Professionals` view on Social Integration of Young People with Immigrant Background in the Labour Market in Sweden

Cosmos Azoba and Ange Munezero

2016

Student thesis, Bachelor degree, 15 HE
Social Work

Study Programme in Social Work, Specialisation International Social Work

Supervisor: Pia Tham
Examiner: Ted Goldberg
Abstract

The aim of this study is twofold. First, the study aims to investigate how employment agency officers, in both public and private agencies, perceive how they help young people with immigrant background to access the labour market. Secondly, the study aims to investigate these professionals’ perspectives on the possibilities and barriers faced by young people with immigrant background in their process of labour integration.

A qualitative study, with face to face semi-structured interviews was conducted with five professionals from both the public and private sector of the Swedish work agency in one municipality in mid Sweden. A social constructivist perspective and empowerment and advocacy theory were used. The results show the importance of the Swedish language and its importance to establish social contacts in the process of finding jobs and integrate. The results also show other difficulties immigrants may face in the labor market such as regulations laid by employers or recruiters as requirements such as being fluent in Swedish language. According to the professionals, the youth immigrants with educational background have an easier access to integration. With “Nystartsjobb” (new start job) the youth immigrants can build networks, increase their language knowledge, get references and experience and job benefits in case of job loss.

Keywords: Young people, unemployment, immigrant, Labour market, social integration.
Acknowledgement

We would like to show our appreciation to our supervisor Pia Tham for her constructive support and the people that participated in our interviews, the workers from both private and public job agencies in a town from mid Sweden. Our whole research and data collection would not have been possible if you all didn’t give us your time to share important and well needed information, expertise, experience, ideas and know how.

Last but not least we would like to thank our children, families and friends for their love and support they always showed to us.

Cosmos Azoba and Ange Munezero
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgement .............................................................................................................. ii

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Aim ......................................................................................................................................... 3
   1.2 Concepts ................................................................................................................................. 3
       1.2.2 Economic integration ........................................................................................................ 3
       1.2.3 Young immigrant ........................................................................................................... 4
       1.2.4 Labour market ................................................................................................................ 4
       1.2.5 Employment officers or professionals .......................................................................... 4
   1.3 Essay disposition ....................................................................................................................... 5
       Background about employment rates in Sweden ................................................................. 5

2. Previous research about young people with immigrant background in the labour market in Sweden and other countries ................................................................. 7
   2.1 Unemployment ........................................................................................................................... 7
   2.2 Social network, a need tie to obtain a job? ................................................................................ 9
   2.3 Educational qualification and language proficiency .............................................................. 11

3. Theoretical framework ..................................................................................................................... 12
   3.1 Social constructivist perspective ............................................................................................. 12
   3.2 Empowerment and advocacy theory ......................................................................................... 13
   3.3 Coupling to theory ................................................................................................................... 13
   3.4 Coupling to theory ................................................................................................................... 14

4. Methodology ................................................................................................................................... 15
   4.1 Preliminary understanding ......................................................................................................... 15
   4.2 Mode of procedure .................................................................................................................... 16
       4.2.1 Selection of literature ......................................................................................................... 17
       4.2.2 The instrument of investigation ....................................................................................... 18
   4.3 Ethical consideration .................................................................................................................. 19
   4.4 Study's limitations ..................................................................................................................... 20
   4.5 Essay credibility ......................................................................................................................... 20
   Reliability ...................................................................................................................................... 21
   Validity .......................................................................................................................................... 21

5. Results and Analysis ....................................................................................................................... 22
   Introduction of our interviewees .................................................................................................... 23
   5.1 The role played by the employment workers ......................................................................... 23
   5.2 Educational background, language proficiency and technology ........................................ 28
   5.3 Problems faced by the group of young immigrants in finding jobs or practical placements ................................ ................................ ......................................................... 31
       5.3.1 Social network of the young immigrants .......................................................................... 31
       5.3.2 Gender, culture, ethnicity, nationality .............................................................................. 32
       5.3.3 Health and mental conditions among young immigrants .................................................. 35
   5.4 Summary ................................................................................................................................... 37
       5.4.1 More resources and focus should be put on this group of people .................................. 37
6. Discussion ........................................................................................................... 38
7. Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 40

References .................................................................................................................. 41
Literature ..................................................................................................................... 41

Appendices .................................................................................................................. 47
Appendix 1 .................................................................................................................. 47
Letter of information ................................................................................................... 47
Appendix 2 .................................................................................................................. 48
Chart of interviewees .................................................................................................... 48
Appendix 3 .................................................................................................................. 48
Interview Guide ........................................................................................................... 48
Background questions ................................................................................................. 48
1. Introduction

Many people are coming to Sweden from interminable wars and social injustices in their respective countries. Upon arriving in Sweden they have hope of starting a new life in peace. But, during their process of integration in the Swedish society, they do often face a lot of other problems, such as; language barrier, difficulty for accommodation, familiarization with a new neighborhood, governmental rules and regulations, finding jobs, integration, segregation, and so on (Wuokko, 2000).

Finding work in Sweden has become a very big challenge to many young people of immigrant background (Tovatt, 2011). Tovatt states that the Swedish labour market is characterized by unequal conditions and the social and financial exclusion of people with foreign backgrounds and young people. Unemployment is higher for immigrants, and this group is also overrepresented in segments with a high percentage of low-skilled jobs (ibid, p. 6). This group of people represents a large group of immigrants; some of them have past work experience from their respective home countries, while some of them do not. But no matter how, entering into the new labour market in Sweden is not always easy, it is a gradual process faced with various structural barriers e.g. lack of previous work experience in the host country, language skills, vocational education, gender, low quality jobs, etc. (Malmberg-Heimonen & Julkunen, 2006).

In national and international comparative studies on labor market from Netherlands, Belgium, France, UK and Sweden, statistics reveal that unemployment rates among non-Western immigrant population and ethnic minorities are higher than among the native population in most EU member states, (Wrench et al., 2010). Immigrants are the most highly unemployed or in low paying jobs in Sweden it showed (ibid, p. 29). Field experiments which were conducted by the International Labor Organization in Spain, Netherlands, Belgium and Germany in the 1990s and recently in Italy, France and Sweden revealed that, even though there are contextual differences between these countries regarding the labor market, policies, methods of job searching, the results indicate clear evidence for discrimination found in all countries. During job application the foreign-named applicants were often rejected directly, the exclusion of applicants was the applicants’ foreign name seen in immigrant background names (Wrench et al., 2010).

According to the latest statistics from Swedish statistics agency (scb, 2015), there is a 70% increase in unemployment rate of the young immigrants over the years from the
ages of 15-24 years, even if this group has a high potential of joining the labour market in comparison to the Swedish youth, it also shows how difficult it is for the youth with immigrant background to secure jobs. These statistics give a better understanding as to why we choose to put our focus in this study, i.e. investigating how employment officers in a town in mid Sweden perceive how they help young people with immigrant background to access the labour market. This statistics is evident discovery of the difficulty young people face in labor market competition in Sweden and mostly the group of young immigrants (scb, 2015).

First, some negative consequences have been reported about long-term unemployed immigrant youth particularly in Sweden where they face greater risk of mental health problems (Malmberg-Heiman & Julkunen, 2006). Secondly, the same studies show that young people with immigrant background than other inhabitants is a group that shows a high tendency of delinquency like criminality, robbery or a high rate of drug/substance abuse. If they are unemployed or unoccupied in different activities, Malmberg-Heiman & Julkunen (2006) allege this can eventually result in heavy consequences risking criminality as Malmberg-Heiman & Julkunen (2006) and Eriksson (2013) claim if that is one reason. For this reason these groups of young people with immigrant background should not be left out in the labor market (Malmberg-Heiman & Julkunen, 2006; Eriksson, 2013).

Our study will focus on three job agencies of which the national employment office in Sweden is part of. Besides the national employment office, two other private owned job agencies are included as they cooperate in finding jobs for the young immigrants in need of jobs.

The national employment office is the state job agency and authority in Sweden responsible for connecting unemployed people in need of jobs to the available jobs. However, in Sweden there are also some private owned agencies that engage in the service of helping unemployed to find jobs. The reason why we focus on these agencies is because they represent the first stop when it comes to finding jobs in Sweden; they are experts in their profession and play a very important role in opening doors for the young immigrants and helping them to find jobs. Thus, the main focus of this study would be to investigate how employment officers both in the private and the public sector perceive how they help this group of young people with immigrant background to join the labour market in order to become independent and function well; to actively contribute to the society.
1.1. Aim

The aim of this study is twofold. First, the study aims to investigate how employment agency officers, in both public and private agencies, perceive how they help young people with immigrant background to access the labour market. Secondly, the study aims to investigate these professionals’ perspectives on the possibilities and barriers faced by young people with immigrant background in their process of labour integration.

The research questions that guided us to fulfill this study are:

- How do the interviewed employment officers describe their roles in helping young people with immigrant background to secure jobs or internship?
- What are the possibilities and barriers faced by young people with immigrant background during the integration into the labour market from these professionals’ point of view?
- How do the concepts of culture, ethnicity, gender and the condition of being immigrant seem to influence young people with foreign background in their process of integration into the Swedish labour market, from these professionals’ point of view and experience?

