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Work Try-outs and Job Coaching as a Path Towards Employment – Employers' Perspective

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<p>This thesis examined employers' perspectives of a cooperation model designed by two employment projects. The cooperation model combines job coaching to the implementation of work try-outs. The objective of the cooperation model is to improve the labor market readiness and position of job seekers, who need support for gaining employment. Furthermore, the objective of the cooperation model is to clarify the job seeker's readiness, potential and possible challenges, in order to make a realistic follow-up plan, which promotes their employment. Employer cooperation has been an essential aspect in these employment projects, in order to develop well-functioning models for employment. Therefore, the employer perspective was used as the basis for this thesis as well.</p> <p>The purpose of this study was to describe employer perspective of employment promotion, supported employment, and the use of activation methods of labor policies. The perspective in this study is closely bound to the context of cooperation with employment projects and job coaching provided by them, but the results contribute to the overall evaluation of implementation of activation methods and employment promotion as well. The objectives of this study were, from the employer perspective to study: How do work try-outs, combined with job coaching, function as a path to employment? And how to improve the functioning of work try-outs? The data was collected by semi-structured interviews with six employers, and analyzed using an inductive content analysis.</p> <p>The results indicated that the employers experienced the work try-outs in some cases as a functional path towards employment. Furthermore, in some cases, as the only path to employment. There was however conditions to the well-functioning of the work try-out, in order for it to be adequate and beneficial for the job seeker/work try-outer. These conditions condensed to the availability of additional support, which the work try-out process requires. In this particular cooperation model, the additional support was given by job coaches. According to the employers' experiences, the additional support was essential in order to ensure the functionality of a work try-out, and the actualization of its purpose.</p> <p>The results of this study increase the knowledge about the functionality of work try-outs as a path to employment. The results help to identify development needs in implementing the activation and employment promotion strategies, regarding job seekers in a challenging labor market position.</p>		
Keywords	Job coaching, work try-out, transitional labor market, employment promotion, employer perspective	

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1 Introduction

Unemployment and employment promotion has been a very topical issue for the past years. In the current state of unemployment, a service system, which produces services for both, the job seekers and the employers, has become essential for the development work of the labor policies. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2012.)

According to the November 2015 Employment Bulletin by Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the current number of unemployed jobseekers in Finland is 342 100, which is 15 600 unemployed job seekers more than the year before. The biggest increase was within Uusimaa area, by 9%. Unemployment figures grew especially among the young (under 25 years of age) and the elder (over 50 years of age). Furthermore, long-term unemployment continued its increase: by the end of November 2015, there were 114 000 unemployed jobseekers, who had been unemployed continually for over a year. There have been about 13 500 people taking part in a work try-out during year 2015. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.)

A press release by Ministry of Employment and the Economy on February 24th 2015 presents, that there were 121 800 people at the end of January 2015 taking part in employment services, which is 4 100 more than a year before. Employment services are for example the work try-outs, employment with the support of salary subsidy, studies promoting employment, and labor force training. In the press release the 2011-2014 minister of labor Lauri Ihalainen states, that the biggest challenge as of now is the prolonged unemployment, and that there is a danger, that many people end up more permanently outside the labor markets altogether. "The employment services work as a safety net, and support the returning to the labor market", Ihalainen elaborates.

(Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015.)

In addition to the government's public employment services, there are numerous development projects, which aim to complete the services, which the public employment and business services provide for unemployed job seekers. Furthermore, the essential task of the projects is to develop the services and the employment promoting methods, which are available to the unemployed job seekers. Two large funders of such development projects are the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY-keskus) and the European Social Fund, ESF.

This thesis has examined the methods and the functionality of two such employment projects, which promote the employment of those, who are in a challenging position at the labour market. The task of the employment promotion projects is to provide such services, which manage to help the job seeker to find passages to employment, and to develop the job seekers' skills and readiness in job search, in order to gain employment and remain employed. The employment projects have provided job coaching and other employment promoting services to a very heterogeneous client group, including people from wide range of age, mother tongues, employment and educational background. The only common denominator for the clients of the projects has been their current unemployment, and the need for support with gaining employment.

The purpose of this study was to find out, how do the work try-outs, combined with job coaching, function from the employers' perspective, and how the operations could be further developed. Moreover, what could be recognized as the challenges and success within the job coaching practices, integrated into the work try-outs. This study aimed to collect deeper understanding in regards of the employer perspective within the job coaching field and work try-outs, which are meant to serve the job seekers' path towards employment – or professional education, via of which, to employment.

There has not been much presentation on the work within job coaching practices, which regards the employer cooperation and the employer perspective. It has been recognized, that in order to find paths to employment and to create sustainable employment, the cooperation with employers must be active and sufficient. This is why the employer cooperation in job coaching is something that would be necessary to be made more visible (Pikkusaari 2011: 82). Moreover, the employment cooperation within the job coaching services has to be active and continuous. The trusting relationship between the job coach and the employer support the employment of the job coaching clients (Vinni 2007:24). These aspects have indeed been the aims of the employment projects and was the phenomena examined in this thesis.

This study has been aimed to serve the developmental work of the employment projects, which are conducted in Helsinki Deaconess Institute in cooperation with the other partners. This study aimed to gather the essential information from the employer partners, to gain deeper insight of how to develop the cooperation, employment operations and employment services further.

2 Employment Promotion

Employment services are provided to the public set by the Finnish legislation. The act on public employment and business service states, that the employment and economic development office, the customer service center of the employment and economic development administration, or the center for economic development, transport and the environment provide the services. They may provide the services themselves, or acquire them, partly or in full, from service providers using the appropriation allocated in the State budget for the purpose of service acquisition. (Act on public employment and business service 916/2012.)

The public employment and business services reformed in the beginning of the year 2013. The purpose of the reformed services is to fit together the needs of the labour market, the businesses and the individual job seeker. There is a service selection, which is available for all clients. The reformation of the services included a client segmentation based on the needs of services of the client. The client segmenting's purpose is to systemize the service provision and substance development. The segmentation resulted in three client categories, into which the clients are referred to depending on their current service needs. (Ministry of Employment and Economy 2012.)

In addition to the public employment services there are private service providers, as well as the employment projects promoting employment with various means, funded by different funding agents, such as European Social Fund, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, or Finland's Slot Machine Association. These private services and projects are meant to complement and further develop the public services.

This study is focusing on two employment projects, which develop the services in cooperation with the employer partners and the TE-services. The work try-out periods are in practice implemented in tripartite cooperation between the work try-outer, the job coach, and the employers/companies. The work try-out and the job coaching are services, which are taking place when the client is not able to gain direct employment.

Tarja Filatov has made a report (2013) of the potential of transitional labor markets to support the working life participation, and employment of those in challenging labor market position. The report presents the possibilities of *transitional labour market* to

support those in a challenging labour market position, to participate in working life and gaining employment. In this report Filatov presents suggestions and relevant modes of action regarding the topic. There are such suggestions regarding the cooperation with the companies as; marketing the labour force services and subsidies to the companies, emphasizing the job seekers' strengths and skills and dissolving the negative ideas of employing the long-term unemployed. (Filatov 2013). The work try-outs can work as a tool in all these aspects, as a first risk-free step to consider the possible employment of a job seeker.

Harkko et al. (2013) examined job coaching services, the target groups of the coaching, implementation of the service and its outcomes. One of the outcomes of this study was, that if job coaching is to be developed into a vocational rehabilitation service that genuinely supports employment, the goals for working life should be clarified and the competence of service providers should be reinforced in the areas of individual guidance, cooperation with employers and job seeking skills.

Furthermore, a publication by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy 1/2015, presents current key recommendations for improving the labor policy services. The joint evaluation project implemented by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, for the period June 2013 to April 2015, involved different branches of government (Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of Finance, in addition to the MEE itself), labor market organizations, the Federation of Finnish Enterprises, and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. The publication states, that there is an increasing need for labor policy services and a great demand for these services to be provided in a new, and more individually tailored ways. There are some key recommendations, which address the issues of this study as well. One of the key recommendations concerning the services of those in a challenging labor market position is: "The practices with employer cooperation have to be strengthened and systemized". (Tonttila 2015: 76). The employer cooperation has been one of the main development areas in the employment projects concerning this study. The employment projects work with a very small sample of job seekers and employers, when compared to the national and public labor policies level, which are the subject of the ministry's evaluation. However, the employment projects' task is indeed to test out and develop good practices, which could then be expanded and multiplied.

In the following chapter the employment promotion measures, such as work try-outs and job coaching, are presented in a general point of view, based on the legislation and

public services. In the following chapter, chapter 3, the work try-outs and job coaching are presented as they function in the employment projects in question.

2.1 Social Employment

Social employment is a hypernym for processes, which aim to a holistically support an individual's life and attach them to working life. The field of social employment consist of employment units, which promote the employment or employ those in a challenging labor market position. (Ylipaavalniemi 2005:15.)

The field of social employment aims to promote the participation possibilities and involvement with its goal-directed operations. The social employment field provides services, which promote and support the equal execution of employment participation: everyone has a right for employment and gaining livelihood with self-chosen work. The services are flexible, taking into account the client's goals and possibilities. The work is conducted in various units, companies and projects, which are connected with the purpose of operations. The units do not share a mutual model of operations, but the services are built according to local needs, traditions and practices. The social employment units are essential operators at the transitional labor market. (Hassinen et al. 2012:5.)

The field of social employment, the organizations and the services produced by the field, is so diverse, that it is hard to collect and administer the information of the field. Due to this, there is no comprehensive statistics or reports of the social employment field's unit amount, resources and services. However it can be estimated, that there is around 500 units and 10 000 daily clients within the social employment field in Finland. (Hassinen et al. 2012:5.)

2.2 Job Coaching

Job coaching organized by Public Employment and Business Services (Ministry of Employment and the Economy) is a segment of professional rehabilitation. The Guidelines of Ministry of Employment and the Economy concerning the law of public employment and business services (18.6.2013) states, that job coaching is a service, which is organized in order to support the career planning, career development, employment and staying employed. Job coaching is a service, which can take place both before, and after employment, as it can consist of actions such as searching for

work, preparing for working life, the contracts related to employment and support for staying employed. Job coaching services for the employer are such as offering information about the job seeker's skills and abilities, and if needed, giving information about the employment promotional activities of Public Employment and Business services. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2013:32. TEM1198/03.10.02/2013.)

Job coaching services consist of various actions and dimensions. In the study by Harkko et al. (2013) people who had been taking part in job coaching services by the Public Employment and Business Services were asked, what kind of activities their coaching had included. The most common activities were those of composing job applications, attending work try-outs, and working life coaching. In addition, there had been actions such as visiting work places and mapping out educational options. (Harkko – Härkäpää – Lehtikoinen, 2013:71.)

Mika Ala-Kauhaluoma has studied the ways of employment promotion and job coaching. His study points out, that the employment projects' share common principles of client oriented, individual approach, which supports the client's own assets. The common denominator for the projects is that of individually tailored support, which is implemented by the job coaches based on the job seeker's situation and support needs. Socio-politically, the work of the job coach is defined as a social service, which helps and supports the challenged in the turn of events of (working) life. (Ala-Kauhaluoma 2007, 70–71.)

There are some basic values and principles in job coaching services, as is described by Suvi Pikkusaari in *Työ(hön)valmennus on taitolaji*. The aim of job coaching services are, that also those who have been left behind, have been excluded, or are about to be excluded from the open labor market jobs, will have a chance for individual and sufficient support, to improve their employment situation. Furthermore, the principles of job coaching include such aspects as working for the best interest of the client, respecting the client and paying attention to the client's wishes, needs and potential, with solution-focused coaching. (Pikkusaari, 2011:25-31).

Work try-outs are familiar to most employers, whereas job coaching as a service is not very familiar for employers in general. In a research by Ala-Kauhaluoma and Härkäpää (2006), which received response from 698 companies, only a few recorded being familiar with job coaching service. The research concluded that the employers did not

have enough knowledge of the services available and some employers expressed a wish that the TE-Services would have a more active role in employment promotion, and would take into account the employer perspective more concretely. (Ala-Kauhaluoma – Härkäpää, 2006:29.)

2.3 Work Try-out

Work try-out is a non-employment, employment promoting service arranged to a singular person. Work try-outs are periods of practice at work, which can be arranged by a company, a private enterpriser, municipality, some other community, foundation, or governmental office or institution, or by a work shop, as long as it can arrange the work try-out in an authentic work environment.

The objective of a work try-out is either to clarify the choice and selection of career, or to support regaining of employment. If the work try-out is arranged to clarify the choice and selection of career, the client either has not yet attained a professional education or there is a change of career or profession taking place. A work try-out can clarify, whether a particular field or profession is of interest to the client. Furthermore, if the client is a person without professional education, the primary objective is to discover a suitable educational option. If the client is a person going for a career or profession switch, the primary objective is to find a new employment or educational option, which is suitable to the client.

The other possible initial objective of a work try-out, which is that of regaining employment, is used when a person has been away from labour market for a lengthened period of time. This can be due to a longer period of unemployment, or some other reasons such as a parental leaves. Based on the work try-out the employer and the employment services can estimate the potential of the client in regards of employment – whether the knowhow and readiness for employment are at a required level, or whether the person may need additional employment promotional measures, as those of salary subsidy, job coaching or further education or training. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2013: 34-35. TEM1198/03.10.02/2013.)

The TE-services advertise work try-out as a stepping stone to the job market, with the following description: “A work try-out at a workplace may help you get your foot in the door when returning to the job market. The work try-out is an opportunity for you to impress the employer with your skills and motivation. After the work try-out, your return

to the job market can be supported e.g. by work on a pay subsidy, education or training, or the services of a job coach.” (TE-palvelut 1/2015.)

2.4 Transitional Labour Market

The aim of the transitional labour market is to provide work possibilities for those unemployed job seekers, who for one reason or another, have difficulties gaining employment through open labour markets (= labour market, within which there is no use of society’s financial assistance, such as salary subsidy). The transitional labour market offers an addition to active employment- and social policy services, which support the promotion of gaining employment and coping, once employed. The aim of these labor market operations, such as work try-out, job coaching and employment with the support of salary subsidy, is to improve professional skills, knowhow and labor market position, and via this, promote the path towards open labor market employment. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2011.)

According to Kerminen (2007) the transitional labor market signifies the employment possibilities located in between the open labor market and the unemployment, for those who have challenges to find their place within the open labor market or professional studies. (Kerminen, 2007). The function of transitional labor market is to provide individual solutions to people, whose social survival has decreased due to a long unemployment or some other reason. The jobs at the transitional labor market are mainly entry passages or activating passages, but for some they are a permanent solution. (Tupo 2 työryhmän mietintö, 2005.)

Transitional Labour Market, in the study setting’s context, indicates the companies, organizations and the workplaces within them, in which our clients, e.g. the unemployed job seekers, have the opportunity to take part in a work try-out, and possibly later on be employed by the company. Possible employment may include a salary subsidy applied by the employer from the Public Employment and Business Services, but the employment can take place without salary subsidy as well.

Kukkonen (2009) has studied the companies’ viewpoint on employing disabled job seekers. The study examined the employment from the viewpoint of companies’ social responsibility. The study concluded that the companies employ disabled job seekers for the sake of diversifying the staff, but also because they wish to take social responsibility. Moreover, the reasons for employing disabled job seekers include the

reasons of equality, helping, promoting progress for the individual, and the company value based reasons:

- work community diversity as a richness
- responsibility as an employer employing the disabled (company image)
- societal and social responsibility
- helping the disabled to gain employment
- the joy of offering possibilities (individual viewpoint)

(Kukkonen 2009: 103.)

The labor market position of a job seeker is essential when applying for jobs. Palosuo (2009) has studied in his doctoral thesis the prerequisites for finding employment and selecting employees. The labor market position effects the employment possibilities in such a way, that from the unemployed job seekers the majority (86,4 %) would still not be employed. Those who had taken part in a training arranged by TE Services, almost every job seeker remained unemployed (93,1 %). The best chance for employment was for those job seekers, who had a current fixed-term employment, of whom 40% gained new employment. (Palosuo 2009:74.)

The employers' attitudes towards job seekers who have been unemployed for lengthened period of time is understandable, but not always justified. It is clear, that an employer wants to hire the most competent person for the job, with current skills and knowhow. This is when the chances of a long term unemployed are not very good. (Hämäläinen – Tuomala – Ylikännö, 2009:42). This influence of a labor market position of a job seeker, to the success of gaining employment, indicates the importance of transitional labor market as a path to open labor market jobs as well. It can be easier to gain employment, when applying for jobs, while already being already employed.

3 Employment Projects

The employment projects, which are used as a basis of this study, are both conducted by Helsinki Deaconess Institute, and funded in addition by The Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and European Social Fund. Both projects are development projects, which aim to promote new ways of employment through work try-outs, combined with job coaching, and new cooperation methods with companies and employers.

The Labor Political Grant by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, is intended to promote the employment of the unemployed job seekers. The operations which are funded with this grant have to improve the job seekers' general labor market readiness, professional skills and knowhow, therefore promoting their employment. The Labor Political Grant can fund operations, in which unemployed jobseekers get opportunities for employment and work tryouts, or both, and other services related to these. The operations can include developing the services and procedures, which aim to improve the unemployed job seekers' labor market readiness, and tasks dealing with the coordination of the national operations. (ELY-keskus 2015.)

