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Unemployment among Young People in Sweden

A study on relevant public services

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Abstract:

Our aim is to gain knowledge of some areas of public services available to unemployed young people in Sweden and to study how these services are implemented in practical social work. It was to view that what services are conducted for unemployed young people, why these services conducted and the outcome. The mainly causes of unemployment, effects on unemployment and needs of unemployed young people were also examined in this research. A qualitative research method was chosen in this study. Through four semi-structured interviews with social workers and interviewees from Social Services and Swedish Public Employment Office, their experience and own options upon the subject were shared. The results of the study are presented in three themes and analysed from the perspective of empowerment theory and welfare theory. The main result of our study is that services conducted for unemployed young people as the implementation of public policy comprises multi-dimensions and social work professions played an important role to help with improvement of their situation by meeting their needs and solving the problems they have in various ways during the process of intervention. Outcome of the services showed both positive influence and negative limitations need to be improved in future work.

Keywords: unemployment, unemployed young people, welfare state, public services in Sweden

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Introduction

The starting point of this study is the practical experience of authors from Women’s Federation in China. One of the aims of this federation is to encourage and support unemployed young women into the labour market and empower them to endeavour for a better life. Due to this experience, authors were aware of the fact that unemployment is a serious social problem especially among youth. With this study we wanted to increase our understanding of the situation in Sweden concerning unemployment and study services conducted for unemployed young people.

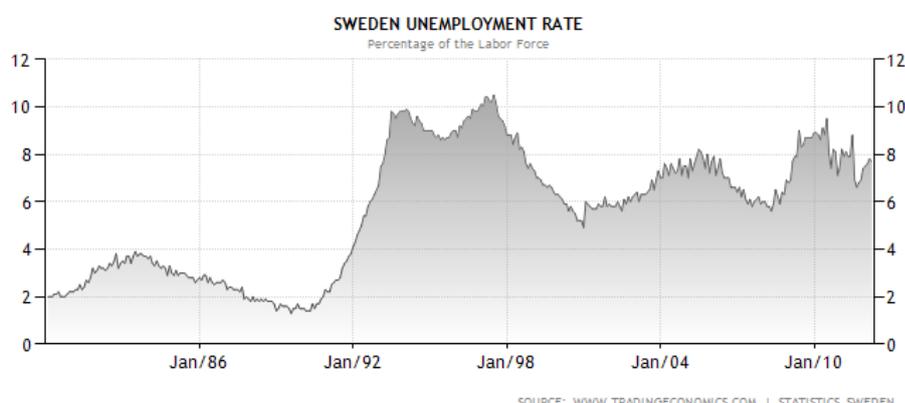
The tables below show clearly the Swedish unemployment.

Table 1: Unemployment Rate¹ (Sweden)

Frequency	Annual			
Time	2008	2009	2010	2011
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.2	8.3	8.4	7.5

Source: OECD Statistic

Table 2: Unemployment Rate (Sweden)² , from January 1980 to May 2012.



Source: Statistic Sweden

In the first quarter of 2011, the unemployment rate for youth ages 15-24 was 17.4 percent in the OECD area compared with 7 percent for adults ages 25 and over. (OECD) The unemployment rate

¹ OECD states that: “The unemployment rate is ratios of number of person’s unemployed and numbers of persons in the labour force which is the sum of numbers of people employed and unemployed. The criteria for a person to be considered as employed and unemployed are defined by the ILO guidelines.”

² Differences between data from OECD Statistic and Statistic Sweden discussed under the section *Definitions and Concepts*.

among youth ages 15-24 is significantly higher in Sweden than EU average and worldwide average. (Thomas, 2009)

There are complicated variables and crossed reasons for this phenomenon. The effect of unemployment is widely spread to many different fields related to individuals' economic and social life. The society has to react to this situation and public services are conducted partly to combat unemployment but also to guarantee the subsistence allowance for people who are unemployed to help with improving their situation. The Swedish welfare system is generous and apart from the subsistence allowance and different projects to combat there a wide range of other benefits as allowance for sickness benefits, early retirement pensions, sickness pension or unemployment benefits to mention a few.

1. Definitions and concepts

Socialtjänsten (Social Services) is the social welfare office of the Swedish municipalities and have the ultimate responsibility for the welfare for individuals and families in Sweden. They are working for positive changes in vulnerable people's lives by providing assistance, social services and other interventions. The aim is to provide children, adolescents and adults with advice, support and assistance, primarily at home and in the neighbourhood. (Gävle Kommun, 2012)

Arbetsförmedlingen (The Swedish Public Employment Office) is in the service of the state and their most important task is to match those who need employees with those who are seeking jobs. It contributes to a well-functioning labour market, for example, by creating meeting places between employers and jobseekers, and arranging education and training to those who need to get or improve career qualifications. (*Arbetsförmedlingen*, 2012)

Unemployment: The official definition of unemployment in Sweden is that an unemployed is a person without paid work, but looking for a job and may take it without any reservation. (Folkhälsogruppen in Novo, 2000) It is similar with the definition under the ILO guidance: persons above a specified age a) without work, b) available for work and c) actively looking for work in the near past are considered as unemployed people. Moreover, the “open unemployed” that we use in our essay, is defined as a person who has to be registered at an employment office. (Novo, 2000) Additionally, other concept that will be discussed in the later sections of our essay is “underemployment”, defined as “groups of employed individuals that work less than they would like”. And the unemployed young people authors mean in this essay is from age 18 to 25.

Unemployment statistics: Mentioned in Giertz (2004), Sweden produces two forms of governmental statistics on unemployment: the labour market board and Statistic Sweden. Both of these two databases provided the unemployment rate of Sweden. And the persons who are registered at employment office and participate in labour market programs are not considered as unemployed in these statistics. But in some other statistic the measurement is diverse, statistic provided by OECD for example (which mentioned above), includes the students and people who is under the training as well as the unemployed.

2. *Aim and questions of the study*

Our aim is to gain knowledge of some areas of public services available to unemployed young people in Sweden and to study how these services are implemented in practical social work.

Main questions:

- a. What kinds of public services are available for unemployed youth?
- b. On what basis are these services conducted?
- c. What do the interviewees think about the outcome of the services?

3. *Relation to social work*

According to the definition of IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers), social work is “*to promote social change, problem solving in human relationship and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principle of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.*” (IFSW, 2012)

Social work in the West emerged from a concern for poverty and unemployment that raised the risk of social disorder in a rapidly changing society. (Payne, 2005) Unemployment as a social problem is also connected with many other problems, such as poverty, social exclusion, criminal behaviours, problems related human well-being and so on. Poverty is seen as the origins of social work and the reactions to poverty is the starting point of any analysis of the social work’s development. (ibid)

This essay and its result may be used to understand public services conducted for unemployed young people including what these services are both in theory and in practice, why these services are conducted and how the outcome of them is. The account of social work as an integrated part of the

state organized welfare provision is important as it helps us understand how some of the ethical issues are inherent in the role of the social worker. (Banks, 2006, p.20) Services are the results of a conscious social policy that points out the ways in which welfare is developed in a society. Social justice and human rights are principle of both social work and social policy. As social workers, take actively role in influencing social policy and a better understanding of welfare state, which may help with solving social problems and issues relating to social disadvantages, is a complement to social work study. And Local authority social services departments administer mean-tested social assistance as part of social work system. (Ginsburg, 1992, p.38)

Background: Sweden as the social democratic welfare state

At the most general level, the Nordic model can be understood in terms of broad, tax-financed public responsibility and legislated, collective, and universalistic solutions that respect employment interests, yet aim at welfare and equity goals. (Kautto, 2010, p600) Most enthusiastic advocates of the welfare state under capitalism see Sweden as having achieved the closest to the ideal. The solidarity built upon ideas of a strong cultural and ethnic fellowship-the “people”. For most of the post war period Sweden has achieved a healthy economic growth, ‘full’ employment, and one of the highest standards of living in the world in combination with the largest, most expensive and possibly most egalitarian state welfare system in the West. (Grinsburg, 1992, p30) The Swedish welfare state model generally implied a high degree of deco modification and universal and generous social policy arrangements.

4. Structure of the study

Background chapter presents a brief introduction of the welfare state model of Sweden and the situation in China is presented. Previous Research with a direct connection to the research aim and the main questions investigated in the essay are presented in the Previous Research Chapter. Empowerment theory and welfare theory, which are relevant to this study, are described in the Theoretical Perspectives. In the methodology chapter, preliminary understanding and the research design are explained in detail. Furthermore, the mode of procedure, tools of analysis, essay credibility, ethical standpoints and limitation of the study are presented. The results are presented on the basis of the three themes with respect to the experimental data and the analysis integrated with previous research and theoretical perspectives follows in each theme. In the chapter of discussion,

results are briefly compared with previous research. Theoretical and methodological discussion follows and the suggestions for further studies are given. In the last part, the reference list and the appendix of interview guide as well as partly norms of the standard of the maximal money that unemployed youth can get from Social Services are presented.

Previous research

Many previous researchers are interested in the issues around unemployment. They explore this phenomenon from different angles and perspectives. Since the study shall focus on the issues around services for unemployed young people, the authors chose the most relevant studies after going through large amounts of research and literature. Previous researches and literature review provide a rich material and help with the whole process of the study. The themes the authors presented in this chapter are divided from the previous research and literature review, and also by comparing it to the empirical data of this study. Most of the studies and literatures are referred to the situation in Sweden, but also some of them from international studies constructing a general picture, for example in sections causes of unemployment and effects on unemployment.

1. Causes of unemployment

Structural reasons (for example recession, the size of youth labour market), lack of qualifications (for example school leavers who do not fulfil education, few work experience) and cultural/ social factors (for example influenced from the family, neighbours and circumstances) are the main causes of unemployment among youth that are frequently discussed in previous research. The causes are usually divided into two categories, one is regarded the characteristics of youths and youth labour markets as a whole, the other category are studying the micro characteristics on individuals. (Niall, 1997)

Youth unemployment has almost become a natural phenomenon in most industry countries due to the globalized economic restructure. (Lam and Yan, 2004) The crisis in 1990s is the basic reason for the increasing unemployment and the crisis is always correlated to unemployment not only in Sweden but also worldwide. Reported by the *Trading Economics* the Swedish unemployment rate reached the height of 10.5 percent in 1997, from as low as 1.3 percent in 1989. Also, Fregert and Pehkonen (2008) states that the increasing unemployment in Sweden began at 1991 and peaked in 1998, which may explain that unemployment is much related to the crisis of the 1990s. The following recovery of the Swedish economy leads to the decrease of unemployment in the later years. But the

unemployment rate now in Sweden is still very high. According to Niall (1997), one fairly obvious but important aspect of youth unemployment (and indeed adult unemployment) is the relationship between unemployment and labour force participation. Changes have happened in the labour market that obviously is decreasing the opportunities of getting jobs.

