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SELF-EFFICACY OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Experiences in a preparatory education project

ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study is to explore self-efficacy experiences of students during a preparatory education project. The idea of this research-oriented thesis was developed in collaboration with a project called Maahanmuuttajat korkeakoulutukseen ja työelämään (Higher Education and Employment for Immigrants). It is a preparatory education project run by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. The preparatory education aims to assist students in entering degree programs in Social Services and Health Care studies.

Education is a key factor in good integration and social wellbeing of immigrants. Furthermore, it is known to have intergenerational effects. Thus, supporting students and strengthening their belief in their own skills will boost their efficacy feelings and therefore can have a positive impact on ones' performance and beyond.

Qualitative research data was collected by using semi-structured interviews. Interviews were carried out with students, who participated in the preparatory education of the project in the preceding semester. The data was then analysed by using theory guided content analysis.

The research was able to show that students have had positive experiences during the project relating to Albert Banduras' self-efficacy theory, specifically, positive experiences of success (i.e. 'mastery experiences') as well as verbal support (i.e. 'social persuasion'). Furthermore, the students viewed the preparatory education, separate admission and mentoring provided in the project as important tools for inclusion in Finnish society and to personal development. Although these elements may not be directly anchored in self-efficacy theory, they indicate that the opportunities offered by the project add to the individuals' wellbeing and personal development. Together, these observations suggest, but by no means demonstrate, that the project may have positively contributed to these students' self-efficacy.

From a broader perspective, the observations suggest the project is helping to establish a more inclusive multicultural community and a more equal society. However, considering the limited reach of the Higher Education and Employment for Immigrants project and the size of the population of immigrant background people in Helsinki metropolitan area, it would seem worthwhile for more higher education institutes to engage in similar efforts to encourage immigrants to get into higher education and further employment, with as ultimate goal to create more multicultural work practices and a more equal society.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, higher education, preparatory education, immigrant, mentoring

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Education and employment structures for immigrants are currently in need of changes and improvement to meet the needs of the day. Immigrants complete only a small number of higher education degrees in Finland in comparison to the number of immigrants in the country. Immigrants need to have equal educational opportunities to those of the original population. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2009, 44-46.) Employment figures of immigrants are lower. Estonian population in Finland has a 66% employment ratio, less than four percentage lower that of Finnish citizen. Among Russian, Iraqi, Somali, Afghani populations the employment rates are subsequently lower, standing at 37, 12, 11 and 15%. It is among the latter population groups that the challenge in integration lies. Growing numbers of immigrants from these countries set urgent demands for the labour market as well as education. (OECD 2018, 20.)

The Finnish Government Program sets as a goal to increase by 2025 the education level of the population. In 2015, the Finnish government initiated the re-examination of its immigrant integration and employment measures. The government approved an action plan on integration, titled 'Immigrants into municipalities, education and employment' in May 2016. In June 2016, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment established a working group with the objective of speeding up education paths and enable flexible transitions for immigrants. One aim of the plan is to increase the number of immigrants in higher education by developing preparatory and language education. The action plan states that the idea of preparatory education is to focus on language skills needed in higher education and to adopt independent research-oriented study skills. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2017, 31-33.) Need for better education and employment opportunities is also recognized by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2009, 47). They aim to increase the number of immigrants in higher education by developing preparatory education possibilities.

Preparatory education for higher education is a relatively new concept in Finland. The Universities of Applied Sciences Act (A 932/2014) states that a university of applied sciences may provide education for immigrants free of charge with a view to provide them

with language proficiency and other knowledge and skills needed for studies at a university of applied sciences (A2014/932). There is no uniform way of organizing it nor is there binding legislation (Lepola 2017, 7). The Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education – network (SIMHE) was set up to help tackle this issue, and now there are few responsible universities that serve as hubs for preparatory education (Ministry of Education and Culture 2017).

Societal and educational structures are slowly becoming more inclusive and offer more possibilities for immigrants. This is important in gaining better education and thus employment. The structures open doors and offer opportunities. Meanwhile it is the preparatory education itself, and how it is organized and implemented, that will have the biggest impact on an individual level. Education is important for the personal development and wellbeing of immigrants. The effects reach even further as intergenerational transmission of education is known to affect the offspring. There is a strong positive relationship in higher education attainments of parents and their offspring (Suhonen & Karhunen 2017). Support from the university, teachers and current degree program students is invaluable for the immigrant student's personal learning development. These learning experiences will be reflected through this study.

1.1 Aims of the thesis

This research-oriented study aims to find out how students with immigrant background experience preparatory education in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Diak) and how they feel it has helped their self-efficacy. The idea of the topic was discussed and agreed upon together with a project manager of Maahanmuuttajat korkeakoulutukseen ja työelämään -hanke (Higher Education and Employment for Immigrants -project). This preparatory education project is run by Diak. The topic is approached through Albert Banduras' self-efficacy theory.

The purpose of this study is to (1) discover what is the (perceived) value of preparatory education to the students; (2) to identify which elements of preparatory education were considered to enhance self-efficacy. Therefore, the research questions of this study are: (1) how the students experienced preparatory education of the project; and (2) how they

feel it has helped their self-efficacy. By studying these questions, we will gather valuable information that may not only benefit the project but also may help the students. The study will produce new knowledge about the students' experiences as the interviews examine the subject deeper than the semester evaluation feedback. The project can use the generated data for example in future project planning or for evaluating the current one. The students interviewed will have a chance to reflect on their own learning through self-assessment. These matters are important so that we can recognize the benefits these types of projects offer to students. Preparatory education may enable better education and higher employment rates in immigrant populations. Research on the connection between immigrant background persons' self-efficacy and preparatory education has to our knowledge not been carried out before in Finland. The subject is relevant because an increasing number of immigrants are in need for more development of their skills, integration and better employment.

This thesis follows wide thematic views of social work and community development. Empowering service users to manage tasks and to have belief in their own abilities is essential in social and community work. Although study is on an individual level, the good practices of preparatory education and mentoring as well as the results of the thesis may be used in the wider context of community and professional life. Investment on elements that enhance self-efficacy can be considered with variety of different service user groups, such as in education, study and school counselling, youth and immigrant work. For example, there are good experiences that teen-age childrens' parenthood peer-support groups were considered helpful and supportive to parents' efficacy feelings (Salo 2015).

