UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Master Thesis in Strategic Human Resource Management and Labour Relations

The complexity of Labour Market Programmes
A case study in the retail sector

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Abstract

Problematization: Previous studies have mainly focused on the long-term effects of youth unemployment and the effects of labour market programmes (hereby referred to as LMP) as well as comparisons between different types of LMPs, predominantly on macro-economic level. There is therefor a lack of knowledge of the experience of being a participant of a LMP. Additionally, little has been explored in an organizational context. Furthermore, there is a need for more knowledge on different solutions to the overall high rate of youth unemployment in society.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore what factors motivate organizations and individuals to participate in LMPs. Moreover, the study aims to identify and explore possible obstacles that might prevent secure developments of LMP implementation in the retail labour market.

Methodology: The research was performed using a qualitative case study, and data was conducted through semi-structured interviews and later analysed by using a deductive content analysis.

Results: The trainees perceive their employment as an alternative for higher education and as a chance for personal as well as social development, and as an opportunity to learn specific skills. The supervisors personal preferences for participating was the willingness to teach, manage and shape the trainee to fit their specific workplace, and an engagement in the next generation. The main reason for Axfood to participate consists mainly of the component that the LMP can be seen as a way for the company to attract, retain and develop talented employees. The main obstacles for poor implementation of the LMP were found to be the vague employer brand of the retail market and the limited criteria for participating as a trainee. Further, the results suggest a tendency for the company to try and find "the right candidate", although the desired features of that candidate do not match the existing criteria for participation.

Key words: Youth unemployment, active labour market policies, labour market programmes, Governmentality, Institutional Isomorphism.

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1. Introduction

1.1.   Youth unemployment and its consequences for society

In the aftermath of the great recession during the years 2008-2009, the youth unemployment rate increased tremendously in different European countries, and among them Sweden (Dietrich & Möller, 2015; Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016; O'Reilly et al, 2015, Jilmstad, 2015). In Sweden, the youth unemployment rate is approximately four times high the adult unemployment rate. The high rates of youth unemployment are perceived to have effects decades ahead and to be a burden for the social and economic future for several member states in Europe (Dietrich & Möller, 2015). Younger individuals entering the labour market are often considered to be a risk population in facing a higher risk of unemployment than their older competitors, for example due to lack of work experience (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016; Dietrich & Möller, 2015). Furthermore, the longer an individual stays unemployed, the less he or she is likely to leave unemployment. One explanation for this is the loss of human capital, both work specific skills but also for example a decreased feeling of motivation and punctuality (Bell, 1999).

Furthermore, young people are prone to be more unemployed than older people, which is often related to the fact that young adults tend to *become* unemployed, due to for example short-term contracts and little or no working experience in order to be retained. However, they also often remain unemployed for a shorter period of time than older people (Layard, 2005). Previous studies have also shown that young people more often face higher levels of stress, due to unemployment, than their older competitors on the labour market. Young people may also experience difficulties later on in life such as depression and minimum of retirement support, caused by entering to labour market at

a higher age (Goldsmith, 1997, Arulampalam 2001, Gregg & Tominey 2005; Kahn, 2010; Skans, 2004). Accordingly, previous studies show that when an individual is being re-employed after a separation from the labour market, the recovery from wage-loss is particularly high (Arulampalam, 2001). Also, when returning to the labour market after a separation the employee will sometimes receive a lower wage than prior the separation due to skills deprivation caused by the unemployment. For example, the employee might loose general skills, but also firm specific skills that might affect the wages when being re-employed (Gregg & Tominey, 2005).

Not only do unemployment affect individual skills and knowledge, being unemployed also seems to coerce the individual to manage the experience of being unemployed by trying to reduce the potential damages the unemployment might have on the individuals future career. In a study made by Mroz and Savage (2006) the long term-effects of youth unemployment on later labour market outcomes were examined. The study provided strong evidence that a lack of employment for a young adult today increases the probability for the youth to train in the near future, in order to be attractive on the labour market, rather than doing nothing at all, or taking on low-wage employments. The researchers call it a *human capital catch-up response to unemployment*, meaning that youths seek out training and work activities in order to avoid possible and unwanted setback in their planned human capital profile, which can be caused by unemployment. By seeking jobs, engaging in different work activities and train, young adults experiencing unemployment battle the potential negative outcomes of being terminated from the labour market for a longer period of time. However, even though the young adults experiencing unemployment might engage in different work seeking activities and training, the study also show upon long-term negative effects for the individual, and the results of the study also support the notion that these youths do not fully recover from the negative impacts of unemployment, such as for example wage loss (Mroz & Savage, 2006). However, Cockx and Picchio (2013) suggest that stigmatization rather than the loss of human capital may be a source of state-dependence in long-term youth unemployment. Moreover, experience of unemployment in the first years after entering the labour market tends to increase psychosomatic and psychological symptoms, as well as usage of alcohol and narcotics, and thereby utilize health care services. Youth unemployment also tends to decrease the individual's social activities and in turn, the

unemployed individual faces social network losses that might influence later potential employments in the individual's working life (Mroz & Savage, 2006; Arulampalam, 2001).

As previously mentioned, the high rates of youth unemployment are of substantial concern for societies and economies in general, and some youths face higher risk of getting trapped in unemployment for a longer period of time (Mroz & Savage, 2006). Accordingly, in a report from the OECD (2013) it is suggested that special, governmental attention should be given to the groups that face higher risks of becoming marginalized from the labour market alongside different social problems, such as for example low-skilled young adults that are neither in education nor in employment (NEET). OECD also suggest that societies in general need to take on actions to ensure that youths acquire the right skills and bring those skills to the labour market in order to utilize them effectively (OECD, 2013). What has then been done in order to decrease youth unemployment? The following section will present the umbrella concept of active labour market policies, which includes several different types of governmental polices that are concerned to increase the ability and willingness of the unemployed to start working (Layard, 2005).

1.2 *Active Labour Market Policies*

Several different solutions to decrease the high rates of youth unemployment have been presented on national level over the years. Such a solution is Active Labour Market Policies (hereby referred to as ALMP) and, as a part of ALMPs; labour market programmes (hereby referred to as LMP). ALMPs and LMPs include for example Public Employment Services, training schemes and employment subsidies. ALMPs intervene the labour market and help unemployed to enter or re-enter the labour market (Martin, 2015). The overall purpose with LMPs is to prevent long periods of regular unemployment, and to facilitate for unemployed and economical disadvantaged individuals to enter the labour force (Sianesi, 2004; Hardoy, 2005). Furthermore, another purpose of LMPs is to smooth the transition from school to work and to promote entry into stable employment relationships (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016).

Another purpose of LMPs is to address the youth labour demand. In times of economic instability but also under normal economic conditions, there can be several explanations to why rates of youth unemployment are high. Employers might not be willing to let go of skilled personnel, or more prone to hire a more experienced worker than an inexperienced. Furthermore, employers might hesitate to employ young persons and engage in costly training and development if there is a risk of the youth leaving the company. Hence, the LMPs might be effective tools for creating more integrated labour markets, since they may work as bridges over the barriers of having little or non-working experience (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016).

1.3 Active Labour Market Policies in Sweden

Active labour market policies were developed in Sweden as early as the 1950's, with the ambition to meet the then current labour market demand that was increasing through a rapidly growing economy. This was mostly done through financing of vocational training programmes (Bonoli, 2012).

As a step to decrease the high rate of youth unemployment in Sweden, and facilitate for the generation switch due to demographic changes, the Swedish government in September 2011 invited representatives of the Swedish labour market to discuss and find solutions to several problems on the current labour market. A problem that is considered being highly important to solve is the, internationally compared, high unemployment rate amongst young adults in Sweden (Ds 2013:20; Caliendo, 2016). The purpose of the three part-discussions between employer organizations as well as trade unions included finding possible ways to facilitate for young adults to be integrated into the labour market, to broaden the ways that already exist and to find new ways for the younger population to get their first labour market experience they need in order to move forward in their career. The discussions resulted in the regulation for support and a labour market program (LMP) for work introduction employments. In Sweden organizations may, with subvention from The Swedish Public Employment Agency, hire unemployed young adults in two different ways; New start job (*nystartsjobb*) and work

introduction employment (*yrkesintroduktionsanställning*), with the later as main focus for this study. Work introduction employment is an employment type that combines 75% work and 25% education for the employee (SFS 2013:1157).

The regulation further states that financial support shall be provided for those companies and organizations that employ young adults between the ages 15-25, who are connected to the The Swedish Public Employment Agency. The subvention for employing a young adult on these premises can rise to up to 55% of the employer costs (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015). The regulation entered into force in august 2014 (SFS 2013:1157), and the aim of the regulation was, in the long run, to employ a volume of 30000 young adults (Jilmstad, 2015). Until April 2015, The Swedish Public Employment Agency has approved only 1133 work introduction employments, with the Volvo Group as the employer of approximately half the amount of the approved employments (U2014:07, YA-delegationen, 2015). Currently, there are five on-going employments of this type within the retail sector (Personal communication, mars 2016).