One of the main reasons for an exclusion from the labour market is to be found in missing, generally low, or not-matching job qualifications. (Kieselback et al. 2006) Much previous research discusses the connection between education, income inequality and unemployment. The general pattern is that the unemployment rates are related to the level of education. (Niall, 1997; Strauss, 2011) It is not very surprising that young people who do not go to the college after secondary school or even do not fulfil secondary school face much higher unemployment rates. In the OECD countries, the difference between unemployment rates of those who has low levels of education compared to those with higher levels of education has tended to widen. (Nickell in Niall, 1997)

The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs (Ungdomsstyrelsen) claims that the reasons for the declining employment among youth compared with the unemployment among adults are as follows: a) the increasing number of young graduates entering the labour market cannot balance the types of jobs that are applied for them, b) economic recession (which is the main external cause), c) unstable employment among youth and d) the Swedish labour market regulations. Niall (1997) has a similar argumentation. Aggregated demands, youth wages and the size of the youth labour force are three main determinants for youth unemployment compared to the adult rates. The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs claimed that so called “jobs queues” is the main reason for the unemployment rate among youth. (ibid) That means that the adults have a huge advantage on youth because they have more experiences, skills and knowledge.

Their family situation, neighbourhoods and circumstances influence unemployment among youth. Young people who come from sole-parent families and who live with families with a low family income had a high unemployment rate. (Bradbury et al., 1986) The so called “Culture of unemployment and poverty” is a special phenomenon among unemployed youth mentioned by Fitzpatrick (2001). He claims that unemployment is inherited from one generation to the next. A missing or a low qualification level is often found among those young people who have grown up in a situation of relative poverty in deprived areas. This leads to multiple socialisation differences and social difficulties. (Kieselback et al., 2006) Galster (2010) conclude that the neighbourhood have a huge impact on the individuals living in the area and may affect young people’s income by shaping attitudes and behaviours against education and labour force participations towards criminal activities. Information about skill enhancing and employment opportunities depends on the degree to which

access they have to the social networks and what resources these networks can give. Personal network for information, advice and recommendation are crucial when trying to get a work. (MacDonald et al., 2005) Limited social ties with employed and better-educated people are an often-observed characteristic of non-employed and lower-income people. (Tiggs et al. in Galster et al., 2010)

2. Effects on unemployment

A great deal of previous research on the subject is how unemployment affects the individuals. It seems obvious that unemployment is associated with a variety of additional problems. Financial deprivation, social isolation and psychosocial problems are three of the directly main effects on unemployment discussed most in previous research. Long-term unemployment also leads to social exclusion. (Hammer, 2000; Julkunen, 2002) Social exclusion is always linked with unemployment - although it doesn't have to be the starting point of social exclusion. Social exclusion may be the result if both a marginal economic position and social isolation are experienced at the same time. (Kronauer in Kieselback et al., 2006) In addition, it could also be a reason to the social unrest and increase criminal behaviour among young people. Long-term unemployment in combination with having only a basic education, were the most robust predictors of offending. (Aaltonen et al., 2011; Cantor and Land, 2001) The effects on unemployment are really complicated and we will in this section present a brief summary of some of the conclusions and arguments from our study of previous research and literature review.

According to IWH (Institute for Work & Health) the effects on unemployment on mental health are complicated by the fact that the cause-and-effect relationship can work in both directions: unemployment may worsen mental health, and mental health problems may make it more difficult for a person to obtain and/or hold a job. Flatau et al. (2000) tried to figure out the relationship between mental health, wellbeing and unemployment and found that there is a negative association between mental health, wellbeing and unemployment. They point out for one example that the prevalence of mental disorders, and the higher incidence of suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts are higher among unemployed people. Hagquist (1998) also did a research showed a link between economic deprivation on one hand and suicide on the other during the second part of 1980s based on the data from Sweden. Another study done by Björklund and Eriksson (1998), based on the situation of the Nordic countries, which used cross-sectional, longitudinal and time-series data, finally concluded that unemployed people have worse mental health than others. According to Novo (2000), lack of control, high demands, financial position, pessimism about the future and low levels of education were found as factors which negative influence on the health of young people.

Moreover, the relationship between unemployment and mental wellbeing has been studied by amounts of psychological and sociological researchers by using different measurements and methods, and it has been shown over and over again that unemployment has a negative impact on mental wellbeing. (e.g. Bjarnason and Sigurdardottir, 2003; Strandh, M. 2000; Dooley et al., 1996; Karsten and Klaus, 2006; Hammarström, 1994) Cobb-Clark et al. (2012) presented that a high risk of social and health of youth exists especially in those who are growing up in a family with a history of welfare receipts.

Paid work does not only give an economic value but also gives a psychosocial value. An unemployed person has fewer social contacts, a lower status and identity and lacks the participation in collective purposes and the regular day-to-day activities that a paid work usually provides. (Nordenmark, 1999) And this also explains why unemployed individuals are more likely to suffer from decreased mental wellbeing. What's more, becoming unemployed also leads to a loss of self-esteem. (Björklund, 1985) Lower self-esteem or self-worth relating to the feelings about oneself are due more to the internal causes of being unemployed than the personality itself. (Weiner in Tiggemann and Winefield, 1992) According to Layard et al. (1997), unemployment increases the probability of being unable to find a job. The longer a person has been unemployed the more difficulties he or she will have to get an available job.

3. Services for unemployed young people

Social Services in Sweden were integrated in the Social Services Act of 1981. (Gould, 2001, p.65) The framework legislation was passed by a Centre-right government, but had the support of all political. (ibid) The law expressed the aim of meeting the needs of individuals at the same time respecting their integrity. The new integrated departments of social services are to be responsible for services to the elderly, disabled, childish day care and income support in the form of means-tested Social Assistance (SA). (ibid) Social assistance with regard to unemployment, activation program and the role of social workers in local Social Services are presented in the following.

Social Assistance

Means-tested social assistance is administered by local authority social services departments, rates of payment are determined locally and benefit is frequently part of a casework package. It was known as poor relief until 1956 when it was reformed and renamed social assistance it was reformed once again in 1982 and renamed social benefit (Socialbidrag). (Ginsburg, 1992)

According to Gould (2001), the expenditure of social assistance increases each year and unemployment was seen as a principle cause of these increases. The unemployed rate of youth under

25 is highest with compared to the rest age groups. According to Rie et al. (2011), the unemployed rate of the labour force aged 15-24 is 21.5 percent, and 5.5 percent of those aged 25-45, 4.3 percent of those who aged 50-64 in 2006. As claimed by Giertz (2004), the frequency of social assistance continues to increase among young recipients.

Activation Program

An unemployed person who is not participating in a national labour market program can be obliged to participate in municipal activation programs if he/she: 1) younger than 25 years, 2) 25 years older but has special need of competence increasing measures, and 3) a student with study allowances but without a job during a study break (usually the summer vacation). (Gould, 2001)

It is stated in the Social Services Act that the activation programs shall aim to increase competence and further the individual's future prospect of self-provision by finding work or entering an education. Social assistance can be denied or reduced if the individual refuses or fails to participate in the measure without an acceptable reason. (ibid) And that the program shall shape in a way that takes reasonable consideration to the individual's preference and capability. But, the obligation is not mutual and the municipality is not forced to provide training programs. (ibid)

The Role of Social Workers in local Social Services

Social workers in the local social assistance administration do not necessarily work directly in the local activation programs but they are responsible for the professional assessments about clients' social situations, work-related measures and the income support transfers according to the Social Service Act. In fact, local activation policy became "materialized" and "real" in this particular organizational domain through social assistance eligibility assessments and the activation referral practices. According to Brodén (2008), the first practical action in relation to activation policy is the clients' application for social assistance, which is a locally administered application with no nationally stipulated application procedures. People can obtain an application form at the local social assistance administration, and the right to apply is based on residency in the municipality. In general, it is a social worker in the in-take unit instructing applicants that they were required to attend the local activation program. While clients needed to be present at the activation program the following day, it took one to two weeks before they met with the social worker and received a formal determination about their social assistance claim. (ibid)

Services provided by Employment Office

Employment Office provides services through two general categories of measures: active and passive means. (Johansson in Kieselbach et al., 2006) Active labour market measures refer to intervening

programmes. Passive measures refer to cash-based support that Employment Office provides unemployment compensation and helps clients apply for unemployment insurance as well. According to IAF (2007), unemployment compensation is financed by tax revenue, and the unemployment insurance is mainly financed by tax revenue and members' contributions represent a minor source.

Active measures

According to Kieselbach et al. (2006), there are two categories of active measures: 1) matching measures to create those conditions in which the job seeker and available jobs are matched with each other 2) measures which are directed at affecting the number of available job by improving the employment mechanisms for the job seeker and to remove obstacles for finding work. This is done through a process of education and training to bring career qualifications in line with available jobs. These efforts can even stimulate geographic mobility through reducing the job seeker's costs for relocation. These two measures are both focused on creating jobs for longer and shorter periods. (ibid)

Unemployment insurance

Sweden maintained voluntary unemployment insurance: *a-kassa*³. According to IAF (2007), the payment of unemployment benefits is administrated by 36 unemployment insurance funds. Historically these funds have been affiliated with trade unions, but the funds are required to be completely independent from other organisations today. However, the funds do frequently cover the same fields of activity or professions as existing trade unions. Trade Union membership is not compulsory for membership in an unemployment insurance fund; anyone who works in a field covered by a fund has the right to become a member. For many labour unions, however, membership in this type of fund is obligatory. (Rie et al., 2011)

And to qualify for unemployment insurance benefit a number of requirements must be fulfilled, some of which are difficult to describe. A claimant must have been a member of the unemployment fund for at least 12 months prior to the claim. There is also a "work requirement"⁴ referring to the period preceding entering into unemployment. Another requirement concern the unemployed

³ a- kassa : a-kass is a earning related unemployment insurance in Sweden, it was a "voluntary" scheme administered by the trade unions but funded largely by contributions paid by employers to the state. For those not members of trade unions, AMA administered a flat-rate benefit (KAS) equal to the minimum entitlement of a-kassa.)