1.2 Concepts

1.2.1 Social integration

The extent to which immigrants engage in social interaction with natives can be labeled social integration. Social integration is just one of the aspects of immigrant integration next to structural and cultural ones, which respectively refer to the incorporation of immigrants in the job market and the adoption of values and customs of the receiving society (Martinovic et al., 2009).

1.2.2 Economic integration
Economic integration means the grading of economic equivalence between immigrants and native communities according to Van Tubergen (2006). The higher participation in economic rates, the lower unemployment intensities, better jobs and higher incomes still are the strongest determinants of a strong economic integration for immigrants (Van Tubergen, 2006).

1.2.3 Young immigrant

A young immigrant is anyone who has attained adulthood and one who moves to another country to resettle and or live there on a permanent basis or a long period of time one that has not reached retirement age and is searching for employment. There have been arguments that there is no perfect definition that describes or explains this term, because there are many different reasons why people move to resettle somewhere else. Some of the reasons might include the effects of globalization, people who move because of their jobs, wars, poverty, famine, better life, political reasons and many more (United Nations, 2012c).

In this thesis context, a young immigrant is someone between the ages of 15-24, with a foreign background that has moved to Sweden for the purpose of living here for a long period of time. In order to fulfill all the above mentioned categories, some processes have to be followed and some authorities like the Migrations board and the Tax agency have to be contacted (United Nations, 2012c).

1.2.4 Labor market

Labour market is when services, workforce and expertise are being demanded and supplied, in other words being sold and bought (scb, 2015). In this research study, our focus is mainly about the labour market in Sweden.

1.2.5 Employment officers or professionals

Employment officers or professionals in this study are the people from public or private job agencies working with young people with immigrant background in the process of finding a job or an internship placement.
1.3. Essay disposition

In the beginning of this study, an introduction of the field of research chosen is presented and followed by the aim and research questions. Thereafter the important concepts used in our thesis are explained followed by the previous research to highlight this study and to give a better understanding of it. In the third chapter, a qualitative approach is used as a method of study. The social constructivist theory together with the empowerment and advocacy theory were used to give meaning to the findings. In chapter four, the methodology was described in detail; this part explains the method chosen and the process used to fulfill the aim of the research study. Chapter five covers the results and analysis of the findings through the information gained from the interviews in relation with the previous research and the theories chosen. The chapter six presents the discussions, interpretation and evaluation of the study. The last and final chapter offerings a conclusion and a short paragraph about what can be interesting to do in future research is proposed.

Background about employment rates in Sweden

According to the Swedish national statistics agency these statistics are conducted on labour market of unemployed people ranging from ages 15-24 as well as on different groups of people outside this bracket. Since our research is about how the employment officers perceive how they help youth with foreign background to get into labour market, we have taken some important information about youth unemployment rate to show a clear understanding of how the Swedish unemployment looks like for young people both native and none Swedes (scb, 2015). [Statistiska Centralbyråns, 2015]
The gap is growing between young people from different ethnic backgrounds. Unemployment is 70 percent higher among young people born abroad than among young people born in Sweden. The figures are for April of each year. Source: SCB

http://www.dagenssamhalle.se/nyhet/70-procent-hoegre-arbetsloeshet-brfoer-unga-invandrare-5527

The diagram shows that there is 70% increase in unemployment rate among the young immigrants from the ages of 15-24 years compared with Swedish youth (scb, 2015). With other words, it shows how difficult it is for youth with immigrant background to secure a job. This diagram gives a better understanding of our aim it shows the number in percentage of young immigrants in need of finding jobs. The diagram further indicates clearly how difficult it is for young people to go through labor market competition in Sweden. The young immigrants have the highest percentage of unemployed.

The below diagram is recent and shows almost the same results as the above one in percentage of unemployment among young people with foreign background compared with natives swedes in labor integration.
“A bright spot among young on job threats”

The current statistics about “unemployment and Sweden’s economy” show that the difference between native young swedes and foreign young born to join the Swedish labor market stagnant as an encounter in Sweden. It is a strong growing gap between the two groups, about 15% of cavity of unemployment. But it is a big progress compared with other European countries and it is positive that there is an indicator, which in any case is pointing in a positive direction according to Professor Bertil Holmlund from Uppsala University (Åkesson, 2016).

2. Previous research about young people with immigrant background in the labour market in Sweden and other countries

This chapter presents previous research through previous articles and literature that focus mainly on young people with immigrant background and the labour market in Sweden and Scandinavian countries. It also reviews their situation and the most common difficulties they face in their course of finding jobs. We grouped the previous research in three different themes which we considered relevant to discuss in this study in regards to finding and securing jobs, for this category of young people. The four themes chosen are unemployment; social network, a need tie to obtain a job? And lastly educational qualification and language proficiency.

2.1. Unemployment

Unemployment is counted among social problems in many societies. It has causes and also effects. Unemployment is associated with many other issues like poverty, crime, low self-esteem, lack of confidence and so on. Unemployment, poverty and other social issues are the main reasons or origins of social work and thereby social work starts its development analysis because of the returns of poverty (Payne, 2005).

A recent study by Kauppinen et al. (2015), stipulates that, long term unemployment leads to social exclusion which in its turn is seen as a consequence and a result of both marginal economic position and social isolation both experienced at the same time. According to the same study, the marginal economic position is due to the low income
or no income at all which results in financial limitations. Social isolation is, then, the consequence of not having enough money to join other members of the community in different organized activities because of lack of money and in the end someone finds himself in a lonely life.

In addition to the above statements, it has been proved that unemployment and mental health can have a cause and affect affiliation. In other words, long term unemployment can lead to mental health problems and vice versa (Kauppinen et al., 2015).

Christoffersen (1994) further discussed and buttressed that unemployment leads to idleness, depression and low self-esteem and lack of confidence which can result to crime or suicidal thoughts when the people involved start to feel that their lives do not have any meaning or purpose. This is also one of the major reasons why unemployed people stand a higher chance of becoming mentally ill. Long term unemployment also leads to loss of hope. The longer one remains unemployed, the more difficult it becomes to find a job. In the case of these young immigrants, there is pressure to fulfill many different requirements before accessing jobs. Young immigrants have an obligation to establish, build and maintain a good contact and network with the people in the new society or country of residence as soon as possible upon arrival (Christoffersen, 1994).

Another study made by Nordenmark et al. (2006), states that people have psychological need for employment where specific underlying meaning of employment is evident such as time structure, social contacts, participation in collective drive, status and identity, regular activity, etc. These latent psychological functions are very important in an individual’s life; absence of these can cause poor mental well-being to unemployed people. Work participation however, can stimulate the positive power of re-employment on a person’s mental well-being (Nordenmark et al., 2006). Another reason that can inhibit mental well-being among unemployed people is the need for economic control restrictions on the private economy and on the ability to predict future life course both depend on the employment situation, which could decrease an individual’s control over the life situation” (ibid, p. 86). The diminution of the economic control influences a diminution in the degree of mental well-being of unemployed person. Economic situation is seen as the greatest significant aspect influencing the mental well-being of unemployed people in general.
2.2. Social network, a need tie to obtain a job?

According to the study made by Rydgren (2004), he specifies that to build a positive social network, as a young person with immigrant background, is a sign of good and positive start for a safe and successful life. But he also claims that it can be hard for a young immigrant to build that network in a new country when he/she knows few people. Most of young immigrants will make contact with other young people from the same country of origin that have come earlier than them, if these ones are lucky to have a job then they can recommend their friends for a job opportunity to an employer. Many immigrants are over-represented among low-skills or low-status jobs such as cleaners, restaurant-employees, and unskilled manual workers in a textile industry (Rydgren, 2004). And amongst feminine migrants most of them are working as health-care assistants.

Rydgren (2004) further claims that, high positions in labor market tend to be occupied by native Swedes; this leads to a situation in which native Swede youths are lucky and favored over non-Swedes youths unfortunately. There is a tendency of network recruitment whereby employers choose people they know, or who have been recommended by someone they know for available places. Immigrants particularly in Sweden have on average, less social resources, because of the ethnicity fragmentation.

Immigrant youth mostly presents with a lack of strong ties to high-status persons holding positions of power. Rydgren (2004) indicated that, in Sweden, there is maintenance of ethnically homogeneous networks, which in turn makes it hard for immigrants to find a job. This happens when people interact more or less exclusively with people belonging to the same ethnic group- maybe also a possible reason why native Swedes hold stereotypical and prejudiced beliefs about migrants (Rydgren, 2004).

In the same study by Rydgren (2004), it is obvious that having a strong/weak tie in the sense of a good network offers valuable information that can lead to a job. This increases or gives a higher probability in finding jobs and plays a big role depending on the circumstances under which the search of work takes place (Korpi, 2001). Also concerning the matter of better/strong ties of network, states that to be lucky to obtain useful job information through a contact depends on the likelihood that the contact in charge of such information will disclose the information at the right time. The question of timing is an explanation as to why strong ties seem to show great importance in job
search. No wonder, Korpi (2001) stated that ‘strong ties have greater motivation, are of assistance job search through them are typically more easily available’.

