Vital Tasks and Roles of Frontline Workers Facilitating Job Inclusion of Vulnerable Youth

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Abstract:
Researchers and others are worried about the marginalisation of vulnerable youth who drop out of school and work. Frontline workers are key support givers for vulnerable youth, but they have been described as professionals who lack a recognised body of knowledge they can rely on. This article investigates vital frontline roles and tasks related to job inclusion of vulnerable youth. Qualitative data are drawn from 16 Norwegian pilot projects aimed at developing social work approaches among vulnerable youth. The challenges and the support provided resemble those in other European countries.

Cross-case analysis suggests four main support roles: 1) administration and securing of basic needs, 2) connection and relation building, 3) job enabling, and 4) job customisation. Combining roles 1 and 2 with roles 3 or 4 seems to improve the outcomes, meaning that they improve the capabilities of vulnerable youth to find and master a job when that is something they have reason to value. Since this topic has been little explored for vulnerable youth, this article contributes to further developing job inclusion support for this target group in particular.

Introduction

Youth unemployment is high in several European countries, and researchers as well as policymakers are worried about the increasing marginalisation of vulnerable youth (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016; MacIntyre, 2014; Mascherini, Massimiliano, Salvatore, Meierkord, & Jungblot, 2012). By vulnerable youth, I mean youth aged 15–25 who are at risk of dropping out of or have already dropped out of school, or have difficulties finding and keeping a job. At the policy level, this can be a problem since lack of education and participation in the community leads many of these youngsters into unemployment and a life as benefit recipients, placing heavy burdens on the welfare state. From a social work perspective, this marginalisation can be problematic, for instance by hindering vulnerable youth from utilising fundamental rights to a meaningful education and work, or by hindering the youngsters from living lives they have reason to value.

The solutions to these challenges can also be very different at the policy level than when seen from a social work perspective. For instance, policy regimes such as those based on workfare (Lødemel & Moreira, 2014) or incentive reinforcement (Bonoli, 2010) tend to coerce jobless individuals into work through incentives and sanctions in order to get them off passive benefits. Individual social work, on the other hand, is preoccupied with establishing good working relationships with clients and helping them to decide what actions are required by taking 'many aspects of the lives of their clients into account' (Røysum, 2012, p. 719). The support process can be multifaceted and time consuming, and can have multiple aims.

This article focuses on the process of job inclusion in particular. By job inclusion I mean finding a job in line with youth's preferences in an ordinary workplace, or using an ordinary workplace as part of the support process and as a means of inclusion for a period (particularly relevant for youth who are struggling at school). Job inclusion is a possible aim or part of the support offered both in social work processes and in frontline activation.

Frontline workers are key support givers for vulnerable youth, and their support can have a profound impact on the future of such youth. However, the complex challenges and contradictory conditions they face involve dilemmas, leading to a risk of ‘highly individualized frontline practitioners’ (Nothdurfter, 2016, p. 434) who may tend to base the support on their own favoured approaches rather than on established knowledge. Such individuation represents a challenge because it increases the level of discretion among frontline workers, with the danger this entails of creating unpredictable services that lack transparency (Van Berkel, Van der Aa, & Van Gestel, 2010). Van Berkel et al. claimed that frontline workers lack a ‘recognized body of knowledge’ that they can rely on (2010, p. 462). This article seeks to contribute to the development of such knowledge by exploring support processes among vulnerable youth, and in particular processes aimed at job inclusion.

The cases discussed in this article stem from frontline workers who provide tailor-made services for youth with complex support needs. They work in local teams that develop support approaches designed for this target group. They include social workers, teachers, child welfare officers, nurses and special educators, as well as others. They cooperate closely with the welfare and employment services, schools, workplaces, families, child and welfare services and others. Since vital support roles in connection with the job inclusion of vulnerable youth have been little explored, this article contributes to further development by generating hypotheses on what should be the core roles and tasks of such support.

