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Facilitating Immigrants' Employability

- Educational borrowing and lending in the context of Swedish for Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

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Authors:	Jenny Sjöblom & Charlotte Wernesten
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Summary:	<p>In the Swedish context Swedish language skills are considered to be a crucial factor for an individual's ability to establish him/herself in society as well as on the labour market. Despite this, the Swedish organisation Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) has been exposed to extensive critique: Not enough students manage to establish themselves on the labour market, but get trapped in SFI.</p> <p>The purpose of this study is to examine whether educational tools found successful in the organisation QATSIHWEPAC can be of use in SFI. This is done against the background of research on educational borrowing and lending.</p> <p>By examining the two organisations thoroughly it has been concluded that three of the educational tools used by QATSIHWEPAC could be of use for SFI. These tools are; support, cultural awareness and flexibility. SFI has both prerequisites as well as hindrances to be able to borrow these tools. The hindrances need to be overcome before such borrowing could occur. However, an important factor for SFI to be able to borrow these educational tools is an enhanced cooperation between authorities, organisations and companies. This in order to enhance the chances for SFI students to enter the labour market.</p>
Keywords:	Comparative education, Educational borrowing and lending, Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), Indigenous Australians

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>i</i>
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Purpose	2
2. Methodology	2
2.1 Critical theory	2
2.2 Strategy	3
2.3 Quality of the results	4
2.3.1 Validity or credibility	4
2.3.2 Reliability or dependability	4
2.4 Discussion about used methodology	5
2.5 Selection methods	6
2.5.1 Selection criteria regarding written sources	7
2.5.2 Critique of the sources	9
3. Theoretical framework	10
3.1 Comparative education	10
3.1.1 The dimensions of comparative education	11
3.1.2 Educational borrowing and lending.....	11
4. Results	16
4.1 Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)	17
4.2 Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC)	28
4.3 Summary of the results	30
5. Analysis	32
5.1 Support as an educational tool	32
5.1.1 Prerequisites and hindrances within SFI for using support as an educational tool.....	34
5.2 Cultural awareness as an educational tool	38
5.2.1 Prerequisites and hindrances within SFI for using cultural awareness as an educational tool	39
5.3 Flexibility as an educational tool	42
5.3.1 Prerequisites and hindrances within SFI for using flexibility as an educational tool.....	43
5.4 Summary of the analysis	48
5.5 Conclusion	51
6. Discussion	51

6.1 Further research.....	57
<i>References.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Appendix</i>	<i>a</i>

Foreword

Thank you Mina for the invaluable inputs you have given us during this study. Without your challenging and constructive contributions we would not have been able to gain such insight into the examined subject. It has been very inspiring to work with you.

1. Introduction

“Discontinue Swedish language education for immigrants” (Reepalu et al., 2007). This view is presented in an article written by the presidents and vice presidents of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). However, this is just one of a number of negative and discouraging reports and articles presented in recent years regarding the Swedish organisation “Swedish for Immigrants” (SFI). Most of these reports and articles have brought attention to the problematic situation faced by the education and the people involved in it. The ongoing debate regarding SFI involves whether the education poses a hindrance instead of a facilitator for immigrants to be able to take part in the Swedish labour market. It has been shown that not enough students manage to establish themselves on the labour market, but gets trapped in SFI. In the article mentioned above it has been stated that:

Several investigations of the language education show that the results after the completion of Swedish for immigrants (SFI) are insufficient. SFI is a dead end, instead of a way into employment (Reepalu et al., 2007, authors’ translation¹)

However, is a discontinuation of SFI the only solution? Would it not be more interesting to examine what could be done in order to improve the education within SFI, and thereby reach the aim of SFI; to enable the students to participate in the Swedish community and labour market (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2007a)? In other words to make immigrants employable. In this context, employability is defined as the capacity through education (SFI) to gain the skills and competencies necessary for gainful employment on the Swedish labour market². It is further on pointed out in the proposition 2005/06:148 that Swedish language knowledge is a crucial factor for an individual’s ability to establish in society as well as on the labour market (Government, 2005/06). The question is; how could an improvement of SFI be accomplished? Would it be helpful to look at international examples in order to gain new perspectives and knowledge on possible solutions? Would it thereby be possible for an educational organisation such as SFI to borrow educational ideas from other countries and contexts and make use of these in their own context?

¹ All the translations from Swedish texts were done by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy of the translations.

² For further information on the concept of employability see: Van der Heijde, C. M., Van der Heijden, B. I. J. M. (2006). *A competence-based and multidimensional operationalization and measurement of employability*. Human Resource Management.

