



Accelerating Coaching and Counseling
through e-Tools and innovative Training

NATIONAL REPORT

Finland

**Situation and Needs of Counselling and Guidance
Practitioners/Coaches working with Hard-to-Reach
Groups in Finland**





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I. Executive Summary

This report presents the results of both quantitative and qualitative data collected from people working in the field of non-formal education and trade unions in Finland. Counselling and/or coaching are an important part of these peoples' work. This is an interesting group of people, because they don't work as fulltime counsellors and, therefore, don't have an education just for that. The need for education is obvious and it was interesting to find out, how they have achieved their professional know-how throughout their career.

The survey and interview data show, that there is variation in highest qualification of these employees. Therefore, they work with various abilities. However, the sense of preparedness when meeting the clients in real life was the same for all the survey participants and interviewees regardless their educational background – none of them felt that their education gave them tools for the work. All the respondents had educated themselves after their qualification in formal, non-formal and informal context and felt, that that was how they got the competence to council, guide, coach and help people.

An average participant of the survey was a middle-aged female with upper secondary school qualification being their highest qualification. Most of the respondents worked in education (9), four people worked in trade unions and four in food industry. Their job descriptions include a lot of counselling and coaching, but none of their job titles are counsellors or coaches. When they were asked, how many hours per week they do counselling, the answers varied from 1 to 40.

Finnish people doing counselling and coaching as part of their work felt, that the most difficult aspect of their job with all the hard-to-reach groups (migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, long-term unemployed and early school leavers) is to help people achieve their own goals. Three top skills and areas of knowledge most interesting, helpful and useful to tackle that problem were psychology, coaching skills and e-tools.

Finnish survey participants and interviewees had a very positive attitude towards further training and life-long learning. Solving or overcoming an identified skills gap as well as acquisition of new

knowledge were the most efficient motivators for Finnish people to attend training. Methodological approaches, intervention strategies and operational tools and resources were all interesting for the Finnish survey participants.

When it comes to e-learning, Finnish people like to study in their own pace, but together with other people. Blended learning was highly popular in the survey answers. Survey participants expressed clearly, that this kind of training would help them improve their work performance and therefore the training should be approved by their employer and be done during the working hours.

All the survey participants and interviewees work with some hard-to-reach groups. Liberal adult education institutes were indicated a new societal task of educating and integrating migrants in vulnerable situation by the Ministry of Education and Culture in the beginning of 2018. The Ministry of Education and Culture also requires guidance, counselling of the migrant students during their studies, as well as helping them find their place in the society (work or studies) after the training.

People working in trade unions guide and counsel people every day. They don't, traditionally see the work as counselling and don't, therefore, educate themselves in counselling skills. This awareness is, however, slowly growing.

If all these people were skilful in counselling and coaching, the benefit to the whole of society would certainly not be questioned. Not to mention how their clients would benefit from it.

1. Context and Background of hard-to-reach groups in Finland

1.1. Main characteristics of hard-to-reach groups

1.1.1. Definition of hard-to-reach groups: early school leavers, long-term unemployed people, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

Early school leavers

The first law about compulsory school attendance was legislated in 1921 in Finland. Today, Basic Education Act 628/1998 legislates about compulsory school attendance from the age of 7 until the age of 17.

Basic Education Act, Chapter 7:

26 Section

2. The education provider shall monitor the absences of a pupil in basic education and notify the pupil's parent/carer of unauthorised absence. The parent/carer of a pupil in compulsory education shall see to it that compulsory schooling is completed. (Amendment 477/2003)

3. If a child of compulsory school age does not participate in education provided under this Act, the local authority of the pupil's place of residence shall supervise his or her progress.

According to Portin et al. (2016, 5, 8) the amount of school drop-outs is very low in Finland in OECD comparison. The quality of education is a key factor, when wanting to better peoples' employability and quality of life. High level of completion of education reflects the quality of education. However, the level of completion of education on secondary level is OECD average, and that is where the focus is right now in Finnish educational policy.

Having just basic education (elementary school) or just one, not recently awarded diploma from vocational school, is considered an alarmingly low level of education in Finland.

From the perspective of non-formal education, the focus is on people, who have a low level of education, and they haven't educated themselves in any other way, either. In the Finnish context, this group of people are the equivalent to early school leavers. Portin et al. (2016, 12, 13) statistic study found the following:

In general, in upper secondary education, the completion rate in education according to the curriculum for young people was approximately 72 per cent three years after commencing the studies and approximately 88 per cent five years after commencing studies. The average completion rates differ quite remarkably between regions and between fields of vocational education and training. The mother tongue also has an impact.

Long-term unemployed people

People are defined as long-term unemployed when they have been unemployed for at least 12 months continuously.

Maczulskij and Karhunen's study (2018) found the following:

In 2015 most of the people, who became long-term employed, had worked in fields that were hit by globalization and automatization – mainly factory workers and people working in low salary jobs (for instance cleaning personnel). The age group of 51-64 was overly represented in long-term unemployed (over half) compared to shorter term unemployed (less than third).

This study among others show, that long-term unemployment has hit hard on people with low basic education and that is why education has been essentially in the discussions when talking about tackling long-term unemployment. (Trade union and Employer federations' policy paper 5.11.2015)

Kurvinen et al. study (2019, 17, 18) found:

Economic growth has helped the people with best employability to get work, first. People, who have been unemployed for a longer time and have little prior experience of work life, have not been positively affected equally by the economic growth. There have been several different kinds of employability and educational proceedings, but the results have been weaker than expected.

The long-term unemployed are a heterogenic group of people. Older age had been found to be one factor in not getting employment.

In both studies the power of education was criticized in helping to activate long-term unemployed. Their learning skills and motivation were seen to be too weak for training to be effective.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

Migrant is a person, who has moved to Finland and who's intention is to live in the country for a longer time, normally at least for one year. Migrants come to Finland from all over the world. The biggest migrant groups in Finland are Estonians and Russians. (Finnish Refugee Aid 2.5.2019)

A refugee status can be achieved in Finland in three ways.

- 1) People who have an asylum in Finland.
- 2) People who have come to Finland as part of refugee quota.
- 3) The family members of the previously mentioned, who come to Finland via family reunification process.

Refugee status is the strongest category of international protection. (Finnish Refugee Aid 2.5.2019)

Asylum seeker is a person who is seeking for asylum in another state. It is a human right to seek asylum. Only some of the asylum seekers will be granted a refugee status. However, asylum seekers can also be granted a residence permit due to subsidiary protection. (Finnish Refugee Aid 2.5.2019)

According to European Migration Network and Finnish Immigration Service (2018, 4) the reasons people of foreign background came to Finland in 2017 were

- family (9 089 people)
- registration of EU citizens (7 800 people)
- employment (6 751 people)
- study (5 194 people)
- international protection (3 784 people)
- resettled refugees (750 people)

- other (306 people)

1.1.2. Recent situation, numbers, evolution and trends in Finland

Early school leavers

There is a slight increase in the yearly percentage of people, who are leaving basic education without certificate of completion of the basic education syllabus, but it has gone up and down a little during the years and it is still too early to say, if the level of increase is permanent.

Table 1. Percentage of people leaving basic education without certificate per school year.