The ESF is one of the European Structural and Investment Funds, and the main tool for creating more and better jobs in Europe. EU's Structural Fund programs' main objectives include job creation and reducing unemployment. The EU funds Finnish projects that promote the growth of employment in Finland. In addition to boosting employment, Structural Fund programs focus on promoting the ability of individuals to remain active in the labor market and the prevention of marginalization. EU funding to create jobs in Finland is directed first and foremost to those, who most need it. Project funding is targeted especially at supporting young people, the unemployed, adults, immigrants, the handicapped and other people in danger of marginalization, and to promote regional equality. The ESF co-finances projects in a wide variety of areas related to improving employment opportunities and social inclusion, depending on the priorities set by the Member States. (Rakennerahastot, 2011.)

In the past employment projects implemented by Helsinki Deaconess Institute (such as *Tempo* 2008-2012 and *Sentido* 2012-2014), have developed the job coaching methods for unemployed job seekers, and especially those with added challenges to gain employment. While developing these services, there has been an aspect, which has increasingly demanded attention and innovation of working methods. This centre issue has been the cooperation with employers, i.e. the companies and organizations. This has come up as an important area for further development regarding the employment promotion and new employment models. Furthermore, job coaching in this context has the potential and purpose to simultaneously serve the employers' perspectives. If the employers' perspective is not considered, it is challenging to build sustainable and effective cooperation with them, in order to create suitable new employment models.

The projects used as a background for this study, are *Kotikallio Living Lab (2013-2015)* and *Sarana Goes Kotikallio (2014-2015)*. They both implemented work try-outs in cooperation with employers and organizations and aimed to develop employment methods of those job seekers, who are in most challenging labour market position. Kotikallio Living Lab –project concentrated essentially on combining job coaching with work try-outs, implemented in close cooperation with the employers. Sarana Goes Kotikallio was partially executing the same approach of job coaching and work try-outs. However, in addition it aimed to especially amplify the employer and company cooperation, establish new partnerships, and create increasingly stronger networks and foundations for cooperation regarding employment issues of those job seekers, who are in a challenging labour-market position.

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute is a public utility foundation. Together with its subsidiaries, the Institute forms a social enterprise group providing a range of social and health care services, as well as educational services. The employment projects belong to the development services and employment services within Helsinki Deaconess Institute. “The Helsinki Deaconess Institute open-mindedly develops and experiments with new services and operating methods, in response to the needs of its changing operating environment” (Helsingin Diakonissalaitos, 2015.)

The projects in question in this study are implemented by Helsinki Deaconess Institute and more precisely a social enterprise Diadome Ltd, which is a daughter company of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute.

3.1 Kotikallio Living Lab -project

Kotikallio Living Lab – employment project (2013-2015) provided a setting for work-try-outs, in which working life skills can be improved and strengthened, and the suitable path towards employment may be clarified. During a work try-out period the skills, abilities, and interests for employment and the particular working field can be assessed, and the wishes and possibilities for further employment can be clarified. In addition, the job seekers will receive job coaching and other services to increase the labor market skills and opportunities of the individual.

The target group of the project were the unemployed job seekers, who have been registered at the TE Services of Uusimaa area, and who needed further support with entering the working life. The needed support may be as an example the lack of

working experience or lack of education and training, insufficient Finnish language skills, or the need to clarify one's orientation regarding the field of work.

After the work-try-out a suitable follow-up plan could be something such as further training, supported employment, employment through the open labor market or professional studies.

The set aims for this project were:

- 60 work try-outs and follow-on plans per year
- A model of the service entity, which promotes employment and development of work force
- Employment platform, which offers work try-out possibilities to familiarize with the professional fields of care services, property maintenance services, restaurant- and cleaning services

The project exceeded its set aims. There was 203 active clients in the project. Furthermore, there were 159 work try-outs implemented and 200 follow-up plans made. From the clients, 57 % found employment or a study place after taking part in the project. From these 57% who found employment or a study place, 62% had been unemployed for over a year, and 22% had been unemployed for over five years. This indicates the suitability of the services for those with long-term unemployment as well.

It has been clear that the close cooperation with the employers and work communities has improved the implementation and functioning of the work try-outs in practice. Moreover, the job coach's presence during the work try-out enabled fast reacting to possible challenges and changes, as well as increased the amount of feedback and evaluation gotten from the work try-out period. The main idea of the project was, that during the project and the work try-out the job seeker, the employer and the job coach together evaluate the job seeker's readiness and potential, based on the feedback and experiences gained from the work try-out. This cooperation model was a way of guaranteeing, that the activation method in a transitional labor market - in this case a work try-out and job coaching – would be genuinely developing skills, improving the working life knowledge, empowering and ensuring of the follow-up plan. The way this project combined job coaching to the work try-outs and employer cooperation, succeeded in realizing the employment path and readiness of the job seekers. (Oliveira, 2016).

3.2 Sarana Goes Kotikallio –project

Sarana Goes Kotikallio (2014-2015) was a pilot project for a larger scale employment service. The purpose of this project was to produce information and experience, which would serve the developing of a service hybrid regarding rehabilitation, education and employment services. Furthermore, the hybrid service's is to produce individual paths towards professional education and employment.

Sarana Goes Kotikallio was building a service model, which is socially and economically sustainable, with its operational network. The service model was designed to serve both – the employment of those in a challenging labor market position, and the recruitment needs and wishes of companies. For the job seeker clients, the project was offering work try-out periods and job coaching. In addition to this work, the project concentrated on expanding the company and employer network, and deepening the cooperation with Helsinki Deaconess Institute's other departments and service providers.

In this project, all the cooperation aimed to the same objective at the very end of it – promoting the employment possibilities of those, for whom it is challenging to gain employment. Having multiple levels and ways of cooperation seems to profit the ultimate objective. The more familiar the employer is to the job coaches and vice versa, the better the development of the functions serving employment promotion. In a trusting and open atmosphere, new ways were tested, and found.

The set aims for this project were:

- 10 new employments and 30 work try-outs
- 5 new companies in the employment network
- creating a new business model, which promote the employment of the client group

The results surpassed the set aims, as the employment figures nearly tripled: 28 job seekers found employment through this project. Furthermore, 31 work try-outs were implemented in this project in cooperation with the employer network. The results were successful due to the strong networking and the building of the employer cooperation. Half of those who were employed via this project had been unemployed for over two years, and 34 % for over five years. (Angeria – Havu, 2015.)

3.3 The job seekers taking part in the projects

The job seekers, i.e. clients, who are taking part in these employment projects have come mostly from the Helsinki and Espoo area. They have been between the ages of 17 to 63. The average age of the clients was 35. The division of males and females has been rather equal in a long-term view, and the amount of immigrant background people has varied from 45% to 57% of the clients. All job seekers have taken part in the projects voluntarily, based on their personal motivation and willingness. The reason for them to take part in an employment project is that they feel they can use some help and support with making their path towards employment. The reason for this can be as an example lower level of language skill (immigrant background), the lack of knowledge of the Finnish labor market system and job applying, mental or physical limitations, learning disabilities, or long breaks in employment history, for example due to substance abuse or imprisonment.

3.4 The Employer Network

The employment projects have built an employer network during the years of 2013 – 2015 consisting of 14 companies and about 50 different work communities/departments. Some of the employer partners have been cooperating with the projects already at the time of applying for the grants, as the executing organization, HDI, has already had similar employment promotional projects before.

The employer network consisted of mostly four working fields: care services for the elderly, kitchen and restaurant services, cleaning services and property maintenance services. The network however has not been restrictive from the job seeker's point of view, as the individual interest has always been the guiding factor in the service by the employment projects. This is why also the employer network naturally has expanded, as singular companies and employers have been contacted with one particular job seeker client, and some vaster cooperation grows from there. However, the projects have get more contacts from such job seekers, who are interested in the four mostly covered working fields, as the information passes on from job seeker to another, as well as from TE Offices to job seekers.

3.5 Work try-outs, job coaching and employer cooperation

The shared task of the before described employment projects has been to develop the functioning of the work try-outs together with the employer cooperatives. This has been implemented by combining the job coaching with the work try-out periods, and having close relations with the employers, in order to consider the employer perspective of the operations and improving them. Close relations in this context mean personal contact and negotiations, before, during and after the work try-outs, collecting feedback and keeping the contact even while no work try-out period is active.

In recent years the employer cooperation has been coming up strongly as one of the most important aspects to develop when designing active labor market policies and employment promotion of those in a challenging labor market position. According to Ala-Kauhaluoma et al. (2005) the employers should be seen as clients as well, with their individual needs, instead of one homogenous group. It is essential to find the right employers and involve them to the processes from the start. (Ala-Kauhaluoma – Härkäpää - Lempola, 2005:62). The employer cooperation is one of the development targets of the supported employment in Finland. Asplund's (2009) literature review, which evaluates the impact of active labor market policies states, that the active labor policies improve their impact, when the implementation is done in cooperation with the employers, and as a part of an authentic working life. (Asplund 2009:91). Furthermore, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy has in a recent publication, an evaluation of the Finnish labor policy service provision system, reported that a result from an international comparison of labor policies brings up the employer cooperation with promoting the employment of those in a challenging labor market position. As an example, the report presents a model of the employer customer's service from Sweden. (Tonttila 2015:81.)

The most challenging aspect of the employer cooperation is motivating new employers to cooperate with employment projects, in order to promote employment of those in a challenging labor market position. The cooperation, however, is multilayered and on some levels the cooperation is more easily initiated than on the others. As an example, arranging work try-outs is usually for the employer an interesting way of cooperation, as it is risk and cost free and the commitment to guidance and supervision task is relatively short. A more pervasive cooperation, especially such that targets employments or apprenticeship contracts, is more challenging to initiate.

In a research by Ala-Kauhaluoma and Härkäpää (2006) the readiness to hire long term unemployed were good, but with a condition, that the risks regarding a contract of employment would be lowered. This risk reduction meant for example lowering the protection against dismissal or having the possibility to hire the long-term unemployed through an agency, which rents work force. According to the research, there were three issues, which were the most problematic in employing those in a challenging labor market position: 1. The employees demand more time to do the work tasks, than other employees do; 2. It is difficult for the employer to evaluate the competency of the job applicant; 3. There is not enough guidance, support and information for the employer regarding the employment process. (Ala-Kauhaluoma – Härkäpää 2006:19.)

When the job seekers in question are those, who have more challenges in gaining employment than the average job seeker, it is understandable, that the interestingness of such employment cooperation is not common. The employment projects in question are holding on to the criteria, that the job seeker clients, who are taking part in a work try-out, must have the chance to experience learning and developing and thus gaining advanced possibilities for gaining employment. This guides the employer cooperation and the forms of cooperation implemented via the projects.

The following figure presents a successful cooperation with the employers regarding the work try-outs, as depicted in the employment projects:

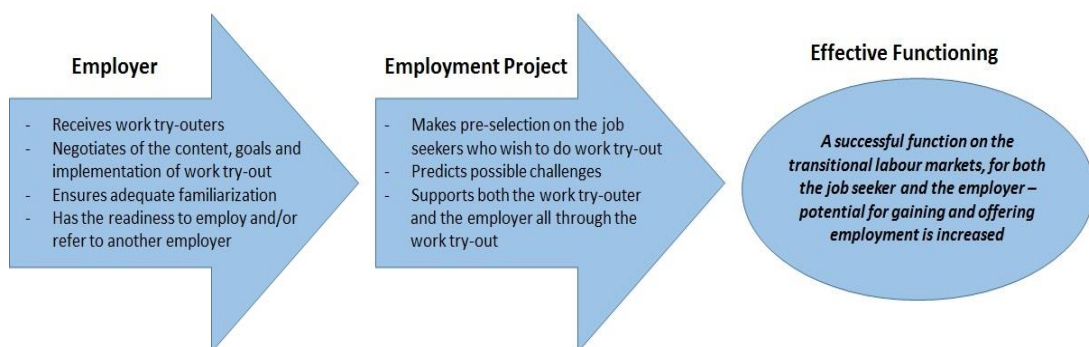


Figure 1. Successful cooperation with employers, regarding work try-outs

The cooperation with the employers, companies and organizations is multifaceted, not at firsthand merely work try-out and employment oriented. There are company representatives who are members in the employment projects' steering groups, in order to develop and mold the employment promotion work from the employer and company perspective as well. In addition, the job coaches for example conduct work

analysis of the work tasks at the work place. Work analysis helps to make visible the nature of the work and exposes the requirements set for a particular task. The information gained via a work analysis can be utilized when planning or re-organizing work or familiarizing new employees. (Luovi, Teot tutuiksi –hanke, OPH 2013-2015.)

The perspectives of cooperation and implementation of work try-outs are likely to vary from employer to another and from manager to another, also depending of the field of profession. Yet it is likely that there will also be conjunctive perspectives and comprehensive ideas, which help to provide relevant information for developing the services and practices of employment services for those in challenging labor market position.

3.6 The work try-out process in the cooperation model

The work try-out process in this particular study setting is that which combines the TE Services' work try-out, and the job coaching provided by the employment project (described earlier in chapter, 2.3). In most cases there is no employment project or other job coaching service combined with the work try-out period. In the model that is examined in this study, there is a job coaching service provided all through the work try-out, as well as before it and after it. This study is concerned with the particular question of how the employers see this combination of work try-out and the support of a job coach, as a path towards gaining employment.

The process starts, when a job seeker client is contacting the employment project. Sometimes the contact comes from a TE Office, or another type of professional from other services (social services, projects, training centers), but mostly the job seeker clients make the contact themselves.

The job seeker client comes to an agreed meeting at the employment project. If the meeting and discussion results in the job seeker's interest and wish to receive the project's services and work together with the job coach, there will be a mapping-out of the job seeker's situation, background, skills, wishes and interests, which will give guidance and ground to the job coaching and proceeding of the work. All the work of these employment projects and the job coach bases on the job seeker's individual personal wishes, and the work implemented together and "beside" the job seeker, in order to empower and support their proceeding, but not do, or decide, for them. The

working methods of the job coach in these projects is stated to be individual, respecting, empowering and learning promoting, and the possibilities of the job seeker are endorsed. As Hassinen et al. (2012) state, appreciative encountering, humane interaction, and mutual respect, support the formation of a trusting relationship, which is essential for a successful process. (Hassinen - Pikkusaari - Välimaa - Ylipaavalniemi, 2012:5). The clients do take part equally in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the process within these employment projects, to endorse the empowerment and the meaningfulness of the process.

At the point of starting the process together, the job seeker and the job coach also contact the TE Services. This is necessary in order to ensure, that the officials also support and enable the plans, which are being planned between the job seeker and the job coach, such as starting a work try-out. The work try-out is by no means the only first step, which can be taken via these employment projects, it may also be prioritizing applying straight for work, applying for school or some other service. However, as this study is concerned with the work try-outs, only this route and process is explained with more detail.

When the plan receives approval by TE Office, the job seeker and the job coach can proceed to finding a suitable work place to do a work try-out, and contact them in order to agree a meeting. The meeting, which is also an interview for the work try-out position, takes place at the work place. The job coach is always in the interview with the job seeker, for more than one purpose. Some job seekers can surely manage the interview part by themselves, whereas others wish to have support and help at that part too. However, even when the help and support is not necessary for the interview per se, this situation works as well as a consolidating factor for the tripartite cooperation between the job seeker, employer and job coach, which further reinforces the fluent communication during the work try-out period between the three parties. Moreover, this ensures that the work try-out works adequately for its purpose, and that possible arising challenges can be addressed properly.

During the work try-out period the job coach is in contact with the work try-outer as well as the employer representative. There is at least two face-to-face meeting during the work try-out, which are the halfway evaluation and the final feedback and evaluation. Other meetings and contacts are set as best serves the purpose. Usually the job coach works on the follow-up plan with the job seeker during the work try-out period. If there is initial thoughts about the work try-outers chances to gain employment in the same

company, the grounding work for the employment can start already after the halfway evaluation. Usually, however, the follow-up plan comes more concrete towards the end of the work try-out period, sometimes only some weeks or months after the work try-out is already finished.

Job coaching enables the monitoring of the client's, e.g. the work try-outers' daily working and functioning abilities. The client's physical, psychic and social performance, in perspective of the work tasks performed, give a view of the person's abilities to cope in working life. In addition, the readiness for working life, and the strengths and developmental aspects of it, emerge while doing the work tasks. (Koskenlahti 2010:36.)

	Actions	Participators
Job Seeker and Employment Project pre-work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mapping out the situation/wishes/possibilities/ etc. - Contacting the TE Services 	Job Seeker Job Coach ↓ TE Services
Employer Contact / Contract of the Work Try-out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contacting the employer/s and agreeing a meeting for interview - Interview/s and contract - Contract sent to TE Services 	Job Seeker Job Coach Employer, Work Community ↓ TE Services
Work Try-out Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help with familiarizing / start of the work try-out if needed - Contacts & visits as needed during the work try-out - Halfway evaluation, discussing the follow-up plan 	Job Seeker Job Coach Employer, Work Community (TE Services, if needed)
Feedback and Follow-up Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final feedback from the employer and the job seeker - Agree on a follow-up plan - Feedback sent to TE Services 	Job Seeker Job Coach Employer TE Services
The Follow-Up & Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Executing the follow-up plan: employment, other work try-out, studies, other service - Reporting the results 	Job Seeker Job Coach TE Services, Project Authorities

Figure 2. The process of work-try out and job coaching in cooperation with the employers

4 Purpose, Aims and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe employer perspective of employment promotion, supported employment and the use of activation methods of labor policies.