1.2 Higher Education and Employment for Immigrants -project

Diak is leading a preparatory education project called Maahanmuuttajat korkeakoulutukseen ja työelämään (Higher Education and Employment for Immigrants). Other partners are Suomen Diakoniaopisto (Diaconia College of Finland) and Stadin Osaamiskeskus (The Helsinki Skill Center, City of Helsinki). It is funded by European Social Fund and duration of the project is 4/2017-12/2019. (Maahanmuuttajat korkeakoulutukseen ja työelämään. Hanketietoa. n.d) The project aims to build a model that streamlines educational paths from vocational institutes to higher education. The idea is to promote rapid

admission of immigrants into universities of applied sciences, especially in the field of social services and health care, thus supporting their employment in the sector. The project studies are in Finnish. The students who participate in the project receive professional teaching in social and health care studies, Finnish language, IT and mathematics. They also have a possibility to get traineeship positions. (Kestävää kasvua ja työtä 2014–2020. Unpublished project plan 2017.) Additionally, mentoring is offered to all students. Mentors are current degree program students of social services and health care studies. Students of the project can apply to Diak through separate admission procedure.

This educational process is designed to introduce higher education studies to minority groups, offer better admission possibilities and provide students with language proficiency and other knowledge and skills needed for studies at a university of applied sciences. One semester lasts 3-4 months prior to the exam. Twenty study admission places are reserved for the students who apply through separate admission, but they will only be filled if the applicants meet the general level needed for admission. Those, who were not granted admission, have had a chance to participate in the program following semester or apply through next separate admission. Similar projects of Diak include Opin portailla Satakunnassa (Sataedu. Kehityspalvelut. Hanketoiminta. Opin Portailla Satakunnassa. n.d.) and Opin portailla Pohjois-Pohjanmaalla (Pinolehto 2017). Both aiming to streamline immigrants' educational paths into further education

Project staff include the head of project who is also the Finnish teacher, a senior lecturer in Health Care, a senior lecturer in Social Services, two project staff members from Diaconia College of Finland and one from Helsinki Skill Center. Additionally, there are a number of Diak degree program students who participate as mentor coordinators, project trainees and mentors. The project is aimed at people with immigrant background and there are no other requirements for participating.

1.3 Target group

Students who participate in the project are a heterogeneous group. Age, cultural and educational background and reasons for coming to Finland vary. What seems to be common, is that many have some background in health care and the social field. Around half of the students are doing practical nursing studies simultaneously. Only a few are completely new to the social and health care field. Most students come to the project through Diaconia College of Finland or the Helsinki Skill Center. The ones who come through Diaconia College of Finland are current or graduated practical nurse students. Students who come through the Helsinki Skill Center have more varied background and include unemployed people. Many are form neighbouring countries such Estonia and Russia, but also other cultural backgrounds are represented. Some have been living in Finland already a long time and others only a few years.

The students interviewed for this thesis participated in the project in spring 2018 and passed the entrance exam. They have started degree program studies in august 2018. They were chosen to be interviewed, because they had completed the Diak preparatory education process and were easily approachable as they were studying in Diak. Most of their background is not revealed due to confidentiality matters. Additionally, demographic information about interviewees is not relevant for this research as such.

1.4 Background of thesis development

Throughout my studies, I have always been interested in multicultural work. Education, teaching as well as project work is something I have experience or interest in prior to social services studies. Therefore, it was clear that I was to apply for a placement position and thesis opportunity in this project. When having received the position, ideas for thesis were discussed with the head of the project. A topic that was interesting and beneficial for both the project as for myself, soon started shaping up. Both parties wished to hear the voice of students and hear about their experiences. Has the project empowered them somehow? What kinds of experiences students have? The project wished to learn more in-depth of the experiences of students. Also, exploring the potential impact of the preparatory education for the students was an interest of the project. Knowing, though, that

this study would only examine it in the framework given and among a small group of students. It was decided to use one-to-one interviews as the data collection method, so that the voices of individuals would be heard the best. The self-efficacy theory was chosen as a theoretical framework, even though the term is often linked to educational sciences rather than social services. This was decided because it focuses on the individuals' experiences and beliefs of their own skills. Though, the project falls in the field of education, so it is quite natural to use the term also as a theoretical framework in this case.

The target group of the thesis is a study community, but the students also belong to immigrant communities. The project itself has clear connection to issues that are in the core of social services; for example, inclusion, integration and employment of immigrants. The thesis takes part in discussions in the field of social services on a wider thematical level. Additionally, understanding human behaviour helps service providers to meet the needs of clients and develop their services. Therefore, I argue that it is justifiable to study these questions within the context of social services and community development.

2 KEY CONCEPTS

Preparatory education, higher education, immigrant and mentoring are all key concepts in the Higher Education and Employment for Immigrants project that is subject to this research. Therefore, there is good reason to examine them closely and understand what is meant by these concepts in this particular project and study. Self-efficacy and educational-efficacy are the core concepts of the theoretical framework used in this research. It is therefore relevant to know the common definitions as well as the connections to this study.

2.1 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. People with high assurance in their capabilities have a high level of self-efficacy. (Bandura 1994.) It is connected to how individuals are behaving and motivating themselves according to their knowledge and skills (Partanen 2011, 21).

Educational self-efficacy is defined as students' perceptions of their own efficacy, themselves as learners and students as well as the sufficiency of their cognitive capacity and academic competence (Partanen 2011, 4, 197-219). Thus, in the context of this thesis self-efficacy refers to students' beliefs and expectations about their abilities to succeed in academic tasks.

Self-efficacy is the core concept applied in the theoretical framework of this thesis. It is shortly defined here and elaborated more throughout the thesis. In this research self-efficacy in understood in an educational context.

2.2 Preparatory education

Preparatory education can be defined as education through which the language and other skills necessary for moving on to mainstream education are learned (Finnish National Agency for Education. Current Issues. Inclusion of migrants is a challenge to the education system. n.d).

Preparatory education in higher education is defined as education to immigrants that is provided by universities of applied sciences free of charge with a view to provide them with language proficiency and other knowledge and skills needed for studies at a university of applied sciences (A 932/2014).

