good if you would tell somebody, what is happening here. Ask why, why the creation of new jobs is not supported. Why there cannot be a subsidy from the European Union? Because of those projects, even if there are millions of them, they are useless."(Z9)*

Communication partner expresses skepticism about retraining programs because she meets their graduates in her office when they fail to get any job. She finds a solution in job support, not in changes in setting up or implementing the retraining programs. Emotional passion, which is connected with such situations for the speaker, is expressed very clearly and impressively: the use of direct speech, the phrases "that's mess, it's terrible," "for God's sake, where should I go," or the contrast between disgusted and frightened clients and professional optimistic approach of officers.

Communication partner in the passage below describes the reasons why men refuse retraining, which does not provide immediate income to support their family. In some cases, this is also about people who associate negative emotions with education rather than the perspective of personal or work growth.

*"Because many times the guy comes in and says: 'But I do want no retraining. What should we discuss here? Please, I want a job. I do not care about anything else. I have two little kids at home and I want to work.' Because one can understand, when this guy comes home, he has two little kids and maybe his wife is on maternity leave. So he is really not interested in anything else. Because he needs to feed the kids, pay the flat, and now there is some learning that, you know, he is not educated a man, and he will not give a damn on these things."(Z11)*

Participant reproduces the arguments of a man-hypothetical job seeker in the form of direct speech, which could induce that she understood his position and broadly agrees with its legitimacy. This alliance tuning of speech shows formulation "because one can understand," that is followed by the description of a hypothetical family situation of the client.

From the following passages is the evident opinion of the communication partner - job seekers are rejected by employers and this is the reason why they fail to find a job after retraining.

Participant accuses employers of rejecting the graduates of retraining. She mentions excuses that hide an effort to get rid of the applicant or discriminatory position. The "blame" for the difficult situation after retraining is not put on clients in this occasion - they can not radically change their situation – the problem lies in employers' approach to them.

*"... But I think it's mainly a matter of employment or available jobs for those who attend courses. You have these employers. They do not want them, to put in bluntly. When a graduate comes to them, they want someone with experience, when a mom comes, they want someone without children, when a woman who has not have children yet comes, they want someone who has already have the kids, like, after maternity leave. They want, um, someone older, but they do not want people over fifty. Yeah, that's every such category, simply. (Q: They all have some minus.) "Exactly. So those employers, of course, always have some excuse. I tell this to candidates, they use it to somehow get rid of the person. Yeah, quite simply, employers can always find an argument the, if they want."(Z17)*

Distance from employers indicates obligatory and repeated pronoun "they" and the list of groups that are rejected by them. Negative connotations also induce expression "they use it to somehow get rid of that man," "those employers, of course, always have some excuse," or "they do not want them." Conversely, emotionally tuned word "mom" indicates a positive relationship to this client group. Expressive expression illustrates the significant aspect of allied discourse: applies to groups with which speaker can identify at least partially. We can, therefore, speak about the alliance because of perceived social proximity.

It also seems that officers that expressed understanding for the situation of the clients were in some cases also predisposed to identify weaknesses in the system of work with the unemployed at Labour Offices. They spoke about formal work with clients that lack a deeper conception of how and where unemployed people should be oriented. Creating of new programs is the only simulation of a solution in this situation.

*"But you know what, I use to visit my colleagues, and when I tell that they have just five to ten minutes of time for one client, then what you want to talk about. Add people. What programs do you want to devise? From my perspective, there is no real work with these people. They come and they are asked several questions, ah, well, come back in a month. There is no space to address thing, what are their options and ideas, what they could do and what not, what should be done for it. They are not working with these people."(P15)*

Allied position and discourse associated with it, which, according to my knowledge, in some cases use the communication partners working at labor office, presents a specific solution to the dilemmas which generally face many employees of public institutions of social protection (Lipsky 1969, Lipsky, 1980, They seem to face in the daily work some challenges that they share with their clients. Even they had problems to find a job or keep it; they also know how difficult sometimes is the situation of the unemployed person. Alien discourse expresses – more or less intentionally - a dilemma:

<http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

- a) between the position of a worker who is a part of the state social administration and whose role is, on the one hand, to help, and, on the other hand, to control and possibly punish;
- b) and position of a person who in the future may find himself or herself on the other side of the office desk and who sought a job in the past and solved the problems that are associated with such a situation.