The perspective in this study is closely bound to the context of cooperation with two employment projects, and job coaching provided by them, but the results can contribute to the overall evaluation of implementation of activation methods and employment promotion.

The aim is to describe the employers' experiences about work try-outs implemented in cooperation with the employment projects.

The objectives of this study are, from the employer perspective to study:

1. How do work try-outs – combined with job coaching – function as a path towards employment?
2. How to improve the functioning of work try-outs?

5 Research Setting

The operational environment of this study is the employment projects Kotikallio Living Lab and Sarana Goes Kotikallio, which both are located within the Helsinki Deaconess Institute premises in different parts of Helsinki. However, much of the work try-outs as well as job coaching work takes place in addition in the numerous work places in different companies. The work places are spread out in the Helsinki metropolitan area, mostly within Helsinki and Espoo.

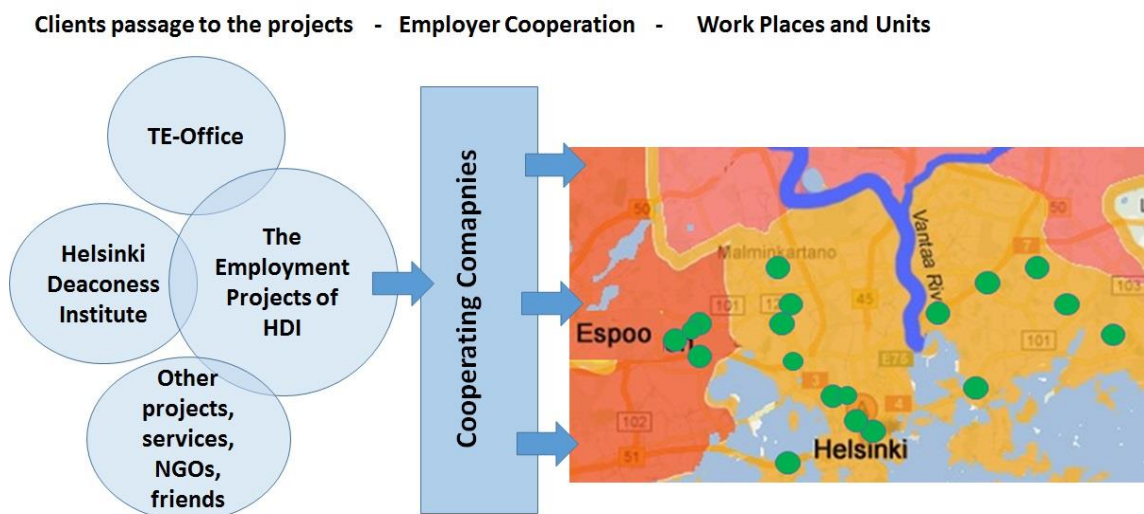


Figure 3. The network of the employment projects

The network of these employment projects is vast. In addition to the numerous companies and their units, the network includes the TE-services, social services, other projects, foundations and organizations, schools, and other contacts, which may direct unemployed people to these projects. However, the work try-outs and the job coaching, which are examined in this study, do take place in the projects' offices and the work places, i.e. the work try-out places, of the cooperating companies.

6 Materials and Methods

This chapter presents the methods, research design, research setting, participants, and data collection and analysis.

6.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative study, and the data was gathered using semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview progresses with preselected central themes and defining questions related to the themes. The methodological emphasis of the semi-structured, i.e. thematic interview is on the interviewees' interpretation and signification of the issue. The semi-structured, theme interview, aims to find meaningful answers, according to the purpose and aims of the study. The preselected themes are based on the framework of the study, in other words to the known aspects of the study setting. (Tuomi - Sarajärvi, 2006:77-78.)

The themes in this study were chosen based on the developmental purposes of the employment projects presented in chapter 3. Furthermore, the perspective of employers was chosen for this study, as it has been less covered in the studies and reports concerned with employment promotion of those in a more challenging labor market position. Both the international and the Finnish experiences of successful job coaching have pointed out, that when the job coach's resources are concentrated on determined support of employment, and on the employer cooperation that it requires, it results more often in actual employment. (Harkko – Härkäpää – Lehikoinen, 2013:141). Hence the employer perspective and employer cooperation are the basis for this study.

The qualitative methodology is chosen for this study as the focus of interest is a specific and localized, non-generalized, form of phenomena, as it is based on a developmental project and specific form of cooperation, and therefore as such has not been covered in earlier researches. Furthermore, this study evaluates the form of cooperation developed, from the employer point of view.

The inductive content analysis was used for the analysis of the data. Inductive content analysis is a process, in which there is a transition from concrete data to abstract presentation of the data. (Tuomi – Sarajärvi 2013:24). Data analysis process of this research is presented in chapter 6.5.

6.2 Sampling

The purposive sampling technique was used in this research. In qualitative research the participants chosen as sources have experience and knowledge of the theme under research. The aim and the research questions guide the sampling. In purposive sampling, the informants who meet the predetermined criteria are identified. Informants may be chosen based on factors such as gender, occupation, client status and so on. (Silverman et al 2014:67). In this research, the informants were chosen based on the criteria presented in chapter 5.2. The choice of purposive selection criteria is influenced by the aims of the study (Ritchie J. et al 2013:131.)

The focus was on the quality of information obtained from the interviewees, in order to respond to the research questions. The saturation of the data occurs when the new data seem to confirm the analysis rather than add anything new to it. This indicates that the sampling cases and sample size is enough. (Denscombe 2014:112). Furthermore, saturation means a condition, when the data starts to repeat itself: the informants no longer produce any new information for the research question. The idea is, that a certain amount of data is enough to bring out the theoretical pattern, which is possible to be found. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2006:89.)

6.3 Participants

The participants in the interviews were representatives from the companies, with which the employment project have been cooperating with, when arranging the work try-outs. The cooperation has been taking place since the beginning of the year 2013. The interviewees are all in a manager position in their companies and they are in a position to recruit and employ new employees as well. The interviews have been covering managers from five different companies or organizations.

The inclusion criteria set for the participants were: the managers have personally cooperated with the employment projects in implementing the work try-outs. The managers are of a position of deciding on recruitments. The managers have experience of ten or more work try-out periods implemented in their working unit.

The data consists of six interviews with the employers, who have closely cooperated with the employment projects. The sample size was determined by the number of cooperating employer partners, who fit the before mentioned criteria frame, i.e. have

long-term experience of working with the employment projects, during multiple work try-outs. This is important in order to have basis for the evaluation of the work try-out model. The sample size is rather small, as the study aims to describe the employers' experiences within a specific cooperation model. The specificity reduces the possible sample size. Though the sample size of interviewees is small, there is considerable repetition and duration of the shared cooperation, which is the basis for this research. With the interviewee participants, the cooperation model and work try-out model had been implemented multiple times, at least that of 10 times. Furthermore, the results cannot be applied to work try-outs taking place in general, but rather the results can evaluate how this model of cooperation functions, and what aspects could be further considered also in the general implementation of work try-outs.

It had been known by all participants, that these employment projects develop new methods of working together with the employers, and they have been aware and willing to participate in the development work since beginning of the year 2013. Therefore, the roles and the setting were familiar to all parties from the earlier cooperation.

Since there is a limited amount of possible interviewees, the anonymity had to be considered carefully. Therefore, the background information given on the interviewees is limited.

Participant	Years in the field	Years in a supervisor position	Amount of staff	Number of work try-outs
Employer 1	36	30	10 - 20	30 +
Employer 2	28	6	10 - 20	10 - 15
Employer 3	32	32	1 - 10	10 - 15
Employer 4	20	9	20 - 30	15 - 20
Employer 5	35	15	10 - 20	15 - 20
Employer 6	10	17	10 - 20	30 +

Figure 4. The participants of the research, a sample matrix

The employer numbers are in a different order here, than in the presented results in chapter 6, in order to ensure anonymity. The "amount of staff" means the interviewee's immediate personal staff, not the whole company's staff. The number of work try-outs is the amount of work try-outs arranged within this particular cooperation model, in the interviewee's own supervision – not that of the whole company's work try-out periods.

6.4 Data Collection

The data was collected through face-to-face thematic interviews with six employer representatives, who have closely cooperated with the employment projects, which arrange work try-outs supported with job coaching. The interviews were organized between August 2014 and January 2015. Before the actual interviews took place, the interviewees had been sent information about the research via email, including a cover letter explaining the background and purpose of the study, as well as the abstract of the research plan in Finnish. All interviewees invited to take part responded positively to the invitation. The interviewees decided on the appropriate time and place for the interviews, which suited their work schedules.

Before beginning the interview, the interviewees were given a consent form to read through and the purpose of the research was explained once more (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). They were also encouraged to ask further questions if needed, at any point of the interview. It was also again explained, that the interviews will be audio recorded, and the recording would be saved until the research work is finalized. The interview setting was relaxed and perhaps relatively ordinary, as the researcher and the interviewees had had similar conversations – though not with as much of depth – during the employment cooperation work prior to the interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured, so that there were themes of which the discussion stemmed from. The structure of interviews can be found as Appendix 3 of this report. The subject and themes was familiar to all the interviewees and therefore the discussion during the interviews flowed well. The interviews' lengths varied between 38 and 63 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed by the interviewer.

6.5 Analysis

The data was analyzed using an inductive content analysis. Content analysis involves establishing categories and then counting the number of instances when those categories are used in a particular item of text. In content analysis, researchers establish a set of categories and then count the number of instances that fall into each category. (Silverman 2011:64). The inductive content analysis process includes open coding, creating categories and abstraction. (Elo et al 2007:109). In inductive content analysis the researcher allows coding categories and units to emerge empirically by

continually revising and updating the coding system while in the midst of conducting the coding. (Brewer et al 2015:305.)

Before transcribing the data from the voice recorder, I listened to the recording through carefully. Altogether, there was 272 minutes of obtained recording. I then transcribed the recorded interviews literally and printed the transcription out. The transcribed recordings comprised 45 pages of Arial size 11 text with 1,5 spacing. After first reading through the data a few times, I started to underline sentences and phrases, which answered to my research questions according to the themes chosen for the interview. After, I made a new document with those sentences and phrases, which were relevant for this study, i.e. had condensed meaning.

From the document of condensed meanings, I grouped the sentences and phrases into thematic subcategories, and I separated these emerged categories from each other with using different colors. Furthermore, I had marked each sentence or phrase with a code (E1, E2, E3, etc.) that made it possible for me to identify, which interview the meaning was originally derived from. At this point I still went back to the original transcribed interviews to check the original paragraphs of discussion to ensure, that the thematic subcategory was chosen correctly. There were a few alterations at this stage to the subcategories. The final amount of subcategories was 56.

At the next stage, I formed upper categories from the 56 subcategories. This resulted in 14 upper categories, which were: *Motivational factors, familiarizing and supervision, work community, work environment, pre-selecting, cooperation between job coach and staff, previous versus no job coaching, background factors, cooperation between job coach and staff in case of employment, work try-out preceding employment, materials, motivators, employer as a trainer and systemizing the process.*

Afterwards I further abstracted the upper categories and finalized the data into four main themes, which answered to my research subject and the set two research questions.

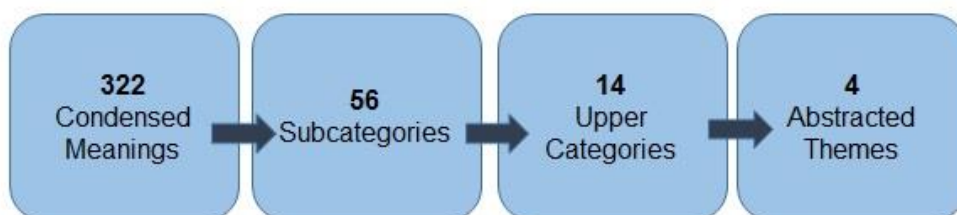


Figure 5. Data reduction process

7 Results

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in the interviews with employers, about their perspective of the functioning of a work try-out model. The presentation is set accordingly to the research objectives in the study. The direct quotations from the interviews presented in results, are a free translation from Finnish to English. The four main themes are: 1) *The implementation of the work try-out periods in general*, 2) *The job coaching practices combined to the work try-out*, 3) *Functioning of the work try-outs as a path to employment* and 4) *Development suggestions by the employers*.

7.1 The implementation of the work try-out periods in general

The first of the four main themes is the *general level of the work try-out periods* implemented in cooperation between the employment projects and the companies. This theme consists of four categories, which relate in the data to the employers' overall descriptions and experiences of the work try-out model as a whole. The four categories have been derived from sixteen subcategories. Moreover, this theme withholds the challenges, and the positive aspects, of the work try-out model's practical implementation.

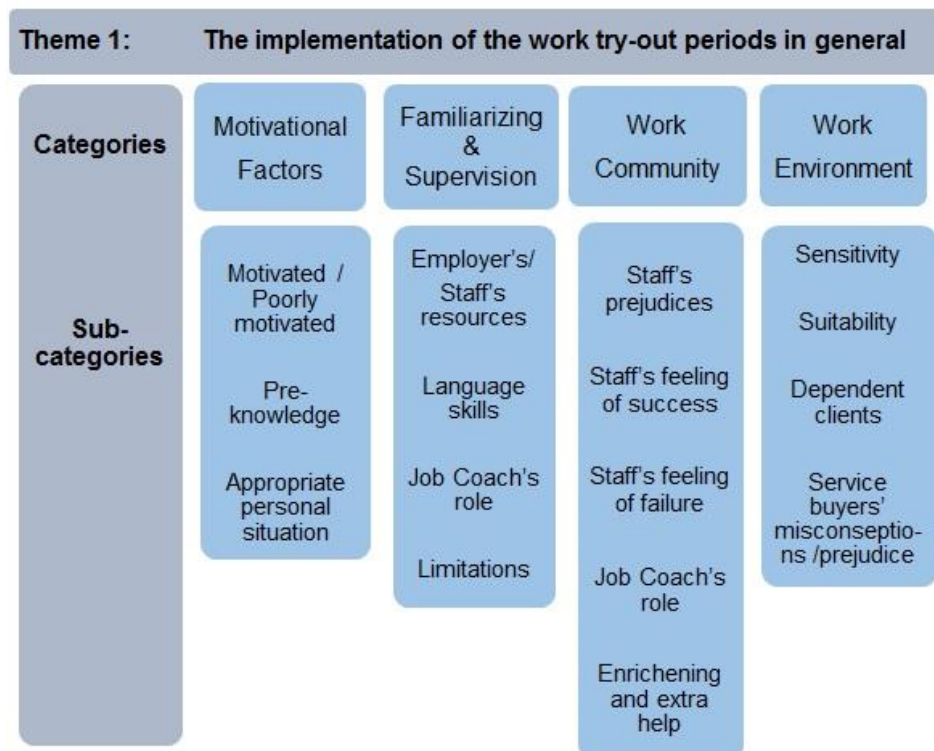


Figure 6. The implementation of the work try-out periods in general: Theme, categories and subcategories

The semi-structured interviews first opened discussion on a general level of the cooperation model and the implementation of the work try-outs. Then, the interviews proceeded to more detailed levels of the cooperation model and its' different sectors. This chapter presents the general level discussions' results, whereas chapters 7.2., 7.3 and 7.4 present the results from discussions of the cooperation and model on the more detailed level.

The interviewed employers, who had all been cooperating with the work try-out model, were all generally pleased with the implementation of the work try-outs, and they described the cooperation as being successful by most parts.

Mostly very well. There has been some challenges yes, but mostly well. (E4)

(Pääasiassa hyvin. Onhan niissä ollut haasteitakin, mutta pääasiassa hyvin.)

It has been working well, no other problems than those of work try-outers' motivational issues. Very nicely has gone by most part. (E1)

(Hyvin on toiminut, ei muuta ongelmaa kuin työkokeilijan motivoituminen. Erittäin onnistuneita työkokeiluista on suurin osa, enemmistö.)

However, all employers named also challenging aspects of the implementation of the work try-outs. The responses were based on both, the employers' personal perspective, as well as on the employers' thoughts of the work try-outers' experience. The issues related to the success, functionality and challenges of work try-outs, described by the interviewed employers, included *motivational factors*, *familiarizing* and *supervising* the work try-outer, and the *work community* and *environment*.

7.1.1 Motivational factors

All of the employers brought up *motivational issues* when discussing about the functionality and challenges of the work try-outs. The employers described motivation as the basis for how the work try-out will turn out. All employers mentioned having mostly experience of such work try-outers, who they perceived as being very motivated to attend the work try-out, and plan the path ahead. There had however been various experiences of also poorly motivated work try-outers. The employers described, that if there is no *genuine motivation*, the work try-out will be more challenging from the get-go. Furthermore, the general experience was, that if the work try-outer is internally motivated, many of the other challenges may be overcome during the period.

When the people are self-motivated and there is a will, strong will that they want to, that they can and are able, it's also a clear sign to the manager that here is potential and this kind of person starts getting support and guidance, there is usually reciprocal effect in it. (E3)

(Kun ihmiset on itse motivoituneita ja on se tahtotila, voimakas, että he haluavat, että kykenevät ja pystyvät, se on selkeä merkki myös esimiehelle, että tässä on potentiaalia. Semmosta ihmistä lähetään kannattelemaan ja ohjaamaan se on yleensä vuorovaikutteinen se tapahtuma siinä.)