In a previous study (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006³) the organisation Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC), which was aimed at the minority group Indigenous Australians was examined. The results indicated that the organisation used a number of educational tools that were highly effective while working with this specific minority group. In the authors' opinion, it is important, if possible, to make use of this knowledge since it can be of great advantage to use knowledge from successful educational situations in other educations. Due to the constantly changing world and the increased globalisation it is feasible that such educational borrowing will be more common in the future. Could the educational tools used by QATSIHWEPAC be used in another context? The problematic situation faced by the Swedish education SFI will be examined in order to see whether the educational tools used by QATSIHWEPAC could to some extent be used by SFI.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the educational tools from QATSIHWEPAC could be of use in SFI. The purpose consists of two research questions:

- 1) What are the prerequisites for the educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC to be of any use for SFI?
- 2) What are the hindrances for the educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC to be of any use for SFI?

2. Methodology

2.1 Critical theory

In this study a critical approach has been taken towards the material and process. Critical theory includes an attempt to see behind and underneath the current dominating research movements and what assumptions they are based on, as well as what these basic assumptions mean to the results of the research (Mertens, 1998). In critical theory no research is outside of the society and the research is clearly related to politics, ideology and society. The focus in this theory is for the researcher to keep a critical perspective on the current situations, conditions and phenomenon in society (Patel & Davidsson, 2003). Morrow (1994) points out that there is a need for critical imagination

³ This study was conducted in Australia in 2006. The study will further on be referred to as 'the previous study' when mentioned in the text. The previous study will be summarised in this study, however, if something is unclear it is recommended to the reader to read the previous study; *'It's in our culture' – A qualitative case study on Indigenous Australians' experiences of learning at the organisation QATSIHWEPAC* (http://theses.lub.lu.se/archive/2006/11/20/1164031526-14112-179/Jenny_Sjoebloom_o_Charlotte_Wernesten.pdf).

in order to avoid that how we live become determined and the only way to live. In relation to this, critical theory is also concerned with the complexity of domination and that social relations create power relations. The need for self-reflexivity and a critical approach by the investigator towards his/her own preconceived notions and the influence he/she has on the research process is also an important component of critical theory (Morrow, 1994).

Alvesson and Deets (2000) point out that the procedure of research within critical theory is not very different from research carried out by other researchers. It is instead the content of what is being studied that differ. In critical research the focus is on subtle aspects of power relations and a possible closed character of situations, institutions, ideas, social practises and processes. The processes that create these relations and characteristics in the phenomenon being studied as well as the actual phenomenon need to be revealed.

2.2 Strategy

The strategy chosen for this study is of a qualitative nature. According to Patton (1990) it is appropriate to choose a qualitative research design when the researcher wants detailed and in-depth data about a process, implementation, or development of for example a program and its participants (Mertens, 1998), something intended to be done in this study. Morrow (1994) points out that choosing a qualitative or quantitative approach when examining a social phenomena is not just a choice between different ways of carrying out the examination, but it is also “...ways of making a set of individuals into two different phenomena” (Morrow 1994, p.207). This is why the features of a research process and the potential impact they may have on the research process and results need to be carefully examined and criticised (Morrow, 1994). Mertens (1998) has pointed out that qualitative research is linked with a holistic perspective, something also supported by Denscombe (2000). Denscombe (2000) also points out that qualitative research is associated with an interest for meanings and how people understand certain things, as well as an interest in patterns of behaviour.

When conducting qualitative research the researcher must be aware of his/her own impact on the situation and the construction of data. However, it seems to be impossible to be completely objective in a qualitative research process. Therefore it is important that the researcher reflects on his/her own background, identity, values, assumptions, beliefs and biases when undertaking qualitative research since these will have an impact on the study's data and interpretations (Denscombe, 2000; Mertens, 1998). Denscombe (2000) emphasises that these aspects need to be given an account for.

2.3 Quality of the results

2.3.1 Validity or credibility

Validity refers to whether the researcher is measuring what he/she intends to measure. However, validity in a qualitative study concerns whether the result is credible to the person that was the origin of the data (Merriam, 1998). Validity could therefore in qualitative research be replaced by the term credibility, i.e. how likely and probable the results are (Bryman, 2001). Patel & Davidson emphasises that during the process of analyzing the collected information the researcher needs to constantly reflect on the decisions he/she makes in order to enhance the credibility. It is also of great importance that the researcher is aware of his/her own preconceived notions since how the researcher handles these will affect the credibility in the whole research process (Patel & Davidson, 2003).

Johansson states that in order for the results to be credible they should enrich the academic field with something new, i.e. the results should capture something that has not been captured by earlier models, theories or perspectives, or the results should capture already identified phenomenon in a better or more interesting way than has been done in earlier theory. It is also pointed out by Johansson that it is not only up to the researcher, but also the scientific society, to decide whether the results are credible or not. In order for the results to be credible the researcher must also consider whether or not the results are transferable (Johansson, 1998).