When most of these young immigrants arrive in Sweden, a majority of them have a poor or no network at all that can give them useful information about getting jobs. Most of them get apprenticeship placement for the first time through the state’s employment office (the national employment agency) in which they also go through a program/course of learning Swedish language through SFI (Svenska för Invandrare). Sometimes, these immigrants are sent by their respective contact officers up to certain duration of time to other private employment offices to further help them to find a job or apprentice placement. These young immigrants however do not have any contact at all to help them privately, thus, the reason they have to trust the employment workers. They present a category of people with weak ties as explained previously and unfortunately without any job experiences in Sweden they are typically exposed to victimization of stereotypes and prejudices among native Swedes.

In a study made by Støren (2011), he emphasized that young people with immigrant background face so much discrimination in their new countries of residence. He mentioned three major different types of discrimination in his study: preference discrimination, preference shown for the majority group; prejudiced discrimination due to other people’s prejudice and statistical discrimination where individuals are judged categorically according to the groups in which they belong (Støren, 2011).

Nevertheless, young people with immigrant background are subjected to discrimination not only because of their educational qualification or language proficiency but also because of the color of their skin and foreign sounding names (Ibid). Another study carried out in Sweden showed that the immigrants with foreign names who search for jobs get fewer contacts and have lower chances of getting the jobs that they search for, this is because of their names, ethnicity, and other information that has to be given in the job application when searching for job vacancies, while Swedes or individuals who have Nordic or European names had higher contact and had better chances of getting the jobs they searched for. This is because people with European or Nordic names do not face high prejudice from the strange sounding names that affect other immigrant youth also because these names are associated with a certain class of people and do not suffer statistical discrimination, one of the three mentioned above by Støren (2011).
2.3. Educational qualification and language proficiency

The educational background and language proficiency seem to play a big role in the integration process and in the process of finding jobs for young people with immigrant descent; it is described as the key to fit in their new society of residence (Hammaren, 2014). According to a previous study by Hammaren (2014), it is known that immigrants stand a better chance of getting jobs and being less socially excluded if they adapt faster and can read, write, understand and communicate in the new language of their country of residence, and also stand a better chance if they have some school qualification since most jobs have certain education requirements to be fulfilled by all applicants before being evaluated for the positions (Hammaren, 2014).

This is somehow a disadvantage to some of the immigrant youth who have low level of education if they had not attended school in their home countries before moving to Sweden. This group also faces difficulty in joining the Swedish schools where they feel being stereotyped (ibid). However if they have high determination and scale the education ladder they probably would have to compete with the native Swedes even though it might take them a long process up.

Malmberg-Heimonen & Julkunen (2006) highlighted the importance of having an education for the present or future competition of the global labor market. Educational qualification among immigrant youth and their social background tend to explain chances in job opportunities and guaranties among young immigrant with foreign background. Language skills are a form of human capital which in a positive way influence immigrant income and labor market possibilities. The individual level of education is counted among the determinants of immigrants ‘language accomplishment’ in Western societies and in Sweden (Malmberg-Heimonen & Julkunen, 2006).

People with higher education normally have better language skills. Furthermore, some factors such as marital status, gender and migration motive have been noticed to somehow influence language proficiency. The new country of residence, the influence of the sending country and the ethnic circle surrounding the youth also tend to influence language performance and immigrants ‘economic integration (Malmberg-Heimonen & Julkunen, 2006).
3. Theoretical framework

In this part we will analyze the use of two major theories: social constructivist theory and empowerment and advocacy theory. These theories are a mixture of practice and theory; we will be using these theories in our analysis because their influence are important in analyzing collected data during the interviews.

3.1. Social constructivist perspective

Social constructivism can be defined as “a theoretical orientation which, to a greater or lesser degree, underpins all of these new approaches (e.g. critical psychology, discursive psychology, discourse analysis, deconstruction and post-structuralism) which are currently offering radical and critical alternatives in psychology and social psychology, as well as in other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities” (Burr, 2003, p.1). Social constructivism embraces the role of how we understand human beings and the psychology discipline. It requires us to challenge the view that conventional facts are based upon objectives and unbiased. It is in antagonism with positivism and empiricism in traditional science and it is calling our attention to be disbelieving our own conviction about how the world appears to be (ibid).

Social constructivist theory explains that clients are the principal factor influencing social changes based on general social understandings of the nature of social work. Clients bring with them outside world into social work activity which automatically bring changes in the nature of that social work and become a reflective practice which means that the workers adapt to the needs of clients. Workers within their social activity, change the approach of their work in order to meet the client's diverse needs. Since social constructivism theory is all about bringing people’s experiences or perspectives together in order to achieve a goal, in this case we are talking about the client in relation to the worker to bring different ideas together in order to achieve the same goal of securing employment.

Human beings are social in nature, the experience of a ‘self’ could be developed in meaningful ways and convey or share with others to achieve the same goal (Alvensson & Sköldberg, 2009). By interacting with young immigrants, the employment workers have a purpose to help the immigrant youth search for jobs or apprentice by matching their CV with available jobs. Part of the problem is that there are no jobs matching the CVs of many immigrants. To be able to get a job they have to work hard to develop
some “marketable skill”. This involves long-term planning and postponement of rewards, which is not necessarily a part of everybody’s cultural understandings or inclinations. This is a major hindrance getting in the way of trying to empower these people.

**Coupling to theory**

Human beings are social in their nature. By interacting with young immigrants, the employment workers have a purpose to help immigrant youth search for jobs or apprentice placements by matching their CV with the available jobs. Some habits and routines, through a certain way of acting during a certain time, create a sense of change in the way of working which can in turn oblige the change of policies or political thinking. The labor market also has needs, and it needs certain skills in the people it hires in order to meet the needs of young people with immigrant background searching for jobs. That can be seen as political empowerment where things might be done differently because of variations in the society. Social constructivist theory brings new ideas of thinking in the strategies of job searching accomplished by employment workers when dealing with immigrant youth for example job matching, preparing the young immigrants with job interviews, etc. Having conception of what social constructivist theory is can help professionals in the work agencies to understand how young immigrants handle themselves in Swedish society/culture whereby a more suitable approach towards the young immigrants can be given in order to meet their needs. There is need for adaptation to new routines in the society in order to integrate it totally. As an example of tools of social constructivism, we can label language which is one of the most important of these tools.

**3.2. Empowerment and advocacy theory**

Empowerment in Social Work is defined as “the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives” (Adams, 2008, p. 17). Empowerment helps those in need to gain power, confidence in making decision and taking actions over their own lives by reducing the way in which social and personal issues affect them. Advocacy, a tool of empowerment can be done individually or in groups with a sole purpose to influence change, to mediate and contribute to self-help
and participation of individuals or communities in decision-making processes so that the needs and wants of this group of individuals can be met. Empowerment and advocacy go hand in hand and enable people with difficulties in life to overcome the obstacles stopping them from achieving desired goals (ibid).

As a theory empowerment empowers individuals and groups of people in learning, encouraging their participation in broader social movements so as to achieve social progress. In most cases, practice and implementation of this theory, initiates and encourages changes in policies and welfare systems to the advantage of oppressed people or minorities. Payne (2005), states that a participative approach is very important because people need to have the right to be involved in the decision and actions taken in relation to them (ibid).

Empowerment is challenging oppression in making individuals strong enough to take control of matters of importance to them. It gives people control over their needs, and power to be involved in decision and planning to make agencies open doors to participation and finally disposes resources to the people (Payne, 2005). In other words empowerment builds and strengthens relationships that lead to individuals being independent and having self-worth of themselves and their surroundings, it also increases self-confidence.

Empowerment helps individuals to not perceive power negatively but in a positive way, instead of seeing power as being oppressive they should perceive it as liberating. Political understanding helps in having good knowledge and understanding of the political situation. Social workers strive to either change the already present way of organizing power relations or accepting it. At an opportunity skills can empower and liberate individuals through, gain, development and use of this (Ibid).

Coupling to theory

Empowerment and advocacy theory is a tool of guidance; it is giving power and confidence to those in need to be capable to make decisions with regards to their needs. By encouraging the young people with immigrant background to seek for jobs individually or participate in group activities with job orientation, employment agency workers help these young people to overcome social barriers such as poverty, unemployment, psychological and mental well-being and giving them their first hope on an independent lifestyle. Empowerment and advocacy theory give people the right to be involved in decision making of their own concerns (Payne, 2005). The employment
agency workers should advocate for these young immigrants in matters of labor market, by helping them to understand job conditions, what has to be done in order to get a specific job, to know when it is available, what salary they are supposed to get or if it is about apprenticeship. They have a duty to explain openly to the youth which support they will get during that period of time and explain the advantage of paying a job’s membership during the employment period in order to receive job allocations in case of miss of job.

4. Methodology

In this chapter, we emphasize the necessary methods used in carrying out our study. We also describe and reflect on our preliminary understanding together with our choice for qualitative study, literature selection, the data process, limitations, ethical viewpoint and lastly the essay credibility.

