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SEINÄJOEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Silja Nevala

How to improve the orientation process and workplace learning?

CASE: EEPEE Prisma Hyllykallio

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Thesis abstract

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Author: Silja Nevala

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This thesis investigated the development of the orientation process and workplace learning at EEPEE Prisma Hyllykallio, Seinäjoki. The topic was chosen due to the student´s personal interest and work experience with the commissioning company. Orientation is conducted annually, particularly for summer workers, and a well-structured orientation program provides a strong start for new employees. Moreover, workplace learning requires continuous support and consideration of different learning styles to help employees develop their skills efficiently.

The research utilized an embedded mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Survey research was distributed to approximately 200 employees, gathering 23 responses. Open-ended questions provided deeper insights into employees´ experiences and preferred learning styles. The key challenges identified included inconsistencies in orientation, lack of feedback and time constraints.

The study produced a list of practical recommendations that can be implemented immediately or tested during upcoming summer workers´ orientations. Additionally, a PowerPoint report summarizing the key findings was created for the commissioning company.

Some of the chapters or subchapters of the thesis are left unpublished. In that case, these sections shall include the mention “Includes business and professional secrets”.

[1] Keywords: orientation, workplace learning, mixed-method research, employee development, mentoring

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Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä

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Tämä opinnäytetyö tutki perehdytysprosessin ja työssäoppimisen kehittämistä EEPEE Prisma Hyllykalliolla, Seinäjoella. Aihe valikoitui opiskelijan henkilökohtaisen kiinnostuksen sekä työskentelykokemuksen perusteella kyseisellä toimeksiantajalla. Perehdytystä tapahtuu vuosittain erityisesti kesätyöntekijöiden kohdalla, ja hyvin toteutettu perehdytys antaa vahvan alun uudelle työntekijälle. Lisäksi työssäoppiminen edellyttää jatkuvaa tukea ja erilaisten oppimistyylien huomioimista, jotta työntekijät voivat kehittää osaamistaan tehokkaasti.

Tutkimuksessa käytettiin monimenetelmätutkimusta, jossa yhdistettiin määrällinen ja laadullinen aineisto. Kyselytutkimus jaettiin noin 200 työntekijälle, ja siihen saatiin 23 vastausta (vastausprosentti 11,5 %). Avoimet kysymykset tarjosivat syvällisempää tietoa työntekijöiden kokemuksista ja oppimistyyleistä.

Tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että onnistunut perehdytysprosessi edellyttää laadukasta suunnittelua, pitkäjänteistä seurantaa ja esimiesten aktiivista sitoutumista palautekeskustelujen kautta. Merkittävimmiksi haasteiksi nousivat perehdytyksen epäjohdonmukaisuudet, palautteen vähäisyys ja aikarajoitteet.

Tutkimuksessa listattiin käytännön suosituksia, joita voidaan ottaa käyttöön heti tai kokeilla tulevien kesätyöntekijöiden perehdytyksessä. Toimeksiantajalle tuotettiin tutkimuksen pohjalta PPT-esitys, jossa esiteltiin keskeisimmät tulokset.

Jotkin opinnäytetyön kappaleet tai välikappaleet jätetään julkaisematta. Tällöin näihin osiin on sisällytettävä maininta "Sisältää liike- ja ammattisalaisuuksia”.

[1] Asiasanat: perehdytys, työssäoppiminen, monimenetelmällisyys, työntekijöiden kehittäminen, mentorointi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis abstract 2
Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä 3
TABLE OF CONTENTS 4
Pictures, Figures and Tables 6
Terms and Abbreviations 7
1 INTRODUCTION 8
1.1 Purpose of the thesis 8
1.2 Objectives and goals 10
1.3 The use of AI 11
2 S GROUP 12
2.1 Case Company: EEPEE Prisma Hyllykallio 13
2.2 Current learning status 14
2.3 Current orientation status 14
2.4 Examples from other regional cooperatives 14
3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 16
3.1 AMO Model 16
3.2 HRM - Learning and Development 17
3.2.1 Enhancing Workplace Learning 18
3.2.2 LEAN 19
3.2.3 LEAN method in suggested practise 20
3.2.4 Case Example: Successful Implementation of LEAN Production 21
3.3 Employee orientation 22
3.3.1 Good orientation process 23
3.3.2 Challenges in orientation 24
3.3.3 Practical ideas for orientation 24
4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 26
4.1 Research Design 26
4.2 Research strategy 28
4.2.1 Sampling 28

4.2.2 Data Collection 30
4.2.3 Data Analysis 36
5 RESULTS 39
6 DISCUSSION 40
6.1 Interpretation of orientation process ..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**
6.2 Interpretation of workplace learning ..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**
6.3 Limitations 40
6.4 Reliability and Validity 41
7 RECOMMENDATIONS 44
7.1 Recommendations through theory ..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**
7.2 Recommendations through research ..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**
8 CONCLUSION 45
BIBLIOGRAPHY 46
APPENDICES 50

Pictures, Figures and Tables

Picture 1. Recommended orientation pathway. EEPEE. (21.07.2024). Retrieved June 17, 2024. EEPEE Intranet. ..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Figure 1. AMO-model (Viitala, 2021, p. 20). 16

Figure 2. The process of Thematic Analysis (Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 664-665)..... 38

Figure 3. Distribution of work experience at Prisma Hyllykallio. (N=23). . **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Figure 4. Distribution of respondents by employment type (N=23). .... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Figure 5. Thematic analysis of open-ended questions 8 and 9. .... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Figure 6. Thematic analysis of open-ended question 12..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by gender (N=23). ..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by age. (N=23).. **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Table 3. Likert statements related to employee orientation (N=23)..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Table 4. Distribution of the level of orientation described (N=23).. **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Table 5. Distributions of orientation formats (N=23)... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Table 6. Distribution of training formats (N=23). ..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Table 7. Likert statements of workplace learning (N=23). ..... **Virhe. Kirjanmerkkiä ei ole määritetty.**

Terms and Abbreviations

EEPEE	Etelä-Pohjanmaan Osuuskauppa (Cooperative of South Ostrobothnia)
S-Etukortti	Loyalty card of S Group

1 INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the strategic and administrative function of managing an organization's workforce (Bonifacio, 2024). It encompasses key activities such as recruitment, training, performance management, compensation, employee relations, and compliance with labor laws. According to the author, HRM plays a crucial role in aligning employee performance with organizational goals, ensuring that businesses attract, develop, and retain talent. Beyond administrative tasks, HRM contributes strategically by fostering a positive work environment, supporting employee engagement, and driving long-term business success (op. cit).

Employee development, particularly through workplace learning and orientation, is a central aspect of HRM. A study conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Työterveyslaitos) in 2021–2022 examined learning and employee well-being in three service sectors: retail, accommodation and restaurant, and real estate. The results were compared to similar data from 2008, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement in these industries (Lindström et al., 2023, pp. 24–26).

The study found that workplace learning methods are increasingly diverse, and this trend is expected to continue in the future. However, one of the key challenges identified was the decline in satisfaction with work orientation. Lindström et al. (2023, pp. 24–26) state hat compared to previous years, satisfaction levels had dropped by 5–10 percentage points in various service sectors, with only about 60% of employees feeling they had received adequate orientation for their role. Since orientation is crucial for both new hires and permanent employees returning from extended absences, addressing this issue is essential for improving employee integration and productivity (op. cit., pp. 24–26).

1.1 Purpose of the thesis

Orientation and workplace learning are essential aspects of organizational development. The orientation process is crucial as it forms an employee's first impression of the company during those first weeks. This period is critical because if the experience does not meet their expectations, there is a risk of the employee leaving, resulting in wasted recruitment resources (Smith Seeling, 2017). Workplace learning, on the other hand, is an ongoing process that is vital for all employees. It is essential for business growth, as a well-integrated learning

system enhances employees' skill sets. While performance scores provide a quantitative measure of progress, it is equally important to ensure that development is on the right track. Valuable insights can be gained from employees and their feedback on the training they receive.

The subjects of this thesis have been motivated by the researcher's current working environment and personal interest in investigating orientation and workplace learning. As Kumar (2005, pp. 43–44) highlights, selecting a research topic should be personally interesting, as the research process demands significant time and intrinsic motivation to achieve meaningful results. Given the researcher's five years of employment at Prisma Hyllykallio, the case company was a natural choice for this study. This direct experience provides an advantage in understanding open-ended responses from employees, as the researcher has a deeper familiarity with the company's context and practices. However, it is essential to approach data collection and analysis with objectivity, and strategies to support this are discussed in the reliability section of this thesis.

The purpose of this thesis is to conduct a survey of orientation and workplace learning for employees of Prisma Hyllykallio. The aim of this thesis is to generate ideas for more supportive and efficient orientation process and recommend new learning styles in the working environment. A study questionnaire included questions about statements of orientation, experienced orientation, and additionally, questions about learning preferences in the workplace. The study results and their analysis can be found in chapters five and six, and the questionnaire at the end of the thesis (Appendix 2).

A search for previous studies in the Theseus database using the term "*perehdytys*" (onboarding) and narrowing it only master studies resulted 67 results with time frame of 2020–2024. With the same time frame, the key word "*learning*" resulted 44 master theses. The combination key words with "*Prisma*" and "*perehdytys*", resulted that at least nine bachelor-level theses have been conducted between 2012 and 2024 on the topic of orientation at different Prisma hypermarkets in Finland. Therefore, the fact that students repeatedly choose orientation or learning as their thesis topics indicate that they remain a noteworthy subject, deserving ongoing attention and potential improvement. As noted by Saunders et al. (2023, p. 34), it is essential to maintain awareness of the quality of arguments and observations contained in such research. Still, they find it a useful way of scanning past projects and perhaps generating new research ideas.