In qualitative research, the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context. The researcher's responsibility is to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make such a judgement (Mertens, 1998, p.183).

It is therefore the researcher's responsibility to provide the reader with a thick description of the situation's complexity in order for the reader to be able to decide whether or not he/she find that the researchers' interpretation is accurate and relevant (Denscombe, 2000). However, to judge whether or not the results are transferable is not only up to the researcher, but also the reader (Mertens, 1998).

2.3.2 Reliability or dependability

Reliability refers to whether the research process would give the same results if it was to be done all over again (Merriam, 1998). This cannot be done in a qualitative study due to the fact that individuals' experiences and behaviours change over time, which will lead to different results if they were to be asked again. However, as pointed out by Guba and Lincoln (1989), the term reliability could instead be replaced with the term dependability (Mertens, 1998). The question is not whether the study is possible to replicate with the same results, but whether the results in the present study are

consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 1998). To enhance the study's dependability the researcher should:

- Explicitly make an account for his/her goal and fundamental premises (such as purpose and theory) (Denscombe, 2000) and make sure it is clear to the reader that the researcher is aware of his/her own position in the process (Merriam, 1998).
- Explain how the research was carried through (Denscombe, 2000) by describing how data were collected and how categories were derived (Merriam, 1998) as well as explain the line of arguments that lay behind the decisions that were made (for example concerning selection methods) (Denscombe, 2000). Merriam (1998) refers to this as *auditing our trail*. How this has been carried out in this study will be described further down.

Merriam (1998) also points out that the researcher should use triangulation, i.e. use different types of methods to collect and analyse information, in order to ensure that there is a consistency between the results and the data collected.

2.4 Discussion about used methodology

In order to be able to fulfil the critical approach taken, a constant reflection was necessary as well as to take a critical approach towards the origin of the material, preconceived notions of the authors and how these were handled, and the authors' influence on the process. This has enhanced the credibility of this study since the critical approach also has had the effect that decisions were reflected on. The dependability has also been enhanced since it has been clarified that the authors have been aware of their position in the process and reflected on their assumptions, beliefs and biases. Even though an attempt has been made to consider preconceived notions, it has not been possible to be completely objective in this process. However, that was not the initial aim, the aim was to be aware and reflect on the preconceived notions, not trying to ignore their existence.

By explicitly making an account of the aim and how the research was carried through (by describing how data was collected, and what selections methods and selection criteria were followed) the dependability as well as the credibility of the study has been enhanced. The credibility and not only the dependability has been enhanced since the reader has been provided with sufficient detail about the process, to enable him/her to make a decision whether the study is transferable or not.

In order to further increase the dependability, triangulation has been attempted to be applied. However, different types of methods, for example surveys, interviews and literature reviews have not been used, but a comparison of documents, articles and books have been made. Different people responsible for those areas examined have been e-mailed, in order to confirm the material's accuracy.

It has been pointed out earlier that in order to enhance the credibility the study should contribute with something new or capture something that has not been captured by earlier models (i.e. identify a phenomenon in a better or more interesting way). This study might not capture something completely new, but rather bring new perspectives on an already identified phenomenon.

2.5 Selection methods

The selection methods used in a literature review will have an impact on the final report. To be able to provide a holistic picture of a situation the researcher needs to keep an open mind in the process in order not to overlook or avoid aspects that will be of importance in the situation studied (Mertens, 1998).

Mertens (1998) has provided a model of how to carry through a literature search for a chosen topic. An attempt has been made to follow this model in the selection process in order to obtain material that is relevant and useful. First, the researcher needs to identify a research topic. In this stage it is important to keep an open mind and be flexible in the approach towards the topic in order to be able to receive a broad picture of the topic and thereafter narrow it down. Previous to the initiation of this study an idea about the focus of the study existed. This idea involved whether the educational tools found in a foreign context could be of use in a Swedish context. Initially it was not clear which Swedish context this should be. However, the ambition was to apply the educational tools in an organisation where they could be of use and an organisation that did not seem to be very successful. After making some overviews of the Swedish school system, Swedish for immigrants (SFI) was chosen as the organisation to focus on. The strategy educational borrowing and lending was decided to be used as a theoretical framework in order to find out whether the educational tools would be of use in a Swedish context. After obtaining an idea about the topic at hand, a search strategy needs to be developed. The strategy may include identifying preliminary sources through searches in databases and other archives, identifying primary research journals through an 'ancestry approach' which includes examining lists of references of already obtained books, articles and other writings (Mertens 1998). To find sources which would provide relevant information about SFI and educational borrowing and lending several different search engines and library catalogues were used; ELIN, LOVISA, ERIC and Google Scholar. Also the home pages of the Swedish National Agency for Education⁴, the Swedish Integration Board and the National Centre for Swedish as a Second Language were used to search for information concerning SFI and the Swedish school system. Another search strategy is to contact individuals or groups with similar or the same interest as the one at hand. Thereby the researcher can receive sources that would not be obtained outside of the fellowship of the contacted individuals or groups (Mertens, 1998). A few key persons in the organisations mentioned above, were contacted in order to make sure that obtained facts were correct, as well as to obtain additional material that could not be found in official documents. The search for literature is conducted by identifying key terms and phrases within the chosen topic and searching for sources including these in

