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Department of Social Work

International Master of Science in Social Work

**YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN GOTHENBURG (SWEDEN)
AMONG NATIVE SWEDES AND IMMIGRANTS:
A Qualitative Study of Labour Market
Exclusion**

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'The most basic level of full employment could be achieved when all people at least have the opportunity to work...'

Russell Nixon

ABSTRACT

The current research studies the youth unemployment in Gothenburg (Sweden), among native Swedes and immigrants. The qualitative investigation explores and analyzes two main questions: 1) what are the causes of youth unemployment, from the perspective of young unemployed and social workers; and 2) what role does the immigrant background play in affecting employment opportunities and experiences for immigrant youth. The semi-structured interview has been the main method used, integrated with documentary review and participant observation. The findings reveal that main causes of youth unemployment can be divided into three groups, categorized according to the perspectives of young unemployed, Swedes and immigrants, and respectively social workers. From Swedish youths' point of view, the main causes of youth unemployment are: lack of work experience and education, state policies and intervention, lack of information, and discrimination, related as a reason for immigrant youths. From the perspective of immigrant youngsters, the main causes are: lack of work experience and education, low level of Swedish language skills, and few or lack of connections and recommendations. And, according to social workers, reasons of youth unemployment include all the described factors, such as: lack of work experience and education, social and psychological problems, state policies and intervention, discrimination and low level of Swedish language skills related to immigrant youths, and few or lack of connections and recommendations.

Keywords: youth unemployment ♦ causes ♦ natives and immigrants ♦
youth labour market ♦ exclusion and discrimination

CHAPTER 1

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Young people represent the future leaders of tomorrow, and if we fail educating and employing them in a manner that would strengthen and build our society, we might end up in a world without hope. Young people have been always one of the central topics of interest for many researchers. This interest and concerns are justified, as youth is “a formative transition” from one to another stage, meaning education, entering the labour market and family creation (Halleröd and Westberg, 2006). When young people encounter such problems as unemployment, economic hardship, lack of education, uncertainty about their life, the questions arise regarding their future, which are of vital significance for the future of the society, as well.

Focusing on the area of labour market participation, young people represent the group that encounter most of the barriers for integration in the job market, resulting in high rates of youth unemployment. It is very interesting that this phenomenon is encountered in both, developing countries, as Moldova and Afghanistan, where the authors come from, and developed countries, as Sweden, this fact also raising our interest for this problem.

Our theoretical-empirical study focuses on the problem of youth unemployment in Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden, mainly we would like to analyze the situation of native Swedish youths and immigrant youths¹. Our research was conducted through a qualitative investigation of the causes of youth unemployment from the perspective of young unemployed people and social workers who work with young unemployed people.

We believe that the results of this research would be beneficial for young people and would serve as a guideline for social workers, in order to prevent the repeated unemployment spell and improve the services provided to young unemployed. Moreover, it revealed information on the current needs, expectations and aspirations of the unemployed youth, both of native Swedes and the immigrants. Respectively, it is assumed that the research findings would have a high impact on municipal level.

¹ In this particular research, we discuss about two groups of respondents, Swedish youths and immigrant youths. **Swedish youths** are referred to young people, who were born in Sweden and have ‘Swedish parents’. **Immigrant youths** are generally referred to young people, born in any other country than Sweden, or those who were born in Sweden, but have, both or at least one, parent(s) born in any other country than Sweden. We use them in this formulation for the purpose of our study, without any intention to polarize the two groups, as actually both groups can be Swedish citizens.

1.2. PROBLEM AT ISSUE

The ability to secure full and meaningful employment is a necessary condition for societal cohesion. Effective access to labour market participation has been threatened, however, by the high incidence of unemployment, particularly regarding youth (Shields, 2002). According to the European Employment Strategy, the main focus nowadays is activation of young people in transition from school to work (Myrhed, 2006). Sweden, as a member of European Union, implements programmes for young people in various fields. Specifically, youth unemployment and late labour market entry are of growing concern in the Swedish policy discussion (Forslund and Nordström Skans, 2006).

Despite active implementation of the current legislation and various services provided, European Union Statistics (www.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu) show that the rate of youth unemployment in Sweden has increased from 11,9 per cent in 2001 to 22,1 per cent in 2006. These figures have drawn our attention and concern about the topic of youth unemployment. On the other hand, Sweden is today one of the countries that receives a big number of immigrants. It is shown that by 2002, the proportion of immigrants in the population of Sweden was about 12 percent, and approximately 20 percent of all individuals living in Sweden today have an immigrant background (Bask, 2005). The latter fact stimulates a sense of curiosity and motivates us to focus on immigrant youths' unemployment, as well.

So, taking into account the above-mentioned facts, we consider that it is important to conduct a qualitative study for evaluation of the causes of youth unemployment among the native Swedes and immigrants in Gothenburg. Halleröd and Westberg (2006) admit that, "we lack the knowledge necessary to determine whether our worries about young people and their future are justified, and, perhaps even more importantly, to determine whether we are worried about the right things".

1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To analyze the causes of youth unemployment in the Swedish context, from the perspective of young unemployed and social workers, in order to provide guidelines for successful prevention strategies of youth unemployment. This study will also enable us to begin to understand the ethnic dynamics, among other factors, affecting youth in their attempts to integrate into the job market.

Research questions

1. What are the causes of youth unemployment in Gothenburg (Sweden)?
 - a) The perspective of young unemployed, Swedes and immigrants;
 - b) The perspective of professional social workers, specializing in youth unemployment.
2. What role does the immigrant background play in affecting employment opportunities and experiences for immigrant youth, thus excluding them from successful labour market participation?

CHAPTER 2. EARLIER RESEARCH

2.1. Youth Unemployment in Sweden

Before making a description of our main topics with regards to earlier research, we would like to give a few definitions on the main concepts that will be used in this study:

Officially unemployed are persons without work, but willing and able to work and looking for a job, often measured as a percentage of the labour force. *Labour force* is the total number of persons employed and officially unemployed (National Institute of Economic Research, www.konj.se). *Young unemployed* are persons aged between 18 and 25 years old, who were not employed during 100 days and are looking for a job and further educational opportunities (Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen, Mölndal Stad, Field practice, March 2007). *Unemployment rate* is the share of unemployed persons in the total number of active persons in the labour market (European Union, <http://europa.eu.int>).

Youth unemployment is a big concern for many countries, including Sweden. According to Giertz (2004), an increasing number of youth has employment problems with recurrent movement from temporary jobs, studies and labour market programs. The topics about young people, in general, and youth unemployment, specifically, have drawn attention of many researchers, who focused on various aspects and angles when analyzing them.

One of the researches related to the situation of youth in Sweden is a longitudinal study which analyzed what factors determine the economic situation among the young, and what aspects in youth have a long-term impact on their economic situation as adults. The main results are: young people's economic situation says little about their current standard of living or future ability to earn money. As well, labour market situation and household characteristics during youth are relatively unrelated to development later in life. However, when we speak about long-term unemployment, it affects young people's economy in the long run (Halleröd and Westberg, 2006).

A qualitative study was conducted by Lily Myrhed (2006), who analysed how the political parties, relate to questions of young individuals in Sweden, particularly to the question of youth unemployment. Units of analysis were the parliamentary parties and their youth organizations. Conclusions were that young individuals in society have a limited impact on the appearance of political parties. No party has a stable responsiveness to questions of young individuals; only three out of the seven youth organisations had the current youth unemployment on the agenda. All parties had suggestions on how to combat unemployment, but not all had suggestions directed towards youth in particular. We would like to mention that youth unemployment is seen as a problem in Sweden, but little intervention is made on the decision-making level, in order to find solutions to this problem.

With regards to youth policies, starting with January 1st 2007, the programmes designed for youth aged between 18-25 years old have been stopped, due the budget cuts from the state. Previously, the programmes offered to young unemployed individual support in

writing their curriculum vitae (CV) and job applications, as well as field practice (*praktik*) according to their interests and skills. Before, young unemployed met 3 days per week with employment officers from Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen² for job search sessions, with individual counseling. Nowadays, these meetings are organized once per week, together with adults (field study, Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen, Mölndal municipality, March 2007). As we can observe, the Government has as a main purpose to involve young people in work activities, by all means. The effects of the new legislation on young unemployed will be further presented, in the empirical data analysis.

However, we would like to support the results obtained in the above-described facts, mainly that youth policies focus on fast shift of young unemployed to job market. The strongest argument is the new program introduced by the new Government, starting with January 1st, 2007, called *Nystartsjobb*, which is coordinated by Arbetsförmedlingen³. The new program encourages employers to hire unemployed people, including youngsters. Advantages for employers: the new hired person will be paid a salary by Arbetsförmedlingen, in the first 1-3 months; advantages for young unemployed: they will have the opportunity to re-integrate on the labour market and acquire new job experience, but with the condition of finding a job themselves (field study, Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen, Mölndal municipality, March 2007). Therefore, young people must be very active and with big initiative when searching for a job and ensuring a successful participation in the labour market. But, these conditions do not work for all young people, many of them needing much more support and help.

Another research analyzes whether unemployment among young people, and programs targeted towards the same group, have an effect on crime. The findings are summarized as follows. Even in a welfare state where social benefits cover the major income loss from job displacement, unemployment has a big impact on main categories of property crime. Contrary to common opinion, there is not a clear correlation between youth unemployment and the occurrence of youthful crimes. Moreover, there is no evidence that labor market programs reduce crime (Nilsson, 2005).

From a trans-national perspective, we would like to describe several studies on youth unemployment, conducted in other countries that will give a broader approach on our topic of concern. One of the papers provides new evidence from High School and Beyond (HSB), a national survey of US high school students, on the effects of compulsory attendance on high school completion and future youth unemployment. The results suggest that for average students, increasing the compulsory attendance age from 16 to 18 increases the probability of completing high school by 5.7 percent and reduces the proportion of time the individuals are unemployed by 2.5 percent (Mingliang Li, 2006).