The structure of the thesis is divided into four main sections. The first section explores the foundational frameworks of the AMO model and the LEAN method, which are applied in the orientation process and workplace learning. The second section details the research design and strategy. The third section presents the results (Chapter five) and provides interpretations (Chapter six), addressing the limitations, reliability, and validity of the study. Chapter seven integrates theory and research findings, offering recommendations. Finally, Chapter eight presents the conclusions.

1.2 Objectives and goals

The primary objective of this research is to enhance the orientation process at Prisma in Seinäjoki. This will be achieved by gathering employees' opinions on the current orientation process, identifying general factors and resource allocations that influence the effectiveness of the experience. Since departments vary in the content of their orientation, the goal is to find ways to make the process more supportive and efficient, particularly for new employees and those returning after a long absence. Effective orientation programs significantly boost employee engagement and support, creating a stronger connection between employees and the company's values and brand (Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2023, p. 29).

An additional objective is to gain insight into the workplace learning experiences of Prisma employees, focusing on discovering the most effective learning styles and suggesting improvements. Workplace learning is a key factor in employee development and organizational success, as it enhances skills, knowledge, and overall job performance. The research will address the following questions:

What factors make the orientation process effective and supportive at EEPEE Prisma Seinäjoki?

What are the preferred learning styles and training preferences among EEPEE Prisma Seinäjoki employees?

To achieve these objectives, the research has the following specific goals:

- Collect employee feedback on the current orientation process across departments, identifying effective elements and areas for improvement.

- Evaluate how the orientation supports employee learning and adaptation to the work environment, particularly for new hires and returnees. Effective workplace learning is crucial for employee development and organizational success, as it enhances skills, knowledge, and overall job performance (Jacobs & Park, 2009, pp. 137–139).
- Identify employees' preferred learning styles and training preferences to tailor the orientation and training programs for greater effectiveness.

1.3 The use of AI

In this thesis, the ChatGPT language model was used as a helpful tool in the early stages of brainstorming and discussing relevant and topical subjects to guide the research process. The AI assisted in generating ideas, exploring different angles, and suggesting logical structures for organizing the research content. This process helped to narrow down the scope of the broad topic, making it more manageable and focused. Additionally, the AI helped in breaking down large topics into smaller, more manageable sections, and offered suggestions on what key content should be addressed under each section or heading. This approach facilitated the balancing of study time and work by ensuring that each part of the research was properly structured and focused.

However, it is important to emphasize that the AI did not generate any sources or contribute to the factual content. All sources used in this thesis are printed materials, such as books, or verified online sources, independently gathered and cited by the author. The AI's role was strictly focused on supporting the ideation and thematic analysis process, helping the author identify potential categories and frameworks for analysis. These suggestions were thoroughly reviewed, adjusted, and finalized by the author to ensure accuracy and alignment with the research objectives.

2 S GROUP

S Group is a network of Finnish companies that are focused on retail and service sectors. The network consists of 19 independent regional cooperatives, six local cooperatives, and SOK, which is owned by the cooperatives and acts as their central organization (S-ryhmä, n.d.a). The role of SOK is to provide expertise and support services for S Group cooperatives. In 2023, S Group employed about 40 000 people across approximately 2 000 stores in Finland, making it the largest private sector employer in the country and further rewarded its reputation as the Ideal Employer (S-ryhmä, 2024, Universum, 2023). Retail and service sectors are divided into five categories, and they are:

- Supermarket trade (Sale, S-Market, Prisma)
- Department store (Sokos)
- Specialty store trade (Emotion)
- Service station stores and fuel sales (ABC)
- Travel and hospitality business (Sokos hotels)

According to The Finnish Grocery Trade Association (PTY, 2023), S Group holds the leading position in the Finnish market with a share of 47%, while its main competitor, K Group, holds 35% of the market share. Lidl secures the third position with 9.8% of the market share, followed by others with only 3.3% or less, signifying their relatively smaller presence in the market. Therefore, S Group holds a strong position in the Finnish market.

S Group´s operations are guided by their values, based on responsible cooperative principles:

We exist for the customer: According to Krook (2023, pp. 9–10), S Group values its customers and demonstrates appreciation by offering them financial benefits through co-op membership. He continues that with an extensive network and a wide range of services throughout Finland, S Group makes it convenient for customers to concentrate their purchases. Co-op membership has become meaningful to members through genuine benefits and actions (Krook, 2023, pp. 9–10).

We constantly renew our operations: The latest news from 2024 highlights S Group's significant investments in renewing its operations. In Vantaa, one of the largest food e-

commerce logistical centers in Europe is being established, which will improve capacity of delivery and security through automation technology (Ranua, 2024). Furthermore, Beaumont (2024) states that technology has made a leap with small robotic transport enabling food deliveries in large cities in Finland, easing consumers' everyday lives. He continues that these robots have been in use for a year and have been positively received by consumers, having just reached the milestone of 150 000 deliveries in Finland, indicating their popularity (Beaumont, 2024). Henell (2024) mentions investments in renewable sources are being established in Eurajoki as a wind power park. It will cover a fifth of S Group's electricity needs and support their emission targets (op. cit.).

We take responsibility for people and the environment: According to Heikkilä (2020), S Group has set new climate goals, which is to be the first Finnish group of companies to be carbon negative as early as 2025. The goal is to reduce atmospheric emissions by 90 % by 2030 (op. cit.). Krook (2023, p.10) explains that due to improved energy efficiency and increased wind power, as well as investment in solar power, S Group is reaching emission reduction targets ahead of schedule. The long-term goal is to reduce climate emissions to net zero by 2050, both in terms of own operations and the value chain (op. cit., p. 10).

We operate profitably: The key strategy of S Group is to produce a competitive advantage through cooperative actions, benefits for co-op members, and increase business and enhance performance ability (S-ryhmä, n.d.b). These key elements make it possible to join in competition due to digitalization, increasing international competition, and uncertainty in growth and consumption (op. cit.). The strategy defines how S Group enables their mission to produce affordable and quality products and services to cooperative members, Finnish consumers, and to be a leader in sustainability in its sectors (op. cit.).

2.1 Case Company: EEPEE Prisma Hyllykallio

EEPEE is one of the 19 regional cooperatives, which operates in the service industry, covering the 80 outlets of South Ostrobothnia with nearly 1 400 employees. The focus of its operations is to provide competitive services and benefits to over 93 000 co-op members. EEPEE celebrated their 120-year journey with their employees and customers in 2023. Hypermarket Prisma has center location in Seinäjoki, the South Ostrobothnia, which employs over 200 employees (EEPEE, n.d., EEPEE, 2023a, EEPEE, 2023b)

In Seinäjoki, there are approximately 350 retail stores (Seinäjoki, n.d.). K-Citymarket Päivölä, Lidl, and Minimani are more direct competitors to Prisma in terms of their focus on groceries and household items. These stores typically offer a wide range of food products along with other everyday necessities, like Prisma. Tokmanni Päivölä primarily focuses on offering a wide variety of discounted goods across various categories such as household items, clothing, electronics, toys, and seasonal products. While they may have a limited selection of food items, their main emphasis is not on groceries. Therefore, in the Seinäjoki area, Citymarket, Lidl, and Minimani would likely be considered more direct competitors to Prisma due to their similar offerings in the grocery and household goods sectors. According to Kotiharju (2016), S Group and Kesko stated that private labels gain fifth of the sales. Lidl´s whole concept is based on variety own brands, which they stated is 75 %.

2.2 Current learning status

Under the Finnish Co-operation Act (1333/2021), companies must prepare an annual workplace development plan to enhance employees' skills and adapt to changes in operations.

Includes business and professional secrets.

2.3 Current orientation status

Includes business and professional secrets.

2.4 Examples from other regional cooperatives

Successful examples from other regional cooperatives within the S Group demonstrate how a well-structured orientation process can improve employee integration and development. These examples can serve as models for potential improvements at Prisma Seinäjoki.

At Suur-Seudun Osuuskauppa (SSO), for instance, three official mentors—Jenni Kavander, Satu Koski, and Mira Wiman—focus full-time on orientation new employees across all SSO outlets. This new orientation system, which started in December 2021, ensures that new hires receive a comprehensive introduction to their role before starting practical work. The mentors create individualized orientation plans, provide and create necessary training

materials, and oversee the orientation process, which includes systems training and required certifications. New employees are also introduced to their colleagues, which fosters a sense of belonging and community (Kavander et al., 2022).

In the HR department at SOK, according to Kakko and Lukka (2024), S Group emphasizes a thorough and individualized orientation process. The goal is to efficiently integrate new employees into their roles, engage them with the work community, and provide professional support to build confidence and learning. The orientation is designed to guide employees through key milestones: the ability to handle basic tasks (“I CAN”), the competence to perform tasks independently (“I KNOW”), and a sense of belonging within the work community (“I BELONG”). Orientation includes a well-organized collection of materials to support learning, and the entire work community plays a role in making the process interactive and supportive.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 AMO Model

The AMO model (Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity) is a foundational theory in human resource management, providing a framework for understanding how to optimize employee performance (Viitala, 2021, pp. 17–20). The model (Figure 1) posits that employees perform at their best when they possess the necessary skills and knowledge (ability), are motivated to apply these skills (motivation), and could influence their work environment (opportunity) (op. cit., pp. 17–20).

