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# **ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION**

**Concept Analysis on the Example of Welcome Office Vaasa**



## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis is twofold: to explore the concept of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration and, based on it, present a theoretical framework for establishing, maintaining, and improving an institution of such kind. Additionally, given the relative novelty of the concept and the subsequent scantiness of sources covering it, this thesis aims to illuminate the purpose, logic, and benefits of such an institution for anyone interested in public initiatives for addressing and meeting immigrants' needs—more so considering the current influx of immigrants in Finland.

The research was conducted at the premises of the partner institution, Welcome Office Vaasa—the one-stop-shop for immigrant integration—during the author's internship and employment. The thesis idea emerged from the work experience and, given its nature and goal, was decided to be materialized by conducting qualitative research incorporating different analysis methods—chiefly, the grounded method. The research questions also delineate the critical segments of the concept: how is a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration established; who are the service providers and their competencies; what are the services provided and their effect; and what are the qualities of the professional network? The thesis is based on data from international literature, the documentation received from the partner institution, the author's work experience, and the interview with the Welcome Office's supervising service advisor.

The thesis delivers an overview of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration, analyzing its critical segments framed as research questions through various corresponding themes. Similarities between the examples for the international literature and the Welcome Office are drawn, with the author elucidating the implementation of the related themes. Finally, the thesis proposes the principles for establishing, maintaining, and improving the institution. The main results of the research are the following conclusions: the institution is established based on the needs of immigrants and in a dialogue with them, following a certain set of values and principles of service provision; the service providers—as multi-skilled professionals—thrive in an inclusive environment fostering their further professional development; the service provision is holistic, empowering, digitalized, and documented; and finally, the professional network—guided by the principle of reciprocity—is extensive and allows advocating for the service users.

Keywords: immigrant, immigrant integration, one-stop-shop for immigrant integration, service advisor, services, professional network



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

When moving to another country, one must learn about its socioeconomic structure, adapt, and be independent; the same applies to Finland. Doing so requires significant time, energy, and knowledge—all divided among complex systems and their corresponding bureaucratic institutions (e.g., social insurance and its representative institution Kela in Finland).

One solution that seems to not merely save time and energy for foreigners but provide them with guidance and assistance is the possibility of conducting all the affairs in one place with professional aid—the so-called one-stop-shop for immigrant integration. Given the ongoing trend of immigration in Finland and the consequential congregation of immigrants in particular parts of the country, the need to concentrate the services appertaining to integration—and everyday life, for that matter—has arisen (The Ministry of Interior, 2021).

The idea of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration is still relatively young in the European Union. Nevertheless, it is a concept that proposes that professional collaboration between different governmental and non-governmental actors united under the same goal and roof—literally—would help achieve the objectives of immigrant integration. Considering the plethora of challenges Asian and African immigrants in Europe face (primarily regarding information acquisition and conducting bureaucratic affairs), the innovative solution of gathering various governmental and non-governmental organizations under one roof has yielded promising results, as will be illuminated later.

I became closely acquainted with the idea during my internship and subsequent employment at the Welcome Office of the City of Vaasa, which served as the subject of my research and the partner aiding me in conducting it. The Welcome Office Vaasa is a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration, though not the quintessential one since

it does not assemble other governmental institutions under one roof (as it will be elucidated later); nonetheless, it acts as a well-connected, independent intermediary, possessing all the necessary characteristics for conducting this type of a thesis. This curiosity prompted me to investigate the concept deeper and create the research-oriented thesis you have at your fingertips: the elaborative theoretical framework of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration.

Its value is twofold: aside from elucidating and converging multifarious concepts (e.g., immigrants, immigrant integration, and networking), the framework presents core principles pertinent to establishing a one-stop shop for immigrant integration and, ultimately, its possible implementation in other Finnish cities. Correspondingly, by exploring the past, current agency, and future engagement of the partner institution Welcome Office, the goal is to examine its importance, influence, and viability. Finally, these insights aim to produce a framework for future action—for the author who plans on venturing into project development and implementation work or any other individual and organization interested in learning and applying the research results. At last, the thesis shall be memorabilia marking ten years of existence of the Welcome Office—a token of its contribution to society and a sign of my gratitude for the opportunities granted.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The fact that gave me further encouragement to conduct a research-oriented thesis was that several prominent sources—like Theseus, Proquest eBook Central, and EBSCOhost—offered no information on one-stop-shops for immigrant integration. Therefore, I decided to explore the topic and, hopefully, create something valuable for anyone interested in the matter and related subjects.

Naturally, I used the Google browser to search for initial sources on the topic of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration; surprisingly, I came across only two sources: Handbook On How To Implement A One-Stop-Shop For Immigrant Integration (2009) and One-Stop-Shop: A new answer for immigrant integration (2009). Both works proved indispensable as starting points, offering a foundation for comprehension and numerous international examples for comparison. Both sources confirmed my own findings and devised hypotheses and expanded upon them; those primarily pertain to establishing a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration, its modus operandi, qualities of the service providers, and characteristics of the professional network.

Exploring the aforementioned sources helped me identify the following critical segments that needed to be researched in-depth for a comprehensive thesis: establishing an office area, empowerment, cultural mediation, service provision dynamics, and networking. Seeking the appropriate literature from the databases mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, I came across several books containing valuable information regarding the segments in question; they follow according to the order of the segments listed: A Handbook of Management Theories and Models for Office Environments and Services; Empowerment: Cross-cultural Perspectives, Strategies, and Psychological Benefits; and Connect the Dots: How to Build, Nurture, and Leverage Your Network to Achieve Your Personal and Professional Goals. I chose these books due to their theories' direct and extensive resemblance and applicability to my

research domain. Additionally, I referenced numerous other authors and sources to fill the overall picture—like pieces of glass in a mosaic.

Finally, the Welcome Office Vaasa provided me with beneficial documentation (i.e., reviews) offering insight into its past.

1) World Café Vaasassa 2012 and 2013 (eng. World Café in Vaasa): documents presenting the process and results of events during which immigrants living in Vaasa expressed their challenges regarding integration and hopes for alleviating them.

2) Vaasan Seudun Rekrytointistrategian Selvitys- ja Suunnittelutyö: Selvitys Palvelujärjestelmästä Rekrytoinnin Tukemiseksi (eng. Exploration and Planning of Vaasa Region's Recruitment Strategy - Explanation of the Service System to Support Recruitment) (2010): a document presenting the origins of Welcome Office.

3) Welcome office-hankkeen ulkoinen arviointi (eng. External evaluation of the Welcome Office project) (2014): a document presenting the evaluation of the service provision of Welcome Office after the initial two years of activity.

4) Protokoll för diskussionsmöte om Welcome Office verksamheten (eng. Minutes for the discussion meeting about the Welcome Office activities) (2017): a document containing a yearly report on the activities of Welcome Office, providing insight into its activities and challenges.

## 3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Immigrant

Most countries have adopted the United Nation's definition of a migrant: any individual who is moving or has moved across an international border or within their own country from their habitual place of residence, regardless of their legal status, the causes behind it, its duration, and whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary (United Nations, 2022). The definition, simple and all-encompassing, fails to consider all the nuances and complexities occurring in real life—primarily the specificity of each migrant type and the moment one becomes and ceases to be a migrant. Therefore, several definitions from different sources will be explored to present a more specific explanation of the term migrant, i.e., international immigrant, that would fit this particular research; for that reason, I have chosen three authors from several prominent institutions to help elucidate the concept.

Koser (2007) from Oxford University differentiates the term migrant into three categories: voluntary/involuntary migrant, political/economic causes, and legal/illegal migrant. A voluntary migrant is an individual who moves under no danger or pressure, whereas an involuntary—or forced—migrant is one who embarks on a journey while fleeing some peril (e.g., conflict, persecution, natural disaster); the latter, also known as refugees, comprise a substantial amount of the clients of the Welcome Office under the status of asylum seekers as will be presented later. People migrating for political reasons are those fleeing before some politically, socially, or ethnically fueled insecurity or danger, while those traveling for economic reasons are doing so to find and create better financial prospects (i.e., employment, income, and more abundant livelihood). The final distinction is drawn between those possessing the necessary traveling and identification documents and not—or possessing forged ones. These distinctions help us distinguish the peculiarities of immigrant types,

even though there are many blurry lines between those mentioned above, thus signifying the possibility of transformation. For example, those legally traveling for work are considered legal migrants migrating for economic reasons, even though the actual cause is the loss of a job due to sexual orientation (which points to the political type), and, along with that, suddenly become illegal ones once their documentation is, for example, stolen.

The distinction between legal and illegal immigrants makes a crucial difference in how immigrant stories unfold. As indicated in the Immigration policy effects—a conceptual framework (2017) issued by the International Migration Institute—the difference originates from laws and subsequent immigration policies that dictate eligibility criteria for one to be deemed a legal or, as stated in the document, regular immigrant; for that reason, one might be a legal immigrant in one country, but an illegal trespasser in another. Furthermore, many undocumented immigrants first have to reach the desired country and enter it, thus illegally, to request asylum; if rejected, they often remain in another country illegally.

