

**Labour Market Integration of Social Assistance Recipients.
A Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) of the Success Factors
of Work Integration Providers in the Canton of Bern**

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Two tables have been removed from this public version to preserve anonymity.

Abstract

The integration of individuals into the labour market is a key concern of public administrations in their efforts to combat social exclusion. Despite the numerous programmes designed to assist various target groups in their pursuit of paid employment, not all programmes are equally successful in integrating individuals into the labour market. Impact models show that factors at different levels (income, input, output, and context levels) influence the outcome of the integration rate. This master thesis examines empirically which factors at which levels of the impact model have an impact on integration rates. A fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) is applied to gain insight into the integration rate of providers of work integration programmes for social assistance recipients in the canton of Bern, Switzerland, between 2012 and 2021. Six success factors, belonging to four different levels of the impact model, are conceptualised as conditions, and the integration rate of the provider in the measurement year is conceptualised as the outcome of the fsQCA. The success factors include the age and educational level of participants, the legal status of the provider, the duration of programme participation, the share of external work practice places and the index of job vacancies in the labour market. This master thesis was able to show that these six factors in various combinations are sufficiently related to a high or low integration rate. Furthermore, it demonstrates that factors for a low integration rate are not the opposite of those for a high integration rate. Further research could continue to incorporate factors from the different levels of the impact model and treat the high and low integration rates as separate phenomena.

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Table of Abbreviations

AHV:	Old-age and survivors' insurance, <i>Alters und Hinterlassenenversicherung</i>
AIS:	Office for Integration and Social Affairs, <i>Amt für Integration und Soziales</i>
ALV:	Unemployment insurance, <i>Arbeitslosenversicherung</i>
BI:	Employment and qualification offers for professional integration, <i>Berufliche Integration</i>
BIAS:	Employment and Integration Services in Social Assistance, <i>Beschäftigungs- und Integrationsangebote in der Sozialhilfe</i>
BIP:	Offers for stabilisation with the prospect of professional integration, <i>Beschäftigung mit Perspektive auf berufliche Integration</i>
csQCA:	Crisp-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
DCC:	Deviant cases consistency
fsQCA:	Fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis
IV:	Invalidity insurance, <i>Invalidenversicherung</i>
QCA:	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
SHG:	Social Assistance Act, <i>Sozialhilfegesetz</i>
SI:	Offers for social stabilisation, <i>Soziale Integration</i>

1 Introduction

The main objective of public policy and public administrations is to combat social exclusion and promote the inclusion of individuals and groups across various dimensions, including economic participation, social networks, political involvement, and cultural integration (Silver, 1994).

This master thesis will specifically focus on the dimension of integration via employment, as work is often equated with belonging to society (Sundermann et al., 2022, p. 3). Research has demonstrated that employment not only leads to increased income but also has a positive impact on various aspects of an individual's life, including self-esteem, social relationships and daily routine (Jahoda, 1988, p. 18; Rosso et al., 2010, p. 108). Conversely, the absence of paid work can have negative effects on individuals, leading to increased psychological and physical problems (Fryer & Payne, 1986, p. 247 as cited in Jahoda 1988, p. 14; Kessler et al., 2021, pp. 62–65; Lätsch et al., 2011, pp. 71–72).

Combatting the negative effects of unemployment and (re)integrating as many people as possible into the labour market is a major concern for the welfare state. To facilitate integration into the labour market, both government agencies and private providers have developed work integration programmes. These programmes may include counselling, support measures, courses, temporary employment programmes, measures in the labour market and more specific measures for certain groups. In Switzerland, such work integration programmes are offered by various institutions, including unemployment insurance, disability insurance, and social assistance which cater specifically to their respective target group (Wyer, 2014, p. 18). Such programmes are especially helpful for social assistance recipients, as their employability often needs to be improved through training in basic competencies such as punctuality, language, and IT user skills before entry into the labour market becomes realisable (Neuenschwander et al., 2022, p. 22).

When public administrations purchase work integration programmes from both public and private providers, the selection of programme providers is based on specific criteria and procedures, and the purchaser must define the framework conditions and monitor the provision of the programmes. Therefore, the administrative units responsible for service procurement are interested in understanding the factors that contribute to the success of programme providers.

Specifically, they seek to identify the factors that enable providers to achieve their primary objective of integrating the target group into the labour market. This knowledge facilitates a more objective evaluation of offers as well as the establishment of more promising framework conditions.

Surprisingly, the effectiveness of programmes aimed at professional and social integration is a topic of ongoing debate. Research has yielded conflicting conclusions regarding the effectiveness of programmes designed to integrate people into the labour market (Neuenschwander et al., 2015, p. 32). While some studies suggest that some programmes do not improve the chances of integration of their participants (see e.g. Aepli & Ragni, 2009; Dar & Tzannatos, 1999), others have arrived at more positive findings (see e.g. Lorentzen & Dahl, 2005; Morlok et al., 2014; Oesch & Neuenschwander, 2017). Reasons for the mixed results in this research area can be found in the contextuality of the specific programme, such as the country (or even the region), the year and the target group studied (Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009, p. 65).

For the context of Switzerland and the target group of social assistance recipients, Aepli and Ragni (2009) and Oesch and Neuenschwander (2017), provide the two most comprehensive studies examining the impact of work integration programmes. Both studies were based on surveys of social assistance recipients. The two studies used quantitative and qualitative methods. Only Oesch and Neuenschwander (2017) were able to work with longitudinal data through three survey dates.

The results of the studies within Switzerland and even more so internationally are difficult to compare, as there is no uniform way of organising the investigated resp. identified success factors influencing the impact of work integration programmes. To address this issue, different impact models have been developed to map the impact of work integration programmes (see e.g. Kita et al., 2022; Neuenschwander et al., 2015). No impact model has been used by several researchers and for different research methods.

The present master thesis aims to investigate the relationship between established success factors and the integration rate of providers of work integration programmes. The impact model developed by Neuenschwander et al. (2015)¹ is used as a guideline for the conditions of a

¹ It distinguishes between four levels that influence the outcome of the integration process: income (characteristics of the participants), input (resources of the provider), output (offer of the provider), and context (economic/population factors and biographical events).

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) in this master thesis. This research method has never been used in Switzerland in the research field of the impact of work integration programmes. The focus is on the work integration of recipients of social assistance in the Canton of Bern. The high and low integration rates of providers will be examined separately.

In the following part, the theory of social exclusion will be presented, followed by an exploration of the impact of work integration programmes in impact models and the contemporary research on success factors in work integration. Moving on to the third chapter, the particularities of Swiss policies and the BIAS programme in the canton of Bern will be discussed. The fourth chapter will outline the methodology and data used in this study. The fifth section will present the main findings, while the final two sections will summarise the conclusions and policy insights.

2 Understanding Labour Market Integration

To learn more about labour market integration, the theories of social exclusion and social inclusion will be presented. This will be followed by an explanation of impact models and their usefulness in the field of labour market integration. The impact model of Neuenschwander et al. (2015), on which the present master thesis is based, will be briefly introduced. After describing the state of research on the factors influencing the chances of integration into the labour market, it will be discussed which research gap results from this.

2.1 Social Exclusion and Inclusion

The concern with **social exclusion** originated in France during the 1960s. The poor were referred to as *les exclus*. But besides the economic (financial) form of social exclusion, there are others like the political, the social and the cultural. In the 1980s, during a time of social and political crisis, the theory of social exclusion was applied to more and more of these types of social disadvantages. The term described the increase in recurring and long-term unemployment. In addition, it also included the increasing instability of social bonds due to social isolation and the decline of solidarity. Not only the material but also the spiritual and symbolic aspects of exclusion were thereby discussed. In the 1980s, the concern and discourse of exclusion spread across the rest of Europe (Silver, 1994, pp. 532–535, 539).

Exclusion refers to the result of a progressive deterioration of the economic, institutional, and personally meaningful social and symbolic connections that typically link an individual to society. Experiencing exclusion poses a danger to individuals regarding their ability to engage in both material and symbolic transactions with the broader society (Silver, 1994, p. 534). Silver (1994, p. 541) states that people can be excluded from various exigencies such as livelihood, employment, property, education, welfare benefits, citizenship, and humane treatment.

Over time, the concept of **social inclusion** was introduced as the appropriate response to exclusion and as a seemingly more positive or affirmative term. The French term *insertion* appeared in the titles of social programmes against exclusion in France as early as the 1980s (Silver, 1994, p. 534, 2015, p. 3).

Social inclusion refers to the interconnectedness and shared values within a society, also known as solidarity, cohesion, social capital, or integration. It involves a multi-dimensional process of increasing opportunities for social participation, enhancing capabilities to fulfil social roles, and broadening social ties. Social interaction between people with different characteristics as well as impersonal institutional mechanisms can promote inclusion (Silver, 2015, pp. 2–3).

Social exclusion and social inclusion are not necessarily opposing concepts, despite often being presented as such. The meaning of these terms and the specific groups and social issues they address can vary depending on the context. The observed forms and culturally significant aspects of social exclusion, as well as the policy approaches to social inclusion, are shaped by national contexts in economic, social, and political life. This is because the concepts of belonging, membership, and citizenship that underlie these terms are based on the history, culture, institutions, and social structures of specific locations. Therefore, the terms exclusion and inclusion do not have the same meanings depending on the context (Silver, 2015, pp. 3–4).

Public policies are supposed to guide those suffering exclusion on their way back into society. One dimension of this road to inclusion is employment (Riba et al., 2011, p. 45). In that field, many public policies have been stated since the 1990s in (western) European welfare states (Eleveld, 2017, p. 277). These training and work practice programmes will increase the participant's human capital, work skills, and motivation and make them more effective as jobseekers. This will make them more appealing in the labour market and increase their chances of finding employment (Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009, p. 63).

But how does this effect, the increased employability, occurs? To be able to better show and examine how the effect of measures comes about, researchers like to use impact models. In the following chapter, impact models and their usefulness in the field of labour market integration will briefly be explained.

2.2 Impact Research

Public policy aims at changing social conditions, it intends to achieve an effect. Effects are not produced directly within the framework of the implementation of public policy but are rather the consequence of the achievements. To identify effects, evaluation needs impact models that serve as an analytical grid for the empirical work (Sager et al., 2021, p. 119).

Effects can be achieved on two levels: as an outcome and as an impact. Outcome describes the effect on the target group and the impact refers to the effect on the society to solve the targeted societal problem (Sager et al., 2021, p. 134). In the area of labour market integration, for example, the outcome could be integration into the labour market and the impact could be reduced social expenditure.

An impact model often distinguishes between the three levels of input, activities, and output, which influence the outcome and impact. The input describes the human, financial and organizational resources required to achieve the objectives. The activities describe the measures that are implemented to achieve the intended outcome goals. Sometimes the activities are treated as components of the outputs and are not listed separately. The outputs describe the products and services that are provided to influence the behaviour of the target groups. There are interactions between the different levels, which complicates the analysis of the emergence of impact (Sager et al., 2021, pp. 119–135).

The paragraphs below will focus on an impact model for work integration developed specifically within the context of Switzerland by Neuenschwander et al. (2015).

The Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH) developed this comprehensive impact model in cooperation with socialdesign, a consulting firm in the fields of healthcare, social services, and education, to systematically examine the effects of integration programmes in social assistance. In this master thesis, the impact model is referred to as the impact model by **Neuenschwander et al. (2015)**. Their approach was to map all relevant factors that influence the intended effects in their model. The impact model distinguishes between the levels of **income, input, output, context and outcome** (Neuenschwander et al., 2015, pp. 32–33).

The impact level is usually defined in evaluation research but often remains unexamined because too many external factors have an impact on overall societal development (Sager et al., 2021, p. 134), which might be why the impact level as such is missing from this particular model.

The inclusion of an income level that measures the characteristics of the programme participants is particular to this impact model. Thus, there is a special focus on the characteristics that participants bring with them when they enter the programme.

The input level includes the resources invested in the integration programme, such as personnel, financial and organisational resources. In this model, the focus lies on the specific resources of the programme provider.

The programmes offered by the providers are subsumed under the output level. This combines the activities and outputs according to the general impact model presented.

In addition to the presented customary way of constructing an impact model, the impact model by Neuenschwander et al. (2015) includes a dedicated context level. On that level, they consider that framework conditions external to the programme such as the labour market, which can hardly be influenced by either the provider or the participant, can have an impact on the effect of the integration programme. Possible changes in the biography of the programme participants are also taken into account on this level of the impact model (Neuenschwander et al., 2015, pp. 32–33).

This effect model provided the theoretical basis for Neuenschwander et al.'s research to test the effectiveness and impact of integration programmes (Neuenschwander et al., 2015, p. 33). This master thesis will use the levels of Neuenschwander et al.'s (2015) impact model to collocate the existing as well as the newly gained research findings.