4.1. Preliminary understanding

Every country and society has been affected by globalization, the free flow of capital, labor, workforce and people have become more restrained, people move constantly in and out of societies. With the current state of things happening all over the world like wars, poverty etc., people have different motives why they migrate and this is where integration and unemployment comes into consideration. Sweden is one of the western countries that receive a high number of immigrants from other countries all around the world; it also helps in many other humanitarian activities especially in the developing world. As future social workers, we acknowledge the importance of globalization, integration, unemployment and the effects it has on social work so we decided to do a study on this topic. It is also a topic that is very sensitive in the society as countries are affected by effects of globalization that has privatized most companies or restricted work operations of most institutions.

We made our study in different job agencies because we could not find enough participants to our research interview from one agency. That is why we chose participants from different work agencies to fulfill the requirement of five research participants.

We used a qualitative method in carrying out this study, a face-to-face and semi-structured interview approach was conducted with respect to important details taken
into consideration, such as explaining in detail certain social phenomenon and how it is related to our study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In order to get a broad perspective of our study, we chose to interview not only public employment workers but also the private ones that work under or in collaboration with the public employment agency. Five professionals both in the public and private job agencies, aged 51, 35, 34, 33 and 30 with working experiences ranging from 3 years to 11 years were interviewed. We identify them alphabetically by representing them with interviewee A, B, C, D and E. The entire five cited above have almost similar positions in their work place which includes helping immigrant youth in integrating and finding jobs. The interviewee A actually works with both young non-immigrants and young immigrants.

We used a phenomenological position where the employment agency workers, within their understanding, explain the phenomena of helping young people with immigrant background find a job. We used one of the goals of phenomenological position which is to try to describe the data obtained as true as possible to the original, to see things through the interviewees `eyes, in this case through the professionals `eyes (Denscombe, 2009). Parallel to the phenomenological position we used the hermeneutics position to interpret the meaning of what has been said by interviewees, we tried to understand the meaning of what the interviewees were saying and tried to see the meaning within a full context (Bryman, 2002, Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

4.2. Mode of procedure

We used face-to-face interviews using semi-structured format of interviewing. The advantage of using face -to -face interview is that the contact with body language is present, the physical presence of the interviewer encourages participation and involvement and can also sound like a normal conversation between two people which can give useful, informative answers (Robson, 2007).

Our study was conducted in a qualitative manner. Qualitative interview seeks qualitative knowledge expressed in normal language (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Qualitative research is directly involved with the people being studied, their personal experiences, and the process of their daily social life (Grinnell, 2001). The use of a qualitative study is relevant in this study because human experiences are continuously changing and is best studied using a qualitative method of investigation (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).
The semi-structured format of interview is like an open conversation and let the conversation develops within the area of interest, the respondents are free to answer in their own way. It is a flexible way of finding out interesting things. The line of inquiry can be modified by following up interesting responses. Disadvantages of face-to-face semi-structured interviews is that they are time consuming, since they can go for long and it can be difficult to focus on the topic. Especially when the interviewee feels too comfortable and start to talk about irrelevant topic it can be difficult to bring him/her back to the conversation without destroying the atmosphere of the conversation. They also stand a chance of being biased by the presence of the interviewer which can be felt as imposing, not forgetting that distractions from the surrounding can also interfere with concentration on the interview process, in using face to face interviews there is also a risk for lack of privacy (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

We carried out our qualitative study by first sending formal email letter of consent and other documents of seeking permission for interviews to the five handpicked participants for the face-to-face interview, one of them was from the national employment agency, in a small town in mid Sweden, and others were from private work agencies all located in the same town. We did this because we could not find enough participants to our research interview from one side. That is why we selected participants from different work agencies to fulfill the requirement of five research participants. More details see chart of interviewees (Appendix 2). We selected these individuals after confirming their positions from the agencies during our inquiry at their work places. We selected them because of the different roles they play in integration of the young people with immigrant background into the Swedish labor market. Our interview guide (Appendix 3) focused on questions we viewed important that could answer our research questions in consideration to our chosen theories.

4.2.1. Selection of literature

In the process of literature collection, we found a lot of useful information, e-books, literature, and journals all pertaining to social work through the library of University of Gävle and also through google scholar; we accessed data bases and gathered information pertaining to social work and our topic from EBSCO, psycINFO. The major key words used during our search for information on this database were young people, unemployment, immigrant, labor market, integration. We found information that concerned countries like the UK, US, Canada, France, Finland,
Denmark and Sweden. Apart from these, we also visited official websites of the labor agencies that we had identified linked to employment issues in Sweden with search words related to our topic of study to get more and in depth information and understanding of the necessary processes involved, websites like 

4.2.2. The instrument of investigation

We recorded our interviews with an MP3-player, and also took notes during the interview, so as to ensure we missed nothing during the interviews. Our interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. The processing of the data included three stages, first was recording the voice in an audio format to an Mp3 player in order to listen to the words and statements later on, the second part was listening and transcribing the information gathered, third and the last stage was about interpreting and coding the information gathered by selecting the relevant patterns.

With selected patterns to interpret our findings, particular details of our text became more comprehensible, and within these specific meaning, our patterns were increasing and gave more sense to our study (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Another thing we took into consideration with our selected patterns was that the many facts from the material interpreted from the semi-structured interviews should not differ with the patterns of the events.

Two methods were chosen to analyze the semi-structured interview they are meaning condensation which is the summary of what the interviewee has said, it is often summarizing large information received and gathered from the interviewee that are compressed and condensed into shorter and brief statements for easier and better understanding and meaning categorization which is when the interviews and information gathered are broken down into different categories and explained under different themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

We summarized the extended statements gathered during our interviews from the employment officers and other important information gathered when conducting our study and made brief statements in few words or phrases so that the main sense of what was said is reported. We conducted our interviews in Swedish language which created a comfortable atmosphere to our interviewees since Swedish is their mother tongue. We assumed they were sure that what they were saying was what they meant. We then translated the information as best we could. We speak Swedish, this is after learning
Swedish as a second language, since we authors are also immigrants from countries that speak other languages which are different from Swedish. But after living in Sweden for several years and having gone to schools as well as having worked in the society we have a considerable comprehension of Swedish language, we therefore tried to translate the interviews to the best we could we even confirmed some meaning of some words from our spouses so that we do not loose meaning of what was said. But the spouses were not given the interviews to look at since this is a matter of ethical concern and which we promised to keep.

4.3. Ethical consideration

It is obvious in a study to remember that we deal with professional people working with private clients. They have an obligation to be careful when using other people’s information in a case like interview reports. The human interaction in the interview affects our participants furthermore our consideration of the human condition is affected by the skills we gain in the interactions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The everyday life however is an ethical issue which stipulates that “all people, to the best of their knowledge and ability, have a responsibility to foster a better social order, both at home and abroad, a goal which cannot be achieved by laws, prescriptions, and conventions alone” (Inter Action Council, 1997). By conducting an interview there are chances of complexities due to ethical issues because it is about investigating private lives and putting them in a public place which should require much attention to what we write in our study and how we decide to write it; nevertheless, the ethical issues were in our mind all the way through our research study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

We considered the guidelines of an ethical procedure such as informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and the role of the researcher. Consequently, we had sent to our participant’s managers in a good time a letter for information (Appendix 1), a letter of consent and an interview guide (Appendix 3) for collecting interview data in a respectful and convenient way. The letters informed all the participants what we intended to do and why, that they can have access to the material of research if they required it. Finally in the information letter, we informed them that it is free will to participate and they can always pull out if they feel they no longer want to be part of it.

The confidentiality of the participants was considered and had to be protected since it is among the ethical protocols required of all social scientist researchers, even if some of them do not mind if their name appeared on the report. Their anonymity was
protected, any names of the persons interviewed, authorities or other information which could be used to identify them will not appear in this study. Another thing we considered in order to keep that confidentiality was the way we transcribed the interviews, the loyalty of the interviewees statement was taken into consideration (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). We also informed our participants that the data collected during the interviews will only be used by us for the purposes of this specific study and will not be used in another different study or in any profitable method in other drives.

4.4. Study’s limitations

Because of our naivety in conducting a research by using an interview method, we faced difficulties in formulation of questions in a relevant way. We discovered that some questions were answered in the questions earlier asked and it felt that we were inexpert in the way of formulating an interview guide. Our sampling comprise of only five workers from the employment bureau though from different agencies we are not sure if this is the real picture of how it works in the whole of Sweden, or else this is just an assumption. Lacking here and which is a limitation is the voice of the immigrant youth or the unemployed immigrant young person or even those who visit these agencies for the sake of finding jobs. We cannot justify that it is true that some immigrants rely on their friends to get jobs and such. We did not have the chance to interview any who had or does not have a job so as to get this view. The reason was the time limit and mostly because we only focused our effort on the agency employees which is a limitation to the study. Such can happen in cases such as ours, as students we overlooked that, we didn’t stop and ask ourselves about that until when we had already started writing the study. We would like to state that another interesting aspect would have been to involve another group of participants/ interviewees especially the ones that partake in the decision - making with regards to the young people with immigrant background, such as policies makers working with the Government. They are the ones making all decisions regarding how the integration of young immigrants will look like. Some questions asked to them could increase value to our study. We however did not reach them.