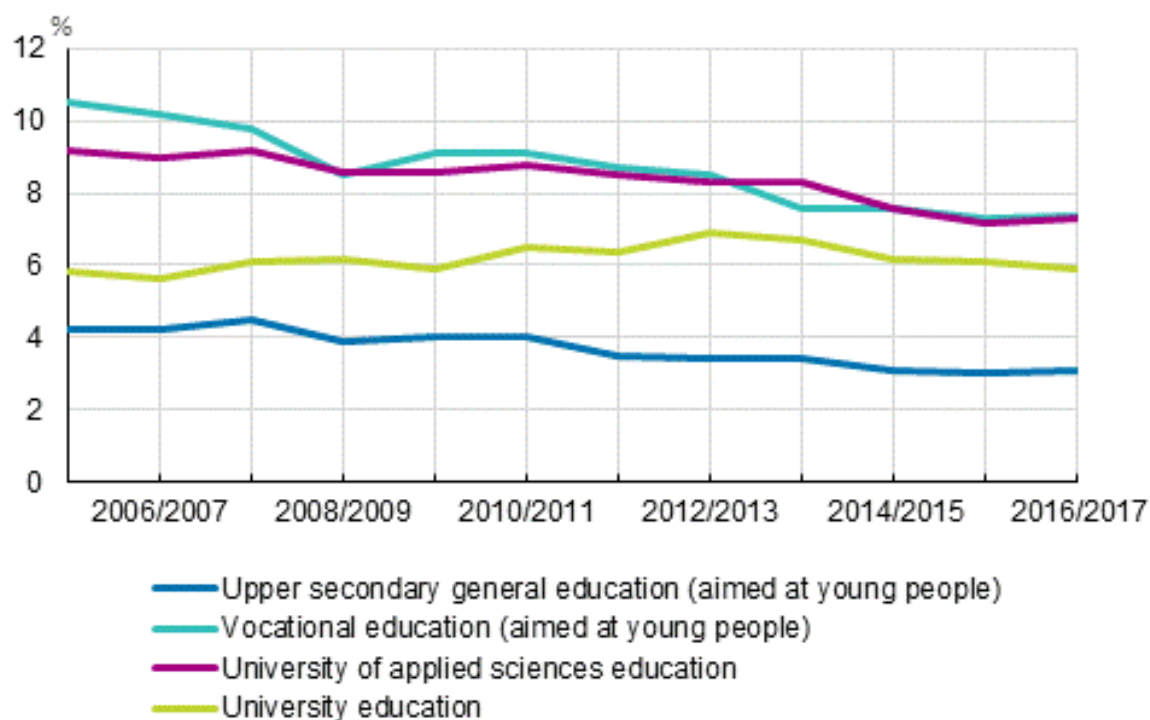
School year	% of all 9-graders
1999/2000	0,29%
2004/2005	0,34%
2009/2010	0,23%
2014/2015	0,51%
2017/2018	0,75%

Source: Statistics Finland (14.3.2018)ⁱ

A total of 510 students had discontinued studies in one way or another in comprehensive school during the 2017/2018 academic year. The number of those who had completely dropped out from compulsory education in the spring term was 74 and those over the age of compulsory education having left school without a leaving certificate from comprehensive school was 436. 37% of all school drop-outs were girls. The number of girls among those who had completely dropped out from compulsory education was 33, and 157 among those having left comprehensive school without a leaving certificate. (Source: Education. Statistics Finland 2.5.2019)

The statistics show, that discontinuation of education is decreasing in the big picture (table 2).

Table 2. Discontinuation of education in upper secondary general, vocational, university of applied sciences and university education in academic years from 2005/2006 to 2016/2017.



Source: Statistics Finland (14.3.2019)ⁱⁱ

All these statistics show, that school drop-outs are rare in Finland, as well as people, who discontinue their education. The worrying statistics can be found, when looking at PIAAC results and the level of basic skills of older population. Finland's good average scores in the PIAAC survey are largely thanks to the good performance of the population aged between 20 and 39. In Finland, the performance gap in literacy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments between the oldest age groups to the best performing age groups is the widest in the survey, and second widest in numeracy too. (Malin et al. 2013)

Long-term unemployed

In March 2019 there were 63 700 people, who had been unemployed for over a year, which is 19 100 less than a year before. 38 000 of them were male and 25 700 were female. 31 700 people had been unemployed for at least two years, which was 11 600 less than one year earlier. (Employment Bulletin March 2019, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland) That means, that long-term unemployment has been decreasing after 2015 according to statistics.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, age has turned out to be a major factor in separating long-term unemployed from shorter term unemployed. Long-term unemployed are in average of higher age. Their employability seems also weaker in the light of studies mentioned earlier in this report.

Table 3. Long-term unemployed by age in 2018.

Age	Long-term unemployed % in 2018
25-39 years	16%
40-49 years	19%
50-59 years	30%
60 years and over	27%

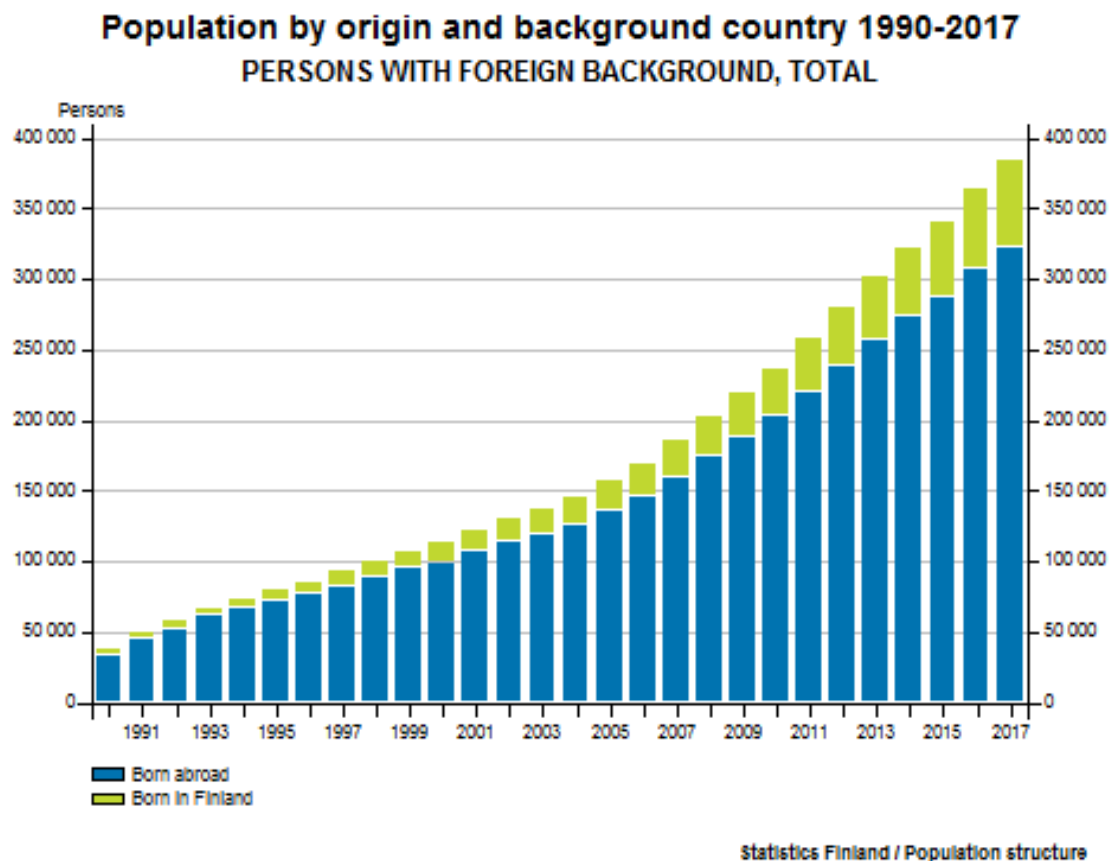
Source: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

An increasing part of Finnish population has a foreign background. This can be clearly seen in figure 1. This is understandably a challenge for the society – how to perform a successful integration?