2.3 Research on Success Factors in Work Integration

Along the levels of the impact model of Neuenschwander et al. (2015), the following section discusses the state of research on the impact of work integration programmes and identifies possible relevant factors for (un-)successful work integration. The first level presented is that of income, followed by input, after output the context concludes the section.

2.3.1 Income Level

The income level covers the characteristics of the participants.

Research has shown the **age of the participants** to be a relevant factor. Riba et al. (2011, p. 50), who analysed the effect of activation policies on beneficiaries of minimum income protection in Catalonia (Spain), stated that participants aged 50 years or older are less likely to be employed than younger candidates. Similarly, Aeppli et al. (Aeppli et al., 1996, 1998; Aeppli, 2000; as cited in Aeppli et al., 2003, pp. 23–24), in their nationwide studies in Switzerland, examined the situation of people who had used up the period of unemployment insurance benefits (so-called disenrolled persons), were able to show that the chances of the group of disenrolled persons over 49 years of age finding a job again were much slimmer than those of the two younger age groups. Of those up to 29 years old, 64% re-entered the labour market, and of those 30 to 49 years old 60%, whereas, for those over the age of 49 years, only 38% found a job. Further indications that old age increases the risk of social exclusion are also provided by the figures on long-term unemployment and social assistance receipt: the age group 50 years and older is particularly affected by long-term unemployment and between 2011 and 2017 there was an above-average increase in the social assistance receipt rate in this age segment from 2,5 to 3,2 per cent (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2018, p. 2; Neuenschwander et al., 2022, p. 5).

According to Kita et al. (2022, p. 87), one reason for this could be that people over the age of 60 belong to the groups of people who are faced with particular prejudices such as a lack of motivation to work or the inability to work under pressure.

In summary, there are indications that a programme with many participants who are disadvantaged in terms of age (over 50 years) is related to a low integration rate of the programme.

Martin and Grubb (2001), who analysed unemployed people in the OECD countries and Bergmarkt et al. (2017, p. 8) who looked at programmes by Swedish municipalities for social assistance recipients, provide evidence that the inverse conclusion that young age is an advantage for labour market integration is also true. Being young thus seems to have an influence on social exclusion and makes integration into the labour market more likely to succeed. It can therefore be assumed that an offer with a larger number of participants below the age of 50 years is more likely to achieve a high integration rate.

When looking at the characteristics of the participants, an additional relevant factor is the **education level of the participants**. According to Oesch and Neuenschwander (2017, p. 28) who studied employment integration programmes for social assistance recipients in the Can-

ton of Bern, individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to succeed in integration into the labour market. Aepli et al. (Aepli et al., 1996, 1998; Aepli, 2000; as cited in Aepli et al., 2003, p. 24) also demonstrated that the likelihood of finding employment increased significantly with higher levels of education. They showed that 43% of disenrolled persons without education beyond their compulsory education had found employment, compared to 56% of participants with further education. Kita et al. (2022, p. 83), who included unemployment insurance, disability insurance and social assistance in Switzerland in their study, also identified having completed an education that is recognised in Switzerland as a promising factor for successful integration into the labour market. The relationship between a participant's level of education and entry into the labour market has also been widely studied outside Switzerland. Rønsen and Skarðhamar (2009, p. 72), who evaluated a Norwegian initiative to combat poverty among social assistance recipients, found a positive correlation between the participants' educational level and integration into the labour market for most target groups. Riba et al. (2011, p. 50) also highlight this advantage in the Spanish context.

When discussing the relationship between educational level and integration into employment, the changing nature of work must be addressed. Hirsch-Kreinsen et al. (2020, p. 497) summarise the transformation of work into three scenarios: substitution, upgrading, and polarization. Substitution refers to the disappearance of low-skilled jobs, while upgrading involves the enhancement of the skill level required in all employment groups. Polarization highlights the devaluation of middle-skilled jobs, resulting in a widening gap between highly skilled workers in complex roles and low-skilled workers in simple roles. Additionally, Switzerland's ageing workforce has led to a shortage of skilled workers in certain industries, particularly those requiring medium to high qualifications. As a result, the demand for highly skilled workers with advanced competencies is increasing (Neuenschwander et al., 2022, p. 7). Therefore, education plays a crucial role in providing individuals with the necessary skills and qualifications to meet the demands of the changing labour market and combat social exclusion.

Based on these findings, it can be assumed that a programme with many participants who have higher levels of education (vocational education or tertiary education) is more likely to have a high integration rate.

Overall, it can be assumed that there are factors that facilitate or impede the integration of people into the labour market. The integration rate of a work programme provider is likely related to the composition of its participants, with age and educational level being identified as important factors in the existing research literature. However, it is important to note that the

composition of participants is not the only element related to integration rates, as impact models suggest that other factors also play a role. Therefore, the following section will examine the input level.

2.3.2 Input Level

The input level looks more closely at the resources of the provider of the work integration programmes.

An element on that level is that successful providers value **relationships with all partners**, including the economy, participants, and referring organisations, according to the systematic literature review on publications on the subject of the method *supported employment*² by Sundermann et al. (2022, p. 14).

Neuenschwander et al. (2022, p. 18) emphasise that providers need good knowledge of the regional labour market and a sustainable network with companies in the labour market in the Swiss context. Sundermann et al. (2022, p. 12) discovered that a positive working relationship between professionals employed by work integration programme providers and programme participants, characterised by trust and respect, has a significant impact on the success of the programmes. Successful professionals in work integration programmes exhibit participant-focused attitudes, optimism, enthusiasm, and good communication and networking skills. Due to a lack of data, this master thesis will not be including the aspect of relationships between professionals and participants.

According to Rønsen and Skarðhamar (2009, p. 66), a close partnership between employment services and social assistance services was found to be essential. However, they acknowledge that while there is some evidence of a positive impact on an institutional level, it is uncertain whether this translates into improved integration rates. Some studies suggest a small but positive effect, but the evidence is not conclusive.

Domeniconi et al. (2013, p. 265) explain that in the context of Swiss unemployment assistance, social assistance, disability and accident insurance as organisations referring people into work integration programmes, it is crucial for success that these **referring organisations are actively involved** in the process of integration into the labour market. They need to maintain an exchange with the participants and the providers of work integration programmes.

² This is a method that first places participants in a job and trains them afterwards (Sundermann et al., 2022, p. 3).

When looking at the collaboration between the providers of work integration programmes and social assistance services an interesting connection could be drawn to the **legal form** of the provider. When the provider belongs to a public administration, they will have a closer relationship to at least one social assistance service than their private counterparts, as they belong to the same administrative unit. One would assume that this facilitates cooperation significantly. However, research by Riba et al. (2011, p. 54) on the effect of the public legal form and integration into the labour market shows that non-profit organisations have a higher percentage of success (an average of eight per cent more) than the units belonging to a public administration.

Certain characteristics of the provider of work integration programmes are related to the integration rate of the provider according to the impact model of Neuenschwander et al. (2015). The legal form of the provider is an interesting factor at the input level of the impact model. The results suggest that a public legal status contributes to a low integration rate of the provider.

In addition to the participants' composition and the providers' characteristics just discussed, according to the impact model of Neuenschwander et al. (2015) the output level as discussed below also plays a role.

2.3.3 Output Level

The output level refers to the actions the provider takes to achieve the integration of the participant into the labour market.

Domeniconi et al. (2013, p. 263) state that generally, giving the participants a sense of purpose within their assignments is important in work integration programmes, including through tasks in real-life work environments. Neuenschwander et al. (2022, pp. 18, 23) concretise, that **external work practice places in the labour market**, compared to in-house places by the providers, are a success factor. Riba et al. (2011, p. 56) were able to show that gaining experience in the labour market while in the programme increases the probability of integration. However, what are the benefits for future integration in external work practice places in the labour market? Research suggests that, especially with social assistance recipients, it is often necessary to first work on their labour market skills and basic competencies before considering integration into the labour market (Neuenschwander et al., 2022, p. 22). In addition, Kita et al. (2022, p. 87) point out that people who have been unemployed for a longer period of time belong to the groups of people who are particularly prejudiced against by possible future

employers. Prejudices include lack of motivation to work and lack of resilience to pressure or stress in the workplace. These prejudices reinforce social exclusion and delay integration into the labour market. External work practice places allow participants to directly showcase themselves to potential future employers which helps to actively counteract the aforementioned prejudices, opening up the opportunity for a direct hire.

The aspect of external work practice places in the labour market during programme participation is included in the present analysis. It can be assumed that a high proportion of external work practice places directly in the labour market contributes to a high integration rate of the programme.

An additional factor within the output level is the **duration of programme participation**.

The duration varies depending on the target group and the individual situation of the participant (Adam et al., 2016, pp. 16–17). The duration of participation has been described as relevant for successful integration into the labour market. Riba et al. (2011, p. 50) find that spending less than a year or between one and three years in the programme positively influenced the possibility of integration. However, once recipients spent more than three years, each additional year in the minimum income programme was associated with a decreased likelihood of achieving labour market integration. One reason for this is the so-called *lock-in effect*. It describes the phenomenon that participants in programmes searched less intensively for a job during the duration of the programme (Eidgenössische Finanzkontrolle, 2015, p. 23). Based on this, it can be concluded that participation in a programme, especially over a longer period of time, can contribute to social exclusion.

It can be found that a short duration of participation in a programme leads to a higher integration rate whereas prolonged programme participation decreases the likelihood of successful integration into the labour market. It can be assumed that the configuration of the programme plays a role in how successfully participants can be integrated into the labour market. According to the research literature, the external work practice places and the duration of participation are important factors. This colludes with the characteristics of participants and providers. The last level of the impact model that influences the outcome of integration into the labour market is the context which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.3.4 Context Level

The context level includes all programme-external conditions. Sundermann et al. (2022, p. 15) found that environmental contexts, such as the gross domestic product (GDP) growth and unemployment rates had an important impact on successful integration. Neuenschwander and Winkelmann (2011, p. 7) state that the integration of social assistance recipients in Switzerland depends not only on the efforts of the providers and the commitment of the participants but also on the **economic situation** of the country or region. Marti and Osterwald (2006, pp. 43–44) found that an increase in exports or an increase in the price level reduces the number of jobseekers in an impact evaluation of programmes for unemployed persons in Switzerland. Grogger (2004) found that the strong economy influenced exit from welfare in the U.S. positively.

Adam (2016, p. 51) and Neuenschwander and Winkelmann (2011, p. 7) mark the state of the Swiss **labour market** as relevant for labour market integration in Switzerland. Rønsen and Skarøhamar (2009, p. 64) found that in a period of economic boom with a great **demand for labour**, more people can switch from passive dependency into active participation in the labour market.

It can therefore be assumed that the good economic performance of a country or region is associated with a high demand for personnel, which influences the labour market, and which can also facilitate the integration into the labour market of unemployed persons. The economic situation is thus related to social exclusion and success in integration into employment. The need for personnel is an interesting factor on the context level. It can be assumed that a high demand contributes to a high integration rate.

After presenting the state of research on the factors influencing the chances of integration into the labour market along the impact model of Neuenschwander et al. (2015), it will be discussed which research gap results from this.

2.4 Research Gap and Research Question

In conclusion, a substantial body of evidence exists regarding the factors that may influence the effectiveness of work integration programmes. This evidence encompasses diverse regions, target groups, and measurement points. The question now arises as to whether these findings apply to work integration programmes for social assistance recipients in the Canton of Bern during the period from 2012 to 2021.

While some studies have been conducted in this region and/or for this target group and/or during this time frame, they rarely use longitudinal data. Moreover, it is noteworthy that no prior research has employed a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to investigate the success factors and their interactions that contribute to labour market integration.

The present master thesis aims to contribute to this literature by analysing multiple measurement points to assess relationships over a ten-year period in a QCA. This longitudinal approach in a QCA will enable the identification of success factors and outcomes that may be specific to a particular provider or year.

The success factors are organised along the levels of an existing impact model for labour market integration. Their arrangement in an overall model is meant to make it easier to understand the identified relevant factors and their interaction.

By applying the QCA method and including success factors along the impact model of Neuenschwander et al. (2015), the following research question will be investigated for programmes for social assistance recipients from 2012-2021 in the Canton of Bern:

What explains the (un-)successful integration into the labour market of social assistance recipients by providers of work integration programmes in the canton of Bern?

In the following, the success factors to be included in the analysis are explained.

2.5 Directional Expectations

Recapitulating the state of research, it can be concluded that factors at the levels of

- the income (characteristics of participants of a work integration programme: age and education level),
- the input (characteristics of the provider: legal form),
- the output (offer of providers of work integration programmes: external work practice places and duration of programme participation),
- and the context (factors external to the programme: demand for labour)

are in relation to the successful or unsuccessful integration of participants into the labour market. Therefore, six success factors, one or two per level of the impact model of Neuenschwander et al. (2015), can be used to explain the outcome of (un-)successful integration of social

assistance recipients into the labour market³. In Table 1, the identified success factors can be viewed according to the levels of the impact model. Based on the concept of asymmetrical causality the assumptions about the relationship between the individual factors and a high integration rate are formulated separately from the assumptions about the relationship between the factors and a low integration rate (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 58).

