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## METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF LABOUR MARKET RESEARCH BASED ON THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY IN POLAND

**ABSTRACT.** The paper focuses on methodological aspects of labour market research on the basis of Labour Force Survey (LFS) in Poland. The analysis shows that methodology covers both the subject of research (the scope of research as well as aspects of researched reality) and applied scientific methods. Scientific methods should be adjusted to the scope of research and the aim of research. Labour Force Survey conducted in Poland since 1992 constitutes an important source of information about labour market. It enables to conduct research on labour demand, labour supply, structural imbalances and, moreover, on basic relationships which exist on labour market. Knowledge of basic labour market theories facilitates such research. Mathematical approach and quantitative methods, especially econometric methods, are of great importance for explanation of relationships existing on labour market (thus, when research is conducted within the scope of positive economics); nevertheless, they are insufficient when labour market research is conducted within the scope of normative economics or economics as art.

**Key words:** methodology of labour market research, labour force survey in Poland, labour market theories.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Methodology is an immanent feature of all scientific research. Appropriately applied methodology facilitates fulfilment of functions and tasks in scientific research. Incorrect applying of methodology or underestimation of its significance is harmful to results of scientific research.

The main goal of the paper is to emphasise the significance of methodology in labour market research. Therefore, the paper draws attention to a few important methodological aspects of labour market research and discusses them. Analyses of labour market on the basis of Labour Force Survey (LFS) in Poland constitute the scope of considerations.

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The paper begins with the question 'What is methodology?' (part 2). Subsequently, an attempt is made to define what can be researched on the basis of Labour Force Survey (part 3). Part 4 focuses on ideas of economic theories which are significant for labour market research. Part 5 is devoted to a discussion on scientific methods and approaches dominant in labour market research. Part 6 presents relevant conclusions.

## II. WHAT IS METHODOLOGY?

The very term 'methodology' is commonly used in scientific research due to the fact that each scientific research is based on a methodology. While analysing a research problem, researchers sometimes try to define applied methodology openly. Nevertheless, in most cases methodology applied by researchers is not precisely defined. In such situations, for those interested in methodology, detailed analysis of the whole research process is indispensable to define methodology applied in research.

Methodology is undoubtedly an immanent feature of each scientific research. It is also evident that applied methodology can be assessed. However, doubts arise with the very interpretation of the term 'methodology'. Diversified understanding of methodology frequently becomes the source of misunderstanding as far as methodological issues are concerned.

Various definitions of methodology can be encountered in literature.

Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN (General Encyclopaedia by PWN) draws attention to the twofold understanding of methodology. Firstly, methodology is defined as a science about applied research procedures and methods of research activity. Secondly, methodology is treated on a wider scale as a science which deals with elements and structure of research systems (Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN 1975:97).

In Wikipedia one can come across three definitions of methodology. Firstly, methodology is defined as a set of methods, rules and postulates characteristic of a particular discipline. Secondly, it is presented as a special procedure or a set of procedures applied in research. Thirdly, it is defined as an analysis of principles or research procedures in a field of science (Methodology, Wikipedia 2006).

Mark Blaug, a prominent modern methodologist among economists, draws attention to the fact that methodology is frequently understood as technical procedures of acting in a branch of science (Blaug 1995:13). However, in his opinion, such comprehension of methodology is too narrow and more adequate for the term 'method'. According to Blaug, methodology should be comprehended more broadly. Methodology of economics is merely philosophy of science applied to economics (Blaug 1995:13), research on ideas, theories and basic prin-

principles of thinking about a subject (Blaug 1995:13), an analysis of the ways with which economists can prove theories and arguments to which they refer (Blaug 1995:19).

Moreover, Blaug draws attention to an important aspect concerning applying methodology in scientific research. In his opinion, methodology does not provide any mechanical algorithm, which would allow to form or justify particular theories, and as such it resembles more 'art' than 'science' (Blaug 1995:20). Thus, although Blaug appreciates practical significance of methodology for scientific research, still he simultaneously underlines an important role of a researcher and originality of his/her approach towards formulation and verification of theories. Drawing attention to the fact that methodology is more art than a science is a way of expressing an opinion that the role of individual researcher's approach towards creation of research process is enormously significant.