Theoretical perspective

The article has two main aims: 1) to identify vital support roles and tasks related to job inclusion processes among vulnerable youth, and 2) to discuss the importance of these roles and their combinations to successful outcomes. The term ‘successful outcome’ here should not just be understood as permanent employment, but also as the improvement of capabilities and achievements. As such, it is in line with the Capability Approach (CA). CA makes two

major claims: first, 'that the freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance, and second, that freedom to achieve well-being is to be understood in terms of people's capabilities, that is, their real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value' (Robeyns, 2016). Amartya Sen called such beings and doings 'functionings' (Robeyns, 2005, p. 95; Sen, 1999). 'Functionings' can include 'working, resting, being literate, being healthy, being part of a community, being respected, and so forth' (Robeyns, 2005, p. 95). Resources can be transformed into capabilities (possibilities) and further into 'functionings' (achievements) with the help of internal 'conversion factors' (e.g. metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills or intelligence), or external 'conversion factors', such as social factors (e.g. public policies, social norms, practices that discriminate unfairly, social hierarchies, or power relations), or environmental factors (e.g. the physical or built environment, climate, geographical location) (Robeyns, 2016).

Although the Capability Approach has a much wider focus than job inclusion alone, finding a job can certainly be one relevant task. Egdell and McQuaid exemplify this by stating that CA 'offers a perspective on the employment activation that is concerned with their freedom to make choices that they value rather than focusing solely on outcomes, such as having to take any job' (2016, p. 1). Hvinden and Halvorsen (2017, p. 6) claim that some conversion factors can serve as facilitators, for instance in the form of actions on 'the part of governments or employers' to 'provide jobs or accommodations for persons belonging to underrepresented groups'.

Research literature on vulnerable youth from Europe (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016; Frøyland, 2016; Johansson & Höjer, 2012), Australia (Munford & Sanders, 2014; Noble-Carr, Barker, McArthur, & Woodman, 2015) and the USA (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010; Xie, Sen, & Foster, 2014) shows that vulnerable youth may need support for a broad spectrum of issues. Challenges differ, ranging widely from minor difficulties to major problems such as

severe mental challenges, drug problems or criminal activity. Several studies point to close individual follow-up as a key success factor (Frøyland, 2016; Noble-Carr et al., 2015; Taylor, 2011; Xie et al., 2014). What vital roles and tasks (conversion factors) does such support involve in cases where vulnerable youth find reason to value job inclusion?

Data and methodology

This article is based on data from two Norwegian research projects. The first was an evaluation of 15 youth pilot projects aimed at developing social work approaches among vulnerable youth aged 15-25 (Frøyland, Maximova-Mentzoni, & Fossestøl, 2016). The second project aimed to improve methods for using ordinary work as a means of promoting school completion (Bernstrøm, Frøyland, & Spjelkavik, 2015). The target groups and their challenges were quite similar in these two projects. The support givers were a mix of frontline workers with different professional backgrounds.

Data were collected in accordance with multiple case study designs (Yin, 2014) and mainly consisted of transcribed, semi-structured qualitative interviews. The data contained rich information about the needs and challenges of vulnerable youth, their situation, the local context, monitoring methods, the coordination of services, and experience of job inclusion. I used the full datasets as the empirical framework (Bernstrøm et al., 2015; Frøyland et al., 2016), but chose focus group interviews as the main data source for this article since these data better displayed the support process.

The focus group interviews lasted two to three hours and were conducted in all 16 pilots. The groups comprised youth workers, the welfare and employment services, upper secondary school counsellors and other services that follow up school drop-outs. Researchers asked the groups to describe and discuss the service provided in what they (the pilot workers) viewed as one successful and one unsuccessful case. This yielded 31 support stories covering

31 vulnerable youth (One focus group only provided one case). The cases are shown in Table 1. The vulnerable youth themselves did not take part in the focus group interviews. Their reflections are therefore not part of the data.