Condition	Condition enables a high integration rate when	Condition leads to a low integration rate when
Income		
Many younger participants	Present	Absent
Many participants with high education level	Present	No expectation
Input		
Public legal status	No expectation	Present
Output		
Many external work practice places	Present	No expectation
Short duration of programme participation	Present	Absent
Context		
Many vacancies on the labour market	Present	No expectation

Table 1: Directional expectations

These *directional expectations* of the conditions are summarised as follows:

Many participants under 50 years of age or with a high level of education, an offer with many external work practice places, a short participation period, or a year with many vacancies in the labour market is related to a high integration rate⁴.

Few participants under 50 years of age, a provider with a public legal form or an offer with a long duration of programme participation are related to a low integration rate⁵.

The theory and the state of research in the field of work integration have been laid out and the *directional expectations* about the research question posed explained. In the following chapter, the specific area of investigation will be discussed.

³ Initially, 19 conditions were included in the first draft. Only the conditions that had the best data quality and performed well in the test analysis were ultimately included. This approach aligns with the good practice of set-theoretic methods, which involves researchers using preliminary findings to justify changes to crucial elements of the data, such as dropping or adding cases and conditions, reconceptualising conditions and outcomes, and altering membership scores of cases (Schneider & Wagemann, 2010, pp. 281, 296).

⁴ With the set labels, this can be summarised as follows: YOUNG + EDUC + EXT + SDUR + HIVA → HIR

⁵ With the set labels, this can be summarised as follows: young + PUB + sdur → hir

3 Approaching the Hard Case

Since the 1980s, Switzerland has had a well-developed **welfare state** that combats social exclusion. The programmes provided are rendered at various administrative levels (federal, cantonal and communal levels) (Knöpfel, 2015, pp. 23, 27).

The social security system can be divided into three levels: basic public benefits (e.g. education system, legal system, health system), social insurance (e.g. old-age and survivors' insurance (AHV⁶), invalidity insurance (IV⁷), unemployment insurance (ALV⁸)) and means-tested benefits (e.g. economic social assistance, reduction of health insurance premiums, supplementary benefits to AHV and IV) (Bundesamt für Statistik, n.d.-b).

This master thesis focuses on **social assistance**. In contrast to social insurance, social assistance is paid irrespective of the reason for the hardship (Wyer, 2014, p. 66). If the income of the support unit (usually the household) is not sufficient to secure its subsistence level and its assets are below the exemption limit, it is entitled to economic social assistance (Kessler et al., 2021, p. 27). The support is designed for rapid integration into the labour market and a move away from the welfare state (Knöpfel, 2015, p. 28). In this context, **work integration programmes** are offered for people receiving social assistance. Since social assistance is organised at the municipal level, there are a large number of different programmes, which do not have a uniform methodology and terminology (Wyer, 2014, p. 76).

The **Canton of Bern**, in contrast, has a landscape of offers in which several providers operate according to the same framework conditions. Since 2006, there has been a uniform concept for the ***Employment and Integration Programmes in Social Assistance (BIAS⁹)*** of the Canton of Bern (see Amt für Integration und Soziales, 2022). This concept ensures that the different programmes that are summarised in the term BIAS programmes are somewhat comparable. And since 2012, the Canton of Bern has directly financed these programmes and exercised supervision (Amt für Integration und Soziales, 2022, p. 3). The canton of Bern is thus an interesting field of study for work integration programmes for social assistance recipients, as

⁶ Alters und Hinterlassenenversicherung, AHV

⁷ Invalidenversicherung, IV

⁸ Arbeitslosenversicherung, ALV

⁹ Beschäftigungs- und Integrationsangebote in der Sozialhilfe, BIAS

the common framework conditions allow for an analysis of several providers offering comparable services in a similar context.

The task of ensuring the necessary employment and integration programmes for social assistance recipients is assigned to the Office for Integration and Social Affairs (AIS¹⁰) by the Social Assistance Act¹¹. Through a contract, the responsibility for programme provision is transferred to different providers.¹² The providers are responsible for one of the defined regions in the canton of Bern, they become strategic partners in one of eight regions through the contract (Amt für Integration und Soziales, 2022, pp. 3–4). Figure 1 shows the canton of Bern with its municipalities. The eight regions are coloured differently¹³.

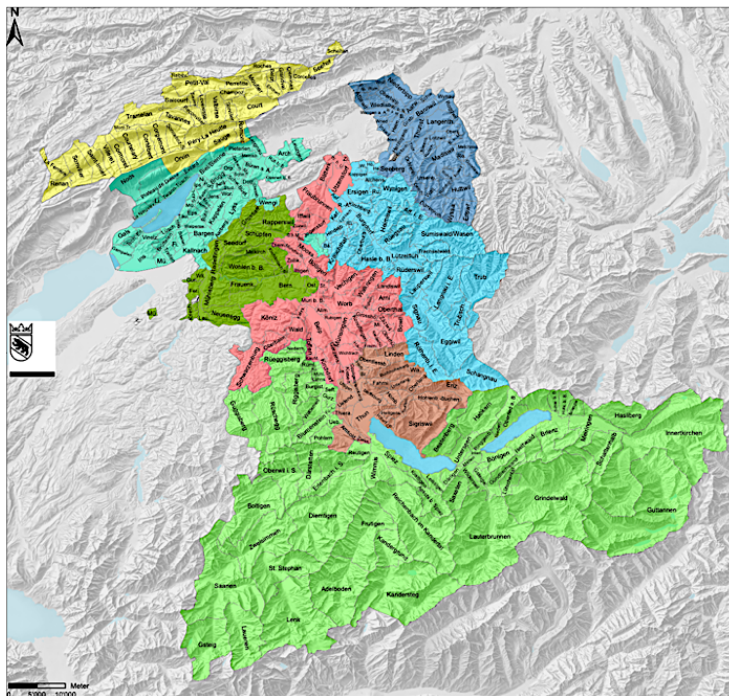


Figure 1: Map of the eight BIAS regions in the canton of Bern as of 2022 (Kanton Bern, Amt für Integration und Soziales, 2022)

For the sake of simplicity, the eight regions as of 2022 have always been used as a basis, although the study looks at the period 2012-2022. There were times when there were more than eight regions, but mergers over the ten years of measurement resulted in the eight regions presented. Therefore, in the years 2012-2017, more than one partner is responsible in some of the

¹⁰ Amt für Integration und Soziales, AIS

¹¹ Sozialhilfegesetz, SHG, in particular on Article 72 SHG, Article 73 para. 2 SHG as well as Article 71 SHG

¹² This purchase of programmes by the canton of Bern from providers is a form of cooperation between the public sector and private providers known as a public-private partnership (PPP) (Thom & Ritz, 2017, pp. 234–236).

¹³ The Bernese Jura region in yellow, Biel-Seeland in turquoise, Bern and other municipalities in dark green, Region of Bern in red, Emmental in light blue, Oberaargau in dark blue, Thun and other municipalities in brown, Bernese Oberland in light green.

regions. The borders of the regions have also changed slightly over the ten years as some municipalities have actively changed regions. However, these changes are negligible.

The providers of the BIAS programmes are municipalities, associations, foundations, and joint-stock companies. Some only provide work integration programmes for social assistance recipients, others also work with other target groups such as the unemployed. The strategic partners are responsible for the coordination of the BIAS programmes in their region. Social services in their region can refer social assistance recipients to their programmes. The BIAS concept defines the framework conditions for the provision of the programmes. Within these framework conditions, the strategic partners can decide on the exact design of their offer (Amt für Integration und Soziales, 2022, pp. 3–4). The following programmes are offered, with small differences, in all regions (Amt für Integration und Soziales, 2022, pp. 9–16):

- Appraisal of employability, the appropriate type of offer, etc.
- Clarification of willingness to cooperate and work, clarification in cases of suspected abuse
- Offers for social stabilisation (SI¹⁴), these allow for a daily structure
- Offers for stabilisation with the prospect of professional integration (BIP¹⁵)
- Employment and qualification offer for professional integration into the labour market (BI¹⁶)
- Placement in permanent jobs, training positions and temporary jobs
- Follow-up support for persons that have been hired and their employers.

The strategic partners have some flexibility to respond to developments over the years, regional factors such as language or the economic situation, and also the needs of social services and employers in the region (Amt für Integration und Soziales, 2022, p. 4).

Now that it has been explained in which area the question of what explains the (un-)successful placement into the labour market of social assistance recipients is to be investigated, the following chapter explains the methodology used to answer this question.

¹⁴ Soziale Integration, SI

¹⁵ Beschäftigung mit Perspektive auf berufliche Integration, BIP

¹⁶ Berufliche Integration, BI

4 Research Design

4.1 Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)

The research question asks about the success factors in labour market integration among providers of work integration programmes in the canton of Bern. A Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is suitable for finding an answer to this question. It can identify the cause of effects by analysing which combinations of factors stand in relation to a high or low integration rate (Oana et al., 2021, p. 6). The QCA identifies combinations of conditions which have a necessary or sufficient relationship to the examined effect, called outcome (Mello, 2021, p. 2).

QCA was developed by Charles Ragin in 1987 to combine the best features of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Oana et al., 2021, p. 6). The QCA compares units of investigation, cases, as bearers of certain characteristics (Mello, 2021, p. 2). The method has a strong case orientation, so fundamental knowledge about the single case is needed to achieve valid results. It applies set theory and Boolean algebra to explain an outcome while taking into account that a complex interplay of different factors occurs (Oana et al., 2021, pp. 5–6).

QCA represents both a research design and a method of analysis, in other words, an approach as well as a technique (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 11).

According to the principle of **causal complexity** applied in a QCA, three specific elements must be considered. First, according to *conjunctural causation*, it is possible that the effect of a condition could only occur in combination with other conditions (Oana et al., 2021, p. 8). Such a combination of conditions is called a path. Secondly, different, not mutually exclusive explanations can lead to the same outcome according to the principle of *equifinality* (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 5). This is relevant because very different combinations of conditions are imaginable, which all can lead to a high or low integration rate. Moreover, according to *asymmetric causation*, QCA considers the high and low integration rates separately, as these can have different causes and could be explained by different combinations of conditions (Oana et al., 2021, p. 8).

An important basic construct of the QCA is the **sets**. In the QCA, cases are measured by their membership in the different sets surveyed (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 24). The outcome is a set, and the cases show a value of set membership in that set. Conditions are also sets for which the cases show a set membership value.

These values may differ depending on which of the two main versions of QCA is chosen: *crisp-set QCA* (csQCA) and *fuzzy-set QCA* (fsQCA).

In a **csQCA**, only sets can be used to which the cases can either be members or non-members. Their set membership score is either 0 or 1. In a **fsQCA**, however, sets can be included for which the cases have a partial membership. These sets are called fuzzy sets. The cases can have a membership value between 1 and 0. The fsQCA thus allows gradations of set memberships and therefore different shades of grey can be empirically captured which inform the analysis and interpretation of results. The fuzzy sets establish *differences in kind*, just as crisp sets do, but they add *differences in degree* to this. However, crisp sets can also be included in a fsQCA. This is because crisp sets are simply put a very special case of a fuzzy set, which only allows full membership and full non-membership. Fuzzy sets, on the other hand, allow addressing the fact that many social science concepts are dichotomous in principle, but that their empirical manifestation occurs in degrees. This also applies, for example, to the integration rate. It can be conceptualised as high or low. But it more closely reflects reality if different degrees of high or low integration rates can be depicted. Because the concepts of interest do not appear in pure dichotomy, fsQCA is used in this master thesis (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, pp. 13–15).

To determine for each case the extent to which it belongs to the different sets (outcome and conditions), firstly the concepts that the sets stand for must be measured in the real world (see chapter 4.2 Operationalisation). Then in the process of **calibration**, a set membership score is assigned to the cases. The qualitative and/or quantitative empirical pieces of information that measure the conditions and the outcome are transformed into set membership scores, to determine whether and to what extent cases belong to a particular set (Oana et al., 2021, p. 11). To define the boundaries of sets the so-called *crossover point* or *point of indifference* must be defined for each set. This point defines the qualitative *difference in kind* between being in or out of the set for crisp sets respectively fully or rather in (membership scores of higher than 0,5) of the set or fully or rather out (membership scores of lower than 0,5) of the set for fuzzy sets (see appendix 3) (Oana et al., 2021, pp. 31–33).

After attributing the membership of the cases in the sets, the logically possible set configurations can be represented in a *truth table* (see appendix 8.1 and 9.1) (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 92).