² **Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen, Mölndal Stad** – Municipal Labour Market and Integration Office, Mölndal municipality

³ **Arbetsförmedlingen** – Public Employment Office

The research on long-term effects of youth unemployment, made in USA, states that an unemployment spell experienced today increases the likelihood that a young person seeks out training and work activities in the near future. The longer-term adverse effects tend to be smaller for younger workers than for elders. However, youths do not fully recover from these adverse impacts of unemployment (Mroz and Savage, 2006).

A qualitative study, conducted in United Kingdom, examines the influence of basic skills on the school-to-work transitions of young adults. The authors document how skill competencies act as barriers to learning and labour market opportunities, illustrating that some individuals are 'reticent' about accessing opportunities and that individual decision-making and agency are important to transitions. This research shows the relationships between decision-making and the structuring effects of prior learning experiences and indicates therefore how structural conditioning and agential processes are linked and together shape transition routes (Cieslik & Simpson, 2006). In relation to the transition of young people from school to work, in the context of Sweden, a more detailed description will be made in the analysis chapter.

At length, we consider important to emphasize two general aspects related to young people that describe the picture of modern youth in Sweden. On the one hand, young people have a great ability to adjust to various sudden changes and find new solutions for new situations, but, on the other hand, they are very sensitive from the social, psychological and cultural points of view and are overwhelmed with the expectations of nowadays society. These topics will be discussed in details in the empirical chapter of the current research.

2.2. Immigrants in Sweden and Canada/USA/Australia. Participation in the labour market (comparative analysis)

This chapter will give an insight of the situation of immigrants in the labour market, in a comparative analysis between Swedish social-democratic welfare system and liberal welfare system in Canada, USA and Australia. First of all, it is worthwhile to define who could be identified as immigrant. An *immigrant* is defined as a person who has moved to Sweden (or Canada, USA or Australia) from another country and has permanent residence in Sweden (or Canada, USA or Australia) (Giertz, 2004).

Labour market participation represents one of the key areas of integration (Valtonen, 2001). Once entering the labour market, citizens, including the immigrants, gain access to other spheres of the society and perform a more active involvement at all levels (Theocharidou et al., 2007). Labour market participation represents as well an intrinsic part of successful integration to full social citizenship (Hjerm, 2004).

According to National Integration Board, during the first half of the 1990s, the employment level decreased dramatically for everyone and particularly for foreign-born people. The employment level for native Swedish people was above or very close to the Government's target of 80% in the period 2000–2005. However, for foreign-born people,

the level of employment has decreased year after year (National Integration Board, 2006, www.integrationsverket.se). All this data show that immigrants have a much lower participation in the labour market than the natives (Theocharidou et al., 2007).

It is worth emphasizing two aspects which have a strong effect on immigrants' integration in the labour market: 1) the high requirements of employers, along with the job qualifications, those related to social codes accepted in Sweden; 2) discrimination at different levels, which can be visible or invisible, conscious or subconscious. According to Neergaard (2006), "conceptions of culture, ethnicity and race give rise both to exclusion and subordination for people with a foreign background." Culturally determined behaviour was one of the most common models for explaining unemployment by recruiting agencies (Swedish National Institute for Working Life, www.arbetslivsinstitutet.se).

Further, we would like to present several researches that study the situation of immigrants, including unemployment, in the Swedish context and other countries' contexts. One of the papers focuses on social assistance in Sweden and the effectiveness of activation programs for reducing poverty of recipients. The research shows that foreign-born citizens have a much higher risk of social assistance, and especially long-term receipt than Swedish citizens. The newly arrived immigrants are in a very weak position and most prone to be excluded from arenas, such as the labour market. Entry into the labour market is difficult due to not only scarce competition, but as well because of further discrimination. Currently, there are observed signs of increasing polarization and social exclusion in various areas of Sweden, characteristic as well for the labour market (Giertz, 2004).

Another research examines how social democratic welfare state contributes to the integration of immigrants into society, based on the Living Conditions Survey (ULF). According to ULF, immigrants do not have the same possibilities to enter the labour market, which is shown to have severe effects on other important areas of social and political citizenship. For example, the level of unemployment is more than three times higher amongst university-educated immigrants compared to non-immigrants with the same level of education. Low levels of education, or a foreign education that is not compatible in Sweden, lack of Swedish work experiences, language and 'cultural' capital and social networks lead to low levels of employment which in turn lead to a poor living standard. The author concludes that the fundamental and urgent task must be the reshaping of the welfare state to meet the multicultural reality (Hjerm, 2004).

From a global perspective, we believe it would be interesting to make a comparative analysis between the situation of immigrants in Sweden and three highest immigrants receiving countries, i.e. USA, Australia and Canada.

In this context, Valtonen (2001) examines immigrants' integration and social work interventions in the context of two welfare states, Finland and Canada, respectively with two different welfare models, social-democratic and liberal. Finland's immigration policy is more restricted and does not include business, sponsorship or any sizeable category of

independent labour migration. Canada has a 'liberalized' and non-discriminatory immigration policy. It evaluates prospective immigrants on the basis of education and training, rather than ethnic origin or country of residence. As for the labour market, Finnish employment policy makes available language and job training courses for immigrants, but access to employment seems to be a problem due to various discriminatory issues. Canada focuses on community work for immigrants' participation in the labour market (Valtonen, 2001). The author concludes that immigrant's full participation and effective practice of citizenship include capacity building, networking of resources and fighting discriminatory barriers.

One of the empirical studies, conducted in USA, discusses the levels of joblessness and earnings within two broad occupational categories: among young non-college educated native Black, Hispanic, Asian, and non-Hispanic White workers and recent and long-term immigrant workers. Based on reported results, the authors conclude that migration, particularly immigration, does not appear to have been a major factor associated with the substantial increases in unemployment by native workers during the 1980s. Although there is some evidence that latter had an effect on natives' displacement, other sources of change may have contributed to this outcome. For example, native workers may have voluntarily exited declining and low wage industrial sectors in search of better opportunities (Wilson and Jaynes, 2000). Also, the findings indicate that immigrants are highly concentrated in specific industries and occupations, mainly unskilled jobs. Indeed, immigrant workers may have priority access to jobs created by immigrant entrepreneurs in a segmented labor market, as for example, jobs in an ethnic economy. In conclusion, authors mention that immigrants' participation in the US labour market must be looked upon in connection with specific industrial categories, which are very broad and diversified (Wilson and Jaynes, 2000).

From the Australian experience, one of the studies examines the unemployment rate differentials between Australia-born and immigrants from English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. The analyses reveal that the principal factors that influence the employment success in the Australian labour market are educational attainment, age, qualifications, and among the foreign-born, duration of residence in Australia and English language proficiency. The results suggest that if immigrants' marketable characteristics were rewarded in the labour market in the same way as Australian-born's rewarded, then immigrants would experience considerably lower unemployment rates than those of Australian-born (Miller and Neo, 1997). We conclude that obtained results differ from recent findings in the US labour market, where duration of residence effects is short-lived. This difference may suggest that Australian and Swedish labour markets are less flexible than US labour market.

Witte (2005) contrasts Swedish and Canadian workers, comparing the Scandinavian social-democratic model of high job protection with the Anglo-Saxon liberal model of high insecurity, low social and income support and weaker adversarial unions. Canadians were more concerned about unemployment than Swedish workers. Neither the quality of labour relations nor union presence significantly affected employees' concerns about downsizing or surviving employment worries. However, there are some weaknesses in

the over-emphasis of Swedish model, characterized by highly unionized environments and less flexibility (Witte, 2005). Ultimately, it is important to mention that flexibility and an extensive process of mixing and matching among workers and firms characterize the youth labour market. Young people change jobs frequently due to low reservation wages and low opportunity costs (Mroz and Savage, 2006), looking continuously for new and better opportunities.

In the end of this chapter, we would like to summarize that Swedish labour market is characterized by well-structured policies and implemented programmes. However, there are two groups of citizens, young people and immigrants, who are less supported, discriminated and many times excluded from the labour market. According to Giertz (2004), voluntary and involuntary exclusion from the labour market is common for young people, especially those with low education. Immigrants have similar problems that are related mostly to the time of arrival and residence in the new country. While social assistance among Swedish citizens is more a youth phenomenon, it is common in all age groups among immigrants.

After the review of earlier research on youths and immigrants unemployment, we conclude that there are few empirical and analytical studies that investigate the factors that lead and cause youth unemployment, among natives and immigrants, which represent our area of interest. In the Swedish context, the existing research focuses mostly on the effects of unemployment on other areas of youth's life. That is why we believe that the current research will bring new insights on the problem of youth unemployment in Sweden, among Swedes and immigrants.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature review and the field study conducted at employment office and related organizations, we identified a set of theories that will serve as a background for explanation and description of the reasons of youth unemployment from the perspective of young unemployed and social workers/employment officers. As according to Trevithick (2005:23) 'we seek and use knowledge in order to understand others and the world around us.' The theories we identified as relevant to the research topic are the following:

- 1) Theories of Unemployment
- 2) Empowerment and Advocacy Theory
- 3) Theoretical approaches to Social Exclusion and Discrimination.
Antidiscrimination Cultural and Ethnic Sensitivity Theory.

3.1. Theories of Unemployment

Parkin and King (1995) describe three different sources of unemployment that result to three different types of unemployment. These three forms of unemployment are: 1) frictional; 2) cyclical; and 3) structural.

Frictional unemployment 'arises from the normal turnover of people in the labour market'. One of the sources of this turnover is the constant changing of people's economic activities, for example, 'young people leave the school and join the labour force, old people retire and leave it, and some people leave it temporarily, often to raise children, and then rejoin it' (Parkin and King, 1995:584). The generous social benefits provided by the state influence the period of time that people take to find a job. Respectively, the rate of frictional unemployment goes higher and average time for job search is longer (ibid).

Cyclical unemployment occurs from an economic decline that affects majority of labour force irrespective of their qualifications, skills and personal preferences (Parkin and King, 1995). *The cyclically unemployed* are those whose jobs opportunities rise and fall with the general situation in the economy, alternating between employment and unemployment (Mendes, 1990).