In the following considerations I use wider interpretation of the term 'methodology' which assumes that methodology of economics deals not only with scientific methods applied in this field, but also with an analysis of phenomena researched by economists, thus, an analysis of the scope of economic research (see Godłów-Legiędź 2006). In that case, questions arise: 'What aspects of reality are of interest to economics and what is the reality researched by economists?' (an ontological question), and 'What research problems are within the scope of economists' attention?' Such wider concept of methodology does not diminish the role which is played by analyses of applied scientific methods in methodological considerations. An epistemological question 'How do we know? How do we acquire knowledge of reality?' has been within the scope of methodological attention for a long time. The question concerns methodological methods applied to observe reality as well as those applied to formulate and verify theories. The aim of the approach is to find out whether methods of analysis are relevant, and in particular, whether they contribute to better understanding of researched reality and solving practical research problems.

### **III. LABOUR FORCE SURVEY AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION ABOUT LABOUR MARKET**

The above remarks prove that methodology cannot ignore questions: 'What should be researched?' and 'How to research?' Therefore, while undertaking analyses based on labour force surveys, first one has to determine what kind of information he/she can acquire on the basis of the survey. This information influences, to a great extent, what can be researched and how to conduct such research.

Labour Force Survey is the main source of information about labour market. Other important sources of information involve: general censuses, statistical reports from enterprises, registers of labour offices and other institutions (e.g. Social Insurance Institution, revenue boards and ministries), occasional monographic research and special questionnaire surveys focused on selected problems (see Makać 1996:14–18). In fact, it seems that Labour Force Survey based on questionnaires is, in many respects, even a better source of information about labour market than the other sources. Regardless of evaluation of the sources mentioned above, one can state that they altogether form a relatively modern and complex information system about labour market.

Labour Force Survey, conducted in Poland since May 1992, is characterised by a few significant characteristics which make this information source a valuable one (Witkowski 1992). Firstly, this is a nationwide survey, which means that its results are, above all, generalised for the entire country. Secondly, the survey is representative. Sampling units are chosen randomly so that survey's results can be generalised for the entire population. Thirdly, the survey is conducted in households, which means that information about economic activity of population is collected in randomly chosen households among individuals aged 15 or more. Fourthly, the survey is conducted on a quarterly basis (every three months). It should be observed that the survey had taken into account one selected week of the middle month of a quarter till the third quarter 1999. However, the method of observation has been changed for a continuous one since the fourth quarter 1999. In fact, 1/13 part of a quarter sample is surveyed in each of 13 weeks of a quarter. That change is of great significance for interpretation of survey's results. Thanks to a new method, survey's results show the situation on labour market throughout the entire quarter. Fifthly, the survey is panel, which means that it is repeated in the same sample of households throughout a certain period of time (one year). First four surveys (in May, August and November 1992 as well as February 1993) were pure panel, which means that they covered the same households. Since May 1993 surveys have been based on rotation in which an elementary sample of households is used in a survey throughout two subsequent quarters, then left out for two following ones and finally used again throughout the next two subsequent quarters. Panel character of the survey is of great significance for analysing labour force turnover. Sixthly, the survey concerns current economic activity of population, which means that evaluation of the situation on labour market is conducted on the basis of determining the status of individuals surveyed in the reference week. Seventhly, the survey is comparable with similar surveys conducted in other countries because of similar definitions of basic categories applied in compliance with recommendations of the International Labour Office (ILO).

Labour Force Survey allows to distinguish three categories of population: employed, unemployed and inactive. As a matter of fact, the fourth category of population is also distinguished, namely economically active. The term refers to a group of both employed and unemployed. Definitions used in the above specification are in compliance with recommendations of the ILO. Having separated the group of employed and unemployed (i.e. economically active), one comes across the category of inactive which comprises of the rest of population.