In Finland, preparatory education for immigrants is traditionally provided in conjunction with pre-primary, basic and upper secondary education (Finnish National Agency for Education. Current Issues. Inclusion of migrants is a challenge to the education system. n.d). Some universities of applied sciences offer preparatory education for immigrants. The programs last on average 3-6 months, include Finnish language teaching, prepares for studies in higher education and provides opportunities for the students to familiarise themselves with the chosen field. Often training for entrance examinations is included. (Lepola 2018, 7-8.) The history of preparatory education in higher education in Finland is relatively short. It has been organized since 2010 (Lepola 2017, 4).

Similar education is also provided elsewhere in Europe. Terms used for it vary; integrative education, integration training, program for academic preparation and integration, bridging courses and orientation year to mention a few. Funding, ways of organising and the target group also vary, but the fundamental idea is the same –including people with immigrant background in higher education and providing them with necessary skills. For example, the inHERE - project has published a Good Practice Catalogue which contains an in-depth analysis of almost 300 initiatives from 32 countries of higher education institutions and organisations committed to welcoming refugees. The catalogue presents language and bridging courses which focus in preparatory education. (inHERE. Higher education supporting refugees in Europe. Outputs. Good Practice Catalogue. n.d.)

2.3 Higher education

Higher education in Finland has a dual structure. Higher education is provided by universities and universities of applied sciences. Both sectors have their own profiles. Universities emphasize scientific research and instruction, whereas universities of applied sciences adopt a more practical approach. (Finnish National Agency for Education. Education system. Higher education. n.d)

It is important to note that in this research higher education refers to universities of applied sciences since the subject of the research is a project in a university of applied sciences. Only in the discussion of intergenerational effects of education, higher education can refer to either of the above. It is perhaps also important to note that in Finland entrance examinations are often used as part of student admission. Especially, when applying to bachelor's level education. (Studyinfo.fi. Higher education. Entrance examinations. n.d.). So, the universities of applied sciences, including Diak, use these exams as admission criteria in the student selection. The entrance exams often include reading and writing about a given topic. The time for writing the exam is very limited which is one of the main problems for immigrants who are not native Finnish speakers and therefore require more time to process the text.

2.4 Immigrant

The term immigrant is defined as a person who has moved to Finland, who resides in the country with a permit issued for purposes other than tourism or similar residence of short duration, whose right of residence has been registered or who has been issued with a residence card (A 1386/2010).

In this study immigrants are people who were born abroad and who do not have Finnish as mother tongue. People with immigrant background are an extremely heterogeneous group. Educational and cultural background, previous experiences and reasons for migration vary. From the viewpoint of preparatory education, this may impose challenges because ideally, support should be tailored for individual needs, but in reality, such tailored support is difficult to offer.

2.5 Mentoring

Mentoring is a form of instruction where the traditional parties are experienced mentors and inexperienced actors. It can be described as a special form of interactive relationship that aims for development and is personally meaningful. European mentoring is described as psychosocial mentoring that develops thinking and strengthens self-respect. Mentoring is a way to share experience and expertise. It offers space for conversation and instruction that meets the actors' needs. Mentoring can have positive impacts on emotional states. (Leskelä 2005, 21-29, 243.)

Mentoring can take on different forms depending on where and why it is practised. Mentoring in this project and thesis is understood as a study process based on interaction between a mentor and an actor. The core values of mentoring are confidentiality, commitment, respect and equality. It aims to improve the study skills of students. (Maahanmuuttajat korkeakoulutukseen ja työelämään. Minun polkuni. n.d.)

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The self-efficacy theory according to Albert Bandura will provide the main theoretical framework. Additionally, elements of educational self-efficacy according to Partanen will be used. This theoretical framework will allow us to explore the individuals' experiences and beliefs in their own skills in an academic context. Interview questions were constructed using the sources of self-efficacy and educational efficacy dimensions as a base. Through this theory the thesis will explore the efficacy experiences of students during the project and aims to understand if elements of strengthened self-efficacy could be traced.

3.1 Albert Bandura: Self-efficacy theory

Self-efficacy theory states that physiological procedures, whatever their form, modify the strength of self-efficacy. It is proposed that expectations of personal efficacy are derived from four sources of information: (1) Mastery experience, (2) Vicarious experience, (3) Social persuasion, (4) Physiological and emotional states. Mastery experiences are previous successful experiences that build a solid belief in one's personal efficacy. Vicarious experiences are provided by social models. The impact of competent models on beliefs of personal efficacy is strongly influenced by perceived similarity to these models. People seek competent models who possess the skills to which they aspire. Through their behaviour and thinking competent models transmit knowledge and teach observers effective skills and strategies. Social persuasion means that people who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort. Physiological and emotional states refer to somatic indicators (stress, tension, fatigue, aches and mood) that people use to judge capability, strength, vulnerability and debility. (Bandura 1977, 191, 195-199.) This research will explore if the students have experienced these sources of information during the project. Any indications that students experienced one or more of the four information sources may suggest a strengthening of their efficacy beliefs and therefore their personal development.

People's beliefs about their efficacy can be developed by these forms of influence. People also use these sources of information to judge their level of self-efficacy. Magnitude of expectations vary, with mastery experiences being of most significance. This information

is derived from environmental events, but it is also important to understand that people process information in different ways. (Bandura 1977). Efficacy beliefs presented above regulate human functioning through four major processes: cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. (Bandura 1977, 194; 1993, 117-145)

According to Banduras theory (1977) self-efficacy is manifested as efficacy expectations and outcome expectations. Efficacy expectations tell about individuals' beliefs in their abilities to perform a certain action. Whereas outcome expectations are individuals' evaluations of results that the actions cause.
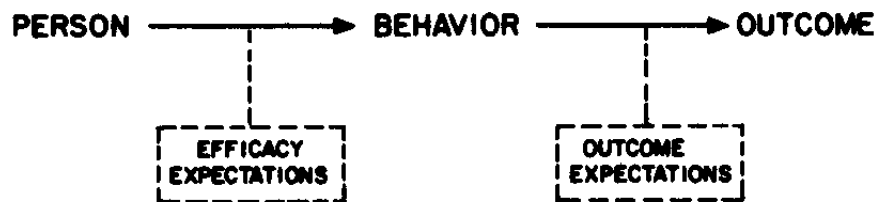

Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of the difference between efficacy expectations and outcome expectations (Bandura 1977, 193).

The impact of efficacy expectations will depend on how they are evaluated cognitively. Contextual factors such social, situational and temporal play a role in how different efficacy experienced are received.