Structural unemployment is the situation where many jobs are available in the labour market in a particular region, but the labour force is not competitive enough in order to get these jobs. The labour market demands might require more specific and qualified knowledge and skills that do not characterize all job searchers. According to Parkin and King (1995:585) structural unemployment 'arises when the number of jobs available in a particular region or industry falls'. It can occur because of constant technological change, such as automation of car plant. Mendes (1990) mentions that the structurally unemployed often lack skills and education, and have little or no work experience to attain and maintain a stable position in the job market, even during economic growth. A large number of structurally unemployed are disadvantaged and depend on social assistance. Many others are young, and, or are part of ethnic groups.

3.2. Empowerment and Advocacy Theory, as a Preventive Measure

According to Payne (2005:295), “empowerment helps clients to gain power of decision and action over their own lives.” Through empowerment, people are enabled to overcome barriers in achieving life objectives and gain access to services. Advocacy is very important because it contributes to self-help and participation of individuals and communities in decision-making process. The main methods used in empowerment are group and community work. According to Adams (in Payne, 2005), as an anti-oppressive practice, group work brings together people with common needs and problems to work together on their own behalf, representing the essence of empowerment.

Croft and Beresford (in Payne, 2005:301) “emphasize the role of participatory practice” that focuses on:

- *Empowerment* involves challenging oppression and making it possible for people to take charge of matters that affect them;
- *Control* for people in defining their own needs and having a say in decision making process;
- *Equipping people with personal resources* to take power, by developing their confidence, self-esteem, assertiveness, knowledge and skills;
- Organizing the agency to be open to *participation*.

Miley and DuBois (in Payne, 2005) focus more on community-oriented practice, with building of partnership and identification of strengths and resources for empowerment of different groups of the society. Although empowerment deals with individuals and families, Lee (in Payne, 2005:305) supports the idea that it also ‘seeks to be community-oriented’, centered on three concepts:

- ‘Developing a more positive and strong sense of self
- Constructing the knowledge and capacity to achieve a critical perspective on social and political realities
- Cultivating resources, strategies and competencies to attain personal and collective goals.’

We believe that empowerment and advocacy concepts explain clearly the phenomenon of youth unemployment, describing its occurrence and methods of its decrease and exit, by integrating actively in the labour market. As young people, possessing skills, creativity and energy, need support in order to be able to develop and use all their capacities, as well as participate actively in the society, including in the labour market. According to Payne (2005:295) ‘power may not be given to people; they must be helped to take it for themselves.’

3.3. Theoretical Approaches to Social Exclusion and Discrimination.

Antidiscrimination and Cultural and Ethnic Sensitivity Theory as a Preventive Measure

Social exclusion is defined as lack of participation in society and stress on the multi-dimensional and changing nature of the problem. This concept comes from various ideological points of view, mostly sharing the following features:

(1) Lack of participation. Exclusion is a matter of degree, since individuals may be participating to a greater or lesser extent, and that it is relative to the society in question.

(2) Multi-dimensional. Social exclusion incorporates income-poverty, but it is also connected with unemployment and poor self-esteem.

(3) Dynamic. The advent of dynamic analysis has generated an interest in the processes of policy making, which lead to exclusion and makes its way back into mainstream society.

(4) Multi-layered. Although it is individuals who suffer exclusion, the causes are recognized as operating at many levels: individual, household, community, and institutional (Oxford Dictionary of Politics, www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.ub.gu.se)

Social exclusion is also understood as accumulation of welfare problems. Therefore, strong connections between welfare problems should be recognized as potential social exclusion (Bask, 2005)

Three mechanisms of social exclusion are so far identified as particularly significant:

- Stereotypical thinking (so-called statistical discrimination: e.g. ‘All Turks are...’);
- Segregation of networks of native Swedes and immigrants (networks are based on ethnicity); and
- Institutional discrimination. Institutional settings have intended or unintended discriminating consequences for certain ethnic groups.

These three mechanisms are interrelated in many ways, which means that a holistic approach is needed when thinking about possible solutions (European Foundation, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>).

One of the barriers causing exclusion in the area of labour market is the discriminatory behaviour of the powerful group(s) towards the ethnic minorities. Discrimination as described by Payne (1997:244), means ‘identifying individuals and groups with certain characteristics and treating them less well than people or groups with conventionally valued characteristics’. Discrimination occurs from the fact that dominant groups in society preserve it as a way of maintaining their hegemony. They do so by taking advantage of their power through their social control of beliefs about the characteristics of society which creates a dominant notion. In this way, discrimination comes to being and is preserved by ‘personal beliefs and behaviour, reinforced by ideologies which develop from the power exerted by groups in order to sustain and strengthen their dominant position within social structures’(Payne, 1997:245).

Among other factors, language and social assumptions to support discriminatory conventions are from the manners in which discrimination is done (Payne, 1997). The discriminatory behaviour based on these factors is more relevant towards the groups of ethnic minorities that makes one of our themes in the present study and will be discussed in the data analysis.

Immigrants experience a higher frequency of welfare problems, such as unemployment, housing and health problems etc., that are prominent examples of social exclusion, and a part of explanation may be that immigrants face *discrimination* (Bask, 2005:86). The earlier research supports this fact, revealing that immigrants encounter a lot of barriers and difficulties while entering the job market and one of the major reasons is discrimination (Giertz, 2004; Valtonen, 2001). The following paragraph describes the state policies with regards to fighting social exclusion and discrimination, evaluating the 'distance' between idea and practice.

Nearly all countries have constitutional clauses specifying equality before law, however a far smaller number have actually enacted anti-discrimination legislation (International Labour Organization, www.ilo.org). 'Swedish policies have made great efforts to offer a rather generous welfare provision in terms of social integration, providing equal opportunities for everyone and raise awareness about human rights, ethnic sensitivity and diversity issues. Measures to combat discrimination have a high priority in the political agenda' (Theocharidou et al., 2007:14). There is also a public authority in Sweden, called *Diskrimineringsombudsman (DO)*, whose remit is to ensure that ethnic discrimination does not occur in working life or in other areas of society (European Union Project, www.stop-discrimination.info). Despite all these efforts, social exclusion and discrimination do exist in the society, where many people with different ethnical background experience discrimination in several areas of life, such as in the labour market, education and health system and in the public places (Theocharidou et al., 2007).

For the preventive and intervention measures in order to fight discrimination, we would like to refer to the theoretical approaches described by Payne (2005), within the *Antidiscrimination and Cultural and Ethnic Sensitivity Theory*. We consider that this theory explains concepts and approaches that are related to the problem of young immigrants' unemployment. Payne (2005:269) affirms that 'anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and anti-racist perspectives focus on combating institutionalized discrimination in society, which represents the interests of powerful groups'.

'Anti-discrimination practice is important as the first account to attempt to provide a theoretical rationale for practice across of range of discriminatory behaviour' (Payne, 2005:269). It seeks to include, in social work practice, a concern for combating discrimination against all groups. This particular approach of the theory is the center of our interest area. Anti-discrimination incorporates structural explanations of discrimination and sensitivity incorporates cultural and social relationships into social work practice (ibid). Thomson (in Payne, 2005:279) talked about various types of discrimination, including gender, ethnicity, ageing, sexual orientation, religion etc. We

will focus on ethnical issues while analyzing the situation of young immigrants in the labour market.

Another concept used in this theory is *multiculturalism*, which affirms ethnic diversity and seeks to incorporate it into societies by valuing cultural contributions to the whole (Payne, 2005). Sweden as a multicultural country, encounters various challenges regarding the integration and interrelation between and within native and immigrant's cultures. Therefore, it is important to emphasize on the role of cultural integration in the process of immigrants' inclusion in the Swedish society, including the labour market (Theocharidou et al., 2007). As according to earlier research, described above, cultural discrimination is one of the main barriers for young immigrants' participation in the labour market. Though, it is significant to focus on the other side of the problem, mainly that discrimination is not a phenomenon that explicitly occurs only between diverse groups, but also among homogeneous groups of people, such as Swedes towards Swedes or among other ethnic groups (ibid). This is related to the way people think and to the prejudices they have, even though sometimes this can happen unconsciously.

Ethnocentrism is another concept that will be used in our research, as it focuses on the inter-relations and attitudes between natives and immigrants in Sweden, within the labour market environments. According to Stemmer-Lueck (2007), ethnocentrism is the tendency to judge other cultures by the standards of one's own culture; to use one's own way of life as a standard for judging others; it is the belief that one's own culture or ethnic group is inherently superior to others.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

The current study is explorative and qualitative of nature, analysing the causes of youth unemployment in Gothenburg (Sweden), focusing on the perceptions and reasons stated by young unemployed and professional social workers. According to Gilbert (2001), qualitative research provides a micro-level perspective, exploring the meaning that events and situations have for participants. It can be used to illustrate and explain in depth specific social phenomena.

4.1. Respondents

To conduct the qualitative study, we selected a sample of ten (10) respondents, divided into two groups. First group included six (6) young unemployed, three Swedes and three immigrants from Brasil, Romania, and Iran, aged between 18-25 years old, including four females and two males. Four respondents have higher education and two respondents finished high school (*gymnasiet*). The three immigrant youths have 1-2 years of qualified work experience in their home countries, and the three Swedish youths have 1-2 years unqualified work experience, like cleaning jobs or patients assistance. Four respondents live on social benefits and have temporary or small jobs, one respondent receives unemployment insurance, one respondent do not have any support. Moreover, all respondents depend on the help of their parents or partners also. The interviewed immigrant youths have resided in Sweden from 7 months to 3,5 years. All interviewees have been unemployed for a period ranging between 100 days and 3 years, meaning that this sample is representative for evaluation of short-term and long-term unemployment in Gothenburg. We believe the empirical findings will give a broader perspective and analysis of the situation of young people in the Swedish labour market.

According to the employment theories, discussed in the theoretical framework, we think that the group of young unemployed can be referred to the group of *structurally unemployed*, being defined as those who often lack skills and have little or no work experience in order to maintain a stable position in the job market, even during economic growth (Mendes, 1990).

Second group involved four (4) professional social workers, all females, aged between 27-41 years old with Swedish ethnicity. The four professionals included two employment officers, who work at the Section for Labour Market and Integration in Mölndal municipality (*Mölndal Stad, Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen*) and two social secretaries, who work at Social Welfare Office in Mölndal municipality. The respondents have experience in working with young people from 11 months to 16 years. Social secretaries are the professionals to whom young people firstly approach; they deal mostly with offering social assistance to unemployed people. Then, they are recommended to employment officers who offer support and involve young unemployed in work programmes, in order to help them to find a job or continue with further education.