Adopted definitions determine the character of division of the surveyed population into excluding categories of employed, unemployed and inactive. This is a significant characteristic from the point of view of structural comparison of these groups. The advantage of the survey is that similar information concerning demographic, social and occupational characteristics is collected in respect to all mentioned categories of population. A set of characteristics of persons taken into account in the survey involves: sex, age, marital status, place of residence, level of education and occupation. Such uniform approach towards collection of information about characteristics of persons allows not only to compare structures of the three categories of population mentioned above but also to examine the incidence of selected phenomena such as, for example, the incidence of unemployment on the basis of unemployment rate.

Apart from demographic and socio-occupational information about persons, additional information about the surveyed categories of population is collected. The category of employed is divided into employers, own-account workers, employees and voluntary workers who are family members. In addition, the survey takes into account information about: the main and extra work-place, regular work, casual employment, full-time and part-time employment as well as ownership sector and place of work according to NACE classification.

As far as unemployed persons are concerned, one distinguishes four categories: (1) those who have lost their jobs, (2) those who have quitted their jobs, (3) those who are coming back to work after at least a three-month break and (4) those who have never been employed and are looking for the first job.

It is for persons previously unemployed that information about employment status, ownership of the last work-place, profession, job position, section of NACE they last worked at and length of service is collected.

A special role in research on unemployed persons is attributed to behaviour of the unemployed on labour market. That behaviour is characterised by duration of job search, methods of job search and occupational expectations of the unemployed (Makać 1996:65). Duration of job search is significant because it indirectly defines chances of the unemployed on labour market. It enables to distinguish the group of long-term unemployed (unemployed for more than 12 months). Experiments show that long-term unemployed persons have definitely fewer chances of finding a job than the unemployed with a shorter period of job

search (employers unwillingly employ long-term unemployed persons because of the depreciation of their human capital). Information about methods of job search (by means of labour offices, advertisements for employment or direct contact with working place) is also collected for the unemployed. These inquiries allow to collect information about the intensity of job search in the group of unemployed. Moreover, the survey collects information about job expectations of unemployed persons. Attempts to define these expectations are undertaken by means of inquiries concerning tendencies of the unemployed to change their place of residence, occupation and qualifications as well as their wage reservations.

Summing up, one has to admit that data collected in Labour Force Survey are immensely rich. LFS provides not only sufficiently long time-series data (quarterly data since 1992) on employed, unemployed and inactive in global, but also in disaggregated perspective, i.e. in the form of time-series data focusing on a cross-section of these variables. Moreover, observation of numerous characteristics of individuals leads to obtaining in LFS detailed structures of employed, unemployed and inactive, not to mention the ability of combining two characteristics in an analysis for a more detailed structural description of a group. Additionally, the survey enables to analyse the intensity of some phenomena on the basis of the analysis of activity rates, employment rates and unemployment rates not only in global terms but also in a cross-section of population.

Labour Force Survey allows to specify groups of employed, unemployed and inactive. A surveyed individual can be assigned only to one of these groups in a particular reference period. The panel character of LFS enables collecting information about flows of persons between the groups of employed, unemployed and inactive which take place in between the reference periods. Such information can be obtained not only in respect to global volumes of particular flows of persons but also in respect to narrower groups, disaggregated on the basis of demographic and socio-occupational characteristics. Moreover, this information can constitute either relative or absolute data, the latter describing volumes of particular flows. One can calculate transition rates as the ratio of the volume of flow of persons to the volume of stock of persons from which the very flow of persons originates. In such a way, rich transition data relevant for analyses of labour market are collected.

Transition analyses conducted on the basis of LFS data can be used in a series of important labour market research. Let me focus attention on some of them.

Firstly, the survey can be used to analyse position of persons on labour market. Chances of job finding and probability of job loss can be estimated on the basis of transition rates of particular groups (it should be noted that transition rates can be interpreted in terms of transition probabilities). Thus, one can iden-

tify so called problem groups, i.e. the most endangered on labour market, which is of great significance for labour market policies and especially for addressing active labour market programmes.