2. Previous research

2.1 Previous research in Sweden

In a study made by Larsson (2003) a comparison was made between three different strategies available for young unemployed individuals in Sweden. The study aimed to determine and compare the outcomes from three different employment strategies; to participate in either youth practice (ungdomspraktik) or labour market training, or to search for a job as an open unemployed on the same premises as any unemployed. The study consisted of a sample of 1657 individuals who participated in youth practice and 606 individuals in labour market training. The comparison group of openly unemployed young adults consisted of 2000 individuals and the total sample of participants was collected between 1992 and 1993. Youth practice entailed a subsidized programme that aimed to provide work experience for a young adult with a high school diploma, aged between 20-24 years. The approximate time spent in the programme was six months, and could take place in either public or private sector. Participation in the programme should be preceded by at least four months of active job searching as openly unemployed (Larsson, 2003). In contrast, labour market training aims to improve the skills of the youth unemployed, and to enhance the individual's chances of meeting the current demands on the labour market. Traditionally, it has been targeted to low educated and low skilled young people and consists of different courses that are both vocational and non-vocational (Larsson, 2003). The results of the study showed that both youth practice and labour market training have negative short-term effect on incomes and future employments. In the comparison between the two programmes it was found that youth practice was better or less harmful than labour market training. Notable is that neither one of the programmes examined seem to have had the intentional effect for youth unemployment. Accordingly, many OECD countries have failed in the ALMPs for youth unemployed (Larsson, 2003). This further stresses the importance of research within this area. What are the reasons for the poor implementation effects of LMPs?

In a study made by Forslund et al (2011) the effects of two ALMPs in Sweden, on the job training scheme (arbetspraktik) and labour market training, were compared over the business cycle. Their study aimed at exploring what ALMP works best during recession. The data consisted of individuals aged 25-55, during 1999-2005, which had entered unemployment and started the programs within the same year. The study mainly focus on lock-in effects, since programs with large lock-in effects (such as on the job training scheme) are most effective in times of recession, due to lower cost of search time (Forslund et al, 2011). The study showed that it is relatively more useful to use labour market training scheme in recession than during an economic up rise, and that on the job-training scheme has a slightly more positive effect in the long run for the labour market (Forslund et al, 2011).

In a report from the Swedish Public Employment Agency from 2015, a number of 902 work introduction employments were granted during the year of 2014. A total number of 16 of the granted employments were targeted by the retail market, and the number of female participants slightly exceeded the number of male participants. The results further show that males represent 68% of the granted employments. Further, the results show that 8% are born outside of Sweden. The report further presents external and internal challenges for the LMP. The external challenging factors includes the quality of supervision, how different promoters are to be used, how the cooperation between employers is to be exerted and how employers can make the work introduction employment a natural part of the organization's activity. A mentioned internal challenge is the restrictions in collective agreements. For example the employees are not allowed to be, or to previously have been, employed by the employer (Yrkesintroduktionsanställningar, Arbetsförmedlingens återrapportering 2014, 2015).

2.2 Previous research in Europe

Hardoy (2005) presents in a study a structural model that implies that individuals participate in programmes (LMPs) in order to empower their human capital. By taking part in the programmes, the individual expects to benefit from the participation by improving his or her labour market prospects. Hence, the opportunities given by the programmes might have effect on the choice of participation alongside individual

preferences. Opportunities are to some extent partly determined by personal characteristics. Accordingly, programme administrators and potential employers might have different preferences regarding the individual and that might affect the availability and level of participation in LMPs (Hardoy, 2005). The study covered data of Norwegian young unemployed people during the early 1990's that participated in LMPs as well as a comparison group consisting of young unemployed not participating in any programme. Age spectrum was 16-25 years old. The study's result showed that those who perceived to benefit most from participating in the programmes did participate in a higher range. However, there were no strong indications that participation in fact did improve labour market prospects. Only participation in employment programmes seemed to have some positive effect on labour market prospects, and only for females and younger individuals. The result of the study therefor gives little support to the notion that LMPs, at this time, improve young adults prospects on the labour market (Hardoy, 2005).

A study made by Caliendo (2011) uses Germany as a case study to examine the effectiveness of active labour market programs. Germany has often been considered a role model in terms of youth labour market integration and labour market incentives, and participation in active labour market programmes has increased during the past years. However, a notable share of young adults still face structural difficulties when about to enter the labour market. The sample in Caliendo's (2011) study consisted of a representative number of young unemployment entries at 2002, aged 25 and younger. A comparison group of non-participators in ALMP was added. The study investigated the effectiveness of participating in an active labour market program versus non-participation in such a programme, and a comparison between different programmes was later presented. The results show, contradictory to the studies made by Hardoy (2005) and Larsson (2003), an overall positive effect of participating in a LMP, especially wage-subsidies have a positive long-term effect on employment probability. Public sector job creating schemes were found to have negative impact on employment prospects in the short-run and to be ineffective in the long run. Participation in such a programme may hence be harmful for the individual (Caliendo, 2011). The study's results show that participation in LMPs has a stronger positive effect on future employment prospects if the individuals have had high level of pre-treatment schooling than if the individuals have had low pre-treatment schooling. None of the programmes

studied increase the education participation among youths. The researchers suggest adjustments in existing programmes in order to integrate low-educated youths into the labour market in a more sustainable way (Caliendo, 2011; Caliendo, 2016).

During 1998, a new active labour market programme was introduced throughout Great Britain. The programme called "The new deal for young people" (NDYP) aimed to help young unemployed into work as well as increasing their employability (Bell, 1999; Dorsett, 2006). The programme is targeted at unemployed individuals, aged 18-24, having requested for unemployment benefits during at least 6 months. The individuals in this programme first undergo a period (up to four months) of intensive job search before they enter one of four options; subsided employment, education and training on full time, environmental task force or voluntary sector. After this, they enter a stage of follow-through, including further job search (Dorsett, 2006). In a study made by Bell (1999), the likely effects of NDYP are examined and the researchers argue that the effects of NDYP are more modest than expected. They also present different ways that could help NDYP to meet its goals. The results of the study showed that the productivity effects of the programme were relatively modest, in relation to expected subsidy needed in order to get the targeted group into work. Furthermore, the researcher could see tendencies for the overall effects of the NDYP policy to be more modest than anticipated (Bell, 1999). However, it is important to consider that this study was made only a year after the implementation of the programme. Therefor it is important to view the results with a critical eye since the long-term effects of the programme are not evaluated.

In 2006, Dorsett (2006) explored in a study among young men the implementation and the relative effectiveness of the different options of NDYP in reducing unemployment and increasing employment. As one of the first evaluation studies of a labour market programme in UK, the study focuses on which option and element in NDYP that has the strongest effect for reducing unemployment and increasing employment. Further it discusses which option is most effective, and which elements need to be changed for reaching better effectiveness of the policy (Dorsett, 2006). The analysis is build upon administrative data over all men entering NDYP in 1998, and consists of four NDYP options mentioned above; subsided full-time employment, full-time education/training (for those lacking basic qualifications), work placement in a voluntary sector for the

cause of gaining experience (often placed in retail sector or other service sectors) and lastly, the Environmental Task Force which means that the individual work for an organization with an explicit environment focused responsibility (Dorsett, 2006). The results of the study show that subsided employment increases the chances of getting out of unemployment, and into employment that is not subsided, to a greater extent than the other options. Participation in full-time education and participation in work placement in a voluntary sector increases the chances of employment slightly more than engaging in Environmental Task Force; however, the differences between these options are less marked. This suggests, similar to the study made by Caliendo (2011), that the option of subsided employment dominates the other options in relation to future employment effects (Dorsett, 2006).

3. Problematization

3.1 Why study youth unemployment in the retail sector?

Considering youth unemployment as an issue that affects the society, the economy and growth of industries and the individual itself, it seems as an issue considered being important to solve. Yet Sweden still has a large number of unemployed young adults (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016). Despite the alarmingly high rate of youth unemployment in Sweden and Europe, and the well-known awareness of individual as well as societal consequences that comes along with unemployment, the participation rate in LMPs in the retail sector is particularly low. Interestingly, the retail market employs the highest proportion of part-time workers, and has traditionally been viewed as a sector where many young adults get their first working experience, for example by working part- time alongside school. This raises the question why the implementation of LMPs in retail has far from fully reached it's goal of employing a larger number of young adults, and the aim to facilitate for safe ways in to the labour market for these young, unemployed adults.

Additionally, the retail sector faces further challenges, for example a higher than average rate of personnel turnover. Furthermore, the retail labour market has a poor image as a final career destination, particularly for high-qualified employees. Even though the retail market has expanded over the past years, there are difficulties in employing suitable employees with the right specific skills (Hart et al., 2007). This further stresses the anticipation that LMPs would be a quite arguable employment alternative for employers in the retail sector to engage in.