Finally, to understand the term immigrant in the context of Finland, we need to know the official definitions provided by the authorities. In the Aliens Act (2004), the chosen term alien denotes "a person who is not a Finnish citizen." Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (2010) defines the term immigrant 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, [and] whose right of residence has been registered or who has been issued with a residence card." The term immigrants in need of special measures signifies immigrants in need of special integration measures due to reduced functional capacity resulting from illness, disability, age, family situation, illiteracy, or other comparable cause. Statistics Finland (n.d.) defines a refugee as a foreign national who has a well-grounded fear of persecution for reasons of ethnic origin, religion, nationality, particular social group membership, or political opinion, with the refugee status granted to a person who has been granted asylum by a state or who is considered a refugee by UNHCR. A quota refugee is a

refugee who has been issued a residence permit under the refugee quota verified in the budget (Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2022).

This thesis addresses "immigrants" with interchangeable terms "service users" and "clients" because the former is found in the international literature and generally widely used, whereas the latter is used in the Welcome Office, denoting the client work aspect.

### 3.2 Immigrant integration

The term integration is initially best understood from the philosophical, i.e., sociological perspective. The term originates from the work of the renowned sociologist Emile Durkheim who conceptualized it as an abstract and performative process of adhering to the shared values and principles of a particular society—an organic and cohesive unit consisting of various parts. The concept, later developed through research, made its way to the public discourse due to the growing challenges and needs of immigration, thus resulting in domestic immigration policies. In practical terms, immigrant integration encompasses a variety of dimensions that comprise the settlement process: from language, cultural norms, and morality to employment, citizenship, and political participation (Favell, 2015).

It is worthwhile to differentiate the term integration into the sub-categories of cultural and structural integration to comprehend its totality. The former is the formal attendance of immigrants in the host society's systems; the primary structural integration marks their participation within the private organizations (e.g., social networks, associations, clubs, and marriage), whereas the secondary structural integration denote participation in the public ones (e.g., economic, legal, and educational). The latter (i.e., enculturation) signifies learning about and adhering to the host society's culture (Valtonen, 2009, p. 63-64).

The following paragraph summarizes the definition found in the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration to grasp the concept in the context of Finland, thus outlining the frame of concrete action. In Chapter One, integration stands for interactive development involving immigrants and society, intending to provide the former with the necessary knowledge and skills while supporting them to maintain their culture and language; this is accomplished through the multi-sectoral provision of measures and services provided by the authorities and other parties. The accent is on social empowerment, i.e., the development of the individual's skills to prevent social exclusion. Chapter 2 delineates in Sections 6, 7, and 8 promoting integration, information about Finnish society, guidance, and advice through basic municipal services and administration; this is the legal cornerstone of the one-stop-shop service points for immigrant integration in Finland (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010), 2010).

### 3.3 One-stop-shop for immigrant integration

The Common Agenda for Integration (2005)—created by the European Commission—sets the foundation in the following words: "strengthening the capacity of public and private service providers to interact with third-country nationals via intercultural interpretation and translation, mentoring, mediation services by immigrant communities, 'one-stop-shop' information points and building sustainable organizational structures for integration and diversity management." In an era where information is the most powerful tool and valuable resource, it is a logical decision to set up a public service devoted to information provision, professional advising, and integration support for new immigrants in the wake of increased immigration, unifying dimensions of such a process handled by different authorities. Moreover, the one-stop-shop concept contains several salient attributes, making it distinguishable from other organizations and unique in its convention.

The principal component is the concentration of services—the locality of intersecting segments pertinent to immigrant integration. The institution, providing a range of programs and services from different domains (e.g., education, finance, healthcare), both governmental and non-governmental, is accessible at one specific point, i.e., one physical establishment (e.g., an office area) (Reis Oliveira, C. et al., 2005, p. 18). The second component—its operating system—is a broad network that constantly updates and coordinates the services and guidance, thus ensuring quality performance. A hallmark of a one-stop-shop service point for immigrant integration is multiculturalism—an ethnic-sensitive practice that necessitates unique know-how when working with those of different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Also known as cultural competence, the core consists of the practitioner's self-awareness and understanding of the client's culturally based perceptions, views, values, and principles (Valtonen, 2009, p. 32). Therefore, a significant aspect of its modus operandi is cultural mediation: attunement to cultural disparities, the capability of establishing communication regardless of language, and trust-building (Penninx, 2009, p. 3).

## 4 THESIS PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

At its core, every thesis aims to explore, explicate, solve, and create. The purpose is a precondition toward the extensive feat of researching and the creative endeavor of writing. Considering the novelty and potentiality of the idea in Europe and Finland and the subsequent deficiency of materials on its topic, this thesis aims to present the findings about the institutional phenomenon of the one-stop-shop for immigrant integration and their possible application.

Accordingly, the writer needs a question that grips the interest and thus prompts answering, serving as the starting point of a journey toward realization—the kind of one I hope to take you on. For that reason, it is pertinent to pose questions no one has ever asked—or, at least, ask the same, reframed ones attempting to re-address a particular issue. The research questions my thesis poses and aims to answer are:

- 1) How is a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration established?;
- 2) Who are the service providers, and what are their competencies?;
- 3) What are the services provided and their purpose?; and
- 4) What are the characteristic of the professional network?

Each question tackles one aspect and expands the perspective by serving as the highest research category, emanating high-resolution conclusions. To ensure that, I opted for the revelatory style of writing by amalgamating a plethora of ideas, expounding them, and revealing a realization to my readers. Furthermore, this is where the purpose and the revelation converge: the fundamental reason to produce a research-oriented thesis is to formulate and organize an informed, coherent, and sophisticated set of ideas about something significant (Peterson, 2014). Finally, a tree metaphor to explain the purpose: the roots—abundant and widespread—are the ideas and concepts, the trunk—directed and compact—their coalescence, and the canopy—that brings life to other species—their manifestation and purpose.

## 5 RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT AND PARTNERS

The research environment encompasses the research conduct area, the professional network, and the dynamic engagement with the former and the latter.

As stated in Chapter 1 Background, I spent three months as an intern and two months as an employee of the Welcome Office Vaasa; therefore, the environment, i.e., the premises of the Welcome Office, was the primary source of information gathering. Furthermore, the combination of hands-on experience (i.e., client work), information-seeking (i.e., documentation, logs, reports), and professional interaction (with co-workers and associates) was the basis of the research process. Finally, the comfort of my home was the second research environment—primarily existing between the laptop and myself.

The internship and the subsequent job allowed for establishing contacts and communication with numerous professionals working for the City of Vaasa willing to provide input for the research process—primarily regarding institutional cooperation, project implementation, and archived information provision. Another valuable input received was their insight: they shared their understanding of the meaning of the work and its overall effect while providing information about the features of the Welcome Office.

## 6 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

### 6.1 Research types

The research conducted to produce this thesis is qualitative, given the exploration of a particular phenomenon and its underlying logic (i.e., one-stop-shop for immigrant integration), the aim of grasping its meaning and purpose (i.e., significance and benefit to immigrants), theoretical concepts basing the research, data as words and observations (i.e., international literature, documentation from the partner organizations, the transcribed interview, and working experience), and, finally, analysis done by extracting generalizations from the data and observations into a coherent unit (Kuada, 2012, p. 118).

Considering the presence of numerous—often not directly related—concepts I identified, the nature of the research was also conceptual since the thesis combines various ideas and themes, aiming to present a new or, at least, different interpretation of the researched institutional phenomenon. Finally, the aim of creating a framework based on extracted generalizations, serving as broadly applicable, and adding to the existing literature indicates the fundamental research—not the applied one since it is not focused on solving a current problem (Kothari, 2004, p. 3-4).

Finally, the research was descriptive and analytical in information seeking: the former was to gain information about a particular instance of the research domain (i.e., the Welcome Office Vaasa), whereas the latter was for acquiring general information about the research domain from the pre-existing materials (i.e., literature) (Kothari, 2004, p. 2).

## 6.2 Data collection

### 6.2.1 Work experience

Much of my findings resulted from my work experience at the Welcome Office. As such, I conducted the duties of a service advisor, participated in various meetings, and gained insight into the institution's inner workings. I recorded my experiences in written form during my employment at the Welcome Office, noting the most prominent ones and including them in this thesis. Most of the contents appertained to my and my colleagues' duties as service advisors and my observations of daily activities in the Welcome Office (e.g., interaction among the employees and contents of meetings). The formulation of the document was simplistic: mere naming and description of contents of interest. I applied no analysis method but merely incorporated the gathered information.

### 6.2.2 Documentation

As an intern and, later, an employee, I had full access to the online database of the Welcome Office; additionally, the Welcome Office possessed numerous paper form documents compiled into files. The data needed encompasses information regarding the inception of the Welcome Office, its internal structure, agendas corresponding to trends, service development according to the needs of the service users, input from the partners concerning networking and project development, and statistical gatherings (primarily about the service users).

### 6.2.3 Interview

Another data collection method was interviewing the supervising service advisor of the Welcome Office. The supervising service advisor was interviewed face-to-face using an unstructured interview schedule composed of predetermined open-ended questions (see Appendix 1) to obtain information and insight about the features of the organizational structure (e.g., management, leadership, network) and service provision. Unstructured interviews provide freedom and flexibility in devising questions and posing them to the interviewee, allowing discourse to unwind naturally and giving rise to spontaneous inquiries and necessary clarifications. Considering I wanted to learn as much as possible about the institution, I did not want to hamper the information acquisition by imposing my limited knowledge on the process by administering structured, close-ended questions. Furthermore, the information gained from the interviewee as quotes served my argumentation, writing flow, and logical consistency in my thesis (Kumar, 2010, p. 144-145). Finally, unstructured, face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions are the most preferred type when conducting research along the lines of grounded theory—the method I used (Goulding, 2002, p. 60).