Secondly, knowledge of volumes of flows allows to assess the nature of unemployment more precisely. One can look at unemployment as a stock dependent on inflows and outflows of unemployed persons. In other words, one can treat unemployment as a stock dependent on unemployment inflows as well as on average duration of unemployment. Such approach enables to determine the character of unemployment. It can be either stagnant (the result of relatively low inflows and long duration of unemployment) or dynamic (the result of relatively high inflows and short duration of unemployment). Distinction between stagnant and dynamic unemployment is significant for labour market policy, since it enables to define more effective measures which should be taken by the state to reduce unemployment.

Thirdly, knowledge of volumes of flows on labour market and, especially, knowledge of transition rates between employed, unemployed and inactive can be used for estimation of so called equilibrium unemployment, i.e. unemployment independent of economic fluctuations but related to frictions and structural imbalances on labour market. One of methods of estimation of such unemployment is a method based on research of dynamic labour force flows between employed, unemployed and inactive in conditions of steady state (see Marston 1976:172). Estimation of equilibrium unemployment is significant for macroeconomic policy, since it leads to better evaluation of purposefulness of applying that policy in reduction of unemployment.

So far transition analyses of labour market based on LFS data have been rarely presented in CSO's reports. Therefore, such analyses require access to individual LFS data, which constitutes a problem for an individual researcher. The next problem connected with transition analyses is related to generalisation of results for the entire population. Rotation of particular samples of households, which participate in the survey, causes that in each reference quarter only two out of four samples are surveyed in subsequent quarters. Thus, only two out of four samples are the source of information about flows of persons. That leads to reduction of the whole surveyed sample. As a result, a question arises: 'To what degree is generalisation of results for the entire population justified?' It seems that such generalisation can be justified in relation to global transition, however, it arouses doubts as far as a very detailed cross-section of persons is concerned.

A similar problem connected with the problem of generalisation of survey's results is related to regional approach. Generalisation of results for population of 49 particular voivodeships was impossible in the old administrative division of Poland (see Makać 1996:60). Nowadays, in the face of new division of Poland into 16 voivodeships, generalisation of results for voivodeships is made only in

relation to some selected global indicators such as unemployment rate, activity rate or employment rate.

Summing up that part of the paper, it is worth coming back to the question asked at the beginning of the paper, namely 'What can be researched by means of LFS data?' If one assumes that the situation on labour market is dependent on three groups of factors, i.e. labour supply factors, labour demand factors and structural imbalances, it can be stated that research based on LFS data concerning all these three factors are possible, however, in a different range and to a different degree.

As far as labour supply is concerned, one can conduct research concerning tendencies of development of labour supply in time (on the basis of data on economically active persons) and structures of labour supply taking into consideration demographic and socio-occupational characteristics. Determinants of labour supply can be also analysed, to a certain degree, in reference to population (determined demographically) and activity rates.

As far as labour demand is concerned, one can conduct research on the basis of LFS data on an important part of labour demand concerning employed persons. LFS data do not contain any data on the other part of labour demand, i.e. on vacancies. On the basis of data on employment one can examine tendencies of changes in labour demand in time and the structure of labour demand broken up by socio-economic characteristics of persons and other additional criteria. Research on determinants of labour demand based on LFS data are hardly possible because LFS does not provide information about characteristics which are considered to be basic in this scope. Therefore, analyses of determinants of labour demand have to be supplemented with additional data coming from other sources concerning especially real wages, labour productivity and production.

As far as unemployment is concerned, one can examine firstly, on the basis of LFS data, tendencies of development of unemployment both in global terms and in terms of a cross-section of categories. Secondly, one can conduct very detailed research on structure of unemployment in reference to numerous characteristics. Thirdly, one can examine problem groups on labour market using data on unemployment rates and transition rates broken up by a series of categories of persons. Fourthly, research on stagnant and dynamic character of unemployment can be conducted on the basis of data on labour force flows and average duration of unemployment. Fifthly, individual data on transition rates allow to estimate levels of equilibrium unemployment.