4.2. Methods

For conducting our qualitative research we have used three methods:

- documentary research;
- participant observation; and
- semi-structured interview.

Documentary research (review) is the method that provides the information and materials (May, 2001) that serve as a starting point in exploring a social phenomenon, as well as help to get acquainted with specific circumstances and characteristics in order to create a clearer picture regarding the research topic. According to Agger (in May, 2001:175), a document “tells us a great deal about the societies in which writers write and readers read”. As a social form of knowledge and sedimentation of social practices, documents offer a better understanding through the ability to place contemporary aspects in a historical perspective (May, 2001).

Participant observation is taking part in a social scene, experiencing it and seeking to understand and explain it. It ‘encourages researchers to immerse themselves in day-to-day activities of the people whom they are attempting to understand’ (May, 2001:148). The aim of understanding is to analyze how the subjects are affected by the social environment, what goes on within it and how people act and interpret within specific social contexts and situations (ibid). We have chosen the *observation* as a method for our primary data collection, because it helps to build a social base from which we can carry on with our study until we are able to explore some parts of that area thoroughly. In the next paragraph, we give the description of the steps we made for primary data collection, using two methods, documentary review and participant observation.

Documentary review and *observation* have been used in the **field study**, done at Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen in Mölndal municipality, for a period of one month. The purpose was to get acquainted with the current situation of young unemployed, Swedes and immigrants, and with the implemented programmes and activities designed for them, as well as to explore the overall situation in the Swedish labour market. The field study included documentary review and 15 (fifteen) study visits at state and municipal organizations and institutions working with unemployed people and immigrants (*Appendix I*). Documentary review involved examination of application forms that are filled out by young unemployed, staff’s guidelines with a set of regulations and provisions stipulated by the local and state legislation. As well, we examined the social workers’ yearly activity plan and we have been provided with statistical information that has been very useful for current research. The study visits helped us to outline what are the programmes implemented for/with young unemployed, with their advantages and limitations, and also, through observations, we had the chance to portray the profile of young unemployed in Gothenburg, from the perspective of different professionals. The documentary research and observation gave us the opportunity to acquire a background information and empirical data on our topic of concern, in order to be able to have a better understanding and insight in the next stages of our empirical investigation.

Semi-structured Interviews

Kvale states that ‘qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge’ (Kvale, 1996:14). ‘Interviews bring rich insights into people’s experiences, opinions, values, attitudes and feelings [...]’ (May, 2001:121).

For the present study, we used semi-structured interviews, because it allows respondents to answer more on their own way, comparing to structured interviews, but still provide a greater structure that guides and facilitates the data analysis made by the researcher (May, 2001). The qualitative research included ten 1-hour semi-structured audio-taped interviews with 6 (six) young unemployed, counting 3 (three) Swedes and 3 (three) immigrants, and with 4 (four) social workers, conducted in March 2007.

Interview setting

Nine interviews have been conducted in the office of Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen in Mölndal municipality and one interview – at one of the researchers’ residence in Mölnlycke. Nine respondents were interviewed in English, and one respondent in Persian. Since all nine interviewees could speak English, although some of them encountered some difficulties, we did not need the services of a translator. For the interview conducted in Persian, we had the advantage that one of the researchers could speak the language fluently. Furthermore, most of the interviewing space was provided to the respondents for expressing their ideas and thoughts on the issue in question. While discussing some sensitive issues, such as discrimination, racism etc., the researchers put a lot of effort in order not to harm in any way the respondents, mainly in creating a favourable environment for interviewees, establishing the contact with them and taking care of the way of putting the interview questions.

Validity, reliability and generalizability

Overall, the interviews helped us to generate new findings and lead to constructed knowledge on the causes of youth unemployment in Gothenburg, respectively clear perspectives on what should be improved in the field. The validity and reliability of the information obtained through interviewing was ensured through follow up questions, clarifications and summarizing made by the interviewer. Furthermore, using the data obtained from documentary review and participant observation, we compared and complemented the interview findings, thus ensuring the internal validity of the research. Essentially, it was possible to explain in detail the causal relationships within the phenomenon of youth unemployment, among Swedes and immigrants, representing the situation in Gothenburg. The interview guide assured the reliability of the obtained results, focusing the semi-structured interview on a set of specific questions directed to two different groups, young unemployed and social workers. We assume that at repeated interviewing, using the same questions, the same results will be obtained. However, the qualitative studies might have different interpretations for the same themes, conducted in different circumstances, with different respondents and by other researchers.

Taking into consideration the specificity of this qualitative study, we cannot generalize the obtained findings on all the population of young unemployed and social workers. We have drawn more specific conclusions related directly to the interviewed respondents that can be used somehow as a background for further research.

Advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods

Participant observation

Advantages

- We had the opportunity to see and involve in the organizational settings that gave more understanding for our topic of research;
- It was possible to outline the main features that characterize the activities within the field of labour market in Gothenburg;
- We portrayed the primary profile of young unemployed that helped us in our sample selection;
- The obtained data helped us in conducting further stages of the research, such as interview guide design, data analysis and discussion of findings.

Disadvantages

- 'It is the most personally demanding and analytically difficult method to undertake' (May, 2001:153);
- It was a time consuming process, with regards to data collection and their analysis;
- Due to its explorative nature, observation method provided also information that was not useful for the current research.

Documentary review

Advantages

- We gathered background information and primary data, which gave better understanding and insight for the research topic, as well as carry out the further steps of the investigation;
- The review of documents gave the opportunity to shape earlier events, descriptions, facts into a new formulation, according to the objectives of the current research;
- The method offered us more space for reflections and adjustment to the current aims of the research

Disadvantages

- Information that was planned to be collected and analyzed was not available all in English language. Some of the relevant documentary resources were in Swedish language and there was little possibility and time for doing translations;
- It did not suppose any concrete steps or rules of how to use and analyze documents.

Semi-structured interviews

Advantages

- This type of interview allows respondents to answer more on their own way, comparing to structured interviews, but still provide a greater structure that guides and facilitates the data analysis made by the researcher (May, 2001);
- It gave the possibility to discuss the topic of youth unemployment in deep and in details, pointing out different perspectives and opinions very useful for research findings;
- It offered more flexibility with regards to expanding the interview questions and have an extended discussion and analysis of different dimensions of the issue in question;
- Comparing to quantitative methods, the qualitative interview provides more input of the respondents in relation to the research topic, reveals more information about personal attitudes, perspectives and experiences, which shape their reality in a more vivid manner.

Disadvantages

- Unlike structured interview, the semi-structured interview sometimes goes beyond the expected limitations. For example, the interviews that we conducted for this particular study provided us a lot of raw material with very little use for our research findings;
- The interview analysis was time consuming and a complex process.

Methods of data analysis

The analysis of documentary review was performed through the *content analysis*, that according to May (2001:191) “makes sense of the obtained data through generated categories [...]”. Qualitative content analysis helped us to define specific categories and themes for investigation of our topic of research, and they have been used as one of the sources for elaboration of the interview guides (*Appendix 2*).

For *semi-structured interview analysis*, we used two methods: meaning condensation and meaning categorization. ‘**Meaning condensation** is a synopsis of the meanings expressed by the interviewee, as well as a diminution of large interview texts into more succinct formulations’ (Kvale, 1996:192). We condensed and structured the transcribed interviews, conducted with young unemployed and social workers, in order to facilitate the defining of the causes of youth unemployment, which is one of the research questions of this study. **Meaning categorization** aims to code the interview into certain simple and clear categories (Kvale, 1996). This method permitted us to place the defined causes of youth unemployment into specific themes, in order to be able to make comparisons between and within the interviewed groups and make conclusions on the research findings.

4.3. Ethical considerations

According to Gilbert (2001), “ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. While truth is good, respect for human dignity is even better [...]”. Within the qualitative research, where the researcher has more freedom of action, it must be put in evidence not only the study’s aim, but as well as its impact on the involved subjects. For the current research, we followed four main ethical considerations:

1. *Informed consent* has been ensured through the presentation of the research aims and expected results to the supervisors from Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen, as well as to interviewed subjects (*Appendix 3*).
2. *Requirement of consent* was made through voluntary consent of subjects for participation in the study.
3. *Principle of confidentiality* – no information that might disclose the identity or any personal information that might affect the subjects was not revealed in the current study. In order to facilitate the analysis and reporting of data, as well as respecting the confidentiality, we have given coded names to all respondents who participated in the interviews. These coded names are as follows: three Swedish youths are SY1, SY2, SY3; three immigrant youths are IY1, IY2, IY3; four social workers include two employment officers, EO1 and EO2, and two social secretaries, SS1 and SS2.
4. *Restriction of use* – the information, data and findings of the current study are used just for research purposes.

CHAPTER 5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Our qualitative study that investigates the youth unemployment in Gothenburg, among Swedes and immigrants provided a set of useful and interesting results. The findings that are presented next will answer to the first research question, as what are the causes of youth unemployment in Gothenburg, from the perspective of young unemployed and social workers. We identified a list of factors that serve as reasons for young people being unemployed, which will be presented from the perspective of three groups: Swedish unemployed youth, immigrant unemployed youth and employment officers/social secretaries. These **factors** are education, work experience, lack of information of young people, social and psychological problems, role of the state, language problems and discrimination. Before making a description of the mentioned factors, we would like to focus on a significant aspect that portrays the youths' attitude towards work, mainly importance of employment stated by young unemployed and social workers.

5.1. Importance of employment

From the perspective of our respondents, importance of employment has been measured at different levels and scales. Young unemployed, Swedes and immigrants, consider that it is very important to have an employment for money and economic strength, to have something to do, be busy with something, be independent and serve the community. To a larger extent, employment is equalized to welfare within a society. Social workers described similar financial reasons, like to get a salary, to have money to exist, be independent, but added also social-psychological aspects like to have a place in the society, to plan your life, to feel that 'I'm important!', to have a higher self-esteem.