Interviewing people introduces subjectiveness to objectivity, i.e., values and meaning to grand institutional structures, but, as argued by qualitative researchers, "not only is a subjective approach beneficial in gaining the acceptance of the participants of their research study but also that complete objectivity is impossible in social sciences" (Felix, 2019).

### 6.3 Data analysis methods

To accomplish the goal of answering the research questions and creating the framework, I utilized numerous data analysis methods. The most fundamental was

grounded theory—a qualitative research method for producing theories and conceptual models by exploring the empirical data on a specific, not yet analyzed, and theorized topic. The particular method was appropriate because the research I was going to conduct was data-driven, was based on inducting various hypotheses from my experience (as an intern and an employee at the Welcome Office) and subsequently confirming them by deducting the same ones by comparing my findings with the cases from the international literature, and creatively tying different concepts together (Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2010). The aim was to extract the gist of all the information and insights as overarching patterns applicable to new iterations. All these characteristics imply the grounded theory as a qualitative data analysis method since the process includes an analysis of a unique case to formulate a theory—or, in this case, a framework—and scrutinize similar ones to determine if they contribute to a discovery (Saunders et al., 2012).

After all the data had been acquired, a selection process began—distinguishing what information was most valuable and contributed to answering the research questions and creating the framework. Furthermore, the data were systematically allocated and compared to similar cases and relevant literature on the themes of a one-stop shop for immigrant integration, management, and immigrant integration by using the axial coding method: accentuating causal links and fitting the elements (i.e., phenomenon, causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action strategies, and consequences) into a basic frame of generic relationships, ultimately forming a theoretical framework for future professional utilization (Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2010).

Moreover, conducting the analysis and generating the framework was devised into four segments:

- 1) codes (i.e., key data points): I identified the most common and thus critical elements (words such as service user/provider/provision, network, principles, establish, and experience);

- 2) concepts (i.e., similar codes forming a unique group): I grouped similar critical elements into known independent concepts, such as immigrant, immigrant integration, empowerment, network, and theory;
- 3) categories (i.e., similar concepts forming groups that formulate a theory): I merged different concepts appertaining to four categories founding the framework, i.e., establishing of the institution, service provider, service provision, and network; and
- 4) a framework (i.e., explanations grounding the research subject): the framework, i.e., the thesis, provides an in-depth overview of the theoretical foundation and its application.

The procedure posited by Carey (2013, p. 121-122) expounds on the grounded theory methodology I utilized; a short description of my actions elucidates each phase posited by the author.

- 1) "A sample is identified, and the researcher begins to collect and analyze information or data in the research field." For example, I had an opportunity to work at a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration, obtain documentation from it, and interview its supervising service advisor; I compiled the data in written form and analyzed it using several analysis methods.
- 2) "Research cases are continuously compared and contrasted; the findings are then utilized to form concepts in response to specific discoveries built from interviews and observations." I compared my findings with the cases from the Handbook On How To Implement A One-Stop-Shop For Immigrant Integration (2009) and One-Stop-Shop: A new answer for immigrant integration (2009); I formed the conceptual framework by applying a specific, later described analysis method.
- 3) "Notes are kept regarding further individual cases of observation/interview; analytical concepts or trends should continue to emerge from such new data, which should subsequently be revised as a consequence." I kept the notes that afterward took the shape of my first draft. I followed the instructions for writing asserted by Peterson (2014), in which he stresses the multi-level rendition of re-writing drafts into a final literary work for apprehending clarity, strength, and quality.

4) "Some less significant concepts or trends, especially those that do not link directly to the original research topic, may be discarded as the research proceeds with the addition of further information." Along the way, I discarded some less relevant concepts and added some to give basis to the structure (e.g., introducing the tenets of networking to illuminate the activity and a professional network).

5) "The researcher begins to gradually develop a conceptual scheme which leads to the emergence of a core theory." By following the aforementioned four-segment-generation of theoretical framework, I attained the answers to the research questions, presenting them as individual chapters of this thesis.

6) "At some point, a state of saturation is reached; ideally, no more new findings or repetition of outcomes emerge in observations or points raised by those interviewed." At some point, I deemed the overall quantity of concepts satisfactory, primarily due to their interconnectedness and in-depth classification and the scope of the Bachelor thesis.

Briefly illustrated, qualitative methodology and the grounded theory method—due to their inductive reasoning—are the so-called "uphill climbing" methods, for they commence from observations, extract patterns, propose hypotheses, and, finally, formulate a theory (Päällysaho, 2022). Moreover, the theory provides an optimal comprehensive and coherent standard for uniting concatenating facts usefully and practically (Goulding, 2002, p. 47.) Even though the grounded theory is an advanced and onerous method not commonly used for Bachelor's thesis, I opted for it because its directives allowed me to conduct a comprehensive exploration intended to create a theoretical framework—one that may not be as original but does offer a new perspective on the rarely researched theme.

All the documentation obtained and the international literature found were analyzed by the close reading method: interpreting a phenomenon through detailed reading and analyzing texts on all levels, thus applying inductive reasoning (Kain, 1998). I recognized myself in its application as I was underlying significant parts of the texts, writing notes, seeking commonalities, and evaluating the findings; this was the

primary method of completing the first segment—identifying the codes—since the written word was the primary source of information. Given the expansive reading of the documents and literature, this method was not only logically warranted but naturally inevitable.

While reading the documentation gained from the Welcome Office, I applied the document analysis method that—according to Carey (2013, p. 183–184)—implies the following: identifying underlying arguments of a document, framing it in the context of developmental need and circumstances, evaluating the objectivity and potential biases held by its author, assessing its strengths and weaknesses, and the evidence presented. Applying this method while reading *World Café Vaasassa 2012 and 2013* (eng. *World Café in Vaasa*), *Vaasan Seudun Rekrytointistrategian Selvitys- ja Suunnittelutyö: Selvitys Palvelujärjestelmästä Rekrytoinnin Tukemiseksi* (eng. *Exploration and Planning of Vaasa Region's Recruitment Strategy - Explanation of the Service System to Support Recruitment*) (2010), *Welcome office-hankkeen ulkoinen arviointi* (eng. *External evaluation of the Welcome Office project*) (2014), and *Protokoll för diskussionsmöte om Welcome Office verksamheten* (eng. *Minutes for the discussion meeting about the Welcome Office activities*) (2017), I utilized the top-down approach: I framed the documents in the context of their time and purpose, assessed the objectivity of the authors and the evidence basing their research, and looked for gaps in reasoning—all this leading me to validate and extract critical conclusions.

I used the classification method to accomplish the second and third segments (i.e., identifying concepts and categories)—the grouping of observations based on an underlying structure of reading materials into classes (Routio, 2007). I devised the segments by writing a multi-level schema consisting of hierarchical elements: from the most common ones to the highest abstractions. The method was necessary since I aimed to produce a bottom-up-built theoretical framework, i.e., extract the generalizations into abstractions and present their application. I predominantly used this method while reading international literature since it was replete with concepts.

Transcribing the interview, reading the international literature and the documentation obtained from the Welcome Office, and applying the above-listed methods naturally prompted me to use the thematic analysis method: identifying the inductively emerging themes (as patterns and words) from the studied data and observations and forming them into so-called clusters (Carey, 2013, p. 184-186). Before I began to write my first draft, the notes I had written until then formed the outline of the thesis, with the major points serving as themes. This method helped me slightly reframe the originally posed research questions, making them more specific, thus allowing a more natural and logical emergence.

#### 6.4 Research ethics

The ethical guide that initially introduced me to the rules for ethically conducting research was the Ethical Recommendations for Thesis Writing at Universities of Applied Sciences (The Reactor's Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences Arene, 2018). Furthermore, it gave me an understanding of my responsibilities and rights as a student researcher and provided me with a layout of legislation pertinent to the task. Since my research was not focused on individuals as subjects, nor did I handle any personal data whatsoever, the only applicable legislative act was the Copyright Act (2015), obliging me to truthfully state the names of authors producing various documents and literary works that I used for research purposes.

During my research, I followed the ethical guidelines for writing a social work dissertation proposed by Carey (2013) since its comprehensiveness provided me with more practical guidelines in my daily research. Given the nature of my research, the following ones specifically applied to my conduct; additionally, a brief description of my actions follows each guideline to present my adherence to them.

1) "Always seek permission from a reliable and dependable source for any intended empirical research." I discussed and agreed on the nature and purpose of my

research with the supervising service advisor acting as my mentor and obtained the necessary research permit to acquire and process data.

2) "Maintain respect, honesty, and trust with research participants and identify each as an equal rather than an object of observation or study." Along with respect and honesty, I maintained transparency and confidentiality with the interviewed supervising service advisor regarding my work and intentions, viewing her as a source of knowledge and insight rather than a mere subject of analysis.

3) "Avoid harm and risk to participants, and carefully consider any implications of undertaking direct research with vulnerable people, such as children or adults with a learning disability." My research never posed encumbrance to anyone—least of all, to the service users who were no part of the evaluation.

4) "Ensure privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, especially regarding personal and other sensitive information gained from participants or elsewhere." Since the nature of the data obtained was not personal in any aspect nor concerned with specific individuals, but with the mere objective reality of the Welcome Office, there was no danger to following this guideline.