### **3. DISCOURSES OF ORDINARY OFFICERS IN LABOUR OFFICES AND THE ISSUES AROUND WHICH THEY DEVELOP**

The analysis of the data shows that the 'big "D" discourse' of the Labour Office officers on the effectiveness of retraining disintegrates into several mutually contradictory partial discourses. According to my findings, there is not a single, coherent discourse in the Foucauldian sense concerning this subject area when it comes to Labour Office line officers. The incidence and nature of these four sub-discourses can be interpreted in the following manner: during the exercise of their work ordinary officers encounter many problems and dilemmas. They address these problems and dilemmas using one of the sub-discourses so that they can legitimize their behavior or integrate various aspects of their work into understandable and acceptable context.

Labour Offices, or more specifically their officers, stand at the intersection of at least three powerful groups of factors that influence their work and a way to which they reflect it. 1) The first group of factors constitutes the institutional position of the labor offices as a part the system of state administration, the legal system that regulates it, administrative, control and sanctioning tasks that labor offices are to perform. To this group belong also specific organizational and variable structures, under which labor offices operate. 2) The second group of factors consists of social and economic conditions that shape the activities of the labor office. Among them are: the amount of financial resources that are available for employment policy programs, available staff capacity (largely depending on funding), the number of unemployed which, depending on the current macroeconomic context, they have to work, and also the structure of employers, including their needs and possibilities to employ. 3) The third, equally important group of factors represent the values, ideology, political opinions and prejudices, which translate to the system and the social environment in which labor offices operate, but also to approach of individual officers to their own work and to clients.

The table shows how specific sub-discourses of Labour Office officers on the effectiveness of retraining relate to issues (difficulties) with which these workers have to deal with their work. Firstly, basic signs of various discourses that are identified, then the ways in which workers understand the effectiveness of retraining within the relevant discourse and, finally, to what prevailing approach to clients the discourse is oriented. Regarding the representation of discourses in the survey data, most occurred expressions can be identified as belonging to bureaucratic and pragmatic discourses, less common was disciplining discourse and more in a few cases the Allies.

<http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

Table: Summary of sub-discourses of retraining effectiveness

<b>Partial discourse</b>	<b>Issues that discourse develops</b>	<b>Characteristics of discourse</b>	<b>How to ensure the effectiveness of retraining?</b>	<b>Relationship to client groups</b>
<b>Bureaucratic</b>	the need of depoliticization, the diversity of clients, the complexity of problems	positive attitude to the system, formalism, alibis, generalizing view on clients	compliance with the standards and procedural rules	categorization according to standards
<b>Disciplining</b>	the uncooperative behavior of clients, responsibility for the functioning of the system, loyalty to authority	critical, blames clients and system setting up, prefers sanctions	checking of clients and the implementation of sanctions against their uncooperative behavior, event. changing the system	categorization and selectivity under deservedness and cooperation
<b>Pragmatic</b>	poorly thought-out and set up system, responsibility for the functioning of the system	autonomous, pragmatic, critic	creating policies and strategies that are not anticipated by standards and regulations	selectivity under effectiveness
<b>Allied</b>	system setting up, need to politize, sharing the problems with clients	critical towards system and employers, on clients' side, emotional	changing the system, allied attitude to clients	alliance, selectivity by solidarity

#### 4. CONCLUSION

<http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

The goal of the research, presented in this text, was to explore how officers in Labor Offices in the Ostrava region construct the effectiveness of retraining programs and how these concepts of effectiveness affect their approach to job-seekers.

