Retraining & Activating the ‘Distant Unemployed’: New Roles and Measures for Locally Based ALMPs

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Dr Micheál Collins
NERI (Nevin Economic Research Institute)
Dublin
mcollins@NERInstitute.net
@MLGCollins

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1. Introduction

- Unemployment and long-term unemployment the greatest scar of the recent recession
- In Ireland:
  - solve most other crisis issues but this will remain
  - defining public policy issue of next decade
  - 4% to 14% unemployment rate
  - LTU now 58% of unemployed
  - care to give focus to those most distant from returning to the labour market
  - relevant to considerations of Community Employment programme

2. Context

Figure 1: Ireland’s U-Shaped Unemployment Curve, 1980-2012
3. Activation Policies

- 85,000 Job Placement and Work Experience places
- Government shift to ‘activation’
- A focus on output measures of ALMPs
  - throughout, placements/employment etc
  - short-term expenditure and outcomes
  - danger of biasing response away from those most distant from the labour market
- Policy needs to be formed in context of reality of the unemployment crisis, its composition and likely duration
- Care not to only activate ‘the easiest to activate’
4. Restructuring CE

- Much critique of the Community Employment (CE) intervention, such as:
  - focused on progression to employment/activation only
  - ignores ‘dual role’
  - lost its way…yes, a case for reform
  - high-cost…but ignores direct benefits, let alone indirect
  - less success…but given participants etc
Reforming CE

- Retain the dual role, but formalise this
- Two streams:

  (i) *Specific Skill (Re)Training focused on the LT Unemployed*

  (ii) *The Provision of Local Services*

  - Focused on future areas of employment growth e.g. personal services
  - Delivered in supported learning and work environment...mentored by qualified CE supervisor
  - Delivered using Individual Learning Plan
  - Linked to formal qualifications (FETAC etc)...moving from levels 1-3 to levels 4-5 on NQF
  - Time limit on participants involvement...set reflecting time required for formal qualification and relevant work experience
(ii) The Provision of Local Services

- A mixture of service provision and some developmental aspects
- Local services as determined by local hosts
- Regular project reviews by DSP; projects not indefinite
- Some formal training and skills enhancement, designed within Individual Learning Plan
- Time limit on participants involvement

- Distribution of CE places across these a matter for policy
- Retain voluntary aspect of participation
- But, this requires some form of mandatory ALMP scheme(s)
- Support for CE providers
  - not realistic to assume absorb within existing resources
  - certainly not when large in size relative to host
  - danger is shortage of CE hosts not participants
- More comprehensive evaluation approach needed
5. Evaluating CE

- Some points, rather than solutions…

- If restructured both streams need to be looked at in different ways
- Usual ALMP metrics are not appropriate
- Evaluating the effectiveness of CEs meeting its objectives which are multiple…

• **Stream 1**
  - like other ALMPs
  - but, note the composition of participants
  - varying skill requirements and training objectives
  - varying durations etc
  - services as well as training; + other intangible benefits

• **Stream 2**
  - capturing services + training + developmental aspects + other intangible benefits
  - interesting example on RSS evaluation
  - but, challenging to do this (these)