5) "Decide where data is likely to be stored and ensure there is no risk of sensitive information being lost or accessed without permission." All the documentation received from the Welcome Office remains in its possession in electronic format, so anyone interested in the original sources must contact the institution; the documents are not private, but they are not published publicly either. Considering my use, I was granted electronic copies, later stored safely on my laptop, with a plan of deleting them upon finalizing the thesis.

Finally, to ensure the quality of my research and thesis, I aimed to fulfill the three key categories: reliability, validity, and rigor. The first category refers to the consistency and dependability of research considering the reproduction of the results, the second one denotes the authenticity and strength of the results, whereas the third one marks the amalgamation of the previous two (Carey, 2013, p. 48). The reader—you—can see how the thesis is reliable, for there are numerous correlations and parallels between my findings (see chapter 6.2.) and the international literature (see chapters 2

and 8). I ensured the validity by applying several data analysis methods alongside my immersion in the Welcome Office. The rigor is, I hope, delivered as an extensive investigation and interpretation of the researched—the one that offers uniqueness and balance in assessing all concepts.

## 7 RESEARCH RESULTS

The following subchapters elucidate four elemental segments of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration, also framed as research questions to naturally and logically arrive at the conclusions, i.e., answers to the research questions. Several concepts are introduced that create the totality of what is to become the framework for establishing such an institution. The data presented is separated into two subsections: the first one contains information from international literature, whereas the second one contains it from my five-month-long work experience at the Welcome Office, the documents received from it, and the interview conducted with the supervising service advisor. The data from both subsections were analyzed using the methods elucidated in subchapter 6.3.

Subsections 7.1.1, 7.2.1, 7.3.1, and 7.4.1—titled Results from analyzing the international literature—in their form very much resemble chapter 3: The conceptual framework. The reason behind this unorthodox thesis structure is the following: I wanted each subchapter to encapsulate all the concepts in close proximity so that the reader could directly see the ties and similarities between the concepts and examples I identified in the international literature and those I derived from the Welcome Office, thus maintaining a constant flow of thought and comprehension. Based on that flow, chapter 8 links the subsections together, and chapter 9 presents the extracted generalities as principles.

## 7.1 Establishing a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration

### 7.1.1 Results from analyzing the international literature

One-stop-shop for immigrant integration is established based on the number of immigrants in a given area and their consequential need for establishing a life via integration in a new country—something demanding learning about and operating in many complex systems, often under a foreign language (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 76). An example is the National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAIs) in Portugal: established in 2004 under the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, they coordinate various governmental immigration services under one roof and thus simplify the bureaucratic processes (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 19).

Finland, as a country with a high level of local autonomy with its numerous municipalities, recommends the creation of one-stop-shops for immigrant integration, with each local district deciding on implementation and bringing together the necessary partners at the local level (Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010), 2010).

The three levels of the feasibility of a one-stop shop are political, structural, and practical. The first one concerns the general policy-making that must be coherent, proactive, and trust-building and, in their essence, rights-based, client-oriented, and fostering cooperation between various governmental and non-governmental actors. The crucial step is to bind migration and integration aspects together, for they are often disconnected (e.g., separated between different ministries). Finland is a country with a brief, i.e., young immigrant history (Tiilikainen, 2007); nonetheless, it has managed to place second on the 2020 Migration Integration Policy Index, though it is necessary to bear in mind that Finland does not have a large influx of immigrants

like some other European countries (e.g., Germany, the UK) (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2021).

The second level of feasibility concerns the institutional arrangements and division of competencies and assignments in policy-making and its implementation; more specifically, it denotes the organizational structure covering all domains of immigration and integration, bringing them coherently together. The final level is the most technical one in nature: it marks the functionality of a one-stop-shop regarding its location, accessibility, working hours, internal management, and client-service provider diode. Finally, political feasibility is the most fundamental since it represents the general attitude and will toward immigration and integration. From it, the structural feasibility arises and embodies the previous one, solving along the way all the issues according to the circumstances and addressing the question of funding. Finally, the practical feasibility shapes the policy-making as it establishes the ground-level operation, maintaining it through experience and management. Though appearing to function top-down, the hierarchy needs to be a loop of information and update; however, it remains true that without adequate political will, there would hardly be any execution (Penninx, 2009). An example of the aforementioned feasibilities is the Citizens Service Centre (est., 2002) in Greece—an institution providing administrative information and managing bureaucratic procedures. It was established under the Ministry of Interior, cooperates with civil services, and is authorized to handle cases addressed to its municipalities and other public institutions. The centers, set up across the country, operate throughout the day to ensure their accessibility to many working immigrants (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 18).

The initial step is researching the number of immigrants and their integration needs since customer need is the basis for any product or service provision (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 28). The most notable signs of any need are the concentration of immigrants alongside their overall well-being, i.e., livelihood quality, access to opportunities, and capitalization on their benefits. The second step is identifying the corresponding services in the given locale to meet the needs; this means assessing

the service provision from governmental and non-governmental organizations that support immigrant integration. Aside from evaluating each organization from the perspective of the benefits, they must also be evaluated by considering their deficiencies and all the emerging difficulties immigrants face when receiving services from them (Viinamäki & Kätkänaho, 2014). Country reports gathered for the INTI project "One-Stop-Shop: A new answer for immigrant integration" list the following most prominent issues: lack of service hospitality and linguistic and cultural competencies (Germany); the dispersion of governmental institutions, and the complexity of bureaucratic procedures coupled with short working hours and language barriers (Greece); the centralization of service in a metropolitan area, lack of coordination and communication (Ireland); understaffed institutions and lack of cultural mediators (Italy); long queues (Spain); and costly processes (Portugal) (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 25-26). As such, this implies the necessity of networking—building and maintaining professional connections according to a preconceived coordination plan. There must be a superior body managing the activity and agenda implementation of the one-stop-shop point; given the governmental nature of the institution, the body of such kind is usually the municipality, i.e., the City Council. Furthermore, the governmental nature of the one-stop-shop point for immigrant integration implies the public funding of its operation by the taxpayers; nonetheless, a cost-benefit analysis regarding establishing and maintaining such an institution is essential.

A one-stop-shop for immigrant integration deals with bureaucratic matters and, as such, finds an office as the most appropriate area for conducting its activities. Establishing an office, i.e., a work environment for such purposes, ought to be based on adequate principles derived from applicable theories; therefore, the following presents and elucidates two management theories integral to managing a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration. One theory is the usability theory from the user-centric perspective. The theory postulates that the workspace (e.g., an office) is an asset built according to the specific tasks of the workers and purposes benefiting the service users—not according to cost and space reductions; therefore, as a physical working environment, an office should support the precise goals of the workgroup

and facilitate communication between the workers and service users. Simplified: spatial forms should embody abstractions, i.e., core principles. Following this theory, a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration should contain separate offices since confidentiality is one of the core values (Appel-Meulenbroek & Danivska, 2022). A theory closely tied to the previous one and expanding upon its concept is user-centered design thinking, positing that the core of any service provision must be the user's desires and preferences. In the physical environment, the relationship between the workspace (e.g., an office) and the users is based on the former's design and purpose and the latter's perception and wants, thus differentiating three levels of user satisfaction: physical, functional, and psychological comfort. The first level depends primarily on the sensory stimuli (e.g., acoustics, lighting, and spaciousness), denoting individual performance; the second one depends on the established rules and possibilities of conduct (e.g., privacy and concentration), marking organizational effectiveness; and the last one emerges from the previous two, signifying the individual's tranquility, safety, and trust. (Appel-Meulenbroek & Danivska, 2022, p. 184–188)

The one-stop-shop should be situated in an easily accessible location near the immigrant concentration in a given wider area, i.e., a city. If the concentration of immigrants in a particular country is scattered, there is a need for more than one one-stop-shop point. Finland has several such clusters spread across its territory—chiefly in the metropolitan area (Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa), Turku, Vaasa, and Tampere; some other considerably smaller cities which nonetheless possess a substantial number of immigrants are, e.g., Närpiö and Kristiinankaupunki. On the other side, Finnish Lapland, as a generally scarcely populated area, does not pose any demand of such kind; however, that does not mean there are no provisional and, thus, logistical difficulties. An example of a growing immigrant clientele and the appropriate response are the Citizens Information Services in Ireland: while the service points had been intended for the general population, some areas showed a noteworthy increase of immigrant service users seeking help regarding family reunification, residence permit issuing, and citizenship; consequentially, the service points attempted

to address the needs, primarily under the Immigration, Residence, and Protection Bill (2007) (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 19).

### 7.1.2 Results from collaboration with the partner institution

The Welcome Office project was initiated in 2012 as a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration, offering low-threshold counseling in English for immigrants—especially newcomers—residing in the City of Vaasa and the region of Ostrobothnia. The project idea originates from the European Union's Common Agenda for Integration (created by the European Commission) and the Finnish Law on the Promotion of Integration; the latter stipulates the necessity of immigrants receiving information about Finnish society, working life, and services promoting integration, with the municipalities and authorities ensuring such provision. In addition, the legislature, as mentioned above, bases the previously elucidated term political feasibility on national and international levels. The project was implemented by the City of Vaasa and funded by twelve municipalities and the European Regional Development Fund; the initial funding was 477,000,00€ split equally by the domestic and foreign financiers (Viinamäki & Kätkänaho, 2014).