Only four of the focus group cases were girls (13%). In the full dataset, 37% of the youth reached by these projects were girls (Frøyland et al., 2016). There are several reasons for the low percentage of girls. The main reason is probably that school drop-out rates are lower among girls than among boys.[i] This could lead to a lower percentage of girls in need of support, since the pilots mainly recruited youth who had dropped out. The low percentage of girls in the cases discussed in the focus group interviews could also be random, as the focus groups were not instructed to choose both sexes.

Since I was particularly interested in exploring job inclusion processes, I added interviews with 13 employers about their experience of hiring vulnerable youth assigned from one of the pilots. I used the information from the employers to inform the findings from the focus group interviews.

Analysis

The analysis had two aims: 1) to identify vital support roles and tasks (conversion factors) that contribute to improved job inclusion capabilities among vulnerable youth, 2) to assess the importance of these roles for the transformation of capabilities into 'functionings' (achievements). I searched the data for information on these topics:

- What kind of support do frontline workers provide as part of the job inclusion process for vulnerable youth and their employers?
- How does each support role contribute to the facilitation of capabilities to find and hold a job?

- Which support roles and combinations of roles characterise successful outcomes (functionings)?

I read the interview protocols several times and developed matrices to display relevant data from the 31 individual cases. I followed an inductive and data-driven approach (Gibbs, 2007; Yin, 2014). In particular, I carefully analysed the cases in which work had been part of the support (marked in Table 1).

(Table 1)

My aim was not to perform an explicit case-to-case comparison, but to identify patterns of support related to job inclusion across cases. The analysis resembles a variable-oriented, cross-case analysis, but with more focus on themes than on variables (Thagaard, 1999). In variable-oriented approaches, 'generality is given precedence over complexity' (Ragin, 1987, p. 54), and the details of any specific case 'reside behind the broad patterns found across a wide variety of cases' (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 102). I therefore labelled the first part of the analysis 'theme-oriented, cross-case analysis'. This analysis led to the identification of four major support roles that these frontline workers engaged in. These roles should be understood as analytical constructs (ideal types) developed by the author. They define the most common tasks and functions associated with each support role.

To be able to use the qualitative data to shed light on the importance of these roles, I added a variable-oriented, cross-case comparison (Ragin, 1987) of the focus group cases based on their outcomes, the level of challenges faced by each individual, the quality of support from the employer and the presence of frontline support roles. Other variables such as social background, diagnosis, type of work or culture, could also have been relevant, but none of them were included.

I defined three levels of challenges ranging from 'severe' (e.g. addiction, crime, grave family problems, homelessness etc.), via 'major' (similar to 'severe', but less extensive), to

‘minor’ (e.g. dropping out because of minor problems or wrong choice of subject). I also defined three levels of support quality from employers, ranging from ‘fantastic’ (provided close long-term support, help with many issues), via ‘good’ (similar to ‘fantastic’, but less extensive) to ‘ordinary’ (positive towards youth, but no extra follow-up).

The informants had defined the focus-group cases as either successful or unsuccessful. Based on my knowledge of all the cases, I re-sorted them into three outcome levels: ‘success’, ‘partial success’ and ‘no success’. In only two cases did ‘success’ mean permanent employment. It was more common that the youth had improved their capabilities through a successful work training period, having returned to school or having been accepted for an apprenticeship. In the partly successful cases, youth had also improved their capabilities, but less so than in the successful ones. They had had good experiences of work training, or had gained control of previous problems or health-related challenges. Those who were not successful were still without jobs, out of school, and had no solution to their challenges. I read the focus group interviews at least five times and categorised the cases twice before comparing them. Details are provided in Table 1.