In Sweden it's a big tradition of work. It is important to work, because it is a part of your social life, as well for your role as a member of society and to be integrated.

(Social worker EO1)

That is why, according to the opinion of interviewed social workers, the period of being unemployed affect very much young people, because it is enough 3 months for them to lose their self-confidence, feel depressed and be uncertain about their future. The respondent EO1 stated: '*Youths who have just education and no work experience still do not have that long time of knowing: I am capable in this adult world!*'. Also, the longer a young person is unemployed, the harder is to get a job.

The period of being inactive affects young people psychologically, as well as their ability to get a job. (Social worker EO2)

In this context, we think that young people from Gothenburg are very motivated to have a job and integrate in various fields of the job market. What are then the problems and difficulties? Further, we would like to present and analyse separate factors and reasons that affect youths' integration in the job market.

5.2. Role of Education and Work experience

All interviewed young unemployed, Swedes and immigrants, emphasized the importance of education as one of the main keys for getting a better job, but in combination with work experience. The respondent SY2 talked about education as an important tool for having more opportunities in the future and getting a suitable job. Lack of work experience is one of the main reasons brought up by young unemployed, especially the first experience on the job market and in a specific field.

Most of employers look for young people who have at least 3-5 years of work experience and relevant education. (Swedish youth SY2)

It is hard to find a job without some years of work experience; especially the employers want someone who knows the area. (Immigrant youth IY1)

The statements described above characterize the **structural** type of unemployment, described in the theoretical framework. Moreover, immigrant youth IY2 stressed on another barrier that immigrants face. She said: *“I do not know anyone who can recommend me that plays a big role in finding a job”*. The Swedish youth SY3 stated that it is hard to get a job if you have no work experience, but if you find a job in your professional field, it would be easier to get a higher income. We would like to emphasize that young people focus mostly on the financial benefits of having a job that is relevant and very important in the first stages of settling their adult life that requires first of all a stable financial situation. However, according to all respondents, the main problem is to make the first step:

...to get a job you need experience, but to get experience you need a job, it's like a vicious circle. (Swedish youth SY1)

At this point, young people are in a so called ‘*transition period*’, when they come out from education and enter the labour market, experiencing a lot of challenges. Besides that, many young people end up in such jobs that are neither matching their qualifications nor their personal choice or tendency. In this way, they have a rather unstable situation and it is a hard struggle for them to acquire a long-term status in the labour market. Moreover, young people change jobs very often, looking for better opportunities and income. This situation characterizes the **frictional** type of unemployment, described in theoretical framework. However, the contrast between the labour force and jobs has been identified as one of the reasons for unemployment. According to the theoretical framework, Muszynski (in Mendes, 1990:28) suggests that in order to reduce unemployment, it is important to ‘*improve the match between labour and jobs*’. Two measures could be effective in order to improve this match between young unemployed and jobs available in the labour market, such as social workers’ intervention and empowerment. The first measure is related mostly to the support and counseling of young unemployed on how to write the CV and job applications. Empowerment, as a second measure, discussed in *Empowerment and Advocacy theory* (Payne, 2005:301), focuses particularly on expanding opportunities for young people, on their capacity-building,

activating and informing them about available resources. As a result, young unemployed will be able to 'take charge of matters that affect them', mainly to use their capacities, qualifications and external resources in order to integrate in the job market (ibid).

Employment officers and social secretaries referred to the effect and importance of both, education and work experience for better integration in the job market. However, the social workers gave more distinct explanations related to these two factors, comparing to interviewed young unemployed. All respondents emphasized mostly the role of basic education that means gymnasium level.

Lots of young people I meet did not finish gymnasium⁴ that is the minimum requirement of employers in Sweden in order to get a job. This is one of the reasons why they are unemployed. (Social worker SS2)

School drop-outs is one of the common problems among young unemployed in Gothenburg, that result later in socio-psychological problems and lead to long-term unemployment. The school attendance is of utmost importance, as it increases the probability of completing high school and reduces the probability of becoming unemployed (Mingliang Li, 2006). Lack of job experience is another challenge for young people, especially it is hard for them to get the first experience.

Employers do not give youngsters a chance and they cannot compete with others who are more qualified and experienced. (Social worker EO1)

As a result, these youths who have not worked, are not qualified for unemployment or sickness insurance, thus they end up applying for social support and becoming dependent on the system for a longer period of time. A young person, at the beginning of his/her independent adult life does not want to find him/herself in such a situation. Social workers emphasized as well the importance of references, as '*approximately 80% of jobs in Sweden go through connections*', that young people, Swedes and immigrants, lack, due to various reasons. Additionally, Allatt and Yeandle (1992:30) state that 'entry into the labour market and progression through employment careers are shaped by the resources upon which people can have, like qualifications, access to information or privileged access through contacts'. The interviewed professionals consider that work practice (*praktik*) is one of the solutions to the problem, even though it does not offer a salary, it gives work experience and references that are the basic tools to enter in the job market. Further, there will be discussed the changes introduced by the new Government and the possibility of young people to do work practice.

⁴ **Gymnasium** in Sweden, together with general subjects, includes vocational training that offers the chance to have a profession after graduation and get a job

5.3. Lack of information of young people

Lack of information about the provisions of specific programmes, aiming to assist unemployed youth, is yet another factor that was addressed by the young unemployed respondents. However, the factor of lacking information was more often addressed by the Swedish young respondents. According to them, they are not informed about the services offered by the social welfare office:

...I found out from some relatives about this office (Arbetsmarknads- och Integrationssektionen). I don't know about NGOs, schools don't give information. (Swedish youth SY1)

Contrary to our expectations, the young immigrants show more satisfaction with regards to the information about the provisions offered through the social welfare office and the Public Employment Office.

The administration of SFI (Svenska för Invandrare) in collaboration with the municipality introduced me to the Employment office. (Immigrant youth IY3)

Therefore, immigrant youths are very well informed about available social services, through the introduction programmes designed for new comers in Sweden. This fact sounds surprising, and raises some questions with regards to degree of awareness and available information for both, Swedish and immigrant young people.

5.4. Social and psychological problems

Related to the effect of social and psychological problems on the ability to get a job and participate actively in the society, the three interviewed groups expressed their opinion in different ways. Swedish youths talked about several problems that they think cause unemployment, like depression, low self-confidence, drug problems, and/or little support from the family.

If you have these problems, it is much harder to do something in life. We need support and encouragement from our parents and teachers, someone who believes in us. (Swedish youth SY3)

Immigrant youths did not share the opinion that problems mentioned above might have an effect on their integration in the job market. They stressed more on the importance of language abilities, recommendations and work experience, the latter mentioned by Swedes as well. We would like to emphasize that all interviewed young unemployed do not see social and psychological problems as one of the main reasons for them being unemployed. Moreover, when they listed the problems, they referred mostly to other unemployed youth, not themselves. We consider that this is an unconscious tendency of people to focus more on external factors rather than on internal or personal factors.

All interviewed social workers drawn attention to such problems as depression, low self-confidence, social phobia, drug problems, bad school background, and drop out before gymnasium. They pointed out that these problems cause unemployment, but in the same way unemployment might cause these problems, it is a twofold effect.

These problems have a big effect on young people. Many of them are even offered jobs, but they are not able to work, first they have to solve these problems.

(Social worker SS1)

To the statement: “Nowadays there are a lot of jobs in Sweden, why there is still a high rate of youth unemployment?” the interviewed professionals commented:

If you're a well functioning young person, who finished the gymnasium, have final exams, some work experience from summer jobs, and a person who do not have problems, he/she can get a job. But many young unemployed that I work with have various problems, which make it more difficult for them to get employed. (Social worker SS2)

All professionals identified two main groups of problems that young unemployed face: drug addiction and psychological problems. First group, young people with drug problems encounter more barriers in the process of looking for and getting a job, because together with unfinished education and lack of work experience, there are more steps to make, and bigger motivation and will is needed for them in order to succeed and maintain this position.

These youths have even difficulties coming in time at work, following a schedule, so the employers don't really want to hire this people. They have to overcome the problems first. (Social worker EO2)

Second group, psychological problems were described by social workers as a big concern and barrier for young unemployed. ‘Unemployed youth exhibit greater depression than employed youth. They regard themselves in a more negative light.’ (Banks & Ullah, 1988:54). SS2 respondent stated that Swedish individualistic society is one of the reasons of these problems, where you have to take care of yourself and there are too high expectations from youngsters.

Young people don't feel good; they don't have good relations with parents. As well, if they are unemployed for many years, they feel depressed, they have a low self-confidence, and without that feeling ‘I'm good, able!’, in this way affecting their ability to get job. (Social worker EO1)

All interviewed professionals have a strong believe that social and psychological problems are one of the main reasons for young people being unemployed. We argue why they claim this? On the one hand a lot of studies demonstrated the strong impact of socio-psychological problems on young people’s wellbeing (Banks & Ullah, 1988), on the other hand social workers might focus too much on the problems they deal with in

their professional life, thus neglecting other factors that might cause unemployment, such as situation on the labour market, work experience, role of the state etc.

Based on theoretical framework, we believe that empowerment is one of the tools for prevention and intervention in solving socio-psychological problems of young people, thus facilitating their integration in the job market. Lee (in Payne, 2005) focuses on the three strategies that require the involvement of both, professionals and young people. They include building up a more positive and strong sense of self; developing knowledge and skills in order to have a critical view on the changes in the society; and improving competencies and abilities to achieve independently the set goals.

5.5. Role of the State

Our empirical study revealed another factor that has an impact on the situation of young people in Gothenburg. Particularly, the new Government has been elected in October 2006, which brought many changes in various sectors of the society, including labour market. On the policy level, the long-term goal of the Swedish Government's labour market policy is to achieve full employment. The Government is taking steps to equip people seeking work to meet the needs of the labour market and to facilitate labour force mobility (Swedish Government official website, www.sweden.gov.se). Discussing the applicability of the state policies towards full employment, in the context of theoretical framework, Nixon (in Mendes, 1990) stresses that 'the most basic level of full employment could be achieved when all people at least have the opportunity to work'.