In the extensive research titled *Vaasan Seudun Rekrytointistrategian Selvitys- ja Suunnittelutyö: Selvitys Palvelujärjestelmästä Rekrytinnin Tukemiseksi* (eng. *Exploration and Planning of Vaasa Region's Recruitment Strategy - Explanation of the Service System to Support Recruitment*, R. Mertaniemi, 2010, p. 47-48), it was concluded that the pervasive issues faced by the immigrants in the city of Vaasa were the lack of information (plaguing both public services and immigrant clients), the complexity of the service systems, lack of coordination between the institutions, and the absence of mentoring professionals. Therefore, establishing a front providing information, guidance, and cooperation was offered—and subsequently accepted—as a viable solution; thus, the Welcome Office was born. As the interviewee stated,

the core of the Welcome Office is information: "people [i.e., immigrants] have always needed information from a trustworthy source on how to set up their lives in Vaasa," further continuing that "there was no explicit underlying philosophy, but the mere response to those in need as well as to those seeking help in employing the newly arrived—especially after all the initiatives had failed, so the municipality opted for a more encompassing solution." Furthermore, the interviewee added that—given the global changes and the nearby reception center—the Welcome Office would serve a diverse range of immigrants: from those immigrating for family reasons and moving in for education to those fleeing their homelands as refugees (primarily quota refugees) and those seeking employment, with the last two as the most represented types (R. Mertaniemi, 2010, p. 49).

During the initial years of the Welcome Office—2012 and 2013—the City of Vaasa, the University of Vaasa, and other partners conducted two World Cafés with a sample size of the target group, i.e., immigrant service users, to learn about the needs and difficulties regarding the integration and welfare services of those with an immigrant background in the city of Vaasa and its surroundings. As Brown et al. (2005) state, "the World Café can make a special contribution when the goal is the focused use of dialogue to foster productive relationships, collaborative learning, and collective insight." The two World Cafés showed that those with an immigrant background who are integrating need primarily information in the English language and hope for more thorough help and guidance from governmental organizations regarding making applications and processing documentation; additionally, many participants belonging to the target group expressed their own incentive considering making the desired positive changes (Vaasan kaupunki et al., 2012). The second one showed an even greater wish to form a public, non-governmental organization devoted to fostering relationships among immigrants by organizing activities and events. (Vaasan kaupunki, 2013) Both World Cafés influenced the service provision of the Welcome Office: aside from providing the services in English (and later on in Arabic and Kurdish), the institution focused on disseminating information and providing guidance through step-by-step explanations of all bureaucratic procedures.

In the case of the Welcome Office, the City Council of the City of Vaasa decides on its funding and program implementation, acting as its superior body. The Welcome Office receives funds from the municipality depending on the number of immigrants residing in the wider area. Often, the problem with public project implementation is that the goals are too broad and thus vague and, as such, do not focus on concrete actions and produce tangible results; therefore, the Welcome Office had developed a specific agenda before the implementation and has continued to do so through networking. As usual, the Welcome Office staff needs to justify their needs and persuade the officials if they wish to receive adequate amounts. This designation embodies the structural feasibility through the hierarchical organization of responsibility in Finland: the municipality (more than 300 in Finland under the State of Finland) acts as a self-governing unit with a City Council on its top, providing its residents with basic statutory services (Municipalities and Local Government, Suomi.fi).

Located in the city center in the main public library, the Welcome Office shares its premises with the Citizen Service office; in that way, Welcome Office is easily reachable, and its customers benefit from a variety of other public services that, in this case, support leisure and educational activities. Like many other public institutions, Welcome Office Vaasa has working hours from morning to early evening and makes itself available via the internet and phone lines (Welcome Office Vaasa, 2022).

## 7.2 Competencies of the service providers in a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration

### 7.2.1 Results from analyzing the international literature

The professional title of such service providers is service advisor. The word advisor is the crux of the matter: the professionals implement legal acts by advising, i.e., providing counsel and guidance to the immigrant clients considering immigration and integration.

One-stop-shop for immigrant integration needs to employ educated individuals well-versed in migration, multiculturalism, and social policies and endowed with the essential skills of writing, listening, and problem-solving. Regarding the necessary education, those employed and serving immigrants in their quest for integration would benefit the most from higher degrees such as social work, political science, and business and management. However, as with many other professions in the contemporary world, their education does not stop there: throughout the working relationship, the service advisors are offered numerous courses—organized by ministries, public institutions, and NGOs alike—that expand their knowledge.

One popular psychological term used in professional domains, such as social, community, and health work, is empowerment. One of the central goals of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration is empowering its service users with immigrant backgrounds. One general definition of empowerment is the awakening and manifestation of the individual's potential—the meaning derived from combining the prefix "em" and the root word "power." In social and community work, the idea encompasses the core belief in the individual's potential based on the universal respect for humankind, achieved through activities aimed at creating a fair and equal world for everyone. Furthermore, three types of empowerment exist—and are interwoven in the

aforementioned professional fields: self-empowerment, peer empowerment, and organizational/community empowerment. The first is the independent realization of one's potential; the second is the encouragement through interpersonal interaction (e.g., by the service advisor's guidance and aid); the last is the process of vivifying individuals through organized activities of formal and informal fellowship (e.g., the service user's participation in the programs organized by the one-stop-shop and its partners) (Amne & Harris, 2016, p. 2–3).

A cultural mediator is an educated professional facilitating immigrant reception and integration, primarily serving as a bridge between the government institution and the immigrant community and ensuring equal opportunities for all (namely, equal access to services). As the title implies, the principal duty is mediation and, inextricably to it, interpretation; other tasks include conducting individual interviews (e.g., motivational interviews, assessments), information provision (including oral and written translations), and psychological support. Given the role, the mediator should preferably, though not solely, be of immigrant background—be it the first or second generation. The feature is not merely to ensure language proficiency but, more importantly, to help immigrant clients have a sense of familiarity; the testament to this claim is the palpable connectedness between the clients of the Welcome Office and the employees providing service in foreign languages whom themselves were immigrants, thus creating a sense of friendliness, trust, and understanding. As such, they possess an inherent knowledge of different cultures and religions, making them attuned to the peculiarities of the immigrant clientele and, therefore, active participants in resolving socio-cultural conflicts.

Another specialty—and duty—of cultural mediators is their capability to transfer their know-how to their colleagues—either by advising, providing guidelines, or simply participating in conversations since a good amount of peer support and review is done casually (e.g., immigrant employees of the Welcome Office frequently shared their experiences and stories of others) (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 58-65). Education in cultural mediation is supplementary training to those experienced in social

and healthcare work, developing their awareness, cultural sensitivity, and utilization of skills (Moniheli ry, 2019). Other countries—like Spain and Ireland—offer module courses emphasizing cultural and legal frameworks, immigration and integration policies, and mediation and communication skills. Education, in its segments, has to vary given the variety of immigrant communities, thus addressing the distinctiveness of each group; this allows a kind of specialization and, therefore, a competency that makes a particular mediator more suitable for a specific setting.

### 7.2.2 RESULTS FROM COLLABORATION WITH THE PARTNER INSTITUTION

From my observation and experience, service advisors' multifaceted competencies are a crucial resource. Regarding hard skills, service advisors must be well-versed in the systems of employment (TE-toimisto), taxation (Vero), social security (KELA), education (depending on the area of operation), activities and services provided by the city, and many more. The description does not strictly mean that each service advisor must possess encyclopedia-like knowledge, but rather that they can identify the solutions to their client's inquiries and perform quick information searches online as proficient users of computers and different software (e.g., programs such as Word and Excel, applications, and websites). Diligent active listening and, thus, careful attentiveness allow for analysis of the client's situation and needs—the activity that, in my experience, was often pivotal, especially for forming a relationship with the clients. Another crucial skill—especially in the contemporary world—is writing: service advisors must master the use of words to form solid ideas and solutions and present them forthrightly. With the above-listed hard and soft skills, motivation and enthusiasm to participate and learn also come to the fore. These qualities facilitate peer review and support and the constant rejuvenation of the program development and its implementation. Finally, as mentioned by the supervising service advisor, impartiality is indispensable in the service advisor's approach: to reserve judgment and fulfill the role of an unbiased professional.

Teamwork is essential: open communication, peer review and support, and an improvement-oriented approach are the core of an adaptable and productive institution. These qualities are necessary for avoiding bureaucratization—primarily regarding blind adherence to rules—and stagnation considering the service provision. In addition, participation in management and service providers makes the service advisors active actors engaged in the affairs of the one-stop-shop, allowing for mutual learning and improvement (Viinamäki & Kätkänaho, 2014).

As witnessed, the team takes care of its members' ability to cope and constructively evaluate and learn. In practice, certain things are often repeated and thus become mundane; therefore, the team must ensure its members' ability to renew themselves and their motivation. The most important thing is to avoid the so-called project fatigue and strive to maintain an exciting, inspiring, and renewable way of doing things. The team ensures that the members participate in training, networking events, and sharing experiences with other operators; this is done by conducting weekly meetings, attending frequent online educational sessions, and, most simply, participating in daily rituals such as coffee and lunch breaks.

Of all the positive features listed, the interviewee named a negative one producing an arduous effect: the presence of solely one supervising social advisor, i.e., the office manager responsible for the ever-growing list of duties and assignments; this, in the interviewee's opinion, could be solved by allocating the responsibilities and tasks more evenly among the parties included—especially those from partner institutions who perform only project work—though that is not inherent to the structural organization, i.e., could be resolved by negotiating.