My analysis cannot fully explain the differences in the outcomes of these cases, since many factors have contributed, and I have only included some of them. Since the number of cases is limited, this method does not produce statistically generalisable findings. They must all be viewed as part of a qualitative approach. However, while my rich data are well-suited to generating hypotheses about what tasks and roles might be vital conversion factors, and what their importance might be, they are not well-suited to testing the hypotheses that this article has generated. This could be a task for a future RCT.

The informants had difficulty reconstructing all the elements of the support process because of limitations in their notes and memory. Limitations related to recall bias when reconstructing a case several years later must therefore be mentioned. Such limitations also

limit the categorisation of cases based on variables such as employer quality, level of challenge and the presence of support roles.

Findings and discussion

The support roles identified in the theme-oriented, cross-case analysis were 1) administration and securing of basic needs, 2) connection and relation building, 3) job enabling, and 4) job customisation. The role *administration and securing of basic needs* (1) entails assisting the youth in meeting needs related to housing, finances, health and activity. Several of the youth involved in these cases had experienced lack of income, lack of accommodation or food, as well as threats stemming from affiliations to criminal groups. Frontline workers providing such administrative services often worked as officers at the employment and welfare service or other municipal or state agencies. They communicated with the youth by phone, letter or email, mostly during working hours. In practice, this role seldom entailed visiting the youth in their home, at school or at work, but more often meant providing support that was important in order to secure basic needs and the presence of vital resources.

Connection and relation building (2) means providing close follow-up of the youth at the individual or group level, often in an environment where the youth can feel safe, and develop a sense of belonging and social participation. This kind of support was often provided by smaller teams or units, often outside the welfare and employment services. Frontline workers performing this role were available to the youth, who could also call them outside working hours and meet them at different locations. As part of this role, they provided lunch and facilitated activities, as well as teaching them about issues such as diet, physical training, working life, school etc. Relation-building meant facilitating inclusion by taking a positive and caring approach. The surroundings from which these frontline workers operated were more of a temporary ‘backstage’: in their work, they aimed to help the youth to define what

they wanted and to include them in school, at work or in their communities in line with their preferences.

Job enabling (3) entails spending time on the road, building employer networks and learning about local working life. Job enabling also entails spending time with the youth in order to get to know them and increase the chances of locating workplaces that could match their interests and skills. Frontline workers performing this role closely monitored the youth, their families and the employers. They could drive the youth to and from work, using the drive to talk to and encourage them. Taking this role rarely involved monitoring youth in the workplace. When frontline workers performed this role, they acted as coaches who introduced the youth to possibilities for further development. The job enablers helped to transform resources into possibilities, thus increasing these youth's capabilities.

Job customisation (4) entails being knowledgeable about working life in a similar way to job enabling, but, in addition to linking youth and workplaces, this role also emphasises long-term planning, job carving (designing jobs in line with youths' needs in collaboration with the employer), and helping employers to follow up youth at work. When frontline workers performed this role, they were not just coaches motivating the youth, but took on a role similar to that of a sea pilot; they not only boarded 'the ship' to advise and support its captain, they also took control during challenging periods. Thus, job customisation meant intervening in training and follow-up in the workplace more than the role of job enabling did. It could also mean addressing, and assisting co-workers with issues such as how to support the youth in work situations and social events at work. Customisation also meant contributing more to the creation of 'natural supports' (Murphy, Mullen, & Spagnolo, 2005) in the workplace than the role of job enabling did, which seemed to leave these issues to the employer. Job customisation contributed to the transformation of capabilities into 'functionings'(achievements).

Several contextual, professional and organisational elements may have had an influence on the support provided. I have not been able to include all these in my analysis, which is a limitation. However, I have included some elements by performing variable-oriented, cross-case comparisons based on the combinations of support roles in each case. These combinations of roles actually represent different organisational models.

Variable-oriented, cross-case comparisons

Each focus group case illustrated complex processes in which support had been provided in connection with several issues by several agencies over a period ranging from one to eight years. Some details of these processes are shown in Table 1. However, it has not been possible to display all relevant information. The data describe elements of the support processes, such as client engagement, profiling, assessments and action plans, as well as job inclusion activities, such as job finding, employer engagement and on-the-job and off-the-job support. I will give some examples of how support givers contributed to these processes by filling the roles already described.