Though, in the long run the state policies promise the latter, however, according to our respondents, currently the new Government applies different strategies. In particular, the work programmes designed for young unemployed have been discontinued, due to budget cuts. These programmes provided (1) work practice for young people (*praktik*) that is highly important for them, in order to get first work experience and integrate much easier in the job market; (2) meetings 3 days per week for learning how to write a CV and how to apply for jobs. Now young people meet once per week, together with adults; (3) Public Employment Office paid social allowance to young unemployed for up to one year. The work programmes have been replaced by a new programme called '*Nystartsjobb*' that we described also in the 'early research' chapter. This program encourages employers to hire unemployed people, including youngsters. Advantages for employers: the new hired person will be paid a salary by Arbetsförmedlingen, in the first 1-3 months; advantages for young unemployed: they will have the opportunity to re-integrate on the labour market and acquire new job experience, but with the condition of finding a job themselves.

What was the effect of these changes on young unemployed and on the activities of social workers with young unemployed? We would like to focus on the provisions of the new Government and on the activities of Arbetsförmedlingen (AF), as a public institution. Interviewed Swedish youths expressed discontent about ceasing of previous programmes, as they offered more support and chances to get a job or continue with further education.

AF used to help young people with finding field practice, but they do not do this anymore since January 1st 2007, due to budget cuts.

The new Government wants to see people in jobs. They force to look for jobs and leave the field practice that I was offered by the municipality, but for me this is the chance to get my first job experience and find a suitable job for me. (Swedish youth SY1)

However, the respondents have a lot of expectations about the new program 'Nystartsjobb', offering them more opportunities and chances to get a job, but it depends a lot on their motivation, initiative and activism that are not common features of young unemployed.

With regards to immigrant youths, they did not give many examples from their experience how the state and new provisions in the labour market policy influenced their ability to get employed. We consider that there can be two reasons: first, they are very careful with what they say and do while having yet an unstable position in Sweden and, second, they see other factors that are crucial for entering and participating in the labour market. However, one respondent came with more general opinions with regards to the current changes in the legislation. Mainly, it is about 'transformation' of 'black' jobs into 'white' jobs.

I think it is a kind of pressure to push people into officially registered work or in so called 'white' market. On the one hand it is good, because it minimizes the chances of employees' exploitation, but on the other hand, there are asylum seekers who are most vulnerable in this situation. They do not have the chances for 'white' work and 'black' work has become more risky for them. So where should they go and what should they do? (Immigrant youth IY3)

Concerning AF, Swedish youths criticized their activity, stating that registration at AF is just a formality, in order to receive social benefits. Moreover, the main procedure is to receive general information and, later on, the young person decides what to do with it and plans further steps.

AF does not have a good reputation, because they do not do much. (Swedish youth SY1)

They do not help with writing a CV or the job applications, but they only give informational materials related to their website. (Swedish youth SY2)

Immigrant youths also gave few critical responses regarding AF's activity, stating that they offer very little help in finding a job. Moreover, AF have not been so enthusiastic about the opportunities that an immigrant young person can have in the job market, 'you have to speak Swedish, you have to go to school', meaning that, for immigrants, there is a very long process with more restraints in order to succeed. Though, the respondents have been content to be offered information in English or their respective languages, such as about their rights, what they can do, how it works if they get a job etc.

Therefore, according to all interviewed young unemployed, we would like to emphasize that the state plays a crucial role for young people's integration in the job market. Firstly, due to the current changes in the labour market legislation, young people feel that they lost the previous support and have to count on themselves that is not the best situation for them, when they need most of the assistance. Secondly, the state and nowadays society have too high expectations from young people that is making more difficult for them to succeed.

Sometimes you feel that you have lost yourself. (Swedish youth SY2)

Government, people working at AF, they all have jobs, they are so far from the situation of young people. (Swedish youth SY1)

Young people think that the Government does not look at long-term perspectives, just focuses on short-term solutions. Along with high expectations, it is important to invest more in youth, to provide with more opportunities, in order to empower them. Empowerment means that people are enabled and equipped with tools in order to overcome barriers and achieve their life objectives (Payne, 2005:295).

All interviewed social workers shared the opinion of young unemployed, showing dissatisfaction to the changes brought by the new Government and discontinuing the work programmes designed for young unemployed.

Before, young people, between 18-25 years old got money for being part of job programmes, including learn to apply for jobs and do work practice. In this way, they didn't need social benefits. (Social worker EO1)

Previously, the municipality and Arbetsförmedlingen (AF) had common activities in order to support young unemployed. We got money from AF to take care of every young unemployed. (Social worker EO2)

Government believes that it is enough to go to AF and help match the CV to get a job. But, the youth I meet they are not at that level; they wouldn't get there and meet the criteria. I don't think Government wants to know where are these young people, it's not their priority. (Social worker SS2)

Nevertheless, all interviewed professionals are very hopeful in the new program 'Nystartsjobb', that will offer the chance for young unemployed to get their first work experience and show that they have enough skills, initiative and responsibility in order to be offered a full-time job. Though, they are not confident that all youths can achieve these goals. Ultimately, social workers strongly believe that the state is one of the decisive factors for young people's integration in the job market and every revolutionary change strongly affects them.

5.6. Ethnic differences and Discrimination in the youth labour market

One of our objectives in the present study is to find out what are the effects of *ethnic differences* and *discrimination* in the Swedish youth labour market, from the perspectives of the young unemployed and social workers. The findings described in this chapter will answer to the second research question as what role the immigrant background plays in affecting employment opportunities and experiences for immigrant youth. The responses to the question on ethnic discrimination in youth labour market given by the two groups of interviewees were varied and controversial. Contrary to the prevailing assumptions, all three immigrant youths stated that they have not experienced anything that they ‘could identified as discrimination’, during their search for a job. They rather see unemployment as a ‘general problem’ in today’s Swedish context and assert other factors and reasons as peculiarly relevant to their state of being unemployed, such as Swedish language skills, etc.

Limited or no language skills and lack of experience hold us back from proper participation and competition in the labour market. Perhaps it is due to lack of language skill that only the low standard jobs are available for us, if there are any. I think language is one of the tools towards integration. (Immigrant youth IY3)

However, the earlier evidence on the phenomenon of ethnic discrimination in the labour market area shows that “considerable ethnic discrimination exists in the Swedish labour market, which cannot be explained solely by human capital factors, such as *education* or *language* skills” (European Foundation, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>). Vilhelmsson (2002:1) discusses that “the labour market status of young individuals with immigrant background is weak compared to that of native-born individuals...”

The fact that all immigrant youths relate their situation as unemployed to other factors, such as language and ‘*proper*’ work experience, and deny or ignore the factor of *ethnic discrimination* that ‘exists in the Swedish labour market’, raises questions, stimulating the curiosity of researchers. In our opinion, such attitude could be explained in two ways. Firstly, these immigrant individuals are not intended to admit or identify themselves as discriminated human beings. The other reason could be the fact that some of them who have come from countries, relatively with worse social condition, they look into the issue with comparative measure. For this reason, we assume that they are not in a position of judging objectively their situation, concerning their search for employment.

The opinion of the Swedish young unemployed, comparing with immigrant youths, is different with regards to the ethnic discrimination in the labour market. They have expressed various and mixed up opinions about the issue. One of the respondents believes that “*it is difficult for immigrants to find a job*” (Swedish youth SY2). The respondent SY3 stated about the other side of the problem: “*Swedish people may have fear towards unknown people, also maybe because they are not so fluent in Swedish language.*” While the interviewee SY1 thinks the opposite: “*My boyfriend is from Mexico, and he gets a job easily*”. Nevertheless, the Swedish youth SY3 share the opinion that: “*when it is hard for Swedish people, I am sure immigrants might face more difficulties in getting a job*”.

The analysis of responses, given by Swedish youth, lead us back to the description of discrimination, discussed in the theoretical framework of this study. Payne (1997:245) points out that, 'one of the ways in which this [discrimination] is done is by the use of language and social assumptions to support conventions which are discriminatory'. From the responses of both, immigrant and Swedish youth groups, we can see a vivid line of conformity about the factor of 'language' being a barrier in the process of immigrants' integration in the labour market.

Moreover, all interviewed employment officers and social secretaries share the same opinion as Swedish youths and affirm the fact that ethnic discrimination does exist in the labour market.

If you apply for a job and your name is other than a Swedish name, then you might face a problem in securing that particular job. That is also one of the reasons why immigrants change their name. (Social worker EO2)

People are afraid of unknown, of someone who look differently, speak differently etc. (Social worker SS1)

You feel safer in your own group, and you get scared of someone with different background, looking and talking differently, you get reluctant to accept these persons. (Social worker EO1)

The last two statements can be defined as *stereotypical thinking*, discussed in theoretical framework (Three mechanisms of social exclusion, European Foundation, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu>), that characterizes the attitudes of Swedish society towards the 'unknown'. Perhaps it is an unconscious behaviour, but it could be questioned that, is it not portrayed in a manner that is consciously justifying the process of social exclusion and discrimination?

The factor of 'unknown' is well described in Payne's analysis of *discriminatory behaviour*. He gives us the example of fighting assumptions of *ordinary* or *normal* between two groups of people. It means that the minority group should submit to what is dominant notion of *ordinary* and should fit him/herself into the so-called general idea of being normal. In this situation the self-identity of the individuals from minority groups will be problematic. Therefore, as suggested by Payne, 'we need to be open and flexible in our views about all ethnic groups and listen carefully to their own perspective, rather than taking for granted any issue related to ethnic identity'. As mentioned before, one of the characteristics of discrimination is 'identifying individuals and groups with certain characteristics and treating them less well than people or groups with conventionally valued characteristics' (Payne, 1997:244).