### 7.3 Services of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration

#### 7.3.1 Results from analyzing the international literature

The principal approach of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration is holistic insofar as it encapsulates networking—that facilitates the exchange of work methods and expertise—and services (i.e., integration programs, support, advising, and safety net). As such, it offers access to services provided by different governmental institutions on the one side and various other non-governmental organizations that make up its network, thus combining necessary and supportive services; furthermore, cultural mediators facilitate the interaction between the two sides (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 19).

Services are intangible actions from one side for the benefit of the other or, more concretely, "economic activities whose output is not physical product or construction" (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2006, p. 4). As was the physical environment of the one-stop-shop elaborated in the previous chapter through the lens of theories, so will the service provision be elucidated accordingly. The all-encompassing one expounding the service provision is the service management theory, focusing on four segments: creating value for the customer, internal and external collaboration, quality, and developing personnel. The created value for the service user (i.e., immigrant) may best be conceived as experience pre-, during, and post-encounter with the service provider, all the while engaged in co-creation of the value—something, in the case of the one-stop-shop, best exemplified in empowering the client by teaching while adopting ownership for one's own deeds (Grönroos et al., 2015, p. 69). The second segment connotes the service encounter triad: the interplay between the service user (i.e., the immigrant client), the service provider (i.e., the service advisor), and the service organization (i.e., one-stop-shop for immigrant integration) (Bateson, 1985). The third one, i.e., quality, is evaluated on different facets as postulated by

the authors Grönroos (1984) and Parasuraman et al. (1985) and referenced by Appel-Meulenbroek and Danivska (2022). Those are functional quality (i.e., service delivery; e.g., interaction and attitudes), technical quality (i.e., outcomes; e.g., the created value and successfulness), and image factors (i.e., the user's perception; e.g., the user's formed opinion) with the contributing factors—in an institution like the one-stop-shop for immigrant integration—such as reliability, assurance, and empathy. The final segment, i.e., developing personnel, pertains to empowering the service providers—for the sake of their satisfaction and for ensuring optimal service provision for the service users (Appel-Meulenbroek & Danivska, 2022, p. 205–210).

When setting up the service provision, connecting services that regulate entry admission and renewal with those modulating activities within the country is a prerequisite. Providing information about and guidance in undertaking various bureaucratic affairs is essential. Therefore, the primary aim is to support immigrants lacking knowledge of their duties and rights while familiarizing them with the systems of the necessary services (e.g., Immigration office, Tax office) and how to navigate them (e.g., learning about the rules and procedures, making applications, and filling out the forms). In doing so, integration processes are faster and characterized by efficiency and effectiveness (e.g., accurately filled forms save time and money; immigrants can proceed with building their lives). Supportive services (e.g., legal advice, language courses, and psychosocial support)—mainly part of the network—assist in the integration by further directing the immigrants and equipping them with skills necessary for proper functioning in the new society and its systems. The Migration Information Centre in Slovakia (est., 2006), for example, aids immigrants in their integration by offering, among others, legal advice and information on education, health, and social security and support considering re-qualification and entering the labor market (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 21). Finally, the premises of a one-stop-shop must be supplied with adequate and indispensable technology (i.e., computers, photocopying, and internet access); additionally, ATMs and photo booths could very well be advantageous, primarily from the technical perspective.

The one-stop-shop gains insight into their clients' everyday situations and challenges and the overall situation concerning integration; that way, policy-making can be influenced from the bottom up by advocating for the clients and influencing the decision-makers. Furthermore, this setup favors participation and localization of decision-making instead of centralized policy development and top-down implementation. Finally, it is important to mention that communication goes both ways: clients are encouraged to share their thoughts and recommendations (Reis Oliveira et al., 2009, p. 42).

### 7.3.2 Results from collaboration with the partner institution

Services of the Welcome Office consist of information provision and professional advising regarding various aspects of livelihood (e.g., employment, taxation, social security, education, and leisure activities). Services are provided by service advisors, who engage their clients one-on-one on counseling points (i.e., office desks). Aside from the possibility of being serviced by one of the service advisors, the clients also have the opportunity to use public computers, scanners, and printers independently. As observed and later confirmed by the interviewee, the only insufficiency regarding the Welcome Office's interior is its lack of privacy: the open desks are the only place where the service advisors and clients can interact, thus sometimes hindering peace and comfort; however, with the new plan of moving the Welcome Office to another, more spacious office containing separate rooms, this problem should pose no concern to discretion and confidentiality in the future.

The nature of service advising—predominantly in the form of guidance and directing—sometimes does not have explicit limits delineating the scope of the service advisor's authority. The hazard lies in the service advisor completing the work for the client due to expediency, thus depriving the latter of responsibility and learning; correspondingly, the clients sometimes wish the service advisors to do the work on their

behalf—for the same reason. Furthermore, sometimes it is not apparent how benevolent the service advisor should be since occasionally it is beneficial to push the extra mile, and sometimes it may be counter-productive depending on the situation. The guiding thought helping resolve the occasional dilemma is that the empowerment of the client—by teaching and demonstrating—is imperative. As the interviewed supervising service advisor explained, "Ownership of the matters belongs to the client—not the service provider."

In the digital age, having a well-set-up internet website is indispensable. For the longest time, the Welcome Office had its short website found under the main website of the City of Vaasa; websites from other authorities were separated, only connected by links. During my internship, the supervising service advisor and partners—with my humble contribution—created a unique and comprehensive website dedicated to the Welcome Office, providing extensive information from various authorities, available in Finnish, Swedish, and English. Unifying the critical sources in one place allowed for the locality and specificity of information in the given locale; moreover, it enabled personalization, regional profiling, and client feedback. Furthermore, the same actors developed the well-known infoFinland.fi website by enriching it with new information and making it accessible in twelve languages, thus making it more inclusive than ever. Versatile and effective methods have been used in information and communication: websites, newsletters, social media, magazines, public presentations, and events.

The one-stop-shop must diligently and comprehensively document its service provision to review and develop its performance and procedures. An advantage of collecting systematic feedback is that the effect of the corrective measures can be seen and evaluated more clearly from the material and whether the direction of the correction was indeed correct. Another reason is that this practice enables an extensive overview of the big picture and its details that must be justified to the stakeholder. The Welcome Office collects information (i.e., data about activities and feedback) through web surveys, the ALPO register (The register of customer visits to immigrant

counseling services that I regularly updated), and network and stakeholder meetings. The ALPO register is a national database containing information about service users' visits to immigrant advisory institutions. The information—not containing any personal details—collects data about immigration and its trends and is utilized in improving services, predicting future trends, and researching (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2021).

The most significant positive outcomes produced by the one-stop-shop for immigrant immigration are the prevention of exclusion and the acceleration of integration (thus reducing costs for service users in the form of time, energy, and money), and the reduction in the workload of different authorities. Other benefits are fewer visits to authorities and accelerated transactions and bureaucratic processes (e.g., fewer mistakes in official forms). Finally, an alternation of preconceived prejudices and corresponding attitudes on the side of employers—and sometimes even authorities—negatively impacting immigrants can only be achieved through long-term, purposeful communication and concrete results. Therefore, an intermediary institution like a one-stop-shop helps alleviate those challenges, benefiting all parties in the process—namely by establishing productive professional cooperation (i.e., employment) between domestic employers and immigrants.

According to the interviewed service advisor, one of the pressing challenges is the efficient marketing of the Welcome Office: consistent markers (mainly expressed opinions) have been indicating that certain types of immigrants do not know about the existence of the Welcome Office and its services—the fact best exemplified in the long periods of infrequent client visits. The state consequently affects the statistics presented to public officials—some of whom find that as proof of the Welcome Offices' ineffectually. Determining the exact causes of rare visits would have required an independent analysis due to its complexity, so it will not be presented in this work; however, some conjectures will be offered. As stated earlier, marketing—as in any public endeavor—plays a significant role. The chief means of advertisement are the website, brochures, online newsletters, and welcoming packages issued to the new

residents of Vaasa (containing information and guidelines); the first two mediums are available in many languages (e.g., English, Swedish, Finnish, Arabic, Kurdish, Vietnamese, and other Asian languages) to ensure their outreach. One possible solution for producing further outreach could be organizing more frequent "open door" events allowing familiarization. While these methods are effective, they might not be entirely efficient; therefore, further strengthening the collaboration with the partnering institutions is required—as stated by the supervising service advisor. The pervasive cause might be the physical separation from the partnering institutions—the situation that will be rectified by the end of 2022 by moving to a new office (in the city center) hosting other governmental institutions. Another possible explanation might be the fluctuation of needs occurring sporadically: depending on the number of immigrants in need, sometimes there are not that many of them seeking aid, marking a positive occurrence.

In national assessments and studies, it has been found that investing in support and advice in the initial phase prevents exclusion and accelerates good practices. Thus, it can be reasonably estimated that the Welcome Office project has tangibly benefited the partners; however, calculating the monetary value is difficult. Furthermore, benefits include cost reduction, efficiency increase, client satisfaction, resolving problems arising from the dispersal of services, lack of information-sharing procedures, and lack of coordination of services (Viinamäki & Kätkänaho, 2014).