Thirteen of these cases had been assessed as successful, seven as partly successful, and eleven as unsuccessful. Work had been tried out in all cases assessed as successful, and in about half of the unsuccessful cases. Frontline workers in all support role categories agreed with the view that inclusion in a workplace at some point in the process can contribute to positive development. Several of the youth involved were described as having changed immensely during work training. For instance, one boy was described as 'aggressive', 'unwilling', 'unkempt' and 'not work-ready' before his placement, but six months later as 'participating', 'happy' and 'motivated' (Case 4, Table 1). The employer explained the changes as follows:

> *He was given work tasks – real work tasks – and responsibilities that he was able to carry out. He was thereby shown trust. We made requirements of him. My staff were flexible and helped*

to give him a chance. They were involved in creating a good framework for this guy. He had little self-confidence, little or no belief that he could do anything. (Employer)

One of the frontline workers involved had a similar explanation: ‘We experience again and again that, when youth start working in businesses that take a caring approach, everything turns out well. Employers take time and make an effort.’ Through flexible and caring support and work tasks that he could master, the youth gradually improved his achievements. He became more capable.

Of the 13 successful cases, ‘fantastic’ or ‘good’ employers had been involved in almost half (6), whereas no ‘good’ or ‘fantastic’ employer had been involved in the unsuccessful cases. ‘Good’ or ‘fantastic’ meant that employers provided close support – often for many years – to help youth to transform capabilities into ‘functionings’. For some of these employers, helping the youth became their own project; they described it as meaningful to help a youth to master ordinary work.

One example was a male employer in a small company, who, after two and a half years, had given a young boy permanent employment in the hope that this would give him the final motivation to become ‘a responsible employee’. This boy (Case 31, Table 1) had disappeared from work several times because of psychological challenges. The employer accepted these events. He had gone looking for him, visited him at his home, supported him in a friendly way, helped him sort out his bills, and even paid some of them. The employer had made it a project of his own to help the boy; he believed that the boy’s difficulties were caused by having parents with severe challenges and thus by his having lacked proper parenting during childhood.

In a different workplace, three women had agreed to cooperate as mentors for a young apprentice with severe challenges (Case 14, Table 1). After five years of close follow-up,

including wake-up calls, home visits and numerous ‘talks’, he finally got his certificate. They had made it their aim to help this boy to succeed:

> *We became extra mothers for him. In the beginning, he was absent one, two or three days a week. He has improved a lot, but still shows up 10 minutes late in the morning. (Employer)*

Findings such as these suggest that successful job inclusion is not merely a sudden miracle that happens when a vulnerable youth is given an ordinary job. The ‘good’ and ‘fantastic’ employers provided tailor-made monitoring, thus suggesting that mastery and improved capability were not a coincidence, but rather the consequence of deliberate support. It is reasonable to assume that what these employers did helped to transform capabilities into ‘functionings’, and that they can serve as examples of important roles and tasks in job inclusion that frontline workers could also help to facilitate. However, it is also possible to interpret some of the examples – for instance the employer who hoped that a permanent job would improve the boy’s performance – as illustrating some of the limits to what even good employers can achieve. In order to facilitate capabilities and ‘functionings’, support may be needed from someone who knows how to match vulnerable youth with work that they can master.