As mentioned above, there are several consequences that come along with youth unemployment, for example economical and health related problems that are important to take into consideration for any part involved. Especially youth unemployment is considered being a highly important issue to be solved, since it has an unarguable effect on a nation's economical future growth and wellness. Several studies have been made concerning youth unemployment and ALMPs in general (See for example Caliendo, 2011; Hardoy, 2005; Larsson, 2003; Dorsett, 2006; Calmfors & Forslund, 2002).

However, while there are several studies on youth unemployment and its effects on society, little is known about the experiences of being a participant of ALMP programmes (LMP).

Previous studies have mainly focused on the long-term effects of youth unemployment and the effects of LMPs in general, as well as comparisons between different types of LMPs on macro-economic level. Further, previous micro-economic studies have generally had a focus to compare the outcomes or supposed benefits for those in the programme compared to individuals who are not targeted by the LMPs (Jackman, 1996). Additionally, little has been explored in an individual and organizational context. Since the retail market traditionally has been viewed as a market strongly targeted at young people, why are there only five on-going employments at this point today? This creates a curiosity to explore what reasons might complicate the implementation of LMPs in the retail sector. Even though the government encourages engagement in LMPs, the participation by organizations is voluntarily. Still some organizations do participate, although the underlying reasons for participation might vary. Are there any specific intentions for organizations to engage in LMPs? How does the individual view this kind of employment, and why?

From a Human Resource Management (hereby referred to as HRM) perspective, it is of importance to study the different ambitions of LMPs as well as the actual outcomes for participants. LMPs target concepts such as retention, employment, knowledge development and professionalization, and are therefor strongly linked to HRM practices (Bratton & Gold, 2012). It is also of importance for managers to gain knowledge about employees' perception of their employment and the organization they work for, in order to optimize HR processes within the organization.

Why using a case study as research strategy?

The chosen research strategy for this study is a case study. By using a case study as research strategy, this study aims at recognizing plausible reoccurring themes surrounding the implementation of LMPs, and potential difficulties that might hinder the implementation of LMPs. The study aims to investigate a certain phenomena

(implementation of LMPs) in a specific context (an organization within the retail sector), and thereby, hopefully, offer some light to different processes that might have an impact on the displayed theoretical issues.

Furthermore, it is the chosen strategy since a case study of an organization provides information from a point of view that can be applied to a broader set back (e.g. the retail sector) (Kohlbacher, 2006; Hartley, 2004). Additionally, from an individual's perspective a case study provides information that can be useful within the organizational environment and for the organization's further development of its work with LMPs.

3.2 Purpose of study

Stepping off from existing literature and previous research, the purpose of this study is to explore what factors motivate organizations and individuals to participate in LMPs. Moreover, the study aims to identify and explore possible obstacles that might prevent secure developments of LMP implementation in the retail labour market. By using a case study as research strategy, this study further aspires to offer a clear depiction of how organizations and their individuals manage new types of employments, and how the implementation of LMP is adapted and developed. By this, the study aims to contribute to existing literature by offering a possible understanding of how organizations and individuals perceive LMPs. Further, this study aspires to contribute to the predominant societal and sociological oriented existing research field by offering an illustrative organizational case example.

Research questions:
- How can participation in LMPs in the retail sector be understood from an organizational and individual perspective and what motivates individuals and organizations to participate in an LMP?
  - What factors might be possible causes for doubtful implementation of LMPs in the retail sector?

4. Theoretical framework

In this section, the framework used when analysing the results is presented. The two theories that were used in this study were chosen using a top-down approach. By looking from a societal perspective on ALMPs and LMPs, governmentality offers viewpoints on societal incentives for engaging in LMPs. Additionally, Institutional Isomporhism presents equitable aspects for organizations to participate in LMPs.

4.1 Governmentality

As previously stated, a number of different solutions to youth unemployment have been presented in several OECD countries (Caliendo, 2016). This raises the question of what factors drive societies to develop LMPs and engage in the population. The theoretical perspective of *governmentality* stems from Michel Foucault and his lectures at the Collége de France 1983-1984 (Foucault, 2012), and has become a theoretical tool that has been utilized to make sense and understand different political arenas as well as changes in the economical landscape (Walters, 2012; Dean, 2010; Boland, 2015). Foucault (1982; in Dean, 2010) defines government as "conduct of conduct". To conduct means to lead, to direct or to guide, and implies further some sort of management or estimation as to how this is to be done. Those who seek to govern hence perceive human conduct, or behaviour, as something that can be regulated, controlled, shaped and turned into specific ends (Dean, 2010).

Governmentality brings the idea that governmental intervention, for example social policies as LMPs, shape individual subjects (Boland, 2015). It emerges gradually in pace with the modern state's development, and seek to optimize and manage the productivity of the population. Governmental interventions often target specific groups, for example unemployed, and take form in different ways of managing the unemployed, for example certain ways of management at employment agencies and in what ways media speak of unemployed. The governmental interventions in turn leads to a certain and dominant perspective of the group targeted by the interventions. Thus, this can then be translated to the perspective of young unemployed adults as being a complex and problematic population that needs to be monitored and facilitated (Boland, 2015). Further, the term

"unemployed" states a socioeconomic condition. This in turn allows for the idea that unemployment is a "rate" or "level" that can be managed and monitored through different matrixes (Walters, 2012). Accordingly, Cockx and Picchio (2013) argue that one reason for young adults to remain unemployed is the stigmatization of being unemployed, rather than the decrease of human capital.

Correspondingly, the government of for example the economy and of the unemployed entails to effect and in some ways shape *who* and *what* individuals and collectives are and should be. This in turn directs the perspective of how societies view certain populations. The unemployed might often be regarded as a person with low self-esteem, which is in need of encouraging, self-help and as a person in risk of becoming dependent on welfare policies. Moreover, the national population as a whole is often regarded as lacking the capabilities of innovativeness and entrepreneurship that is required to be internationally competitive (Dean, 2010). This means that the collective perspectives of some groups also legitimate some of the policies and national programmes that are created in order to help certain groups in society (Walters, 2012; Boland, 2015).

4.2 Institutional Isomorphism

This study's theoretical approach has previously focused on what reasons there might be for societies to conduct different social policies, and the subtle yet strong influencers that might have an impact on how societies treat collectives as well as individuals. However, there is no demand for organizations in Sweden to participate in LMPs. In order to contribute with a broader perspective, and for the analysis to be solid, some light will be shed on the organizational perspective, and the reasons for why some organizations engage in helping young adults on their way in to the labour market. As a theoretical framework for why organizations tend to create trainee-programs and promote educational development, the concept of institutional isomorphism will be used in this study.

Isomorphism can be described as a "constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (Hawley, 1968 in DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p 149). Following Meyer and Rowans' work

(1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify three mechanisms of institutional isomorphic change, namely *coercive* isomorphism, *mimetic* isomorphism and *normative* isomorphism.

Coercive isomorphism

Coercive isomorphism results from political influences, and both formal and informal pressures on organizations from other similar organizations, or organizations that they depend on. Some organizational changes and decision-making are direct influences from society and governmental mandates, and pressures from a shared legal environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). It has also been argued that organizational structures reflect the rules institutionalized and legitimated by and within the state (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The external pressures on organizations to adapt the practices and rules that are considered important in an industry also therefor tend to make organizations more similar to each other. It is the threat of not accomplishing a certain level of required and desired standard in the business that is an implicit force for organizations to act and develop new systems, often designed in a certain way (Nicolaou, 1999). This contributes to the reasons why organizations act homogeneously in societies and in their business environment.