4.5. Essay credibility
Reliability

Reliability simply refers to the consistency of results over time, in quantitative research, reliability lays emphasis on the degree to which measurements remain same over time, emphasis is also laid on both the stability and similarity of measurements over time.

While in qualitative research, reliability is simply the quality of the research, the trustworthiness of the research is also examined, and thus reliability becomes the consequence of validity (Golafshani, 2003). Reliability is considered as necessary but not a sufficient condition for validity. A cure of consistency is to consider the degree of accuracy to apprehend the significance of specific usages and explanations of test scores. But there is no security of the relevance of the readings or usages by measuring the consistency of meaning (Salkind, 2008). When some questions were asked to different participants in different places and got same answers, it brought an increase in the reliability of our study. Interviewing different agencies involved in helping young immigrants to get into labor market was chosen in order to get a broader view of how that municipality works to integrate its youth in labor market. However, our study cannot be used to generalize how other Swedish municipalities are working to integrate their young immigrants as we interviewed only a few professionals.

We tried to formulate an interview guide in a sufficient and relevant manner, by avoiding leading questions and keeping neutrality. In presenting our analysis, searching for inconsistencies between the interviews so as to confirm that the interviews gave similar answers, the reliability is proven and then our results. These strategies most probably improved the reliability of our work. The interviewees were asked always in the end to complete with anything they think that we missed to add in the questionnaire and which could be relevant for our study. We were sure that our questions were open to generate full answers and were divided into two different parts. As interviewing require professional expertise in addition to interviewers’ specialized knowledge, the reliability of our study could have been pretentious somehow because we, as new researchers are lacking in qualified judgmental request (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Validity

The content of measuring instrument for our study is the interview guide used as an instrument of measurement. The instrument must provide an adequate sample of
questions that represent the variables of interest, it must measure the variable it is assumed to be measuring (Grinnell, 2001; Patton, 2002). To reach a high quality of validity is important in any research this awareness continuously occupied our mind during the whole research process. Validity refers to the truth, the correctness and the strength of a statement (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This study gives a strict follow up of the interview guide. The content validity is based upon logical link between the questions and the objectives of the study which means the questions addressed to our participants or the themes that characterize our interviews were directly coupled to the research questions, tool of analysis and finally to our discussions. “Construct validity describes the extent to which a tool measures a theoretical construct…” (ibid). With construct validity, we made sure that we were looking not only at the tool of analysis but also at the theories underlying it. The tool of analysis was reflecting the theories empowerment and advocacy and social constructivist perspective used in our study in intention to give a better understanding of our results. The interviews were first translated from Swedish language to English and then transcribed. We saw a necessity of building the practical aspects of the research by taking into account the literature analysis in order to give credibility to the study (D’Cruz & Jones, 2004).

**Generalizability**

Generalizability is described as being able to draw deductions and correlations in broad populations based on what is set up by the research study via a sample (D’Cruz & Jones, 2004). In this case, however, a total of five interviews analyzed in this study are inconceivable to conclude in a generalized approach that our interview could produce a holistic data collection by opinions of few participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Compared to a quantitative research study, a qualitative study may not present generalization (D’Cruz & Jones, 2004). Generalizability is defined as the extent that findings in one situation can be transferred to other situations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 324).

**5. Results and Analysis**

This chapter presents and analyzes how the interviewed employment agency workers in private and public sector describe their help to the immigrant youth to come into the labour market. With the help of some themes that were deducted from our interview
guide such as; the different roles played by the employment workers work with the young people with immigrant background, educational background and language proficiency, problems faced by the group of young immigrants in finding jobs or apprentice placements, and finally a reflective summary of how more resources and focus should be put on this group.

Introduction of our interviewees

We will present the responses gained from the five interviewees (A-E), and at the same time analyze them in four chosen themes. Before that, we would like to present one more time our five interviewees, their gender, age, work place and their duration in the same profession.

**Interviewee A** is a female professional, age 51 and working in the national employment agency with work experience of 11 years.

**Interviewee B** is a male professional, age 30 years, working in our first visited private employment agency and has a work experience of 3 years.

**Interviewee C** is a female professional, 35 years old with working experience of three years, working at a second visited private employment agency.

**Interviewee D** is a male professional working also at the second agency, 33 years old, with three years of work experience.

**Interviewee E** is a female professional, 34 years old, working in the first private employment agency with three years working experience.

5.1 The role played by the employment workers

The agency employees at the work agency described that they help the young with training and coaching’s that the youth need in order to access the job market in their new country Sweden.

This help is for the youth to learn Swedish language faster and to get extra qualifications that can increase their chances in getting jobs. The agency employees describe that they connect the youth to apprentice placements where some of them attend 50% language lessons and the other 50% on apprentice placement.
Interviewee A explains:

We do this after having consulted with the youth and finding out what is important for them here and now.

However, interviewee A affirmed that these young immigrants have some duties before they can be enrolled at the national job agency. For this reason, they must have passed the B stage at SFI and be actively enrolled at the national employment agency at least for a period of three months before getting any help with job or trainee. Once these young immigrants are enrolled at the national job agency, they are expected to report their daily activities and at the same time search for different jobs announced on the platform on a monthly basis. This will be surveyed by themselves (young immigrants) and a report about their participation at the required activity will be send by each of them through the agency office website with the help of individual ‘log in’ to the social insurance/services in order to get financial support.

Interviewee A confirms again this:

These youth immigrants could be turned off at the employment office for 45 days if they fail to regularly report their activities as indicated.

According to Lundin & Liljeberg (2008), job applicants must fulfill some certain requirements such as providing access to some important documents needed either from other authorities or from their home countries as background checks to be integrated into the labour market (Lundin & Liljeberg, 2008). These requirements are vital for immigrants to get integrated fully into the labour market.

Interviewee A further revealed that the cost of education/program is bought by the national employment agency together with the national social insurance agency. This is done for instance for some job programs, by paying almost 90% of the salary of the young immigrant to the employer, while the employer pays the remaining 10% if the job fixed can have a duration of one year described in Swedish as “nystartsjobb”. In the process of doing this, the employer gains a workforce at a very low cost and the young employee gains a waged job, experience, future references and new network. Moreover, in the case of a job loss, the young employee can still receive a monthly payment of up to 80% of his salary if he has regularly pay unemployment insurance fee during his 1 year employment.
Lundin & Liljeberg (2008), states that the major advantages of “nystartsjobb” from the national employment agency are that the job applicants don’t have to go through the tough screening and requirements of future employers. In addition, they can be employed by their family members and work experience as well as references can be easily gained. Lastly, a broader network could be established. Nonetheless, some possible disadvantages with “nystartsjobb” are that a long-term unemployed person cannot get into this program. Furthermore, employers do not want to employ young people who do not get enough money from the national employment agency. Another difficulty is that some of the employers (most restaurant owners) do not want to give a job to a young immigrant after apprentice without a contract of “nystartsjobb” (Lundin & Liljeberg, 2008).

Interviewee A recounted some roles played by them as professionals. She says:

“we help the youth with immigrant background with training which can help them to learn Swedish faster or can also give them the qualification to an education/program through coaching…”

Interviewee A further describes below how they proceed in their coaching role for the young immigrants to find out what can be of interest for youth to work with and what plan the young immigrant has for the future. She says:

“We interview the youth to see what he wants to have as a priority…what most wants is a job or apprentice program, for them it is the most important to begin with.”

According to Andersen (2008), training provides new skills; it enables the participant to engage in new and more advanced forms of labour market activity. These skills raise the competitiveness of the unemployed and hence their sense of control (ibid). However illustrate Wrench et al.(2010) there is a tendency for those who initially accept low level jobs or occupation to be locked in such in the long run, according to the authors, initial occupation needs to be of high level to make an individual’s occupational position successful in the long term (Wrench et al., 2010). Interviewee A further explains that the young immigrants are the ones to decide what they are interested to work with or to begin with…
“But as employment workers we have to make an effort on how to guide them in the labour market, they need someone to instruct and show them different ways to get into the labour market”.

She further explains:

“after getting some hints from the youth, we go from there by knowing the kind of assistance needed…young people are rather spoiled nowadays, they do not want to do anything realistic, they want to jump from A to Z, and they do not want to take small steps at a time or climb ladders, instead they want to be successful at once”.

According to Page & Czuba (1999), empowerment is often developed as we work through it.

Interviewee B explains:

“We support the immigrant youth by contacting the employees at their work places so as to stand a better chance of finding jobs… evaluation is done individually and it includes various types of relationship, depending on their life situation, some have low self-esteem and therefore need more help”.

However, Adams (2008) claims that listing the essential ways in working to overcome barriers to empowering individuals is essential in lifting them out of dependence, oppression, and towards perhaps transforming them (Adams, 2008, p.113).

Interviewee C explains more about the role they played in his private agency and says:

“We help the young immigrants with the validation of their documents; this is for the youth with certain educational background. ...we try to engage them in lots of things such as job coaching making sure these individuals become more independent once they leave our office.”