In figures 1 and 2, all persons with at least one parent born in Finland are considered to be of Finnish background. Persons whose both parents or the only known parent were born abroad are considered to be of foreign background. If both parents of a person were born abroad, the background country is primarily the country of birth of the biological mother. The background country for all persons with Finnish background is Finland.

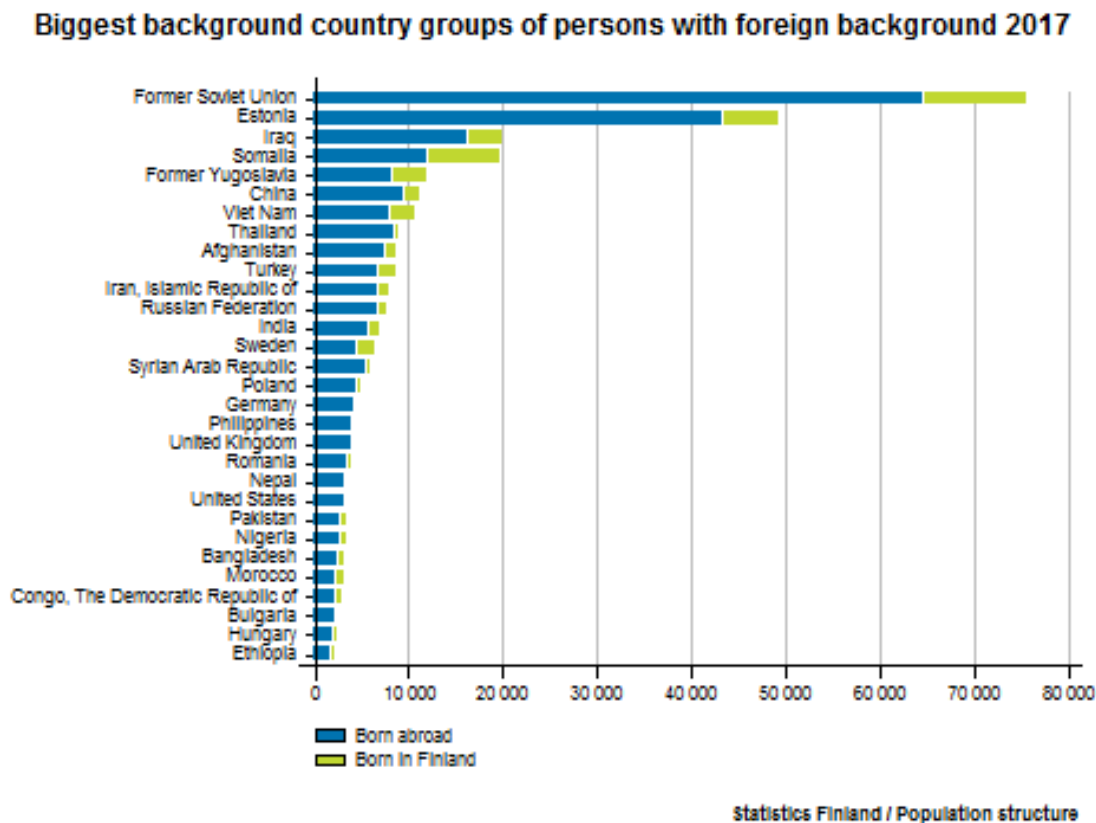
Figure 1. Persons with foreign background, total 1990-2017.



Source: Statistics Finland/Population Structure

Figure 2 shows the various backgrounds of migrants living in Finland. In terms of integration, the starting point for learning the language is surely different for Estonians and Iraqi people. Estonian language is in the same language group as Finnish, whereas native Arabic speakers must learn the language starting from new alphabet.

Figure 2. Biggest background country groups of persons with foreign background in 2017.



Source: Statistics Finland/Population Structureⁱⁱⁱ

First refugees came to Finland from Chile in 1973. The Finnish refugee quota has been 750 people since year 2001. In comparison, the refugee quota in Sweden was 5000 people in 2018. (Finnish Refugee Aid 2019)

In 2015, 32 476 asylum seekers came to Finland, which was the highest number in Finnish history. The amount of applications for asylum decreased dramatically after that being 4 548 in 2018. Half of those applications were new. In 2018 most of the asylum seekers came from Iraq, Russia and Somalia. 70% of the asylum seekers were male and 30% female. Half of the applicants were young adults between 18-34 years of age. Every fourth applicant was 0-17 years of age. (Finnish Refugee Aid 2019)

2. Career Guidance, Counselling and Coaching with hard-to-reach groups in Finland

An online survey was done in February 2019 and three interviews in March 2019. The online survey was sent to some teachers working with counselling of different kinds of hard-to-reach groups and to trade union officials, who also forwarded the survey to some workplace stewards. We got 20 responds to the survey quite easily. It could be an indication of the topic of guidance and counselling being relevant right now in the field of non-formal education in Finland. We, then, picked three interviewees of the people we had sent the survey to. We wanted them to present different kinds of professions and educational backgrounds. They also work with different kinds of target groups, which was interesting.

The survey was on ILIAS platform in Germany and we got the survey reports from there. The survey was, however, translated to Finnish and the respondents gave their answers in Finnish.

We used an interview guide of the ACCEnT-project. The interview questions were also translated to Finnish and the interviews were done in Finnish. All the interviews were done via Skype and recorded.

It is notable, that all the survey and interview answers were translated from Finnish to English for this report. It is not completely without problems to translate the crucial terms from Finnish to English and vice versa.

The Finnish word for “counselling”, “neuvonta”, has an association to a process, where someone is giving answers and advise top-down and telling the other person, what to do.

“Guidance”, “ohjaaminen”, has many associations depending on the context. When talking about counselling work, guidance has a softer tone than counselling, taking the client’s own situation into consideration, too.

In this data, coaching was obviously seen as *a method* in a counselling or a guiding process. Coaching was considered to be a very customer-oriented approach, that effectively helps people to achieve their own goals, which was always the aim for the respondents of this survey and the most important thing for the interviewees.

In this report, the word “ohjaaminen” (guidance) is most often translated to counselling, because that was a professional situation they were talking about. The person, who translated the answers was not a professional translator and that is why there is always a possibility for cultural mistranslation and that should be noted, when reading the answers.

2.1. Personal, Educational and Professional Background

2.1.1. Professionals’ Characteristics

We had 20 answers to our survey. Over half of the survey participants were women. The other respondents were six men and three people, who defined their gender as “other”.

Table 4. Gender of the survey respondents.