Importance of support roles and their combinations

I compared two groups of cases. One consisted of cases with one or two roles present (mainly roles 1 and 2). The other group consisted of cases with three to four roles present (mainly roles 1, 2 and 3). The level of user challenges was quite similar in the two groups. In cases with one to two roles present, work was tried out in six out of ten cases, whereas work was tried out in all cases with three or four roles present. In cases with three to four roles, half of the employers recruited were characterised as ‘good’ or ‘fantastic’, whereas most of the cases with one to two support roles present did not recruit employers. When they did, twice as many were ‘ordinary’ as ‘good’ or ‘fantastic’. In this limited sample, support teams with three

to four roles present seemed to recruit 'good' employers more often than those with one to two support roles present. The support processes of these teams were also more often assessed as successful: nine of ten cases with three or four roles present were assessed as successful, compared to half of the cases with one to two support roles present.

In addition to support from employers, the main difference between these two groups of cases was the role of job enabling. These findings could therefore suggest that the job enabler role adds something vital to the process of transforming resources into capabilities. I find support for this in several interviews describing efforts among enablers to build employer relations and thereby increase their knowledge of employers and tasks suited to vulnerable youth. This made them better at seeing possibilities. For instance, one 'enabler' said that he ensured sustainability in companies by looking for top leaders who were willing, but where department managers and mentors could also contribute to sustainable support (Case 28, Table 1). To be able to do that, he needed detailed information about companies, which he gained by meeting and talking to employers. He also regularly attended the youth unit in order to develop relations with the youngsters and assist the other social workers with profiling and assessments, and help the youth to define their interests, skills, aims and plans. His relations with both employers and youth helped him to match youth to suitable work tasks and environments. He also provided close individual support, for instance by driving the youth to and from work in the beginning. He could wake the youth up in the morning, provide support for their family or assist the employer if necessary.

A job enabler and his colleagues in a different case (27, Table 1) described the support as follows:

> Enabler: We had arranged a place for him at a local workplace during the initial two-week course. He said he wanted to work there. I picked him up at home the first week. He was normally awake, but once I had to wake him. I did not join them inside the company.

> His mentor did the follow up. I also took him home after work. I wanted to find out how he had experienced work.
> Colleague 1: By visiting him, you were able to observe his situation at home. It was dirty and untidy. He had two cats. You helped him to dress so that he looked presentable.
> Colleague 2: We were kind of parents for him. How do you cook? How to live on your own…
> Enabler: He mostly ate porridge.
> Colleague 1: The positive development started after you started waking him. His family did not support him.
> Enabler: I think this boy would still be sitting at home in front of his computer if I hadn't followed him that closely…

The data thereby show that job enabling contributed to establishing support structures directly targeting the needs of the youth, providing them with alternatives to choose between and tailor-made help to transform resources into capabilities.

A different case (30, Table 1) involving job customisation illustrated these processes in even more detail. The frontline worker involved described an approach consisting of written inclusion plans and measures, such as agreements with the youth to talk to the employer on defined topics, what kind of help to provide, permission to call the youth at certain hours and to visit him at home if he did not show up. They had talked about challenges experienced earlier, and made arrangements to prevent similar problems from recurring.

This frontline worker was active in the inclusion process and intended to go to the place of work and follow up the boy during the initial training, as well as helping the employer if necessary. In this way, she wanted to make sure that the boy turned up, and to reduce the stress and anxiety that she knew would be challenging for him. She had prepared the boy for participation in social arenas in the workplace, and planned to encourage co-workers to contribute:

> Having structure around him and that it works is the most important factor for him to succeed at work. But also some focus on social aspects at work, tell him to 'go in and sit

> down with the others, do not take all the focus during the break, and you must stick to your 30 minutes.' It is important, I think, that we join in and provide some learning and support for other colleagues, so that they could set some limits for him, too. For he can be very uncritical in how he communicates things. (Frontline worker)

She thus facilitated 'natural supports', which several authors have pointed to as vital for sustainable job inclusion (Drake, Bond, & Becker, 2012; Murphy et al., 2005). Her activities involved defining areas of responsibility, discussing them with the employer and the youth, developing strategies for long-term support, involving professional and non-professional networks as resources, and addressing psychological issues in order to help the youth cope with such challenges. This frontline worker's strategies focused more on the creation of support structures *in* the enterprise in question than was found in any of the other cases, and the frontline worker viewed herself as a vital facilitator in the enterprise as well. Such tailor-made follow-up in the workplace seems to be particularly relevant in cases where more support is needed than an enabler, the employer or the youth themselves can provide if capabilities are to be transformed into 'functionings'. In such cases, the job needs to be customised (Molina & Demchak, 2016) to match both the user's work capacity and the employer's needs.