Mimetic isomorphism or mimetic processes

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that uncertainty has a strong influence on why organizations tend to imitate one another. Uncertainty in this sense could be, for example, environmental uncertainty, when organizations face ambiguous problems with unclear solutions or when the pathways to certain goals are in disguise. When uncertainty strikes, organizations tend to "model" other organizations. Their behaviour is therefor mimetic, they borrow practices that seems legit and usable from the organization being modelled and imitate them. The companies imitating the organization that acts as a role model tend to do so to be able to claim and demonstrate that they in fact are doing something to improve for example working condition or solutions to understaffed work places. Innovation is a common phenomenon for organizational modelling. Organizations imitate innovative companies in order to

legitimize themselves. The more personnel an organization employ or the greater the spread of its customers is, the stronger the pressure on other organizations to follow its lead and provide the same programmes and services as the organization being imitated. Thus, the stronger the labour force, more customers or the better innovation prospect, the greater the possibilities for mimetic isomorphism amongst organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Normative isomorphic processes

Normative isomorphism stems from the professionalization. Professionalization can be understood as the shared struggle amongst members of a certain occupation to define the condition and methods of their work. Over the latest decades, the largest growth in professions has particularly been concentrated to specialized staff of large organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Professionals can be described as the persons in organizations with specialized formal education who have expertise in offering some knowledge-based service to their respective organization (Teodoro, 2014; Abbott, 1988). Both associations and mechanisms of formal education that professional's share, as well ass socialization and similar recruitment processes, contribute to the production of a common cognitive base and a joint legitimization of occupational autonomy, which leads to similar organizational structures between one organization and another (Radaelli, 2000). Thus, when occupations cause individuals in organizations to conform to the dominant behaviour of their professional community, by for example different social rewards or opportunities in employment, normative isomorphism occurs (Radaelli, 2000; Teodoro, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

5. Method

5.1 Research design

The research for this thesis was performed through a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews, annual reports and further documents such as organizational newsletters as primary data. Since the study focuses on exploring LMP implementation through the perspective of individuals, as well as from an organizational perspective, a qualitative method is an appropriate method of choice. The study further strives to investigate underlying reasons for uncertain implementation and thus, a case study is a suitable choice of research design (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

5.2 Setting

The company investigated in this thesis is a large corporation, Axfood, which conducts food retail and wholesales in Sweden and consists of 376 stores. Their strategy relies upon five cornerstones: *profitability, growth, customers, sustainable development,* and *employees and organization.* Profitability means that the company strives to be the most profitable company within food retail in Sweden by improving effectiveness of assortment, increasing efficiency in logistics and at stores, and by having a good cost control. The company also plans to increase its market share by for example growth in digital business. Furthermore, the company also have clear sustainability goals, which includes being an active and responsible societal actor. The company also strives to have proud and committed employees. To achieve this, the company focuses on attracting, retaining and developing its employees. They also stress the importance for the company to have value based leader- as well as employeeship, and to have a clear organizational culture that inspires. They also strive to be a customer focused organization and emphasises the importance of having an entrepreneurial spirit. The company further emphasises the importance of having purposeful, user friendly, cost-effective and secure HR-processes. (Axfood, annual report 2015).

5.3 Data collection

The primary data was collected through documents, annual reports and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used since they offer the respondent freedom to speak and express their experiences and thoughts during the conversation, yet at the same time offer the researcher a direction of the interview, keeping track and not navigate the interview too far from the subject of matter (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). The interviews were conducted in Mars 2016 and four of them took place in conference rooms/offices at the respondents' workplaces, which facilitated for a familiar environment for the respondents. One interview took place at an office connected to the organization. The audiotaped interviews lasted between 35 and 90 minutes and were conducted and transcribed in Swedish, and later translated to English. The transcription and later translation to English served as a contribution to the analysis of the data. The respondents consisted of five persons; two trainees, two supervisors, and one co-developer of the used IT-system and also represent of the employers organization. Three of the respondents were males and two were female. The trainees had both started their participation in the programme in June 2015 and had therefor some departments left to learn and work in before ending the programme. The supervisors had both been working in the market for approximately ten years each. By reaching out through e-mails and telephone, the author of this study tried to gain access to higher positioned managers at the company, for example the HR-manager responsible for the programme, however without further success. Therefor, policies, documents and annual reports have been used in order to broaden the organizational perspective of the participation in the LMP.

5.4 Data Analysis

The data of this study was analysed using content analysis with a deductive approach. Content analysis is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication and aims at providing knowledge and new insights of the studied research topic, with the purpose of attaining a broad description of the phenomena by presenting relevant concepts and categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Content analysis can further be used to

develop an understanding of the communication and to identify certain problematic processes. By using a deductive approach, the analysis is based on previous theory and moves from general to specific. This means that by using existing theory and previous research, the analysis begins by identifying key concepts and coding them into categories that can later be applied in the new context. A deductive approach is hence also directed (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Directed, deductive approached content analysis is identified as being more structured than an inductive approach. In the interview situation this means that an open-ended question can be followed by a targeted question. The data is then analysed through a matrix of categories, and data that does not fit the categories are either coded into new categories or subcategorized to an existing category (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this case, the author therefor conducted an interview guide (see appendix 1) stepping of from existing theory and previous research. The questions in the interview guide aimed at targeting for example eventual problems with the implementation, how the individuals express their knowledge or beliefs on different motivators for participating, organizational as well as individual levels, but also how the participants perceive knowledge and development within the organization. By adding a focus on knowledge and knowledge development during the interviews, the educational part of the LMP could be further targeted and explored. The questions were nevertheless designed to be as open as possible for the interviews, meaning that a question for instance could cover or lead forward to several areas of interest.

During the analysis, which was, as previously mentioned, directed and deductive, the transcriptions of the interviews were read through several times in order to find key concepts. The key concepts could have been noted in previous research or found in the chosen theories, therefor it was important to have a directed approach during the analysis in order to keep track and avoid missing out on important concepts. Key concepts in this case were for example the way the trainees perceived their educational part of the programme and how the supervisors motivated their will to supervise. Later the key concepts were transformed and clustered into categories to summon up and collect important concepts related to each other. The categories aimed to target the research questions of reasons for participation and possible limitations in implementation of the LMP. The categories that were found were: *Understanding of the*

participants' roles with the sub-categories of: Personal development, Human Capital and Communication; *The understanding of the market; Perception of the IT-system* and *Criteria for participation.*

The data was coded and connected to these categories and later analysed furthermore by using a theoretical framework consisting of governmentality (Dean, 2010; Boland, 2015; Walters, 2012) and Institutional Isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The reason for choosing these two theories as a framework originate from the will to find factors that influences organizations to engage in LMPs. By starting of looking for broader, societal factors that might encourage and form certain behaviours, the author hoped to find plausible motivators for societies to coerce organizations to participate in youth targeted programmes, since the programmes are voluntary. Thereby governmentality was used as a theoretical perspective when analysing the data. Further, to find motivators for organizations to participate in LMPs, the theory of Institutional Isomorphism was used. This theory offered a perspective of how organizations might strive to engage in LMPs as a motivation to gain more competitive advantage, hence, participate in LMPs in order to strengthen for example employer brand, professionalize the personnel and provide for retention within the organization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Together, these two theories broaden the perspective of the studied subject and bring in both social and organizational perspectives to the analysis. The two theories may also together offer some explanations to why individuals choose to participate in LMPs, since both societies and organizations influence for example individual self-perception. By presenting the empirical material alongside with the analysis of it in the same chapter, the theoretical framework and previous research help guiding the findings forward in line with the usage of content analysis as aforementioned (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Furthermore, a strength of using content analysis is that existing theory can be extended and supported, for example in this case where the theoretical framework of governmentality was extended to both organizational as well as individual ways of managing and shaping an individual. However, researchers might be more likely to find that the results of the study support rather than dismiss existing theory, due to being biased of existing theory when the categorization was made. Nevertheless, this is often a

problem with many types of qualitative methods and analyses (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

5.5 Delimitations

Although this study strived to have as many respondents as possible, it ended up having five interviews and respondents. Preferably, there should have been more interviews added in order to further explore the research subject. However, since there are only five on-going work introduction programs in the retail market at this point, the number of participants in this study might still be relevant, in the sense of them adding more knowledge to the research field. Another issue is the fact that this LMP has only been available to the retail market since 2014, which means that the data and the empirical findings of this study is further limited due to a shortened time period. This study was further conducted only within the retail sector. Therefor, it might be difficult to transfer the results to different businesses, however the perception of being a trainee or supervisor might still be similar cross-boarder business sectors, and therefor this study might be of relevance to other sectors as well.

When using a data analysis that includes coding or categorization there is always the possible risk of missing out of important components. These components, such as the integrity of narrative materials, can get lost in translation during the analysis since the coding in some ways works as a deconstruction of the data (Elo & Kyngnäs, 2008).

5.6 Validity and reliability

External validity can be describes as to what extent the findings of a study can be applied to other situations whereas internal validity asks the question of how congruent the findings in a study are with reality (Merriam, 1995). External validity is sometimes viewed as a problematic issue for qualitative studies since data in qualitative studies often are not randomized, but rather explicit. This on the other hand does not mean that the research is not valid. Qualitative studies aims at investigating and explore the depth of the research topic, hence the goal is not to generalize what is accurate or true to a great many (Merriam, 1995).

According to Merriam (1995), reliability can in some ways be described as the researcher's interpretation of someone else's interpretation of the reality being studied. By using different types of sources of data, such as interviews, documents and annual reports, the researcher of this study was able to triangulate the "reality" of the respondents and the data, and be able to avoid the issue of another researchers' interpretation, and in that way increase the study's reliability and the notion that the purposed subject for investigation was in fact studied. Accordingly, even though this study is a single case study, the results might be able to be transferred to other organizations and cases if they share a similar environment. However, this might be difficult since for example laws and regulations that have an effect on LMPs might change during time.