⁴ This requirement has been changing frequently; the work requirement in 2007 is at least 6 months and at least 80 hours per calendar month, or for 480 hours during a consecutive period of 6 calendar months and at least 50 hours during each of these months.

person's job search intensity, a person must be registered at employment office as seeking jobs, there is also a willingness to work-test assessment, as an offer of 'suitable' work must be accepted. (IAF, 2007)

For those people who never enter the labour market, workers and in some cases the self-employed, an occupational group, or with a particular educational background with the notable exceptions other independent funds, they can get insurance from another union *Alfa-kassan*. (Rie et al., 2011)

4. Outcome of these services

The debate about "*Does social assistance (or welfare state) influence the unemployment?*" has a long tradition in social sciences. There is a growing body of literature stressing that an individual's labor supply is influenced by exposure to welfare use, in another word the frequency of social assistance recipients may have a tendency to increase the unemployment. (e.g. Bertrand et al., 2000; Moffitt in Brännström and Stenberg, 2007). Brännström and Stenberg (2007) found that the number of social assistance recipients does not increase the number of unemployed, based on Macro-level findings from Sweden in during the troublesome economical period in the beginning of the 90s. They also state that the ideology behind these two arguments may be divided into two perspectives. One perspective claims that participation in social assistance is not a matter of choice, but rather an indicator of people coming to the last resort. The means-test focuses on the needs are often caused by individual shortcomings such as weak health, drug abuse and/or relational problems. Therefore, comprehensive and universal benefits such as health care and pensions enjoy much more popularity than targeted programs such as unemployment benefits. (Taylor in Fraile and Ferrer, 2005) Conversely, another perspective stresses the importance of individual choice, implicitly suggests that economically disadvantaged people are to blame for their own circumstances. The model of welfare may weaken people's economic incentive to work and contribute to the "welfare culture". (Bertrand et al., 2000) And the problem is also assumed to increase with the generosity of the welfare system. (Lindbeck in Brännström and Stenberg, 2007) When it comes to unemployment insurance, as Giertz (2004) stated, the consequence of this arrangement of unemployment insurance was that a large numbers of even long-term unemployed people did not have to depend on social assistance for their main source of income.

In addition, a previous study (Eardley et al. in Dirch and Oldfield, 1999) found that during the 1980s and at least until 1993 there had been a steady increase in significance of social assistance, both in terms of the volume of expenditure and the number of recipients. It could be explained by the

statement of Kieselbach et al. (2006) that the characteristic of Swedish welfare model is that the state has the primary responsibility that its citizens achieve a tolerable standard of living. Without the transfer payments of state, many young people in Sweden between the ages of 18 and 29 would have had an income that placed them under the relative poverty line. (Gustafson in Kieselbach et al., 2006)

On the basis of information received in Dirch and Oldfield (1999), Sweden has not engaged in any significant policy development beyond the up-rating of benefit levels since 1993 except for small refinements of the existing objectives and minor administrative changes. There is also a growing demand from the public to cut the unemployment benefits spending since the huge expenditure comes from their money. Interestingly, Fraile and Ferrer (2005) found in their study that the explanations of attitudes towards social policies are a product of two main individual factors: citizen's political values and self-interests. Regarding self-interests, individuals who do not directly or potentially benefit from unemployment protection in the near future or do not expect to do so, will show a much higher degree of support for a reduction in the level of unemployment benefit spending than those who are at more risk of being unemployed. (ibid) Furthermore, Citizen's political values consequently link to their degree of supporting the welfare state. Hence, the type of welfare state also relevant to this issue. It is evidenced by researchers (for example Blomberg and Krol in Fraile and Ferrer, 2005) that citizens of countries with liberal or continental welfare states present lower level of support for welfare state programs than citizens coming from the Scandinavian countries and the reason lies in the historical development of the state in each country.

Studies of activation program and labour market training show both positive and negative effects. According to Giertz (2004), even the more successful labour market programs have moderate impacts; it gives only a small contribution to reduction of poverty among low-wage earners or a small increase of the labour market attachment among persons with a marginal position to the labour market. Little is known about the impact for persons excluded from the labour market but many researchers point to a lower impact than for the marginalized. Activation programs seem to at best have moderate effects for persons with marginal labour market positions and structural policies are needed to reduce marginalisation and exclusion. (ibid) Moreover, Calmfors et al. cited in Giertz (2004) conclude that the active labour market programs had limitations as a measure to fight unemployment. The linkage of participation in training programs and participation as a means to re-qualify for unemployment insurance tend to distort incentives for participation.

From a policy perspective, it seems that welfare policies introduced to alleviate the consequences of high levels of youth unemployment have not functioned well. (ibid) To be more specific, criticisms

focus on the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the welfare bureaucracies, which have only done a little redistribute income between classes and do not tackle with the fundamental causes of poverty or unemployment. (Banks, 2006) Also pointed out by Julkunen (2002) is that policies designed to raise the welfare of youth at risk of unemployment must be designed within an understanding of the social circumstances in which young people live.

According to Niall (1997), youth unemployment durations are somewhat shorter than for adults. However, another discussion is how it is possible to get the youth who have lost their jobs and have little educational merits back to the labor market. According to Hammer (2003), educational capital is the main factor for unemployed young to return to education and social capital for return to the employment.

Theoretical Perspectives

1. Empowerment theory

Empowerment is a generic concept, which can be attached to any aspect of social work, in areas such as disability, mental health and unemployment.

In social work, empowerment means much more than “becoming power”. It embraces both theory and method. Empowerment in the *Dictionary of Social Work* is defined as a theory concerned with how people may gain collective control over their lives. It is also a method by which social workers seek to enhance the power of people who lack it. (Thomas and Pierson in Adams, 2008, p.8) The *dictionary of Social Work* links empowerment with self-help: empowerment can refer to user participation in services and to the self-help movement generally, in which groups take action on their own behalf, either in cooperation with, or independently of, the statutory services. (Adams, 2008)

Bringing these statements together, empowerment may be defined as the means by which individuals, groups, and/or other communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives. (ibid)

Empowering practice, like the demands of the user movements it serves, seeks change not only through bringing to those who have been oppressed the exercise of control over what happens to them, but through transforming it. (Mullender and Ward in Adams, 2008)

Empowerment can be on different levels: self-empowerment, individual empowerment, group empowerment, organizational empowerment, community and political empowerment. They are integrated in the same system and intertwine one another. Individuals cannot be separated from their group, family, organizational, social, political or economic context. It is not sufficient to work with individuals with just one of these elements. Also, empowerment practice may engage with inclusion, participation and justice when empowering practice engages with the social, political and personal dimensions of people's lives. (Adams, 2008, p.198)

According to Adams (2008, p.193ff), there are some necessary points necessary one has to fulfil to achieve the general goal of empowering people through greater participation: Developing mutual empowerment; enabling self-advocacy; providing non-compromising professional support; building on people's skills to achieve local empowerment; using a professional anti-professional approach; developing profane practice and so on.

In addition, according to Zimmerman (1995), there are three components of psychological empowerment: Intrapersonal (domain specific perceived control, domain specific self-efficacy, motivation control and perceived control); Interactional (critical awareness, understanding causal agents, skills development, skills transfer, across life domains and resource mobilization); Behavioural (community involvement, organizational participation, and coping behaviours)

2. Welfare theory

Welfare theory is a means of gaining both a transcendent and an imminent knowledge of the concepts and principles that underpin the design and delivery of social policies in order to understand the ways in which those policies affect the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. (Fitzpatrick, 2001, p 4) The questions that have to be asked are *how* welfare services operate and *what effects* do they have on individuals and society, and *why* we need a welfare state. It thus indicates the two main traditions of welfare theory.

It is essential to address what welfare or wellbeing is and what social welfare might imply in welfare theory. Answers of these questions are ambiguous and according to Fitzpatrick (2001), six of the main perspectives on welfare are especially discussed; happiness, security, preferences, needs, desert, and relative comparisons. We are not going into detail with each of these perspectives but we will present some of them.

When Maslow (Fitzpatrick, 2001) presented his theory upon hierarchy, he stated that the basic needs of a human being are the physiological needs whose fulfilment we require for sheer survival. Next are needs related to physical safety and security, then comes the need concerned with our relationships with others, then the need for self-esteem and last, at the top of the hierarchy is the need for creativity and self-actualisation. (Maslow in Fitzpatrick, 2001)

Treating needs and need-fulfilment are mostly becoming the proxies for welfare. Basic needs, non-basic needs and preference are distinguished, and basic needs are more likely regarded as relevant to welfare but not the other two needs. (Fitzpatrick, 2001, p7) Social policy is concerned, first and foremost, with basic needs. The lack of fulfilment means that human life can neither flourish nor perhaps even survive. We also must take into consideration the means by which individuals can fulfil their non-basic needs, and in addition we have to be concerned with needs that are social in nature. (ibid) The existence of basic needs requires that society meets certain standards of social organization and welfare provision if those needs are to be satisfied. Even if different countries will have different ways of organizing themselves and their welfare systems, depending on the level of economic development as well as upon ideological, cultural and religious factors, the underlying commitment to a fair distribution of social wealth would appear to be a necessary condition of basic need satisfaction. (ibid, p24)

And there are three main distinctions that are useful for the possible definition of welfare is that it should be subjective or objective, universal or relative, and individual or collective. (ibid) These factors usually differ with different models. Additionally, welfare also refers to the range of services, which are provided to protect people in numbers of conditions, and that is the idea of welfare state as well.

A wider range of the concepts and principle involved the debates of equality, liberty and citizenship is also important. It is obvious that there are various debates regarding the concept of welfare. The authors of this essay are mainly concerned with the concept of social equality rather than the legal or the political equality. It is not necessary to have an absolute degree of equalization, which means that it would be unrealistic and undesirable for everyone to have the same income and same level of wealth for instance. All human beings possess certain basic needs, as health and autonomy which are the preconditions for a meaningful human life no matter when in the history or where in the world they live. (Doyal and Gough in Fitzpatrick, 2001) And these basic needs can therefore be said to constitute a universal 'core' around which our particular collective and personal identities are formed. (Fitzpatrick, 2001) If basic needs are universal, there must be corresponding needs-satisfiers and that is also why support equality claimed by Fitzpatrick (2001) is important. The existence of

basic needs might justify equality in some form and it is a controversial discussion about what type and level of equality which is preferable.