Page & Czuba (1999) view empowerment as a process that is equivalent to a pathway or journey in achieving one’s goals.

Meanwhile, the issue of discrimination was also featured in the labour market, even though it is highly overlooked. According to interviewee D, the labour market tends to
be discriminatory due to language, cultural and traditional differences. For instance, he claims:

“Most immigrants’ educational backgrounds do not meet our Swedish system of education, which affect their chances to get integrated into the labor market…”

It is against this backdrop that Le Grand & Szulkin (2002) allege that there is salient tendency towards statistical discrimination especially when it comes to evaluating the educational attainment of immigrants whose academic backgrounds do not conform to the Swedish standard. Employers may devalue education undertaken in foreign countries when they make decisions about recruitment, and promotion. Employers may treat people with similar educational credentials differently; depending upon what country the education was undertaken (Le Grand & Szulkin, 2002). Nevertheless, according to Adams (2008), professionals should specify the fundamental barriers to be overcome in empowering work with individuals (Adams, 2008, p.113).

Here the importance of guidance from the workers towards the youth can be noticed. This can be put in relation to the empowerment and advocacy theory that assume to enable people with difficulties in life to handle and overcome the obstacles stopping them from achieving their desired goals (Payne, 2005). In our study, this can be put in the relation to how the agency workers try to give the young immigrants the help they need in achieving their desired goals. In this guidance, there is a presence of a participative approach because the possibility of being involved in the decision making process is given to the young immigrant. The young immigrants particularly need more knowledge on how things work in Sweden without ignoring the language barriers they face.

The professionals claim that it is important to understand the problems in order to find solutions. This can be put in relation to the social constructivist theory which embraces the role of how we understand human beings, social constructivist theory explains that clients are the principal factors influencing social changes based on general social understandings of the nature of social work (Burr, 2003). Clients bring with them outside world into social work activity which automatically bring changes to the nature of that social work and become a reflective practice which means that the employment workers adapt to the needs of clients.
The solutions and necessary actions taken are gradual to say it cannot be done all at once it is a gradual process that has to go through different stages (ibid). While offering all this constant motivation, and guidance, many more are put into consideration. In combination of the two theories, this leads to challenging oppression and making individuals strong enough to take control of their lives (Payne, 2005).

5.2 Educational background, language proficiency and technology

The professionals describe a situation where the young immigrants face difficulties in finding jobs because of the language barriers and technical knowledge such as use of computers mostly. They explain that it happens that an employer makes it clear that he or she want a young individual who has good skills in Swedish language and knowledge in computer use.

Interviewee E says:

“The need for computer skills is evident out in the labor market, this is what most employers want and it is unfortunately a requirement that even employment agencies need...if the youth don’t have it, it becomes difficult to access jobs!”

Lack of economic integration establishes one of the main problems of immigrant’s life due to language barriers, inadequate human and social capital, and unfamiliarity with the culture and technology in the new country (Heilbrunna et al., 2010).

Interviewee A explained the difference between standing a better chance of getting a job as an educated and non-educated:

“We work depending on previous experience or educational background; some have good educational background and previous work experience while some do not. The ones that have educational background and experience stand a better chance but the ones that do not, have it difficult.” (Interviewee A)

The interviewees emphasize that language plays a very important role because it is one of the keys to integration. It is not easy to study Swedish language especially for these young people who have not finished high school or do not have any or very little educational background.

According to Van Tubergen (2010), the second-language skills of immigrants play a key role in their position in the labour market. Immigrants who are more proficient in
the host-country language are more likely to find a job and higher earnings. In addition, immigrants establish more contacts with the native population when they have more knowledge of the second language.

Interviewee E comes with a different opinion about the importance of learning Swedish part time and going to apprenticeship part time. She expresses:

“I do not see the implementation of the new labour policy as a good one compared with the old system when immigrants focused only on studies until they finish the recommended language program (SFI) before they can go to the next step which is apprenticeship and search for jobs. Now we send them to a practice place while they are unable to engage a conversation in Swedish language”.

Interviewee B expresses further about lack of computer skills:

“I do see some differences between them because some of them have difficulties to manage the computer, maybe because they are not used to that. While for some it is problem with the Swedish language they are not so good at understanding it. It is a big problem for those who do not know how to use a computer”.

Interviewee C:

“… We help in preparing a professional CV, personal letter, and merit list, because most of them do not have this system in their home countries or are not good in computer use… we show them how to search for jobs, so they can choose from a list of different jobs by sending their CV”.

Interviewees emphasized that they encourage the young immigrants to go to school and attain a good knowledge in the Swedish language, culture or have a degree in Swedish language or high school degree if possible for their future in Sweden so as to stand a better chance in job searching or to get a stable work.

There is however objective barriers to employment such as competition, problems deriving from the macro-economic environment in the host country, and language problems (Heilbrunn et al., 2010).

It was confirmed by interviewees B, C, D and E that language is one of the first steps to getting a job and that the training aimed at better jobs, better pay, and many possibilities in a new country.
Institutional discrimination is multifaceted and might include direct racist discrimination from people with racist ideas; or may be routine societal discrimination carried out by people who are simply following traditions of recruitment but with no racist attitudes, or may be routine practices of indirect discrimination; a failure to understand and make allowances for historical discrimination, all which could occur in a national context of broader legal discrimination (Wrench et al., 2010, p. 40).

Concerning the point of racism/discrimination, interviewee E expresses herself in these words:

“It can be also racism/discrimination to be explained by saying lack of the Swedish language proficiency”.

Interviewee D explains why some of the employers do not want to give a chance to young immigrants’ apprenticeship. He says:

“having a trainee is a burden, there must be a supervisor who tells where to find clothes, where to hang jackets or things like that, it can be heavy for employers to put an extra staff at the young individuals disposal to show such things that a Swedish youth would not need help with.”

Anyway, such problem is understood given the young immigrants background, from where they come mostly, there are no such things like having extra clothes to be hanged at certain places, we can say this as we authors are of foreign background and that only cannot be a reasonable excuse to not give jobs to the immigrants since this is something that can be learned very fast by seeing. Such acts could amount to immigrant discrimination.

Most of the interviewees shared the same opinion that to have a young individual as a trainee at work place can imply heavy consequences because of the time consumed, potential production loss and a list of others consequences.

The major task behind the cooperation between the youth with foreign background and the professionals in the labour market is to find a job. In order to find one, some necessary requirements must be fulfilled according to their interests and skills. Hence, the youth of foreign background need to do everything possible to get used to their new country of residence, to know how things function and work, to build a network, and
also to put the norms, culture, tradition and language into consideration in collaboration with their own native friends to obtain a balance of both. Otherwise it can lead to long-term unemployment which also results in loss of hope in the long run as stated in the earlier research done in Sweden and Scandinavian countries (Christoffersen, 1994). Interviewee A, emphasized the importance of knowing the Swedish language:

“Swedish language is the basis for communication, and without communication there cannot be further progress”

However the social constructivist theory states that clients are principals involved in influencing social changes based on general social understandings of the nature of social work (Burr, 2003, p.1). Young people with immigrant background should be the ones to influence how the help they need should look like, and the professionals should work with them to define its trajectory. If there is evidence that the young immigrants are influencing the way of handling their needs as job seekers then from their involvement the voices should be allowed to contribute to employment policy changes of the new country in this case Sweden.

As an example, the option adopted by the national employment agency explained by interviewee A, of buying and introducing some apprentice programs when the young immigrants will go 50% to learn the Swedish language and go for job trainee 50%, can count as a change due to the situation of need for learning the language and at the same time have a job training that can generate a job in future. At the same time the program is adapted to the high number of immigrants coming to Sweden and need to learn the Swedish language. There is necessity of putting the young immigrants on the way to labour market as soon as possible so that they can support themselves.

5.3 Problems faced by the group of young immigrants in finding jobs or practical placements

Different points are developed in this theme from the Interviewees perspective in regards to the area research and chosen theories, these points are 1) Social network of the young immigrants, 2) gender, culture, ethnicity, nationality, racism/discrimination and 3) health and mental conditions among youth of immigrant descent.

5.3.1 Social network of the young immigrants
Interviewee A explains this about network:

“One of the biggest challenges is building or getting contacts, this is very hard for this group when the language barrier plays a big part in this case…”

Networks also create inequalities in the labour market (Tovatt, 2011). Tovatt illustrates that most job vacancies in Sweden are filled through social networks or informal recruitment procedures. However, social network recruitment also contributes to the reproduction of inequality structures in society she warns. Whether a social network creates opportunities or not means more than having contacts in the labour market (ibid).

Interviewee B expresses himself further:

“We try to play different roles in creating new social networks, by engaging them in jobs where they can also practice and speak the Swedish language at their work places so as to create new networks and also improve their language and cultural skills so they can stand better chances in finding jobs later on”.

It was expressed in earlier research that these young immigrants are likely to find themselves in lower paid jobs for instance pizzeria, restaurant, cleaning or textile companies or elderly care houses even if they are highly educated because of their weak ties.