Efficacy expectations vary in magnitude, generality and strength. When a student classifies a certain action or task as difficult, their different efficacy expectations can limit or activate their actions. They can either direct to easier tasks or on the other hand, they can expand to try more difficult tasks. Hence, different experiences effect behaviour by hindering or strengthening. Bandura believes that self-efficacy beliefs are the main starting point for individual development.

In the context of preparatory education and mentoring, as well as social and community work, perhaps this theory can give some new ideas into empowering the individuals and supporting their personal development. Does the work include elements that can support

individuals in strengthening their efficacy? Could these elements be enhanced somehow? By studying the experiences of clients through this theory service providers could learn new aspects of how clients reflect on their experiences and what improvements could be made in the service.

3.2 Educational self-efficacy

Bandura defines perceived academic self-efficacy as personal judgments of one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated types of educational performances (Zimmerman 1995, 203). Interactive processes that construct self-efficacy beliefs over educational lifespan of students are: (a) previous meaningful education experiences (negative and positive); (b) perception of oneself as a student and learner; (c) perception of sufficiency of cognitive capacity and academic competence; as well as (d) support, acknowledgement and accreditation from meaningful others. They are viewed in students' personal context and in the context of education and society. (Partanen 2011, 2, 184-196.) If one has high perception of oneself as a learner, elements such motivation, active participation, determination and will to develop oneself can be traced. These elements alongside with positive learning experiences and support from others reflect high efficacy. (Partanen 2011, 184-196) These interactive processes are investigated in this research by trying to identify if the students have experienced them.

To highlight the meaning of perceived efficacy in academic education we must focus on Banduras' note where he explains that merely possessing knowledge and skills does not mean that one will necessarily use them effectively under difficult conditions. This means that even if students have the same amount of knowledge and skills they may differ considerably in their academic performance. Perceived efficacy affects academic performance that requires self-regulation of motivation, disruptive thought processes and aversive emotional reactions. Efficacy beliefs, therefore, contribute to academic performance over and above actual ability. (Zimmerman 1995, 202-226.) So, the more the student believes in his or her own abilities the more likely he or she is to succeed.

4 METHODS

This chapter describes the methodological approach used in this qualitative research. Firstly, the use of semi-structured interviews as the data collection method is introduced. Then, the data acquisition is explained, followed by a description of the theory guided data analysis. Finally, ethical viewpoints that were considered in this research are presented, including a description of the research environment.

4.1 Semi-structured interviews

The research was carried out by using empirical qualitative data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews. It is a typical interview method in participatory research. The interviews were conducted individually face-to-face with students. This data collection method was chosen so that the voices and experiences of students would be heard the best as semi-structured interviewing allows space for exploring the subject. Face-to-face interviews have an advantage over group interviews in that everyone has an opportunity to talk about one's own experiences in confidence. Semi-structured interviews also allow good dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. Interviews were carried out according to the interview guide of Silverman and Patterson (see Table 1).

Semi-structured interviewing represents focused research where the researcher is viewed as an investigator and the participant as an informant. Both have clearly defined roles. This approach to data collection is particularly useful in professional fields such as community development and social work. Semi-structured interviews can be used to gain in-depth information on how stakeholders understand an issue. The interviews are composed of open-ended questions. Those questions guide the conversation, but researchers should adjust them in response to what has been said and diverge from planned questions when other relevant themes to the study emerge. The essence of semi-structured interviewing is that it is focused, but flexible. (Silverman and Patterson 2015, 60-62.) Semi-structured interviewing is probably the widest spread method in social sciences. Its openness allows the interview to take the shape of the interviewee. The students are viewed in this research not only as the subject of research, but they have the primary role as a knowledge-producing participant. (Brinkman 2013, 21.)

Table 1. Semi-structured interview guide (Silverman and Patterson 2015, 62)

	Element	Definition
I	Informed Consent Statement	A verbal or written statement about study that identifies: its purpose, the risks and benefits of participating, steps taken to protect participants' confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation.
II	Grand-Tour Questions	Broad questions that ask an interviewee to provide an overview of major themes of interest to a researcher.
	Probes	Specific follow-up questions used to flesh out details of the theme covered in grand-tour of questions
III	Demographic Questions	Questions asked to collect data on demographic characteristics of an interviewee and relevant dimensions of a research setting.
	Closing Questions	A question that asks an interviewee whether there are any other issues he or she would like to discuss or elaborate upon.

Participatory research can be regarded as a methodology that argues the significance of involving research partners in the knowledge-production process (Bergold & Thomas 2012). The project and the students were considered to a certain degree as research partners in this study. The project leader had a possibility to participate in commenting the interview questions. Also, the students were the key producers of research data. Additionally, they participated by reflecting their experiences and analysing the experiences through major theoretical themes. For this purpose, Table 2 in APPENDIX 2 was presented to the students. Participatory research methods aim to plan and conduct the research process with those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study (Bergold & Thomas 2012). An important factor in participatory research is to give voice to marginalized groups, and this is exactly what is aimed at with this thesis.

All interaction with the students and the project staff was in Finnish. Interviews were carried out in Finnish. Likewise, the consent form and transcripts were written in Finnish. The citations, interview questions and consent form were translated into English for the purpose of this thesis.

4.2 Data acquisition

The aim was to construct interview questions that are neutral and open-ended, and which would provide information needed to draw any conclusions. The interview questions were constructed largely around the themes (the four sources of information) in self-efficacy theory. The students were briefly informed about the research during a support session of the project in August. Then, all students who participated in the project in spring 2018 and had started their degree studies in August 2018 were contacted personally by e-mail. The e-mail contained information about the research, a consent form (APPENDIX 1), the interview questions (APPENDIX 2) and the invitation of participation. Six out of the nine students replied positively to the interview invitation but only four were actually carried out. No suitable time for an interview with the two other students could be arranged. Data was gathered by audio recording during each interview. Afterwards the recordings were transcribed. The interviews lasted about 45 minutes, including an introduction to the research and the interview itself. They were carried out within a 3-week period in September. All four interviews were transcribed into one 14-page document with Times New Roman font size 12, 1.5 line spacing and 2cm x 2,5cm margins.