According to the employers, when the internal motivation was not present, or there were some other issues, which create a state, which seems like a lack of motivation, it can be noticed rather early on in the beginning of the work try-out period.

Quite soon it has been shown, there has been non-attendance, the work try-outer is not really sure if this is a good place this kind of place. If their own situation is.. Own situation is not on right tracks... these have been single cases. (E1)

(Aika piankin näkynyt, tullut poissaoloja, työkokeilija ei oo itsekään ollut varma onko tää nyt hyvä tää tän tyyppinen paikka. Jos oma tilanne on ollut... Oma tilanne ei ole kohdallaan niin... ne on yksittäisiä tapauksia.)

When discussing the issue of motivation, the employers talked about the importance of giving pre-knowledge to the work try-out candidates, i.e. adequate and realistic information about the work try-out, of the work place and its practical work tasks, before starting a work try-out. This was brought up as an important part of the cooperation model in question. By assuring, that that the work try-out candidates are adequately informed, the motivation for that particular work try-out place can be tentatively confirmed.

Motivational issues in the employers' descriptions were also strongly connected to the need for job coaching, as the pre-work and pre-selection is performed by the coaches. The employers explained, that assuring the motivational level before starting a work try-out, is a very important task for the coach. Furthermore, assuring that the work try-out candidate has an appropriate personal life situation, to be able to manage a work try-out period, was discussed as an essential part of the motivational orientation. The aspect of pre-work is presented in the more detailed discussions in chapter 7.2.

Moreover, the motivational issues were related in the discussions to the challenge of familiarizing and supervising. This again was strongly connected to the discussion of challenges concerning usage of time and resources, of the supervisor and the staff. These issues are discussed further in the following chapter.

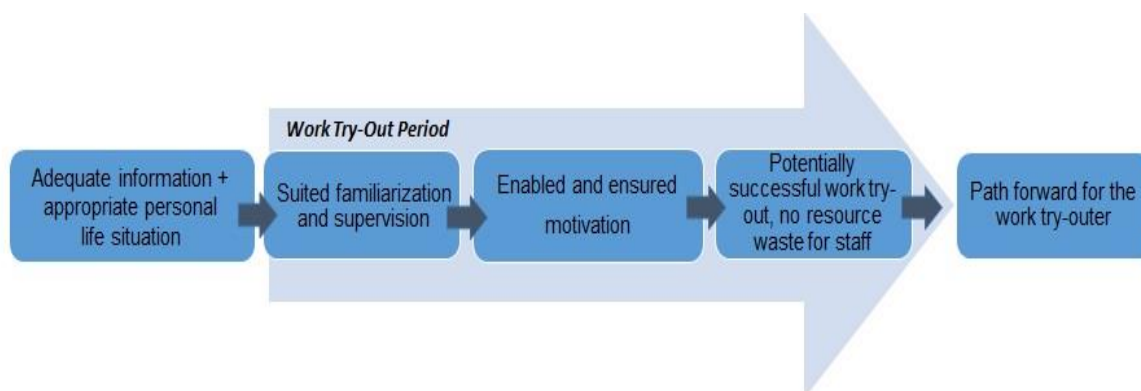


Figure 7. Positive consequence of ensuring motivational factors

7.1.2 Familiarizing and Supervising

The *familiarizing* of the work try-outer and the *supervision* during the work try-out, were subjects, which the interviews brought up extensively, and were discussed by all interviewees. Furthermore, these issues were mentioned more than any other issues, in discussions on the overall challenges of work try-outs in general.

There were two perspectives taken to the subject of familiarizing and supervising, which were 1) the challenges for the staff, which was brought up to the discussion by the interviewer, and 2) how we as a staff could do this better?, which arose from the interviewees themselves.

The challenges brought up about familiarizing and supervising were strongly linked to the staff's resources. Especially the question of the use of time, which is spent by the staff and the supervisor, in order to familiarize and supervise a work try-outer.

In care services the biggest challenge is hurry. They would need more guidance in the beginning, some of them. They would get more attention in the beginning, would start better. There is hurry, we have to think about that, it's our responsibility.(E1)

(Hoitoalalla suurin haaste on kiire. Tarvis alkuohjausta enemmän, jotkut. Huomioitais alussa, niin lähtis paremmin. Kiire on...meidän on mietittävä se, se on meidän vastuulla.)

First thing is that there should be time to explain to the staff what work try-out is. What's required from the staff when work try-outer comes. It's very important to brief the staff... there should be time for that. (E3)

(Ekana se, että työntekijöiden kanssa pitäis olla aikaa selvittää mitä työkokeilu on. Mitä vaaditaan työntekijöiltä jos työkokeilija tulee. Työntekijöiden briiffaus on hirveen tärkeää... et siihen pitäis olla aikaa.)

Some already have some experience of the field of work...it depends a lot on what the know-how is. We have to be awake that there is not too many people at once, so that some are not left without support. (E5)

(Osalla jo on jotain kokemusta alaan...paljon on kiinni siitä mikä se osaamisprofiili on. Meidän pitää olla hereillä ettei ole liikaa ihmisiä, ettei jää ihmisiä tukematta.)

Furthermore, the challenging issues raised in the discussion of familiarizing and supervising, were such as poor language skills and therefore communicational challenges, which further increase the resource and time use requirement for the supervising and familiarization work.

The language problems are there, the staff unfortunately don't always understand, and there is difficult situations, there has been discussions, that they come to learn the Finnish language at the same time – regarding that we should think of a solution and discuss about that more. (E1)

(Kieliongelmat on, henkilökunta ei aina ymmärrä valitettavasti, tulee hankalia tilanteita, on ollut keskustelua, että tulee samalla oppimaan suomen kieltä – siihen pitäis meidän mieltä keinoa ja siitä puhua enemmän.)

Moreover, majority brought up the challenges of the work try-outers' health and substance abuse problems as limitations, when describing the challenges of the familiarizing and supervising.

The one who had some diagnosis and we don't know what it is, we are in a bit of a challenging position... When there is a neurological thing or something else, how do we proceed with them, when we start to set some aims for the work try-out. At least the supervisor should know the facts, so that we can set appropriate aims, when we know the challenges in the background. (E3)

(Se yksi jolla oli taustalla jotain diagnoosia ja kun me emme tiedä mitä diagnoosia, ollaan vähän vaikeilla vesillä... Kun on joku neurologinen juttu tai joku muu, miten me toimitaan, kun lähdetään asettamaan tavoitteita. Ainakin esimiehellä tulisi olla tietoa, että osataan tavoitteitakin asetella sen mukaisesti, jos tiedetään mitä rajoitteita siellä taustalla on.)

Too little background information, what are the challenges in the background. Is it substance abuse and so. When a person like this comes... and we work in a world where it can cause some very unfortunate things. We should know about those a bit. (E4)

(Liian vähän taustatietoja, että mitkä on ne ongelmat siellä taustalla. Että onko päihdeongelmaa ja näin. Kun tulee tällöinen henkilö... ja mehän työskennellään semmosessa maailmassa, että se voi todella aiheuttaa ikäviä juttuja. Pitäs vähän niistä tietää.)

The interviewees described this challenge from the position of the cooperation model, i.e. having the job coaches' support in the pre-work preceding the work try-outs. The job coaches' role is to do pre-selecting and assure, that the issues, which may affect the goals and implementation of the work try-out, are brought up and talked over, to such extent as possible and meaningful. Regardless of the coaches' support, this issue was brought up extensively. Later, in the results from the more depth-in-discussion on

job coaches role (chapter 7.2), there will be comparison to a setting, where there is no job coaching available at all.

7.1.3 Work Community and Environment

There was discussion about challenges and positive aspects of work try-outs for the work community in all interviews. In the discussions on this theme, there were two different levels brought up – that of the immediate, company’s own work community, and that of the surrounding environment, consisting of geographical setting, surroundings, visitors and clients.

Discussing the challenges, two themes stood out: The *attitude* and *prejudice of the staff* towards the work try-outers and the *prejudice* and *sensitivity* of the work environment. The interviewees expressed that there had been challenges with the attitude and prejudice of their own staff, and the surrounding environment, towards the work try-outers.

There’s a bit of attitude, the staff’s attitude, that “they should know a bit more shouldn’t they”. When others are busy and someone else just sits around at times, it brings up irritation within the staff. (E1)

(Asenteessa on jonkun verran, henkilökunnassa asenteita että “pitäshän noiden osata vähän enemmän”. Kun toisilla kiire ja joku vaan istuu siellä välillä, tulee jopa ärtymystä työyhteisössä.)

95 % of the staff has welcomed the people but there has also been challenges with a few staff members. When they come from different countries... it’s not about the work try-outer but our staff. They fear that their job is taken from them or maybe they just want to argue. But that I don’t approve of at all. (E4)

(95 % ottaa hyvin vastaan, mutta on myös ollut haasteita muutamien henkilön kohdalla. Kun on eri maista... se ei oo työkokeilijoista kiinni vaan omasta henkilökunnasta. Pelkää että ne vie työpaikan tai haluaa vaan riitaisuutta. Mutta sitä en salli yhtään.)

There is some pressure from outside... when they get to know there’s ex-prisoners, for example, we have to assure, that there is no danger. (E5)

(On joskus painetta ulkopuolelta... kun ne saa tietää, että joku on vaikka ollut vankilassa, joudumme vakuuttamaan, että ei oo mitään vaaraa.)

The *sensitivity* of the work environment in the discussions related to the field of work, as in which fields of profession may be more *suitable* for work try-outs and which not, as well as the surroundings of the physical work place. There was discussion on the sensitivity and prejudice of the clients, visitors, and other people, who are in a contact with the workplace.

The care services are a bit... sensitive area, there is palliative care and elderly in a very poor condition. A kind of sensitivity... you see a lot here that one has not maybe seen elsewhere. Dying, poor condition, aggressive... (E1)

(Hoitoala on vähän... herkkä asia, saattohoitopotilaita ja tosi huonokuntoisia vanhuksia. Semmonen herkkyyys... täällä näkee paljon sellaista mitä ei ehkä ole muualla nähnyt. Kuolevia, huonokuntoisia, aggressiivisia...)

We get quite negative feedback from the clients that we do things wrong or in a way that seems wrong, even though we have informed that there is work try-outers in the work community too. The company image suffers... It can be improved but it will always be an existing aspect too. (E5)

(Saadaan aika negatiivista palautetta asiakkailta, että tehdään väärin tai väärän näköisesti, vaikka ollaan tiedotettu, että meillä on myös työkokeilijoita. Yrityksen imago kärsii... voihan sitä parantaa, mutta se on aina kuitenkin läsnä.)

The job coaches' role was expressed to be essential for the support of the staff and the work community. The employers felt, that the successful implementation of work try-outs, both for the work try-outer, and the work community, was highly improved with the job coach's help. The job coach's role is to provide adequate information for both parties before, during and after work try-out, in order to ensure a work try-out that functions best to its potential. This was seen as means to decrease the very challenging and difficult situations in the work try-outs, which affect the work community. The severe challenges, and a possible suspension of a work try-out, was seen as a waste of resources for the staff, as well as a feeling of failure for the staff in some cases.

Especially if one has been away from working life, the expectations and suppositions are very unrealistic, then this coaching and the practicing/work try-out brings one back down to earth... it's a big help in that. In these success cases of ours, the coaching has really been a big help. (E6)

(Varisinkin jos on ollut poissa työelämästä, niin ne odotukset ja luulot on kovin epärealistisia, niin just tää valmennus ja se harjoittelu palauttaa maan pinnalle.. siinä se on kyllä suuri apu. Kyllä näissä meidän onnistumisissa, se valmennus on ollut tosi suuri apu.)

And then an everyday theme is that if a person wants to come to the field and it just doesn't work out, these things don't happen, it is often experienced as a failure, even too much so.(E5)

(Sitten jokapäiväisenä teemana se että jos ihminen haluaa tälle alalle ja se ei vaan toimi, ei tapahdu näitä asioita, se koetaan epäonnistumisena, ehkä liiankin rankasti.)

Discussing the positive aspects, all interviewees mentioned several positive experiences of the work try-outs arranged in cooperation with the employment projects. The employers experienced the work try-outers' presence in the work community as an *enriching factor* as well as an *extra help* with the work tasks.

Interesting people and even though quite harsh backgrounds too, it brings some more understanding for us. Positive. The joy of work can be seen in many of them, when they work here. As they have just been home long, and so... (E1)

(Mielenkiintoisia ihmisiä ja vaikka vähän vaikeita taustojakin, se tuo semmosta ymmärrystä lisää. Positiivinen. Työn ilo näkyy heissä monessa, kun he täällä työskentelee. Kun vaan pitkään kotona ja noin...)

There's much more positives than negatives. The diversity they bring is a richness and we have learned to enjoy it. In many tasks there is always added value for the work and there is benefits. (E5)

(Enemmän sitä positiivista puolta on kuin negatiivista. Niiden tuoma monimuotoisuus on rikkaus ja me on opittu nauttimaan siitä. Monissa tehtävissä aina syntyy lisäarvoa työlle ja on hyötyä.)

Moreover, the employers had experienced work try-outers presence as an important and fulfilling task of guiding and helping those who are in need of such support. There were also experiences, that the staff had had feelings of success and joy, when they had been able to guide and help someone in the work try-out. The employers shared experiences of witnessing how the work try-outer gains strength, self-esteem, or a good follow-up path, for example to studies.

They bring color to the work community and they are a great help too in practical work tasks. It's our task to guide the students and the work try-outers, to get the ahead in life. That brings joy, that someone has a good experience here, we have been able to help a bit. (E1)

(Tuo väriä työyhteisöön ja on suurena apuna myös käytännön työssä. Meidän kuuluu ohjata opiskelijoita ja työkokeilijoita ja ohjata elämässä eteenpäin. Se tuo ilon siitä, että joku saa hyvän kokemuksen täältä, me on saatu autettua vähäsen.)

I think not only me, but the whole staff has gained strength when they have seen that some work try-outer is very shy and has failed in previous studies or work try-outs, but here has had a positive work try-out. It brings a sense of success when you see that feeling of success in the work try-outer. (E2)

(En usko, että ainoastaan minulle vaan koko työyhteisö on saanut voimaa, että muutama työkokeilija on ollut todella arka ja aiemmin ei oo onnistunut opinnot ja työkokeilut, mutta täällä on saatu onnistunut työkokeilu. Se tuo onnistumisen tunteen, kun huomaa siinä työkokeilijassa sen onnistumisen tunteen.)

In a way we have more strength for the service work... it's the motivational increase in fact. From being more than just employees, being supervisors and supporting the people to learn. (E6)

(Jaksetaan palvelua oikeastaan paremmin... se on se motivoituminen juuri. Siitä kun ollaan enemmän kuin vaan työntekijöitä, ollaan ohjaajia ja tukena ihmisten oppimisessa.)

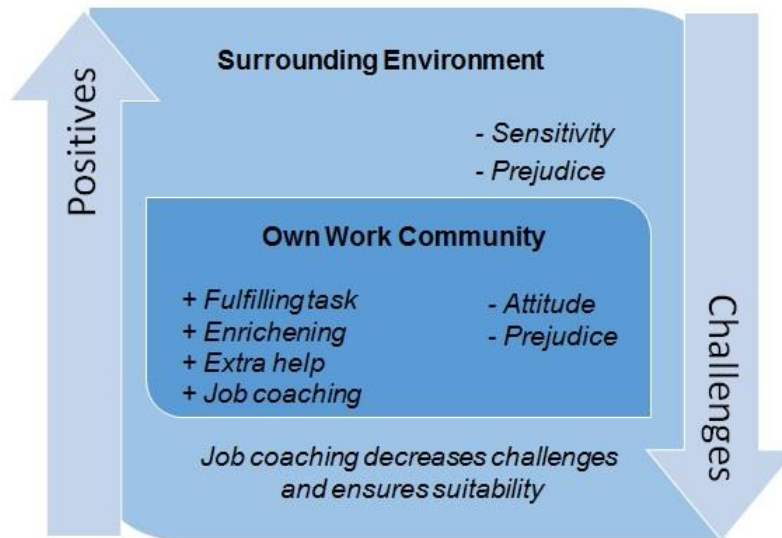


Figure 8. Positives and challenges for the work community and the surrounding environment

7.1.4 The positive and the challenging aspects

A summary of the general ideas about the implementation of work try-outs, with the cooperation model in question, and its positive and challenging aspects, can be presented as follows: The employers felt that at its best, the work try-out can offer the staff feelings of success, extra help and enrichening factors. Furthermore, they cherished the feeling of being able to guide the work try-outer and them having a fulfilling work try-out experience. They felt that the positive aspects were more likely to actualize, if the work try-outer was well motivated for the work try-out, and the pre-work had been adequately done by the job coaches.

Challenges related to the implementation of work try-outs, were those of poorly motivated, or poorly informed, work try-outers, the challenge of resources and time use, supervising those who have personal limitations, and the possible feelings of failure for the staff, when work try-outs are challenging and may even end in suspension or other abrupt situations.

Positive aspects	Challenges
Good motivation	Poor motivation
Extra help	Resources, time use
Enrichening	Familiarizing/supervising when limitations
Feelings of success for staff	Feelings of failure for the staff
Fulfilling experience for the work try-outer	Staff's & environment's prejudice
Job Coaching	

Figure 9. The positive and the challenging aspects of work try-outs

7.2 The implementation of job coaching

The second theme from the four main themes is the implementation of job coaching to the work try-out periods. This theme consists three categories, which derived from thirteen subcategories.

