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Escalator, carousel, or ghost train? The intended and unintended consequences of activation measures for long-term unemployed youth

Active labour market policy measures are key interventions for employment promotion, and young people have been one of the main target groups of these measures. Nevertheless, there are currently only a few studies available on the positive and negative consequences of activation for young people at particular risk of exclusion. This article examines this elusive problem using interview data from long-term unemployed youth. The aim of the study is to explore the intended and unintended consequences of active labour market policy measures as perceived by long-term unemployed young people. The dataset includes 28 life course interviews with long-term unemployed young people. The data have been analysed using thematic narrative analysis, and Anthony Giddens' structuration theory is used as a theoretical framework for interpreting the results. In the analysis, the young people's experiences are summarised into three story types: the activation escalator, the carousel, and the ghost train. These story types describe the different consequences of activation from the perspective of long-term unemployed young people. The research shows that activation can help young people break the vicious circle of unemployment, but there are also considerable risks associated with participation in active labour market policy measures.

Keywords: activation, unemployment, long-term unemployment, active labour market policy measures