⁴ Swedish National Agency for Education. Further on referred to as SNAE.

different databases and archives (Mertens, 1998). Keywords used when searching for material in the area of SFI were: 'Swedish education', 'Swedish for immigrants', 'Svenska för Invandrare', 'Swedish school system', 'Adult education', 'Immigration + Sweden' and various combinations of these. In the area of educational borrowing and lending we searched for: 'education borrowing', 'education lending', 'educational borrowing', 'educational lending', 'education borrowing and lending', 'educational borrowing and lending', 'comparative education' and 'transfer + education'.

It is up to the researcher to interpret the information received and select titles that are usable in relation to the chosen topic. An evaluation of the titles regarding their usefulness and relevance to the research should be carried through according to a number of criteria (Mertens, 1998). The criteria used in this study will be discussed below. The findings need to be analysed and synthesised and there are two different ways of synthesising research findings; statistical and narrative. The choice between these is determined by the purpose of the research (Mertens, 1998). The approach in this study will be of a narrative nature due to the qualitative rather than quantitative approach. The way the literature review is finally used is determined by the purpose of the study in which it is included (Mertens, 1998). In this case it will pose as partly the theoretical framework but also as a base on which a comparing analysis is made.

To ensure the quality of a literature study a clear specification of what methods were used for searching literature and documents as well as the criteria for excluding or including information need to be presented (Mertens, 1998). The criteria used in this specific study will therefore be presented below.

2.5.1 Selection criteria regarding written sources

The source is the origin of our knowledge. A source can be written, in the form of official documents, private documents, statistics and registers, newspapers, brochures, images (films, maps et cetera), sound (tapes, CDs, et cetera) (Patel & Davidson, 2003), books, scientific articles and letters, or oral in the form of interviews, statements, speeches, et cetera (Thurén, 2005). In this study the knowledge will be built on written sources.

The selection of documents should, according to Patel and Davidson, be carried out in a way that ensures the emerging picture to be as complete and undistorted as possible. To ensure this, the phenomenon in focus should be illuminated from several perspectives (Patel & Davidson, 2003). In the initial stage of the literature study a few criteria were established in order to try to increase the possibility of receiving a holistic, undistorted and true picture of what was going to be studied. This was also done with the hope to be able to increase the liability and quality of the theoretical framework. The criteria were; topicality, relevance, quality of the source, authority on the topic, scientific source (Merriam, 1998) and free of tendencies (Thurén, 2005).

The *topicality* of a source concerns when it was produced and if it is the most recent work in the field. The *relevance* of the source in relation to the study at hand should be considered not to lose focus in the research. *The quality of a source*, regarding if it is a primary or secondary source, is also important to consider in a literature review. If a text has been rendered the original message may have been reduced or changed and important aspects may have been lost. The usage of secondary sources could therefore provide distorted information. The criterion *authority on the topic* concerns who the producer of the data is. If the author has been recognised by others in his/her field the source's reliability (here dependability) will be increased (Merriam, 1998). However, concerning the relation between the criteria relevance and topicality and between relevance and authority on the topic Merriam states that: "If a particular resource of research study is highly relevant to your present research interest, it should be included even if the 'who' and 'when' criteria are not met" (Merriam, 1998, p.54). That the source is based on research and thereby *scientific* is related to the credibility of the study. The conclusions of the study are based on the sources and if the sources are scientific this increases the credibility of the study.

Sources may have tendencies in different directions. The researcher should strive towards obtaining a material that is *free of tendencies*. How this may be done will be developed further down. The tendencies of a source is determined by how and why it has originated and been produced. A source may be partial in its nature depending on who the originator is and why the source has been created. A source is, according to Thurén partial when there has existed an interest of projecting a false or distorted image of the reality. Therefore, a source that is suspected to be partial should be complemented with other sources. For example, when using documents that have been produced with a political or other kind of agenda, the origin and the reason why the documents have been produced need to be kept in mind. However, not only these types of documents need to be carefully read and used. Also scientific sources might be influenced by partiality when produced. It is therefore important to examine who is behind the source (Thurén, 2005). Researchers who base their conclusions on official documents and literature also need to be aware that the research might be distorted. If only one type of research is funded and judged to be of public interest, and therefore published, this leads to a phenomenon called publication bias (Mertens, 1998).