Networks offer more adequate than inadequate jobs. The rationale behind this proposition is that the network is rather well informed about the job seekers’ interest and qualifications and selects jobs with higher adequacy (Franzen & Hangartner, 2006).

There is however a risk for limiting opportunities in the labor market by having an occupation below one’s education level, as was shown in a study among academically trained people in Sweden. Foreign-born academics are more likely to have an occupation below their education level than native-born academics in Sweden state Wrench et al. (2010) and again lack of work experiences or recommendations can also be an excuse for discriminating the weaker group in the labour market.

5.3.2 Gender, culture, ethnicity, nationality
The issue of gender, ethnicity, culture and nationality is described by our respondents as a barrier or hindrance to some immigrant youth in accessing jobs in Sweden. Pierson (2010, p.97) claims that vulnerable young men have the tendency to engage in antisocial behavior and many likely find it difficult to secure stable employment (Pierson, 2010). Concerning some barriers faced by the young immigrants related to gender, culture and nationality in searching jobs, Interviewee B describes:

“We try to help every individual in every way we can, but sometimes it is not easy, there was a case where we found a job for a female, only to find out later that the husband did not approve the job because of religious/cultural reasons”…..

The professionals also say that some men have it hard to take a job with elderly people because their religion will not allow them to help an old woman hygienically.

Interviewee D states the same as obstacles among young immigrants, because of religious beliefs and says:

“We have come across many cases where their beliefs go against the system in Sweden, and then they reach a dead end where progress and decisions cannot be made”.

According to the empowerment theory in which people should be granted say in decision making; it would be better for the employment workers to address the young immigrants and get to understand their personal background, culture or religion and beliefs. For those whose religion or culture does not allow certain practice, an alternative should be found for them because this will make job placements not generalized. By allowing the young immigrant chances to voice their interest and trying to find solutions will be empowering. Dominelli (2008) claims that there are diversities in the labour market. These are what the employment work agencies should find out of and match the immigrants to respective work in accordance to respecting their cultural background. Recognizing such an approach may lead to an anti-discriminative practice in the labour market integration (Dominelli, 2008).

Interviewee D explains further:

It is a big challenge for both the young immigrants and the employment workers, since finding a solution to this is not easy but complicated, and in most cases even makes the
process of getting to the aimed goal slower, exhausting and also loss of time, physical and psychological resources involved.

Descriptive characteristics like gender, race, and ethnicity are considered as lines of divisions influencing distributional processes in the labour market. Several mechanisms behind inequality based on divisive characteristics are depicted in the literature on labour market discrimination. One such mechanism is called “taste for discrimination” some employers, co-workers, or customers act on their dislike of certain ethnic or racial minorities. If sufficiently many employers discriminate against minorities (Le Grand & Szulkin, 2002).

According to (Wrench et al., 2010) attitudes or practices of ‘gatekeepers’ (persons who control access to jobs in this context) can play discriminatory role in immigrant’s background employment exclusion, they indicate that survey carried out in six municipalities in Sweden focusing on recruitment processes proved existence of both direct and indirect discrimination (Wrench et al., 2010), recruiters valued certain norms and routines for certain work places and therefore look for people who shared such values of thought, it showed that certain attitudes can function as the ‘gatekeepers’ in staff recruitment and negatively affect people who do not have their roots in Swedish culture and are less familiar with companies’ styles of thought. When ‘correct’ is defined and determined mainly by native-born managers, it can result in ethnic discrimination (ibid, p. 36). Beside this, Wacquant (2008) indicates that government elite or the ruling classes of rich nations to some degree are unwilling or proved unable to stem the rise of marginality or inequality, he elaborates that there is heightened stigmatization not only in daily life but in public too linked to class and ethnicity (ibid). For this reason it may be difficult for the young immigrants to achieve power and use it to state their case as is required by empowerment theory.

According to what has been said in previous research, prejudice and stereotypes make it easy for the immigrant youth to be discriminated by the majority of the population in getting jobs. Discrimination or oppression also occurs when these groups of young immigrants have different religion that restrains them to some activities or jobs adding to culture, language, ethnicity and skin color difference. Because it might be difficult or rather ignored if there is an opportunity that is thought not to favor some men in regards to statement like above from interviewee D. The majority group in this case can oppress
the weaker group by taking advantage of that power position in the intention of exploitation of the weak (Wrench et al., 2010; Støren, 2011).

Multidimensional racism is forms of oppression to the minority group (Dominelli, 2008). The three forms are, personal racism practiced by individuals as negative attitudes and activities that deny certain people dignity and equality, cultural racism consists of social values, norms traditions and ideas which guide social interactions and assign worth to some while devaluing others rooted in culture, its elements include language and religion that people use to compose collective world view legitimating a person or a group’s place in society, lastly institutional racism (Dominelli, 2008; Rydgren, 2004; Wrench et al., 2010) refers to professional practice and policies that determine entitlements and eligibility to social resources by excluding some people more than others. Entitlements and eligibility pathologies excluded groups for their failure to succeed within the system and is missed in taken for granted everyday routines, is legitimated by public power and authority, making tolerant persons act racist without being aware. Failure of an organization to provide appropriate service to people because of their color, culture or ethnicity can be detected in processes which amount to discrimination (Dominelli, 2008). A manifestation of institutional racism is further illustrated by Munck (2005) as high unemployment rate among certain groups of people and it is a crucial indicator of social exclusion Munck ascertains.

5.3.3 Health and mental conditions among young immigrants

Interviewee B discusses health and mental conditions among youth immigrants as an issue that affected access to labour market.

“Health issue is a dilemma many cases have been reported where these categories get jobs but later to discover that they do have more complicated health problems that could not be easily noticed or seen from appearance…” (Interviewee B)

In most of these cases B explained that the employment workers make effort to help the young immigrants to get into the labour market but it has happened that some of the young immigrants have psychological and trauma based problems, which affected their performances at their workplace, the employment professionals then refer the immigrant youth to other professionals for help so they can get the necessary assistance they need. Interviewee C says more about the health issues by mentioning:
“There is also the health issue where some of the immigrant youth are not healthy enough to take up a job. So in some cases, these youth cannot fulfill their aspirations even if they want to.”

She states again:

“We try to adjust and find solution to this problem”.

We got this statement from the participant C, however, she gave us no evident example of a mental or traumatic case that they have solved; because of no given proof we cannot give that here as evidence about what the professional do to help the immigrant with psychosocial traumas. Health is a very important aspect in every individual’s life, because without health every other thing like future plans, work and endeavors become almost impossible.

People have psychological need for employment where specific underlying meaning of employment is evident such as time structure, social contacts, participation in collective drive, status and identity, regular activity, etc. These latent psychological functions are very important in an individual’s life; absence of these can cause poor mental well-being to unemployed people (Nordenmark et al., 2006).

Apart from the fact that these individuals move to a new country, and have to face so many different challenges like integration, social exclusion, unemployment, language and a list of other things, they also come with different personalities, religion, background, beliefs and history. Some of them have been in very hostile and bad situations like wars, rape, poverty, abuse and more. So they carry these traumas along with them, and that can make matters worse for these immigrants in the process of getting a job in Sweden (Wuokko, 2000), this also makes it difficult for the workers at the employment agency office to carry out their duties.

An interviewee at a private agency outlines that if this kind of issue appears, the best way to solve the problem or find a solution is referring the immigrants back to the national employment agency where employees can involve the necessary professionals needed, in some cases psychiatrists, physician, doctors, social workers and other professionals that can involve the young immigrants in different activities and help them cope with their pasts so as to have a new beginning and a promising future in terms of labour market aspect. That is called “coordination individual plan”, [SIP in Swedish].
According to what the empowerment and advocacy theory stipulates, the group of young people with immigrant background with mental health problems is vulnerable and need some advocacy in regulation of their cases. The influence of advocacy will help the concerned authorities make policy changes in ways that favor this group of category to be treated in a deserving approach. Their cases should be understandable and not given sanctions, for instance money deduction from the support they get or such, simply because they are not attending their sessions of searching for jobs or internships as laid out in the regulations. Nordenmark et al. (2006) states that in the Nordic countries, and Sweden, in particular, relatively generous unemployment benefits are combined with an active labour market policy that is designed to activate and increase the competitiveness of the unemployed.

Thus, as Rees (1991) explains, interdependence of policy and practice must be established because the policies and practice go hand in hand (Payne, 2005). By understanding that policies and practices go hand in hand will create better outcomes between professionals and the clients, victims of poor mental well-being.

5.4 Summary

5.4.1 More resources and focus should be put on this group of people

According to the information gathered from our different interviewees, this issue of tight budget is unforgettable and a critical concern when it comes to solving the problem of unemployment, especially from the employment agencies perspective, because it involves employing more workers which is impossible in the current status. Another difficulty is the suggestion to include different programs that can enhance the chances of these young immigrants in finding jobs. With additional resources they could invest in research in order to have broad perspective of which measures are beneficial in the way of helping the young people with immigrant background to join the labour market.