Logical minimisation can be used to find the shortest possible conditions or combinations of conditions that always lead to the outcome (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 105). So QCA looks for patterns, conditions or combinations of conditions that always occur when the outcome occurs. This is called a **sufficient condition** (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 333). **Necessary conditions** on the other hand are patterns where the outcome only occurs if a condition or combination of conditions is also present (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, pp. 329–330). Through this search for patterns, causal links between the outcome and the conditions can be identified (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, pp. 92–115). The same process is carried out for the absence of the outcome (Oana et al., 2021, pp. 214–215).

When identifying sufficient conditions, three different solution terms can be derived (Mello, 2021, p. 134). The difference lies in the treatment of the set configurations in the *truth table*, which did not occur in the sample. These are called *logical remainders*.

If it is assumed that the *logical remainders* cannot be considered sufficient, the **conservative solution** is obtained. This solution only works with the actual occurrence of positive outcomes that meet the predetermined consistency and frequency criteria (Mello, 2021, p. 134). It is the most complex of the three different solution types (Oana et al., 2021, p. 123). If it is assumed that all *logical remainders* would have been sufficient for the outcome, the **parsimonious solution** is calculated. It includes all those remainder rows that contribute to obtaining the most parsimonious solution in the logical minimisation. This solution is the most sparingly way of representing the observed facts (Oana et al., 2021, p. 123).

The **intermediate solution** includes the *logical remainders* that were included in the parsimonious solution, provided they align with the researcher's *directional expectations*. The solution terms of this solution are less simple than those of the parsimonious solution but more simple than those of the conservative solution (Oana et al., 2021, p. 123).

The difference between the three solutions lies in whether none, all or some remainder rows are included in logical minimisation (Oana et al., 2021, pp. 122–123). The three solution types are interdependent and there is no hierarchy between them (Mello, 2021, p. 141). The research goal determines, which solution type is the most adequate. “The conservative solution describes cases in greater detail, whereas the most parsimonious solution prioritizes that

no redundancies are included. The intermediate solution aims at striking a balance between these goals and the sound counterfactual reasoning” (Oana et al., 2021, pp. 129–130). All three solutions should be calculated and analysed (Mello, 2021, p. 141). For this analysis, the focus is on the conservative solution as it is exclusively guided by the empirical information at hand and describes the cases in detail.

After the research design and technique of QCA have been roughly outlined, it will be presented how the cases were chosen and how the concepts under investigation were operationalised.

4.2 Cases and Data

One possibility to select the cases is to include all cases from a given population (Mello, 2021, p. 23). In this analysis, the **total population** of BIAS-programme providers in the years 2012-2021 were included (see chapter 3). A case is a provider in a specific year. According to the *most similar system design*, cases have to be as similar as possible but show differences in outcome (Berg-Schlosser & De Meur, 2009, pp. 21–23). This is to ensure that the selected cases share enough contextual factors so that they do not have to be included in the analysis. The providers share the same canton and provide programmes in the framework of the BIAS concept, which has stayed relatively the same over the time of interest.

The data used is available per provider and per calendar year, for ten years. This leads to several cases involving the same year as well as several cases involving the same provider. To be able to represent these two elements in the conditions, a characteristic that remains the same per provider, the legal form, and a characteristic that is the same per year, vacancies in the year, were included. But when analysing **longitudinal data** in a QCA, it should also be noted that the QCA does not explicitly integrate the temporal dimension and cannot structure the results chronologically (De Meur et al., 2009, p. 161). A technique which can be used to introduce temporal dimensions is including them in the cases themselves. The cases must be structured in such a way that some cases proceed others in a chronological sequence (De Meur et al., 2009, p. 162). In this master thesis, the temporal dimension is included in the cases by naming them after the year and the provider (for example E12 for provider E in the year 2012, E13 for provider E in the year 2013 and so on). The results can thus be analysed according to

the temporal aspect. This enables answering two additional questions: firstly, what is the situation with the other providers in the same year and secondly what is the situation with the other years of this same provider (see chapters 6.1.3 and 6.2.3)?

All providers in the survey period were included in the sample. The analysis thus includes **92 cases**, which include 14 providers¹⁷ respectively ten years. The 92 cases included are considered to be a large amount, but a QCA can also be used to analyse large-N data (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, pp. 12–13).

The exact data collection (data sources) and the data sets (raw data matrix and crisp and fuzzy data matrix) can be found in the appendix (see appendix 1, 2 and 6). In the following, it is discussed how the variables (outcome and conditions) to be studied were made measurable.

4.3 Operationalisation

As discussed in chapter 2.5, six conditions were identified to explain the outcome, a high integration rate. According to the impact model of Neuenschwander et al. (2015) the conditions and the outcome can be found at different levels. The outcome level of the impact model corresponds to the outcome in the QCA. The factors from the other four levels (income, input, output, and context) are the conditions in the QCA. The sections below explain how the concepts (the outcome and the conditions) become sets which can then be incorporated into the QCA.

The **outcome level** is covered by the outcome included in the QCA. The outcome to be examined is the **success in integrating social assistance recipients into the labour market**. This is to be operationalised as an integration rate, measured by the ratio of successful placements¹⁸ to total participants. To allow easy identification of the direction of the outcome, it is called **high integration rate (HIR)**. Providers with a low integration rate are excluded from this set.

¹⁷ For reasons of anonymity, it is not disclosed which provider is active in which year and in which region.

¹⁸ Placements in permanent and temporary jobs as well as apprenticeships.

Researchers criticise focusing only on this impact caused by work integration programmes, as there are other positive and negative impacts of work integration programmes (Neuenschwander & Winkelmann, 2011, p. 3). However, including more outcomes is beyond the scope of this master thesis.

To be able to represent the participants' composition at the different providers in the different years for the **income level**, two success factors are included:

The first factor is the **age** of the participants. To include the age, the proportion of participants under 50 years of age is calculated from the total number of participants. The set is called **many participants under 50 years of age (YOUNG)** and excludes cases with a high proportion of participants over 50 years of age.

The second factor is the **educational level** of the participants. To capture this, the participants with completed vocational education or tertiary level qualification in the programmes were added together, and their share of the total participants was determined. The set is called **many participants with vocational and/or academic education (EDUC)**. Providers with a high proportion of participants without a qualification in basic education are thus excluded from this set.

To be able to represent the specificities of the providers for the **input level**, one factor is included: the **legal form of the provider**. To determine the legal form, the cases were divided into public (municipalities) and private (foundations, joint-stock companies, and associations). The set is called **public legal form (PUB)**. Providers with a private legal form are excluded from this set. This condition stays constant for the same provider in the longitudinal sample. This is to account for the situation that many of the providers appear several times as cases.

To represent the offer of the providers for the **output level**, two success factors were included:

The first factor is the proportion of **external work practice places** compared to all places. It is intended to measure how many employment opportunities are offered to participants directly in the labour market. The set is called **high share of external work practice places (EXT)**. Providers with a high share of in-house places are excluded from this set.

The second factor is the **duration of programme participation**. It can be measured by the average duration of participation in working days in the programmes. The set is called **short**

duration of programme participation (SDUR). Providers with programmes in which participants participate for a long time are excluded from this set.

To incorporate the specificities of a year for the **context level** one success factor is included: **vacancies in the year.** It can be measured by the index of vacancies in the *Espace Mittelland*, which includes the Canton of Bern and some neighbouring cantons (Bundesamt für Statistik, n.d.-a). The set is called **high index of vacancies (HIVA).** A provider in a year with a low index of vacancies, therefore, does not belong to this set. This condition is always the same for a specific year in the longitudinal section. This allows considering that, due to the longitudinal data, each year occurs several times as a case.

The exact data collection (data sources), the data set (raw data matrix) and more detailed explanations on the calibration of the sets (calibration of conditions and outcome, plots of the scores of the raw variable against the calibrated scores, descriptive Information to the sets), as well as the calibrated fuzzy and crisp scores (crisp and fuzzy data matrix), can be found in the appendix (see appendix 1 - 6).

In the following, the results of the calculated QCA are presented, which included the conditions just presented. First, it is tested whether there are necessary conditions. Then sufficient conditions are discussed. The results for the high integration rate are always mentioned first, followed by those for the low integration rate.

5 Analysis of Necessity

During the analysis of the integration into the labour market, no single condition fulfilled the criterion of necessity. So, there is no condition or combination of conditions that are always present when the outcome is present (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, pp. 329–330). For both the high integration rate (HIR) and the low integration rate (hir), the test for necessary conditions does not identify a stand-alone condition without which the outcome cannot be present (appendix 7). Furthermore, for both the high integration rate and the low integration rate, a combination of conditions using the logical OR is discussed in the appendix (7). Both combinations do not meet the requirements to be considered necessary.

6 Analysis of Sufficiency

The test for sufficient conditions looks for conditions that cannot be present without the outcome (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 333). In the analysis of the sufficient conditions a *truth table*, which shows all logically possible combinations of conditions, is first created. For the chosen six conditions, there are 64 possible combinations (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 92), which are listed in the appendix (appendix 8.1 for the positive outcome and appendix 9.1 for the negative outcome).

Only 25 of these combinations occurred in the empirical study, but some are displayed by multiple providers. For example, two cases were surveyed that show a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age, a low proportion of participants with a high level of education, a private legal form, few external work practice places, a long duration of programme participation as well as a year with many vacancies. Lastly, both of them also have a high integration rate.

The 39 possible combinations that did not occur in the empirical study are *logical remainders* (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 93) (see chapter 4.1). Logical minimisation is carried out on the basis of the *truth table* and as already mentioned in chapter 4.1, the conservative solution is used. The conservative solution assumes that the 39 rows of the *truth table* not occupied by cases would not belong to the set of the outcome and thus cannot be included (Mello, 2021, p. 134). The other solutions are presented in the appendix (high integration rate appendix 8.2 and low integration rate appendix 9.2).

In the following, the sufficient solution for the positive outcome (high integration rate) is presented first, followed by the sufficient solution for the negative outcome (low integration rate).

6.1 Results of the Analysis of Sufficiency for a High Integration Rate

To show the results of the analysis of sufficiency for the high integration rate, the overall solution is presented first. The overall solution is composed of six parts, the paths. These are described individually in the second chapter. Subsequently, to address the specifics of the longitudinal data, a focus on providers and years is given, followed by a focus on *directional expectations* and the levels of the impact model.

6.1.1 Solution to a High Integration Rate

Six sufficient combinations of conditions for a successful integration into the labour market are found. This overall solution explains nine cases with a high integration rate. This is 36% out of the total of 25 cases with a high integration rate in the total sample. In addition, the solution includes four cases that do not have a high integration rate. Six out of the 14 providers and eight out of the ten measurement years could be explained at least once by the overall solution.

The consistency threshold, which determines which rows of the *truth table* are included in the analysis and treated as positive instances of the outcome, was set at 0,922 (Mello, 2021, p. 134). Therefore, a total of eight *truth table rows* were included in the analysis, four rows with and four rows without *deviant cases in kind*¹⁹. If fewer rows with deviant cases had been included, very few cases would have been explained by the solution. The limit was set so that it allowed the highest number of cases with the lowest proportion of deviant cases. These deviant cases are discussed in detail in chapter 6.1.2 below. The solution consistency is 0,913, which means that 91% of the empirical evidence is in line with the relational statement of sufficiency (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 127).

When the six paths are considered together, the solution coverage of 0,569 is moderate. This indicates that the six combinations of conditions cover only a part of the high integration rate (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 133). This moderate solution coverage can also be seen in Figure 2 by the fact that there are more providers and years in the top left quadrant than in the top right quadrant.

In Table 2 below, the first row shows the six paths that are in sufficient relation to a high integration rate (HIR). The next four rows show the corresponding cases and the parameters of fit for each individual path. The last two rows describe the consistency and coverage of the overall solution (of the six paths together).

¹⁹ They provide evidence against a sufficiency claim (Oana et al., 2021, p. 101). “In an ideal setting, there should be no deviant case. Yet in empirical applications, researchers will occasionally identify deviant cases. What is important is that their number should remain small in relation to the number of typical cases” (Mello, 2021, p. 195).

Conservative solution	YOUNG* EDUC* pub* EXT* sdur	+	YOUNG* educ* PUB* SDUR* HIVA	+	YOUNG* educ* pub* ext* sdur* HIVA	+	YOUNG* educ* PUB* EXT* sdur* hiva	+	YOUNG* EDUC* PUB* ext* sdur* HIVA	→	HIR
Single case coverage	L15; I19, I20		C17, C18, C19, C20; C21		B20, B21		B14		N13		G21
Consistency	0.913		0.934		0.938		0.933		0.949		0.992
Raw coverage	0.189		0.132		0.239		0.156		0.122		0.099
Unique coverage	0.032		0.073		0.084		0.044		0.055		0.025
Solution consistency											0.913
Solution coverage											0.569

Table 2: Analysis of sufficiency for the outcome of a high integration rate (HIR)

Before going into the individual paths, the overall solution is visually represented. The xy-plot in Figure 2 illustrates the set membership of the cases in the entire solution path.

