

VT students, assessing the effectiveness of such policies in filling the employment gap experienced by disadvantaged groups.

All VT courses in the sample ended in 2011, providing a consistent learning plan and final exam. The representative sample survey is performed by CATI methodology on individuals extracted from monitoring and administrative data, following the main national and EU guidelines (ISFOL, 2003). The goal is an evaluation of placement outcomes of VT students by analysing their professional position about one year later the completion of the course (Oct. 2012). In particular, personal characteristics possibly influencing the employment levels are taken into account.

The most innovative aspect of the work is the net impact evaluation, which is usually neglected in practical applications due to many theoretical and methodological issues concerning the *ex post* identification of a proper comparison group. This goal clearly guided the whole design, since it allows a clear understanding of the main programme effects and helps avoiding the so-called dead-weight loss, i.e. the resource loss experienced whenever subsidizing targets which would be anyway satisfied (Sestito, 2002; Martini *et al.*, 2009).

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis is performed on a representative sample of VT students completing their course in 2011. Regione Piemonte financed the policy by means of ESF resources within the “Unemployed –

Labour Market” directive (MdL)⁴. In order to evaluate the net effects, all selected courses issue some certificate (either professional qualification or specialization) and they are mostly address to unemployed people. For the sake of generality, no specific highly disadvantaged group is addressed (e.g. detainees or disabled persons).

In quasi-experimental net impact evaluation, the identification of a proper target (i.e. the treated population) is particularly awkward, since an highly homogeneous control group is needed, which has to be selected *ex-post*. Moreover, in both samples an adequate numerosness is needed in order to guarantee statistical significance.

3.1 The target population

The target population collects all students, who attended the courses and got the final certificate. In order to evaluate the net impact, the analysis is restricted to those individuals who were not employed at registration, hence focusing on policies aimed at recovering the employment gap of weak targets, rather than on policies devoted to human capital accumulation. This choice allows a more appropriate evaluation of Italian VT policies, whose historical mission concerns the recovering of the disadvantaged.

Since the target population has been extracted from monitoring and administrative databases, a careful pre-processing is needed to avoid records either duplicate or missing

⁴ In particular, the courses pertained the four actions: FOR - III.G.06.04 (qualification for unemployed foreigners); BAS - IV.I.12.01 (basic knowledge qualification for low-school-attendance adults); SPE - IV.I.12.02 (specialization and brief refresher courses); PDS - II.E.12.01 (post-qualification, post-diploma, post-degree specialization courses).