Unquestionably, the welfare state is a fundamental for the European social model. (Pestieau, 2006) The definition of the welfare state is ambiguous and dependent on political and economic ideology. Indeed, what it comprises and what its functions are is very much discussed. Social cohesion, which is the basis and the outcome of the welfare state when the welfare state began, has come under increasing attack during later years, although in Europe there continues to be a large degree of consensus that it is the responsibility of government to insure that nobody who is poor, sick, disabled, unemployed and old is left deprived, governments all over Europe are trying to hold back the spending on the welfare state. (ibid, p2)

According to Fitzpatrick (2001), there are economic, social and ideological justifications for the welfare state. From the economic perspective, the state can and should secure the conditions for stable economic growth. Two main properties of social justification for the welfare state refer to redistributive systems and justice-enhancing mechanisms. (Fitzpatrick, 2001, p82) When it comes to the ideological parts, four main welfare ideologies are noted, which are the radical right, social conservatism, social democracy and Marxism. The 'radical Right' alludes to those who combine a commitment to economic liberalism with a commitment to a moral conservatism. Conservative thought is often treated as an adjunct to the radical Right. Social democracy is a blend of two ideological perspectives: social liberalism and democratic socialism. Marxism distinguishes base and superstructure. The base represents the economic foundations of a society: the productive forces and productive relations, which are the most important elements of the social order. The superstructure rests on this base and contains things such as the legal, political and cultural systems. (ibid, p133)

Methodology

This chapter of methodology in this essay presents the analysis of how this research has proceeded. It includes why and how the research method was chosen and the procedures used to gather, present and analyse data related to research questions and the ethical standpoints made during the entire process. A discussion of credibility, which includes the validity and reliability of this study, is presented as well.

1. Preliminary understanding

Before the study were conducted, the authors, as researchers tried to figure out if there were any preliminary understandings in our minds that could influence the final results of this study, which could affect the credibility of our research. We had some preliminary knowledge about the public services in a welfare state and some ‘public attitude’ about unemployed young, but it was mostly general knowledge and at a structural and theoretical level.

All preliminary knowledge came from theories, earlier research and literature reviews. Some of our reflective questions were designed based on this available material. This study is trying to find out more about the welfare politics in Sweden, its theory and effects from there on focus more on how the social workers and professionals that work with unemployed youth think about this phenomenon, how they conduct their services and how they think about the outcome of the services coming out of their work. It is interesting to compare the practical work with ‘theory’ from the perspective of the civil servants. In addition, we both have some practical experience with unemployed young women in China and some fore knowledgeable about the situation from these experiences.

2. Research Design

To fulfil the broad aim of this study, it was significant to have a general understanding of the Swedish Welfare System as well as knowledge about the two main Swedish public services conducting services for unemployed people, and also having an understanding of some basic facts on welfare state politics. This study is focused on the exploring of social servants’ experience and aspects towards unemployment among youth as a social problem and the public services conducted to meet this problem.

Interviewing is a primary mode of data collection in qualitative research; semi-or unstructured interviews when eliciting people’s views, opinions, attitudes, and experiences always employ unstructured interviews. (Arksey, 2004, p.268) Semi-structured interviews were selected in this study. Three themes were designed related to the aim of this study that was closely connected to each other as well as the previous research and two theoretical perspectives. The information we got from our previous research is rich and helps with the design of interview guide.

Furthermore, a phenomenological approach was used. Noted by Patton (2002), phenomenology is about how people describe things and how they experience them through their own sense. *“In qualitative inquiry, phenomenology is a term that points to an interest in understanding social*

phenomena from the actors' own perspectives and describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be." (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009, p26) According to phenomenological method one should describe as precisely and completely as possible the information given by the participants. The idea was to describe and not to explain; objective is an expression of fidelity to the phenomena investigated. (ibid) All these methods were strictly used in this study during the process. It is a suitable approach for the study at this level to increase the knowledge and understandings of specific small-scale study from the perspective of professions and social workers.

3. Mode of Procedure

3.1 Selection of literature

Extensive literature studies were performed to help us with a better understanding of subject we were studying. The authors discussed with the professors at the starting point and decided what related literatures were needed in this study.

We used the following words in our search for relevant literature: *welfare state, social policy, social assistance, unemployment, Sweden, unemployment among young, causes for unemployed young, effects on unemployed young, public services in Sweden, welfare state*, to achieve our goal.

Numbers of databases were used, for example Sociological Abstracts, SAGE, Social Services Abstract and also Google Scholar. Other sources online were used as well to inspire the authors ideas of this study. Lots of hits were received and it became evident that these topics about this subject were well researched. But in the area of specific services conducted for unemployed youth in Sweden, earlier research was a little difficult to find and the authors noticed some books available but they had a general outline and were not specific for youth. The HIG-library provided us with the main part of the literature. The librarian helped us to literature even from other universities as well. Relevant course literature from our courses in research methods are also used in this study.

3.2 Sampling

The limitation of this method, which is also one of the limitations of a qualitative research method, is that the result cannot achieve high generalization.

The reason for choosing our interviewees from Social Services and Swedish Public Employment Office is that these are the two main public sectors that are the most relevant offices related to our

studies. Non-probability sampling (purposeful sampling) was the method of sampling the authors used. According to Patton (2002), the purpose of non-probability sampling (purposeful sampling) is to "select information-rich cases strategically and purposefully; specific type and some cases selected depends on study purpose and resources". (p.243) Considering limitation time and sources available for us, the advantage of this method was that it was an effective convenient way to conduct research at our level to fulfil the specific demands of our research. To take the full advantage of the information given by professionals and social workers that work with the unemployed youth, and combine it with our literature studies we could get our research questions answered as good as possible. The limitation this method, which is also one of the limitations of a qualitative research method, is that the result cannot meet high generalization.

3.3 Data collection

Conducting interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with the interviewees. The information generated through this kind of interviews gives the authors a better understanding of the informant's perspective on the themes that are under investigation. The authors used an interview guide organized around the three themes for this study and employed open-ended questions; there is a freedom to make on-going adjustments to the guide in response to the way the interview is progressing. The interviewees were first asked to describe the public services conducted and their daily job. The themes were then presented one by one and they were free to say upon each theme. The authors followed up with new questions according to their statements. The other questions designed in the interview guide asked if they were not answered during the discussions on each topic.

Secondary Data

Literature on Swedish Welfare System applied to give a basic and better understanding of the Swedish welfare system and the main public services conducted for unemployed young, and the earlier research focused on the causes and influences of unemployment as well as the outcomes or effectiveness of the public services conducted. This has set the framework for the themes of this study, the results presented and analysis.

3.4 Data transcription

All of the four face-to-face interviews were recorded with the use of two audio recorders, which frees the interviewers to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview. The words and their tone, pause, and are recorded in a permanent form that is possible to return to again and again for listening. (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009) The two recorders were used to avoid technical defects or human errors with one of them. Both of the recorders were tested on beforehand to make sure that they functioned well and to avoid background noise. The interviewers did not take many notes during the interviews since the taking of extensive notes may interrupt the free flow of the conversation.

The authors transcribed all the four interviews. The interviews were first transcribed verbatim and word-by-word by the authors and each author was responsible for all of them separately. Then the conversations are structured in a form amenable to the essays relevant themes.

The interviews were transcribed in this way to make the process more efficient and save time, but care were taken that both of the authors used the same procedures of transcriptions in order to make it possible to make combinations and cross-comparisons of the interviews. Since the two authors transcribed the four interviews independently, the authors carefully checked the transcripts word by word, and also had discussions with possible divergences to give a reliability check. The authors transcribed the conversations into a literary style to highlight nuances of the statements and help the communication of the meaning of the interviewees' statements to the reader in order to achieve the validity of transcription. (ibid) Ethics were also considered during the transcribing process, the names of our interviewees are replaced by other typical Swedish names to protect the confidentiality. The transcripts were also sent back to the interviewees for correction and thus confirm the statements. The whole transcribing process was finished within a week.

4. Tools of analysis

As before mentioned in the previous section about data transcription, the authors then analysed the texts with an abductive analysis method. This strategy is a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. We did have some pre-understanding about the topic of study through our previous research and our theoretical perspectives, and from that we designed three themes to analyse. We were not fully deductive, since we also were inspired by the empirical data what the interviewees described after the interview conducted. And not fully inductive either, which is letting the so-called

“facts” speak for themselves. (Patton, 2002, p470) Data gotten from the interviews is examined on basis of the empirical study and interpreted.

Meaning interpretations is another tool we used during the process of analysis. The previously developed deductive framework is not always conforming to the empirical data. Authors try to use abductive exploration and explanation to analyse the results with the combination of data gathered from qualitative interviews, secondary data from previous research and different theoretical perspectives.

5. *Essay Credibility*

5.1 Reliability

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), reliability pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings. Reliability was considered during the process of the research and on every stage. Reliability of qualitative research is much related to the quality of the researcher as an instrument of research. As we as researchers had few experiences and skills, it might have influenced the reliability of the study to some extent, but the authors tried their best to consider all possibilities to strengthen the reliability of this study. For example, leading questions were used during the qualitative interviews to enhance the reliability of this study through repeatedly confirming checks of the answers of the interviewees to verify the interviewers' interpretations. The two researchers who conducted this study transcribed the data independently to enhance the reliability the transcriptions into detail, such as counting the number of words to see if it was differences between the two transcriptions of the interviews, thus providing a quantified reliability check.

5.2 Validity

Validity is the goal of any research and should be carefully stressed all the time during the entire process of research. (Grinnell, 2001; Patton, 2002) Validity refers to the truth, the correctness and the strength of a statement. (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009) A social work researcher ought to seek to develop a correct understanding of empirical reality, by conducting studies, which could lead to valid knowledge about the world (Grinnell, 2001, p. 35). In this study, the researchers follow the research questions strictly in all the processes including the research design, the conduct of interviews, analysis and discussion. Questions were formulated carefully to meet the purpose of the study and the theoretical perspectives before the interview. The two authors did the transcription and analysis

separately, and discussed the different understandings comparing them with each other to identify the validity of interpretations of the meanings.

5.3 Generalization

Compared to quantitative research study, qualitative study may not have a high degree of generalization. (D'Cruz and Jones, 2004) It is not possible to draw a picture of universal generalization in a qualitative study with few participants in the research only depending on the understandings of single persons. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) But in this study, both four of our interviewees are the professions work with unemployed young who is familiar with this subject, which we believe that has a high comparatively generalization in this field.

6. *Ethical standpoints*

The authors interviewed professional social servants of their professional opinions and not of their private lives and feelings and thus they served as interviewees and not respondents. But even then the ethical issues were considered through the entire process from the very start of our investigation to the last report. In what follows, we discuss the ethical aspects of our research with four fields of traditional ethical guidelines for researchers addressed by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009): informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and the role of the researcher.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Before the interviews started, authors sent informed letters to all our interviewees to briefly introduce ourselves, tell them the research purpose and the procedures of the research project, the anticipated benefits and potential hazards of the research to get permission of participating in our interviews and their rights to abstain from or end participation in the research at any time as well, and their possible access to the transcriptions and the analysis of the this research. We also informed them that all the materials we got from the visits and the interview will be only used in our degree project, and we would make sure to keep our findings anonymous and confidentiality in research implies private data identifying the participants will not be disclosed. The names of our interviewees were replaced by other typical Swedish names in this research to protect the confidentiality. The three themes of our research were also described in the mail to make the participants better understand our research aim and better prepared.