The cases in the top half have a high integration rate, but only the cases in the **top right quadrant** simultaneously display the solution formula. The cases **above the diagonal** are consistent with the sufficient conditional logic. Cases in the right quadrant above the diagonal are the **typical cases**. They are the cases that most fit the statement that this solution is in a sufficient relation to a successful integration (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 307). One such typical case for the total solution is **C18**. In 2018, provider C looked after about 900 participants, of whom about 20% were integrated into the labour market. The participant structure is characterised by many participants under 50 years of age and few participants with a high level of education. The provider has a public legal form, it offers few external work practice places and the duration of participation is rather short. The year 2018 is one with comparatively many vacancies.

The cases in the **upper left quadrant**, which also show a high integration rate, cannot be explained by the solution. These are deviant cases, but do not contradict the statement of sufficiency. They are simply not explained by the model and are as such labelled as *deviant cases coverage* (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, pp. 307–308).

The cases in the **quadrant on the bottom right** are contradictory cases because they hold membership in the solution but not in the outcome high integration rate. They are true logical contradictions, which are labelled as *deviant cases consistency* (DCC) (Mello, 2021, pp. 142, 195). In the section that follows, these four DCC will be looked at in more detail.

The cases in the **quadrant on the bottom left** are not relevant for the calculation of the positive outcome (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 307). In this analysis, a large proportion of the cases belong neither to the solution nor to the outcome high integration rate.

Figure 2: Plot of the sufficient solution for the high integration rate (HIR)

In the following, the individual paths from Table 2 will be discussed.

The **first solution path** describes cases which combine five conditions that sufficiently lead to successful integration into the labour market: The providers have a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age, and a high proportion of participants with vocational and/or academic education, they are providers with a private legal form and a high proportion of external work practice places combined with a long average duration of programme participation. The private providers covered by this part have a favourable participant structure and focus on gaining real work experience during their stay in the programme; the average duration of participation is rather long.

While it is interesting that two providers (L and I) are members in this solution path, it is important to note that L15, which is touched by the solution path, does not have a high integration rate (HIR) and is, therefore, a DCC. With an integration rate of 15,84% of participants, and thus a set membership of 0.46 to a high integration rate, the integration rate is not far from the anchor point of 16.25%. Looking at the different years, it must be said that 2015 seems to be a year in which integration was less successful for providers overall, for only one provider had a high integration rate that year. This successful provider differs from the set membership of the conditions from the above-mentioned provider L15 only in the design of the programmes it offers. It has few external work practice places but a short participation period. For L15, it is the exact opposite. Another interesting aspect concerning L15 is that this deviant case for the high integration rate solution is also captured by the low integration rate solution presented later. Comparing the two paths to which L 15 belongs, it is noticeable that the path related to the set HIR (a high integration rate) has especially **many external work practice places** (EXT). This success factor could be of particular interest because it could interact with the other constant conditions to lead to a high integration rate. So, while for 2015 there is an indication that rather fewer external work practice places, in combination with other conditions, lead to success, the comparison of the two paths to which L15 belongs, identifies that rather many external work practice places in combination with other conditions lead to a high integration rate.

The **second path** covers only provider C, from 2017 until 2021. In these five years, the provider is characterised by a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age and a low proportion of participants with vocational and/or academic education. The provider has a public legal form, and its offer is characterised by a short average duration of programme participation. In addition, these years are all characterised by many vacancies.

It is important to note that case C20 is a DCC since it has the conditions mentioned above but is not successful in the integration into the labour market. With an integration rate of 16,19% of the participants and thus a set membership of 0.49 to a high integration rate, the integration rate is very close to the anchor point of 16,25% and a membership to a high integration rate. In 2020, only one provider shows a high integration rate. This could be related to the provider which, unlike C, has a private legal form and many educated participants and offers many external work practice places. After looking at provider C, it is also worth looking at the year 2020 to understand why C20 had a low integration rate in that year, while it had a high integration rate in other years with the same five conditions. A year-specific factor that could not

be included in the analysis could be the first and second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and the first lockdown (Jäggi et al., 2022, p. V). The programmes were temporarily closed and the social services allocated significantly fewer social assistance recipients to integration programmes (Lätsch et al., 2020, p. 21). The social services also maintained a significantly limited frequency of contact to the social assistance recipients and adapted the type of contact to the circumstances (Lätsch et al., 2020, pp. 11–13). All these specificities, that changed the situation of the programmes and the participants, could not be included in the analysis but could explain why C does not have a high integration rate in 2020.

The **third solution path** describes providers that are privately owned, have a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age with a low proportion of participants with vocational and/or academic education, have in their offer a low proportion of external work practice places and a long average duration in the programme as well as a measurement year with many vacancies.

This path is especially puzzling at the output level because it had been assumed that many external work practice places and a short participation period are related to a high integration rate. In this path, both output conditions now occur in their absence, which was not expected. Provider B is explained by this path in both 2020 and 2021, but of these, B20 is a DCC. It shows the conditions, but no successful integration into the labour market. With an integration rate of 15,9% of the participants and thus a set membership of 0.47 to a high integration rate, the integration rate is not far from the anchor point of 16,25%. 2020, as mentioned in path one, is a year in which integration was less successful for all the sampled providers and for which the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic could be an unincluded factor that changes the outcome. Interestingly, provider B in the following year 2021, which is also covered by this solution path, is also affected by the second Covid-19 wave and subsequently the second lockdown (Jäggi et al., 2022, p. V). In this year, however, five of the eight active providers show a high integration rate. So, the situation does not seem to be the same as in 2020.

Case B14 occupies the **fourth path** alone. Its characteristics are most similar to those of the third path, which includes the same provider B from other measurement years. Path four, however, differs from path three in two aspects: First, the duration of participation is low. Secondly, the number of vacancies in the survey year is low, which depends on the year and

not the provider. This result at the context level is astonishing compared to the directional *expectations*. It had been expected that many vacancies, and not a few, would be related to a high integration rate.

The **fifth solution path** to the positive outcome only covers a single provider, namely N in the year 2013. N13 is characterised by a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age, a low proportion of participants with vocational and/or academic education, a public legal form, a high proportion of external work practice places, a long average duration of programme participation and a measurement year with not many vacancies.

This path hence shows the condition at the level of the context in the other direction than expected.

But while this configuration is deemed sufficient for a successful integration into the labour market, the case N13 (the only empirical evidence present) belongs to the configuration but not the outcome and is, therefore, a DCC. Since its consistency value is above the threshold, it was included in the solution. With an integration rate of 15.43% of the participants and therefore a set membership of 0.43 to a high integration rate, the integration rate is further away from the anchor point 16,25% than the other DCCs mentioned (see also Figure 2). In 2013, only one provider has a high integration rate, which differs from N13 in that it has a private legal form and few external work practice places.

At this point it must be mentioned, that the case N13 which occupies this path alone and does not have a high integration rate, is also covered by the third solution path for the low integration rate. The paths differ in that the path for the high integration rate also has a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age (YOUNG) and few participants with a high level of education (educ). However, since the path has only one deviant case as its empirical basis, this is not further pursued.

The **sixth and last path** is a provider which has a public legal form, with a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age and of participants with vocational and/or academic education, which has, in the measurement year, a low proportion of external work practice places and a long average duration of programme participation while it is a year with many vacancies. This design of the offer (output level) seems puzzling considering the *directional expectations*. It had been assumed that an offer with many external work practice places and a short duration of participation would be related to a high integration rate.

Case G21 is the only one that empirically belongs to this path in the analysis. However, looking at the other five paths, it has the highest membership in path two. What distinguishes G21 from path two though is the higher proportion of participants with vocational and/or academic education plus a longer average duration of programme participation.

6.1.3 Findings on Providers and Years

To take the longitudinal data into account, Table 3 below shows which regions (columns) and years (rows) have the high integration rate and/or the solution. The providers are represented by the letters. Cases with a high integration rate are coloured dark and cases explained by the solution are outlined. For certain regions, multiple providers were responsible for the same region in a couple of years, which is why some rows are split. Some providers changed, so the letters in a row may change (see chapter 3). Cases written in bold are DCC. Cases that belong to the solution for a high and a low integration rate are underlined (namely N2013 and L2015). Both of these two cases were discussed in more detail in the previous chapter 6.1.3.

In the following, typical explained and non-explained regions resp. providers and years will be further elaborated for better understanding.

Provider C has been a provider in all ten years and a member of the set HIR (high integration rate) in four out of five years between 2017 and 2021. Of these four years with high integration rates, all can be explained by the solution. It is a **typical explained provider**. Even in the year 2020 in which it had a low integration rate it is a member of the solution (namely as a DCC). The provider C has the following conditions throughout the years 2017 to 2021: It is always a provider with a public legal form, with many participants under 50 years of age and with little education. Its offer consistently has a short participation period and every year except 2021 it has few external work practice places. Throughout the measurement years 2017 to 2021, there were many vacancies.

A **typical explained year** is not so easy to find, as all years have either unexplained cases with a high integration rate or DCCs (see the columns). In **2019**, three cases have a high integration rate, two of which are explained. All cases this year have the same manifestation in the set HIVA: a high rate of vacancies. All three of those with a high integration rate have a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age, but they differ in the other five conditions.

Provider B belongs to the set high integration rate in seven of the nine measurement years in which it occurred, three of which are explained by the solution. A very typical case of a successful provider whose success **cannot be explained by the included conditions**. Provider B has a private legal form (association), in all measurement years in which it reported a high integration rate it also reported many participants under 50 years of age and few external work practice places. The other three conditions change over the seven years.

Focusing on the years, i.e. the columns, it is noticeable that **2012** is a **typical non-explained year**. Three of the ten providers in this year have a high integration rate, but none of them are covered by the solution. The three successful providers have in common, besides the year-specific low index of vacancies, that they all have a public legal form and that participants stay long in the offer. One possibility why the year 2012 is never touched by the solution could be that the providers recorded the data slightly differently in this measurement year, perhaps because it was the first year of documentation and there were still more uncertainties.

Table 3: Overview of membership in the high integration rate (grey if HIR) and the solution per year and provider (box frame) - This table has been removed from this public version to preserve anonymity.

6.1.4 Findings on Directional Expectations and Impact Model

So, what enables the impact of work integration programmes for social assistance recipients in the canton of Bern? When looking at Figure 3, which assigns the conditions (the success factors) of the paths to the levels, it becomes clear that the calculated paths always require the interaction of several factors and several levels of the impact model to be sufficient for a high integration rate. The grey columns indicate the different levels of the impact model. The rows are the paths of the solution, and the number on the left is the number of the path in chapter 6.1.2. Factors corresponding to *directional expectations*²⁰ are written in bold.

Looking at Figure 3 it becomes obvious that only the set **YOUNG** (a high share of participants under the age of 50 years), a factor on the income level, plays a role in all the paths in the expected specification. It is important to emphasise that it is not sufficient on its own, but only achieves the sufficient relationship to the high integration rate in interaction with other factors. But when focusing on age, it is always a high proportion of participants under 50

²⁰ YOUNG + EDUC + EXT + SDUR + HIVA → HIR

years of age, in interaction with other factors, that is in a sufficient relationship to a high integration rate. A low proportion of participants under the age of 50 years never appears in the paths leading to a high integration rate. It can therefore be recommended that a high share of participants under the age of 50 years continues to be included in investigations of the causes of successful integration and that its interaction with other factors is further investigated.

All factors except for YOUNG appear in a path both in their presence (upper case letters) and in their absence (lower case letters) and are therefore in interaction with others in a sufficient relationship to the high integration rate (HIR) in both their presence and absence. For the education level, for example, this means that in one path a high proportion of educated participants (EDUC) is sufficiently related to a high integration rate, and in another a low proportion of educated participants (educ). For all factors except the proportion of participants under 50 years of age (YOUNG), the *directional expectation* could therefore not be strengthened. On the contrary, it must be assumed that the factors do not have such a direct relationship to the integration rate, but rather develop this in interaction with others in various forms.