When choosing sources the starting point needs to be the purpose of the study. It is important that the picture of the phenomenon provided to the reader is as holistic as possible. There is a need, while making the selection of the sources, to consider that a selection will be distorted if facts that are relevant in the chosen perspective are withheld. For example, this can happen if those who have made the selection have reason to hide how it has been made, or if additional information changes the general impression. This means that the perspective from which the selection has been made needs to be clarified (Thurén, 2005).

When selecting sources and using these, the researcher also needs to be aware of his/her own preconceived notions, possible hidden agendas in the research and the expectations on the result. The researcher is the interpreter in the process and thereby needs to make

his/her own understanding of the process clear since, for example, this will have an influence on how the literature review is planned and conducted. The researcher selects what to use and what to focus on in a study. In order not to let this shape the outcome of the study it is important to keep an open mind towards new influences and sources throughout the conduct of the literature review as well as in the writing process (Mertens, 1998).

2.5.2 Critique of the sources

In the search for literature the established criteria mentioned above have been kept in mind. The criterion *topicality* has been fulfilled since mainly the most recent published sources have been used. In those cases where the most recent sources have not used this was due to that the content in those sources was still relevant. The *relevance* of the sources has been achieved to a great extent since only such material that was in alliance with the focus of this study has been used. In order to ensure the *quality of the sources* an attempt has been made to use mainly primary sources. In those cases where primary sources have not used, the secondary sources were considered to be valid and thereby useful. However, awareness was still needed concerning that these sources were secondary and thereby may have been altered in some way. In the literature search an aim has been to cover the field, therefore *authorities on the topics* have been searched for. One example of such an authority is David Phillips within the field of educational borrowing and lending. The Swedish National Agency for Education seems to be an authority within the field of SFI. However, an institution like the Swedish National Agency for Education may have an agenda of its own. This in combination with who has commissioned the study and with what purpose it has been produced might influence the material. In order to stay critical towards the obtained material this has been considered. However, sometimes it has been complicated to stay critical due to the lack of and difficulty in finding other authors outside of governmental offices and institutions.

The aim has been to find and use *scientific sources*. The sources used for the section concerning educational borrowing and lending are all based on research. However, fulfilling this criterion has been rather difficult when it comes to some of the data collected about SFI. This due to the need to use documents and agendas that possibly are not the result of extensive research. The information about the Australian organisation QATSIHWEPAC is based on the authors' research, conducted in a previous study, and is regarded as a valid research source.

To keep the material *free of tendencies* have not been possible in this study. Several of the used sources have tendencies due to their originator being governmental institutions. The publications from these kinds of institutions may have an agenda and a purpose to fulfil depending on who has commissioned it. In order to try to make sure that this study is not influenced by the tendencies in the collected material an attempt has been made; 1) to stay critical to the underlying reasons to why and with what agenda the source has been produced, and 2) to find other sources to complement the material in order to find out whether or not the information is credible. However, this has been complicated

since a major part of the material produced concerning SFI is produced by governmental organisations, such as the Swedish National Agency for Education, the Swedish Integration Board, and the National Centre for Swedish for Immigrants.

In this study an attempt has been made to provide the reader with an as comprehensive picture as possible. Therefore, sources that shed light on the situation from as many perspectives as possible have been used. This has been done by using documents from governments, researchers with different approaches to the topic, Swedish sources as well as foreign sources. However, as mentioned earlier, due to the lack of different perspectives it has been somewhat difficult to provide such a holistic picture. Although, this has been done as far as possible, and in the literature search for information about SFI, an effort has been made to obtain and read all the material accessible.

The publication bias that might exist is something that has been kept in mind when drawing conclusions based on the obtained sources. The fact that many different sources say mainly the same thing might be a sign of a certain publication bias. An attempt has been made to find sources that illuminate the situation from different perspectives in order to not let this possible bias distort the results of this study. As mentioned above, the researcher must be aware that in some cases only one type of research are funded and published due to it being judged to be of public interest. This might be something that has happened to research within SFI. A majority of the field studies have conveyed an extremely negative view of SFI, which sometimes might have led to that the whole picture has not been provided to the reader. The authors have certainly been influenced by the existing negative view and it was one that was initially shared. It has been a challenge to overcome this existing perception of SFI in order to be able to look at SFI from a different perspective and distinguish other important factors that have contributed to the problematic situation. This was something that became clear early in the process. Thereby, an effort has been made to keep an open mind towards other influences and aspects of the situation. An as critical approach as possible has been taken towards the material collected.

3. Theoretical framework

In the theoretical framework an account of the theory of comparative education will initially be presented. This will be followed by the pragmatic part of this theory; educational borrowing and lending.