All the work try-outs arranged in cooperation between the employment projects and the employers, such as interviewees of this research, includes the function of job coaching provided by the employment project. Job coach's task is to support the work try-out period both from the work try-outers perspective and from the employers' perspective. Job coach helps with possible challenges along the way, supports the work try-outers' motivation, ensures that practicalities function as needed and follows the work try-out's progression concerning its' set goals and follow-up path.

The implementation of job coaching and it's functionality from the employers' perspective is interesting, as it is what differentiates the work try-out's in question in this research from those implemented in general, via TE-office straight, without employment project's and job coach's help. The aim was to find out, how essential the job coach's role is from the employer's point of view, when evaluating the functionality of work try-out towards its' purpose. Does the job coach's service essentially improve the work try-out as an activation policy?

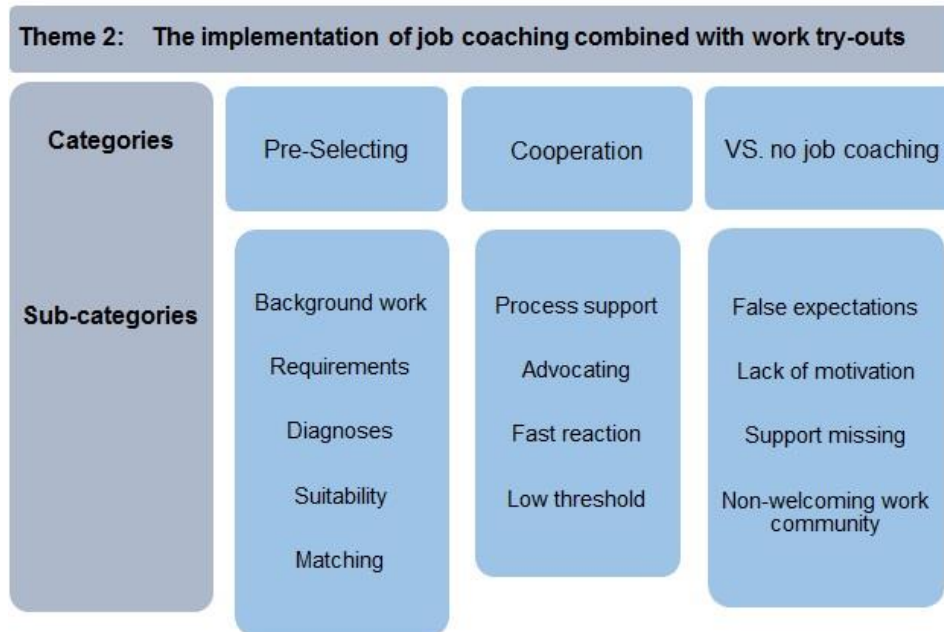


Figure 10. The implementation of job coaching with the work try-out periods: Theme, categories and subcategories

The interviewees had very positive experiences of the job coaching connected to the work try-outs. The issues, which arouse from the discussion on job coaching practices within this framework, included *pre-selection*, *cooperation* and the *difference when no job coaching is available*.

7.2.1 Pre-Selection

The job coaches' task is to do pre-selection based on the mapping-out she/he has done with the job seeker, and based on also the facts she/he knows of the work places, work tasks and work communities. The task is to fit the job seeker's wishes and goals for the work try-out with a work place and work try-out possibility, which best matches for a functional and goal enabling work try-out.

Pre-selection work is such, that does not necessarily take place in common work try-outs, where the job seeker independently or with TE-offices reference takes part in a work try-out. Pre-selection can be done when a job coach is there to set up and follow up the work try-out with the work try-outer and the employer, as it actualizes in the employment projects in question.

All six interviewees brought up the issue of pre-selection in the discussion, and explained their experiences and ideas of the importance of pre-selection. The employers described the pre-selection as an important *background work* i.e. being aware and knowledgeable of the work try-out candidate's wishes, aims, possible challenges, previous experience and the all the issues which may affect the work try-out in practice. The employers felt that it is essential, that the job coaches are familiar with the *requirements* of a certain work field and/or community, in order to do the *matching* work successfully.

When starting to plan the work try-out there has to be knowledge of the person's background and experiences and the suitability for it... It's such an important phase... One can never have 100 % success, no matter how well prepared. But should ensure the preconditions for success. (E3)

(Kun lähetään suunnittelemaan työkokeilua täytyy aatella ihmisen taustat ja kokemukset ja soveltuvuus siihen... Ei koskaan voi 100 % onnistua, vaikka kuinka hyvin valmisteltu. Mutta pitää varmistaa onnistumisen edellytykset.)

I'd say the coaches have succeeded in this very well. That the readiness has been discussed and the volition is evident. It can of course happen that the reality proves to be different, than the ideas. But then again that part can only be measured through the work try-out, but the pre-selection is very important and useful. (E5)

(Mä sanoisin, että valmentajat on onnistunu kauheen hyvin. Et niitä valmiuksia on keskusteltu ja se tahtotila on selkee. Voi tietysti käydä niin että se todellisuus osoittautuu erilaiseks kuin luulot. Mut että sinänsä eihän sitä pystykään mittaroimaan kuin sen työkokeilun kautta, mutta se esityö on tosi tärkeätä ja hyödyllistä.)

It's so important. There are risks to consider. Realities are not quite in tack and can happen awful accidents. (E4)

(Se on tosi tärkeätä. Riskit täytyy ottaa huomioon. Realiteetit ei oo ihan kohdillaan voi tapahtua hirveitä tapaturmia.)

The employers brought up issues such as mental health issues, possible *diagnoses*, substance abuse issues and debt issues, which can easily affect the coping in and managing of a work try-out and can affect the work community as well. They expressed that the *suitability* of the work try-outer to the work community should be considered carefully, before signing the work try-out contract. The employers wished for even more knowledge about the background issues, than what has been available in the cooperation model. It was however acknowledged by the employers, that there is no access to any such information and the work try-out candidate will tell about the issues, which she/he chooses to disclose. This background work is always done to the extent possible, when job coaching is a part of the work try-out, but the extent is up to the job seeker / the work try-out candidate. The importance of background work and pre-selection were mentioned regarding someone possibly being disqualified only in one

interview, and in all the others it was only mentioned regarding securing the correct guidance and supervision for a work try-out.

However, the fact that there is the background work, and that the relevant issues are discussed with the employer, gained high importance by all interviewees. They all described how a vast amount of resources can be wasted or unnecessary experiences of failure can arise, if the background work, the matching work, is not present.

7.2.2 Cooperation

All interviewees brought up the cooperation and essentially the support of the job coaches given to the work try-out process. The job coaching practices were described by the interviewees with notions such as supporting the process, quick reaction, openness, mentoring and advocacy. The interviewees described particularly practical situations, in which the coach has been helping with solving issues during the work try-out. They talked about experiences when there has been issues related to the rules and agreements of the work try-out and the work place, or working life in general.

It's definitely good that the job coach is there. When I think about few guys who were here... The coach was telling about the rules and regulations of employment. It would have not worked without the coach. (E4)

(Ehdottomasti hyvä, että valmentaja on siinä. Kun ajattelen pariakin herraa, jotka täällä oli... Valmentaja kertoi työelämän pelisäännöt. Ei ois ehkä pärjättykkään ilman sitä valmentajaa.)

Moreover, they discussed about the importance of coach being easily available and fast intervention when needed. Also the cooperation model, in which the job coach is present at the work place occasionally with no particular agreement or meeting, but "just to greet", was experienced very positive. In addition, it was seen as serving the prevention of challenges - and the handling of the challenges, if such were to arise. This was described as an example as *low threshold* cooperation.

A few times the coaches have hurried to help and we have together discussed about how to get to the result that we are aiming for. It's important that there's a low threshold to deal with these things, that works. (E2)

(Pari kertaa valmentajat onkin rientäneet apuun ja yhdessä ollaan mietitty että miten päästäs toivottuun tulokseen. Tärkeää on, että on matala kynnyys hoitaa näitä asioita, niin se toimii.)

For sure it's a good thing that the job coach is there and visits and evaluation meetings together and if there is a problem we can contact right away and think about what to do now, this did not go as planned.. it's very important, the job coaches presence. (E3)

(Totta kai se on hyvä että se työvalmentaja on siinä ja käy ja yhteisiä arviointitilaisuuksia ja jos ongelmia niin voidaan heti kontaktoida ja miettiä mitäs nyt tehtäisiin, kun ei mennytkään niinku suunniteltiin... tosi tärkeä, työvalmentajan läsnäolo.)

As soon as they been needed, they have come around and dealt with things that need to be dealt with. And it's important, that it happens quickly. The demand is, that not over the phone, but right there on the spot. (E4)

(Heti on tulleet paikalle kun on tarvittu ja heti on puuttunut asioihin mihin pitää puuttua. Ja se on tärkeää, että nopesti. Se vaatimus on että ei puhelimessa vaan ihan paikan päällä.)

Furthermore, in addition to dealing with acute arising issues and situations, the interviewees described the job coach's role in the broader context, than that of a particular work try-out period. The employers discussed the aspect of job coach's role as a mentor and advocate, whose work can have an influence in the work try-outs situation and progress at a larger scale.

The job coach is like a mentor to the work try-outer. She has someone who can help forward and can ask about things and clear up things elsewhere than just here, it clarifies situation. In a way the job coaches are advocates, you promote their issues and that's... most likely these processes don't go forward without it. (E1)

(Työvalmentaja on niin kuin mentori sille työkokeilijalle. Hänellä on joku joka voi auttaa edistämään asioita ja jolta voi kysyä ja purkaa asioita muualla kuin täällä, selkiyttää varmaan tilannetta. Tavallaan työvalmentaja on puolestapuhuja, asiamies, hoitaa asioita eteenpäin ja sehän on... ei varmaan muuten lähde nää prosessit eteenpäin.)

7.2.3 The difference when no job coaching is available

The model and cooperation discussed in this research and in these interviews is a particular model, where job coaching is a fixed part of the process. To gain more insight of the importance level of job coaching, the interviewer enquired about the employers' possible experiences of such work try-outs, where no coaching has been available. Five out of the six interviewees had a chance to compare work try-outs, in which there had not been a job coach available. Both, the pre-selection and background work, and the cooperation during the work try-out, came across to the discussion, in the comparisons of the interviewees. They employers described such aspects, as *lack of motivation, support missing, false expectations* and *non-welcoming work community*, when the coaching part is missing from the work try-out.

As in the previous chapters presented, the factors, which appeared to be important to the employers in the cooperation model, appear again in the discussion of lacking the

job coaching part in the implementation of a work try-out. The interviewees expressed, how the lack of pre-selection and background work increases the risk of challenges of the work try-out.

There has to be visits to the work place and meet the supervisors and ask what kind is a suitable one... before even one work try-out starts. That is there motivation and to a place like it is. (E1)

(Pitää käydä siellä työpaikalla ja puhua esimiehille ja kysellä mikä on sopiva... ennen kuin yhtäkään työkokeilua alkaa. Että onko motivaatiota ja sellaiseen paikkaan.)

Has not worked. Only failures. Alcohol, drugs, mental health issues, attitude... I have called the TE-office of four people that I'm not taking them. Because that's a wrong way altogether. They have come here, been 2-3 days, and then they don't come. (E4)

(Ei oo onnistunut. Pelkästään epäonnistumisia. Alkoholit, lääkkeet, mielenterveysongelmat, asenne... Mä olen soittanut neljästä henkilöstä TE-toimistoon, että mä en ota heitä taloon. Koska se on ihan väärä keino kokonaan. Käyneet tässä, olleet 2-3 päivää ja sitten ei tuu töihin enää.)

The interviewees expressed a big difference on the extent to which the work try-out can function well, when there's no job coach involved in the process. The functioning towards the set goals and supporting the work try-outer's path, is what the interviewees brought up in their discussion.

There's a difference, that they are kind of left penniless. The work try-out goes without thoughts and follow-ups. Definitely a person will find their own following plan much better, when the coach's support is there. (E1)

(Siinä on sellanen ero, että he jää vähän tyhjän päälle. Jakso menee iä ja jatkoja. Ehdottomasti paljon paremmin henkilö löytää sen oman jatkon kun on tää valmentajan tuki.)

Yes it is so, that if someone just comes straight from the TE-office, it is totally different thing than when there's someone. It's the support for us too, that we can discuss the situation if it doesn't work... and together clear up things if... it's really important. (E2)

(Kyllä on niin, jos tulee vaan suoraan TE-toimistosta, se on ihan eri asia kun siinä on joku. Se on se tuki myös meille, että voidaan keskustella tilanteesta jos se ei toimi... ja yhdessä purkaa asioita ja jos... kyl se on hirveen tärkeä.)

Furthermore, the interviewees expressed their thoughts about the false expectations versus pre-knowledge of the work field and work place. They described it as essential, that the one starting a work try-out has gained knowledge of the work contents and the work environment before the work try-out starts. Even so, that the work try-out period is sometimes meant for only getting familiar with a certain field of work, there should be enough adequate information to consider the suitability, before signing the work try-out contract. The employers expressed, that the penalties to the work try-outer by the TE-

office of a possibly suspended work try-out can be difficult and even unfair, as well as the possible feeling of failure on the work try-outer.

There has not been negative reaction towards anyone. But more a worry of the fact that this person now is not surviving with the support that he's getting. (E2)

(Ei yhteenkään olla suhtauduttu kielteisesti. Mutta enemmän huolissaan oltu siitä, että tämä ihminen ei nyt pärjää tällä tuella mitä hän saa.)

I could say, that all who have come through the employment projects have had a sufficient idea of our work and has not been shocked of anything. Fully different grasp, than if they have come straight from TE-office. (E3)

(Voisin sanoa et kaikki ihmiset jotka projekteista tulleet niin heil on ihan riittävä kuva tästä meidän työstä ei oo tullut shokkina mikään. Tyystin eri ote, kuin jos on tullut suoraan TE-toimistosta.)

Moreover, when the coaching work is not a part of the work try-outs, the interviewees brought up the work community's lack of knowledge regarding the work try-out: what is it all about and how to relate to the work try-outer? This was described as making the work community possibly not fully welcoming to the work try-outer.

It is important that the staff understands, what the deal is, why, who, what is the aim. People knowing who is coming and why. There is the coach professionally explaining what it is all about. Otherwise, it can be really challenging for the work community to relate correctly. (E3)

(On tärkeätä että työntekijät ymmärtää, mistä on kysymys, miksi, kuka, mihin tähdätään. Ihmiset tietää kuka tulee ja miksi. Siinä valmentaja on ammattimaisesti kertomassa mikä on kysymyksessä. Muuten voi olla työyhteisölle tosi haastavaa suhtautua oikein.)

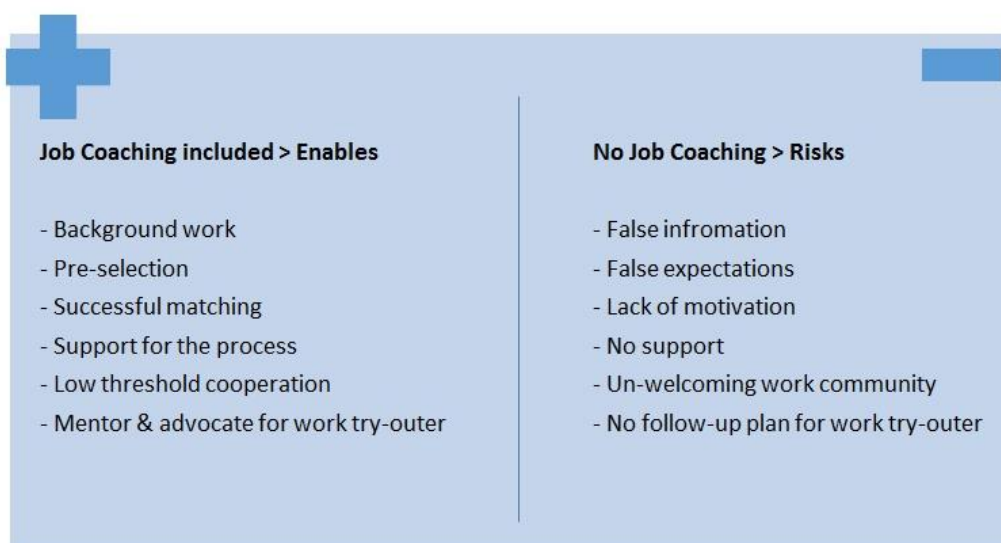


Figure 11. Job coaching included VS no job coaching included

7.3 Work try-out as a path towards employment

The main question of this research is how a work try-out functions as a path towards employment, as experienced by employers, who have participated in a cooperation model, which incorporates job coaching to the work try-outs. All the interview and discussion themes presented in the previous sections underlay this particular question, presenting segmented entities of the cooperation model. This section presents the results of the discussion part, in which the employers were requested to discuss a final, composed set of experiences and ideas, on the aspect of work try-out as a path towards employment. The interviewees discussed such issues regarding this subject, that were categorized as *background factors*, *cooperation between job coach and employer/staff* and *work try-out preceding employment*.