Viitala (2021, pp. 17–20) gives example – ability is enhanced through activities like orientation and training, while motivation can be bolstered via reward systems and constructive feedback. Opportunity involves empowering employees to shape their roles and adapt to job tasks. When all three factors are effectively addressed, individual performance improves, subsequently enhancing organizational outcomes (op. cit., pp. 17–20).

According to Boxall and Purcell (2011, pp. 5–6), these factors are influenced by more than just direct HR management practices. External elements such as supervisory and co-worker support, the quality of information systems, and financial resources also play a critical role. They continue that a well-funded organization that invests in new technologies and staffing budgets creates an environment conducive to the AMO model's success. Conversely, the absence of one factor, such as organizational support, can hinder performance even when the other two factors are strong (op. cit., pp. 5–6).

The interactions among ability, motivation, and opportunity are complex, with no universally accepted understanding of their precise relationships. Nevertheless, Boxall and Purcell (2011, p.136) state that all three are essential for fostering employee performance. For the AMO model to succeed, it must enhance abilities (through knowledge development), motivation (through rewards and empowerment), and opportunities (via empowerment and access

Figure 1. AMO-model (Viitala, 2021, p. 20).

to information). These improvements ensure employees feel informed, capable, and engaged, ultimately driving better organizational performance (op. cit., p.136).

The study by Obeidat et al. (2016), explores the relationship between high-performance work practices (HPWP) and organizational performance through the ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) framework. Their data were collected from 118 Jordanian firms in the financial and manufacturing sectors using surveys completed by HR directors. Their findings confirm a positive link between HPWP and organizational performance, emphasizing the importance of investing in skill-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing HR practices. According to Obeidat et al. (2016), the findings support the AMO framework's utility in explaining this relationship and highlights its relevance in a non-Western context. Despite limitations, such as reliance on cross-sectional data and HR managers' self-reports, the research provides valuable insights into HRM's role in improving organizational outcomes (op. cit).

3.2 HRM - Learning and Development

According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020, p. 379), Learning and Development (L&D) aims to ensure that employees are equipped, skilled, and engaged through various methods, such as hands-on experience, mentoring, and organizational programs. They state that strategic L&D aligns employee growth with broader business objectives, recognizing that skilled human resources provide a significant competitive edge. Building a culture of continuous learning and empowerment is essential to fostering long-term organizational growth (op. cit).

Armstrong and Taylor (2020, pp. 383–390) continue that on an individual level, learning strategies are designed to enhance specific skills and behaviours that support organizational goals. They suggest understanding how people learn—through **action, interaction, and instruction**—shapes effective learning strategies. Motivation is a critical component in this process, with expectancy and goal theories suggesting that when employees are motivated by clear, attainable goals and positive outcomes, learning becomes more effective (op. cit., pp. 383–390). Customized approaches help learners reach their unique objectives and strengthen engagement (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020, pp. 383–390).

However, Armstrong and Taylor (2020, pp. 392–393) state that effective learning activities require a solid foundation in understanding **what needs to be learned and why**. This starts with a learning needs analysis, which identifies the skills and knowledge required at both

individual and group levels (op. cit., pp. 392–393). Armstrong and Taylor (2020, pp. 392–393) explain that a gap analysis pinpoints the difference between current capabilities and what is needed to meet organizational demands, allowing for targeted learning interventions. Insights are gathered from managers and employees through surveys, interviews, or informal discussions, which often reveal specific areas for development more effectively (op. cit., pp. 392–393). The results of these analyses guide the organization's overall learning strategy, ensuring it aligns with and supports business objectives (op. cit., pp. 392–393).

3.2.1 Enhancing Workplace Learning

Armstrong and Taylor (2020, p. 404) state that learning primarily occurs in the workplace, often in informal settings. They explain that while employees gain knowledge through experience, line managers play a crucial role in facilitating this process by providing coaching and organizing supportive activities, including formal training sessions. Therefore, workplace learning is largely experiential—**learning by doing**—and encompasses social or cooperative learning, where individuals learn from one another (op. cit., p. 404). This process is further enhanced through self-managed learning, coaching, mentoring, e-learning, and structured experiences, such as induction training, which ensures new employees acquire the necessary skills and knowledge (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020, p. 404). Additional training may later be provided to develop new competencies or enhance existing ones (op. cit., p. 404).

According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020, pp. 405–407), while experiential learning is vital, it should not be left to chance. It needs to be structured and supported through various means, such as:

- **Job Rotation**: Moving employees between tasks to gain diverse experiences and reduce boredom.
- **Coaching**: Encourages employees to tackle higher-level problems and enhances their awareness of their performance.
- **Mentoring**: Utilizing trained individuals to offer guidance, practical advice, and ongoing support to help new hires to learn and develop.
- **Buddy System**: Pairing new hires with more experienced colleagues to facilitate knowledge transfer.

- **Shadowing**: A type of buddying where trainees observe experienced colleagues to learn best practices.
- **Performance Management**: Regular assessments to guide employee development.
- **Personal Development Planning**: Structured plans that help employees set and achieve their learning goals

Armstrong and Taylor (2020, pp. 407–408) remind that social and collaborative learning happens continuously as individuals and groups work together. They state that collaborative problem-solving enables employees to learn from each other's experiences, but this process should not be left to chance. Therefore, social learning is strengthened through connected learning, which addresses individual learning needs and interests. This can be supported by opportunities for collaborative learning, such as learning communities and virtual learning environments (op. cit., pp. 407–408).

3.2.2 LEAN

Vuorinen (2023, p. 71) states that LEAN is a methodology and mindset that brings together practical approaches for process improvement and quality enhancement. Moreover, it focuses primarily on increasing customer value by identifying and reducing waste and unnecessary activities. The core idea of LEAN is to help organizations concentrate on delivering greater value to the customer efficiently and cost-effectively (Vuorinen, 2023, p. 71). In this approach, the three primary challenges in achieving this "flow" are variation, overload, and waste (op. cit., p. 71). According to Torkkola (2015, pp. 23 – 27), eliminating these is not the final objective but a strategy to foster an efficient, value-centred workflow. Among these, variation is particularly significant, as it often leads to both overload and waste. They state that it is typically categorized into seven types: overproduction, inventory or unfinished work, waiting, unnecessary movement of employees or materials, transfer of tasks, errors and rework, and inappropriate processing. Understanding and eliminating these types of waste is essential for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in any organization (op. cit., pp. 23 – 27). LEAN's core principles can be divided into five stages according to Vuorinen (2023, p. 71) and Torkkola (2015, pp. 23 – 27):

- **Identifying Customer Value:** In LEAN, all products and services derive their value from the customer's perspective. The organization must understand what the customer values and is willing to pay for.
- **Mapping the Value Stream:** The organization identifies all steps in the process that contribute to customer value and removes any actions that do not add value.
- **Establishing Flow in Production:** Production should be continuous, streamlined, and free from unnecessary delays, handling, and transport.
- **Implementing Pull-Based Production:** In a pull system, production is driven by actual demand rather than projections, which reduces overproduction and waste.
- **Striving for Perfection:** LEAN involves a continuous pursuit of improvement, where waste is minimized, and processes are refined.

3.2.3 LEAN method in suggested practise

According to Sarpo (2013), building on the core principles of LEAN, the goal in orientation is to create a streamlined, value-focused orientation experience. By focusing on activities that genuinely add value for both the new employee and the organization; while removing unnecessary, time-consuming steps, LEAN offers a clear, efficient approach to orientation (op. cit). Sarpo (2013) suggest that this can be structured into a five-step LEAN pathway for orientation and applying method to workplace learning as well, which includes the following:

Invest in initial interactions: Sarpo (2013) explains the importance of a structured and paced introduction, focusing on how first impressions shape a new employee's perception of the organization. He emphasizes that LEAN prioritizes quality over rushing through introductions, ensuring meaningful, memorable interactions. In workplace learning, this would mean allowing more time for new employees to learn and providing opportunities to have conversations with mentors, as well as the chance to ask questions.

Streamline learning for impact: Sarpo (2013) describes how LEAN encourages creativity and simplification, avoiding information overload. Standardizing the orientation content and process reduces errors and allows for continuous improvement, aligning with LEAN's commitment to quality (op. cit). In workplace learning, this brings value to employees by creating a clear and structured learning path, which ultimately enhances the service provided to customers.

Assign a mentor or buddy: Sarpo (2013) outlines the importance of a mentor, or "tutor," as a reliable guide through the orientation process. He states that designated mentor introduces unwritten rules and fosters a supportive learning environment. In workplace learning, this could be facilitated through a virtual community where employees can discuss the subjects they've learned and share insights, creating a collaborative learning atmosphere.

Involve the organization: Sarpo (2013) emphasizes the value of exposing the new employee to various departments and involving leadership. LEAN encourages team integration by allowing employees to understand how their role connects to the larger organization (op. cit). In workplace learning, the organization should clearly explain the reasons behind the training and the benefits it brings, helping employees see the value of their development.

Gather and apply feedback: Sarpo (2013) highlights LEAN's focus on continuous improvement by collecting feedback from the new employee about their orientation experience. He suggests that feedback is used to adjust and improve the orientation process, ensuring it remains relevant and valuable. Additionally, gathering feedback after workplace learning is completed is crucial for management to enhance training offerings and make necessary adjustments based on employee input.

3.2.4 Case Example: Successful Implementation of LEAN Production

A case study of AstraZeneca's Turbuhaler factory analysed the transformation of a successful improvement program into a sustainable LEAN production system over nine years (Poksinska & Swartling, 2018, p. 999). AstraZeneca, a global biopharmaceutical company, implemented LEAN to address inefficiencies in production and avoid outsourcing. The study involved 24 semi-structured interviews, 34 observations, and data collection from shadowing managers (op. cit).