Consequences

The consequences of a research need to be addressed with respect to possible harm to the participants as well as to the benefits expected from their participation in the research. (ibid)

The possible benefits such as to get more people know about and better understand Social Services and Swedish Public Employment Office and some of the services may be learnt by other countries were informed by the interview were conducted. As we did informant interviews, there is no possible harm to participants in our point of view, but we still informed our participants that they have the rights to withdraw their participating at any time they think it could be harmful for them. And the transcripts in more fluent written style were sent back to the interviewees for correction instead of the exact transcripts.

The Role of researcher

The authors are aware of the roles from researcher since the interviewer themselves are the main instrument for obtaining knowledge. Thus, authors kept the above mentioned ethical standpoints in mind through the entire process of this research, and were very careful to make sure our own personal opinions did not get in the way of our research. Outmost of what we could do to report and interpret everything from our participants' perspectives.

7. Limitations of the study

The study was planned in the preparation process to investigate the public services also from the perspective of unemployed young. For example, what do they think about the services they are getting, to what degree these services solving their problems and meeting the needs of them and so on. But unfortunately, since there were no responses after we asked the servants to help us mail their clients who are unemployed to ask if they would like to take part in our research, we could only conduct this study from the perspective of social workers and other professions working with unemployed young. It is not possible to generalize the results to a big population due to the small size of sampling comparing with a quantitative study. On the other hand this may be enhanced by depth and richness from the experience and the own perspectives of the servants to a comparatively generalization in this field.

Before the interviews were conducted, the participants were informed in advance that the interview would be conducted in English and we made sure that the interviewees from both institutions were able to understand and speak English. As English is, for interviewers and the interviewees, not mother language, there also maybe a limitation for this research. As discussed in earlier sections, the

authors therefore paying attention to this during the process of interview such as, listening very carefully and using two recorders to record the interviews. And also, the transcripts were sent back to the interviewees for correction and thus the statements and results were validated.

Time limitation is another significant problem of the study. Unemployment as a research area is a quite complicated field. Although authors tried to narrow this research questions from the beginning of the study, more and more factors and information that are correlated with each other around this subject came out during the whole process. The earlier research and literatures presented in this research and used in analysis of the results are just the tip of the iceberg. The dual purpose of gaining knowledge and increasing the understanding of this subject may have been achieved better if we had more time. So this limitation should also be considered when reading this essay.

Result and analysis

1. Brief introduction of interviewees

Sandra and Erika are two of the interviewees of our interview and both of them are responsible for the economy affairs in Social Services. There are 30 social workers in economy department and they are working with divided groups: people ages 18-25; people ages over 25; immigrations and refugees, and short time (temporary) only. Sandra works with people aged over 25 and Erika works with people aged 18-25. Eva and Jessica are our interviewees from Employment Office in Gavle. Eva is mainly responsible for the job matching process, and Jessica works in the area of young. The names presented here are not the real names of interviewees.

2. Theme one: Public services available for unemployed young people

Social Services

According to our interviewees, government is the one who decide how the social assistance system works, the standard of the minimum spending of individual⁵ live in Sweden is formulated by the government. Social assistance is given as supplementary the client's income less than the minimum standard. As Sandra stated,

⁵ The standard of the minimum spending of individual, see appendix.

“We always count every possible income their clients can get and then decide how much they can get from them”.

In order to get money from social assistance, people need to be registered at the employment office first, and they can get some benefits from them. But if clients are under 25, the money they can get is limited and it also depends on what education they have. The standard is about to regular lowest income citizen in Sweden. They need always compare that what regular lowest income citizen in Sweden can afford for those who want extra money.

It is not that easy for unemployed to get the financial support from Social Services and they need to apply for every month with papers that can prove their situation. According to the interviewees, first time the clients come to the agency, an individual meeting will be arranged for them to explain both the detailed rules and rights of the clients. How to create an application and what is needed to prepare it. A plenty of documents are needed, such as excerpts of the clients bank accounts and proof of their recent salaries, rent contract and so on. One more important and necessary condition is that the recipients must register at the employment office, so that they can prove that they are actively searching for jobs and trying hard to support themselves. The clients also need to show a list of all jobs you have applied for during the last month.

The social services have received much criticism saying that the only thing they are doing is to pay the money to people and nothing else. When Sandra talks about critical comments like that, she emphasized that,

“We are not just sitting here and giving the money to our clients and do nothing else. One of the biggest parts of our job is to encourage and motivate them to make some changes of their life themselves.”

Erick added,

“We went out to the field instead of just sitting in the office and waiting for them coming to us. Of course we have limited resources ourselves, but we also employed many field workers together with us to handle their problems. And the interventions are not only conducted to the clients themselves, we also work with their context like families, community they are living and so on. “

She also noted that,

“The unemployed young people should notice the importance of it other than find a way to get the benefits, and we help them with construct a picture of a better life they can get and try

to help them become more positive. Many of our clients are stressful when they become the recipients of benefits, pressure from not only themselves but also the society. We, as social workers, could understand that the clients themselves should not be the only one to blame, there are so many complicated problems contribute to this consequence. Therefore, we aware that we should not only work with individuals but also the structure even there still many limitations for us to make changes.”

Social services cooperate with different professionals, such as doctors, psychological therapists and other institutions such as the employment office, institution provides job to offer help for unemployed youth with adjusting to a harsh labour market at the same time fighting with negative emotions when they first the labour market as they lack experience All the efforts they are making are to help their clients get a better life not give that little money to them for a low-quality life.

“I work with youth whose experience are not that much and lost the right direction of their life in somewhat. I will give some suggestions for them not in force them to study or what they must do. Try to empower them. When I work with youth, I usually give a clear picture to them and explain the consequences of their behaviours since they know little from what they experienced at young age.” (Erika)

Sandra and Erika claim that young are more in the centre of their work and there are many special projects for unemployed young, for instance, there's one called 'Young to Employment' which is a short-time project conducted by the government. Also, they have specific convenient services for youth that they have an entrance for unemployed youth to find the staffs work in social services and employment office at the same time and the same place. They can just come and ask for help at any working time without any appointment.

Swedish Public Employment Office

According to our interviewees, the main job of Swedish Public Employment Office is to match those who need employees with those who are seeking work. It's both ways, either the companies put an advertisement on the system of employment office and then people apply for those jobs, or the companies just turn to Swedish Public Employment Office and ask them to pick out some people that they think are qualified for the job.

For the people who registered in Swedish Employment Office, they have to take the recommended jobs no matter where the job place is. If they refuse the recommended job, they cannot get the financial support from the Employment Office. As Jessica stated that,

“...but there are also some rules, like if the job is in Malmo and the client says ‘I don’t want to move to Malmo for this job’, there is no money for him. We just don’t say apply for this, we say you have to apply for this. The ‘a-kassa’ says if you have a chance to get money from working, you cannot get money from government.”

To get money from "a-kassa," people have to register in Swedish Unemployment Office and proves of actively seeking jobs are needed. Jessica gives an example that,

“You have to come here and tell us which jobs you have applied for, we can call and ask if they have received the application, if they said they haven’t got application from them, and then we stop to pay them.”

Youth is a special group in this kind of insurance that there are certain requirements for getting money from a-kassa. For example, it requires twelve months membership and certain work times before get unemployed. In the cases of young, they cannot meet the standards in general.

Swedish Public Employment Office also cooperates with Social Services and other institutions. When people get unemployed in Sweden, first they get money from Swedish Public Employment Office and if the amount of money they get cannot meet the minimum standards of living in Sweden, they get the rest money from Social Services. According to the interviewees, Employment Office also have agreements with companies and the community high school for adults which is called "Komvux" to arrange some education for their clients. They also work with another department at community level regarding work and education. People who go to that job coaching provided by that department are also registered in Employment Office and get money from Social Services.

The training takes three weeks to 20, or 40 weeks sometimes. And it works like this, people apply for job training they want to have, but their applications may get refused if they already have well education or working experience, the application for them to have more education in another area may considered as "extra things to do". As Jessica argued that,

“We are talking about how far you are from work, how long have you been without a job within six months, and you have education from the university, it is not that difficult for you to get a job. If you are old, and you had only one job when you were 18, and then you lost job, you have no education, you have just one experience, no one wants to hire you, and for those people, we give help.”

Summary of Results

Social Services and Employment Office both offer cash-based support to unemployed young, and to get benefits from these the registration at Employment Office is compulsory, seeking jobs actively is also required and an offer of "Suitable" job must be accepted. Social assistance is given by Social Services as a make up for the state's minimum spending of an individual account any possible income, and it includes the money unemployed people get from the Employment Office.

Social workers in the local social services are mainly responsible for reading the clients' applications and doing professional assessments about clients' social situations as well as work-related measures and the income support transfers. Apart from these, social workers there also offer help in consulting and motivating young to enter the labour market, get the education or live a better life on their own. Additionally, they are not only work at individual level but also with context like families, neighbours or even take policy reform into consideration at structural level.

The main job social servants in Employment Office do are to help the clients fill the application form, to match the job seeker and available jobs with each other as well as to arrange education or training to those who really need to get or improve their career qualifications in line with available jobs.

These two public sectors also cooperate with each other and other institutions or professionals. For example, Employment Office cooperates with companies and the adult high school "Komvux" to arrange job placement and education to unemployed people. Social Services cooperate with job coaching institution and social workers also cooperate with doctors, psychological therapist when offer consulting services to unemployed people, especially unemployed young.

Analysis

Negative impact on unemployment cannot be solved by social assistance or insurance only, in other words, financial support can only help with the minimum standard of lives instead of tackling the mainly fundamental problem is being unemployed. It is rational to have job-search and training programs in the logic of activation and municipal ambitions to cut unemployment. Necessary motivation and qualification enhancing are integrated with financial support to help unemployed young people get into the labour market in some way.

It is obvious that empowerment is an essential strategy for social work in almost every field. Several researchers have found connections among perceived control variables, skill development and

measures of participation and community involvement (Kieffer, 1984; Stone and Levine, 1985; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988). And these constructs are all consistent with empowerment theory.

One of the main respects in the theory is to enhance the power of people who lack it. (Adams, 2003) As we can see in the Result part, it is always emphasized by the interviewees and keep in their minds that the importance of making individuals or groups become able to control their own life and, to meet their own goals.