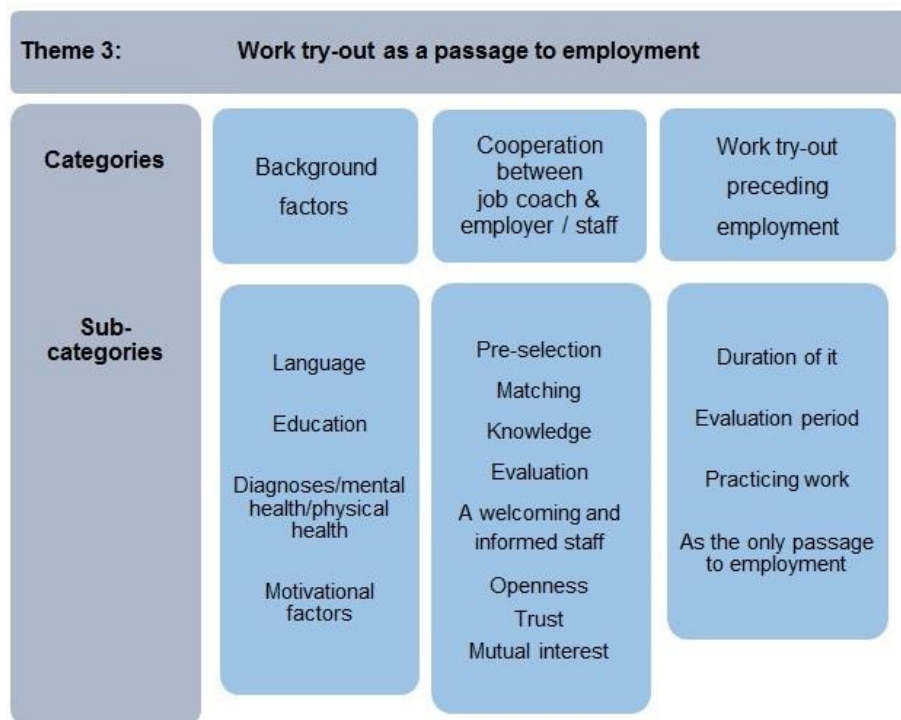


Figure 12. Work try-out as a path to employment: Theme, categories and subcategories

7.3.1 Background factors

As presented in the previous chapters, according to the interviewees' experience, the background work is essential. This issue was yet further emphasized, when requested a composed experience of functionality of the work try-out. This discussion re-raised particularly the issues of *language*, *education*, *diagnoses* and *motivational factors*.

The employers brought up the importance of language skills. Not so much with a notion, that there would have to be very good Finnish language skills, but rather that it is known, what the language skills level is. Furthermore, what kind of tasks will be possible for the work try-outer and how the language skills development could be supported.

We had this person who had lived in Finland for long but had not learned the language. But we accepted that and the work community learned to communicate with him in different ways and we made sure he knows exactly what are his tasks, and it worked, he was employed. (E3)

(Meillähän oli tää yksi joka oli asunut Suomessa pitkään ja ei ollut kieltä oppinut. Mutta me hyväksyttiin se ja työyhteisö oppi kommunikoidaan hänen kanssa tietyillä tavoilla ja varmistettiin että hän tietää tarkkaan omat työtehtävät ja se toimi, hänhän meille työllistyi.)

There are people who will never learn Finnish language. And in these situations the work try-out is great, if the person through that finds employment and can perform the work with a poorer language skill. (E1)

(On näitä ihmisiä jotka ei koskaan sitä suomen kieltä opi kunnolla. Ja tällaisessa tapauksessahan työkokeilu on loistava jos hän sitten työllistyy sitä kautta ja pärjää siellä työssä huonommallakin kielitaidolla.)

The question of education was discussed as well. The educational aspects were expressed in affiliation with the field of work that is in question. For example, within nursing and elderly care field education is a prerequisite, whereas on some other fields one can gain employment based on knowhow and experience, rather than education.

It's important that there would be an access to a labor policy training or an apprenticeship training. Most need a studying period, without that employment is very rare. (E5)

(Ois tärkeätä että päästään vaikka työvoimapolitiittiseen koulutukseen tai oppisopimukseen. Suurin osa tarvii sen, suoraan työllistymistä tapahtuu erittäin vähän.)

The diagnoses was the most brought up issue, when discussing about the background work's importance. The lack of knowledge about the work try-outers' challenges and possible diagnoses, which would need special consideration, seemed to be the issue that has brought along the most challenging cases of work try-outs. The interviewees all wished that there would be even more attention payed on finding out the diagnoses and challenges, and that they would be openly discussed with the employers, in the work try-out interview and planning. Interviewees explained, that such information is essential in order to be able to supervise and guide according to the needs and potential of the work try-outer.

Everything that affects doing the work, should be discussed. There is always stumbling with those on the way. These things should be discussed openly, it would help everyone. Would be more benefits from the work try-out, there wouldn't be unnecessary setbacks, in a way. (E5)

(Kaikki mikä vaikuttaa työntekoon ois hyvä tulla esiin. Niistä tulee aina kompastuksia sitten matkan varrella. Kaikki pitäis pystyä avoimesti puhumaan, se auttais kaikkia. Saada enemmän irti siitä työkokellusta, ettei tulis turhia takapakkeja, tavallaan.)

That we are able to set aims accordingly, if we know what kind of challenges is there in the background! And that we don't start requiring such things, which that person don't have the ability for. (E3)

(Että osataan tavoitteitakin asetella sen mukaisesta jos tiedetään niitä rajoitteita siellä taustalla! Ja ettei lähetä vaatimaan sellasta mihin se ihminen ei kykene.)

The fourth background factor, which was expressed as an essential part of the composed experience, was that of the motivational factors, previously presented in section 7.1.1. The interviewees seemed to describe the motivational factors as a totality of the factors of the work try-outers life situation, how that affects the work try-outers resources, and mental and physical strength. Moreover, they expressed how important it is that these factors are known, and taken into consideration, when planning and implementing a work try-out.

The biggest challenge is when there's no motivation. Many have these substance abuse or mental health issues. Those are the toughest. (E4)

(Isoin haaste on se jos ei oo motivaatiota. Monellahan on päihdeongelmaa tai mielenterveyden ongelmaa. Nää on ne vaikeimmat.)

7.3.2 Cooperation between job coach and staff

Cooperation between the job coach and the staff was the second aspect discussed extensively by the interviewees, when considering the functionality of the work try-out towards employment. The interviewees, who have all been cooperating in this particular model, seem to feel it is an essential part of the positive functioning of the work try-out in carrying out its purpose.

The employers had experiences of how this cooperation had improved the work try-out, and the work try-outer's chances of employment, or other sensible follow-up plan. They described the cooperation with job coaches as ensuring the pre-selection work, the successful matching of the work place and work try-outer, bringing knowledge to the staff and the work try-outer, enabling a welcoming atmosphere to the work place and enabling feelings of success for the staff.

The coaches have come and explained about the aims of a work try-out for the staff and so on... This supports the understanding. All are not so prepared because there is so much different challenges that they may have. (E1)

(Valmentajat on tulleet kertomaan ihan että mikä sen työkokeilun tarkoitus on ja näin... Tää on tukenut ymmärtämistä. Kaikki ei oo olleet ihan varautuneita kun voi niin erilaisia haasteita heillä olla.)

The work community has gained strength, when a few of the work try-outers have been so shy and before they have not had much success and here they have been doing well, with the support of the staff and the coach. This brings joy to the work community. (E2)

(Työyhteisö on saanut voimaa että muutama työkokeilija on olleet tosi arkoja ja eivät ole oikeen onnistunut aiemmin, mutta täällä heillä on mennyt hyvin, kun työyhteisö ja valmentaja on tukenut. Tää tuo iloa työyhteisölle.)

Moreover, they described the advantage of having a cooperation, which has been based on *trust*, *openness* and *mutual interests*. The employers were pleased with the fact that with close cooperation it has been possible to create an atmosphere between the job coach and the employer/staff, that there is trust and openness, which serves the implementation of work try-outs. The employers had experienced a clear support by the coaches and felt there was a strong mutual interest within the cooperation. The coaches had been interested in what works, what is possible, and what are the employer's wishes. Furthermore they had shown interest and effort in matching a suitable work try-outer to the work place. When challenges had arisen, the coaches were quickly there to sort out the situation with the employer and the work try-outer. This was seen as an essential part of arranging the work try-out in a successful – that of reasonable and worthwhile – manner. One interviewee wished for even more job coaches' presence in the work community, than what had been taken place.

7.3.3 Work try-out preceding employment

Last category of the discussion on how work try-out functions as a path to employment, was that of deeper assessment of how work try-out period preceding employment, serves employment possibilities. In this discussion, the employers brought up issues of *duration*, the period as an *evaluation period*, the period as a *practice for work*, and it being in some cases the *only passage to employment*.

The duration of the work try-out was brought up extensively when considering its function as a path to employment. The work try-out's duration is set to be from one to six months in one work place. The duration is somewhere between that scale, set

according to the aims and situation. Often a work try-out period is first agreed for one month at first. After this it can be prolonged in case that it suits both parties, the work try-outer and the employer, and it serves the work try-outer's path. According to the the employers' experiences, when there is a clear aim and potential for the work try-out to result in employment, it takes that of a longer duration to enable the resulting in an employment. The given examples were those of two to six months of duration, no less than two months. This was explained with having time to work out possible obstacles and challenges – which are usually present to an extent or another, if someone is going to a work try-out, instead of direct employment. The challenge aspects mentioned were language level improvement, solving housing issues, getting help with health issues, gaining mental strength and empowerment, and getting used to the working schedules and regulations.

Furthermore, the preceding work try-out was explained to function as an evaluation period. In order to get to know the person in a deeper level, than only through their stated challenges with employment, was found important. The employers had experienced, that initially the stated challenges or gaps in working life would scare them too much to employ a person straight away. However, having a chance for evaluation period, they have seen other qualities and attributes of the job seeker, which may speak on behalf of employing them after all.

It's a totally different possibility to gain employment through that, that you have evidence, that you come to work in the morning and there is so many similar elements as in an employment. It is always easier for a hiring person to hire someone who is in a work try-out, than someone who is on a couch. (E5)

(Onhan se nyt ihan eri mahdollisuus työllistyä sitä kautta, että on näyttöä, että tulee aamulla hommiin ja kuitenkin niin paljon samoja elementtejä kuin työsuhteessa. Se on palkkaavalle ihmiselle aina helpompi palkata työkokeilussa oleva kuin sohvalla oleva.)

The fact, that work try-out enables practicing work in an authentic work place, with authentic regulations, tasks and rules, was found important. The employers felt that people who have some challenges with employment – be it the language skills, the lack of training or health issues – have most likely had gaps in the working life. When considering the young adults, it can even be a total lack of work and working life experience. In this, the employers felt a work try-out can be a great period for getting familiar with working life and getting acquainted with the regulations and daily rhythm, without having yet the threat of i.e. being fired from work, but rather getting support with succeeding.

I think, that because of their backgrounds they would have not proceeded in a normal process... There is usually too many gaps there. (E6)

(Luulen, että heidän taustojensa takia he eivät olisi edenneet normaalissa prosessissa... Siellä usein on liikaa aukkoja.)

In addition, the employers expressed, that at times the work try-out preceding an employment, is in fact the only possible path to employment. They had experienced such cases where they felt that they as employers would have not employed someone based on the initial information they had of the job seeker, yet after a work try-out period they had seen the case in a different manner. The employment projects were seen as enablers for those people especially as a breaking possibility to gain employment in an otherwise rather hopeless situation.

I definitely would have not hired! That's clear. But through this work try-out the thoughts changed, he did the job so well and we had no problem communicating the relevant things. (E3)

(En varmasti olisi palkannut! Se on ihan selvä. Mutta tän työkokeilun kautta ajatus muuttui kyllä, teki hommat tosi hyvin ja pystyttiin kommunikoimaan kaikki tarpeellinen.)

For sure, I don't think I'm the only one feeling this way...we have had many work try-outers and not even one of them I would have hired according to their CV or the first impression. (E2)

(Ihan varmasti, en usko että olen ainoa joka näin ajattelee... monta työkokeilijaa ollut ja yhtäkään en olis palkannut sen cv:n tai ensikohtaamisen perusteella.)

7.3.4 Employers' perspective on successful work try-out

A summary of the employers' perspectives on the work try-out functioning as a path to employment can be presented as follows: The employers felt, that in order to have a well-functioning work try-out, the most important aspects of it are the background work and the cooperation between the employer and the job coach during the work try-out. Furthermore, the employers presented two scenarios of a well-functioning work try-out: 1) Work try-out leading to an employment, and 2) work try-out being in other ways a positive and empowering experience, which serves the work try-outers path forward in one way or another.

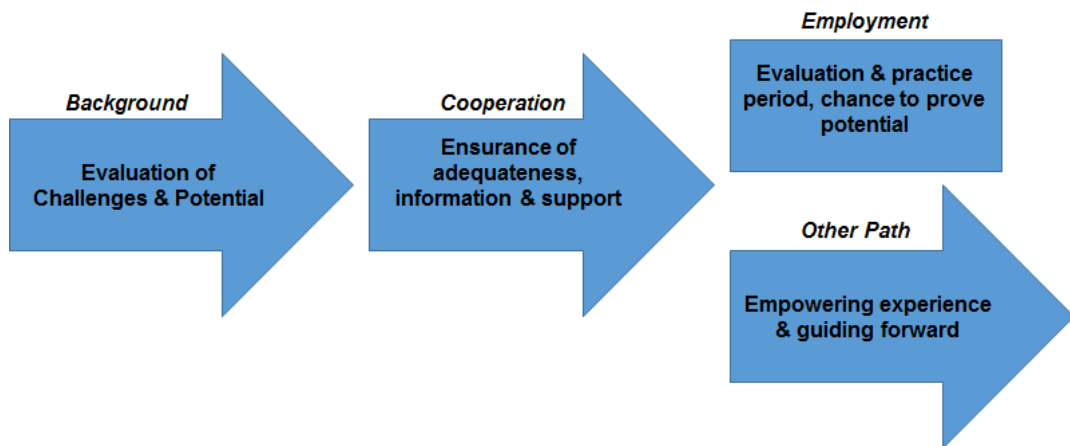


Figure 13. Successful work try-out as a path forward

7.4 Development suggestions by the employers

The interviewees were requested to share some development ideas and suggestions regarding the functioning of a work try-out. The interviewees examined this from the point of view of the particular cooperation model in question. The interviewees expressed development suggestions, which were categorized into *materials*, *motivators*, *employer being a trainer and an educator* and *systemizing the model*.

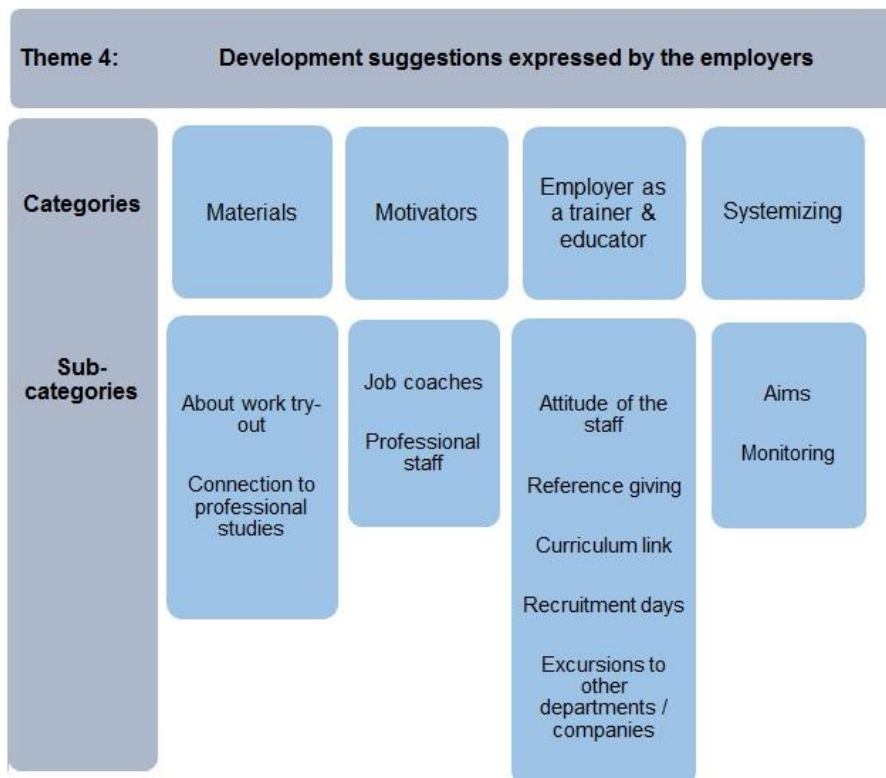


Figure 14. Development suggestions by the employers: Theme, categories and subcategories

7.4.1 Materials

The employers brought up the importance of developing more informational materials about work try-out itself, as well as material on how the work try-out and its contents could be connected to professional training and studies.

Such a thing like how the staff welcomes these work try-outers, for example in written form... to the supervisor that kind of leaflet, that how this proceeds and what to take into account. (E1)

(Ihan sellanen että miten työntekijät ottas vastaan hyvin nää työkokeilijat niin vaikka ihan kirjallisena sellainen.. vaikka sille ohjaajalle sellainen lehtinen että miten mennään ja mitä ottaa huomioon.)