3.1 Comparative education

The increased internationalisation and interconnectedness in the world, often called globalisation, makes it possible for actors from around the world to become involved in, and have an impact on societies in completely different parts of the world. The fact that societies influence and are influenced by others to an increasing degree also effects the educational systems in these societies. The education system in a society reflects the

society's sociocultural systems and is embedded in these (Arnové, 2003). Studying and comparing education systems and the contexts from which they have originated and are embedded in, are in the domain of comparative education research. Comparative education has, as its subject matter "the macro- and micro level forces shaping education systems around the world" (Arnové, 2003, p.3). Differences as well as similarities between education systems are in the scope of comparative education (Samoff, 2003). According to Phillips (2000), comparative studies aim to search for and analyse educational practices in other contexts in order to relate these ideas to the "home" situation.

3.1.1 The dimensions of comparative education

There are, according to Arnove (2003), three dimensions of comparative education; the scientific, the pragmatic and the global dimension. In this study the pragmatic dimension of comparative education will be focused on. The pragmatic dimension, takes its starting point in the findings of the scientific dimension. Findings in different societies' education system can be highly valuable and discoveries in one education system might contribute to improved policies and practices in another system. However, it is as likely that they will not (Phillips, 2006; Arnove, 2003). The pragmatic dimension of comparative education is referred to as educational lending and borrowing (Arnové, 2003). This dimension will be in focus in this study, and therefore further clarified below. The reason why focus will be on this dimension is due to the aim to look into whether the educational tools used in one education might be of use in another education.

3.1.2 Educational borrowing and lending

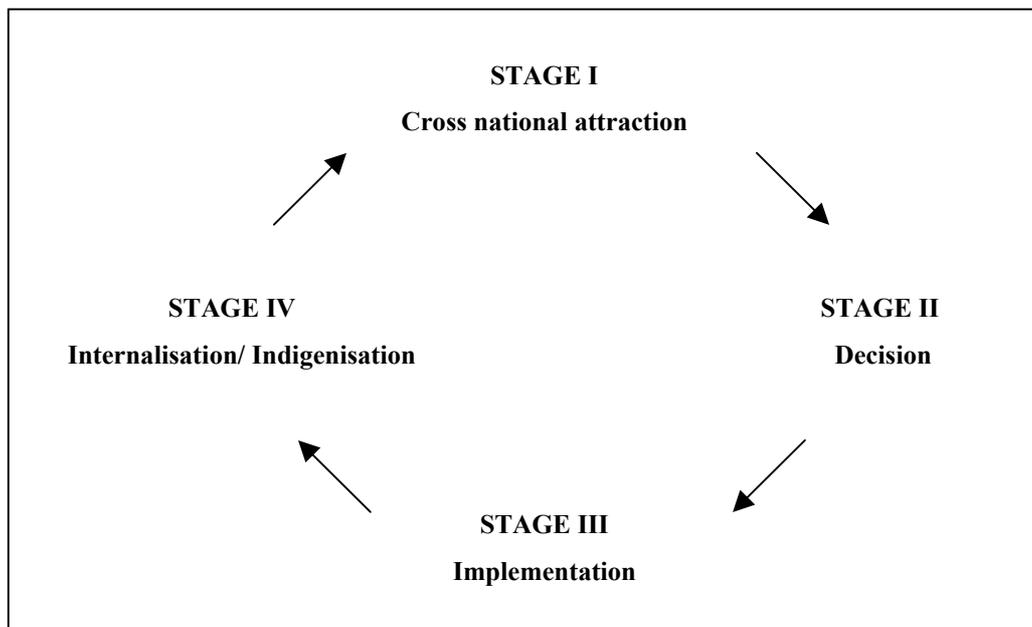
One of the earliest known examples of educational borrowing occurred in 607 A.D. when the Japanese travelled to China to study the empire's education system (Arnové, 2003). However, as a phenomenon, educational borrowing has only been recognised for about two hundred years (Phillips, 2005). It was in 1816 that Marc-Antoine Jullien triggered an interest for the concept of educational borrowing by intending to identify "... good educational practice and aiding its transfer to other systems" (Phillips, 1989, p.267). Phillips & Ochs (2004) state that educational borrowing occurs when there is a clearly expressed intention to adopt a system or practice from elsewhere. It is important to note that this is not a process in which general systems or practices from one context subtly influence policy in another context without being actively reflected on. According to Jackson (1984) there is a general agreement on the purpose of borrowing:

(a) to promote knowledge, (b) to assist reform and development, (c) to improve knowledge about one's own educational system, and (d) to promote international goodwill (Jackson, 1984, p.18 cited in Phillips, 2000, p.297).