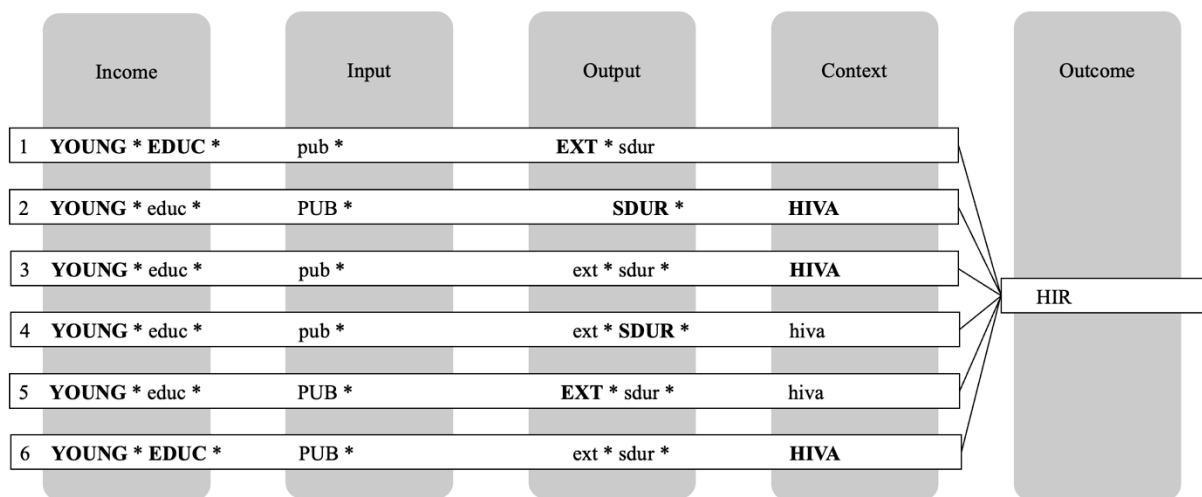


Figure 3: Illustration of the paths that are sufficient for a high integration rate

After introducing what is in sufficient relationship with a high integration rate, the following sections will look at the low integration rate.

6.2 Results of the Analysis of Sufficiency for a Low Integration Rate

As with the high integration rate, it is first shown which overall solution is in a sufficient relationship with a low integration rate. The subsequent section looks at the individual paths, followed by a focus on the possible findings thanks to the longitudinal data and the conclusions drawn regarding the impact model.

6.2.1 Solution to a Low Integration Rate

The sufficiency analysis of the negative outcome - a low integration rate (hir) - also reveals six solution paths that cannot be present without the outcome (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 333). For the negative outcome too, primarily the conservative solution is discussed, which assumes that the 39 rows of the *truth table* not occupied by cases would not belong to the set hir (low integration rate) and thus cannot be included (Mello, 2021, p. 134).

Table 4 shows the sufficient condition combinations for a low integration rate (hir). They cover 51 cases, which is 76% of the total of 67 cases with a low integration rate in the total sample. 12 of the 14 providers are explained at least once.

The consistency threshold was set at 0,898, resulting in the inclusion of nine rows without and two rows with *deviant cases in kind* in the analysis. Therefore the solution covers two cases that show a high integration rate, and thus provide evidence against the sufficiency claim (Oana et al., 2021, p. 101). These will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.2.2. The solution consistency of 0,886 is lower than for the high integration rate, which means that less of the empirical evidence is in line with the relational statement of sufficiency (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 127). If the total solution is considered, the solution coverage of 0,775 is better than for the high integration rate. The calculated QCA can therefore explain more of the low integration rate than the high integration rate.

Conservative solution	young* EDUC* ext* sdur	+ young* PUB* EXT* sdur	+ PUB* EXT* sdur* hiva	+ young* pub* ext* sdur* hiva	+ YOUNG* EDUC* pub* sdur* hiva	+ YOUNG* educ* PUB* ext* SDUR* hiva	->	hir
Single case coverage	M12, J13, J14, J15, J16; J17, J18, J19, J20, J21, H17; G14, G15, G16; G17, G18, G19, G20	D12, D15, D16; D17, D19, D21; K13, K14, K15, D13, D14; D18, D20	D12, D15, D16; K13, K14, K15, D13, D14; N13; N12, N16, K12, K16	H16; M12, J13, J14, J15, J16	L16, H12, H13, H14, H15, F13, F14, F15, A12; L15	E12, C12, C13, C14, C15, C16		
Consistency	0.947	0.877	0.855	0.952	0.933	0.899		
Raw coverage	0.521	0.263	0.207	0.228	0.201	0.111		
Unique coverage	0.145	0.043	0.023	0.010	0.051	0.064		
Solution consistency								0.886
Solution coverage								0.775

Table 4: Analysis of sufficiency for the outcome of a low integration rate (hir)

The fact that there are still some unexplained cases can be seen in Figure 4 in the **upper left quadrant**. These are *deviant cases coverage* (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, pp. 307–308), which have a low integration rate but are not covered by the solution.

The explained cases in the **upper right quadrant**, which belong to the set of the low integration rate as well as to the solution, are in the majority. Yet as seen in Figure 4, there are cases that are below as well as above the diagonal. So, while many cases belong to the set of the solution and to the low integration rate, conspicuously many cases below the diagonal no more belong to the low integration rate than to the solution and are therefore inconsistent with the

sufficient conditional logic. The typical cases are above the main diagonal and are in line with the statement of sufficiency (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 307). A **typical case** explained by the solution that has a low integration rate is **D21**. It is characterised by few participants under 50 years of age and with a high level of education. It has a public legal form, an offer that is characterised by many external work practice places and a long participation period. In 2021, the index of vacancies was comparatively very high. Visually, it is also noticeable that provider D often has a high membership in the solution, with changing membership in the outcome (provider D can be found in the top right quadrant on the right-hand side of Figure 4 for multiple years).

A specific focus in the following chapter 6.2.2 will be on cases N12 and D12, as they are in the **lower right quadrant** and are therefore true logical contradictions (namely DCCs) (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 307).

The cases in the **lower left quadrant** are not directly relevant to the claim of sufficiency (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 307).

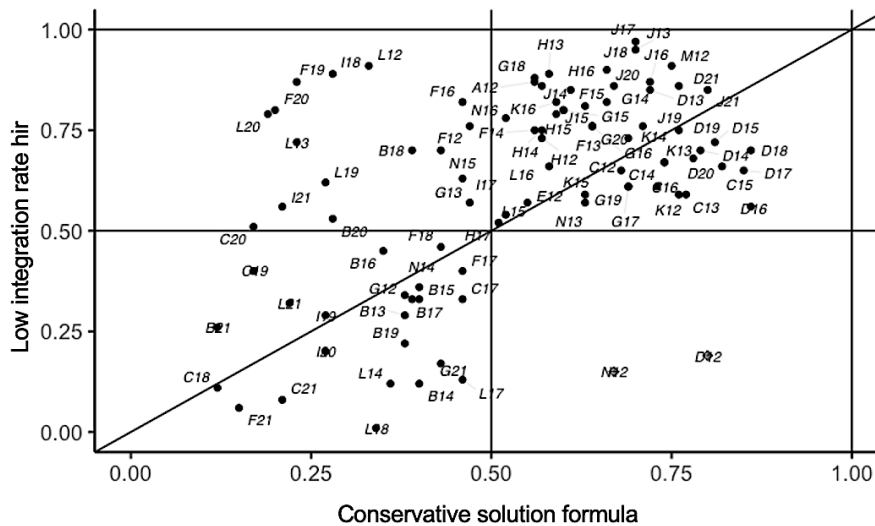


Figure 4: Plot of the sufficient solution for a low integration rate (hir)

6.2.2 Paths

The different paths will be discussed in the following.

The parts overlap in part, which is reflected in the fact that the unique coverage is smaller than the raw coverage for all paths (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 134). For example, the first and fourth paths together explain one row of the *truth table* (M12, J13, J14, J15, J16). However, each path has cases that only it can explain. In the case of the fourth path however this is only H16, which is why the unique coverage of 0.01 is very low. The rather low values of the unique coverage of the different paths indicate, that they can only explain little of the

set membership in the outcome (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 138). The consistency values of the paths are each well above 0,75 and are thus acceptable (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 129).

The **first path** exhibits the conjunction of four elements that are expected to be a hindrance to successful integration into the labour market. The providers have a low proportion of participants under 50 years of age and a high proportion of participants with vocational and/or academic education. Furthermore, their offer has a low proportion of external work practice places and a long average duration of programme participation. If well-educated and older participants are in a programme that has only a few external work practice places and in which they stay for a rather long time, this is related to a comparatively low integration rate. Four different providers and all ten survey years are represented in this path. Providers J and G can be assigned to this path in many survey years.

The **second solution path** for a low integration rate is composed of a participant structure with a low proportion of participants under 50 years of age, a provider with a public legal form and a high proportion of external work practice places whilst having participants with a long average duration of programme participation. Two providers, D and K, belong to this path. Interestingly, provider D belongs to this path in all surveyed years, but in the first measurement year 2012 it only has the conditions (the participant structure, legal form, and the design of the offer), but not the absence of the outcome but the presence (and therefore it is a DCC). With the same conditions, provider D has a good integration rate in 2012, unlike in all other measurement years. Why D12 could be a DCC is explained in more detail in the following paragraph.

The **third path** to the negative outcome is the following: the provider has a public legal form, a high proportion of external work practice places and a long average duration of programme participation in a measurement year with few vacancies. From the 13 cases that belong to this solution path, some also belong to the second path.

Several cases of the providers D, K and N in the years between 2012 and 2016 can be captured by this solution path. However, after 2016 no more cases are captured by this solution, nor to path four, five or six.

In addition to the DCC D12 already mentioned in path two, N12 is also a DCC in this path. The two, therefore, have a combination of conditions that are sufficiently related to a low integration rate, even though having a high integration rate. Interestingly, only three providers

show a high integration rate in 2012. None of these three cases with a high integration rate (HIR) belong to the presented solution for a high integration rate²¹ (see chapter 6.1) but two belong to the solution for the low integration rate. It is thus striking that in 2012 two of the three cases with a high integration rate had a combination of conditions that had a sufficient relationship to a low integration rate. One reason for this could be that the providers were more successful in integrating participants into the labour market in this year than in the following years for reasons not recorded (e.g. due to regional peculiarities this year, see chapter 7.2), while the conditions remained the same. Another possibility would be that the providers recorded the data slightly differently in this first year of measurement²².

The case N13, which occupies this path and has a low integration rate, is also captured by the fifth solution path for the high integration rate (as a DCC). For more details, see chapter 6.1.2.

The **fourth solution path**, which is in a sufficient relationship to a low integration rate, is defined by a structure with a low proportion of participants under 50 years of age in combination with a private legal form, and an offer that is characterised by a low proportion of external work practice places, a long average duration of programme participation in years with few vacancies. This path is astonishing on the level input (pub), as it contradicts the *directional expectation*, that a public legal form is related to a low integration rate.

Five different partners in five out of ten survey years (2012-2016) belong to this path. As with path three, not a single case belongs to this path after 2016.

The **fifth path** that is related to a low integration rate is one with a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age as well as with vocational and/or academic education, which comes together with a provider which has a private legal form and a high duration of programme participation in a measurement year with few vacancies. The fifth path is puzzling at the income and input levels. For the Income level, only one directional expectation was set for age (young), but the overall favourable participant structure with many participants under the age of 50 years (YOUNG) and a good level of education (EDUC) is a surprising component of this path. For the input level, the public legal form (PUB) was expected, but here, in combination with other conditions, the private legal form (pub) emerges.

Four providers (L, H, F and A) are explained by this solution in the years between 2012 and 2016. Like in paths three and four, not a single case belongs to this path after 2016.

²¹ They were not included because their consistency value was below the threshold.

²² This assumption was also discussed in chapter 6.1.3.

Here, moreover, the reference from the first path for the high integration rate must be taken up (see chapter 6.1.2). The case L15 is captured by the first path for a high integration rate as well as by this fifth path discussed for the low integration rate. Comparing the two paths it is noticeable that the path related to the low integration rate specifically has a **low index of vacancies** (hiva). The factor of few vacancies could thus, in combination with other conditions remaining the same, lead to a low integration rate. Thus, it could be of particular interest in studies of the low integration rate.

Lastly, the configuration of a high proportion of participants under 50 years of age, a low proportion of participants with vocational and/or academic education, a provider which has a public legal form, a low proportion of external work practice places, a short average duration of programme participation and a measurement year with few vacancies is a sufficient condition for a low integration rate. Provider E belongs to the set of this path in the year 2012, and provider C in the years 2012 to 2016. As with paths three, four and five, not a single case belongs to this path after 2016.

6.2.3 Findings on Providers and Years

Table 5 corresponds to Table 3, except that in this instance the cases with a low integration rate are coloured dark and the cases belonging to the solution for a low integration rate are outlined. In the following, typical (un-)explained regions resp. providers and years will be described to benefit appropriately from the longitudinal data.

Providers A and M were only active in 2012 and had a low integration rate. In the following years 2013-2021, the region was covered by Provider J. This provider also had a low integration rate in all of the following nine measurement years. All measurement years of **A, M and J** are covered by the solution. The entire region of these three providers is therefore a **typical explained region** with a low integration rate. All cases in this region have a low proportion of participants under 50 years of age and a high proportion of participants with a high level of education. They all have a private legal form, and their offer is consistently characterised by few external work practice places and a long duration of participation. The index of vacancies varies in the years of measurement. Apart from the context-level, these three providers always have the same conditions and always show the same outcome.