The study continues that before LEAN, AstraZeneca was profitable but had low productivity. In 2001, the company initiated LEAN to improve efficiency. The orientation phase focused on creating formal networks, recruiting experienced managers, and educating employees on LEAN practices (op. cit). The factory introduced LEAN tools like visual production control and waste reduction, leading to a 150% increase in productivity and a 90% reduction in quality deviations (Poksinska & Swartling, 2018, pp. 999, 1001).

According to Poksinska and Swartling (2018, pp. 1001–1003), the company faced challenges during implementation, such as resistance to standardized work and difficulties with employee engagement. However, as employees were empowered and participated in improvement efforts, changes were successfully integrated. The reward system shifted from individual bonuses to team-based incentives to encourage collaboration. Moreover, managers also transitioned from process management to coaching roles, fostering a more participative culture (Poksinska & Swartling, 2018, pp. 1001–1003).

In the study, employees had internalized LEAN principles, applying them even in their personal lives. Therefore, the company continued to evolve by promoting teamwork, increasing employee responsibility, and reorganizing teams to focus on self-management. Managers played a key role in creating a supportive environment for learning and development (Poksinska & Swartling, 2018, pp. 1003–1004).

In conclusion, Lean methodology is a long-term process that requires continuous improvement and the involvement of all personnel. Success hinges on employee empowerment, a participative culture, and managerial support. By focusing on teamwork, self-management, and ongoing change, organizations can sustain Lean practices and achieve lasting improvements in efficiency and productivity.

3.3 Employee orientation

According to Joki (2024, p. 87) and Viitala (2021, pp. 97–99), employee orientation includes all activities that help new employees integrate into the organization, their work community, and quickly learn their tasks. They state that it is essential for new hires, employees with changed roles, temporary workers, and external contributors. Moreover, effective orientation, primarily the responsibility of immediate supervisors, ensures individuals can perform efficiently and comfortably in their new roles (op. cit).

However, it is important to clarify two terms: orientation and onboarding. Clausen (2022) describes that orientation is part of the onboarding process, which typically begins with the decision to recruit a new employee. Moreover, orientation refers to the initial days or week when employees gain basic skills for their tasks (op. cit). Onboarding, on the other hand, is a series of events that include orientation. Onboarding is crucial, regardless of the type and size of the business (op. cit). The onboarding process helps new employees understand how to succeed

in their daily jobs and how their work contributes to the overall business. It is an ongoing process that can last several weeks. Understanding the difference between the two is vital, as both are valued and required (Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2023, pp. 11–14; Clausen, 2022).

The Finnish law states that employers must offer employees adequate information about safety hazards or risk factors and ensure that professional learning and work experiences are taken into consideration. Employees must be sufficiently oriented to the job, tasks and process, including safety issues related to used tools and work habits. Employees are given instructions and guidance to prevent work hazards and in situations that are dangerous to health and safety. This includes guidance in case of errors and exceptional situations. Finally, the instruction and guidance given must be extended if necessary (Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002).

Eklund (2018, pp. 28–29) adds that the goals of orientation in organizations are often broader than merely ensuring work safety as mandated by Finnish law. According to her, employee commitment is a common orientation goal, but it is not necessarily the primary goal for every organization. Nowadays, short-term contracts and part-time work are becoming more common. In such cases, the goal of orientation might be quick job learning or mastering routine tasks. It is essential for the employee to learn the practical aspects of their work environment that are most relevant to their job (Eklund, 2018, pp. 28–29).

Eklund (2018, pp. 28–29) states that when organizations aim for long-term commitment and are willing to invest in long-term development, the goals of orientation can look quite different. In these cases, it may be beneficial to set goals such as adapting to the organizational culture or getting to know the work environment more thoroughly and finding it enjoyable (op. cit., pp. 28–29). More time and resources are allocated to mastering the job comprehensively, with the understanding that development continues strongly even after the formal orientation period (pp. 28–29).

3.3.1 Good orientation process

According to Eklund (2018, pp. 36–37), developing a structured orientation process is the only way to ensure consistency across all roles within an organization. Every individual joining the organization has the right to receive proper orientation tailored to their specific role. The quality of orientation often focuses on the skills and experience of the person conducting

it (op. cit., pp. 36–37). Therefore, it is crucial for the organization to ensure that the facilitator is well-prepared for the task. Eklund explains that whether the facilitator is a supervisor or a colleague, they must have experience to address the needs of the new employee and possess the skills necessary to support the employee's learning process. The goal of a structured orientation process is to provide both facilitators and new employees with an effective tool for implementing the orientation (Eklund, 2018, pp. 36–37).

According to a study conducted by Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013), orientation has a significant impact on employee engagement. The study focused on how supporting new employees influenced their engagement during the first 90 days and compared this data to the support received after this period. The results showed that the support provided in the initial months had a greater impact on work performance and engagement than the support received after the 90-day period (op. cit). Therefore, the first few months, typically identified as the orientation period, are the most important for employee engagement.

3.3.2 Challenges in orientation

According to Davila and Pina-Ramirez (2023, pp. 33–34), orientation programs often fail to deliver the expected results, primarily due to insufficient planning, time, and resources. However, less obvious factors can also negatively impact these programs. These include:

- orientation and reality do not match,
- lack of employee engagement with the orientation,
- a "do it yourself" mentality,
- lack of involvement from managers,
- information overload in a small time-window,
- assuming unwritten rules are obvious

3.3.3 Practical ideas for orientation

Eklund (2018, pp. 173–184) lists tools and ideas to help in planning and designing the ideal orientation process that would be suitable in the organization. However, the different methods are suited to different situations and environments. A good orientation method could be

important to gain new insights about the current quality level of orientation process (pp. 173–184).

Eklund (2018, pp. 173–184) suggests thinking of new employees as a valuable, fresh perspective on how well the orientation process works, and it is beneficial to make use of this insight. One effective method for **gathering their feedback** is to have them map out the process as they currently understand it (op. cit., pp. 173–184). Instead of simply explaining how things are done in the organization, Eklund suggests letting the new employees independently explore and share their views. This approach leverages their fresh perspectives to contribute to the improvement of organizational practices (op. cit., pp. 173–184). Eklund´s another approach is to have them keep **a learning diary** during the orientation as their personal notebook. Ideas and questions are good to write down and go through them carefully in the next meeting or workday (op. cit). This could be supported by a personal mentor, which is a more experienced employee in the workplace, who guides and supports new employees. Mentors share knowledge through practical experience, which makes it possible to pass tacit knowledge to another employee (pp. 173–184).

Digital material and online learning in orientation include texts, visuals and videos that are possible to go through them at their own pace and do not require the presence of mentor Eklund, 2018, pp. 173–184). However, bigger changes in the system or new service require training in bigger groups and might require several days. Therefore, learning could be organized internally by organization or employees are able to join open training courses outside the organization to develop their own skill set (op. cit., pp. 173–184). For example, PAM offers different courses that will help employees to succeed in their career or increase their wellbeing (PAM, 2024).

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Saunders et al. (2023, pp. 178–179), research design can be described as the plan that a researcher follows to answer research questions and achieve the set objectives. It is crucial to justify each phase, from the research design to the research strategy. In this case, an evaluative study using an embedded mixed-method research design is the most suitable approach for determining how well the orientation process and workplace learning work at Prisma Hyllykallio. Saunders et al. (p. 181) confirm that evaluative studies are used to "assess the effectiveness of an organizational or business strategy, policy, program, initiative, or process."

4.1 Research Design

Research designs are typically categorized into three types: **quantitative**, **qualitative**, or **mixed-methods**. These classifications emphasize whether the research data is numeric, non-numeric, or a combination of both (Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 181–182, 184–187). Quantitative research generates or utilizes numerical data, which is collected in a standardized manner. In contrast, qualitative research seeks to understand participants' meanings and the relationships between them through words and images, generating non-numerical data (op. cit., pp. 181–182, 184–187). Mixed-method research designs, therefore, combine quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures and analysis techniques within the same research project (pp. 181–182, 184–187).

Morse and Niehaus (2009, pp. 14–15) state that one of the key advantages of mixed-method designs is their efficiency, allowing a single research project to be completed more effectively than conducting multiple related studies over time. These designs are particularly effective when the researcher focuses on a single, well-developed concept that is easily measured, involving a narrow-targeted, unidimensional question and a single data type (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, p. 16). Furthermore, as Silverman (2024, p. 355) notes, mixed-method designs leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data, offering multiple perspectives on a given situation.

In **an embedded mixed-method design**, it is possible to use the methodologies either equally or unequally, with one taking a dominant role and the other a supportive role (Saunders et al., 2023, p. 189). When a questionnaire includes primarily quantitative questions but

also incorporates one or two qualitative open-ended questions, this is referred to as a concurrent embedded design (Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 189–190). In this case, the quantitative method is dominant, while the qualitative responses are collected simultaneously within the same questionnaire.

Survey research is a crucial method in mixed-method approaches, facilitating the efficient collection of both quantitative and qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 189–190). Common types of survey research include interviews and questionnaires (op. cit., pp. 189–190). While interviews allow for in-depth exploration through direct interaction with respondents, questionnaires provide a structured means of gathering information from a larger population efficiently (op. cit). Questionnaires are particularly valuable in this context due to their ability to standardize responses, making it easier to analyse data across different respondents (pp. 189–190).