Gender	Number of respondents	%
Female	11	55.00%
Male	6	30.00%
Other	3	15.00%

Most of the respondents were between 41 and 60 years of age (70%).

Table 5. Age of the survey respondents.

Age	Number of respondents	%
20-30 years	2	10.00%
31-40 years	3	15.00%
41-50 years	9	45.00%
51-60 years	5	25.00%
over 71 years	1	5.00%

It can be said, that the average respondent was a middle-aged female.

2.1.2. Qualifications and Professional Training

Level of basic education varied in our survey sample from elementary school being the highest qualification for one person to master's degree being the highest qualification for 6 people. Most common answer (7 people) was upper secondary school qualification being the highest qualification. Six respondents had bachelor's degree. That means, that a little bit over half of the people, who took the survey, had academic degree (12). The academic degrees were on educational sciences, health care, cultural studies, community education, social sciences, theology, Spanish philology and communication.

It can be seen in the survey data, that adult education and further training with and without official qualifications are popular in Finland. 16 survey participants named several further training courses, certificates or qualifications they had taken to help their guidance, counselling and coaching work.

We did three interviews for this report. One of the interviewees had upper secondary school qualification, one had bachelor's degree and one had master's degree as their highest qualification. Our interview data gave one explanation for the popularity of voluntary adult education and further education in the spirit of life-long-learning. All interviewees told, that their first qualification or degree did not prepare them for counselling and guiding at all, regardless the level of their qualification.

“Theology master’s degree prepared very weakly for guidance work. In teacher’s pedagogical studies there was nothing about counselling or guidance. My guidance skills come from the time I was a young club leader and took young confirmed volunteer training in my parish. I have studied adventure methods, action methods and other things related to guiding and just by doing guidance and counselling.”

Interviewee 2

This quotation from one of the interviewees shows the respect for informal and non-formal learning environments to acquire necessary skills for work life.

Topics of further training courses mentioned in the survey answers were for instance coaching methods, drama methods, negotiation skills, action methods, solution-oriented methods, adventure methods, empowering photography, recognition of prior learning of migrants, expression, mediation, interpersonal skills for youth, empowering interaction, training skills, group dynamics, equity, diversity, green care, social construction and work psychology. Some respondents had taken several long courses for workplace stewards and safety representatives. Counselling and guiding people at work place in difficult situations is an essential task of workplace stewards and people working in trade unions.

Respondents had done certificates and basic level academic studies, such as academic pedagogical studies, group work with functional methods instructor, drama and theatre methods instructor, multicultural instructor, coaching certification, MOD-instructor (Diversity, Insight, Dialogue) and NLP practitioner.

All these educational courses mentioned by the survey participants show the variety of educational opportunities in non-formal education recognized by Finnish people working with guidance and counselling. They also recognize, what they learn informally in their every-day life, which could be heard in the interviews.

Some survey participants had done official vocational qualifications as further training. Those were romany culture instructor (both further qualification and specialist qualification) and specialist in competence-based qualifications training,

Some had done teacher's pedagogical studies (qualifying studies). Two of the survey participants were qualified study counsellors. They acquired qualification through further education after their master's degrees.

2.1.3. Institutional and Professional Profile

The respondents work descriptions, line of work and employers varied remarkably in our sample. Most of the people work in education (9), four people work in trade unions and four in food industry.

The educational institutes are study centres, folk high schools, vocational institutes and one rehabilitation centre. Counselling of hard-to-reach groups is mostly connected with integration and language education for migrants in the respondents' work places. Liberal adult education institutes were indicated a new societal task of educating and integrating migrants in vulnerable situation by the Ministry of Education and Culture in the beginning of 2018. The Ministry of Education and Culture also requires guidance, counselling of the migrant students during their studies, as well as helping them find their place in the society (work or studies) after the course.

People working in educational institutes are specialists, trainers, teachers, educational planning officers, educational content producers, a guidance counsellor and a vice rector. They teach, train, do projects, counsel students and associations, motivate, support, encourage, network, arrange events, facilitate group work, do individual coaching/counselling, plan, evaluate, develop, administrate, do marketing, communication, work in teams and organize. I.e. their work is very versatile, and they see guidance and counselling of students and associations as a cross-cutting idea in almost everything they do. It is a mind-set to always try to help, support and guide. Besides that, they do individual and group counselling and coaching sessions for especially migrant students. In those sessions, the focus is only and clearly in counselling, guidance and coaching.

People working in trade unions are trade union officials, who work in an office environment. A major part of their work is to help trade union members, branches and workplaces by counselling, guiding, supporting and helping in every way they can. They work with young people, migrants, workplace stewards and most often with people who have a low basic education level. Their own highest qualification is often upper secondary school (vocational school), but there are exceptions with higher degrees. Their educational background gives them very little knowledge and transferable skills for counselling, guiding and coaching, even though that is mainly their work. It is a long tradition to just start doing the work without any educational preparation.

The long tradition is perhaps even stronger in the third group of our survey respondents, the people working in food industry, in bakeries and food factories. They are skilled bakers, dairy workers and meat industry workers, and in that occupation, they naturally don't need guidance skills. People, who responded in our survey work, however, also as workplace stewards, which is a very different kind of task from their original, very hands-on career choice.

Workplace stewards negotiate with employers and help their co-workers with every kind of work-related problems. Most of the job is counselling, coaching and helping people. Co-workers turn to them, when they lose their jobs and are desperate in finding a new path in the future. Or when they get sick or an industrial accident happens. Or when they need to change jobs. Or their job description changes, and they feel, that they can't manage their job anymore. Sometimes their co-workers need further education or want to change work place. In all these cases they approach the workplace steward for guidance, information and help to find their way, or to get encouragement, for instance, to go "back to school", which can be very frightening idea due to bad previous experiences of school and a negative vision of themselves as learners.

2.1.4. Collaboration and Career Development of hard-to-reach groups

Our survey participants work in various fields and have various backgrounds in studying counselling, guidance and coaching. Their job descriptions include a lot of counselling and coaching, but none of their job titles are counsellors or coaches. When they were asked, how many hours per week they do counselling, the answers varied from 1 to 40.

Eleven (11) out of seventeen (17) respondents counsel and coach less than 16 hours per week. Seven of them do counselling and coaching max. 5 hours per week. Five (5) respondents do counselling and coaching for 16 hours or more per week. Two of them do it full-time, i.e. 35 and 40 hours per week.

The number of hours per week was asked with an open question. It could be seen, that the respondents understood the question a bit differently. Some of them see their whole work as counselling, guiding and coaching – helping people, and some of them counted just the hours, when they are individually counselling someone in a private session.

The interview data shows, that working with hard-to-reach groups is rewarding and satisfying – but also challenging.

“Meeting these people is the best part of this work. It enriches, empowers and strengthens me. Without these encounters with people I wouldn’t get perspectives on how to develop my work.”

Interviewee 3

Interviewee 3 is a trade union official, who counsels people with low education level, migrants and unemployed people. The same positive attitude could be heard in teachers’ answers, when they described working with their target groups.

"It's highly motivating because my guidance can have huge impact on the quality of life of the people I counsel. I see a lot of success stories in my work and it's very enriching. Also, people come from different cultures, that I find interesting. I do get continuous direct feedback from my work and I find it really satisfying."