The **typical unexplained provider** for the solution for a low integration rate is the **provider I**. However, it is worth looking at the whole region. N and K are responsible for this region

from 2012 to 2016, which the provider I took care of in 2017-2021. Provider K shows a low integration rate in all its measurement years (2012-2016), which can all be explained by the solution. Provider N has a low integration rate in 2013, 2015 and 2016 and is covered by the solution in two of these three years and also in one year in which it has a high integration rate. It is interesting to note that provider I, which has a low integration rate in three years (2017, 2018 and 2021), is never captured by the solution. Can a difference between provider K, which is well explained and provider I, which is badly explained, be identified that could clarify why they can be interpreted so differently? The two providers have in common that they always have many educated participants and a long participation duration. Either one of the four other conditions in which they differ, or an unrecorded characteristic must be responsible for the difference in explainability.

The solution **explains well** the providers with a low integration rate in **2014**. All seven cases with a low integration rate were captured by the overall solution. Interestingly, apart from the low proportion of vacancies given by the year, nothing unites them. Indications could be that all but one provider have many participants with a high level of education and a long duration of participation.

In 2020, seven providers show a low integration rate, but four of them are not covered by the solution. And therefore, **2020 is not well explained** by the solution. The seven providers have nothing in common besides the year-specific high share of vacancies. The three providers explained are united by a low proportion of participants under 50 years of age, a high proportion of educated participants and a long duration of participation. To explain why the low integration rate of four providers in 2020 could not be explained, reference can be made to an aspect that was taken up in chapter 6.1.2: the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and the following effects caused by it.

Table 5: Overview of membership in the low integration rate (grey if hir) and the solution per year and provider (box frame) - This table has been removed from this public version to preserve anonymity.

6.2.4 Findings on Directional Expectations and Impact Model

So, what hinders the impact of work integration programmes for social assistance recipients in the canton of Bern? Looking at Figure 5, it also becomes clear for the low integration rate that the calculated paths always require the interaction of several factors and several levels of the impact model to be sufficient for the outcome (hir). The six paths that are sufficient for a

low integration rate (hir) are shown in the rows, while the number on the left refers to the path number in chapter 6.2.2. The grey columns refer to the levels of the impact model and factors that correspond to the *directional expectations* are written in bold.

When the calculated paths, which are in a sufficient relationship to a low integration rate, are compared with the *directional expectations*²³, it becomes clear that all three factors for which a *directional expectation* was established, occur in the paths both in their presence (upper case letters) and in their absence (lower case letters). They are therefore in a sufficient relationship to a low integration rate in the interaction with others, both in their presence and in their absence.

Of the factors for which no *directional expectation* was established, the set **low index of vacancies** (hiva) stands out. The set of years with a low index of vacancies in interaction with other factors is always in a sufficient relationship to a low integration rate. There are paths that have a sufficient relationship to a low integration rate, in which the low index of job vacancies does not occur at all, yet high index of vacancies does not occur in any path that is found. Therefore, it can be recommended that when research focuses on problems in the integration of social assistance recipients, the demand for personnel should be considered and its interaction with other factors should be further investigated. In general, when the integration rate is low, it might be interesting to look at the context in conjunction with other factors.

As for the high integration rate, the *directional expectations* were not strengthened for the low integration rate. On the contrary, it must be assumed that the factors do not have such a direct relationship to the integration rate in general, but rather develop it in interaction with others in various forms.

²³ Young + PUB + sdur → hir

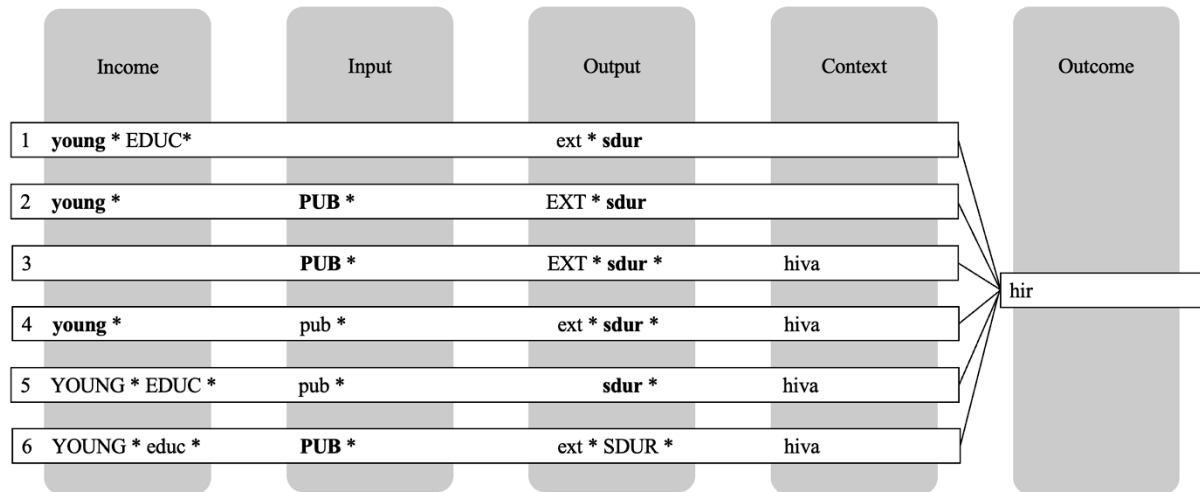


Figure 5: Illustration of the paths that are sufficient for a low integration rate

Overall, it can be said that the analysis has shown that the interaction of factors at the different levels (income, input, output, and context) are related to the success or failure in integrating social assistance recipients into the labour market. The results presented will be discussed further in the following.

7 Discussion

This master thesis looked at the factors that enable an impact of work integration programmes for recipients of social assistance. For this purpose, objective data from the canton of Bern was analysed at ten measurement points along the levels of the impact model of Neuenchwander et al. (2015). Emphasis was placed on how different impact factors interact with each other. Using the QCA method, it was possible to show which conditions are related to the integration rate of which provider in which year.

In the following, the afore-presented results for the high and low integration rate are discussed and embedded into previous research. Further, this master thesis addresses whether successful and unsuccessful integration into the labour market should be considered separately. In addition, it also discusses whether the application of the impact model has proved useful, to what extent the measurement of the different levels has been successful and how it could be improved. Finally, a general outlook on future research concludes the discussion.

7.1 Reasons for High or Low Integration Rates

The present study was able to show that there is no single recipe for success in integrating social assistance recipients into the labour market, but that several interactions of conditions are related to the integration rate. This is called the concept of equifinality, which means that a phenomenon can have several non-exclusive explanations (Oana et al., 2021, p. 8).

All included success factors played a role in at least one combination of conditions and were, therefore, relevant for the positive and negative outcome. Considering that 64 combinations of conditions would have been possible for each of the positive and negative outcome, it is interesting that only six could be associated with the positive outcome and six with the negative outcome. This has already achieved a significant reduction in the number of different combinations. Through further research with a set-theoretic approach, typologies of situations of programme offers in the field of work integration can be formed based on this (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 8).

In the following, as far as the method allows, statements will be made on how the individual factors - age, level of education, legal form, external work practice places, duration of participation and vacancies in the year - are related to the high and, subsequently, the low integration rate. It is important to note that the analysis only identified paths, combinations of conditions, as results and no results are available for the relationship between individual success factors and the integration rate. However, given this limitation, the observations described below help to relate these results to the research presented and to answer the research question.

Age has always shown the expected relationship to a **high integration rate** in combination with other conditions (YOUNG→HIR). This is in line with the state of the research (Bergmark et al., 2017; Martin & Grubb, 2001). Thus, this master thesis could provide further evidence that being young facilitates the path of integration into the labour market.

The state of research also suggested that **higher levels of education** pose an advantage for individuals' integration into the labour market (Aeppli et al., 2003; Kita et al., 2022; Oesch & Neuenschwander, 2017; Riba et al., 2011; Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009). These findings could not be confirmed by the present analysis. Both programmes with many and few participants with educational advantages, in combination with other factors, were seen to have a high integration rate. A reason for this difference between the state of research and the present analysis could be that in some regions and years a positive preselection of participants with

high chances of success was conducted by the social assistance services. This phenomenon is called creaming. In this phenomenon, social assistance recipients with good prospects are sent into the programmes in a prioritised manner (Lorentzen & Dahl, 2005, p. 31). This positive selection could be overriding the results regarding the participants' educational background. Comparing the assigned participants with the total number of social assistance recipients in the region or *propensity score matching*²⁴ could be used to reveal this selection in future research (Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009, p. 75).

According to the present analysis, a high integration rate is possible for both a public and a private **legal form** of the provider in combination with conditions from other levels. This master thesis can therefore not contribute any directional information. Neither is there any such evidence in previous research on the relationship of the legal form and a high integration rate.

Both many and few **external work practice places** are sufficiently related to the high integration rate. However, indications could be identified that many external work practice places in combination with other conditions can be particularly relevant for a high integration rate (see chapter 6.1.2). This is in line with the state of research (Neuenschwander et al., 2022; Riba et al., 2011). However, this could only be shown by looking more closely at a case that belongs to the solution for both the high and low integration rates and comparing those two paths. The reasons why this result did not also manifest itself in the solution paths for the high integration rate could not be determined.

Contrary to the state of research (Riba et al., 2011), the short and long **duration of programme participation** are present in the paths related to a high integration rate. The directional expectation suggested a relationship between the short duration of participation and the high rate of integration. One reason for this could be that the real length of stay in the programme only considers the time of exit and not the type of exit. The type of exit can be, among other things, a dropout without a follow-up solution or integration into the labour market. For the success factor of duration of programme participation, an early programme exit and an early integration into the labour market are the same, as it only measures the time com-

²⁴ A method to minimise systematic selection bias (Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009, p. 65)

ponent. This could be the reason why the success factor has an unclear relationship to the integration rate. Instead of the real participation period, the conceptually intended participation period would be more appropriate for future research.

Both a high and a low **index of vacancies**, in combination with other conditions, occurs in the paths that have a sufficient relationship with a high integration rate. This is not in line with the state of research, which assumed that a high index will facilitate the integration of unemployed persons into the labour market (Adam et al., 2016; Neuenschwander & Winkelmann, 2011; Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009). It might have been more meaningful to consider the change in the index instead of the absolute index. An unchanged high index of vacancies in comparison to the previous year might not increase their opportunities for employment as many social assistance recipients have been looking for employment for a longer period of time than one year (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2018, p. 3; Kessler et al., 2021, p. 9). It would therefore be interesting for future research to include the aspect of the change in the index of vacancies.

This master thesis was able to provide indications that for social inclusion, in the sense of successful integration into the labour market, the factors age on the income level and external work practice places on the output level are particularly interesting in combination with other factors (cf. chapters 6.1.4 and 6.1.2). However, it should be noted that only 36% out of the total of 25 cases with a high integration rate in the total sample were covered by the solution for the high integration rate. Future research must therefore clarify how the results change with additional empirical evidence.

Having looked at the individual factors for a high integration rate, the below section will focus on the analysis of factors leading to a **low integration rate**.

The state of research assumes that a high proportion of **older participants** is related to a low integration rate (Aeppli et al., 2003; Neuenschwander et al., 2022; Riba et al., 2011). Contrary to this state of research, both programmes with higher as well as lower proportions of older participants, in combination with other conditions, were found to have a sufficient relationship with a low integration rate. The second factor at the income level, **level of education**, also showed up in the high and low versions in paths related to a low integration rate. These mixed results in terms of participant characteristics of age and education related to a low integration rate could be due to a negative selection of participants. Negative selection occurs when from all suitable social assistance recipients especially poorly motivated individuals are

included in programmes to test their willingness to join the labour market (Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009, p. 64). Such a negative preselection of participants would probably lead to fewer placements in the labour market but could not be identified in this master thesis. As mentioned above for positive selection, suspected to interfere in the relationship between the education level and the high integration rate, a comparison of the assigned participants with the total number of social assistance recipients in the region or *propensity score matching* would be appropriate measures to be able to take preselection into account in the analysis in future studies (Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009, p. 75).

Based on the research (Riba et al., 2011, p. 54), it would have been expected that the public **legal form** would be related to the low integration rate. However, this study has found that both the public and the private legal forms can be found in the paths sufficiently relating to a low integration rate. This could have to do with the fact that this condition does not sufficiently cover the level of resources on the part of the providers (input) and thus the relationship of the legal form to the integration rate is influenced by other factors on the input level. It would be advisable to include other factors at this level in addition to legal form in future research. Possible such factors are discussed in chapter 7.4.