Educational borrowing as a process

Educational borrowing involves identifying a successful practice and then introducing and assimilating it into the home context. Phillips points out that

educational borrowing is an extremely complicated process and its four stages; cross national attraction, decision, implementation and internationalisation/indigenisation must be considered before initiating the process of educational borrowing (Phillips, 2005; Phillips & Ochs, 2004). It is also of great importance to be aware that this process often takes a long time (Phillips, 2005). The process of educational borrowing and its four stages is illustrated in the following model.



(Based on Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p.779)

The first stage, *cross-national attraction*, involves impulses and externalising potential (Phillips, 2005). Impulses can be: international dissatisfaction, systemic collapse, negative external evaluation, economic change/competition, political and other imperatives, novel configurations, knowledge/skills innovation and political change. If any or several of these impulses exist in an educational system a need is triggered to look into externalising potential i.e. “aspects of educational policies and practices that can be borrowed” (Phillips & Ochs, 2003, p.453).

The second stage involves *decision-making*. There are different types of decisions; theoretical, realistic/practical, quick fix or phoney. A theoretical decision is made on a level where an implementation is not meant to occur. A realistic/practical decision is based on information that illustrates that the system or parts of the system that is to be borrowed from has proved to be successful in other contexts than the one it is to be borrowed from. A quick fix decision is a decision made believing that a problem can be solved by implementing parts of, or a whole system, which has been successful in another context. Such a decision is made without previous evaluation of the context in which it is to be implemented. When implementing an educational idea from a foreign context it is of great importance to be aware of the dangers involved in making quick decisions based on a sudden enthusiasm for a specific educational idea (Phillips &

Ochs, 2003). Phony policy borrowing, includes borrowing only the discursive policy without real intention of implementing the policy. It is a borrowing of rethoric (Silova, 2004).

The third stage involves *implementation*. How and in what pace this will be carried out depends on the borrower society's contextual conditions as well as their significant actors, i.e. those people or institutions who have the power to support or oppose change and development (Phillips & Ochs, 2004). However, as mentioned earlier it is important to realise that this is often a lengthy process (Phillips, 2005). In the fourth stage, *internalisation/indigenisation*, the educational idea is contextualised and becomes a part of the borrower country's educational system. In this stage the educational idea's effects on the system can be assessed (Phillips & Ochs, 2003).

The central issues

Phillips (2006) points out that the central issues for researchers who are involved with the concept of educational borrowing is; 1) whether it would be possible in practice for a country to solve its educational problems by adopting policy or practices which have been successful in another country and, 2) if this would be possible, how would such a policy or practice be transferred and implemented? According to Phillips (2006) and Halpin & Troyna (1995) educational borrowing is only rarely combined with success. Therefore, the next section will deal with the difficulties involved in educational borrowing and how such difficulties can be managed and overcome.

Difficulties encountered with educational borrowing and lending

The concept of borrowing and lending is often linked with problems and has been misused several times (Phillips, 1989). This has contributed to a rather critical attitude among authors within the field of borrowing and lending. As mentioned above, it is important to be aware that borrowing educational ideas is not a simple process. However, even though only a few cases of educational borrowing is combined with success this does not necessarily need to be a hindrance for future 'borrowers'. Arnove even points out that "perhaps more can be learned from lessons of failure – what not to do – than from stories of success" (Arnove, 2003, p.7).

The importance of context

One of the greatest dangers in comparative research is, according to Phillips, when outcomes are seen as separated from the processes (i.e. the conditions of teaching and learning) that led to the outcomes. The conditions of teaching and learning must be considered and analysed before a transfer and implementation is to occur since they are an essential part of the educational provision (Phillips, 1989). Noah emphasises that:

The authentic use of comparative study resides not in wholesale appropriation and propagation of foreign practice but in careful analysis of the conditions under which certain foreign practices deliver desirable results, followed by consideration of ways to adapt those practices to conditions found at home (Noah, 1986, p.161-162 cited in Phillips & Ochs, 2003, p.458).

As mentioned earlier the education system, in its structure and nature, reflects and is embedded in the context of its society (Arnove, 2003; Phillips, 1989). The context consists of the society's history, culture, politics, traditions, ideologies, economic conditions, attitudes (Phillips, 1989), worldviews, philosophies and educational ideas (Uhrmacher, 1997). In order to be able to make a successful transfer of educational principles, recognition of the context from where the educational idea has originated from is vital (Uhrmacher, 1997; Phillips, 1989). This due to that if an educational idea is transferred from one context to another the contextual framework in which the idea was embedded will also be transferred (Uhrmacher, 1997). It is also important to recognise that educational approaches and understandings are under the influence of both cultural imperatives and local nuances (Spren, 2004). However, knowledge about the society where the educational idea is to be borrowed from is not sufficient. In order to be able to assess whether an educational idea will be appropriate and successful in a new context, it is important to not only be familiar with the contextual framework in which the idea has originated but also with the contextual framework in which the idea is to be implemented (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Uhrmacher, 1997). It is not until the borrower country has gained such knowledge that it will be able to see what the societies share in common (Arnove, 2003). "One cannot simply uproot elements of one society and expect them to flourish in the soil of another society" (Arnove, 2003, p.7). A strategy found somewhere else cannot be used as a quick fix model and if someone is to borrow a model it is of great importance that he/she is aware of the fact that this model has been developed in another context to suit that context's specific needs. Phillips states that it is not possible to only pick and choose those particular features that seems to be attractive in order to solve the educational problems an educational system might face (Phillips, 1989).