According to Malhotra (2020, p. 319) and Saunders et al. (2023, pp. 549 – 551), **A questionnaire** serves as a structured tool to collect information from respondents, guided by three primary objectives. First, they state that it must accurately translate the needed information into specific, clear questions that respondents are both able and willing to answer. Crafting such questions is challenging, as subtle differences in wording can yield different types of responses (Malhotra, 2020, p. 319, Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 549–551). Secondly, a questionnaire should engage and motivate respondents to complete it fully, since incomplete responses limit its value. They state that researchers aim to reduce fatigue, boredom, and non-response to improve completion rates, as a well-designed questionnaire can enhance respondent motivation and participation. Lastly, minimizing response errors is crucial, as inaccuracies can arise from unclear questions, misinterpretations, or errors in recording or analysing answers (op. cit). Attention to factors like visual layout, length, content, distribution methods, and the use of clear language can further improve response rates and the quality of the collected data (Malhotra, 2020, p. 319; Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 549–551).

According to Malhotra (2020, p. 338) and Armour and MacDonald (2012, pp. 182 – 183), **pretesting** is a critical step in questionnaire design, aimed at identifying and addressing potential issues before the questionnaire is published. They state that the process involves testing a small-scale version of the questionnaire with individuals whose characteristics closely align with the target population. Moreover, pretesting evaluates key aspects such as question

clarity, content relevance, and overall structure (Armour & MacDonald, 2012, pp. 182–183, Malhotra, 2020, p. 338).

Initially, the research plan did not include a formal pretesting phase due to a constrained timeline. The questionnaire was designed and finalized based on feedback from knowledgeable colleagues and the thesis supervisor, and it was prepared for immediate deployment. However, after one week of data collection, only eight responses were received, prompting a review of the process. During this review, technical issues with the Webropol platform were identified, and it was advised to reframe this initial data collection period as a pretesting phase.

During the pretesting phase, only quantitative responses were retained and are presented in Appendix 4. While qualitative feedback was initially collected, it was not saved before the pretesting data collection process was reset. Consequently, it is not possible to review the written responses or determine whether similar themes appeared in both the pretesting and final datasets.

To maximize accessibility and response rates, the questionnaire will be distributed online, targeting employees at Prisma Hyllykallio. The questionnaire was launched on December 20th, 2024, and it closed January 10th, 2025, in total of three weeks. As Saunders et al. (2023, p. 513) note, online surveys typically require two to six weeks to collect responses. The survey link will be shared through the internal communication platform (Workplace) and by printed QR codes placed in common areas like break rooms, ensuring easy access for employees. This dual approach leverages digital convenience and physical visibility, enhancing participation while minimizing disruption to daily tasks (Saunders et al.,2023, pp. 551–552).

4.2 Research strategy

The research strategy is divided into sampling, data collection and data analysis.

4.2.1 Sampling

According to Malhotra (2020, p.357), in sampling design process, the first step is to define target population. In this case the element is the respondent of conducted survey, and sampling unit is Prisma as it contains the elements of the population to be sampled. Extent refers

to the geographical boundaries, thus more accurate description should be Hyllykallio, Seinäjoki. And the time factor is conducted between December 2024 and January 2025. Therefore, the target population total is 252, which consists of all employees who work in Prisma, Hyllykallio and are part of EEPEE.

The second step is to list directions to identify a sampling frame from the target population (Malhotra, 2020, p.358). Because the survey is distributed in certain private Workplace-platform, which includes Prisma Hyllykallio employees, but also workers from Emotion and Parturi-Kampaamo. Therefore, the researcher's plan is to notify in the questionnaire that it is only for employees in Prisma departments workers. After the exclusions, the sampling frame is approximately 200 potential respondents.

The third step is to select a sampling technique, which involves several decisions of a wider perspective (Malhotra, 2020, pp. 358–361). How are the elements or respondents selected? In this study, the non-probability sampling technique strongly relies on convenience or the personal judgement of the researcher. Even though nonprobability sampling might give results easily and cost-effectively, it is crucial to notify that this type of sampling and its findings may not be representative of the entire workplace (op. cit., pp. 358–361). Saunders et al. (2023, pp. 294–295) adds that non-probability sampling is suitable to answer any research question where the focus is on gaining insight and understanding. In more specifically, convenience sampling focuses on respondents' self-selection, which means any Prisma employees volunteers to fill the given survey, are selected. This type of sampling technique is commonly used in exploratory research for generating ideas and insights, but it is also practical for gathering feedback (Malhotra, 2020, p.363, Saunders et al., 2023, p. 293).

The final step, before executing the sampling process, is to determine the sample size which refers to the number of respondents to be included in the study (Malhotra, 2020, p. 359). The statistically determined sample size is the net or final sample size – the sample remaining after eliminating potential respondents who do not qualify or who not cot complete the survey (Malhotra, p. 391). The formula of Cochran (1977) is commonly used when the researcher knows the total population size and wants to adjust for it. The general form of the formula accounts for the finite population, confidence level, and margin of error, making it particularly useful in practical surveys.

$$n = \frac{N \times \mathrm{Z}^2 \times p\,(1-p)}{(N-1) \times E^2 + Z^2 \times p(1-p)}$$

Where:

N = Population size (200)

Z = Z-score (for 95% confidence, Z = 1.96)

p = estimated proportion of the population (usually 0.5 if unknown)

E = Margin of error (usually 0.05 for 5%)

$$n = \frac{200 \times 1{,}96^2 \times 0{,}5\,(1-0{,}5)}{(200-1) \times 0{,}05^2 + 1{,}96^2 \times 0{,}5(1-0{,}5)} = \frac{192{,}08}{1{,}4579} \approx 131{,}75$$

The recommended sample size for ensuring high precision and reliability of results is 132 respondents. However, due to practical constraints such as time, the researcher will be aiming to collect at least 60–80 responses. While this smaller sample size will increase the margin of error and reliability, it will still allow goals to obtain meaningful insights and identify key themes. The results should be interpreted with caution and recognized that the estimates would be less precise compared to a larger sample.

4.2.2 Data Collection

As previously discussed, **the structure of the questionnaire** follows a mixed-methods approach, integrating both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture a comprehensive range of employee responses. However, closed-ended questions play a dominant role, providing quantifiable data that allows for efficient analysis of trends and patterns. To gain more nuanced insights, three open-ended questions are included, two about orientation and one for workplace learning. Optional fourth open-ended question is situated at the end of the questionnaire, allowing respondents to comment freely on subjects or give general feedback. When forming the questions, the data requirements table from Saunders et al. (2023, pp. 519–520) was used to design the layout and order of the questions. A copy of this table can be found in Appendix 1.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections: a cover letter and consent, demographic questions, orientation, workplace learning, and a thank-you notification with an opportunity to provide additional comments about the subject. Each section is clearly labeled to guide

respondents through the different topics. As noted by Armour and MacDonald (2012, pp. 180–182), grouping questions according to similar topics and using headings to mark the beginning of each new section is an effective approach. This structure not only enhances the clarity of the questionnaire but also helps respondents navigate through the various topics more easily, ensuring a smoother and more organized survey experience. The questionnaire itself is in Appendix 2.

Section: A cover letter and consent

Including a cover letter (Appendix 2) is essential when presenting a questionnaire to respondents, as it should be polite, encourage participation, and clearly outline the purpose and intended use of the data (Armour & MacDonald, 2012, pp. 179–180). To fully inform participants about the research's purpose, scope, and confidentiality, both a cover letter and an informed consent form with a mandatory checkbox are provided at the start of the questionnaire (Armour & MacDonald, 2012, pp. 179–180; Saunders et al., 2023, p. 267). This cover letter offers clear details on the study’s objectives, voluntary participation, and confidentiality protocols, in alignment with ethical guidelines (op. cit).

Section: Demographic questions

The questionnaire begins with four mandatory demographic questions, following the recommendations of Armous and MacDonald (2012, pp. 180–182). They explain that this structure aims to help respondents ease into the survey, encouraging them to continue as the questions gradually become more complex and thought-provoking. The chosen demographic questions include gender, age, work experience, and form of employment.

Question 1 and question 2

Gender and age were included because they might reveal differences in perspectives and could potentially create contrasting views among respondents. Since the sample includes a limited number of respondents over the age of 50, the decision was made not to divide age groups into 50s and over 60s. In this case, the division would result in too few respondents in these age groups given the sample size of approximately 200 participants. Broader age ranges were set to better protect the anonymity and privacy of respondents, ensuring no individual could be easily identified during data analysis.

Question 3 and question 4

Initially, the questionnaire also considered segmenting responses by department, but it was determined that this detail would not add value to a study focused on general orientation and workplace learning. However, work experience and form of employment were retained as they might reveal differing perspectives or insights on the topic.

Question 3 provides respondents with five options to best describe their work experience: less than one year, 1–2 years, 3–5 years, 6–10 years, and 11+ years. The last category is intentionally broad to protect respondents' anonymity and ensure objectivity in the study, as only a few employees have extensive experience. Further dividing this group could risk confidentiality.

Question 4 asks about respondents' current form of employment, divided into two categories: permanent and temporary. While it would have been possible to specify this further, as some permanent employees work full-time while others do not, and temporary workers may have varying hours, these distinctions were not relevant to the study's focus. The primary interest is whether permanent and temporary employees perceive learning differently, as permanent employees are more likely to stay long-term, while temporary employees might transition to permanent roles or pursue other paths, such as returning to studies.