Interviewee E discusses about the tight budget they always have to deal with:

“There is always the issue of money, budget or financing, there is a certain amount allocated from the government to solve the case of unemployment in Sweden, and I personally think it is not enough. If the government can increase the resources allocated to
this sector, then we can include more activities, workers and research, then a big difference will be seen”.

Interviewee B expresses his distress in budget control for his company:

“We have to adjust to the resources allocated to us, the budget we have is not enough to cover all the needs of our clients with regards to the concurrence in labour market today. We need more resources to offer a quality work to this particular group of young immigrants”.

Concerning the need for more resources and focus that should be put on young people with immigrant descent, interviewee E says that the individual sessions are less involving.

“Due to the lack of resources or little allocated resources to this aspect, the time given to this group of young immigrants is limited, we are also forced to work with them in groups instead of individually, and the help rendered would be more effective if it was given individually.”(Interviewee E)

With all mentioned above, in relation to the empowerment and advocacy theory, it is assumed that practice idea focus on political role on empowerment and plays a big role when it comes to empowering at societal or community level. However we got no response in regards, for instance, to how these workers might be involved at societal level to bring empowerment to the immigrant youth.

In presenting a case for need of extra resource allocation, such as time, money, or extra personnel a professional must show why it is a useful end in itself, and why that allocation is preferable over competing possibilities of resource allocation (Healy, 2005). The aforementioned extra resources if fulfilled may potentially contribute to increasing the chances for the young immigrants’ labour integration; and hence, empowering them. Munck (2005) argues that empowerment is a transformative process in response to inequalities. It is equally a component that helps in the handling of the underlying structures which produce inequalities in order to bring social inclusion (Munck, 2005).

6. Discussion

This section will present a discussion in relation to the results and analysis in order to ascertain the implications of the study from the professionals’ point of view.
From our point of view, the role played by the employment workers creates an easier way for the young immigrants’ integration into the Swedish labour market. Based on our findings, the rationale of this role is to guarantee a job for one year, which is described by the national employment agency as “nystartsjobb”. As indicated in the results and analysis section, this job program enables the young immigrant employees to be given 80% of their salaries even after losing a job. Thus, the program gives hope to the young immigrants by increasing their prospect to be independent. Adams (2008, p.17) argues on empowering individuals or group of people’s capabilities as essential to enable them to become self-sufficient.

Based on our findings from our interviewees, the educated young immigrants seem to find it easier to learn a new language than those without. This is also true for computer learning skills. According to our interviewees, the majority of these young immigrants do not have higher education due to their younger ages. Thus, it makes it difficult to give them the help they need for labour integration. Heilbrunn et al., (2010) claim that there are objective barriers to employment, which include: competition, problems derived from the macro-economic environment as well as the language barrier in a host country (Heilbrunn et al., 2010). For this reason, we mean that by empowering these young immigrants with the required education may enable them to be fully integrated into the Swedish labour market. Hur (2006) claims that empowerment develops when people endeavour to advance the capabilities to overcome their psychological and intellectual difficulties in order to achieve self-determination, self-sufficiency as well as decision-making abilities (Hur, 2006, p.531).

According to our interviewees and earlier research, most of the young immigrants do not have stronger social networks to fix jobs for themselves or within their domain. This makes it difficult for them. Montgomery (1991) argues that job seekers who expand their social networks with friends and relatives as a source of employment information usually find it less difficult to integrate into the labour market (Montgomery, 1991, p. 1408). For this reason, this claim is consistent with our findings which suggest that Swede youths find it easier to integrate into the labour market than the youth immigrants due to their stronger social network advantages as natives of Sweden.
Meanwhile, as indicated in the results and analysis section, female young immigrants are described as often sidelined by their husbands/male partners when it comes to choosing a job due to gender differences and culture. This makes their labor integration difficult. Moreover, and according to our interviews, our findings indicate that discrimination tends to exist among some employers. They tend to employ someone within their ethnic group or nationality by using stereotypical discrimination. These challenges limit the labor integration process for young immigrants who have fewer alternatives. As indicated by Le Grand & Szulkin (2002), gender, culture, ethnicity, and nationality do affect the labor market due to some discriminatory practices among employers on certain ethnic or racial minority groups (Le Grand & Szulkin, 2002). However, these practices may be of a concern in the Swedish labor market.

According to our interviews, some of these young immigrants have complicated health issues which make their labor integration practically difficult. The implication is that employers usually need a healthier workforce for better job performance. Long-term unemployment may lead to mental trauma and other related social issues because the youth with long term unemployment stand back in line for getting in the `nystartsjobb` programs. Dooley et al. (1996, p.449) claim that poor physical and mental wellbeing may result in a weaker job performance and a job loss.

From our results, we can see that more resources make it easier for the employment agencies to employ more personnel and to connect better with the young immigrants on an individual basis. The implication based on Healy’s (2005) standpoint is that the need for more resources involves taking into cognizance of why such extra resources are required for accountability purpose.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate how employment agency officers, in both public and private agencies, perceive how they help young people with immigrant backgrounds to access the Swedish labor market. The study also aimed to investigate these professionals’ perspectives on the possibilities and barriers faced by young people with immigrant background in their process of labour integration.
The topic was chosen by us due to the increased influx of immigrants in Sweden. Hence, more research in this topic may give insight to possible roots, main causes, and effects of the problems. Gender, cultural, ethnic, national, political, religious, and traditional, as well as many other factors may give a better understanding of this study. Hence, we assume that empowerment and advocacy practices focusing on the political or role of the government may likely influence policies on the young immigrants’ job integration into the Swedish labour market. The employment agency workers’ role in both the private and the public agencies is vital assisting the young immigrants to integrate into the labour market. However, we propose further research to be done on this topic because of its significance. Thus, we should have widened our study by including the immigrants themselves in order to have ascertained their views about the help they receive from the employment agencies.

References

Literature


http://online.sagepub.com.webproxy.student.hig.se

http://www.sciencedirect.com.webproxy.student.hig.se


Tovatt, C. (2011). Young people’s entry into the labour market—opportunities, strategies and gatekeepers. Available at: https://scholar.google.se/scholar


Appendices

Appendix 1
Letter of information

Hello!
We are students studying for a degree in Bachelor of Science in Social Work at the International Program for Social Work at Högskolan in Gävle.
During spring 2015 we are writing our C-essay about Social integration of youth of immigrant descent in the Labour Market in one Municipality in mid Sweden and in connection with this study we need to make some interviews with personnel who work with this group of youth of immigrant descent to come into labour market (public and private work organizations).
Our goal with this study is to study how employment workers describe how they help the young people with immigrant background to come into labour market and to investigate how they work together to respond to their needs and to know which practical dimensions they dispose for those youth of immigrant descent in order to put them on the right track of a work placement. We hope to get answers to help us to conduct our study.
We send this invitation to your organization with hope to get possibility to make an interview (in Swedish language) with one or two of your personnel working in this area of youth of immigrant descent. We are searching for answers to some questions related to our topic of the essay and with help of your experiences and reflections, we expect to answer them.
The participation is voluntary and the participant can at any time terminate the involvement in the interview. The information given in the interview will be treated with confidentiality; it will be anonymous and will not be used in any other form than for this study only.
We believe the knowledge we will attain from your participation will help us for an understanding of what should be taken in consideration in order to decrease unemployment among youth with foreign background.
If you would like to have a copy of the finished essay, please contact us on the above email address.
Thank you in advance, Kind regards,
Cosmos Azoba & Ange Munezero
Appendix 2

Chart of interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Place of work</th>
<th>Years in profession</th>
<th>Way of interviewing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Arbetsförmedlingen</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Private agency 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Private agency 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Private agency 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Private agency 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 3

Interview Guide

Part 1
Background questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in the profession</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2
Q1) Can you describe how you work with this group of young immigrants?

Q2) According to your experience, what are the differences you notice between young people with immigrant background and non-immigrant youth when it comes to searching jobs and why?

Q3) Do these young immigrants with foreign background have some special/different wishes when it comes to the type of job they want to find or are they prepared to take any job which is available?

Q4) Is there any difference between girls and boys in their approach of finding a job or a practical placement?
Q5) Once you find a practical placement (job) does it in most cases lead to a job after or not? And if not always, what could be the reasons?

Q6) What can be the reaction of these young immigrants when they realize that the job they got is of low payment? How many prefer to continue to work despite low wages?

Q7) How do you handle a situation such as when a young immigrant have had a job and after few months the job is over? Do you have a disposal plan to him or her after that to work on or he or she begin again with a new job searching as usual?

Q8) In your opinion, What do you think can be done to make the process of finding jobs easier for these young immigrants?

Q9) What are the requirements you need from this group of young immigrants in order to start a process of finding a job?

Q10) According to your experience, what can explain unemployment among young immigrants with foreign background?

Q11) According to you, which background and similarities do the ones who have hardest in finding a job have in common?

Q12) Which measures do you think are the most important to consider in order to make the process of finding jobs easy for young immigrants?

Q13) How can you describe your co-operation with other organizations involved in this area of social integration of youth of immigrant background in labor market? Do you see a need of co-operation with schools? If yes, how your collaboration looks like?