These findings suggest that the enabler and customiser roles add vital conversion factors to the support processes. Focus groups and employer interviews support the provision of these roles as parallel support. For instance, in the case referred to by the job customiser, challenges related to income (he had no money for food) and housing (he had been thrown out by his father) had to be solved in order to help him to improve his situation. Such 'administrative' support was provided at the same time as the job customiser developed a relationship with him and started looking for a job that he could master. Several employers also stated that support in connection with issues related to health, housing, drug problems or other issues had to be provided while the youth were working in their enterprise. These

findings therefore also suggest that combinations of support, such as administration of basic needs (1) and connection and relation building (2), with job enabling (3) or job customisation (4), can improve the conversion process and contribute to improved capabilities and successful transformation of these capabilities into 'functionings'.

The analysis also showed that, of the cases assessed as successful, the cases where three or four support roles were present more often involved youth with severe challenges (4 out of 9) than in successful cases with one to two roles present (2 out of the 11 had severe challenges). This supports the view that combining several of these roles can make it easier to also facilitate successful support for people with severe challenges.

Conclusion

Frontline workers are in a position to help vulnerable youth towards work and inclusion, and they seem to have relevant competence to build secure relations and to provide successful monitoring. Taking on the role of job enabler or job customiser seems to add vital job inclusion qualities. This enables more qualified use of work as part of the support process, and increases the chances of successful outcomes. However, taking on these roles will require knowledge about how to use ordinary workplaces as a means of inclusion. In my data, such knowledge – and particularly the role of job customisation – is rare. All the four roles appear to be vital conversion factors, however, for successful support of some vulnerable youth. They should therefore be available to frontline teams facilitating job inclusion of vulnerable youth in order to contribute to reducing the unfortunate unpredictability of such services by providing knowledge about job inclusion that frontline workers can rely on.

Performing these roles and tasks helps to convert the resources of vulnerable youth into improved capabilities to live the lives that they want and to find and master a job when that is something they have reason to value. The presence of frontline workers performing these roles might provide the welfare services with knowledge that they lack and that they

need if they are to facilitate work tailored to the needs of vulnerable individuals. I believe that knowledge about vital roles in job inclusion derived from social work processes among vulnerable youth can be useful for policymakers designing frontline activation services. However, it is necessary to investigate these issues in greater depth, in particular the possible limitations related to differences between support processes based on user preferences and activation policies that tend to coerce individuals into activity.

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Appendices

Table 1 Focus group cases (sorted by outcome)