Because the interviews were carried out in Finnish there were occasionally minor issues in understanding a particular question, but in most of those cases the students asked for an explanation. The students elaborated on some questions a fair amount, which can be a sign that the language skills allowed them to explore the subject sufficiently. A very small amount of the answers were short or beside the subject. This could be a sign of either not understanding the question properly, not being able to use the language sufficiently to express themselves to the fullest or simply not having any further comments. Nevertheless, the language skills of the students were very good and allowed plenty of room for reflection.

4.3 Theory guided content analysis

Analysis of interview data was carried out by using a theory guided analysis method. This type of analysis has theoretical connections that are such that the theory can help in the analysis while not fully relying on it. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, 109.) The data was

analysed by using the four information sources from Banduras (1977) theory as main categories. They include (1) Mastery experience, (2) Vicarious experience, (3) Social persuasion, (4) Physiological and emotional states. Educational self-efficacy further emphasizes characteristics such as belief in oneself and perception of oneself. They too were chosen as categories for the data analysis. In other words, the data is compared to the theoretical framework and elements of those information sources will be traced in the data for analysing the experiences of students.

Each interview transcript was coded with a different colour, so that later they could be easily identified. All transcripts were combined on a single document. First, all information, which was not of immediate interest to the thesis or the research questions, was identified. The relevant information was selected and moved to another document. The remaining data was organized according to theory-related categories. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018, 104.) Hence, the categories were very close to the ones used for planning the interview. Then, the essence was extracted from the data and connected to the research questions.

4.4 Ethics

Arene ry (2018) ethical recommendations for thesis writing at universities of applied sciences and responsible conduct of research (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK. Research misconduct. Responsible conduct of research. n.d.) practices were followed throughout the thesis process. Following ethical principles were committed to in the study; mutual respect, equality and inclusion, democratic participation and reciprocation, active learning, sustainable development, positive change, collective action and personal integrity (Arts and Humanities Research Council 2012, 8).

The gathered information was anonymised so that the personalities of interviewees cannot be recognized. No personal information is revealed in the thesis or stored elsewhere publicly accessible. Furthermore, care was taken to ensure that the direct quotations in the text cannot be connected to an individual in order to guarantee anonymity in such a small sample. The interview data is only accessible by the author. Students received a consent form that includes information on the author of the research, the purpose of the thesis and

interviews, the use of the data and who has access to it. Before asking the consent of the interviewees, the information provided in the consent form was verbally explained to them. Students had an opportunity to read through the preliminary version of thesis and accept their citations.

Interviewees can feel restricted to talk about their feelings and experiences to a stranger in institutional settings. Also, the fear of being attacked for saying something wrong or contradictory to views of others may hinder people expressing their views. It is therefore important to create a sense of safe space in order to facilitate sufficient openness. A safe place in this context means a space where all views can be expressed, jointly discussed, solved or the least, accepted without being used against them. (Bergold & Thomas 2012.) For the interviews the safe space was mainly created by using communication skills such as presence, active listening, encouragement and open communication. Also, confidentiality was emphasized. Interviews with the students were carried out at the premises of Diak. It is a familiar place for the students. A small class room or conversation area was reserved for the interviews.

It is important to assess the role of the interviewer and how it may affect the interview situation, thus here I will examine my own role. My main task is to carry out the research and interviews. Additionally, I am doing a work placement in the same project and studying in the same university as the interviewees. Thus, there is a double role which makes it particularly important to consider ethical aspects. Through the placement and other studies, I am occasionally, yet rarely, involved with the same students I interview. Equal treatment and interaction with all students is the best way of practicing confidentiality. On the other hand, being so close to the students may help the role as an interviewer. I know the project and preparatory education well, I have been through a similar application process and I am a student of the same faculty. All this gives me some insight into their narratives.

5 FINDINGS

The main findings of the research are that the preparatory education project has provided the students with elements that may support or strengthen individuals' self-efficacy. There are clear suggestions that students have experienced some forms of influence that are related to the theory. Significant experiences of success which the students talked about relate to the theory. They are called mastery experiences and are the strongest sources of self-efficacy. It is therefore an important finding that several students had such experiences during the project. Also, verbal support and acknowledgement from others is an element that relates to the theory and is widely narrated in the interviews. This is called social persuasion in Banduras theory. Whether these experiences have truly contributed to a stronger self-efficacy cannot be concluded from this research, in part because individuals process information in different ways.

Belief in cognitive abilities and motivation are important factors in building educational self-efficacy. Students were asked about their belief in cognitive skills and about motivation during the studies. Most students reported some amounts of both. Especially motivation was considered high among all. These are some of the aspects that regulate human functioning, which may indicate some strengthening of self-efficacy during the project. Furthermore, students have reported significant mastery and vicarious experiences, and most of all, a great deal of social persuasion. According to the students these experiences have contributed to better self-belief, made them feel great and have given them hope. This data serves as an indicator. It is not an objective truth but rather an observation in one case study. The following chapters will list the results by categories which are (1) Mastery experiences, (2) Vicarious experiences, (3) Social persuasion, (4) Emotional states, (5) Perception of oneself, (6) Belief in oneself and (7) Other findings.

5.1 Mastery experiences

Previous successful experiences are the most significant in building a solid belief in one's personal efficacy (Bandura 1977, 191, 195-199). All students could identify at least one

single experience of success during the project. All reported that the experience was related to course work or tasks and included either good results, grades or good feedback from others. One added that getting friends and a feeling at comfort in the course was also a successful experience. Some students reported first having had doubts about their own skills or fears about language or the level of studies.

> "After getting a good grade I felt that I had succeeded... It felt like my self-esteem was a little bit stronger."

> "First written assignments, I had never written in Finnish. But when I did and received good feedback... it was meaningful."

Two students talked about studying hard and after receiving results they got confirmation of their skills or realized that their skills are sufficient. One of them identifies this as a significant experience of success. Another student identifies a significant experience of success comparing her level of Finnish language skills in the beginning of the course and after.

> "I remember when I came here in the winter and in the spring my language skills were better. I think that was significant."

Mastery experiences have the strongest impacts to self-efficacy if there are challenges involved. Challenges, that are overcome with perseverance. None of the students reported such challenges regarding their experiences of success.

5.2 Vicarious experiences

Many self-efficacy expectations are derived from vicarious experiences. Seeing other people succeeding in difficult tasks can generate expectations in observers that they too will improve if they persist. An example of a vicarious (i.e. secondary) experience provided by social models (Bandura 1977, 191, 195-199) can possibly be traced in one interview, where a person with immigrant background was seen as a competent model and possessing skills to which the student aims. Another student answered not to have identified with role models as such, but later in the reflections mentioned being motivated by a mentor who the student could relate to and look up to.