Interviewee 1

"I have multiple target groups and diversity is a good challenge. Working with students from my own professional field makes me feel that I have the needed knowhow. Yet, I must constantly re-evaluate my knowhow – are the things that I say or do, true?"

Interviewee 2

The interviewees had a similar approach to working with hard-to-reach groups and their self-reflection shows, that potential problems are in their own ability to understand their clients and be professional enough. These skills require constant learning.

"Developing my know-how is really important for me. My target group, immigrants, need more guidance than students in average. Challenges they are facing are different because they come from a different cultural background and may lack education. That's why they have more to learn. Students learning to read and write, who have learning difficulties require closer attention and guidance. Because my target group faces all these challenges, I need to have a lot of skills myself."

Interviewee 1

"Self-development is important because every counselling situation is always new and unique. Knowledge, skills and my own know-how should also be evaluated. Self-reflection is important. Routine counselling is not a good option, nor is working like on an assembly line when counselling."

Interviewee 2

"It's important [career development]. Because there was no know-how of counselling, when I started in my current job, I had to get it elsewhere. My work tasks require constantly educating myself."

Interviewee 3

2.1.5. Clients' Characteristics

We asked in the survey about the age and gender of most of the survey participants' clients. These questions got quite strict feed-back in the open fields at the end of the questionnaire. Some respondents said, that they work equally with men and women and therefore it was irrelevant to answer the question about gender of the clients. The question about a typical age faced the same critique.

For instance, Interviewee 1 told us, that the migrants' study group has students between 20- and 61-years old people and half of them are women and half of them are men. Not much can be assumed of an answer, that the clients are mostly women, if in the current group there are 5 women and 4 men, because in the previous group there might have been 7 men and 4 women and in the next one there could be one or two people more of the other gender than the other(s).

However, 18 respondents gave their answers to these questions and here are the results. Conclusions of the answers should be made with care, since the responds here can have a small margin to other possible answers and the questions didn't give an option to select several gender or age groups.

Table 6. What kind of population do you work with the most (gender)?

Gender	Number of respondents	%
Female	10	55,56%
Male	7	38,89%
Other	1	5,56%

Table 7. What kind of population do you work with the most (age)?

Age	Number of respondents	%
Under 18 years	1	5,56%
18-30 years	5	27,78%
31-40 years	5	27,78%
41-50 years	5	27,78%
51-60 years	2	11,11%
61-70 years	0	0%
over 70 years	0	0%

2.2. Working Challenges, Difficulties and Training Needs

2.2.1. Working Challenges and Intervention Concerns

The interviewees mentioned some challenges and concerns in their work. Things they found challenging were for instance

- tight time frames for guidance
- ability to keep agreements to clients within the framework given by their employer
- keeping up own motivation, when something bad happens to a client
- solving conflict situations in group counselling
- managing feelings of being inadequate in difficult, negative situations
- ability to see, what challenges the clients face and to be able to offer the right tools for them

“Time is a major challenge, because doing high-quality work takes more time. One needs to be able to stop and prepare for counselling situations.”

Interviewee 2

Discretion seems like a major concern when working with hard-to-reach groups. Ethical considerations are always on the table. When working with migrants, the obvious concerns are cultural differences and language barrier. Interviewee 1, who works with migrants, said, that things need to be simplified and sometimes it is unclear, if the client has enough cultural background information to make fair judgement of the topic discussed.

Other concerns of discretion are for instance power relations in the counselling situation and the ability to help people find their own solutions without walking all over them.

“It’s concerning when people see their situation with one-track mind and are unable to look things from different perspectives.”

Interviewee 3

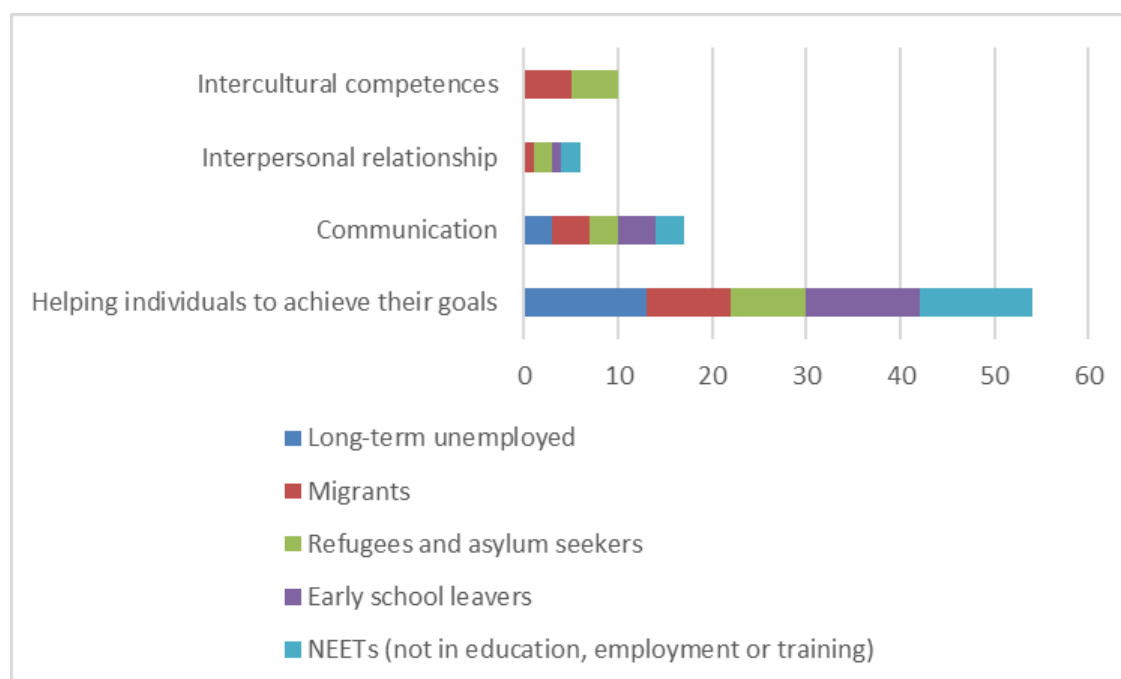
“Loneliness people face and lack of faith in their own skills and abilities is concerning. Can we as counsellors reassess the person’s role as an actor or do we just walk over them with our goals? Does the person I am guiding get their voice heard enough? Do we genuinely esteem them enough?”

Interviewee 2

2.2.2. Experienced Working Difficulties

It is obvious, that the most difficult aspect of counselling and coaching for the survey participants was to help people achieve their goals. That is the most difficult thing with all hard-to-reach groups mentioned in the survey (long-term unemployed, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, early school leavers, NEETs). Communication was always mentioned as being somewhat difficult but helping people to achieve their goals was far more difficult for the Finnish respondents.

Figure 3. What difficulties do you experience most with each of the following target groups?



Intercultural competences were mentioned as difficulty only when working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Interpersonal skills were hardly mentioned as a difficulty. There is no obvious explanation for that. Could it be, that it was thought to be part of communication?

When talking about these results in the interviews, all the interviewees recognized the difficulty in helping people achieve their goals and the importance of that was emphasized.

“The most important thing about counselling is in my opinion to help people from their own starting point and not to pour solutions top-down. I’m not surprised, that the biggest challenge has been how to help people to achieve their own goals.”