Though the Swedish Constitution promises that "... all human beings are of equal value (section 2 ch.1). No statute or regulation may result in unfair treatment of a citizen on the grounds of his or her sex or belonging to a minority on account of his or her race, colour

or ethnic origin ... (section 15 ch.2).” (International Labour Organization, www.ilo.org). However, the interviewees responses give us a different picture:

The integration policy is very well structured favoring immigrants, but the implementation of it is less successful. We can have very nice words, but if you don't keep the discussion alive, they remain just words. (Social worker SS2)

According to social workers, approximately 80 per cent of work in Sweden goes through connections and *recommendations* play a vital role. For young immigrants it is a difficult situation, because most often they do not have that circle of contacts that they can use in order to get a job. Another problem for them is that 'some companies' prefer to hire an 'inexperienced Swede' instead of an 'experienced immigrant' even with more educational background, due to various reasons. Although, it was also mentioned by the respondents that this attitude is not relevant to all companies within the country.

Most Swedish employers are still male and white, and they want to employ male and white as well. (Social worker SS2)

However, one of the social workers has rather an undefined opinion about the role of ethnicity in the labour market area, but in the same time she highlights some other reasons common for both, Swedes and immigrants that affect their ability to get a job:

I don't know if it is about ethnicity, is it because they are immigrants or there may be other problems that make them not getting a job. When I meet Swedes and immigrants, there are different reasons why they are unemployed, but there are common problems, like drug abuse that make them to be unemployed. (Social worker SS1)

Ethnocentrism, discussed in the theoretical framework of the current study, also plays its role in shaping the scenario of social exclusion. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to judge other cultures by the standards of one's own culture; to use one's own way of life as a standard for judging others; it is the belief that one's own culture or ethnic group is inherently superior to others (Stemmer-Lueck, 2007). This concept could be relevant for both, majority and minority ethnic groups, meaning that any discriminating attitude can occur between both groups, in a reversible way.

When I was in school, we had a lot of immigrants and most of them hated Swedes. (Social worker SS2)

While admitting that this behavior of immigrants represents ethnocentric tendencies, but we can also consider it as a response or counteraction based on their previous experiences. Moreover, this statement could be associated too as an ethnocentric predisposition of the social worker. The different points of view brought up in the responses of our interviewees suggest that ethnic discrimination is a complex set of occurrences.

Swedish language skills as a pretext to justify discrimination

To the question on ethnic discrimination all respondents referred to the problem of Swedish language. It was highlighted as one of the main problems restricting the integration of immigrant young unemployed in the labour market. The Swedish youths consider that one of the main reasons of young immigrants being unemployed is low level of Swedish language skills.

Immigrants have problems in getting a job, because they are not so fluent in Swedish language. (Swedish youth SY3)

The young unemployed immigrants also share the same view by admitting that:

“...language is one of the tools towards integration” [and] “limited or no language skills hold us back from proper participation and competition in the labour market”. (Immigrant youth IY3)

However, the findings show that there is yet more to explain about the reasons of unemployment among immigrant youth in particular. “Young individual with immigrant background have a lower employment probability and a higher risk of becoming unemployed or not being in the labour force than individuals born in Sweden, with native-born parents” (Vilhelmsson, 2002:1). Differences in Swedish language skill cannot explain the whole reality on the ground. According to Vilhelmsson (2002:2), “the labour market status of young individuals with immigrant backgrounds is weak compared to that of native-born individuals, despite the fact that many of those concerned were born in Sweden and have attended the Swedish compulsory school (*grundskolan*)”.

Therefore it can be argued that, maybe unconsciously, language skill is being used as a pretext to justify the discriminating attitudes towards immigrant young unemployed on the labour market. Sometimes, ethnic discrimination is disguised under the expressions such as ‘language skills’, ‘cultural differences’ etc. Meaning that cultural differences or language skills are presented as one of the reason for unemployment of immigrants and, in this way, the discriminating attitude is justified.

In the field of social work practice, the sociologists suggest to apply the anti-discrimination and ethnic sensitivity concepts for combating the phenomenon of discrimination. As previously discussed in *theoretical framework*, the ‘anti-discriminatory perspectives focus on combating institutionalized discrimination in society, which represents the interests of powerful groups’ (Payne, 2005:269). It is a structural explanation of discrimination and sensitivity that incorporates cultural and social relationships into social work practice (*ibid*).

The concept of ethnic sensitivity as one of the approaches to fight the discriminatory behaviour in the labour market area can serve to protect the interest of the minority groups against the powerful. It ‘promotes responses to ethnic diversity in societies’ (Payne, 2005). The sensitivity theory more focuses on empowerment of the less advantaged group(s)/individual(s). Lum and O’Hagan (cited in Payne, 1997:247)

introduce the idea of ‘cultural competence’ for workers, to carry out their work with respect for maintaining diversity and understanding the main cultures they would have contact with’. In our opinion, for avoiding mistakes in intervention caused by misunderstanding the clients’ concerns, there should be people from other cultures as social workers at the professional level. Therefore, in social work and similar professions sensitivity should be encouraged towards the needs and choices among different ethnic groups.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Youth unemployment and social (labour market) exclusion are complex problems, having multiple causes and requiring diverse strategies of remedial action (Petersen and Mortimer, 1994). The current research reveals that making a causal analysis of youth unemployment from the perspective of more than one group is a complex process that brings us multiple perspectives and approaches. From our empirical study, we identified seven main factors that affect young people's integration in the labour market, such as: education, work experience, lack of information of young people, social and psychological problems, role of the state, language problems and discrimination. All the factors we have described were assessed by young unemployed and social workers at different levels, showing different degrees of importance and impact for integration in the labour market.

Portraying the situation in the field of youth labour market, the empirical evidence shows that employment is very important for young people from Gothenburg, both for Swedes and immigrants. They are very motivated to have a job and integrate in various fields of the labour market. When it comes to education, all young unemployed, Swedes and immigrants, emphasized the importance of education as one of the main keys for getting a better job, but in combination with work experience. Lack of work experience seemed to be one of the main causes for youth unemployment. Furthermore, immigrant youths added the role of connections and recommendations for getting a job. Social workers support the latter ideas, focusing especially on the difficulty to get the first job experience. Related to education, the professionals stressed on the problem of school drop-outs as one of the common problems among young unemployed in Gothenburg that result later in socio-psychological problems and lead to long-term unemployment.

In relation to social and psychological problems, all interviewed young unemployed do not see them as a main reason for them being unemployed. We can infer that young people might not want to be identified as a problematic group. Moreover, when they listed the problems, they referred mostly to other unemployed youth, not themselves. This can be considered as an unconscious tendency of people to focus more on external factors rather than on internal or personal factors. Social workers, on the contrary, have a strong believe that social and psychological problems are one of the main reasons of youth unemployment. We argued why they focus too much on these problems, maybe because they deal with them in their professional life, though neglecting other factors that might cause unemployment, such as situation on the labour market, work experience, role of the state etc.

Focusing on the role of the state, all 10 respondents agreed that the state plays a crucial role for young people's integration in the job market. Firstly, due to the current changes in the labour market legislation, introduced by the new Government, young people feel that they lost the previous support and have to count on themselves that is not the best situation for them, when they need most of the assistance. Moreover, social workers believe that young people necessitate a 'psychological push' in order to be active and to make them feel that they have chances and there is someone who can support them.

Secondly, the state and nowadays society have too high expectations from young people that is making more difficult for them to succeed. In particular, according to young unemployed, the employers portray the ideal employee as being 25-30 years old, have a very good education, 5-7 years experience etc. that seem unattainable for young people. Distinctively from Swedish youths and social workers, immigrant youths did not have defined opinions about the new provisions in the labour market policy. We assume that there are two reasons: first, they are very careful with what they say and do while having yet an unstable position in Sweden and, second, they see other factors that are crucial for entering and participating in the labour market. The same as Swedish youths, social workers also showed dissatisfaction to the changes brought by the new Government, pointing out that they affected a lot the young unemployed.

In the context of the new labour market policies, there is an interesting fact to be revealed. The European Union statistics show increasing rates of youth unemployment in Sweden, but Arbetsförmedlingen statistics (Mölnådal municipality) show a decrease in the number of young unemployed, due to the current strategies of the Government, aimed at transforming 'black' jobs into 'white' jobs. We raise the question why? We assume that this divergence in figures resulted from the following supposition: some young people, registered at Arbetsförmedlingen as unemployed, had worked in 'black' jobs that currently were transformed in 'white' jobs, as a result this young people become officially employed. Somehow, these suppositions require a further research.

With regards to role of ethnicity in affecting employment opportunities of immigrants, Swedish youths and social workers affirm the fact that ethnic discrimination does exist in the labour market. Especially, visible immigrants are affected more, those who speak differently, have different names and look differently than Swedes. Stereotypical thinking characterizes the attitudes of Swedish society towards the 'unknown'. Perhaps it is an unconscious behaviour, but is it not portrayed in a manner that consciously justifies the process of social exclusion and discrimination? It can be assumed, as well, that the conceptions of differences are those that cause exclusion and discrimination, further influencing the behaviour.

Contrary to the prevailing assumptions, all immigrant youths relate their situation as unemployed to other factors, such as language and '*proper*' work experience, and deny or ignore the factor of *ethnic discrimination* that 'exists in the Swedish labour market'. Such attitude could be explained in two ways. Firstly, these immigrant individuals are not intended to admit or identify themselves as discriminated human beings. The other reason could be the fact that some of them come from countries, relatively with worse social condition, and look into the issue with comparative measure. We can presuppose as well that interviewed immigrant youths have not yet experienced discrimination. Concerning the interrelation between Swedes and immigrants, according to the social workers, there have been observed ethnocentric tendencies from the side of immigrants, due to various reasons. It can be inferred, on the one hand, that this is a response or counteraction based on their previous experiences, but, on the other hand, it can be viewed as an ethnocentric tendency of the social worker. Actually, ethnocentrism could be relevant for both,

majority and minority ethnic groups, meaning that any discriminating attitude can occur between and among both groups, in a reversible way.

All respondents agreed that low level of Swedish language skills are one of the main problems restricting the integration of immigrant young unemployed in the labour market. Nevertheless, maybe unconsciously, language skill is being used as a pretext to justify the discriminating attitudes towards immigrant young unemployed on the labour market. Sometimes, ethnic discrimination is disguised under the expressions such as 'language skills', 'cultural differences' etc. Meaning that cultural differences or language skills are presented as one of the reason for unemployment of immigrants and, in this way the discriminating attitude is justified.