> "Our mentor was an immigrant and had only been in Finland for a few years. I got motivation from him/her. That it is possible to get in... That if he/she gets in..."

One other student could find two role models outside the project, one in previous studies and one at the work place. Those role models were people that the student thought were very good in what they did and looked up to. They motivated the student to become like them in a professional sense.

5.3 Social persuasion

People who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities are likely to mobilize greater effort (Bandura 1977, 191, 195-199). Social persuasion, more specifically verbal accreditation, support and acknowledgement from others, is perhaps the most frequently recurring aspect of efficacy sources in the interviews. Teachers, fellow students, mentors, friends, family and colleagues were reported to have supported students in many ways. The message was especially uniform concerning the study community. Teachers' support, encouragement and feedback were deemed invaluable by the students. The student community was mentioned as a source of encouragement and peer-support. Mentors and mentoring was mentioned briefly by some. Friends and family who verbally encourage the students can also act as social models. In this context, they are called significant others. They have an important role in building educational self-efficacy. (Partanen 2011, 203.) Significant others can be traced in two interviews.

> "If I am having a difficult time studying, my partner always encourages me by saying 'you can do it, you are smart, you can!' He says that I will learn the language better and that I have very good possibility to get in... He is also from immigrant background and very good in Finnish."

5.4 Emotional states

Students' emotional states towards studying during the project were reported generally positive. Enjoyment, curiosity and excitement was how they described feelings during studies. Stress was mentioned, and it was partly related to other life events that took place alongside the preparatory studies. Combining evening studies of the project with day studies or work created some stress. Language was not seen as a stress factor during the project. In response to a question about feelings one student said:

> "In the project everything went really well, because all course mates were immigrants too. It was easy I can say. And then we had Finnish twice a week. In fact, it was really good that we all were immigrants, and all wanted to get in."

This response may suggest that the preparatory education and study community can support positive emotional states. Furthermore, Leskelä (2005, 21-29, 243) states that mentoring can have positive impacts on emotional states.

5.5 Perception of oneself

All of the students seemed to have a very clear perception of themselves as learners. They knew what kind of students they are. Partanen (2011, 2, 184-196) indicates this perception is one of the interactive processes that construct self-efficacy beliefs over educational lifespan of students.

> "I have a long experience in studying from my own country, so I know my strong and weak points."

> "I have a bad memory, but if I practice a lot I will remember. And if I practice really well, I can be very challenging."

> "If I am interested in something, I am very curious. I am keen to learn new things and really want to become familiar with the Finnish social service system."

Students also reflected on development in study skills. Two reported that they have acquired better time management skills. For one it resulted in better reading skills, because

the professional concepts had become more familiar. Improved language and social skills too were mentioned. Motivation is one clue that a student has a high perception of him or herself as a learner (Partanen 2011, 195.) All students reported having a very high motivation towards the studies.

5.6 Belief in oneself

Another important interactive process that contributes to self-efficacy is how sufficient students view their cognitive capacity and academic competence. Two interviewees brought up previous university degrees. They clearly had trust in their cognitive capacity and were familiar with academic studies.

> "I believe in my cognitive skills as I have a university degree from my own country, so I know that I only doubt my language skills. If it was in my own language, considering I also have work experience, it would be easy. The content itself is not difficult, but the language is."

Students seemed also to have some expectations that the outcome would be positive. They believed that there could be a high chance they would be admitted, but still, there were some doubts.

> "I all the time believed that I would get in with the help of this project, right from the beginning. But I didn't count on it to relax. I studied a lot."

> "I had a fifty-fifty feeling, either I succeed or not. Inside I had a belief that I would pass the exam, but still I wanted to learn Finnish."

> "Quite good, because teachers said that I had good chances. And I got mental support from a mentor… that it is possible to get in if you believe it and work hard for it. I believe 90% is up to you."

5.7 Other findings

The students had positive experiences from the project. Teachers and lectures were considered good. Many students talked on several occasions about their degree studies and the challenges they have come across since they started. Communication with native

Finnish students was considered difficult by some. Fast speech and use of spoken language of fellow students as well as insecurity of own language skills were considered as main problems. Other challenges were probably not related to the students' immigrant background and not different from the challenges any student who starts degree studies in a new university faces.

Preparatory education and the separate admission were considered very important for all immigrants wishing to get into higher education. One student stated to feel this preparatory education system is particularly humane for immigrants. He/she had already applied several times but found that the language was a barrier to passing the entrance exam. Also, a wish was expressed for this type of opportunity to continue. Either in the form of preparatory education or at the least separate admission.

6 DISCUSSION AND ASSESSMENT

This chapter will discuss the findings of the research in the light of existing literature. The assessment of the research will examine how the goals of the thesis were met and the meaning of the findings. Finally, the professional development of the author following from this research will also be explored.

6.1 Discussion

Only a limited amount of literature is devoted to the subject of self-efficacy among immigrant students and preparatory education. Preparatory education in higher education is a relatively new concept which in part explains the scarcity. However, recently there has been an increase in the number of studies being published on preparatory education. For example, Arvela (2017) has studied preparatory education in the Opin portailla Satakunnassa – project and the students' experiences from the preparatory education. The results were that the education developed students' academic competences and that the students were generally satisfied with the education. The findings are similar in this research as the students reported improved study skills, better time management and gave excellent feedback on the preparatory education provided by the project.

Naskali & Salvi (2018) have examined supporting self-efficacy of immigrant students in a folk high school environment that aims to prepare highly educated immigrants for higher education. They note that strengthening a students' self-efficacy is a vital aspect of the instruction process. The process includes setting relevant milestones, assessing the nature of education experiences and recognising psychological barriers. Further, supporting self-belief as well as favourable expectations and study attitude is mentioned as important. The process they discuss includes similar aspects as the preparatory education process of Diak's project. Naskali & Salvi (2018) continue, that from the view point of instruction, also motivation plays a big role in learning outcomes. According to a survey they undertook, the students reported that they get motivation from teachers and the other immigrants in the study community. The teachers and study community were similarly considered supportive in this research. Interestingly, Naskali & Salvi (2018) suggest that

motivation could be increased with the help of native students. This is precisely what is offered through the mentoring program in Diak's project as mentors are mostly native students. Although, based on the theoretical framework and some reports in the interviews related to a non-native mentor, one could argue that mentors with immigrant background also may have an important role in motivating and supporting students.