Also, work and training are often offered with the motivation that it is in the interest of the recipients. Unemployed people, especially unemployed young, is basically vulnerable group, which is also the reason social workers target on empowering them to make some changes and represent a picture of more possibilities in their future. These capacities developed by education or active measures may lead a success in labour market that people become independent, which is an example of empowerment strategy. And the psychological therapists are involved with giving the interpersonal psychological empowerment (Adams, 2003), which includes perceptions of control, competence and efficacy as basic elements that offer people with the initiative to engage in behaviours to influence desired outcomes. The international components includes both cognitive understanding and learning about one's environment, which factors may consider preparatory to participation because they are indirectly linked to the behaviours needed to influence outcomes.

In addition, the interventions are not only done by the personal level, and group level and community level, which is correspond with methods used in empowerment as well, according to Adams (2003). These levels interact with each other within various contexts. For example, support provided through meeting and consulting with unemployed young as group and sometime their families as well to diminish the negative feelings of unemployed young are facing such as isolation, shame, depression, lack of confidence and so on. Without collaboration with elements like family, people surrounding, society as a whole, policy and so on, the work with unemployed young as individuals is not sufficient. Let the unemployed young more involved and participated in the personal, social and political lives is what social workers make efforts to achieve.

From the perspective of welfare theory, which is not opposite to the empowerment theory, instead, it is complementary of that to understand the ways in which policies affect the well-being of individuals and society as a whole (Fitzpatrick, 2001, p4) and, both of them we believe are aimed to the better lives of people. Actually, social protection which includes social assistance, unemployment insurance (refers to cash-based support) and activation programs (refers to intervening programs) are

all provided under the premise of the welfare state. (Johansson in Kieselbach et al., 2006) The more structural and social problems-based explanations of unemployment were ultimately more influential and led to the development of the social policies, such as unemployment insurance system, to reduce the impact of unemployment.

A critical reputation about Social Services, or a wider welfare system, has been discussed by the public for a long time. Some people may argue that welfare state in Sweden is too generous, but on the other hand, the social servants thought that it is far more difficult for those unemployed than they realized. The standard of getting benefits is, in fact extremely strict. An example mentioned by our interviewees, the precondition of getting benefits is that actively searching for jobs all over Sweden which means every possible job should be taken regardless of your preference (maybe you prefer to live in Gävle but if the job is out of Gävle available for you, you should take it without any other option). Ideally, the welfare state is to protect people and help people with their own life, but in reality, many limitations tied up due to the restricted resources or maybe the generosity of welfare state itself. A discussion about why do we need welfare state will be presented in the later sections as well.

3. Theme two: On what basis are these public services conducted?

To work with the problems of unemployed young people

Personal behaviour and qualification make some significant of unemployment. All of our interviewees claim that main problem which contributes to unemployment is personal behaviour of the young and they do not fulfil the education, comparing with some critical statements about the gap between the education they get and what they need in labour market.

“Most of my clients (youth) have low education, and they even haven’t finish high school. They dropped out school and spent the time for example with some friends, stayed at home playing computer and so on. They just don’t want to go to school. We should motivate them to get education.” (Erika)

“Schools always take a lot of blame on unemployed young people’s life but I think the unemployed young people themselves need to take more responsibility than schools. You should always have a responsible for your own life. The whole society should look around what’s happening and what they can do as well instead of blaming all the time. And of course the schools can improve in some areas.” (Sandra)

“There is some young people sleep half a day and they are awake from the noon to late at night. Then they may play the computer, search Internet or go out with friends late in the night. They are not able to work in this structure of life and feeling tired.” (Jessica)

Another issue regarding to unemployment among young is that the influence of the people around which could be family, neighbourhoods and friends.

“If you have people around you who are unemployed and don't think it's naturally to study or work. If your parents are unemployed, you are also unemployed, and you think its nature. They just get used to it and it's nothing strange for them.” (Eva)

Erika pointed out similar statement,

“I work with the young people and many of them were born in this kind of system. Their parents and sometimes even their grandparents never worked; they don't have any education and personally I think those are the hardest to motivate because they don't know anything else. When they are children they only know that the social services can pay this and that and they think that, well, life is like this maybe. They don't know what kind of freedom they can get from paid jobs, which they can control, and the life of themselves. I don't think those young people are lazy or dark or something like that. It's quite often that the surroundings of them are unemployed, which influence them a lot.”

And Jessica picked up one example of her own life experience,

“I have been seeing my parents going out for work all my life, going out have routine, and coming home, having dinner together, going to bed at time to be able to have energy to get up next morning. And if you didn't see your parents work when you grow up, you think it is you do not know how it works.”

That is why motivations by social workers are needed to change their opinion about what another life could be instead of being restricted in a circle and to encourage them make differences about their life for a better future. Association with some other institutions, people (for example doctors, psychologists) are conducted coping with this specific health related problem.

“Most of the clients here are socially excluded to some extent, and they lose social lies when they become unemployed and some related health related problems and behaviours coming out all the time. We as professions also deal with their psychological problems for example depression, stressful or some other negative emotions: loss of self-esteem, alcohol problems, drug abuse and so on.” (Sandra)

According to the interviewees, the problems unemployed young have sometimes overlap with the causes of unemployment. And when considering about the causes, one significant aspect cannot be ignored with is economic problem. In recent years, the economy of Sweden has been under the pressure due to the economic recession. Changes of structure in the labour market: the numbers of jobs available are insufficient. As highlighted by the informant,

“It is hard time now in Sweden. Many factories shut down and move to other places, which mean a lot of jobs that don’t take much education have disappeared. We try to get the positive sides and encourage our clients to study. And we also have clients have the same education as we do but still unemployed that can also explain that it is hard time now even though they have high education.” (Erika)

And also the recruiting standards of the companies change over time. The employment competition has become fiercer, and the competitive environment has pushed the education requirements of recruitment higher and higher. The interviewees said that it is obvious that problems at structural level are the main reasons for the unemployment but the services they provided are more at personal level.

“The big difference between today and 40 years ago is the companies want people with education, it doesn’t have to be university, but they want to hire people at least they have gone through high school.” (Eva)

“When a lot of people have bachelor degree, they push the level higher and higher, and then you have master and then you have the next level. The gap between people who have education and who do not have education is getting bigger and bigger.” (Jessica)

To meet the needs of unemployed young people

When they become unemployed, financial protection provided by welfare state is necessary for them to survive. Register in Employment Office can get benefits from both “a-kassa” and the government. They can also get some benefits from Social Services as we mentioned in previous section.

Support and encourage is essential for unemployed young as stated by Erika,

“They are more vulnerable since they are young. Support and encourage by someone makes them feel a little bit satisfied with what they are suffering now and what they should do for a better future.”

Some of the young came to Social Services for help have bad relation to their original family and are kicked out from home. The reasons we mentioned about being unemployed are somewhat the

reasons they have bad relations with their original family, such as they dropped out school, alcohol and drug problems, problematic behavioural patterns sometimes and so on. Erika said that,

“They dropped out schools doing nothing every day and their parents said ‘No, you must live on yourself’ and kicked them out. We work with families in these cases but it not always work. Some of them may live with their friends and some of them even have no place to live. That is the reality of many and we need to help them with getting the contract of apartment if there are no other solutions.”

There are some statements conclude that the “truly needs” of unemployed people are the benefits instead of finding a job. Eva argues against that point of view,

“Some of them maybe, but it does not work like that, if they do not want to have a job, they do not get money either. They have to be active.”

Sandra and Erika hold same views as well,

“I think a lot of people in Sweden or from other backgrounds have a bad knowledge about this group of people. Especially for the people who didn’t have contact with social services before think that our clients are lazy or just live on their tax money. Of course there always be people who do not want to work and trying to pull the system, but it is a small group I should say.”

Erika added,

“I think generally it is not fun to come here and it is not much money that they can get. When they come here to apply every month they feel ashamed. Most of them are willing to support themselves and manage on their own because it is not free to use the money comes from us. There are rules needed to follow and we will check the account every month.”

Jessica also mentioned that it is not free to use that amount of money got from the Social Services.

“When you get money from Social Services, you have to sell your apartment, and rent an apartment that is really cheap. You cannot have a cell phone, computer; everything that is able to sell you should sell it. When you like have nothing left and then they pay you. And you have to show that you use that amount of money to do really necessary to survive, you have food, clothes and go to the doctor’s, but nothing else to do.”

Moreover, Eva in the Employment Office noted,

“But the money they get either from “a-kassa”, here and Social Services are limited, and there are also rules for them to use this amount of money. I shall say their main needs are to be employed, people can apply for jobs in our system either here in our computer or at home.”

It is not difficult to find according to our interviewees that for most situations, main needs of unemployed people are to be employed and support themselves instead of depending on the benefits only.

Summary of results:

All the services provided by Social Services and Employment Office are conducted to work with the problems of unemployed young and meet their needs. The problems they have on the other hand could be the causes of being unemployed as well as the effects on unemployment. According to the interviewees, the most significant cause of unemployment pointed out by interviewees is economic recession, changes in labour market and size of youth labour market, which is at structural level instead of personal level that they cannot control. Despite the structural reasons, the main causes which contribute to the unemployment among young are as follows:

- Low level of job qualification
- Affect by family, neighborhoods and circumstances (most have bad relation with family or not supported by the family)
- Personal behavior problems (like lack of structure of life, alcohol and drug problems)

The negative impacts from unemployment are as follows:

- Circle of poverty
- Social exclusion
- Health related problems especially mental wellbeing and psychosocial problems

The needs of most unemployed young people are as follows:

- Get a job
- Financial protection to survive
- Support, guidance and encouragement
- Special needs for apartment in some cases

Analysis:

What we could see from result is that unemployment among youth is really a multidimensional issue, referring to causes are complicated and diverse needs are called for them. Thus, working with this, interventions conducted in various ways with different backgrounds as well as at different levels. To start with, it is evidenced by plenty of researchers and also from our result that the increasing unemployment in Sweden is mainly caused by the economic recession. (e.g. Fregert and Pehkonen, 2008; Niall, 1997) Aggregate demand in labour market influences young labour as well as adults but especially for young, stated by Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs (SNBUA). Therefore, apart from helping with economy growth at structural level, policy reforms and innovation aimed to increase paid work are also important.

If we control the structural causes, unemployment is mainly influenced by both educational and vocational job qualification. (e.g. Kieselback et al., 2006; Niall, 1997; Strauss, 2011) It is quite obvious that without knowledge, skills and training in line with the requirements of the labour market, getting a job then seems impossible especially for youth who are in the so called “job queues” even when they are “qualified enough”, adults are in the head of queue. Therefore, effective measures against unemployment is trying to increase qualification by motivating them to get an education or providing them certain kind of education and training, so that they can do available jobs in the labour market.