	A		B		C	D		E
No	**Gender and age**	**Years of support**	**Main challenges** Type of problem	**Level**	**Main helpers - frontline roles**	**Work tried?**	**Employer Quality**	**Outcome/ functioning**
28	Boy 19	1	Psych., family issues, language challenges	1	1,2,3	Y	G	Success, work training, will start school
7	Boy 18	1	Drop-out, difficulties living alone	1	1,2	Y	O	Success, apprenticeship gained
2	Boy 21	2	Psychological, social anxiety	2	1,2	Y	O	Success, work training will start at university
21	Boy 22	2	Crime, gangs, immigrant, language	2	1,2	Y	G	Success, work training, apprenticeship
4	Boy 20	2	Drop-out, aggression	1	1	Y	G	Success, work training + return to school
10	Boy 21	2	Drop-out, ADHD, quit medication	1	2,3	Y	O	Success, work training + return to school
27	Boy 23	4	Family issues, psychological issues, drop-out, ADHD	3	1,2,3	Y	O	Success, return to school
25	Boy 20	2	Drugs, no apartment, crime	3	1,2	Y	G	Success, less drugs + apartment
22	Boy 21	4	Drop-out, no drive, family issues	2	1,2,(3)	Y	O	Success, in work training, motivated
3	Boy 24	6	Alcohol, psychological issues	2	1,2	Y	O	Success, full-time job, but still challenges.
31	Boy 23	4	Low confidence, health issues, family issues, drop-out	2	1,2	Y	F	Success, full-time job
23	Girl 23	3	Refugee, psychological issues, drop-out	3	1,2,(3)	Y	O	Success, completed school, training candidate
14	Boy 21	6	Drop-out, immigrant, aggression	3	1,2,3	Y	F	Success, craft certificate gained
30	Boy 18	1	Family issues, drop-out, psychological issues	2	1,2,3,4	Y	G	Partial success, work training starting
26	Boy 21	2	Drop-out, family issues, learning challenges	2	1,2,3	Y	G	Partial success, work training.
8	Boy 22	4	Health issues, family problems, learning challenges	2	1,2,(3)	Y	O	Partial success, possibilities of job
15	Girl 16	1	Psych. issues, drop-out, learning challenges, health	3	1,2,3	Y	G	Partial success, in work training
12	Boy 18	1	Drop-out, health issues, learning challenges	2	1,2	N		Partial success, established contact
17	Boy 18	1	Drugs, family issues	3	1,2	N		Partial success, established contact
18	Boy 18	1	Family issues, in institution, behaviour, gaming, drugs	2	1,2	N		Partial success, place to live, sheltered work training
16	Girl 21	2	Drop-out, family issues, drugs, psychological issues	3	1	N		No success, health assessment coming up
29	Boy 22	1	Drugs, family issues	3	1,2,3	Y	O	No success, given up
5	Boy 20	3	Drop-out, gaming, no drive	2	1	Y	O	No success, unemployed, no contact
1	Boy 24	4	Drop-out, drugs, crime	3	1,2	Y	O	No success, still support
24	Boy 20	6	Fam. trouble, drop-out, drugs	3	1,2	N		No success, still NEET
19	Boy 17	1	In child welfare institution, drugs, behavioural challenges	3	1,2	N		No success, still in institution
6	Boy 19	3	Family trouble, reading/writing difficulties	2	1,2	Y	O	No success, not found good approach
13	Girl 24	8	Psychological issues, family issues, health issues	3	1	N		No success, no solution
20	Boy 19	2	Drugs, family issues, drop-out, no drive	3	1,2	N		No success, no solution
11	Boy 20	4	Drugs, crime, family issues, learning challenges	3	2,3	Y	O	No success, needs closer follow-up
9	Boy 18	2	Immigrant, crime, drugs, in institution	3	1,2	N		No success, chose to drop out of support at 18
					Total	**22 Y**		**11 no success, 7 partial success, 13 success**

Comment: Each of the 31cases consists of an actual youth. Col. A: Shows gender and age (at the time of the interview or at the end of the period of support provided by the informants involved). The second column shows years of support. Col. B: Type of problem based on support givers' descriptions. Assessments of level (1=minor, 2=major, 3=severe) of problem are carried out by the author based on information provided. Col. C: Support roles present based on author's analysis (1=administration of basic needs, 2=relation and connection, 3=job enabler, 4=job customiser). Parenthesis used when role was partly present. Col. D: Shows if work was tried out at any point. The second column shows the quality of support provided by the employer as assessed by the author (F=fantastic, G=good, O=ordinary). Col. E: Outcome/achieved functioning based on information provided, summarised in three categories defined by the author.

[i] During the period 2010–2015, 78% of girls in Norway completed upper secondary school within five years, compared to 67% of boys. Source: Statistics Norway: https://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/statistikker/vgogjen/aar/2016-06-02