Section: Orientation

The section focuses on the orientation process and consists of three mandatory closed-ended questions, with two mandatory open-ended questions at the end to capture specific feedback.

Question 5

This section begins with a 5-point Likert scale featuring six statements, each linked to either the AMO model or LEAN methodology. Respondents are asked to specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of statements: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

During orientation, receiving feedback and support is essential for new hires, as it boosts their motivation and helps them feel qualified for the role. The next statement addresses whether there is a follow-up conversation with the supervisor after orientation, which could further strengthen motivation and enhance skills. Another statement asks if respondents would prefer more personalized orientation, providing insight into their satisfaction with the process. The quality of orientation is a critical element in LEAN principles, aimed at improving efficiency and effectiveness, and is reflected in the next statement. Finally, the last statement examines whether adequate time is allocated to the orientation process, allowing sufficient time to learn—another fundamental aspect of the LEAN approach.

Question 6

A separate Likert scale was created for Question 6, which asks respondents to describe how supportive and guided the orientation process has been, either from their own experience or through observation. This question aligns with the AMO model, which suggests that adequate orientation enhances ability, while guidance increases motivation and improves performance. The scale options range from "well-guided" to "no guidance at all," each with a detailed description for clarity: **Well-Guided** (*I received detailed, step-by-step instructions*), **Moderately Guided** *(I received general guidance but had room for independent learning*), **Minimally Guided** (the process was mostly independent, with occasional guidance), **No Guidance** (*I received little to no guidance*). Each option's description helps respondents accurately assess their experience, making it easier to capture meaningful data about the quality of guidance in the orientation process.

Question 7

Question 7 asks respondents which of the following training formats were most useful, based on either their own experience or what they have observed. This wording allows both new and experienced employees to reflect on the orientation process. The purpose of this question is to gather insights into preferred learning styles and training formats among employees. Respondents are encouraged to select up to 3 options from the following training formats: practical training, job shadowing, classroom-style group training, personal mentoring, online courses, or printed or digital materials for self-study.

Unfortunately, due to limitations in the Webropol platform, it was not possible to include an "Other" option. Ideally, this would have allowed respondents to write in any additional training formats not explicitly listed in the predefined choices. While this was not possible, every effort was made to ensure that all relevant formats were captured.

Question 8 and questions 9

At the end of the orientation section, two mandatory open-ended questions are included to gather more in-depth feedback. Question 8 encourages respondents to reflect on the positive aspects of their orientation experience and observations, fostering a constructive approach to feedback. Question 9 then shifts the focus to potential improvements, asking respondents for suggestions on how the orientation process could be enhanced. The goal is to gather actionable ideas that align with LEAN principles, which prioritize both continuous improvement and the recognition of current strengths. By combining these questions, the feedback aims to provide a balanced view of both strengths and areas for enhancement, ensuring the orientation process supports new employees in their roles and facilitates a smoother transition into the workplace.

Section: Workplace learning

Similarly, the section on workplace learning follows the same format: two mandatory closed-ended questions followed by one mandatory open-ended question.

Question 10

Question 10 is similar to Question 7, but it specifically focuses on how respondents prefer to learn when a new system or service is introduced that everyone needs to be aware of. Respondents are encouraged to select 1 to 3 options from the following training formats that they find most effective. The aim is to identify the most useful methods for workplace learning and skill development in such situations. The options provided are practical training, mentoring and coaching, job rotation, online courses, self-study, team-based learning, formal training sessions and personal self-directed learning path. This question helps identify employees' preferred learning methods, in line with workplace learning theory, which emphasizes experiential and social learning approaches. Additionally, for Question 10, it would have been

preferable to include "other" option to allow respondents to provide any additional feedback or answers not covered by the predefined choices.

Question 11

Question 11 includes a 5-point Likert scale featuring four statements, each linked to either the AMO model or LEAN methodology. Respondents are asked to specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of statements: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree.

Two of the statements reflect the AMO model and its theoretical emphasis on social and collaborative learning. Respondents are asked whether they receive support from their supervisor regarding learning and development. This aligns with the AMO model, which states that support increases motivation and performance. Help and support from colleagues is also important, especially in problem situations. Adequate support helps employees feel qualified for their jobs, boosts motivation, and improves performance. When a problem is solved with support, employees become quicker at addressing similar issues in the future.

The quality of workplace learning is a key aspect of LEAN principles, which focus on continuous improvement and process optimization. The final statement addresses the use of time in workplace learning. Allocating sufficient time ensures that respondents have enough time to integrate new information and skills, which is crucial for effective learning. If adequate time is provided for workplace learning, it prevents rushing through the process, ensuring employees can fully absorb the necessary knowledge and skills.

Question 12

The section ends with one mandatory open-ended question, identical to Question 9, asking respondents for suggestions on how the workplace learning could be enhanced and could give potential improvements. This aligns with LEAN principles, which encourage continuous improvement by addressing obstacles that may hinder effective learning and development.

Section: A thank-you notification

The questionnaire ends with an optional, open-ended question inviting respondents to share any additional thoughts or comments about the orientation process or workplace learning. This provides an opportunity for respondents to express insights that may not have been covered in the previous questions. Once completed, respondents are instructed to click the "Submit" button to finalize and send their responses.

4.2.3 Data Analysis

According to Saunder et al. (2023, p. 514), data collected through online questionnaires will, in most cases, be analyzed using computer software. They state that virtually all cloud-based survey platforms, such as Webropol, enable researchers to design questionnaires, capture responses, automatically code and save the data, and subsequently analyze it within the platform or export it as a data file for external analysis. According to them (2023, pp. 574 – 575), these tools eliminate the need for manual chart creation, calculator-based computations, or hand-counting the frequency of words or phrases. However, researchers must still understand the different types of data and their implications for analysis (op. cit).

The following section divides data analysis into quantitative and qualitative approaches, highlighting how each requires distinct methods of preparation and analysis.

Quantitative data analysis

According to Saunders et al. (2023, pp. 575 – 578), data for quantitative analysis can be divided into two distinct groups: **categorical data** and **numerical data**. They state that categorical data refers to values that cannot be measured numerically but can be classified into sets (categories) based on characteristics that identify or describe the variable. Therefore, categorical data can be either nominal or ordinal (op. cit., pp. 575 – 578). Numerical data, on the other hand, are values measured or counted as quantities. Saunders et al. (2023, pp. 575 – 578) describe that numerical data is more precise than categorical data, as each value can be assigned to a position on a numerical scale. This also allows for the application of a wider range of statistical techniques (op. cit). Numerical data can be further divided into interval or ratio data, or alternatively into continuous or discrete data (Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 575–578).

In the current research, the quantitative questions in the questionnaire were identified as generating either nominal (descriptive) data or ordinal (ranked) data.

According to Schmuller (2013, p. 12) and Saunder et al. (2023, pp. 577 – 578), nominal data consists of categories that are distinct and cannot be ordered numerically or ranked. Examples of nominal data in this study include questions about gender, form of employment, orientation formats, and training formats (op. cit). These data simply count the number of occurrences within each category of a variable. In contrast, ordinal (ranked) data provides a more precise form of categorical data (op. cit). They indicate the relative position of each case within the dataset, though the actual numerical differences between positions are not recorded (Schmuller, 2013, p. 12; Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 577–578). They give example of Likert scale, which capture respondents' levels of agreement or disagreement with statements and rank their responses in a meaningful order (Schmuller, 2013, p. 12; Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 577–578).

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative analysis lacks standardized technical tools, though systematic methods such as coding, counting, and software applications can be applied. Qualitative data is diverse, encompassing spoken words (verbal), written or typed text (textual), and images or videos (visual) (Saunders et al., 2023, p. 652). Rather than following rigid formulas, qualitative analysis involves exploring the data through various perspectives and methods to ensure a thorough examination (Saaranen-Kauppinen et al., 2009, pp. 93–94). The goal is often to condense the data to enhance understanding and interpretation, revealing insights that directly contribute to answering the research questions (op. cit., pp. 93–94; Saunders et al., 2023, p. 652).

Thematic Analysis is regarded as a general approach in qualitative research, where patterns of meaning are identified through coding. This method forms the foundation of other qualitative techniques, though applied in more specific ways. Its primary purpose is to uncover themes or patterns that emerge across the data set, which are then analyzed in relation to the research questions. Themes, or key topics, are typically developed inductively by identifying patterns and connections within the data, such as linking different interviews, responses, or written texts. Thematic Analysis is systematic, offering a clear and structured process for analyzing qualitative data. At the same time, it remains flexible and accessible, allowing for

rich descriptions, explanations, and theories to emerge from the data (Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 664–665; Saaranen-Kauppinen et al., 2009, pp. 105–107).

According to Saunders et al. (2023, pp. 664 – 665), thematic Analysis helps researchers understand large and varied qualitative data sets, which aids in identifying key themes or patterns. This, in turn, enables the drawing and validation of conclusions. They describe that the process of Thematic Analysis is divided into six phases (Figure 2): familiarization with the data, coding the data, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing themes, refining and naming themes, and writing up the findings (op. cit., pp. 664 – 665).

According to Turobov et al. (2024, pp. 13, 16 – 17), the integration of AI tools like ChatGPT into thematic analysis offers both significant opportunities and notable challenges for research methodologies. They add that AI can enhance data processing efficiency, enabling researchers to manage larger datasets and perform comprehensive analyses that improve research quality. However, they remind that its application requires human oversight to ensure accurate and in-depth results, such as errors in quotations or code naming require manual review and verification.