Miettinen (2018) constructed the mentoring program for Diak's preparatory education project. The students who participated in the mentoring program in autumn 2018 gave feedback on it. They reported for example that mentors have provided them with good information about the degree program studies as well as personal support. One student reported that mentoring has given him/her more self-confidence. Receiving feedback, reflecting own experiences and meeting with new people were considered meaningful. (Maahanmuuttajat korkeakoulutukseen ja työelämään. Ajankohtaista. Mentoroinnista hyviä kokemuksia ja lisää tsemppiä opiskeluun. 2018). Mentoring in its fundamental purpose is an activity that has great potential in supporting the students' self-efficacy. Mentoring was only occasionally touched upon in the narratives of the students who were interviewed in this thesis. In part, this is probably related to the interview questions which did not specifically ask about mentoring. This was intentional because not all students participated in mentoring, but in retrospect probes could have been used to explore this subject further too. In any case, mentoring is viewed as an important part of preparatory education in this project. The staff as well as all the students, including degree program students who act as mentors, view it beneficial and essential for learning. The interviews as well as the collected feedback both emphasized the meaning of verbal support from either teachers, course mates, friends and family, or mentors. Indeed, verbal accreditation seemed to be the driving force in motivating the students, offering significant experiences of success and building trust in oneself.

6.2 Assessment

The research questions were (1) how the students experienced preparatory education of the project and; (2) how they feel it has helped their self-efficacy. The interview questions (APPENDIX 2) were open ended and some rather general, so they left a lot of room for exploring different experiences but also left some space for own interpretations. With

some ready-thought-out probes the flow could be directed towards essential thinking regarding the research questions. Meanwhile, at times it was only afterwards that a suitable follow-up question would arise. Some questions could have been replaced with other, perhaps more neutral ones, and in other instances with more specific questions. Furthermore, there probably should have been specific questions about mentoring and the experiences of it regardless that not all students participated in it. Thankfully, feedback separate to this thesis was collected on mentoring (see previous section) which, together with the information gathered through the interviews for this thesis, has provided us with valuable information about the kinds of experiences students had as well as the connection between mentoring and self-efficacy. Interviews were carried out in Finnish, which is not the native language of the students. This may have been a restricting factor, questions were at times perhaps misunderstood or the language did not allow maximal reflection of the subject. Nevertheless, the students were able to share a great deal of their experiences from the preparatory education. At the end of the interviews, students were asked to analyse their experiences through some major themes (Table 2). This action was meant to involve the students in analysing their own experiences. But, because the theory and its practical aspects can be complex to understand, it was perhaps difficult for the students to analyse their efficacy experiences. Nonetheless, the action served as a second chance to reflect, and in fact generated additional interesting information. In any case, according to the findings presented above, one can argue that the interviews provided the researcher with sufficient information to address the research questions.

From the perspective of analysis and drawing general conclusions, this study was carried out on a small sample (four students). However, from the perspective of the population (nine enrolled students) the sample is still sizeable. The saturation was perhaps not met, but the experiences of the students who participated are real and useful for this study. Thus, the results cannot be generalized but rather tell the reality of this group. Some conclusions and ideas presented in this thesis will hopefully be of some value to the social field. What exactly contributes to ones' self-efficacy is complicated and it cannot be positively confirmed if and how something that happened during the project has contributed to the self-efficacy. For example, it may be that these students already possessed a higher level of efficacy due to previous academic or professional studies or work experience. Therefore, their outcome expectations may have been more positive resulting in better academic performance during the preparatory education and entrance examinations. Even

an extensive longitudinal study would probably not be able to establish exact causality but could however significantly strengthen conclusions on associations between self-efficacy and preparatory association.

Maybe more important than to evaluate whether there has been any strengthening of self-efficacy is to identify the aspects of the project that can support students' personal and educational development. For example, peer support from course mates or other immigrants in the study community was viewed as important. Also, regular feedback from the teachers was viewed as important. Mentoring also provides additional support for the students that can strengthen self-efficacy. Therefore, it can be argued that good communication between a student and a teacher, regular feedback and evaluation, group activities, examples of other immigrant students, and mentoring, all are aspects of this type of projects that are likely to further support self-efficacy of students.

6.3 Professional development

I understand that I have only focused on a small area of study and that I mainly presented this particular case. Even so, planning, carrying out the research and writing this thesis has been a significant learning experience and I feel it has strengthened my own efficacy beliefs. My personal aim was to carry out the thesis process according to my best knowledge and to learn about academic reasoning as well as applying theory in professional life. The academic development has perhaps been stronger than the one of professional skills considering the research-oriented quality of the thesis. Regardless, the data collection process included some essential work methods that are applied in social services client work. Planning the interview, drafting the open-ended questions, practicing active listening in interviews, and considering how to carry out the process ethically all added to my professional development. However, I also see room for further academic and professional development especially in applying different theories to practice and in client work.

For my thesis I had to build an understanding of how and where preparatory education and self-efficacy theory fit in the field of social work and why they are relevant. Part of the professional development therefore was the realization that such theory can be applied

in a number of services and for many client groups. I have been able to use the theory in my placement tasks as a mentor coordinator and a project trainee. I have focused in my work on those elements that may be of support to the efficacy of students in different ways. I have also used the theoretical knowledge when co-writing an article to a web publication about the connection of mentoring and self-efficacy.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This research gathered outcomes of the Higher Education and Employment for Immigrants project. Several conclusions may be drawn from this work. They are presented in what follows.

First, most students involved in the project viewed preparatory education, separate admission and mentoring as important tools for personal development for inclusion into Finnish society. These views are not only of the interviewees but also of those who are currently studying in the project, and of those degree program students who act as mentors. And all those students wish that the project would continue and that preparatory education or that at the least separate admission would become a part of Diak's application procedure. Indeed, this would truly foster equity as well as cultural and social sustainability in the organization and in the surrounding community. The project appears to have enabled new beginnings for individuals, numerous amounts of support, more trust in own skills, knowledge about higher education studies and improvement in Finnish language. Obviously, not all students who participate in the project have similar positive experiences. To get a full picture of experiences, all students should be interviewed. Bearing that in mind, one could conclude that the impact of the project is positive for those students who were interviewed.