A written material could be, which stems from this field's curriculum. That could be used to see what kind of entities in the working life should be emphasized. That could help many people. The practitioner could then themselves also check a bit, that they'd rather train these things. (E5)

(Kirjallinen materiaali vois olla, joka juontaa tän alan opinto-ohjelmasta. Siitä vois sitten katsoa millasia kokonaisuuksia työelämässä pitäis korostaa. Se vois auttaa montaa ihmistä. Harjoittelija vois itekkin katsoa vähän että vois mieluummin harjotella näitä juttuja.)

7.4.2 Motivators

The employers brought up discussion about how important work is the one done by the job coaches and by the professional staff, by acting as agents of raising motivation. By the job coaches more on the level of supporting the process with their professional coaching skills, whereas by the professional staff in the work place by showing example and motivating for professional growth and identity. This included such aspects as motivating towards developing and training one self, and gaining a sense of purpose and pride from being able to have an effect on one's own and other people's lives, through work.

I think it's easier for a work try-outer to be in a work community where the people are educated, they have a profession, thinking about the follow-up. Otherwise they may think that education is not needed etc. but when one is here one gets enthusiastic about studying more and belong to a group of professionals.(E2)

(Luulen että työkokeilijalle on helpompi olla työyhteisössä jossa muut ihmiset ovat koulutettuja, heillä on ammatti, sitä jatkoa ajatellen. Muuten voi aatella että eihän koulutusta tarvita jne. mutta kun on täällä niin tulee into opiskella lisää ja kuulua ammattiryhmään.)

7.4.3 Employer as a trainer and an educator

The employers brought up the issue of employer, the work place, and the entire staff, being in a position of a trainer and an educator, when arranging work try-outs. They described the importance of the understanding of this by the whole staff. Moreover, this should be enabled by the supervisor and the job coach, by them showing concrete example.

Every day there is these success moments, that the people start to trust themselves because they really want that job and get supported in it. The boss cannot just sit there in the booth all day, but be involved in the job.(E4)

(Joka päivä tapahtuu niitä onnistumisia että se alkaa luottaa itteensä se työntekijä koska ne oikeesti halua sen työpaikan ja saa siihen tukea. Eihän se pomo voi vaan siellä kopissa olla vaan itse mukana niissä hommissa.)

The interviewees had experienced, that staff's attitude has an effect on the implementation and success of the work try-out, and how the staff functions as an example for the work try-outer. When there was enough adequate information about work try-out as a function and the pre-work with the work community had been done adequately, the employers felt that there were more chances for the staff to have a positive and constructive attitude towards the work try-out. Moreover, they felt the staff seemed to be more motivated to be of good example and support.

The interviewees had experienced the importance of reference giving, in a case that a work try-outer cannot be employed to the work try-out place, but can benefit from getting references in order to get into a training program or employment in another company. They expressed that this is an aspect that should be kept in mind, and there could be developmental work done, in order to ensure the earned references to be given to a work try-outer.

Those who have succeeded well and get a good certificate those could be advertised further. That we would make it visible that these have done well, giving them references of it. (E4)

(Niitä jotka onnistuu ja saa hyvät paperit käteen niin niitä voi mainostaa eteenpäin. Että heistä tehtäs näkyvästi niitä että nää on onnistuneet, se niiden suositteluinen siitä.)

Furthermore, there was discussion on giving knowledge to the supervisor of the work try-out about the curriculum of related studies. This way it could be ensured, that if the work try-outer is interested in the field's studies, they would get all possible benefit from the work try-out in relation to the aimed study curriculum.

The employers presented further ideas, as in how the companies could improve the work try-out system, in cooperation with the job coaches. Two such suggestions came up, which were *recruitment days* and *excursions to other departments and companies*. The recruitment days would be events arranged together, in which employers would get a chance to meet with work try-outers seeking a job, who were evaluated already as potential employees on that field by the work try-out's supervisor/s. The excursions to other departments and companies would serve as a perspective and knowledge - expanding factor, during the work try-out. This way the work try-outer would gain insight at a larger scale about the field of work, than when remaining in one department all the time.

7.4.4 Systemizing

The last development suggestion was that of further systemizing the work try-out model. Even though it has been a regular part of the current work try-outs to involve the setting of the aims and monitoring the reaching of the aims, the employers felt this could be further systemized and ensured.

That there is a specified task description and what he should be able to do by what time. And if he has not, we can think over, is it just that he needs more time or is it that he is not suitable. That would bring better results. (E3)

(Että määritellään tehtävänkuva ja mihin täytyy kyetä missäkin aikajaksossa. Ja jos ei ole päässyt niin mietitään että onko se vaan että hän tarvii lisää aikaa vai johtuuko se siitä että hän ei vaan oookkaan sopiva. Se johtais parempiin tuloksiin.)

If we think about that person, that she just tries to struggle in a place, which is not... "I'm really not in a suitable place here". There should be a clear system to monitor this. (E2)

Jos aatellaan sitä ihmistä, ettei hän vaan yrittää rimpuilla sellasessa paikassa joka ei sitten oookkaan... "en oikeesti oookkan oikealla paikallani". Tähän pitäis olla selkeä systeemi seurata.

The systemizing of the work try-out model also included insuring the quality of the content of the work try-out. The employers described the lack of time and resources during the common workdays, and how it would be essential to ensure the fact, that a work try-outer can fulfill his potential, and develop during the work try-out period. This could be done, as suggested by the interviewees, by for example breaking the work tasks into parts and keeping a book of what the work try-outer has already been learning and what is yet to cover.

That has been noticed, that we should have a more diverse program, that practice program, to someone who is being coached into working life. It's a bit a question of resources, but it would improve a lot, that they would get to go through all. The coach could register and ensure that all the contents of the work would be gone through. (E6)

(Se on havaittu, sen tiedostamme että meillä pitäis olla monipuolisempi toi ohjelma, se harjoitteluohjelma sille jota valmennetaan kohti työelämää... Se on vähän resurssikysymys, mutta paljon se parantais, että he pääsis niinku kaiken käymään läpi. Valmentaja voi pitää kirjaa ja varmistaa, että ne työn kaikki sisällöt tulis käytyä läpi kattavasti.)

8 Discussion

The context of this thesis is a current issue in our society at the moment. There is an increased interest on how to decrease unemployment rates, and how to enable the employment of those people, who have challenges to gain employment through the more common routes.

The employment matters affect people and their families at multi-dimensional levels. As an example, the fact that parents are able to gain employment, and in the longer run improve the family's socio-economic status, influences their children's well-being and future as well. The influence is cross-generational, as the socio-economical status, social class and unemployment, can pass on from a generation to another. The environment, in which a child is growing up, and the extent to which it appreciates education and employment, affect the child's later orientation regarding these matters. (Korhonen, 2013:73). Furthermore, the employment of the young people is essential as well, to prevent them from marginalization and prolonged unemployment. The unemployment experience of the youth has been indicated by numerous studies having far reaching effects on one's employment trail. (Hämäläinen – Tuomala, 2013). Therefore, it is highly important, as a part of empowering and inclusion endeavors, to promote the employment of those with a more challenging labor market position.

This thesis concentrated on the evaluation of the functioning of the work try-out, within a particular cooperation model. The model of cooperation is a specific one, yet it can give insight to the abilities and challenges of the work try-out at a more general level, as well. The cooperation model in question is that of a stronger support for the employer and the work try-outer. Therefore, the challenges presented in the results of this thesis, are likely to be even more obvious in the generally arranged work try-outs, with less support.

This thesis aimed to find out the employer perspective in particular. The employer perspective is essential in developing employment services, since they are the ones employing people. Moreover, they have knowledge and experience, which will enable the evaluation of work try-outs' potential in promoting employment. This study contributes to the knowhow of how job coaching methods were to be implemented, and combined with the work try-out periods, in order to promote the employment of the unemployed jobseekers. The fact that the employers have prior to this study consented and been willing to cooperate in employment promotive issues, probably has affected their willingness to also take part in this study, as a part of the development work.

In the following chapters, the results are discussed according to the research questions: what were the employers' experiences of the work try-outs supported by job coaching, and how they see the implemented model as a path to employment. Furthermore, what kind of development suggestions arise, and how can they be implemented at a practical level.

8.1 How do work try-outs function as a path to employment

The employers who were taking part in the cooperation with the employment projects, and agreed to participate in this study, had mostly positive experiences of the arranged work try-outs. The employers felt that arranging work try-outs is actually an important task for their staff and company, in order to support the employment possibilities of those in a more challenging position in the labor market. In addition, the employers felt that arranging the work try-outs and supporting the job seekers' path, their work community gained as well many positive experiences and practical help too. It was clear, that the employers had paid much attention to the effect the work try-outs have on their staff and work community, and vice versa. There was also willingness to improve the attitude and atmosphere of the staff and work community towards more positive, to be able to have better work try-out experiences for the job seekers.

Previous studies have had similar results, when studying the companies' and employers' views on employing people with some challenges. Ala-Kauhaluoma et al. (2005) present, that if the work community seems to have problems in adaptability, due to prejudices as an example, it can affect the employer's recruitment decision. (Ala-Kauhaluoma – Härkpää – Lempola, 2005:101). Kukkonen (2009) similarly pointed out that the work community has a big role and lots of influence on the questions of

employing someone with challenges. How the work community will relate to an employment decision, is a question, which is anticipated, and seems to have influence on the decision making of the employer. After making a decision to employ, the relating of the work community has its influence on the continuity of the employment. (Kukkonen, 2009:137.)

Alakauhaluoma and Härkäpää (2006) studied the private service sector as an employer to those in a challenging labor market position. The results indicated that when a company has experience of supported employing, they evaluated the employed person's potential performance and the potential risks in a more positive manner, than companies, who yet did not have experience of supported employment. By sharing the experiences of those employers, who have experience, there can be a positive effect on increasing supported employment. In Finland such B-to-B marketing is still very rare. (Ala-Kauhaluoma - Härkäpää, 2006:30). Therefore, sharing and marketing these positive experiences of the employers, there can be created more employer cooperation within the employment promotion field. Furthermore, by evaluating the existing cooperation models and developing them further, there can be increasingly successful paths from work try-outs toward employment.

The employers had experienced, that the success of a work try-out period is highly dependable on the motivational level of the work try-outer, i.e. the overall life situation he/she has, and how that life situation enables personal resources and strength to manage the work try-out. The employers felt, that the motivational level, and the ability to make use of the work try-out, are the most important aspects to consider before starting a work try-out. Also, they wished to be more aware of these issues, in order to be prepared accordingly and for example set the aims for the work try-out accordingly. Both Keskinen (2013) and Portman (2014) have studied the activation methods of the unemployed and pointed out the same, as the employers in this study. Keskinen and Portman had interviewed the social workers and employment workers of the city and municipality. When starting the activation procedures towards employment, like searching for a work practice place or rehabilitative work for the clients, the employers wished to have more information on the job seeker. Such issues were raised, as what kind of limitations does the job seeker have in relation to the work performance. (Portman 2014:62). Furthermore, an important basis for all the interviewees in Keskinen's study, was that the life situation and background is being carefully mapped out and evaluated. The guiding, advising and motivating was seen as an important aspect in order for the work and process to proceed (Keskinen 2013:49.)

The employers discussed extensively of the possible challenges in the work try-outs, such as those that may come along with mental challenges and disorders, or substance abuse issues. In Kukkonen's study (2009) it was also pointed out, that when employers think about the decision to employ someone with challenges, especially mental challenges are experienced as difficult. The handling of such issues within the work community is experienced troublesome. (Kukkonen 2009:117). The employers in this study emphasized the importance of the evaluation of the overall life situation of the potential work try-outer. Furthermore, the importance of doing the preparative work and selection with the job seekers, before going to the work place. In order to ensure this, the employers brought up the necessity of preparative work done by the job coaches.

Job coaching was seen as an essential part of the cooperation model by the employers. Not only in regards of the preparative work, but also the cooperation during the work try-outs and the after-work with the work try-outers. The employers had experienced the coaching being as the supporting force throughout the work try-out process, both for the employer, and the work try-outer. They viewed the coach being in a role of a mentor and an advocate for the work try-outer. Furthermore, the job coach was seen as having an important role as a mediator, between the work try-outer and the employer, and between them and the TE-services.

Job coaching as a supportive method combined with work try-outs gains confirmation from the other studies relating to the same issue. Ala-Kauhaluoma has found that those people who are in need of special support for employment, are not benefiting from the current public services, and there is a need for more diversity in the service selection. (Ala-Kauhaluoma 2007:100). When it comes to actual employment of a person with some challenges, a job coach, or other support person at the work place, especially in the beginning of an employment, could ease the employers' worries. (Ala-Kauhaluoma 2007:181). Therefore, when considering a work try-out, which is applied even prior to possible employment, it is obvious, that such operation requires additional support. Granholm evaluated one employment project, which offered support and rehabilitation for the unemployed. There the perspective was that of the unemployed job seekers. The unemployed job seekers evaluated as well, that the best support they gained for their employment, was that of coaching and support, and work try-outs or practical work. (Granholm 2015:32.)

As stated by a recent evaluation report by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the encounters with the job seeker client, are what mold the client's experience, and affect the level of the client becoming active. Adequate information and positive encounters have a positive effect on the implementation of the service, as well. (Tonttila 2015:34). Keskinen (2013) has studied the social work done in the employment services centers. Her study found that the most important basis for the employment promotion, was the thorough mapping-out of the job seeker's life situation and background. Without having becoming familiar with these aspects, there cannot be created any such plans, which would fit the client's needs. (Keskinen, 2013:65). Both of these evaluations and studies regard to the work done by the public employment services, for which such work can be challenging, due to enormous amounts of clients. The employment projects are able to use before-mentioned methods, and ensure the aspects easier, as the amount of clients can be kept reasonable.

As the employers compared the work try-outs arranged within this cooperation model, to those, which had no job coaching available, the difference was evident. The interviewees felt that without the job coach, the work try-outers were left with not enough support. From the preparative work of informing the potential work try-outer and doing the pre-selection, to the support during the work try-out, further towards the follow-up plan, the employers felt that not enough support was available without a job coach. As Filatov presents in her report (2013), it's important, that the contact to the job seeker client is kept on even during a placement at the transitional labor markets. The TE-offices have such large numbers of clients, that to them, this is a challenge. (Filatov 2013:36). However, in the employment projects the job coach is able to do this work, due to reasonable amount of clients. There is a question of how to find ways to implement the well-functioning models created in employment projects, to the general and public employment services. Those authorities, who regulate and develop the service system and selection, are in an integral role, when it comes to making use of the developed well-functioning methods. (Ala-Kauhaluoma 2007:101.)

As can be seen, previous studies and the perspectives of the employers in this study suggest, that in order to successfully implement the activation methods and employment promotive actions, the in-depth and individual approach is essential with working with the job seekers. Moreover, the support should continue while the job seeker is taking part in activation operations, such as that of a work try-out. This applies especially with clients who have a challenging labor market position.

As a summary, the employers in this study brought up the conclusion, that in order for the work try-out to function to its potential success level, the following should be present:

1) For the potential work try-outer: Enough adequate information about the work field and work task; mapping out the life situation and the needs for support and help; evaluating the ability to take part in a work try-out at the moment; support and help during the work try-out; ensuring benefits from the work try-out; and support and help with making a concrete and realistic follow-up plan.

2) For the employer: Enough adequate information about work try-outs in general and about the potential work try-outer; the coach being familiar with the work field and tasks, in order to do a functional match of a work try-outer and a work place; the coach supporting the employer/supervisor/staff during the work try-out, especially with challenges; in case of possible employment, support with the paperwork and the beginning of the employment.

If the before mentioned has been taken care of, the employers felt that a work try-out at its best works well as a path towards employment. The employment possibilities are then, according to the employers, depending on such issues as the level of language skill, the level of education (higher requirement in some tasks, than others), other work field's requirements and the health and ability level of the work try-outer. A prominent view which came up from the interviewees was the fact, that work try-out was seen as the only possible path to employment for some people. The employers had experienced cases in which they would have not by any means employed a person based on their written curriculum vitae, and/or performance in the interview. Yet the employers had hired the work try-outer, or given them references for another job, after seeing how they perform in the work try-out. As Bräysy et al. also present in their article on work try-outs as tools for professional rehabilitation, the employers have a possibility to gain reliable information about the work try-outer's suitability and ability for the work field and tasks, during a work try-out. (Bräysy – Kallanranta – Karkia – Kokko, 2008.)

Based on previous studies and this study, it is clear that a work try-out can function as a path towards employment, especially for those, who do not proceed via the common labor market routes. That is conditional to the aspect of having the needed support for the process and for the job seeker, before, during, and after the work try-out. Moreover, the employers evaluated, that a work try-out has functioned well and according to its

purpose, not only based on a possible straight employment or professional study route, but on a good, empowering and inclusion-promoting period at a work place, in the work community. This was seen by the employers as a valuable experience to any job seeker. This is pointed out in various studies as well, as that of Björklund and Hallamaa (2013). Björklund and Hallamaa presented in their article on encouraging people towards labor markets in an ethical and sustainable way, that offering authentic possibilities in such a way, that one can experience themselves as beneficial and a worthy members of a society, is essential in becoming active. A person must be able to acknowledge their self as an active actor, instead of being a target. An active stand arises from the experience of being valued and having resources, which they can use for the good of the community. If a person is continuously a mere passive target of operations, they will not form a self-image of a beneficial and voluntary actor. A person can then surrender to be a target of operations and supported by benefits, because they do not believe in their possibilities to attend the labor market or the society's activities. (Björklund - Hallamaa 2013: 169.)