Contrary to our assumptions, Swedish youths are the one who lack information with regards to the services offered by social welfare office and employment office, and immigrant youths, on the opposite, are comparatively well informed about available social services, through the introduction programmes designed for new comers in Sweden. This fact sounds unanticipated, but anyway not identified as a clear cause of youth unemployment.

In the end, we conclude that main causes of youth unemployment can be divided into three groups, categorized according to the perspectives of young unemployed, Swedes and immigrants, and respectively social workers. From Swedish youths' point of view, the main causes of youth unemployment are: lack of work experience and education, state policies and intervention, lack of information, and discrimination, related as a reason for immigrant youths. From the perspective of immigrant youths, the main causes are: lack of work experience and education, low level of Swedish language skills, and lack of connections and/or recommendations. And, according to social workers, reasons of youth unemployment include all the described factors, such as: lack of work experience and education, social and psychological problems, state policies and intervention, discrimination and low level of Swedish language skills related to immigrant youths, and lack of connections and recommendations.

The empirical study brought up interesting and diversified results that answered to the main questions of the research. However, there is still a set of questions that have been raised in the current paper, which can be explored in further research. One of the suggestions is to conduct a qualitative study, comparing the situation in Sweden, Moldova and Afghanistan.

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FIELD STUDY REPORT

Name of organization: Mölndal Stad (Arbetsmarknads- och integrationssektionen)

Section: Labour Market and Integration

Visiting address: Stadhuset, Ågatan 4 B, 431 82 Mölndal, tel. 031-315 1062

1. Introduction

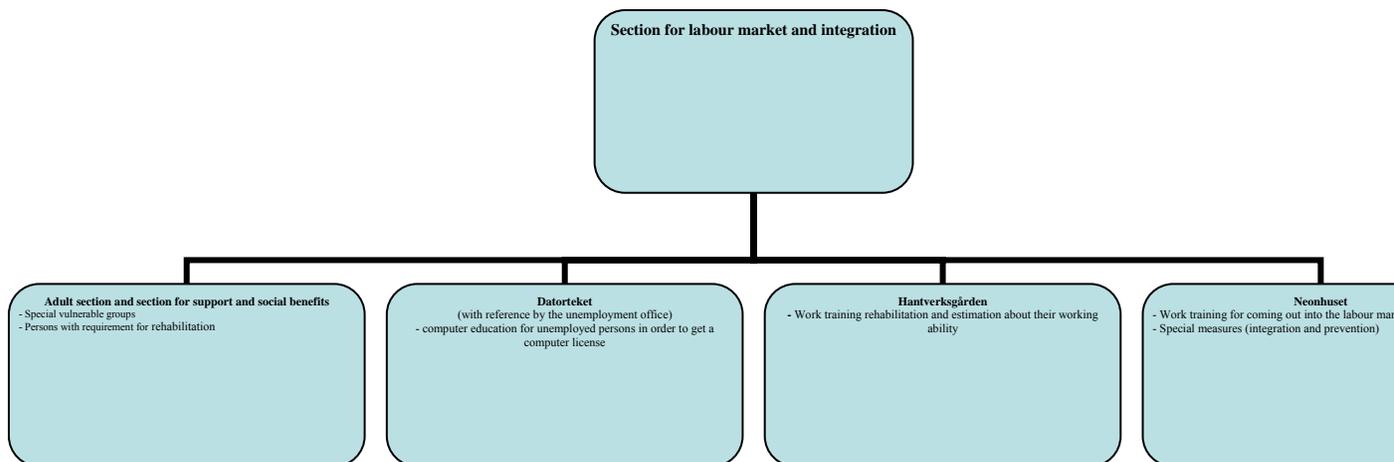
As a part of the International Master Programme in Social Work at Göteborg University, we have been placed at the Section for Labour Market and Integration under Work and Family Support Administration Office at Mölndal Stad. Our field practice has been performed over a period of five weeks, from 26 February to 30 March 2007. The aim of the presented report is to share knowledge and experiences gained during the field work.

2. A short description of the organization/trainee post

Mölndal is located in the south of Göteborg, on the Swedish West coast with the square of 147 km². It is located in the metropolitan area of Göteborg with the intersection between European highways and the metropolitan outer peripheral road.

Organization/trainee post description:

The Section for Labour Market and Integration and Refugee reception, where we had our field placement has the following structure:



3. Main activities and group of clients met at the trainee post

The organization focuses its activities on two main directions, related to two groups of clients, (1) support of unemployed people and (2) refugee reception.

1) Support of unemployed people

Main activities performed by this direction include:

- Offer social benefits to unemployed people
- Offer counseling and make individual plans with the clients with regards to their integration on the labour market and continuing with further education
- Individual support and advice for the clients, *e.g.* help to make their CVs and fill out job applications
- Establish contacts with employers and cooperate with unemployment office (Arbetsförmedlingen) and local administration
- Offer work training to unemployed people (*Neonhuset*) and/or place them on field practice

2) Refugee reception

Main activities performed by this direction include:

- Provide Public Introduction Programmes (*Introduktionsprogram*) for refugees and other new comers that include:
 - a) SFI (Swedish for immigrants (600 hrs)
 - b) Work practice (200 hrs)
 - c) Word processing in Swedish (20 hrs)
 - d) Family system in Sweden (10 hrs)
- Provide new comers with financial support (*Government and Introduction compensations*) for their resettlement, *i.e.* about 20 600 USD for 2 years
- Develop individual plans and offer counseling for the clients in order to integrate better in the Swedish society
- Work with unaccompanied minors who seek asylum in Sweden.

4. Description of the study visits and participation in client meetings

During our field practice we made 15 (fifteen) study visits at state and municipal organizations and institutions working with unemployed people and refugees. The detailed information can be found in the table below.

We participated in individual and group client meetings. They were meetings and observations of unemployed group of people, who visit the Arbetsmarknads office every Monday for job seeking program (*Jobb sök*). This group of people includes more adult

unemployed than young persons, due to new Government measures with regards to partial shortening of the budget on unemployment support for youngsters.

Also, we met with a group of unaccompanied minors, placed temporary at *Nätverkcentrum*, until a decision is taken with regards to their residence permit in Sweden. Individual meeting was done with an unaccompanied minor, a girl from Somalia who recently arrived to Sweden. We discussed about the reasons for coming to Sweden and what are her first impressions.

6. Interview with clients

We conducted 9 (nine) semi-structured interviews. Four interviews were made with social workers: 2 (two) employment officers and 2 (two) social secretaries who work directly with young unemployed people. Five interviews were conducted with young unemployed people including 2 (two) immigrants and 3 (three) Swedes. We had the support of our supervisors and the staff of Arbetsmarknads and Arbetsförmedlingen in finding our respondents.

The interviews and study visits that we made are related to our degree report on youth unemployment, as they connect with the organizations that deal with unemployment issues and offer support to unemployed people.

Conclusion:

The field study gave us the opportunity to improve our knowledge and skills with regards to social work activities within the Swedish system, mainly in the area of labour market integration and refugee reception. We had the chance to get acquainted with how legislation is implemented through various state and municipal programs and projects, especially the advantages and disadvantages of the policies of new Government.

One the main outcomes of the field study was to outline the current situation of youth unemployment in Western region of Sweden, what are the reasons why they are unemployed, as well as the implemented programs designed for them. This outcome represents a great contribution to our degree report and future professional activities in the field of social work.

Interview Guide for young unemployed

A. Background questions:

- Name (code)
- Age
- Sex
- Ethnicity
- Education

Themes:

1. Education
2. Work experience
3. Social problems (individual/family)
4. Discrimination
5. Measures for integration on the job market
6. Financial resources

B. Main questions

1. What is the importance of employment for you?
2. How long have you been unemployed?
3. When did you register at unemployment office?
4. Do you have any work experience so far?
5. Are you looking for a specific job or just any job?
6. Have you experienced any discrimination during your search for a job?
7. What is your opinion about the role of ethnicity when it comes to labor market?
8. Do you know about any programs aiming at integration of young people on the job market? If your answer is positive, have you gone through it? What have been the effects/results?
9. How do you make a living? Or in other words, how do you cope with your financial needs? Do your financial resources meet your requirements?
10. According to the topics discussed, what do you think are the main reasons for you being unemployed?

Interview Guide for social workers

A. Background questions:

- Name (code)
- Age
- Sex
- Ethnicity
- Place of work (Division, local or state level) and beneficiaries
- Experience in the field

Themes:

1. Education
2. Work experience
3. Social problems (individual/family)
4. Discrimination
5. Programs for integration on the job market
6. Financial resources

B. Main questions

1. What do you think is the importance of employment for young people?
2. The period of being unemployed, does it affect the further integration of young unemployed on the job market? If yes, how?
3. What is the role of previous work experience in the process of integration of young unemployed on the job market?
4. What is the effect of previous social problems, faced by young unemployed, on their ability to get a job?
5. Do you think young unemployed experience any discrimination during their search for a job?
6. What is your opinion about the role of ethnicity when it comes to labor market?
7. What are the programs that you implement for integration of young people on the job market? What have been the effects/results?
8. What are usually the sources for living of young unemployed? How do they cope with their financial needs?
9. Do you think that young people like to be unemployed? Is it convenient for them?

10. According to the topics discussed, what do you think are the main reasons for young people being unemployed?

APPENDIX 4

Informed consent

The following is a presentation of how we will use the data collected in the interview.

The research project is a part of our education in the International Masters program in Social Work at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. In order to insure that our project meets the ethical requirements for good research we promise to adhere to the following principles:

- Interviewees in the project will be given information about the purpose of the project.
- Interviewees have the right to decide whether he or she will participate in the project, even after the interview has been concluded.
- The collected data will be handled confidentially and will be kept in such a way that no unauthorized person can view or access it.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for us to document what is said during the interview and also helps us in the continuing work with the project. In our analyze some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized. After finishing the project the data will be destroyed. The data we collect will only be used in this project.

You have the right to decline answering any questions, or terminate the interview without giving an explanation.

You are welcome to contact us or our supervisor, in case you have any questions (e-mail addresses below).

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Aemal Peroz, e-mail: aemal_p@yahoo.com

Supervisor:

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