Analyses of structural imbalances constitute one of important trends in labour market research. The analyses are usually based on comparison of the structure of unemployment and the structure of vacancies broken up by various categories, especially by skills, occupational and spatial characteristics. Although analyses of vacancies cannot be conducted because of the lack of LFS



data concerning vacancies, still some analyses of structural imbalances can be undertaken, especially those based on differentiation of unemployment rates broken up by various labour force groups.

#### IV. SELECTED IDEAS OF LABOUR MARKET THEORIES

Most economists claim that economics should be an empirical science in the sense that formulated economic theories ought to originate from the observed reality and, furthermore, constantly confront it. The same should concern labour market economics. On the one hand, hypotheses, theoretical generalisations and labour market theory can be formulated on the basis of statistical data coming from LFS; on the other hand, they can be empirically verified with the use of LFS data. In both cases knowledge of past theoretical scientific achievements is indispensable.

Theoretical achievements of economics in the field of labour market research are enormous. It is impossible to present them in such a short paper. It is also impossible to present in details the very theoretical achievements related to scientific problems researched by the LFS. Thus, considerations will be limited merely to underlining selected theoretical ideas of existing labour market theories which are relevant to the analysis of scientific problems mentioned above.

As far as labour supply is concerned, traditional neoclassical theory of Marshall and Pigou is worth mentioning, since it treats labour supply in terms of rational behaviour of individuals (see Marshall 1892:527, Pigou 1933:252). Marshall and Pigou introduced measures of labour supply in the form of a number of individuals ready to work and a number of working hours, thus, laying foundations for labour force considerations. They also emphasised the influence of wages on labour supply taking into account the existence of substitute and income effects of wage increase.

As far as analyses of labour demand are concerned, a few theoretical approaches are worth mentioning, especially neoclassical and Keynes's theories as well as Keynesian models of growth.

According to a traditional neoclassical approach (see Kwiatkowski, Tokarski 1999: 441-454), the ratio of real wages to a marginal product of labour plays an important role in the formation of labour demand. Assuming that the law of diminishing returns operates, neoclassicals identify labour demand as a decreasing function of real wages and an increasing function of a marginal product of labour. Difficulties connected with describing a marginal product of labour frequently influence labour productivity which is treated in literature as one of variables defining labour demand.

Keynes's approach towards labour demand was not unanimous. Keynes could not completely divert his attention away from the neoclassical approach, however, he understood it in a little different way than neoclassicals. Studying Keynes, one can come across an original approach based on macroeconomic perspective in which labour demand is dependent on the scale of economic production, which is determined by demand for goods (Keynes 1985:51–52).

Considering determinants of labour demand, one should mention Keynesian models of economic growth. For example, Harrod's model shows that labour productivity growth and the rate of production growth play an important role in employment increase provided that one rejects exogenous character of the employment increase.

While analysing unemployment, it is advisable to use extensive theoretical achievements which exceed traditional neoclassical and Keynesian approach.

Theory of search on labour market is worth mentioning here because of its significance for explanation of equilibrium unemployment and, especially, frictional unemployment. One of important statements of this theory is that there exists certain unemployment connected with job search in market economy. This unemployment results from rational decisions of the unemployed. The theory claims that job-seekers follow rationality, evaluate search costs and search benefits and look for a job as long as search benefits exceed search costs. Such approach stimulates further research of factors which influence search costs and search benefits. These are factors such as: generosity of a system of unemployment benefits, social policy of a state, qualifications and wage reservations of unemployed persons (see Kwiatkowski 2006:155–172).

Phelps and Friedman's theory of natural unemployment rate plays an important role in the analysis of equilibrium unemployment (Friedman 1968, Phelps 1967). Unemployment in their theory is not sensitive to economic fluctuations; however, it is characteristic of the equilibrium in the labour market but the one different from the perfectly competitive market. According to them, natural unemployment is characteristic of labour market with incomplete data, imperfect labour force mobility, information costs, etc.