Interviewee 2

It was also reflected in the interviews, why that is so difficult. It has something to do with empathy and, once again, ethical questions of power relations, equality and even human rights.

“I feel that it would be so important to always strengthen everyone’s right to exist and always to remember human value. If you do that, you will probably always find it difficult to help people from their point of view, because you are so aware of the power relation in counselling situation.”

Interviewee 2

One interviewee was a bit surprised, that communication skills didn’t appear more clearly in the survey results. In their opinion those skills are essential in counselling.

“It is a little surprising to me, that communication skills were not more in focus. I think they are the basis for everything. Of course, it is important to help people to achieve their goals. It is also hard, because in my job we have been taught to give “the right answers” to people and that’s how things have always been done. I know now, that it is better to try to help people find their own solutions. They commit better.”

Interviewee 3

This interviewee connected communication skills also with empathy and was aware, that it is a question of skills and tools, that you can learn.

“Of course, it is sometimes frustrating, when you want to help people in the best way you can but feel that you just don’t have enough tools for communication in situations, when people feel hopeless.”

Interviewee 3

What the survey results say about intercultural skills being difficult, was no surprise.

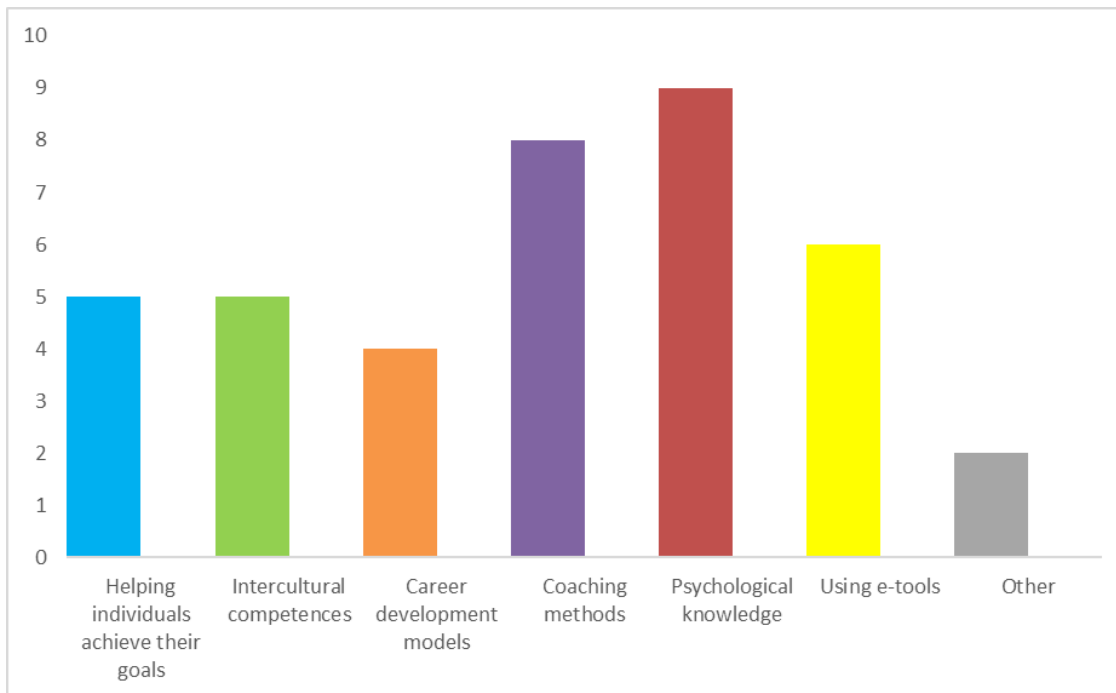
“It is understandable, that intercultural competences are emphasized when the target group are migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. Cultural differences are a touchy and difficult thing. I don’t think you can ever be too knowledgeable in that.”

Interviewee 1

2.2.3. Frequency, Motivation and Areas of Needed Training

The survey respondents were asked about in which fields they felt they needed more training.

Figure 4. In which areas do you need more training?

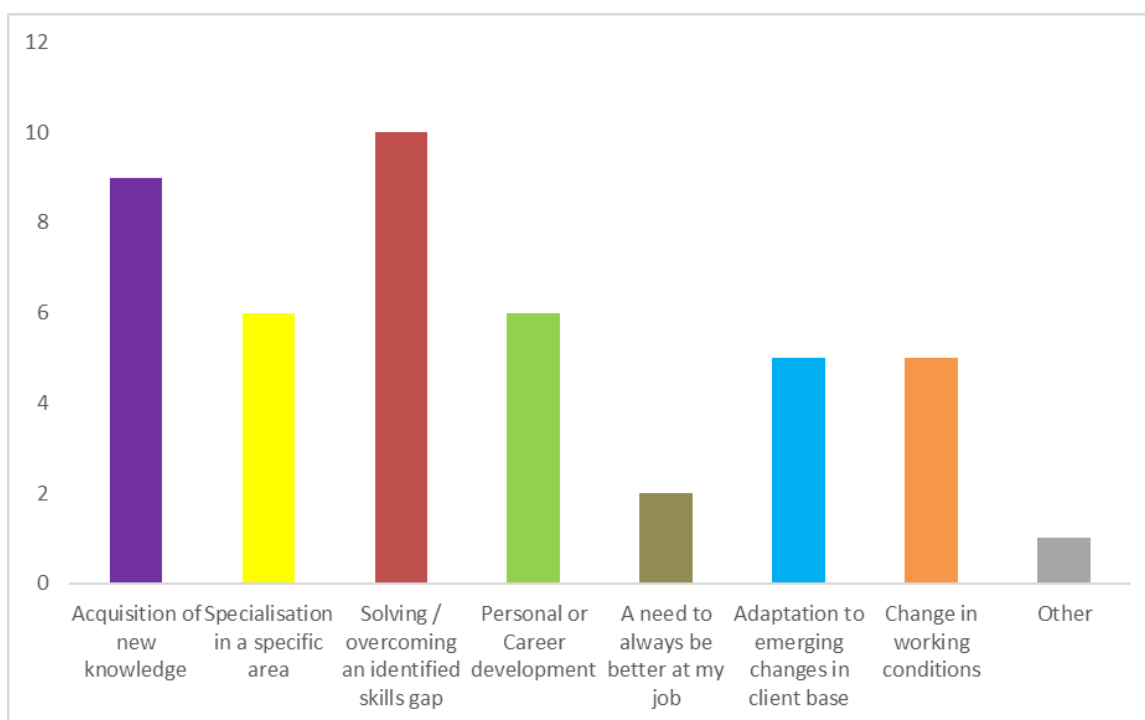


The results show, that concrete tools, such as coaching methods and e-tools were popular as well as gaining psychological knowledge. Helping individuals achieve their goals didn't get that many mentions compared to how important aspect that was in describing the most difficult things in counselling and coaching. Presumably respondents see psychological knowledge, coaching methods and e-tools as tools to tackle that difficulty. It is maybe a little surprising, that career development models were not more popular considering, that they are also quite concrete tools.

Topics specified in "Other" were human rights and knowledge about educational and job possibilities for migrants in Finland.