Further, both reliability and validity have been described as concepts of trustworthiness that are dependent on four aspects, namely; creditability, dependability, transferability and conformability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Morse et al, 2002). In order to verify that these four aspects were taken into consideration throughout the research process, focus were put to find a match between research questions, method and also theory. During this process the theory evolved and the research questions were modified in order to address the subject of research properly. Further, the sample of data were matched to the research area and consisted only of respondents with strong connections to the subject of investigation. This facilitated for a close bond between data and research topic, making the research process proceed in one direction.

5.7 Ethical considerations

This study has followed The Swedish Research Council's recommendations for good research practice (Forskningetiska rådet, 2011). Four main requirements regarding *information, consent, confidentiality* and *use of research data* were taking into consideration and followed. Regarding information, the respondents were prior to the interviews informed about the study, it's purpose and why further research is needed within the chosen area. Further, the respondents were informed that their participation was completely voluntary, and that they at any time could stop the interviews from

going further on, without any consequences for the respondent. The respondents were furthermore informed that their identities were going to be anonymous and that no unauthorized would have access to the respondents' personal information. Moreover, the respondents were informed that the collected data were only to be used for this study, and that the data would later be deleted.

6. Results and Analysis

In the following section, empirical findings carried out from the case company are presented. Extracts from transcribed interviews present the views of the participants, their supervisors and the co-developer of the case LMP programme; Ung I Axfood. The first section aims at answering the first research question, and the second section's target is to answer the sub-research question.

6.1 Understanding the participants roles in the LMP

Since the case study aims to shed light on different plausible incentives for participating in an LMP, the different roles of the participants were targeted during the interviews. In this section, the most commonly mentioned segments of being a participant in Ung i Axfood, and the reasons behind participating, are reflected by the trainees and the supervisors.

6.1.1 Personal development

During the interviews a reoccurring theme was brought into light, namely the reasons for choosing to join the programme. All respondents were in favour of the programme's opportunity for learning and the respondents shared similar motivational aspects for participating in the studied LMP. The interviewees expressed a will to personally develop themselves as a primary motivator for applying to the programme. For the trainees, it was mainly the reasons for not putting higher education such as college or university studies on hold, and to prevent falling behind and loose track and stay unemployed. In line with the results presented in Hardoy's (2005) study, the fear of loosing social human capital as unemployed seems to have been a motivator for applying to the programme.

" They (Axfood) are a very big employer and you can develop yourself quite much and that was something that caught my eye. I didn't want to go to college or university directly after graduation… But at the same time I didn't want to put it on hold either. And then I saw this opportunity as something in between." (X, trainee)

For the supervisors, the main reason for participating is reflected in how they view their trainees' development and their own personal benefits from guiding a new colleague at the workplace. This can be connected to the theory in terms of governmentality, especially from the supervisors' perspective of wanting to lead or guide the trainee. Governmentality can be described as the will to lead or manage for certain reasons, and often for the reason of creating specific results in behaviour (Foucault, 1982; Dean, 2010).

"...and I have seen an essential difference...in how (trainee's name) gradually has grown. One can see a clear difference from the start and now, there isn't many mistakes being made now. It's exciting to see. //...You get the opportunity to show and lead the whole way." (O, supervisor)

This is furthermore reflected by the trainees when speaking of the variation of the work tasks at the workplace and during their training period. The fact that the programme includes working at all departments in the store shows that governmental intervention in some ways can shape the individual (Boland, 2015). In this case it might be the creating of an employee with firm specific knowledge about managing a store.

"For a period of time I've been in the meat and delicatessen's department, and in December and before that I was at the colonial department...Before that it was the fruits department. So it has been a lot but I've also learned a lot and that's nice..." (A, trainee)

"To have had the opportunity to try everything (departments)... I didn't really know <u>what</u> I wanted, but it was nice to know that you can try out anything or it <u>is</u> nice to try everything." (X, trainee)

6.1.2 Human Capital

During the interviews, the importance of having a strong labour force was expressed. This can in some way be described as having an explicit focus to train, develop and manage the human capital at a workplace or in an organization. Especially a focus on

having specialized skills was a re-occurring theme during the interviews, and was reconnected to the over all organizational purpose with engaging in the programme; to shape the labour force and train talented employees. From an organizational perspective, this can be connected to institutional isomorphism, and above all; normative isomorphism. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), professionalization can be understood as the struggle amongst members of a certain occupation to define their work. In this case, both trainees and supervisors pointed out the positive outcomes of attending the programme.

"If the trainee wants to move ahead (trainees name) will have a special competence not many in that age has". (F, supervisor)

Furthermore, the supervisors also expressed the benefits of training young people, which again can be related to governmentality and the idea of shaping an individual to be able to optimize the productivity (Boland, 2015). However, some concerns were voiced;

"The benefit with a younger and not fully-trained employee is that you have the ability to shape that person, but at the same time it's risky since the trainee needs to develop his or hers own way of working... but youths tend to do as one says more often than a person who has worked in the business longer." (O, supervisor)

The trainees themselves also lifted the social benefits they have reached so far during the programme; explicitly pointing out increased social skills gained from meeting customers on daily basis and the experience of having co-workers within a wide age-range. This can be related to the human capital catch-up response to unemployment (Mroz & Savage, 2006). By expressing their gain in increased social skills, the trainees legitimize their participation as something that will gain them in the future, even if the trainee-period does not lead to another type of employment at their organization.

"It has been a social training for me actually... My customer service skills have improved...talking to customers and people." (A, trainee)

" It doesn't matter if one is 55 or 25… we are relatively outspoken, everybody laughs at it and have fun. It doesn't matter how old you are, one can have fun anyway… I think that has been one reason for my development, that I haven't had any problems with socializing with people that are older." (X, trainee)

6.1.3 Communication

During the programme, the supervisors and trainees have weekly and monthly meetings to keep track on how the employment continues to develop. During the weekly meetings the trainee has a questionnaire to work from, with questions regarding what the trainee has accomplished that week and reflections that might have been raised. During the monthly meetings the supervisor as well has questionnaire as basis for the meeting. The half-year meeting has a specific intention, and it is for the union to see that the trainee follows every step in the programme. The half-year meeting also serve as a pressure to ensure that the participants perform as they are expected. All respondents view their communication between trainee and supervisor as well flowing and encouraging for both parts. The communication is also something that is being viewed as a bearing part of the programme as such. Nonetheless, the most frequently asked questions to one of the developer regard how the programme should be implemented, especially the educational parts of the programme. The supervisors and their trainees confirm this by saying;

"It feels a bit strange that they just sent a bunch of material that we do not really know what to do with… I mean, we haven't got any information about it, which feels very odd. So we have made our own little interpretation of it". (X, trainee)

This feeling of uncertainty can be related to mimetic isomorphism. In times of uncertainty organizations tend to express a will to imitate another organization. This is called modelling and is a form of mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). A re-occurring theme during the interviews regarded if the participants were "doing right or wrong". The participants also seek the mother company's approval for legitimizing their work, and expressed a feeling of disappointment of the lack of interaction between them

and Axfood. Even if the participants have contacts to reach to if necessary, the communication with Axfood during the process is almost absent.

"Ever since we were finished with that is was (trainees name) who was going to come to us we have not had anymore contact. And that's a bit pitiful because I think that it would have been good with a reconciliation from both sides, so we know that we are doing…well… right". (F, supervisor)

Isomorphism can be described as a "constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (Hawley, 1968 in DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p 149). This is reflected by the participants in their ways of communicating with each other and other stores in the programme. They share an uncertainty in how to perform in the programme and therefor they share their experiences with one another. One supervisor requested an extended communication between the stores in in order to share experiences and knowledge, to be able to make the best out of the programme.

"We talk about the different ways we are working on…they work in a completely different way. So that is something one will have to figure out later on, which way was right or wrong." (O, supervisor)

However, the almost excluded contact with Axfood is not always perceived as an obstacle for the programme's progress. The roughly non-existing interaction opens up for the participants to plan the work and educate the trainee in their own way, which is appreciated. Interestingly, coercive isomorphism notes that the external pressures on organizations to adapt the practices and rules that are considered important in an industry, for example pressures from higher level in a company on how the trainee programme should be carried out, often tend to make organizations more similar to each other (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Nicolau, 1999). However, one of the respondents expresses a feeling of positivism of the lack of communication between Axfood and the supervisors by saying;

"They helped with the formalities, the contracts and how they're supposed to look like and what the rules are… since then they haven't been involved at all, so we have planned it all independently. // It's positive because having someone that controls… No, it doesn't work. It has to be up to every individual, how the store functions… it cannot be controlled from the outside". (O, supervisor)

Here the forms, contracts and formalities might be signs of coercive isomorphism, the contracts look the same for all participants, and is therefor a pressure, but the freedom to plan independently creates a feeling of responsibility that might strengthen the organization and organizational commitment at the workplace.