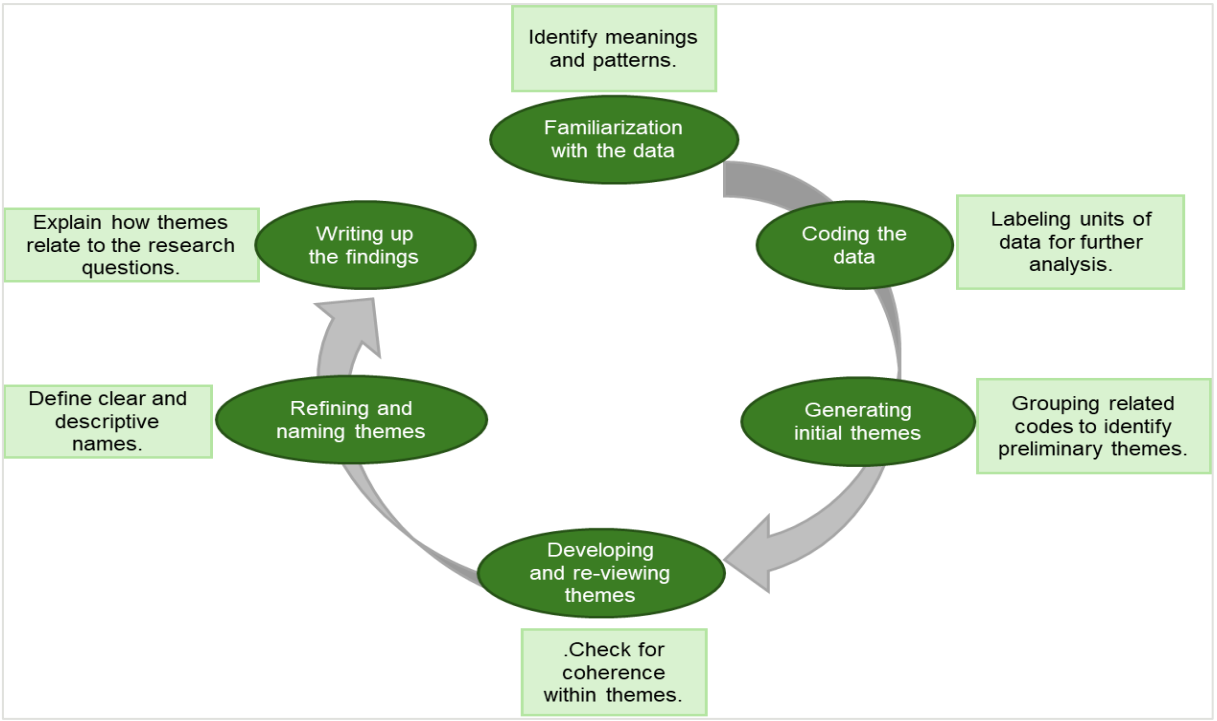

Figure 2. The process of Thematic Analysis (Saunders et al., 2023, pp. 664-665).

5 RESULTS

The questionnaire targeted approximately 200 potential respondents, of whom 23 completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 11.5%. This fell short of the minimum target of 60–80 responses. The ideal sample size would have been 132 respondents. Due to time constraints, the researcher chose not to extend the questionnaire's closing date. According to Webropol statistics, 143 respondents opened the questionnaire but did not provide any answers, while 41 respondents started filling out the questionnaire but decided to discontinue.

The results are presented under four sections: demographic, employee orientation, workplace learning and thematic analysis from open-ended questions. The quantitative data results are structured in the same order as presented in the questionnaire form. For the qualitative data results (open-ended), a thematic analysis was conducted. An AI tool was utilized to assist in categorizing the responses into themes.

Includes business and professional secrets.

6 DISCUSSION

The discussion chapter covers the interpretation of orientation and workplace learning, followed by a consideration of the study's limitations. Finally, the reliability and validity of the research methods and results are critically evaluated, providing a comprehensive overview of the study's outcomes.

Includes business and professional secrets.

6.1 Limitations

The study's **sample size** was relatively small (~200 employees), with only 23 responses received. As a result, the findings may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and opinions within the organization. The small sample size limits the ability to generalize the findings to the broader employee population at EEPEE Prisma Seinäjoki. Furthermore, due to the low response rate (11.5%), the study does not provide a comprehensive representation of all employee experiences or views.

There were several **design limitations** in the questionnaire. Notably, there were no Likert scale questions related to the quality of orientation materials or the role of mentors. These important aspects of the workplace learning process were only mentioned in the qualitative responses, meaning they could not be confirmed or quantified through the survey. As a result, the study could not fully capture the extent to which employees find the orientation materials or mentoring effective.

Additionally, demographic questions regarding age, gender, work experience, and type of employment were included in the survey, but due to the small sample size, these questions could not be used for filtering or cross-comparison. In a larger sample, it would have been valuable to explore whether factors like employment type (temporary vs. permanent workers) or work experience influenced employees' perceptions of workplace learning and orientation.

Another limitation arose from the way the survey treated orientation and workplace learning. The respondents often mentioned orientation when discussing workplace learning in their qualitative responses, suggesting a possible overlap or confusion between the two concepts. A more precise question at the beginning of the workplace learning section, such as "What is

the most recent skill or system you needed to learn in the workplace?" could have helped to clarify whether respondents were referring specifically to orientation or other aspects of workplace learning. This could have allowed for a more accurate and focused understanding of employee learning experiences.

The timing of the survey distribution, which coincided with the busy Christmas season, likely contributed to the low response rate. Despite extending the survey period to four weeks, the overall response rate was still low, which may not adequately reflect the broader employee experience. The constrained timeline also limited the amount of time available for data analysis and may have affected the depth of analysis that could be conducted.

Since qualitative data was derived from a small sample size of 23 participants, **the findings from open-ended questions** should be interpreted with caution. It is important to recognize that these responses may not be representative of the broader employee population, and some issues mentioned may be specific to individual experiences. Overinterpreting these qualitative insights could lead to conclusions that do not reflect the entire employee population. Further research with a larger and more diverse sample would help clarify whether these themes are more widely applicable or isolated to certain employees.

As an **internal researcher** with prior knowledge of the organization, there was both an advantage and a potential bias in conducting this study. While familiarity with the organization facilitated access to information and helped guide the research process, it may have also influenced the analysis due to pre-existing assumptions. Balancing the roles of researcher and employee posed practical challenges, and time constraints further affected the research process, as outlined by Saunders et al. (2023, pp. 220–222).

6.2 Reliability and Validity

The survey results remained consistent when repeated with the same participants during pretesting and the actual survey period. However, the seasonal timing of the survey (conducted between December and January) influenced participation rates, as this period is typically associated with increased workload and stress. Although reminders were sent through various channels—such as internal chat groups and supervisors, participation rates remained lower than expected. Despite these efforts, the limited timeframe for survey collection and analysis impacted on the overall response rate, and the closing time for the survey was not extended.

While no formal statistical tests such as Cronbach's alpha were applied, internal consistency was ensured through a carefully structured survey aligned with theoretical models like the AMO and LEAN frameworks. The survey focused on core aspects of orientation and work-place learning, though no explicitly repetitive or overlapping questions were included. The consistency across the questions was intended to reflect the central constructs of the study and provide insights into the research focus.

The data collection process was reliable, with both Webropol (for survey distribution) and Excel (for data analysis) being used throughout the study. While Webropol did experience temporary functionality issues during pretesting, these were promptly resolved with the help of IT support. Afterward, the data was downloaded into Excel for easier handling and analysis, ensuring the integrity of the dataset. The clarity of the survey questions was carefully refined before pretesting, with feedback from colleagues and the thesis supervisor incorporated to improve the accuracy and alignment with the theoretical framework.

There were no indications of biased or inconsistent responses, and while no formal monitoring tools were employed to detect response patterns, all questions (except the final open-ended one) were mandatory, encouraging thoughtful responses. This approach helped minimize potential non-response bias and encouraged participants to engage with the survey more fully.

The data collection process was standardized to ensure consistency. Participants received uniform instructions through the online survey cover letter, which included consent to participate and an explanation of anonymous data collection. No modifications were made to the questionnaire once it was published, maintaining consistency among all participants.

For the pretesting phase, 8 responses were received, but due to technical issues, the qualitative data was accidentally deleted. As a result, the cross-checking process between pretest and final survey responses could only be conducted for quantitative data. Despite this, the results from the pretest and the final survey's quantitative data were aligned, which supports the reliability of the data analysis. Thematic analysis was employed for the open-ended responses in the final survey, and an AI-powered tool helped identify and categorize key themes across the qualitative data.

To ensure **content validity**, the survey was designed to cover all relevant aspects of the research topic using a data requirement table that justified each question and Likert scale statement in alignment with the AMO and LEAN models. Feedback from experts and colleagues helped improve the clarity of open-ended questions, ensuring they were phrased to avoid confusion among respondents. Furthermore, the use of an AI-powered tool in thematic analysis helped identify and categorize patterns consistently, ensuring objectivity in analyzing qualitative data. To maintain data privacy and ensure validity, all responses were anonymized before being processed by the AI tool.

Although the survey did not account for all external variables (e.g., participants' personal situations or the work environment), the timing of the survey—conducted between December and January—was a significant factor that could have impacted on **internal validity**. Given that this period corresponds to the busy holiday season, some participants may have found it difficult to fully engage in the survey due to work pressures. While reminders were sent to encourage participation, these external factors may have influenced the results. However, no significant biases or pre-existing conditions within the organization were identified that could distort the outcomes.