8.2 How to improve the functioning of work try-outs

The employers expressed some development suggestions based on their experiences with the employment projects and the cooperation models. This feedback was very valuable, in order to develop the services further, and in addition in a broader context of evaluating work try-out practices.

The employers presented four themes of development suggestions concerning the work try-out model in question. Two of them were material based aspects, those of written information, and systemizing and monitoring tools. Two of them were based on the professionals' personal and practical work, which should according to the employers empower and motivate the work try-outers. Furthermore, the professionals should train and educate, or be a part of enabling training and education, of the work try-outers.

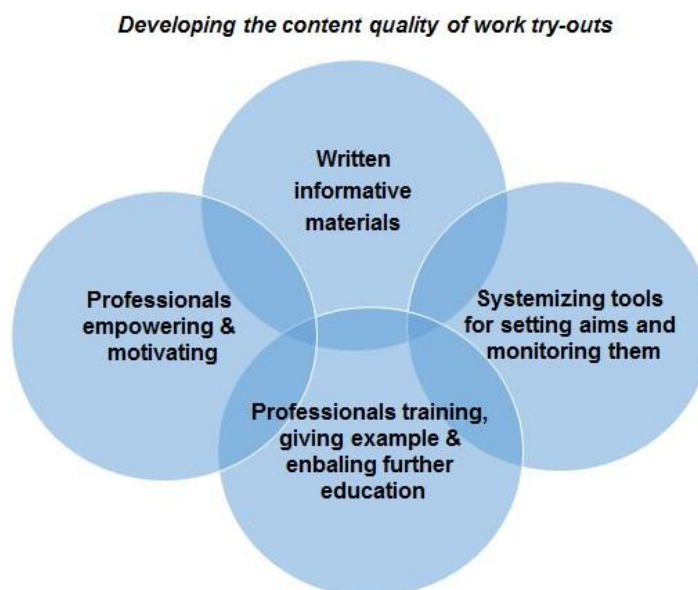


Figure 15. Employers' perspectives on how to further develop work try-outs

The development suggestions point out the deep level on which the interviewees had been cooperating, in order to improve the work try-outs' functioning, for both: their own work community and for the work try-outer. All the development suggestions can be seen as intertwined aspects. The written informative materials were seen as a tool for creating an informed and positive atmosphere within the work community and the staff, which then serves the welcoming and supervising of the work try-outers. Furthermore, the materials and systemizing tools were suggested by the employers to work for ensuring, that the work try-outer will be able to fulfill their personal potential at an adequate level and preventing the possible immoderate expectations placed on the work try-outer. Moreover, the employers presented the importance of gaining the benefits from the work try-out for later use. They brought up ideas such as being able to use the experience and practice gained from the work try-out as a part of later professional studies or training, and getting references for further employment and educational possibilities.

In addition to the written informative and systemizing materials, the employers brought up the involved professionals' personal and practical work, and its effect on the work try-outers. The employers expressed the essentiality of the quality of guiding and supervising, and being an example for those taking part in a work try-out. They felt, that these issues should be thought about more, and enabled and promoted further by all the professionals involved in the work try-outs process – especially by job coaches and the employers/supervisors and staff.

8.3 Ethical Considerations

Research permission was applied from the institutional ethical committee board of the Helsinki Deaconess Institute was on May 22nd 2014, and the confirmed permission for the study was received June 9th 2014. In addition, the idea and concept of this study had been previously discussed in the steering group of the Kotikallio Living Lab – project. The steering group consists of representatives from the HDI development services, Diadome oy, Helsingin Diakonissalaitoksen Hoiva oy, Fazer Food Services oy, Public Employment and Business Services and the project team. The idea and request for a study to be made had been discussed in the steering group meetings on September 23rd 2013 and December 11th 2013. All interviewees of this study were of legal age, over 18-years old.

Furthermore, all the interviewees of this study were employers within the cooperation companies and organizations, which had already closely cooperated with the employment projects in question. Furthermore, the interviewees were already familiar with the projects, their staff and their operations. The interviewees had already been working with the issues of this study through cooperation in multiple work try-outs, and they had already been a part of evaluation and feedback processes to different extents. Therefore, the issues discussed in this study had already been a part of their daily professional tasks and areas of work. This study did not include any participation of the clients of Helsinki Deaconess Institute or the employment projects, and thus does not include any sensitive, or vulnerable, client material. However, the people who participated in the study remain anonymous.

The potential interviewees were contacted and given an information sheet and a consent form, which clarified the purpose and aims of this study. The potential interviewees, who were contacted and requested to take part in this study, were clearly informed, that they are free to refuse taking part in the study. Furthermore, it was made known that it is possible for the participant interviewee to withdraw from the study at any point of the process. These matters were also confirmed face to face in the beginning of each interview, in addition to signing the written consent for the interview at the beginning of the interview.

All the material obtained through interviews, was securely stored and handled according to health care professional's obligation to establish and maintain the

confidentiality of the information contained. Moreover, all the material has been destroyed, when the study and report was completed.

The purpose of the study in itself is ethical, as the purpose is to find development ideas in order to promote the employment of the unemployed jobseekers. The employment promotion methods and cooperation models are especially implemented in order to enable employment for those in a challenging labor market position. Therefore, the purpose of this study promotes the inclusion and empowerment of those who most need the support for employment.

8.4 Trustworthiness

The reliability criteria of a qualitative research can be fulfilled in two ways. That of making the research process transparent through describing the research strategy and data analysis methods in a sufficiently detailed manner, and that of paying attention to theoretical transparency, by making the theoretical stance from which the interpretation takes place. (Silverman 2011:360.)

The classical concepts of reliability and validity were substituted by Lincoln and Guba in 1985 with a concept of trustworthiness. (Kovalainen, 2008: 294). This concept includes four aspects; credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. I am using concept of trustworthiness in evaluation of this thesis.

Dependability means the responsibility of the researcher to prove, that the process of research has been logical, traceable and documented. (Eriksson – Kovalainen 2008: 294). I have presented sampling, data collection and analysis process in details in chapter 6 of this thesis. Size of sample was only six interviewees. This, however, is explicable by the specific model of cooperation being under study, which itself restricts the sample size. Furthermore, the data was saturated with this sample, and it was likely that no additional interviews would have provided new information for the study.

Conformability refers to idea that data and interpretations are truthful. (Eriksson - Kovalainen 2008: 294). The research process in this thesis has been carefully opened and explained. There has been careful consideration of the ethical manners and honesty at each step of the data analysis and presentation of results. All interviews were tape recorded and carefully transcribed. During the analysis of the data, I made certain, that the subcategories and upper categories were describing the original

content of the interviews and the experiences of the interviewees. Furthermore, I went back to the original data during analysis, to ensure the original meaning of the data. When presenting the data, in chapter 7, I have included direct quotations from the original data to confirm the truthfulness of the study.

Transferability points to being able to show, into which degree there can be found similarities in this research and previous research. (Eriksson – Kovalainen 2008: 294). There has not been specifically similar research in Finland before, yet there has been multiple researches, which study the same phenomena in a different setting and process model. From these researches, I have presented similarities in this thesis. Moreover, qualitative research is not meant for making statistical generalizations, but to provide theoretically sensible construction for a phenomenon. (Tuomi – Sarajärvi 2013: 85). This thesis does provide in-depth description of how the employers in this cooperation model experience the functionality of the work try-outs.

However, it is a limitation, that the results of this study are so strongly connected to a certain specific model of cooperation and implementation of work try-outs. The interviewees were involved before this study to the development cooperation with the employment projects and me, the researcher. This may have affected for example their initial agreeability to take part, and the level of being favorable regarding the cooperation model. The study researches a specific cooperation model, and the results are therefore attached to the specific cooperation model. Therefore, the results in this study can not be applied to other work places and employers directly. The results do however give insight to the phenomenon at a more general level as well, as to arranging work try-outs and improving their functionality. This has been explained throughout the thesis.

Furthermore, the references used in the framework of this study, are all rather recent studies, evaluations and reports. In a topic such as this, which is strongly attached to the current setting of labor policies and societal circumstances of employment and a weakened labor market position, the topicality of the references is important.

Credibility of this study has been reached by being fully familiar with the topic in question, as well as the concepts of the phenomenon. I was already very familiar with the topic, as I have been working many years within the development work of the employment promotion and the particular aspects of this study. This can function both against, and for the reliability. The familiarity can affect the study reliability negatively,

by the researcher making conclusions based on not only the research material, but on previous ideas and concepts of the phenomena. This was however acknowledged already from the planning phase of the research, and I have been careful not to let earlier ideas and concepts interfere with the study of this thesis. This was ensured by paying careful attention to the analysis of the data, using only the data, for drawing results and conclusions. Moreover, the fact that the topic and phenomena was already familiar to me, made it easier to understand the context and concepts in the discussion and expression of the employers.

9 Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to gain the employers' perspectives regarding work try-outs, and their functionality, as they are implemented in cooperation between them and the employment projects. The objective was to evaluate the work try-out's functionality as a path towards employment. Furthermore, the purpose was to gain development suggestions from the employers, who have vast experience of the implementation of the work try-outs.

As presented in the thesis earlier, the results of this study cannot be as such applied directly into the general level of implementation and functionality of work try-outs, as they are based on a particular cooperation and model. However, the results can be considered out of this particular context, and they can give additional information for the consideration of the general work try-outs as well.

According to the results of this study, work try-outs can function well as a path towards employment. Furthermore, a work try-out can in some cases be the only possible path to employment. According to the results it is however evident, that the work try-out requires a supported process in order to function well for its purposes. This study brought up the importance of thorough and individual support and guidance, if the labor market activation operations, such as that of a work try-out, are to be effective and result in benefits for the unemployed. This is especially important, when considering those in a challenging labor market position. This is certainly a question of costs for the public employment services. It would be an immense expenditure to provide all those with challenges to gain employment, with individual job coaching. However, the expenditures could be compared with the expenditures of

long-term unemployment and exclusion, and most likely be discovered to be more cost-effective in the longer scope of time.

The close cooperation with the employers, in order to develop the employment methods and models, seemed to have a very positive effect on the way they viewed the work try-outs and work try-outs' possibilities to enhance the job seeker's employment possibilities. This can be seen from the employers' differing experiences concerning those work try-outs, which were implemented outside of the cooperation models of the employment projects. Furthermore, other studies presented in this thesis have likewise concluded, that employers view the employment promotion of those in a challenging labor market position more positively, when they already have experiences of such employments.

As a conclusion of this study it can also be stated, that the employers were highly motivated to promote the implementation of the work try-outs, and especially in such a manner, that it would best serve and bring the benefits for the work try-outer. Even if the work try-out was not to result in employment or a path to professional studies, the employers experienced the period as a chance for a valuable learning and empowering experience.

It would be important that they would leave with a good feeling, that it would be a positive experience for their self esteem. We would build one path forward and with a good feeling and they would get self-confidence. This is what I hope the staff will remember and like this receive them. (E1)

(Ois tärkeätä että he lähtis hyvillä mielin, että se ois heidän itseluottamuksen kannalta positiivinen kokemus. Rakennettais yks väylä eteenpäin ja hyvillä mielin ja tulisi itsevarmuutta. Sitä mä toivon että työntekijät sitä, sen muistais ja sillä mielellä heitä vastaanottais.)

I have come to the conclusion that even if the main goal, the studies or employment don't happen, it is also a success if the person comes from that passive condition from home comes to the working life and... even if the period is that of months and he then goes back there, but if the threshold is then lower to go again, even that is a success. (E6)

(Oon tullut siihen tulokseen, että vaikka se pääkohde eli opiskelut tai työllistyminen ei toteudu, niin sekin on onnistuminen jos henkilö sieltä passiivisesta olotilasta kotoa tulee työelämään ja... vaikka se jakso olisi sit kuukausia ja sit palaa sinne, mutta jos sit on se kynnyks matalampi lähteä uudestaan, niin sekin on onnistuminen.)

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Hyvä Vastaanottaja,

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää työntajien näkemyksiä siitä, miten työkokeilut yhdistettynä työvalmennukseen toimivat työllistymistä edistävinä toimina ja miten niitä voitaisiin edelleen kehittää.

Työorganisaatiosi on yhteistyössä työllistämishankkeidemme kanssa järjestänyt työkokeilujaksoja työnhakija-asiakkaille, jotka työkokeilun kautta pääsevät joko tutustumaan alaan ja selkeyttämään uravaihtoehtojaan ja/tai saavat tukea työmarkkinoille paluuseen. Hankekoordinaattorin ja työvalmentajan roolissa olen jo työskennellyt sinun ja organisaatiosi kanssa työkokeilujen järjestämisessä ja toteutuneiden jaksojen arvioimisessa.

Osana Metropolian ammattikorkeakoulun Health Business Management korkeakouluopintojani olen tekemässä opinnäytetyönäni tarkemman selvityksen siitä, miten työnantajakumppanimme näkevät yhteistyössä järjestämämme työkokeilut väylänä työelämään. Ohjaajani tässä työssä on yliopettaja Eija Metsälä (p. 050 347 8177).

Kutsun sinut osallistumaan avoimeen yksilöhaastatteluun, jossa on tarkoitus tarkemmin kuulla näkemyksiäsi aiheesta. Haastattelu kestää yhdestä kahteen tuntia. Haastattelun sisältö on luottamuksellinen ja sitä käytetään vain tämän selvityksen yhteydessä. Aineiston analysoinnin jälkeen haastattelumateriaalit hävitetään asianmukaisesti. Ketään yksittäistä haastateltua ei voida tunnistaa tuloksissa eikä missään tutkimuksen vaiheessa. Haastatteluun osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Suostuttuasi haastateltavaksi voit myös missä tahansa vaiheessa keskeyttää haastatteluun/selvitykseen osallistumisen.

Näkemyksesi antaa hyvin tärkeää tietoa kehittämistyötä varten ja haastattelutilanne järjestetään sinulle sopivaan ajankohtaan ja paikkaan.

Vastaan mielelläni mahdollisiin lisäkysymyksiin.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Silja Havu, p. 050 578 1248, silja.havu@hdl.fi

Consent Form / Suostumus tutkimukseen osallistumisesta

Opinnäytetyönä tehtävä selvitys:

Work Tryouts and Job Coaching as a Path Towards Employment – Employers' Perspective

Miten työkokeilu yhdistettynä työvalmennukseen toimii työllistymisen väylänä – Työnantajien perspektiivi

Tekijä: Silja Havu

Selvityksen tulokset tullaan julkaisemaan työn valmistuttua 2015. Valmis työ toimitetaan kaikille työnantajayhteistyökumppaneille ja haastatteluun osallistuneille. Lisäksi Metropolian hyväksytyt opinnäytetyöt ovat nähtävissä ja avoimesti saatavilla osoitteessa www.theseus.fi.

Minulle on selvitetty yllä mainitun tutkimuksen tarkoitus ja tutkimuksessa käytettävät tutkimusmenetelmät. Olen tietoinen siitä, että tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Olen myös tietoinen siitä, että tutkimukseen osallistuminen ei aiheuta minulle minkäänlaisia kustannuksia, henkilöllisyyteni jää vain tutkijan tietoon, minua koskevaa aineistoa käytetään vain kyseiseen tutkimukseen ja aineisto hävitetään tutkimuksen valmistuttua.

Suostun siihen, että minua haastatellaan, haastattelu nauhoitetaan ja haastattelussa antamani tietoja käytetään kyseisen tutkimuksen tarpeisiin. Voin halutessani keskeyttää tutkimukseen osallistumisen milloin tahansa ilman, että minun täytyy perustella keskeyttämistäni tai että se vaikuttaa kumppanuussuhteeseeni/työsuhteeseeni.

Päiväys

Tutkittavan allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys

Structure of Interviews /

TEEMAHAASTATTELUN RUNKO / APUKYSYMYKSIÄ

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Miten työkokeilu yhdistettynä työvalmennukseen toimii väylänä työelämään – Työnantajien perspektiivi

Miten työkokeilu yhdistettynä työvalmennukseen toimii väylänä työelämään?

Työkokeilujaksojen toteutuminen, haasteet ja onnistumiset:

- Miten työkokeilut ovat mielestäsi toteutuneet käytännössä?
- Mitä haasteita työkokeilujen toteuttamisessa on ollut sinun/organisaatiosi näkökulmasta?
- Mitä onnistumisia työkokeilujen toteuttamisessa on ollut sinun/organisaatiosi näkökulmasta?
- Miten työyhteisönne on kokenut työkokeilut?

Työvalmentajien tuki työkokeilun tarkoituksenmukaiseen toimivuuteen:

- Miten mielestäsi työvalmentajan työskentely yhdistettynä työkokeiluun toimii käytännössä?
- Mihin työvalmentajien tulisi kiinnittää erityistä huomiota työkokeiluja järjestettäessä, työntajan/organisaation näkökulmasta katsottuna?

Työkokeilun toimivuus väylänä työelämään:

- Miten näet työkokeilujen toimivan väylänä työelämään? / Miten näet työkokeilujen toimivan väylänä työelämään sinun alallasi?
- Miten työkokeilujen toimivuutta väylänä työelämään voitaisiin kehittää?
- Onko sinulla vertailukohteita työkokeiluista, joissa ei ole ollut mukana työvalmentajan tukea?