6.2 The market

A natural reflection considering that this programme entails the retail market is the market itself. Current changes, the uncertainty of the future and certain needs were all subjects mentioned during the interviews.

"The purpose of the LMP was to strengthen the trade market and secure labour force over time, and to get young people to stay in the retail market. So a purpose and a goal was to make a youth initiative and to strengthen the attractiveness for retail and store sellers." (D, co-developer of programme)

"The retail market's biggest problem is that a lot of young people start working in the business, but then they disappear. So the challenge is to get them to stay, to make it that much of an interest." (O, supervisor)

This is confirmed by the trainees, explaining that not many of their previous class mates has stayed in retail. The employer brand of the retail market is not that strong amongst young people.

"I think a lot of people hesitate when it comes to work in a store… If you have attended the retail programme in high school you want to do something…funnier or something that sounds better." (X, trainee)

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One concern that was reflected during the interviews was how other people view the retail market and the LMP. The government of for example the economy entails to effect and in some ways shape *who* and *what* individuals and collectives are and should be. This in turn directs the perspective of how societies view certain populations (Dean, 2010). This is much reflected by the participants, every participant stresses that their daily work tasks are more complex than people might think.

"If you say to someone that you work in a food store people think you only pack goods... But it's so much more, you have to plan days ahead. // If I ask those outside they think I go away these 25% during the week...to a school or something." (X, trainee)

Even though the retail market is considered being a market that attracts many young people, the few number of active programme participants indicates something else. One of the developers of the LMP programme suggests that this might be a case on national level. The initial incentive for creating the LMP was to reduce youth unemployment. However, there is no other market that employs so many youths as retail does, according to one of the developers. But long-term thinking is not the retail markets strong side, nor is strategic competence development. This might be a reason for Axfood to join the LMP. As previously mentioned; organizations tend to "model" other organizations they find successful. They imitate innovative companies in order to legitimize themselves and their behaviour is therefor mimetic; they borrow practices that seems legit and usable from the organization being modelled and imitate them (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In this case, this can for example be other companies' that has had successful LMPs, for example the Volvo Group. Both the retail market as well as for example Volvo in the industrial sector use trainee programmes (i.e LMPs) that, specifically approaching young adults, has had both positive and less luckily successful outcomes. This can further be explained by a competition between organizations, cross boarding sectors, in order to strengthen each organization and sector in for example personnel retention. Moreover, organizations do not only invest in for example personnel retention as a way of gaining competitive advantage within their specific sector or production environment, but also cross-boarders for political power and

institutional legitimacy. Also, organizations tend to compete with each other cross boarders for social and economic fit (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Even if the programme opens up for the possibility to employ the trainee on a regular contract, it is not demanded. However, the fear of loosing talented employees was also reflected during the interviews.

"If the trainee came to me and said 'I want to take this internal education', then off course he or she should do so. But only if we feel that this is a motivated employee that is just not going to take advantage of a bunch of educations and then leave." (O, supervisor)

There is also a will to express the benefits for the market of having these programmes and training of the trainees.

"One incentive and a purpose with the LMP were to give these stores the ability to, in some ways, tailor and form their employees." (D, co-developer of programme)

"The co-employees know that (trainees name) has a special type of employment, and a special education and they have a great respect for (trainees name) because of that. But at the same time (trainees name) is one of them. // ..So if (trainees name) wants to move ahead, (trainees name) will have a special competence not many in that age group has." (F, supervisor)

This indicates the organizations' struggle to professionalize their personnel in order to define the condition of the work of, for example, a store seller, and legitimize it as an attractive alternative. When professionalization occurs in an organizations it is mostly concentrated to formal education in order to give the professionals expertise. The professionals may later provide knowledge-based service to the organization. This contributes to a common cognitive base and leads to having similar structures between organizations, a form of normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Teodoro, 2014; Abbott, 1988; Radaelli, 2000).

6.3 The IT-system

During the interviews, a reoccurring theme was the web-portal where the trainees answer questions regarding their employment. The web-portal is the base for the educational part of the programme, and consists of one assignment per month, including 8-10 tasks per assignment. The questions are self-correcting, meaning that the questions do not have to be answered correctly for continuing the programme. However, there is a monthly follow up to see if the trainee is in phase with the time line of the LMP. There is no central storage of the answers the trainees give to the tasks, although there is a possibility to see if the trainee has visited or opened up the assignments, or whether or not the supervisor has completed his or her supervisor training. The trainees themselves plan when during the week they will answer the questions in the web-portal.

"It's very, very simple. It's mostly common sense and so on… If I sit with it for two hours I feel like I have done very, very much." (X, trainee)

During the interviews, confusion regarding the purpose with the web-portal was brought to light, from both trainees and supervisors. Initially, it seems to have been inconsistencies in what supplies has been distributed to the trainees, difficulties with passwords and usernames, and an overall uncertainty regarding whether or not the answers are stored somewhere and if so, who is able to see them. Interestingly, the problems with the web-portal make the participants feel unsure and create a feeling of not understanding basic things.

"It took really long time before I could e-mail him (contact), I think it was nearly two months, to say that 'I can't connect to the link you sent!'… and I didn't get it, so I thought like; is it me that get's it wrong, that don't get it..?" (F, supervisor)

The trainees share an almost identical picture of the questions of each chapter. The questions according to the trainees do not always fit their workplace, which causes confusion.

"I think it's very strange questions if I'm going to be totally honest... because it doesn't fit our store at all. I mean...it can be questions regarding marketing outside...like, that doesn't fit our store...it's really weird." (A, trainee)

"Unfortunately, I think the web-portal is... a bit messy. It's kind of adjusted to any workplace at all in retail. Which is a bummer. So then we have to take it to another level, how <u>we</u> work." (X, trainee)

Another question raised during the interviews regarded who might have ability to see the answers and collect information from the web-portal. This causes some suspicion among the participants.

"I don't know actually... I think <u>they</u> have control...cause I'm online so they can probably see that in some way." (A, trainee)
"Well, I guess that they can see it somewhere? Because there is a light... There's like a traffic light. If I haven't done it yet it's just grey, but when I have started an assignment it turns yellow and if the time has passed...well, I guess it will turn red, but that hasn't happened for me, but I guess when the employment's over it will be red the thing that aren't finished. And green if finished. But I don't know the consequences." (X, trainee)

However, there seems to be a purpose with not telling the trainees what will happen if not finishing the assignments. One purpose is for the trainees and supervisors to actually do the assignments, since the self-correction of the questions facilitates for the participants to neglect the educational part of the employment. This can be seen as way of conduct of conduct (Dean, 2010). By keeping the programme participants in the unknown; the company and its co-partners can, perchance unknowingly, control and shape the participants web-portal user behaviour by *not* telling the users what will happen if they don't answer the questions.

"Hypothetically, one can cheat with anything if one wants to. If you open up an assignment and it is approved...it doesn't mean that you have answered it. So we need to trust the supervisor and the trainee that they are <u>interested</u>. It's a good thing they don't know what will happen if they don't answer the questions." (D, co-developer of programme)

This is also reflected by one of the trainees when speaking of the supposed purpose of the web-portal and the reporting to the company.

" *It creates a goal, if I haven't done it… well, then we're not in phase. I think it's much about… it creates a dialogue with the supervisor. If we didn't have it (the web-portal) I don't know if we would have followed it at all. And I think that, since we <u>do</u> have it by our side it makes us remember that I'm actually going to <u>be</u> at all departments at the store and so."* (X, trainee)

Here the web-portal may work as a guideline for the participants. It also means that the programme outline is the same for every participant, and that Axfood can shape the behaviour of the trainees' regardless workplace or supervisor.

The programme was introduced in 2013 and is in need of a refreshment procedure according to the developer. The trainees also note the fact that the web-portal and the IT-programme from 2013 is a constant reminder of how the programme has not been updated since then. Both the developer and the participants stress the importance of an updated web-portal. This can be connected to coercive isomorphism since the threat to not accomplish certain levels of standard in a business makes organizations develop new systems (Nicoalou, 1999).

Furthermore, the trainees express a feeling of being treated as younger than the adults they are by the design of the programme. In some parts of the programme, especially in video clips, there are cartooned figures that explain the content.

"*I think a lot can be solved if they just re-make the educations online. Or maybe rephrase some things… like, maybe not have these cartooned characters that talk. It's a bit like watching a children's television programme when there's a video clip. I mean, if they would have had real people it would have been… I guess it's just ridiculously explained. The information is really good, but if one just would have done it with real people or interviewed someone it would have been easier to understand than these cartooned figures. It feels ridiculous. These educations are often identical with our own internal*

educations. But there are real people in our internal educations and then there's a cartooned figure in this one. It just feels unnecessary, I could have spent that time walking next to someone showing how it actually works." (X, trainee)

This can reflect a direct consequence of the governmental interventions mentioned previously.