The idea of natural unemployment rate was also developed in Keynesian theory; it was called NAIRU theory of unemployment (Layard 1986:29–65). This theory is interesting from our point of view, since it emphasises factors which influence the volume of equilibrium unemployment. These are mainly factors such as: level of structural imbalances on labour market broken up by skills, occupational and spatial criteria, level of labour force mobility, intensity of job search, a role of long-term unemployment, generosity of unemployment benefits, level of employment protection, strong position of labour unions and insiders as well as level of labour productivity.

Both the theory of natural unemployment rate and the NAIRU theory of unemployment assumed that equilibrium unemployment was not sensitive to economic fluctuations or changes in demand for goods. This idea was rejected in theories of unemployment hysteresis (see Snowdon, Vane, Wynarczyk 1998:341 and next). The theories emphasised mechanisms by means of which level of equilibrium unemployment was increased as a result of negative demand shocks. Special attention was paid to such factors like: a role of long-term unemployment, strong position of labour unions, a role of insiders and depreciation of human and physical capital.

Theory of human capital is also worth mentioning. It emphasises the importance of human capital in individuals' position on labour market. The increase in human capital improves individuals' position; it increases chances of job finding and decreases probability of job loss. The theory also emphasises the fact that human capital can undergo depreciation, which has a negative effect on persons' position on labour market (Becker 1975:95-116).

As it has been previously emphasised, theoretical achievements in the field of labour market economics are enormous, therefore, it is difficult to present them here more extensively. While undertaking labour market research, including empirical analyses, it is important to get acquainted with theoretical achievements and take full advantage of them, which should facilitate research.

## V. DISCUSSION ON SCIENTIFIC METHODS AND APPROACHES

Now, I would like to present a few observations and reflections concerning scientific methods and approaches applied both in economics and in labour market economics. It is not my intention to present these observations here in a more detailed way. Nevertheless, I would like to draw attention to an existing tendency in regard to applied scientific methods and approaches, and share my reflections and reservations which arise from existence of this tendency.

If one looks at labour market economics from a wider historical perspective, i.e. from the perspective of the latest half a century, one can notice a tendency to formalise economics as a science. The tendency is revealed in:

- mathematical approach towards economic analyses;
- development of abstract theories, where the most important role is played by assumptions which are often unrealistic and by conclusions drawn logically from such assumptions, and where rigour of deductive thinking is significant;
- development of econometric methods of verification of hypotheses and theories.

If we take into consideration the theory of job search, the NAIRU theory of unemployment, so called matching function, and various models of labour

demand, one can easily notice a strongly formalised approach. In order to present them, one uses mathematical jargon instead of an easy language of natural description; whereas in order to verify them empirically, one uses sophisticated econometric methods instead of empirical methods of common sense or even simple methods of statistical analysis.

A question arises: 'How should one evaluate the existing tendency?'

I would like to emphasise the fact that labour market economics profits from this tendency. Firstly, the tendency helps to explain behaviour of individuals on labour market more clearly. Secondly, it allows to explain relationships existing on labour market, which develops knowledge on functioning of labour market. Thirdly, the tendency enables to verify statements and hypotheses empirically. Fourthly, it helps to predict the situation on labour market. On the whole, it can be stated that the tendency facilitates progress in scientific comprehension of labour market.

Although the tendency towards formalisation of labour market analyses brings about numerous benefits, still it arouses some reservations.

Firstly, the tendency frequently leads to groundless limitation of the scope of research. There exists a tendency among researchers to select scientific material, to choose such material and aspects of reality for research which are easily measured and described by language of mathematics. Qualitative empirical proofs and elements of examined reality are frequently omitted. Due to the fact that economics is a social science, such kind of limitation of the scope of research ignores factors important for economic analyses which refer to social dimension of economic research.

Secondly, the tendency towards formalisation of labour market analyses does not cooperate well with some kinds of economic research. Formalistic approach is important and economic analyses in the field of positive economics profit from it enormously. Nevertheless, this approach is limited in the case of economics understood as a normative science or art (see Colander 2001:19–61). In such circumstances, while considering goals of labour market policy as well as ways and instruments of obtaining these goals, one should take into account, in analyses, a number of social, political and institutional factors which are not easily formalised. Methodology applied in the case of normative analyses and economic research as a art is different than in the case of positive economics. In such circumstances, approaches using language of mathematics and advanced econometric methods are not so important. Common sense considerations, scatter diagrams and simple correlation coefficients are frequently sufficient. Therefore, predomination of formalistic approach means that some areas of economic research related to normative aspects and art are either researched improperly or even omitted.