Due to the small sample size (11.5% response rate), the results of this survey **cannot be generalized** to the larger employee population at EEPEE Prisma Seinäjoki or beyond. The limited sample size reduces the external validity of the findings. Future studies would benefit from increasing the sample size and improving the response rate to make the findings more representative of the broader employee population. Furthermore, the study was conducted at a single location, Prisma Hyllykallio, which limits the generalizability of the results to other Prisma locations or organizations with different cultural and structural characteristics.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are drawn from both theoretical frameworks and the findings of this research. They are separated into distinct categories: orientation, workplace learning, and job rotation. While each section addresses specific areas of employee development, it is notable that many of the recommendations overlap, emphasizing common themes of structured support, clear communication, and continuous feedback. These recurring themes highlight the importance of creating a comprehensive and cohesive approach to employee onboarding and training.

Includes business and professional secrets.

8 CONCLUSION

This master thesis explored the critical areas of orientation and workplace learning at EEPEE Prisma Hyllykallio, with the aim of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the orientation process. The study gathered employee feedback on the current orientation practices, shedding light on both strengths and areas for improvement. One of the main findings was that the orientation process, although comprehensive, could be further optimized by better aligning it with employees' learning preferences and addressing specific departmental differences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Data requirement table (English)

Appendix 2. The questionnaire with cover letter (Finnish)

Appendix 3. Answers for open-ended questions (Finnish)

Appendix 4. The pretesting responses (Finnish)

Appendix 1. Data requirement table

No	Question	Options	Mandatory	Theoretical framework
1	Gender	Male, female, other	X	Demographical
2	Age	15-19 years, 20-29 years, 30-39 years, 40-49 years, 50+ years	X	Demographical
3	Work experience	Less than year,1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, 11+ years	X	Demographical
4	Form of employement	Permanent, Temporary	X	Demographical
5	Answer the following statements	-		-
a	*Feedback is given during the orientation.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	AMO
b	*The support received from colleagues during the orientation was sufficient.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	AMO
c	*After the orientation, a discussion is held with the supervisor about learning and development.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	AMO
d	*The orientation should be more personal.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	AMO
e	*The overall quality of the orientation has been good.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	LEAN
f	*Sufficient time has been given for learning during the orientation.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	LEAN
6	How would you describe the level of guidance you observed or experienced during your orientation?	Likert scale Well-Guided - No Guidance	X	AMO
7	Which of the following training formats did you find most useful during the orientation?	Orientation formats	X	LEAN
8	What do you think worked particularly well in the orientation process?	Open-ended question	X	LEAN
9	What improvements would you like to see in the orientation process?	Open-ended question		LEAN
10	Which learning method has been most useful in work-based learning and skill development?	Training formats	X	LEAN
11	Answer the following statements	-		
a	*I receive support from my supervisor in my learning and development.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	AMO
b	*I get help from colleagues in case of problems when needed.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	AMO
c	*The overall quality of work-based learning has been good.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	LEAN
d	*Sufficient time has been allocated for work-based learning.*	Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree	X	LEAN
12	What improvements would you like to see in workplace learning?	Open-ended question	X	LEAN
13	Do you have any additional feedback about orientation or workplace learning?	Open-ended question	O	LEAN

Appendix 2. The questionnaire with cover letter

OPINNÄYTETYÖ - perehdytys ja työssäoppiminen

Pakolliset kysymykset merkitty tähdellä (*)

Hei,
Olen Silja Nevala ja opiskelen kansainvälistä liiketaloutta (YAMK) Seinäjoen ammattikorkeakoulussa. Opinnäytetyöni käsittelee perehdytysprosessia ja työssäoppimista. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, kuinka perehdytys ja työssäoppiminen toteutuvat Prisma Hyllykalliossa ja miten niitä voitaisiin kehittää.

Kysely on suunnattu kaikille Prisma Hyllykallion työntekijöille (pois lukien Emotion ja parturi-kampaamo).

Kyselyyn vastaaminen vie **noin 10-15 minuuttia**, ja se perustuu omiin kokemuksiinne ja havaintoihinne perehdytyksestä sekä työssäoppimisesta.

Vastaukset kerätään anonyymisti, eikä niitä voida yhdistää yksittäisiin henkilöihin.
Kaikki tiedot käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja niitä käytetään vain tutkimustarkoituksiin.

Kysely on avoinna ajalla 20.12.2024 - 10.01.2025.

1. Osallistumisesi ja tietosuoja *

- ◯ Hyväksyn, että osallistun tähän tutkimukseen, ja ymmärrän, että vastaukseni käsitellään anonyymisti ja luottamuksellisesti. Tiedot käytetään vain tutkimustarkoituksiin.

2. Sukupuoli *

- ◯ Mies
- ◯ Nainen
- ◯ Muu

3. Ikä *

- ◯ 15 - 19 vuotta
- ◯ 20 - 29 vuotta
- ◯ 30 - 39 vuotta
- ◯ 40 - 49 vuotta
- ◯ 50 tai yli

4. Työkokemus Prisma Hyllykallio *

- ◯ 1 - 2 vuotta
- ◯ 3 - 5 vuotta
- ◯ 6 - 10 vuotta
- ◯ 11+ vuotta

5. Työsuhteen muoto *

- ◯ Vakituinen
- ◯ Määräaikainen

PEREHDYTYS: Vastaa seuraaviin kysymyksiin kokemusten ja havaintojesi perusteella. Tavoitteena on kerätä palautetta perehdytyksen tuesta ja tehokkuudesta eri kokemusasteilla olevilta työntekijöiltä.

6. Vastaa seuraaviin väittämiin *

1 = täysin eri mieltä
2 = osittain eri mieltä
3 = ei samaa eikä eri mieltä
4 = osittain samaa mieltä
5 = täysin samaa mieltä

	1	2	3	4	5
Perehdytyksen aikana annetaan palautetta *	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Perehdytyksessä kollegoilta saatu tuki oli riittävää *	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Perehdytyksen jälkeen käydään keskustelu esimiehen kanssa oppimisesta ja kehittymisestä *	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Perehdytys tulisi tapahtua henkilökohtaisemmin *	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

	1	2	3	4	5
Perehdytyksen kokonaislaatu on ollut hyvää *	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Perehdytykselle on annettu riittävästi aikaa oppimiseen *	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

tustu suosituksiin

7. Kuinka kuvailisit perehdytyksen aikana havaittua tai kokemaasi ohjauksen tasoa? *

- ◯ Hyvin ohjattu (yksityiskohtaisia vaihe vaiheelta -ohjeita)
- ◯ Kohtuullisesti ohjattu (yleistä ohjausta, mutta oli tilaa itsenäiselle oppimiselle)
- ◯ Vähäisesti ohjattu (lähes itsenäistä, satunnaista ohjausta)
- ◯ Ei ohjausta (hyvin vähän tai ei lainkaan ohjausta)

8. Mikä seuraavista koulutusmuodoista oli mielestäsi hyödyllisin perehdytyksessä, jonka olet kokenut tai havainnut? Voit valita 1 - 3 koulutusmuotoa. *

- ☐ Käytännön harjoittelu
- ☐ Työskentelyn seuraaminen
- ☐ Luokkamuotoinen ryhmäopetus
- ☐ Henkilökohtainen mentorointi
- ☐ Verkkokurssit
- ☐ Painetut tai digitaaliset materiaalit itseopiskeluun

9. Mikä perehdytyksessä toimi mielestäsi erityisen hyvin? *

10. Mitä parannuksia toivoisit perehdytysprosessiin? *

TYÖSSÄOPPIMINEN: Vastaa seuraaviin kysymyksiin kokemustesi ja havaintojesi perusteella.Tavoitteena on kerätä palautetta siitä, miten hyvin nykyiset työkäytännöt tukevat työntekijöiden oppimista sekä mitä parannuksia voitaisiin tehdä työssä oppimisen ja työn sujuvuuden edistämiseksi.

11. Mikä oppimismenetelmä on ollut hyödyllisin työssäoppimisessa ja osaamisen kehittämisessä? Voit valita 1 - 3 oppimismenetelmistä. *

- ☐ Käytännön koulutus
- ☐ Mentorointi ja valmennus
- ☐ Työkierto
- ☐ Verkkokurssit
- ☐ Itseopiskelu
- ☐ Tiimissä oppiminen
- ☐ Viralliset koulutustilaisuudet
- ☐ Henkilökohtainen itse asettama oppimispolku
- ☐ Muu (täsmennä)

12. Vastaa seuraaviin väittämiin *

1 = täysin eri mieltä
2 = osittain eri mieltä
3 = ei samaa eikä eri mieltä
4 = osittain samaa mieltä
5 = täysin samaa mieltä

	1	2	3	4	5
Saan tukea esihenkilöltä oppimisessani ja kehittymisessäni *	○	○	○	○	○
Saan tarvittaessa apua kollegoilta ongelmatilanteissa *	○	○	○	○	○
Työpaikalla oppimisen kokonaislaatu on ollut hyvää *	○	○	○	○	○

	1	2	3	4	5
Työpaikalla oppimiseen on varattu riittävästi aikaa *	○	○	○	○	○

13. Mitä parannuksia toivoisit työssäoppimiseen? *

14. Mitä lisättävää sinulla on perehdytyksestä tai työssäoppimisesta?

Tähän voit kirjoittaa ajatuksiasi perehdytyksestä tai työssäoppimisesta ennen kyselyn lähettämistä.
Kun olet valmis, klikkaa "lähetä".

Appendix 3. Answers for open-ended questions

Includes business and professional secrets.

Appendix 4 The pretesting responses

Includes business and professional secrets.