6.4 The criteria for being a trainee

"It is not hard to get companies to employ work introduction trainees, but it's hard to find trainees, partly because of the limitations in the criteria. If we could broaden the criteria and open up for those attending theoretical programmes in high school, we can save this. The business is in need of it." (D, co-developer of programme)

The above quotation identifies some of the obstacles for a secure implementation of LMPs in retail. The trainee must be under the age of 21, be unemployed and register as such at the Swedish Public Employment Agency, not have been previously employed at the workplace, and has to have attended a specific retail programme in high school. The recruitment process involves telephone interviews, meetings with the store, and visits to the Swedish Public Employment Agency. During the interviews, discussions of the difficulties with the criteria were expressed. A background to this might have been the transition of the high school programme from being a theoretical program to become a practical programme, with the reform of GY-11.

"The demand of the high school programme of retail to give access to higher education was removed, which meant that many parents didn't want their children to seek and attend practical programmes in high school, because then they wouldn't have as many opportunities later on. And the practical programmes were marketed as programmes for those that didn't want to study or felt that they had the skills to do so and... who wants to part of that group? No one. Who wants children that aren't clever?" (D, co-developer of programme)

This reflects the theory of governmentality in the sense that governmental interventions; media, and the ways of managing the unemployed at the employment agencies leads to a certain and dominant perspective of the group targeted by the interventions. In this case, it can be reflected in how the society views those who attend practical programmes in high school or unemployed youths (Boland, 2015).

Further, there seems to be another reasoning with the benefits of the programme.

"*The LMP is a good alternative for the young adults that don't have that specific and strong will to get a job by themselves. Off course there are also those who wants to learn and develop themselves, and not only those who didn't get a job on their own.*" (D, co-developer of programme)

This further indicate signs of governmentality since the unemployed often tends to be regarded as a person with low self-esteem in need of encouraging, self-help and as lacking the capabilities of innovativeness and entrepreneurship. It further stresses the perspective of young unemployed adults as being a complex and problematic population that needs to be monitored and facilitated into the labour market (Dean, 2010).

However, there seems to be a clash between the view of the young adults as in need of help to get an employment and the trainees' experiences of the recruitment process, which stand in contrast to the society's view of unemployed youths. The trainees expressed that the recruitment process was long, included many steps and that they had to call and e-mail the company various times in order to get feedback on the process. This indicates that they had to be involved and interested in the process for its continuance. Furthermore, there were also problems with the criteria of being registered as unemployed at the Swedish Public Employment Agency. In Sweden, an unemployed registered member of the Swedish Public Employment Agency is not allowed to turn down any job offer. One of the trainees shared an experience where the trainee (before attending the programme), was, after having met the store and all was set with contracts and other forms, offered a summer job before the programme was about to begin. The organization saw this as an opportunity to get to know the trainee before starting the trainee period.

" They (The Swedish Public Employment Agency) said: 'If you accept the summer job offer, you can't have the trainee employment, because then you would have been employed there before. But if you neglect the offer, you neglect an opportunity to work, and you are not allowed to do that.' They basically wanted me to work for one month instead of 12. So I had to call the manager and ask him to withdraw the offer, since I was unemployed and wasn't allowed to turn down an offer." (X, trainee)

Being unemployed states a socioeconomic condition, a rate that can be managed throughout different matrixes (Walters, 2012) and is governed through the employment agencies. The strongest purpose with LMPs is to reduce youth unemployment, yet this example shows the difficulties with connecting governmental programmes with other governmental incentives such as the Swedish Public Employment Agency's own agendas. In this case the trainee, who is the primary key of the LMP, was encouraged to accept an offer of one month instead of 12 months. This suggests that the trainee, if accepting the offer, could return to being monitored again through the employment agency after only a month, if not offered a continuing employment. This would work contra productive with the optimization of the population (Walters, 2012; Boland, 2015).

7. Discussion

The previous section has focused on the results' connection to the theoretical framework. The following section presents a discussion of the results, based on the results and previous research. With a theoretical analytic approach, the research questions are answered.

7.1 How can participation in LMPs be understood from an organizational and individual perspective?

7.1.1 -Understanding of employment. Individual understanding and motivation

LMPs were introduced as an incentive to reduce the high levels of youth unemployment and facilitate for young adults to enter the labour market. Previous studies have presented LMPs as ways to prevent long periods of regular unemployment, and as tools to facilitate for unemployed and economical disadvantaged individuals to enter the labour force. Another common purpose with LMPs is to smooth the transition from school to work and to promote entry into steady employment relationships. Furthermore, LMPs have been presented as effective tools for creating an integrated labour market by working as bridges over the barrier between non and a some working experience, facilitating for employers to employ youths even in uncertain times (Sianesi, 2004; Hardoy, 2005; Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016). Since this study focuses on why organizations and individuals choose to participate in a LMP, it was of interest to explore the origin of LMPs and how the incentives of LMPs might have had an impact on the image of typical candidates and their reasoning for participation. This was done using a theoretical framework including governmentality (Foucault, 1984; 2007; Walters, 2012; Dean, 2010; Boland, 2015) for understanding the participation from a social perspective, and the theory of Institutional Isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) as of why organizations might engage in LMPs. In order to identify some reasons for participation, organizational as well as individual, it was of importance to explore how the participants view their employment.

In the result it was found that the trainees perceive their employment as an alternative for higher education. They view their trainee period as a chance for personal as well as social development and as an opportunity to learn specific skills. According to previous studies youths tend to seek jobs, engaging in different work activities and train in order to battle the potential negative outcomes of being terminated from the labour market for a longer period of time (Mroz & Savage, 2006). However, previous research on implementation of LMPs has not shown a high rate of positive labour market outcomes for the participants. Nevertheless, the participants in this study show a positive attitude towards their participation. Thus, the trainees as well as their supervisors' declaration of having a motivation to personally develop themselves, and having the opportunity to watch an employee grow can be signs of them empowering their human capital and as a way of legitimize their participation. According to Hardoy (2005), participation in a LMP might be driven by the participants' expectations of possible positive outcomes deriving from the participation. Hence, personal preferences such as expectation of gaining from participation might motivate the individual to participate (Hardoy, 2005). In this case, the personal preferences could be the trainees' resentment to study at a college or university, or the fear of loosing social and human capital as a plausible consequence of unemployment. The supervisors' personal preferences might be the willpower to educate, manage and shape the trainee to fit their specific workplace or an overall engagement for the next generation.

7.1.2 What are the reasons for Axfood to engage in an LMP? Organizational understanding

It has previously been stated that even though many OECD countries have failed in working with ALMPs, organizations have been encouraged to participate in LMPs in order to strengthen the labour market and to contribute to the solutions for reducing youth unemployment (Caliendo, 2016; Larsson, 2003). These coercive forces might have worked as a pressure for Axfood to join the LMP, even though the market they are targeting already employs many youths. Additionally, the annual report from Axfood (2015) states that the company focuses on attracting, retaining and developing employees. This can also serve as a way for participating in the LMP, since this allows for

the company to form and shape the employees to fit their specific environment, and hence, open up for the opportunity to retain the employee; in this case the trainee.

In Sweden, the LMP of work introduction was introduced in 2014, employing around 1133 individuals. The Volvo Group acts as the employer of approximately half the amount of approved employments, meaning that the Volvo Group is without reservation the most successful on employing on these terms (YA-delegationen, 2014). Even though the Volvo Group entails a different type of market, there can still be a cross-boarder competition between Axfood and Volvo. Organizations do not only compete for resources and customers within their specific sector or production environment, but also for political power and institutional legitimacy. Furthermore, the industrial market and the retail market are connected by their ability to employ a high number of personnel, specifically youths. Also, organizations tend to compete with each other for social and economic fit (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Since Volvo Group was one of the first to engage in this type of LMP, and the criteria for participation is similar between the two employers, it can be seen as a modelling and mimetic process (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Further, Axfood states in their core values that they have clear sustainability goals, which included being an active and responsible societal actor. This can serve as a way of legitimate their participation in LMPs and gaining competitive advantage as well as political power.

7.2 What factors might be possible causes for doubtful implementation of LMPs in the retail market?

As noted previously in the research the retail sector faces different challenges, for example a higher than average rate of personnel turnover. Added to this, the retail labour market has a poor image as a final career destination, particularly for high-qualified employees. Although the retail market has expanded over the past years, there are difficulties in employing suitable employees with the right specific skills (Hart et al., 2007). This indicates that the LMP, which has a strong focus to train the employee to gain firm specific knowledge, could serve as a tactic to retain skilled personnel. However, there are only five on-going employments of this type –why is that? The results show significant signs of the participants being observant and sensible to how

others view the retail market. The eagerness to explain their choices, the fear of loosing skilled personnel and the focus of retention of employees can be explained by professionalization and the struggle to define and legitimize the work in retail, and how normative isomorphism occur between different units (Radaelli, 2000; Teodoro, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The modest employer brand of the retail market as a final career destination, the fear of other peoples' judgement and the struggle to define the work might act as barriers for entering the programme. However, it is noteworthy that both trainees and supervisors strongly advice others to join. Nonetheless, this might not have been the case before their entrance into the programme.