## 7.4 Professional network of a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration

### 7.4.1 Results from analyzing the international literature

Managing professional networks—or networking—is the process of establishing, nurturing, and leveraging one's professional relationships and thus optimally utilizing the available social capital (i.e., information, advice, support, ideas, and assets)—something ultimately based on human capital (i.e., education, skills, experience, talent, personal assets). As asserted by Inga Carboni (2018, p. 1–11), the entire phenomenon can be divided into the following segments: ethics (i.e., the values and principles of the fruitful and reciprocal alliance), seeking (i.e., identifying new potentials), soft skills for network-building (i.e., personal traits and interpersonal abilities), range (i.e., expanding the network's ambit regarding innovation, problem-solving, and maintenance), individual relationships (i.e., quality, quantity, strengths, and weaknesses), strategizing (i.e., optimizing relationship-building), nurturing (i.e., relationship maintenance), challenges (i.e., inherent ones and those amplified by socio-historic reasons), leveraging (i.e., utilizing and benefiting from the network), and needs (i.e., adaptation according to changes in requirements and wants).

"Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public-policy formation and implementation." Stated as the tenth Common Basic Principle, mainstreaming—i.e., normalizing the integration of immigrants—is one of the key aims and, as such, one of the main challenges. The one-stop-shop's function is to enable immigrants easy access to public services while allowing them to establish connections with non-governmental actors. A one-stop-shop for immigrant integration acts as a sort of forum insofar as it gathers people and focuses on information exchange. Relationships are built continuously in such a dynamic structure: new actors (i.e., institutions and associations) join over time. Aside from information

provision, communication is another essential element—especially an ongoing one with immigrants, since the critical point is that they are not a problem but a solution. Therefore, to ensure this goal, several EU countries (e.g., Germany, Portugal, Belgium, and Spain) encourage the development of consultative bodies—organizations consisting of representatives of all sides (i.e., governmental and non-governmental agencies and immigrant associations) discussing and monitoring migration and integration policies. As an institution centered in the middle of administrative services, the one-stop-shop conveys a clear socio-political message that immigrant integration is not merely the responsibility of a single authority but a mutual endeavor with checks and balances that gives voice to those that it serves (R. Penninx, 2009).

#### 7.4.2 Results from collaboration the partner institution

The synergy between various actors benefits immigrants, authorities, and municipalities, especially regarding work-related immigration. The idea was that concrete projects would encourage the participation and commitment of the neighboring municipalities and the motivation of customers (i.e., immigrants), thus creating a positive loop of cooperation, good results, and, above all, improving the general attitude toward immigration. As expressed by the interviewee, "Give and take" is the unofficial credo among the collaborating organizations that illuminates the generous and reciprocal nature of the conduct. However, according to the supervised service advisor and the 2017 annual report, one problem is that partner organizations frequently outsource their duties to the Welcome Office without discussion and planning. For example, even though by law the Immigration Office is mandated to aid their applicants in filling out forms, they forgo doing so by simply declining incorrectly filled documents and directing them to the Welcome Office.

The needs of the immigrants were defined clearly through networking with other authorities (e.g., TE-toimisto) before the commencement of the project; therefore, no

conflict arose between the said needs during the implementation. However, according to the interviewed service advisor and the 2017 annual report, one problem is that partner organizations frequently outsource their duties to the Welcome Office without discussion and planning. For example, even though by law the Immigration Office is mandated to aid their applicants in filling out forms, they forgo doing so by simply declining incorrectly filled documents and directing them to the Welcome Office (Winberg et al., 2017).

Most of the funding is spent on staff salary costs for the supervising service advisor—who acts as a project manager—and service advisors. A balance was successfully found between concrete customer work and ensuring the continuation of project activities by using the project's financial resources. The experience shows that the personnel performs customer work quite independently.

Serving as an intermediary institution in the middle of a broader network, the Welcome Office fulfills the legal stipulations demanded by the Act on the Promotion of Integration: "Local authorities must develop integration as multidisciplinary cooperation." The so-called "spider web" positions the Welcome Office in the middle of all relevant Finnish authorities, thus establishing dialogue and cooperation among all prominent actors. By fulfilling its role, the Welcome Office has established counseling as an activity of a regional dimension and interest instead of a mere administrative sector or municipality. Part of the network are other one-stop-shops (e.g., the one in the city of Kokkola) that allow for analysis of immigrant needs and service provision on a new level: all one-stop-shops benefit from the other's practice, experience (especially benchmarking in terms of statistics), and insight that contributes to self-assessment and continual development.

The two projects implemented in cooperation with the Welcome Office are Talent Coastline Employment and Get Together Network. As a comprehensive project funded by the city of Vaasa and the EU, the former's goal is to develop recruitment of international talents in the Ostrobothnia and Central Ostrobothnia regions in

Finland: to enable immigrants further education (i.e., regarding the Finnish language and additional skill development) and aid the private employers in employing the immigrant labor force, thus producing a two-fold effect (Talent Coastline Employment, 2022). The latter—a network of city dwellers of international backgrounds—aims to assist immigrants in building their lives in the city of Vaasa by organizing casual gatherings, info sessions, activities, and events (Get Together Network, 2022).

## 8 DISCUSSION

### 8.1 Resemblances between the result types

#### 1. How is a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration established?

Political and social conditions in Finland for establishing one-stop-shops for immigrant integration are beneficial, satisfying the feasibility levels as presented by R. Penninx (2009). As illustrated, political feasibility has a strong foothold in the EU and Finnish legislation. Furthermore, structural feasibility arises from the well-developed public institutions and taxation system exemplified in the relationship between the municipality, the city of Vaasa, various governmental institutions, and the Welcome Office. Finally, practical feasibility is embodied in the premises of the Welcome Office Vaasa resembling the management theories posited by Appel-Meulenbroek & Danivska (2022): the main attributes of the office area are its accessibility, spaciousness, and friendly atmosphere facilitating service user's and service provider's satisfaction on all three levels; the deficiency, however, is the lack of private spaces.

Recognizing the need of the immigrant population in the region of Ostrobothnia and the city of Vaasa by conducting research (Vaasan Seudun Rekrytointistrategian Selvitys- ja Suunnittelutyö: Selvitys Palvelujärjestelmästä Rekrytoinnin Tukemiseksi, 2010) along the guidelines proposed by Reis Oliveira et al. (2009), the city's officials deemed it necessary to establish an office front that would meet those needs. The utility of the World Café, as asserted by Brown et al. (2005), is exemplified in the early service development of the Welcome Office, where those responsible engaged the target group in fruitful dialogue yielding beneficial results. My opinion is that such practice could and should be repeated every few years or, at least, according to the noticeable changes across various sectors (e.g., an influx of immigrants according to the Reception Center in the Pohjanmaa region, immigrant employment rates, number of immigrants in education institutions).

## 2. Who are the service providers, and their competencies?

The service providers must be educated and competent professionals who have mastered the use of the word: they must be proficient and effective communicators—both orally and in writing. Furthermore, given the intricateness of the system in which they navigate and guide the immigrant service users, they must also be perspicacious problem-solvers able to identify the crucial points of any problem or situation, acquire the corresponding information, and advise the service users as well as teach them. By doing so, service users are not merely shown what to do but also how to conduct their matters, thus empowering them to take responsibility for themselves and others in similar situations (peer empowerment, according to Amne and Harris (2016)). Furthermore, service advisors must be knowledgeable about various cultures and their peculiarities and have an appropriate attitude toward those strange to the mainstream, thus serving as bridge points between the domestic and foreign. The service providers most adept at this are naturally those of immigrant backgrounds, as the Welcome Office's service advisors originating from Iraq and Sudan manifested that in creating hospitality and cordial and professional relationships with the service users and facilitating empowerment based on shared identity.

As exemplified at the Welcome Office, fostering teamwork through open and honest communication, cooperation, and daily rituals boosts team spirit, coping techniques, problem-solving and prevention, and innovation. The value of inclusivity is equally significant in the inner circle of the staff, just as it is in the service provider–service user relationship. Perhaps team-building—as a series of routinized activities aimed at developing relationships within a team—could be implemented (Miller, 2003).

## 3. What are the services provided and their effect?

Evaluating the service provision of the Welcome Office according to Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons (2006), the value is created for the service users primarily in the abstract form: they receive information and guidance in handling their matters; material

value (e.g., printed and copied documents, flyers, reading materials) is of secondary importance. It is imperative that the service user participates in value creation to be responsible for him or herself and become empowered. Internal and external collaboration is marked by positive interaction between the service users and the service advisors. The two criteria mentioned above are incorporated in public events organized by the Welcome Office and the city of Vaasa; e.g., a one-day event titled Spring Get-Together (in which I participated) offers creative workshops, food, and drinks in a music-filled atmosphere, joining together citizens and city officials. The quality of service provision of the Welcome Office is confirmed by a large amount of successfully assisted service users and a good reputation. Finally, the personnel of the Welcome Office has the possibility for continuous education in the form of online courses.

The essence of the service provision is to endow the service users with the know-how on the knowledge about and understanding of the various social welfare systems, the means of acquiring information, and proper ways of conducting personal bureaucratic matters. In doing so, one must know how to use digital systems and make the best of them. Working on the lowest level and serving those in need, the service providers gain insight into the challenges yet to be improved; as seen with the Welcome Office, its staff, therefore, can influence local decision-making by advocating for those who struggle to voice their opinions. To accomplish this, they must also have comprehensive compilations of their activity (excluding personal information) that allow better advocacy and argumentation for funding.