Thirdly, the tendency towards formalisation of labour market research happens to be excessive. Such situation is caused by economists' belief that applying formalistic approaches increases both prestige of research and researchers' authority (Mayer 1996:30 and next). Many researchers believe that "ideological and irrational statements cannot be expressed with the use of equations" (Mayer 1996:32). That is not true. Applying formalistic approaches does not determine whether a theory is correct or whether it can be properly verified. Nevertheless, incorrect opinions of economists on these aspects lead to excessive misuse of formalistic approach in economic research.

The aim of the above comments is not to limit formalistic approaches in labour market research. Advantages of formalistic approaches have also been presented. The comments draw attention to the fact that such approaches happen to be insufficient, especially when research is conducted in the field of normative economics or economics as a art.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The above considerations emphasise an important role of methodology in labour market research. As a matter of fact, methodology focuses one's attention on a series of questions significant from the point of view of accuracy of scientific research.

Labour Force Survey conducted in Poland since 1992 allows to conduct analyses of basic economic quantities concerning labour market (employed, unemployed and economically inactive persons) from the point of view of labour demand, labour supply as well as tendencies of development of these quantities and their structures. Both stock and flow analyses of labour market are possible. Analyses of relationships existing on labour market are also possible, however, they frequently require additional statistical data.

An important methodological question in labour market research is: 'What should be researched?' or 'What aspects of reality should be researched?' The answer to these questions depends on the aim of analysis. If explanation of labour market operation from economic perspective is the aim of analysis (thus, the aim is within the scope of positive economics), then limitation of analysis to quantitative and economic aspects is fully justified. However, if more universal explanation of labour market operation constitutes the aim of analysis, especially when goals of analysis relate to normative economics or economics as art, then non-economic aspects of reality, particularly institutional, social and political, should be taken into consideration.

Another important methodological question is: 'How to research?' or 'What scientific methods and approaches should be applied?' These questions are im-

portant for formulation and verification of theoretical hypotheses and theories. According to presented considerations, knowledge of past theories of labour market is significant for the accuracy of research. Additionally, applied scientific methods and approaches should be adjusted to the aims of analysis. Formalised approaches and econometric methods play an important and positive role in the analyses of labour market conducted within the scope of positive economics. Nevertheless, they are insufficient in labour market research conducted within the scope of normative economics or economics as art.

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**METODOLOGICZNE ASPEKTY BADAŃ RYNKU PRACY  
NA PRZYKŁADZIE BADAŃ AKTYWNOŚCI EKONOMICZNEJ LUDNOŚCI  
W POLSCE**

Przedmiotem artykułu są metodologiczne aspekty badań rynku pracy na przykładzie badań aktywności ekonomicznej ludności w Polsce. Z analizy wynika, że metodologia badań obejmuje zarówno przedmiot badań (zakres badań i rodzaj aspektów badanej rzeczywistości), jak i stosowane metody badawcze. Metody badawcze winny być dostosowane do przedmiotu i celu badań. Badania aktywności ekonomicznej ludności prowadzone w Polsce od 1992 r. są ważnym źródłem informacji o rynku pracy. Umożliwiają podejmowanie badań na temat podaży pracy, popytu na pracę, niedopasowań strukturalnych, a także podstawowych zależności występujących na rynku pracy. W badaniach tych pomocna jest znajomość głównych teorii rynku pracy. Podejście matematyczne oraz metody ilościowe, zwłaszcza ekonometryczne mają zasadnicze znaczenie dla objaśnienia zależności występujących na rynku pracy (a więc, gdy prowadzone są badania w kategoriach ekonomii pozytywnej); są one jednak niewystarczające gdy badania prowadzone są w kategoriach ekonomii normatywnej i ekonomii jako sztuki.