In order to characterize what constitutes "added" value of chosen methodology and specific analytical methods, I can mention the following five main benefits: (1) Critical approach allows to take into account the way that power, ideological and socio-economic aspects influence the work of ordinary officers in Labor Offices. Discourses that these workers construct relate effectiveness of retraining to their approaches to clients. (2) I could also address some specific conditions of Labor Offices that are partially or totally absent in other studies: the role of disciplining approaches, varied concerns of ordinary officers or the occurrence of an allied approach to clients. (3) The constructionist epistemological perspective allows a deal with the effectiveness of retraining as a social construction which has no "exact" and general definition, but rather that is the result of different interpretations and the impact of the various actors in the construction of meaning. (4) Utilization of discourse analysis and identified discourses in relation to the social construction of effectiveness (or "efficiency") provided an opportunity to capture, how the these discourses direct to different concepts of retraining effectiveness, and how these concepts may affect the work of ordinary officers (e.g. by resorting to procedural approaches or by creating their own "effective" practices), and their work with clients. (5) Utilization of critical discourse analysis enabled me to thematize the sensitive issue of selective access to different groups of clients of labor offices.

The chosen methodology puts, on the other hand, a significant limitation: it's not possible to make a substantial generalization from this research. This research can be conceived as partial and it relates to the situation in the region. But it's acceptable to assume that similar findings could be identified in many Labor Offices across the country. Research and analysis, presented in this paper, can serve as inspiration for the further development of discursive and critical research focused on social policy and social work.

## REFERENCES

- Berger, P. L., Luckmann, T. 1991. *The Social Construction of Reality*. London: Penguin Books.
- Boghossian, P. 2001. What is Social Construction? *Times Literary Supplement*, February 23, 2001, pp. 6–8.
- Bourdieu, P. 1989. *Social Space and Symbolic Power*. *Sociological Theory* 7: 14-25.
- Fairclough, N. L. 1989. *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. L., Wodak, R. 1997. Critical discourse analysis. Pp. 258-284 In *Discourse Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. 1981. The Order of Discourse. In: *Untying the Text. Post-structuralist Reader*. London: Routledge.

<http://jrdsjournal.wixsite.com/humanities-cultural>

- Foucault, M. 1999. *The History of Sexuality. I.* New York: Pantheon Books .
- Gee, J. P. 2005. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis. Theory and Method.* London: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. 2008. *Social Linguistics and Literacies. Ideology in Discourses.* London: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. 2011. *How to do Discourse Analysis. A Toolkit.* London: Routledge.
- Herzfeld, M. 1993. *Social Production of Indifference.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Iedema, R. 2003. *Discourses of Post-Bureaucratic Organization.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V.
- Keller, J. 2007. *Sociologie byrokracie a organizace.* Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství.
- Keller, J. 2013. *Posvícení bezdomovc .* Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství.
- Lipsky, M. 1969. *Toward A Theory of Street Level Bureaucracy.* Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- Lipsky, M. 1980. *Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services.* New York: The Russell Sage Foundation.
- Merton R. K., 1957. *Social Theory and Social Structure.* Glencoe: Free Press.
- Musil, L. 2004. "Ráda bych Vám pomohla, ale ..." *Dilemata práce s klienty v organizacích.* Brno: Marek Zeman.
- Sirovatka, T. et al. 2003. *Hodnocení program aktivní politiky zam stnanosti na lokálním trhu práce.* Praha: VÚPSV.
- van der Laan, C. 1990. *Legitimatieproblemen in het maatschappelijk werk.* Utrecht. SWP.

#### **AUTHOR'S PROFILE**

*Martin Brezina is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Ostrava, the Czech Republic. He works as a teacher at Komensky College in Ostrava. He also participated in research at the University of Ostrava, Faculty of Social Studies. His research and teaching interests include employment policy, social integration and research in social policy and social work.*