#### 4. What are the qualities of the professional network?

The final paragraph evaluates the Welcome Office's network according to the criteria devised by Inga Carboni (2018). Ethics are embodied in the phrase "Given and take," indicating the reciprocal nature of professional relationships. The seeking phase of partnerships was primarily completed in the initial years of the Welcome Office, with new ones established over the years, according to the initiatives to meet the needs of the citizens (e.g., Talent Coastline Employment). Strategizing accompanies

establishing relationships insofar as plans and roles are determined and is generally conducted during yearly reports. Soft skills for network-building are continually improved depending on the partners' personalities and facilitate cooperation (as stated by the interviewed supervising service advisor). The range aspect, i.e., increasing the Welcome Office's capability of problem-solving, primarily relies on the possibility of directing the service users to other cooperating institutions and organizations or seeking help from professionals possessing unique skills (e.g., a Hungarian-speaking service advisor from another public institution aided us in communication with a Hungarian immigrant who spoke no other language and sought help from the Welcome Office was). Individual relationships are strengthened and nurtured through occasional professional and casual work-hour meetings (e.g., panels, seminars, and events). For the Welcome Office, challenges, leveraging, and needs are often intertwined due to their interconnected nature and usually arise in collaboration among partners on various projects (as indicated by the interviewed supervising service advisor).

## 8.2 Possible improvements of the Welcome Office Vaasa

Creating an advisory committee composed of representatives of various governmental and non-governmental agencies (e.g., immigrant associations) would serve the one-stop-shop by facilitating constant dialogue and updates between those invested in its operations. The primary consideration would be the analytical examination of elements relevant to the policy-makers and stakeholders by providing reviews of the one-stop-shop's activity, thus legitimizing the operation and demands arising from the circumstances. The one-stop-shop could, in return, receive an evaluation of its work and complementary recommendations (R. Penninx, 2009, p. 6). Another feasible idea is appointing selected immigrants—who have established their lives in a host society—as mentors serving in, for example, various programs and

associations and, finally, as liaisons in the one-stop-shop; they would act as informal cultural mediators, offering their time and help outside of the office premises.

The media plays an important role by providing accurate and unbiased information on immigration and informing the populace about the happenings and possibilities. What could be done more regarding media coverage in the city of Vaasa is attempting to write articles on the city's official website (e.g., a news feed, chronicles, blogs), publish them in the local newspapers, and participate in the local radio station. Utilizing those communication channels—primarily by sharing encouraging success stories—would potentially produce a positive effect of advertising the Welcome Office, connecting people, spreading awareness about integration, and promoting a positive attitude towards immigrants.

The Welcome Office would benefit from metrics and qualitative indicators measuring the accomplishment of its goals; this would further convince municipal decision-makers and cooperating parties of the necessity of its existence. The Welcome Office has collected customer feedback, but this is usually not enough to convince the decision-makers. Additionally, the data from the ALPO register could be used more strongly considering measuring individual progress to support the Welcome Office's funding. Furthermore, creating a convincing document illustrating the hypothetical situation in which there is no Welcome Office in the city of Vaasa would help fortify the organization's existence, for, alas, the interviewed supervising service advisor could not answer that question when asked.

Finally, when establishing a new office, the interior could be made appealing to the service users' *ethos* (values) and *pathos* (emotions) by creating a welcoming and warm environment decorated with inclusive art, thus contributing to inclusivity, trust, and cooperation.

## 9 CONCLUSION

The last chapter concludes by presenting the theoretical framework for establishing, maintaining, and improving a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration based on the data types and their similitudes, with related principles clustered under each of the four research questions. Finally, the chapter briefly describes the effect of the conducted research on my professional development and my review of the research process.

### 9.1 Principles for establishing, maintaining, and improving a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration

How is a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration established?

1) Identify the needs and challenges of integrating immigrants in a specific locale by engaging them in a dialogue.

Every service provision is based on the principle of "supply and demand." If a particular locale hosts many foreign immigrants integrating into society, they may face bureaucratic and other challenges. To aid them in adapting to and participating in the new society for mutual benefit, they must be engaged in a productive and encouraging dialogue. The dialogue—as an event, interviews, or questionnaires—serves as research for determining their most common needs and challenges.

2) Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations in the locale where the immigrants in need are.

After identifying the most prevalent needs of immigrants and their challenges, the second aspect that must be evaluated is the operational activity of the governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations, i.e., their strengths and weaknesses. Binding the former together under one roof requires recognizing the

deficiencies of their services (especially procedures) and manners of correcting them in the planned multi-professional, collaborative environment (i.e., a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration). The identified strengths serve as an anchoring point for further service development.

3) Found a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration based on the values and principles for providing quality aid for the target group.

Abstract values (such as multiculturalism, inclusivity, confidentiality, and service user's ownership) and principles (such as holism, empowerment, and service user's active participation) must be the core, manifested in the service provision (i.e., the interaction between the service provider and service user) and physical formation of the institution (i.e., interior embodying the values and principles).

Who are the service providers, and their competencies?

4) Employ competent professionals who know how to communicate, identify problems, seek information, offer solutions, guide and empower service users, and act as bridge-builders.

A service advisor providing services at a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration must possess a range of soft and hard skills (primarily on the concept of information acquisition and dissemination) while aiding the service user, empowering him or her through the process, and respecting his or her ownership over the personal matters, thus adhering to the core values and principles.

5) Emphasize the importance of teamwork and foster its spirit by promoting transparency, learning, and participation in everyday activities.

Cultivating camaraderie among the service advisors encourages improved performance, better coping, and reciprocal learning. Open communication, peer review, and mutual support are essential characteristics of a productive and satisfied team.

6) Continually invest in the service advisors by offering them the possibility of participating in various professional courses and events.

Another priority must be the service advisor's continuous education and professional development—especially in the era of rapid change producing new work methods. Being up-to-date with current events, adopting new work techniques, and actively improving the service provision while evading the often overly routinized and mundane nature of bureaucratic work produces a valuable professional invested in his or her work.

What are the services provided and their effect?

7) Provide holistic services that value the service users' betterment, ownership, and empowerment.

The core elements of the service provision must be information acquisition and dissemination, and guidance through various bureaucratic procedures. Engaging the service user in the process and respecting his or her ownership of the actions and decisions to be done, the goal is to teach him or her how to navigate different systems and eventually become self-reliant, thus fostering empowerment.

8) Ensure digitalization of the service provision.

In the era of digitalization, every office must have IT equipment (e.g., computers, printers, and scanners) available to professionals and service users. The purpose is twofold: to ensure easy and swift completion of procedures on the spot and unhindered access to other institutions and connection with them.

9) Keep records of service provision.

Online documentation of service provision (while respecting the privacy of service users) helps keep track of the type and number of service users and actions performed, identify patterns and trends, collect feedback, and improve the service provision. Moreover, the archived logs are used to present the value of the one-stop-shop for immigrant integration to the supervising bodies deciding on the budget and guidelines.

What are the characteristics of the professional network?

10) Continually develop a mutually beneficial professional network.

Building an extensive professional network of governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations and their representative actors is essential. Reciprocity is the core value, and negotiation is the core principle.

#### 11) Advocate on behalf of the service users for better opportunities

Working "on the ground," close to the service users of immigrant backgrounds, allows insight into their needs and challenges and, subsequently, advocating on their behalf by influencing the decision-makers and initiating projects benefiting them.

### 9.2 Professional development, personal review of the research process, and recommendations for future research

During the research process, I familiarized myself with the qualitative research methodology that allowed me to investigate the chosen theme adequately and thus draw conclusions and, more importantly, advance my perception and understanding of concepts. By the latter, I mean viewing concepts as systems construed of core ideas and logical premises whose essence can be identified and compared to others, thus recognizing recurring and applicable patterns. This analytic thinking can be extrapolated to other domains of professional life, especially when an assessment is necessary or a solution must be developed, e.g., project initiation. Regarding the topic itself, i.e., the one-stop-shop for immigrant integration, I believe exploring it granted me further acumen of institutions and workings of such sort that can be applied to other related instances, e.g., immigration offices and non-governmental organizations devoted to immigrants.

Regarding the institution, the Welcome Office does not benefit substantially from my research and thesis. Only the potential improvements I listed might be the touchstone for further development—if deemed plausible and necessary. Aside from that, the concepts I identified and elucidated might serve as means of reconsidering and

reiterating the *modus operandi*. The Welcome Office benefited primarily from my job performance as an intern and employee while I received valuable information and, of course, salary—that was our *quid pro quo*.

I believe the thesis at your hands offers a valuable overview of the theme in question, elucidating and relating to it numerous concepts and demonstrating its feasibility in real life. Undoubtedly, many other concepts can be related to the theme; the ones I chose to expound on are the ones most pertinent to the analyzed iteration in question—the Welcome Office Vaasa—and most frequent in general.

Finally, that leads me to conclude this thesis with a remark on future research on the theme. As stated previously, the Welcome Office Vaasa is not a one-stop-shop for immigrant integration connecting various public institutions under one roof, though it bears most of the features; therefore, future research could focus on the direct interplay between the governmental institutions at the same premises. Furthermore, different corresponding concepts could be identified and analyzed, thus presenting other instances of the theme.

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## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. On what principles is the Welcome Office founded?
2. On what principles does the Welcome Office operate?
3. What is the inner structure of the Office (i.e., management and leadership)?
4. What is the financial aspect of the Office?
5. How could the Office be developed?
  
6. What are the fundamentals of the professional network?
7. How does the network affect the Office, and how does the Office affect the network?
8. What kind of projects would benefit the Office?
  
9. What makes the Office unique in its service provision?
10. What are the services provided by the Office?
11. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the services?
12. How can the services be improved?
13. What are the principles of the client-service provider relationship?