Second, perhaps social services client work would gain effectiveness if aspects of self-efficacy were considered where possible. To that end, more research would be needed in studying self-efficacy experiences within immigrant communities and in the practical applications it could have for social instruction. Further longitudinal research of the connection between preparatory education and self-efficacy would useful to support this area of work. Mentoring as a part of preparatory education has also great potential in developing students' self-efficacy. In this project mentoring has already an established place, and most people who have been involved in it believe that it is useful for personal development. Hence, an interesting topic for another study would be how mentoring may affect self-efficacy in higher education.

Third, considering the government level goals of increasing the amount immigrants in higher education, further action should be taken on both on strategic and practical levels. Helsinki metropolitan area has the largest amount immigrant background people in Finland. Consequently, the area has great potential - and responsibility - in implementing these goals. It would be important to have higher education institutes and further professional field representing the equivalent percentage of immigrants as the region has. Encouraging immigrants to get into higher education would then create more multicultural work practices, and a more equal society.

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APPENDIX 1: CONSENT FORM

Hello, I am a student from Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Degree program in Social Services). I am writing my thesis about self-efficacy of students who took part in Diak's preparatory education. With self-efficacy I mean people's beliefs about their own abilities to perform in different situations and in given tasks. The fact that one trusts their own skills has a great effect on individuals' actions and motivation.

The aim of the interview is to find out what kind of experiences students have about higher education preparatory studies. Also, to find out if the experiences have had an impact on students' self-efficacy. My aim is to gather information that preparatory education and other actors in social field could use. Participation in research is voluntary. I ask for your consent to record the interview and use the data in my thesis. You have the right to quit the research and receive more information about it at any time. I am bound by confidentiality and ethical principles of social field. The recording and other material will be stored only accessible by me and it will be destroyed appropriately when the thesis is ready. Your identity will remain confidential and will not come up during the research or in the final thesis.

Joanna Nikodin

Consent of research participation

I give permission that I will be interviewed. I give permission that the interview will be recorded. I know that my identity will remain confidential in all parts of the research
I give permission that the information I give will be used only in this thesis. I know that I can quit the participation in research at any time.
I know that the interview data will be destroyed when the thesis is ready. I have been given sufficient information to participate in the research.

Helsinki

 ____/____/2018

Signature:

_____

Hei, Olen sosionomiopiskelija Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulusta (Degree program in Social Services). Teen opinnäytetyötä valmentavaan koulutukseen osallistuneiden opiskelijoiden minäpystyvyydestä. Minäpystyvyydellä tarkoitetaan yksilön käsitystä omista kyvyistään suoriutua eri tilanteista tai annetusta tehtävästä. Sillä, että luottaa omiin kykyihinsä, on suuri vaikutus yksilön toimintaan ja motivaatioon.

Tarkoitukseni on haastattelun avulla selvittää, minkälaisia kokemuksia opiskelijoilla on Diakin amk-opintoihin valentavasta koulutuksesta ja että onko sen aikaiset kokemukset vaikuttaneet opiskelijan minäpystyvyyteen. Tavoitteenani on koota tietoa, jota amk-opintoihin valmentava koulutus, sekä sosiaalialan eri toimijat, voisivat käyttää hyödyksi.

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Pyydän sinulta lupaa nauhoittaa haastattelu ja käyttää siitä saatavaa tietoa opinnäytetyössäni. Sinulla on oikeus keskeyttää tutkimus ja saada siitä lisätietoa kaikissa sen vaiheissa. Minua sitoo vaitiolovelvollisuus ja sosiaalialan eettiset periaatteet. Haastattelun nauhoitus ja muu materiaali säilytetään vain minun saatavilla ja se hävitetään asianmukaisesti kun opinnäytetyö on valmis. Sinun henkilöllisyytesi pysyy salassa eikä tule esille tutkimuksen aikana eikä valmiissa opinnäytetyössä.

Joanna Nikodin

Suostumus tutkimukseen osallistumisesta

Annan luvan siihen, että minua haastatellaan. Annan luvan siihen, että haastattelu nauhoitetaan. Tiedän, että henkilöllisyyteni pysyy salassa tutkimuksen kaikissa vaiheessa. Annan luvan siihen, että minulta saatuja tietoja käytetään vain tässä opinnäytetyössä. Tiedän, että voin keskeyttää tutkimukseen osallistumisen. Tiedän, että haastattelun tiedot hävitetään, kun opinnäytetyö on valmis. Olen saanut riittävästi tietoa osallistuakseni tutkimukseen.

Helsinki

____/____/2018

Allekirjoitus:

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APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Project, as understood in this interview, includes: Professional studies, IT, mathematics, mentoring, separate admission and support workshops for degree program students.

1. Which courses did you take?
2. What do you think of the education/project?
3. How do you relate to studying? → Do you enjoy it, or does it rather give you stress?
4. How would you describe your motivation in exercises and in the study community?
5. How would you describe your activity in exercises and in the study community?
6. How would you describe your success in exercises and in the study community?
7. What kind of perception do you have of yourself as a learner? → Do you believe in your own cognitive skills?
8. What did you do for your studies and entrance exams?
9. How was your belief during the project, that you could reach your goals? → Did you believe, that you can influence it with your own actions?
10. What kinds of experiences of success did you have during studies? → How meaningful were they for you? Were there challenges involved?
11. What kind of development have you noticed in you or your study skills? (Before and after project / generally)
12. Have you noticed that some things have strengthened your perception of yourself as a learner and of what you are able of?
13. What kind of verbal encouragement have you received during your studies and who from?

14. What kind of peer support did you get from other students? → Was there for example a role model that you could relate to?

15. What other kind of support did you get from other people? → For example, family, and friends

16. What kind of support does the support workshops offer you? And what would you wish from them in the future?

17. Is there something you would like to add, or do you have any questions?

    You have now reflected your learning shortly through the interview questions. How would you analyse your experiences through these themes?

Table 2. Themes for analysis

Experiences of success in studies
Relating with a course mate i.e. "if they can, I can"
Verbal encouragement
Positive feelings (excitement, courage, curiosity...) vs. Negative feelings (depression, stress ...)
Motivation
Belief in oneself
Support from a close person