Survey participants were asked, what motivates them to educate themselves. Overcoming a skills gap and need of new knowledge were the most efficient motivators. Specialization, as well as personal and professional development were also good reasons to seek further education. It is understandable, that “Always a need to better” didn’t get many mentions. It would be somewhat unfamiliar way to express oneself in the Finnish culture to say clearly, that “I want to be good or better or best”, even if a person would, in fact, be very willing to always improve and develop themselves. Then again, it is notable, that changes in the working environment were not considered as major motivators to seek education even though that could have been expected.

Figure 5. What motivates you to seek training?



All three interviewees had taken many further training courses, qualifications and degrees within the last three years. The topics of the qualifications were community education, special needs education and Finnish Roma minority cultural studies. They had studied many methods to help with their counselling and coaching work: narrative methods, empowering photography, dialogue skills, drama methods, coaching and playback theatre.

They agreed on the survey results and understanding of psychology as well as coaching methods being key factors in counselling people from their own point of view. They didn't mention taking studies in psychology before and were interested in that.

"I think the results show, that it is important to counsel from the client's point of view. There is a need for understanding the other person and their motives. Maybe knowing more psychology helps with that? Also coaching has the same philosophy of helping the person from their point of view. I think this is good news, when we think about respect."

Interviewee 2

One of the interviewees was also interested in career development models to help counselling migrants, even though that was not a main interest for the survey respondents.

"I would personally also like to study career development models even though not many respondents picked that. They would be very useful with migrants, I think."

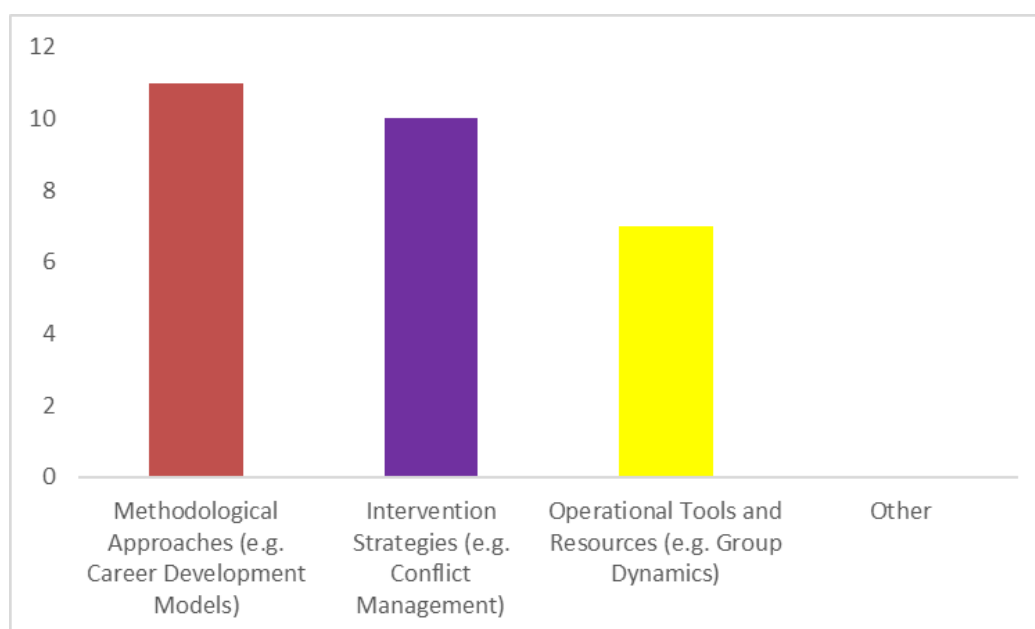
Interviewee 1

2.3. Learning Content and Environment

2.3.1. Content and Type of Training

Finnish survey participants had a positive approach to all the content options presented in the survey for the training program. There were no significant differences between the offered options. Respondents were interested in methodological approaches, intervention strategies and operational tools and approaches in this order.

Figure 6. Which content would you like to explore in this training program designed for career counsellors, practitioners and/or coaches working with hard-to-reach groups?



“Conflict or difficult situations management, group dynamics would be good. People act differently in different situations. I’d like to understand how to act in them and what triggers different behaviour styles. Competences would give me self-confidence to act within my work tasks. I would get courage to address issues deeper than on a surface level. Then I could help people more and more efficiently.”

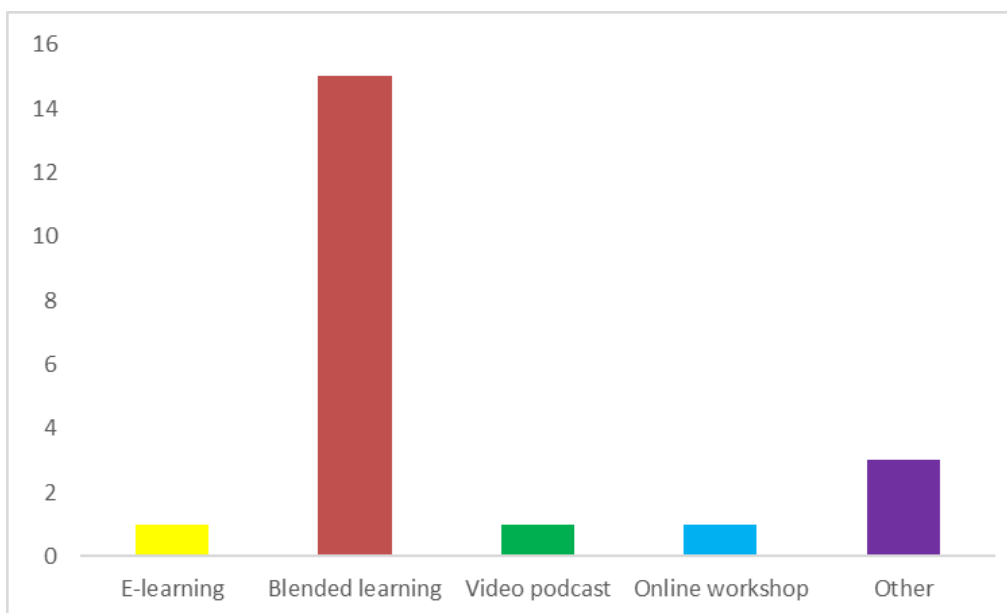
Interviewee 3

"I'd need information about practical methods and coaching methods. time management. I'm excited to do self-development. Sometimes when I'm tired I can't do development alongside work. Education invigorates me as a counsellor, and information about scientific studies and legislation helps in guiding. ... New skills would help me being a better counsellor and getting new tone in my work. ... One needs to take good care of one's own well-being."

Interviewee 2

Respondents of the survey saw benefits in all the contents offered, but when asked about training type, the opinion was very clear in favour of one option – blended learning.

Figure 7. Which type of training do you prefer?



Other learning methods suggested by the survey participants were

- skype conversations with other students and the trainer
- learning together in interaction with the group
- traditional face-to-face gathering with a group

Survey results show a will to learn independently in their own pace, but in interaction with other people. The need to connect and learn from other students can be seen in the survey results presented in the next chapters, too.

2.3.2. The Use of E-tools and E-learning Training Structure

Our interviewees use a lot of e-tools in their personal life and work, but not in counselling work. Obstacles everyone mentioned were low level of language and ICT skills of clients.