7.2.1 Criteria for participating in the Labour Market Programme

During the interviews it was mentioned that it is not hard to find companies that are willing to participate in work introduction employments, but hard to find youths that see this as an opportunity for a sustainable employment. One explanation might be found in the limited criteria. Since there is an age limit, a regulation stating that the trainee must have attended a special high school programme and the statement that there can only be one trainee per workplace, the range of potential trainees is narrowed down. Still, over a thousand do graduate from the specific retail programme. This would indicate a broader recruitment spectrum, however only twelve employments have been approved since the start in 2014. One explanation might be, as was raised during the interviews; the common opinion that attending a practical programme might lead to fewer options later on in the youth's working life. Hence, it is not perceived as a fruitful alternative for the youth to choose this kind of programme, and the youth might choose a different alternative, perchance as a result of the pressure from significant others, such as legal guardians. This is further supported by the results of this study, where it was found that most of the trainees' former classmates have chosen entirely different career paths, and almost none are working within retail.

The programme is further being promoted as an alternative for young adults that do not have the self-discipline or motivation to get a job on their own. Additionally, this confirms theories regarding the view of an unemployed as a person with low self-esteem, in need of encouraging, self-help and as lacking the capabilities of innovativeness and entrepreneurship needed for being a competitive player on the

market (Dean, 2010). However, this stands in contrast to the recruitment process that required both time and effort for the trainees in this study. Both trainees and their supervisors also stressed that since the communication with Axfood still is almost non-existent, they have had to make their own interpretation of the programme, showing skills of entrepreneurship and drive. Furthermore, the trainees in this study have gained personal, as well as firm specific skills, which they would not have been able to assimilate without their own willingness. However, the IT-system's design with cartooned figures instead of real people as is in Axfood's internal educations, further stresses the notion that young unemployed adults are a complex group that has to be facilitated and helped into the labour market (Boland, 2015). The targeted group is to some extent being presented as infantile, which might have an effect on the societies stress to care for and govern this specific group (Dean, 2010). The societal view of unemployed young adults as lacking drive and in need of encouragement, the poor employer brand of the retail market and the overall notion that those attending practical programmes has not got the same options later on in the working life as those who attend theoretical programmes all together co-operate to outline the characteristics of the desired candidate for the programme (Boland, 2015; Dean 2010). This profiled candidate is to some extent confirmed and targeted by the IT-system, as it seems to be designed for younger children. All in all, this further legitimises the governmental idea of the complexity of unemployed young adults (Dean, 2010), and it is essential to mention that not many aspire to be associated with that kind of complex group.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Main remarks

This master thesis aimed at seeking answers to the research questions of how the studied LMP in the retail sector could be understood, how participation could be motivated from an organizational as well as an individual perspective, and to identify possible reasons for poor implementation of the programme. It is of importance to once again note that this empirical study, beside organizational documents, is based on semi-structured interviews with five participants connected to the same organization; two trainees, two supervisors and one co-developer of the IT-system, and that the LMP was studied within the retail market.

The results present that the main reasons for the trainees to participate in the LMP is that the LMP offers a sustainable alternative to higher education. The trainees and their supervisors further stresses the opportunity for personal development as a main factor for wanting to participate. The supervisors as well as the trainees express an overall positive attitude towards the programme, although the trainees express frustration for being, to some extent, projected as infantile through the design the IT-system used for reporting their education. The main reason for Axfood to participate consists mainly of the element that the LMP can be seen as a way for the company to attract, retain and develop talented employees. By offering training and firm specific knowledge, Axfood may be able to retain employees in a market that is often identified as a market where many does not stay for long. Also coercive pressures from society for large corporations to address difficulties in society such as unemployment and the aspiration to develop a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be reasons for legitimizing participation from an organizational perspective.

To address the second research question, regarding possible reasons for poor implementation of the LMP in retail, the main component found were the poor employer brand of the retail market as such. How others view the retail market and presumptions of what retail work includes might be overall factors for why people hesitate to start

work in retail. Especially personal engagement in firm specific knowledge can act contra productive for those not interesting in a further career within retail. Further, the criteria for participation as a trainee are limited and therefor the rate of possible participation is cut down drastically. The criteria further suggests that the LMP is targeted to fit a candidate that does not exist, since it is promoted as a programme for those without self-esteem and internal motivation to get a job. However, this stands in contrast to the recruitment process and the responsibilities of the trainee does therefor not match that idea. Hence, this can be a reason for the few on-going work introduction employments in retail; the desired candidate does in fact not exist, or young individuals might not identify themselves with the outlined features of the desired candidate.

Interestingly, although the findings present some plausible obstacles for successful implementation of the LMP, the trainees and their respective supervisors express their satisfaction of being a participant of the LMP. This is of importance to mention in the sense that LMPs are not out of reach to become more successful and acknowledged, and for more organizations to notice and participate in LMPs, regardless sector. Thus, the LMP as an incentive for decreasing youth unemployment rely, to some extent, on how it is perceived by its surrounding environment, for example companies and young adults. It might therefor be of importance for the further development of LMPs to facilitate for more organizations and companies to be able to participate, by breaking up some of the existing regulations, and to share information about this type of LMP to high school students in order to raise knowledge in advance.

8.2 Contribution to existing research

This study has contributed to the existing research field by offering a case study within retail with the frame of reference of Institutional Isomorphism and governmentality. The study has extended the theory of governmentality to address both social and individual preferences, implementing the theory in a new context. Furthermore, the study has provided more information of how individuals perceive employments within the retail sector. Additionally, this study has contributed to the overall research of LMPs in Sweden and Europe, by offering an insight to the individual experience of participating in an LMP.

8.3 Contribution to the HRM-research field

This study has contributed to the HRM-research field by offering an individual as well as an organizational perspective of the experience of a work introduction employment type. It has further offered an insight to how individuals perceive the recruitment process and their professional development within the organization. Additionally, this case study may work as an example for eventual future modelling of the labour market programme in order broaden the criteria for participation, so that more candidates might be able to to seek this opportunity for employment and hence strengthen the retail market, by it employing and retaining more employees.

8.4 Further research

This study has a focus of on going work introduction employments, and was conducted within a limited time reference due to the fact that the LMP has only been active since 2014. For future references it would therefor be of interest to see how the LMP affect the retail labour market in the long run. Nevertheless, even when considering the limited time period, the number of participating organizations and candidates in LMPs in the retail market are remarkably low, comparing with for example the industrial sector. This raises interesting questions that seek further investigation. More research regarding the relationship between societies, governmental incentives and organizations are therefor of importance. Moreover, since this study only provides the perspective of participants that are in the programme at the moment, it would be of interest to see if and how their participation in the programme affect their future careers, and in what ways. Further, there is a demand for more research regarding youth unemployment and incentives to decrease unemployment. Additionally, extended research regarding LMPs and how to optimize these kinds of incentives might be of importance and work as an effective tool for finding the right techniques to attract, retain and develop young adults within the retail market. Also, further research on individuals' experiences of the studied LMP is of importance since it might facilitate for beneficial development of the LMP.

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Appendix 1

Frågor vid intervju.

Allmänna frågor:
- Introduktion av intervjuare och syftet med uppsatsen
- Hur intervjun kommer läggas upp
- Anonymitet (all data raderas)
- Respondentens bakgrund
- Utbildningsbakgrund
- Tidigare arbetslivserfarenhet
- När började arbeta för XX
- Position/typ av anställning på XX

Vid intervju med ansvarig:
- Syfte, vision och mål med YA.
- Varför ska man använda sig av YA? Varför viktigt med YA för Axfood?
- Vilka motiv finns det med YA?
- Olika sätt att organisera en arbetsplats?
- Hur definieras kompetens?
- (Få tillgång till utbildningsmaterial?)
- Tillgång till personer som är handledare/traineer
- Kontaktperson inom facket, fackliga representanter

Fråga till handledare/traineer:
- Hur ser en vanlig dag ut?
- Hur definierar de kompetens?
- Vilka hinder finns det för lärande?
- Jobbar med samma saker? Hur mycket variation på arbetsuppgifterna?
- Vilka nya kunskaper har du fått?
- Vad kan leda till ökad kompetens?
- Vilka typer av personer/kunder handlar? Vad innebär det för er?
- Tankar kring IT-systemet (rapporteringen). Hur funkar det? Hur mycket tid läggs på att rapportera? Vad rapporterar man om? Hur mycket stämmer rapporteringen överens med verkligheten? Jobb 75% och utbildning 25%?
- Horisontellt och vertikalt perspektiv