Young people who are vulnerable and whose attitude and behaviours are easier affected by circumstances than adults, such as their family, friends and neighbourhoods. Surveys (e.g. Bradbury et al., 1986) showed that the youth unemployment rate is higher by those who have members in family or people surroundings being unemployed or depend on social help. Moreover, as Galster (2010) concluded that, neighbourhoods could influence young people in terms of affecting young people’s income by shaping attitudes and behaviours towards education, labour force participation and criminal activities as well. Also, alcohol and drug problems are along with this in many cases. They are in a process of transition during a specific period of life and it is a time for them to enhance capacity to understand and act on the environment, do the right as well as good things. If they are born in the system of unemployment and they may think that life should be like this under “disorder” and poverty which could also explain the situation. It becomes a kind of “culture” in the system from one generation to the next. (Kieselback et al., 2006; Galster, 2010) Services are then conducted for unemployed young to support, guide and help them with social circumstances in which they live. Social workers should go out to the field to hear the voices from clients as well as circumstances

around them, which is also a central respect of empowerment theory that is taking into consideration what clients think and empower them.

Financial deprivation seems to be the most direct and obvious negative effect on unemployed young. Social protection (social assistance and unemployment insurance) as the implication of welfare state provided almost the last life-saving straw for those have few income to survive. Furthermore, Paid work is crucial for the individuals not only because it provides essential income but also provides psychological benefits, which is a sense of personal and social identity. There are complicated links between these dimensions. In general, unemployed young have a high risk of health related problems especially for mental health and psychosocial problems leading to an increase in depression and low quality of life, but also for objective health indicators such as higher risk of suicidal behavior. (e.g. Hagquist, 1998; Novo, 2000; Nordenmark, 1999; Flatau et al., 2000;) The relationship can work from both dimensions, mental health problems in combination with other problems make people more difficult to find paid work. Similarly, as claimed by Björklund (1985), being unemployed leads to a loss of self-esteem or self-worth, which although further contributes to unemployment. According to the interviewees, social workers are not isolated to tackle this situation; instead, network with other sectors or professions is an essential strategy.

Apart from negative effects discussed above, long-term unemployment contributes to more serious consequences in many cases like social exclusion. (Hammer, 2000; Julkunen, 2002) This concept is not something new in social work and always challenges social workers working from both perspective of empowerment theory and welfare theory. From perspective of empowerment theory, socially excluded unemployed young could be regarded as a marginalized group that some images on them are indeed socially constructed, tackling with this, individual empowerment is not enough by like capacity building, motivation and encouragement while collective empowerment concerns with people gain collective control over their lives to meet their interests as a group by working with structural aspects. (Adams, 2003) Oppression in this case is actually power inequality with politically, socially, economically or sometime culturally dominant group. Even though the interviewees did not mention the concept of anti-oppression practice or empowerment as a strategy of social work, in reality, they are actually working consistence with these theories to transfer power, to assist their desire and eventually move in emancipator direction. From perspective of welfare theory, welfare state refers to both redistribution and social justice. (Fitzpatrick, 2001) We can see from the result that at practically level, services provision also complies with principles in welfare theory such as to always pursuit human rights, justice, equality and better life for clients.

4. Theme three: Outcome of these services

Social Services:

The most direct outcome of services conducted for unemployed young is to what degree of possibility for them being involved into the labour market.

“It is hard to say that whether they are involved in labour market or not, but there is a big possibility for the clients to be a short time unemployed in my group. Because they are young and they can get a job or education or something like that. But there are also some of them stay here and when they grow up they change to another group that Sandra is responsible for. It is hard to say because we have all types of clients and it really depends.”(Erika)

All of the interviewees mentioned that they hope to meet every client more often but it is just impossible with so many cases and lacking of resources. When they were asked if they have a free hand, what better methods would be used to work with unemployed young then.

Sandra said that,

“For young people who have a big possibility to be involved into the labour market, the better method for them is to encourage and motivate them to study more and more, actively search a job to get a better life instead of just staying here for benefits. We think that more special programs should be conducted to educate them in a better way to increase their knowledge, skills and capacity and so on. That’s the most important thing I think. When young people first change a role from a student, they need to adjust and understand more. And we hope that there will be more workers work for clients here in Social Services so that we can handle all of the cases in a better way. And many of the young people have family problems and if we have free hand now, work more with the family and maybe some community work with circumstances are essential as well.”

According to the interviewees, most of unemployed young people expect for a better life in the future with the efforts of themselves other than live on the benefits. Sandra also mentioned that,

“It’s really hard to live only depend on that amount of money, so it doesn’t mean that you come here year after year and you have a better life. If you absolutely cannot support yourself in any other way, this is the last chance for you to survive.”

Swedish public employment office:

Employment Office as the largest employment agency in Sweden contributes to a well-functioning labour market. It is the most common and easiest way for unemployed youth to be involved into labour market in Sweden. According to the interviewees, the services provided by them are the implication of Swedish labour market policy with the supports to those who are unemployed with different labour market programs, which functioned very well. Eve highlighted that,

“The matching measures to create those conditions in which the job seeker and available jobs are matched with each other really provide efficient and convenient for people come here. They can use our system to apply for jobs and we also help them with some suggestions. It is the most common method in Sweden, when you become unemployed or maybe underemployed also registered here and most of them will find jobs in the end.”

Jessica said that if they want to get benefits, they need to be actively seeking jobs, which means that if they do not apply for jobs they will not get money. And in that certain situation the preference of willing of individuals cannot be considered much if they want to get the money they should try to best to get a paid work. An example pointed out by Jessica,

“It is not possible for you to say that ‘I don’t want this job because I need to move to Stockholm. I have my family here and I want to stay in Gävle.’ If there is any chance for you to get a job, you should go for it otherwise there is no more benefits on you.”

According to our interviewees, the motivation for unemployed young to get education or a job does not work for everyone. Jessica says,

“One big thing is to make these people who do not have education, to understand how important it is to get education, to motivate them to start to study. But it does not work for everyone.”

And she also claimed that compared to other countries Sweden has a better benefit system, as she told,

“Africa for example, if you don’t have a job, you get no money and you get no food, it’s really a big benefit for people in Sweden, but everyone is too used to it, they think it as a punishment when we say go and get yourself a job.”

People may get hired when they fulfil their certain study in a company, which Employment Office cooperates with. As Eva tells,

“They educate people in company in the special work, and then they are going to hire that person too after may be three months study there.”

Job qualification is really important and if they have free hand of making policy, they'd like to focus more on that in the future.

Summary of results:

In very general summary, it could say that services provided by Social Services and the Employment Office have positive impacts. Social assistance and cash-based support from Employment Office contribute to reduction of poverty among unemployed young or a small increase of the labour market attachment among unemployed young with a small position, and the successful labour market programs give a small contribution as well.

However, the life depends on the benefits only is not that good and it is hard to live on that little amount of money. Unemployment is not an outcome of generosity of Swedish welfare system, and most of the unemployed young are indeed prefer to be employed. It to some degree depends on the individuals about whether they are employed or not, but there is a high possibility for unemployed young to be short time unemployed that either they get a job or enter education. Structural policies are needed to reduce unemployment among young, marginalisation and exclusion caused by unemployment. The better local services can be conducted by focusing more on increase the capacity of individuals, work with family and circumstances and more individual or group casework with unemployed youth.

Analysis:

Social assistance and unemployment benefits on the one hand could help individuals getting rid of material poverty. Additionally, argued by the definition of welfare, to fulfil basic needs are accepted by most. Of course welfare state cannot content with everything you prefer and the benefiting from the welfare state has always dependent on a degree of participation in the labour market. (Fitzpatrick, 2001) The redistribution of income is to some extent based on what you have contributed, so that there are always limitations. For instance, unemployment benefits for unemployed young is pretty little since they might never getting involved into labour market before or only for a short time.

Social protection is essential, but on the other hand it does not solve the fundamental problems concerning poverty as well as unemployment. Welfare theory also explained that it attempts to ameliorate but not eliminate to poverty. (Fitzpatrick, 2001) And then labour market policy designed for unemployed mainly target to deal with fundamental problems of unemployed people at both micro and macro level. According to Giertz (2004), activation programs seem to at best have moderate effects for persons with marginal labour market positions and structural policies are needed

to reduce marginalisation and exclusion. In terms of structural policies reducing marginalisation and exclusion, results showed that interviewees are merely reflect on this instead they are talking more on individual level since their work is mainly conducted at individual level. However, indeed authors suppose that even though the interviewees didn't mention concepts like tackling with marginalization and exclusion during the interviews, these are still part of their work in one or another way. As trained social work professions, it is significant to keep in mind with ideas of making changes economically, socially as well as politically.

Even though results showed that services functioned well to some extent to help the unemployed young get involved in the labour market, which was also evidenced by Niall (1997) that youth unemployment durations are somewhat shorter than for adults. It still has limitations as a measure to tackle unemployment and depends on characteristics of different individuals in which many factors could influence like motivation of getting a paid job, educational capital, social capital and so on.

Since tackling with the unemployment concerned as a definitely multidimensional problem at different levels is obviously a difficult and complicated process, the outcome of the services should not only be discussed under a simple question whether they are employed after receiving these services. From social work perspective, additional problems to this phenomenon should be considered carefully when working with unemployed young, like related behaviour problems, health problems, social relations and so on. As authors discussed in previous section, the negative effects of unemployment on individuals could on the other hand be the causes of being unemployed as well, which consists many crossed and overlapping aspects that social workers should work with. Therefore, better methods should be used in their work is to conduct more individual, family and community work instead of "document work" to sit and make the decision lined by the government standards.

It is a large amount of public spending on these benefits in Sweden and our interviewees think it cannot be cut to a lower level since it is necessary to give all inhabitants a decent economical life situation. Without the transfer payments of the state, many young in Sweden would have had an income that placed them under the relative poverty line. (Gustafsson in Kieselbach et al., 2006) But there are also some supports from public for the cuts of the spending on benefits. Alternative attitudes towards social policy and welfare state were presented in our previous research part. (e.g. Fraile and Ferrer, 2005) Results showed that government does not lower the benefits or makes it harder to get, but the qualification of getting the benefits is counted carefully.