As for the proportion of **external work practice places**, previous research did not present a connection between the proportion of external work practice places and a lower integration rate. Also, both expression of the variable can be found in paths sufficiently relating to a low integration rate. This master thesis cannot provide any new indications in this regard.

In relation to the **duration of participation**, it was assumed that if participants stay on the programme for a long time, there are indications that the integration rate of the programme will be lower (Riba et al., 2011). In five of the six paths, the analysis of the duration of programme participation, in combination with other conditions, yielded the same result. In one path, however, the short duration of participation in combination with other conditions was sufficiently related to the low integration rate. This could be because the reasons for early dropout were not included in the analysis, as already mentioned in the discussion of the high integration rate. A dropout without a follow-up solution means a short participation period but is obviously related to a low integration rate. This could lead to the factor appearing in a solution path for the low integration rate in this direction and not in the expected one. As already mentioned, it would be advisable in future research to (also) consider the conceptually intended participation duration.

For the low integration rate, the context of **vacancies in the year** in combination with the other conditions always displays the same relationship (hiva→hir). This could not be explicitly expected so far due to the state of research, but it could be an indication that the context, in interaction with conditions on other levels of the impact model, could play a significant role in the less successful integration into the labour market. It would be interesting to see if, when considering the change in the index instead of the absolute value, as recommended for the high integration rate, equally consistent results appear for the low integration rate as those just described.

When the results for the low integration rate are considered as a whole and linked to the theory of social exclusion, this master thesis was able to provide indications that a non-advantageous contextual situation, in this case few vacancies, could in interaction with other factors be specifically relevant for social exclusion (cf. chapters 6.2.2 and 6.2.4).

The results for the high and low integration rates have just been discussed separately; the following paragraphs will take a closer look at whether this approach is useful.

If the paths that are in a sufficient relationship to the high or low integration rate are considered, it is noticeable that none of the combinations of conditions leading to the positive outcome led to the negative outcome in its entirety and vice versa. Thus, there is **asymmetric causation**, the occurrence of the outcome has different explanations than its non-occurrence (Oana et al., 2021, p. 8). So, the negation of the combinations of conditions that explain a high integration rate does not (fully) explain a low integration rate according to the present analysis. This suggests that the high and low integration rates are separate phenomena that should be studied individually.

For the underlying theory of social exclusion and social inclusion, this means that the situations that enable inclusion and the situations in which exclusion is maintained are not direct opposites but separate phenomena. This is in line with Silver's assessment, that social exclusion and social inclusion are not opposites, even though the expressions are commonly used as such (Silver, 2015, p. 3). The two phenomena should in future research be studied separately and, as knowledge of the differences increases, they should be related to each other.

7.2 Using Impact Models in QCA

Using the configurational approach of QCA, this master thesis has shown that the combination of different factors is related to a high or low integration rate. The inclusion of the impact model has made it possible to organise these factors so that this study can now show that a combination of factors from the levels of income, input, output, and context can contribute to the explanation of the integration rate of providers. In nine of the 12 combinations of conditions that are sufficiently related to the integration rate, factors from all levels of the impact model are included. Therefore, it can be recommended to use impact models to organise the results of QCA in future research and to ensure the inclusion of factors from all levels in research on the integration rate.

But what does this mean for the underlying theory of social exclusion and social inclusion? This master thesis shows that the inclusion of people who were previously excluded from the labour market can either succeed or be made more difficult through the different interactions of factors of all levels of the impact model. Based on future further results, indications of the importance of the different levels of the impact model and their interaction could be included in the theory on social exclusion and inclusion.

Having outlined the benefits of the impact model, the following paragraphs discuss whether the different levels of the impact model were well covered by the selected factors and which other factors could be considered in future research.

On the **income level**, the age and level of education of the participants were included in this research. All six paths that are related to a high integration rate include both selected conditions of the income level. With a low integration rate, there is also a sufficient relationship between paths in which the two income conditions do not (both) occur.

Based on Hutmacher-Perret (2017, p. 14), who states that older age and lack of education are two major obstacles to professional integration, the choice of these two factors can be considered a valid choice for the income level. Interestingly, she also assumes that they often occur cumulatively. It would be interesting to investigate further how these two factors are connected as well as including more factors on the composition of the participants. Possible factors include gender, with some studies showing that the female gender can be a hindrance to entering the labour market (Hangartner et al., 2021; Riba et al., 2011). Regarding the family situation, Rønsen and Skarðhamar showed that having young children can delay the process

of employment entry even among men (2009). The state of health could also be a significant factor, as being in good health is crucial for successful participation in the workforce (Løyland et al., 2021; Riba et al., 2011; Shahidi et al., 2019). Another additional or alternative factor on the income-level could be the nationality of the participants. There is already some research that produces very diverse results (Hangartner et al., 2021; Morlok et al., 2014; Riba et al., 2011).

The **input level** condition (legal form) occurs in all paths related to the high integration rate and in five out of the six paths related to the low integration rate. This level of Neuenschwander et al.'s impact model (2015) covers the resources of the providers of work integration services. Measuring this level by legal form was suitable but certainly did not cover the breadth of this level. Further interesting factors to include could be the qualification of the work integration providers' employees as well as their caseloads (number of cases per employee) (Riba et al., 2011; Sundermann et al., 2022). On a financial side the financing model, credit available and price paid per service would be interesting factors to include at the input level.

In each of the paths related to the high or low integration rate, there is always at least one of the two included conditions of the **output level**. The measurement of output by means of participation duration and external work practice places was interesting. However, the two factors included do not address the support of the participants at the output level, which could be examined in future research. To include this, the quantity, quality and speed of the appraisal of employability, the appropriate type of offer etc. (Morlok et al., 2014; Neuenschwander & Winkelmann, 2011; Sundermann et al., 2022) or the individuality, quantity and quality of counselling (Domeniconi et al., 2013; Neuenschwander et al., 2022; Neukomm & Bock, 2017) could be analysed.

The **level of context** was not represented in all paths, neither leading to a high nor a low integration rate. However, including the index of job vacancies could provide a very direct way for future research to measure the part of the economic situation that is relevant for integration into the labour market. Other success factors that could be examined by future research include gross domestic product growth (GDP) or unemployment rates (Grogger, 2004; Sundermann et al., 2022). As recommended for the index of vacancies in the previous chapter 7.1, the change could be more meaningful than the absolute value for these two variables. As already discussed in chapters 6.1.2 and 6.2.3, the inclusion of the Covid-19 pandemic as a year-

specific factor would certainly be important. Regional factors such as urban versus rural environments could also be relevant. According to Neuenschwander et al. (2015) it would also be interesting on the level of context to analyse the biographical events of the participants during the programme participation (e.g. birth of a child, marriage).

How the **success of the programme** is measured as an **outcome** should also briefly be discussed. It would be interesting to look at the integration rate not in isolation as a success, but in relation to the duration of social assistance receipt or programme participation. In addition, it would be interesting to include how lasting these placements in the labour market were to measure the impact of the programmes. This is because adding the continuance of inclusion to the analysis could strongly influence the results, as certain target groups may be able to remain in the labour market longer or certain offers may be more conducive to longer-term integration (Aeppli et al., 2003, p. 23; Rønsen & Skarðhamar, 2009, p. 76).

Neuenschwander and Winkelmann (2011, p. 10) rightfully question whether it is legitimate to interpret integration as the effect of integration programmes. According to them, it is hardly possible to objectively prove the impact of programmes of work and social integration for methodological reasons. This is because factors that influence social or work integration (especially biographical factors, but also those of the current state of the apprenticeship or labour market) and their interactions are extremely complex and can therefore often not be linked to the integration programmes. However, it does not seem to be a sensible way to abandon research that examines the impact of work integration programmes. Instead, great care should be taken to ensure that different levels of influence and factors are considered. As mentioned several times, an impact model is a very good way to ensure that this is the case. Future research should, as discussed above, include more and different variables and relate them to the integration rate. In this way, it can be shown which additional factors have an influence.

7.3 Outlook on Future Research

After the general results and their significance and limitation have been discussed, the outlook for future research will be provided in this subsequent section.

Future research could extend the same success factors to other providers or years. For example, the same research could be conducted with providers in another canton. However, it could be a problem that the definitions of the programmes can differ greatly, especially across cantonal or national borders. Nevertheless, it would be very interesting to investigate whether the

results can be reproduced in other cantons. At best, the configurations empirically missing in the present analysis (namely the *logical remainders*) could be observed and incorporated into the analysis. It would be very interesting to see to what extent the results could also be refined by this.

Furthermore, future research should take up the aforementioned additional conditions on the different levels of the impact model and further investigate how they interact. Methodologically, there should be no obstacles to applying the approach of including success factors at different levels (income, input, output, context) in a QCA to other regions, years, target groups or work integration services.

An important theoretical interest would be to further explore the difference between situations where social exclusion remains prevalent and those where greater social inclusion succeeds. Answering this question requires much more profound case studies on the level of the providers and the participants.

8 Conclusion

This master thesis has looked at some of the different factors that enable an impact of work integration programmes.

The levels of the impact model by Neuenschwander et al. 2015 were included to organise the state of the research. To close the existing research gap, a QCA was calculated using objective longitudinal data from programmes for social assistance recipients in the Canton of Bern. The question was investigated as to what explains the (un-)successful integration of social assistance recipients into the labour market by providers of work integration programmes for social assistance recipients in the canton of Bern.

The QCA has shown that various factors work together and are in combination sufficiently related to a high or a low integration rate. For the high integration rate, it was shown that a high proportion of participants under the age of 50 years and a high share of external work practice places can be specifically relevant in combination with other factors. For the low integration rate, a low index of vacancies in the solution path in combination with other factors is consistent in its direction. However, different combinations of factors are related to low or high integration rates. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that changing one factor at one level of the impact model can change the interaction of all factors and thus the outcome. The

calculated QCA also shows that the high and low integration rates are separate phenomena that are related to different combinations of conditions. It is worth investigating these separately. Programmes with a low integration rate should be looked at in a differentiated way and the absence of certain promising factors should not be regarded as the only cause for a lower integration rate.

Overall, it can be concluded that the use of an impact model can be helpful in the interpretation of the results. It makes it possible to group the factors and thus to conclude that success factors from different levels interact to influence the integration rate. Basing the analysis on the different levels of an impact model also facilitates the systematic search for alternative influences.

For the theory of social exclusion and social inclusion, this means that the integration of people who are excluded from the labour market can succeed because of the interaction of success factors on different levels of the impact model. Furthermore, the integration can be made more difficult by the interaction of factors at different levels. And analogous to Silver's assessment (2015, p. 3), the situations that enable inclusion and the situations in which exclusion is maintained should be examined separately because they are separate phenomena.

Especially against the background of society's interest in the integration of social assistance recipients into the labour market, the search for the underlying causes for success and the scope for action remains relevant for the research community but also for service providers and purchasers, as well as for political decision-makers. An important finding of this master thesis is, that success or failure in terms of a high or low integration rate cannot be explained by influenceable factors alone. Contextual and income factors that cannot be influenced by the jobseekers, the providers and the service purchaser often have an impact on integration into the labour market in combination with the other factors.

Further research results in this area can enable programmes to be adapted to the unchangeable factors and thus become more successful in labour market integration. Furthermore, they could contribute to realistic expectations of service purchasers and to appropriate framework conditions.

A generalisation of the findings across national or even cantonal borders may be difficult due to the peculiarities of the Swiss social security system, the regional structure of the canton of

Bern and the unique BIAS offer. Nevertheless, it can be generally recommended to the administration to pay attention to the design of input and output factors when purchasing services. However, based on the current state of research, they should check whether the resources and the offer of the programme provider are promising, especially in combination with the characteristics of the expected participants and the current context. In addition, when assessing the integration rate of purchased programmes, they should consider the context and income factors, which are difficult for providers to change. Knowledge about the unchangeable factors can thus help to avoid making inappropriate adjustments, such as terminating contracts with providers of inclusion programmes.

For the many stakeholders in the field of work integration of social assistance recipients, it is important to understand that it is in fact the complex interplay of different factors that leads to high or low integration rates, and not the manifestation of individual factors. Based on future research, programmes should be adapted to achieve better integration rates and enable more social inclusion.

9 Selbstständigkeitserklärung für die Masterarbeit

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich diese Arbeit selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäss aus Quellen entnommen wurden, habe ich als solche kenntlich gemacht. Mir ist bekannt, dass andernfalls der Senat gemäss dem Gesetz über die Universität zum Entzug des auf Grund dieser Arbeit verliehenen Titels berechtigt ist.

Biel, 4.7.2023


Michelle Gassmann

10 Einverständniserklärung zur Veröffentlichung der Masterarbeit

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich der Veröffentlichung der von mir verfassten Masterarbeit im Falle einer Benotung von 5.0 oder höher auf der Homepage des KPM zustimme. Die Arbeit ist öffentlich zugänglich.

Biel, 4.7.2023


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