*“If they don’t know how to use them or don’t trust them,
that’s an issue.”*

Interviewee 3

All of them felt, however, that e-tools could be very useful, if a proper way of using them was found. Two of them said, that any tool can be useful, if one knows how to use them right. Interviewees mentioned for instance

- videos of practical situations supporting counselling of migrants
- easy mobile apps
- career counselling games
- visual career counselling tools

E-tools the interviewees use in their everyday life are for instance Whatsapp, Skype, Padlet, mobile applications, social media tools, e-mail, YouTube, Prezi and Kahoot. If there were models for using these in counselling, these people could probably start using them very easily.

When asked about the preferred style of studying an e-course, the survey answers are univocal.

Table 8. What type of e-learning training structure do you prefer?

E-learning Structure	Number of respondents	%
Step by step	15	71.43%
Quizzes	2	9.52%
Completion of deadlines	2	9.52%
Other	2	9,52%

In “Other”, one respondent expressed a will to be in interaction with other students even though everyone should be able to study in their own pace. That should be made possible by scheduling some of the sessions for online conversations with all the students. Another suggestion in open answers was, that each section should open when the previous one was finished – not at a certain date, but instead when the student has finished the section in their own pace.

2.3.3. Training Schedule, Frequency, Duration and Information

Survey participants answered questions about preferred way to study on an online training. It could be seen, that they see these topics as their professional further training, since counselling and coaching is an essential part of their work. **75%** of the respondents preferred to **study during working hours**. Only 10% wanted to study after working hours and 15% were willing to study during the weekend.

Most of the respondents preferred a quite short duration for a training session, 45 minutes. These answers could be read together with the opinions about the way to attend the training, which was in students’ own pace, not in the same time-table with everyone else.

Table 9. What is your preferred duration for the training session?

Duration/session	Number of respondents	%
45 minutes	10	52,63%
90 minutes	6	31,58%
120 minutes	2	10,53%
Other (60 minutes)	1	5,26%

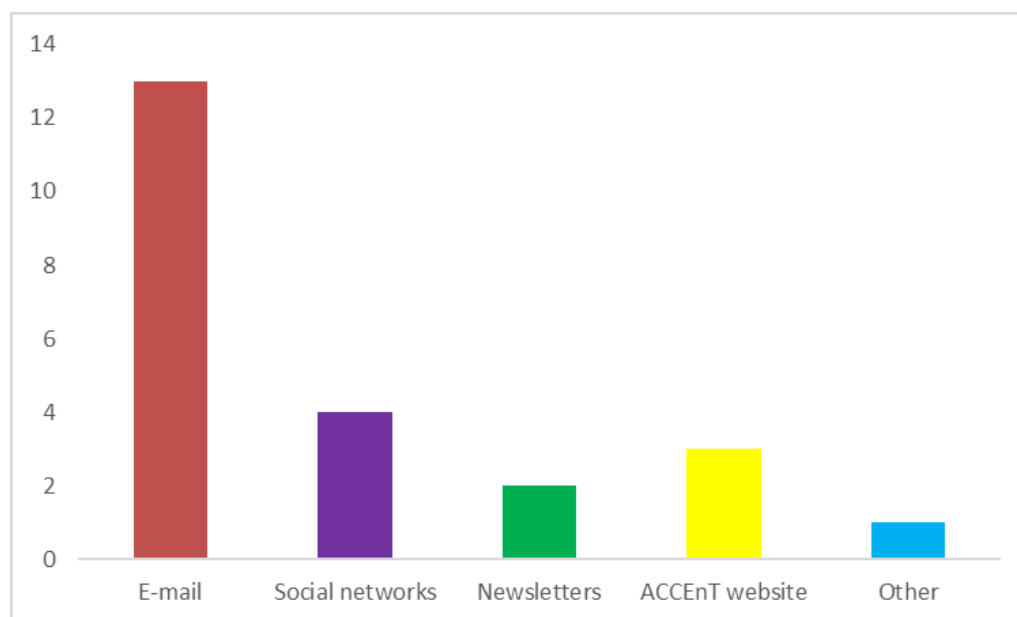
When asked, how often they would like to attend the training program, the most popular answer was twice a month, i.e. every other week. It is uncertain, if the respondents perceived “attending” as certain, specific times you are expected to be online and take part in a session or times they were prepared to study independently online. The formulation of the question refers to certain times the students would be given by the course provider, so that could be the interpretation. The answers might not tell the whole truth when thinking about the responses to the question about studying style. The most preferred style was to proceed in own pace in a way, that the next section always opens automatically, when the previous is done.

Table 10. How often would you like to attend the training program?

Frequency	Number of respondents	%
Once a week	2	12,50%
Two times a week	3	18,75%
Bimonthly	8	50,00%
Monthly	3	18,75%
Other	0	0%

We also asked, how they would like to know about the up-coming training course. “Other” was specified in the open field answer as “through our educational secretary”. The preferred information tool is e-mail for the survey participants in Finland.

Figure 8. How would you prefer to receive information about the training course?



3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Finnish survey and interview data show, that the profiles of people doing counselling and coaching as part of their work in the context of non-formal education and trade unions vary in terms of their highest qualification and job description. But, they also have many things in common: challenging target groups, understanding the importance of further training in informal and non-formal context as well as a desire to help people achieve their own goals from their own starting point. Our survey participants were aware of their counselling role as an essential part of their job. This is, unfortunately, not the case with everyone. There is still work to be done in that area – to help people realize that counselling and maybe coaching is what they do, and it requires professional know-how. There is a huge potential request for the kind of training ACCEnT is going to provide, when all these employees realize, that they can, actually, improve and learn those skills.

A positive attitude towards training and constant improvement was obvious in both survey answers and interviews. People have taken a lot of further training courses after their qualification and understand the meaning of life-long-learning. When asked about the most interesting topics that would help them be better at counselling, all the topics suggested were seen as interesting and useful. It was interesting, that psychological knowledge was especially popular theme for further education. The reason could be, that there are not that many further education courses on psychology available in Finland. Coaching methods were also a popular topic. The interviews showed, that they are considered to be helpful when trying to help people with their own goals and recognizing their own realities of life. Coaching was seen as a method to be used while counselling.

The question of e-tools was twofold. The interviewees told, that they use many kinds of e-tools in their everyday life. They use them also in their work. They felt, however, that it is difficult to use them in counselling, because of their clients' low language and/or ICT skills. They were hoping for simple apps and methods to use as e-tools in counselling. The attitude towards that was very positive and hopeful.

Survey participants were surprisingly unanimous of how they would like to study. This could be due to e-learning being quite common in Finland now-a-days and people having experience of what works for them when studying online. The key factors were to be able to study in their own pace, but together with others. Learning from their peer was recognized and there was a wish for that. ACCEnT training was seen as professional further training and therefore something to be done during the working hours. That raises another question of their employers approving the course as useful for the organisation. These are things to be considered while planning the training.

Another aspect to consider when planning the online course and the marketing of the course, is what motivates these people to attend training. The reasons were quite rational: getting new (and more) information as well as new skills. Even though talking about change and what it requires, is, perhaps, practically the same thing, this vocabulary wasn't as appealing and recognizable for the Finnish survey participants as talking about getting new knowledge and skills.

II. Annexes and Appendixes

Annexe I – References

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