Arguments concerning whether the social assistance of generosity of welfare state influence the unemployment rate discussed both in the interviews and by previous research presented in former sections (e.g. Bertrand et al., 2000; Brännström and Stenberg, 2007). As authors discussed in theme two about the “truly need” of unemployed that many studies or public argued about, results on the contrary showed that from the interviewees’ perspective, their clients are more willing to get a job instead of depending on the benefits. But some may still doubt the motivation of unemployed young which believe that the benefits not only reduce recipients’ incentive to work but also affects their possibilities on a future labour market. (e.g. Bertrand et al., 2000) A critical comment on it is that they get used to the welfare benefits and will become too dependent upon the welfare system of the welfare state. In the other word, the benefits will increase the unemployment. From our point of view, we thought it might be more effective to take both perspectives into consideration, which are individuals should not be fully blamed as individual choice to be unemployed meanwhile services should conducted in a way to empower and motivate them more for controlling their life all by themselves.

Discussion

1. Summary of the results and connection to the research question and aim

The purpose of this research was to study services available for unemployed young in Sweden with respect to two main public sectors in order to increase the knowledge as well as make a better understanding of the phenomena of unemployment. We conducted this research by formulating three appropriate themes in advance, which are all relevant to our aim. These were: a) what are the services, b) why are these services conducted, and c) the outcome of these services. By interviewing the social workers and professions in two public sectors (Social Services and Swedish Public Employment Office), we got the results that we have presented in this essay.

To start with, introduction of services available for unemployed young presented as theme one of this paper. The result showed that Social Services and Employment Office together offer cash-based support regarded as social protection to individuals or families. However, in order to get the support, unemployed young should actively seeking jobs that registration at Employment Office is compulsory. The amount of benefits counts the every possible income unemployed could have and compare it with the standard of minimum spending each month in Sweden. Additionally, the Employment Office mainly responsible for job matching, and arrange education or training to those who really need to get or improve their career qualifications in line with available jobs. Additionally, social servants from both sectors also offer services like consulting, motivate and empower

unemployed young to get education or fight for a better future and maximize the quality of their lives. Social work professions not only work at individual level but also with context like families, neighbours or even take the pressure or bad image from society as a whole, policy reform into consideration at structural level. Network with diverse sectors at different levels is another essential strategy utilized.

Furthermore, after understanding preliminary knowledge about those services, in theme two we discussed deeply about why these services conducted or in another word on what causes these services conducted by dividing it into to patterns, one is to work with the problems that unemployed young have and the other is to meet their needs. To sum up, the causes of unemployment are complicated including economic recession, changes in labour market and the size of youth labour market more likely the structural problems as well as at individual level that are low job qualification, effect by context like families, personal behaviour problems such as lack of structure in daily life, alcohol and drug problems. Meanwhile, all these together could contribute to circle of poverty, social exclusion, and wellbeing problems. Moreover, the results showed that the financial support to survive as well as support guidance and encouragement are what the unemployed young need, and the most significant one is to get job.

After all, we presented the outcome of the services from the social servants' perspective as well as what they think that better measures could be. Many interesting questions were discussed under this section. Results showed that the life depend on benefits only is not that good and it is hard to live on that little amount of money. Neither economic nor social identity could be embodied being unemployed so that most of the unemployed young are willing to get a paid job. It is difficult to count whether they are involved in the labour market or not after series of services helping them, but according to our interviewees a huge help for them to get a job if they really want. Interviewees thought that better interventions could focus more on increasing job qualification of people to enhance human capitals; working with family and circumstances more is complementary to individual work.

The subject we investigated gave us a plenty of knowledge and it was not a sensitive or crabbed topic. The empirical data gotten from interview is quite clear, structured and understandable and there are not many alternative interpretations of the results.

2. Comparison with previous research

The results of main services we were investigated in this study are much more on the practical level from the perspective of social workers and professions and focused on the work in practice. And the earlier research and literatures we presented are more to introduce the system in Sweden at structural level. In another word, the results given by the interviewees in this study is more focused and specific on the perspective of interviewees, and the earlier research and literature review showed a broader and structured picture of the issues around the services conducted for unemployed. This helped us to understand with both experience of interviewees and services available for unemployed young in Sweden in a more comprehensive way and gave a complement to the results.

Both the previous research and the results showed that structural reasons is the most significant cause of unemployment, but it didn't discuss in details in this study since this economic reasons are not managed in the area of social work. Services we studied are mainly conducted to work with the problems the unemployed young have and the needs of them.

A plenty of previous research claimed that the personal reasons for unemployed youth shouldn't stress all the time excepting economical reason. But our results showed that the personal reasons such as job qualification should of course be considered but not supposed to blame the unemployed young completely. Cultural/social factors are also the important causes according to the results, which have also been proved in some previous research. Comparing with the subject on the effects on unemployed young, a high consistency between earlier research and results of the study showed. Financial deprivation, social isolation and health wellbeing are the main effects on the unemployed young. In total, the results and earlier research have high degree of similarities together to help us explain why these services are conducted, and important as well as necessary of conducting these services presented.

Both the results and previous research believe that unemployed young have a big possibility to involve into the labour market after series of services conducted for them. And according to our results, it is much depends on the individual themselves including the motivation of them, personal characteristics and so on.

In addition, authors found that there are debates on the social assistance and benefits for unemployed people providing by the generous welfare system in Sweden. Some of them support and some on the other hand think that may increase the unemployment in some extent and it is not the effectiveness approach to solve fundamental problems that unemployed young have. The results hold out the argument that it is not possible that the benefits can ever lower even though the state does cost a lot

on this every year and the unemployment could not increase due to the generous welfare system in Sweden. One reason for the benefits can never lower is that it is hard to live on such little money in Sweden. Life under benefits only is not that good and even hard for the clients. Also proved in many previous researches that the benefits given are only to meet the minimum living standards of citizens and the state has the primary responsibility that its citizens achieve a tolerable standard of living. But it doesn't mean that results object the statement about it is important to solve the fundamental problems unemployed young have such as, low job qualification and social capital effects. What the results express is that both the benefits and the other services are significant to combat together with unemployment.

Except for what we discussed above, another main difference between previous research and results is that about the outcome of the services provided. The results are more tend to be positive that these services will help unemployed youth in many ways. But the previous research holds both positive and negative perspective that also some limitations within these measures are used now.

3. Methodology discussion

As mentioned in methodology chapter, the study was planned to interview some unemployed young during the preparation process, but unfortunately interviews were not success to conduct. Then, authors decided to interview social workers and professions working with unemployed young since authors considered that by reaching our aim it is important to know their experiences and points of view. Questions like: What do they think about the services they are getting and to what degree these services solving their problems and meeting the needs of them, and what better services could be to help them. Valid feedback and evaluation from the service users can help with open and broader perspectives of the subject.

English is not the mother language of both authors and the interviewees so that it could be a limitation of this study. Authors considered about this during the whole process of the investigation by paying carefully attention to listening, recoding, confirming, checking and transcription in order to tackling with this limitation to ensure the credibility of the study to the most possibility. Put it into another view, nevertheless due to this thesis and the education program authors have are all in English, it could be more relevant to utilize English during the interview since in that since the words would be given in their real meanings instead of translating some other language into English, which has a risk that some words may be replaced by others that not their "truly mean". It also increases the credibility of the study.

Unemployment is a really complicated subject, which related to many other social problems that social work usually tackle with, for example, human wellbeing, psychological problems, social relations, social exclusion, and poverty and so on. Various services are much related to the diverse social policies and welfare system in the context of Sweden as a generous welfare state. For the authors with another culture background, it takes time to get to the bottom about how it works in a welfare state among different institutions at different levels. There are many links between various factors and a mass of information comes out during the process of the study even though authors try to narrow it down from the very beginning of the study. The dual purpose of gaining knowledge and increasing the understanding of this subject may be achieved more well by a wider range of time.

Authors chose the most relevant earlier research and literatures available for us in English in this essay but it still some of the sources are hard to reach. For example, the outcome of services provided for unemployed young, how many of them get back to the labour market after the programs. And also lack of timeliness, we found some relevant research concerning the outcome of the services in Sweden but were investigated long time ago. This limitation may be eliminated by authors can get the access to the sources in Swedish.

4. Suggestions for future study

Authors suggest that further study related to public services conducted for unemployed young people could have two directions. One suggestion is to focus on the perspective of unemployed youth as service users. What do they think are the main problems for them to be unemployed and the effects on them, also what they think about the services they are getting, to what degree help with their problems and meet their needs, and what the better methods could be for instance to evaluate the services. And in this way, social workers can get more reflections on how to meet this problem in the future.

Another suggestion for future studies could be to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the social work institutions organised by state with some other services or interventions provided by non-governmental organizations. This study mainly targeted to the services conducted by the public sectors, organized both on a community and on a state level. In this case, problems like some social workers play a role in the public sector as gate-keepers for the clients to decide whether they can get the benefits or not by bureaucratic “document work”, which hardly seems like what typical social work should do. But on the other hand, the strong financial and political support by the welfare

system in Sweden helps with all the services conducted. So the further study could be a discussion about this subject and to explore a wider picture for achieving the goal of helping the unemployed young people improving their situation.

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Appendix I

Interview Guide

Theme one:

What kinds of services are conducted for the unemployed youth?

What programs and methods are in use now? Are these programs and methods effective?

What methods do you use to get the unemployed young people's motivation to the labour market? Is this included in the services you provided?

Theme two:

Why these services are conducted?

How do you define the needs of unemployed youth?

What do you think are the main problems of unemployed youth?

Theme three:

What do you think about the outcome of the services they are getting now?

How is the life of unemployed young who are depending on the benefits only? Are they able to support themselves?

Do they get into the labour market?

Do you think that services meet the needs of them and help them with their problems?

Are there better methods do you think? If you have free hand what would you do then?

Appendix II

Partly norms of the standard of the maximal money that unemployed young people can get from Social Services presented below. Riksnorm och dess fördelning på olika poster 2012 (National norm and its distribution to the various items in 2012)

PERSONLIGA KOSTNADER (Personal production cost)		
	VUXNA (Adult)	
	Ensamstående (single)	Samboende (cohabitation)
Livesmedel, alla måltider (food)	1670	2700
Kläder-skor (clothes-shoes)	560	1120
Fritid-lek (leisure-play)	430	870
Hygien (hygiene)	260	580
Summa personliga kostnader	2920	5270

GEMENSAMMA HUSHÅLLSKOSTNADER (Common household expenses)				
	ANTAL MEDLEMMAR I HUSHÅLLET (Number of members of household)			
	1 pers	2 pers	3 pers	4 pers
Förbrukningsvaror (consumables)	100	130	230	260
Dagstidning, telefon, TV-licens mm (newspapers, telephone, TV license etc.)	820	900	1070	1220
Summa gemensamma kostnader	920	1030	1300	1480

For our target group, which is unemployed young people it is usually 2920+920+ rent, electricity, health care and day care.