In studying foreign systems of Education we should not forget that the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside. We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant (Sadler cited in Phillips, 2005, p.24).

However, Arnove proposes that even though systems are socioculturally attached to the society from which they have originated, general principles or parts of a school system of a society may be decontextualised and applied in another society (Arnove, 2003).

Ochs (2006) in agreement with Uhrmacher, Phillips and Arnove, also points out the important role context plays in the process of educational borrowing. However, she also

emphasises the fact that it must be regarded not only during the initiation of educational borrowing, but also while the ideas are being implemented. Cowen (2006) argues that the problem with context is not that we are unaware of its significance, rather it is that we cannot intellectually comprehend its complicated nature.

There is another dimension of the problem of educational ideas being transferred from one context to another. Bungum emphasises "... the importance of the cultural context in how educational ideas are interpreted, reshaped and realized in schools" (Bungum, 2006, p.31). When bringing a new idea into the classroom it is therefore important to consider that its ecology will change. Ecology in this context refers to "... curriculum (what is taught), pedagogy (how something is taught), school structure (use of time and space as well as school-community relations), evaluation (formal and informal), and intentions (the school's, the principal's, or the teacher's)" (Uhrmacher, 1997, p.4). It is thereby important to realise that when teachers are being introduced to ideas created and initiated in another school system and a different national culture they will interpret these ideas differently. This might have an effect on how the ideas are being implemented. A school system is shaped by a society's ideological and cultural characteristics in which it exists. Therefore, it is not possible to directly transfer one educational idea from one context to another, since teachers will interpret and transform it in order for it to suit their own context. This can contribute to that the fundamental idea of an educational idea completely changes (Bungum, 2006). Spreen also points out that: "what might be the same on paper is understood and implemented very differently at the classroom level" (Spreen, 2004, p.110). Cowen (2006) refers to this process as the 'chameleon process' that includes the re-interpretation of educational ideas when they are transferred from one context to another.

Prerequisites for successful educational borrowing

Uhrmacher (1997) states that initially the borrower should ask the question whether or not something could be learnt about another school system that could be applied in the borrower's 'home' context. Ochs emphasises that before starting the process of borrowing it is important to consider the question: "What factors are necessary to implement, and ultimately internalise educational policy or practices from elsewhere that could lead to effective, innovative education practices?" (Ochs, 2006, p.614). In order to be able to answer such question both the context where the educational idea has originated as well as the context in which the educational idea is to be implemented need to be examined (Uhrmacher, 1997).

A few factors in the process of educational borrowing and lending have proven to be of great importance if educational borrowing is to succeed. In order to be able to transfer and implement an educational idea from one national context to another successfully Phillips (2006) points to the necessity of the borrower country having favourable conditions and supportive significant actors, i.e. people or institutions who have the power to support or oppose change and development. When implementing the new ideas it is crucial that all the actors involved cooperate in the process. This will require that the management is committed and show enthusiasm for the new ideas (Phillips,

2006). Halpin & Troyna state that if the dominant political ideologies are promoting reform within the education systems it is more likely that an active education policy borrowing will occur. They also emphasise that if there is some synchrony between the characteristics of the education systems involved in the borrowing and lending process active education policy borrowing is more likely to occur (Halpin & Troyna, 1995). Something else that can contribute to successful borrowing is that educational ideas from another context are not seen as ‘theoretical’, ‘phoney’, or ‘quick fix’ solutions. It can also be advantageous to initially carry through a pilot programme in order to find out whether or not the educational ideas that are to be borrowed would work in the ‘home’ context (Ochs, 2006). In one successful case of educational borrowing and lending the following factors were pointed out as being crucial for their success:

- (1) a continued commitment to the objective (improving achievement) and understanding across the LEA of the motives for cross-national attraction;
- (2) the development of key partnerships to collect data, provide resources, and raise awareness during the decision-making process;
- (3) awareness of successes and challenges through evaluation during implementation;
- (4) recognition that internalisation was an iterative process, which could lead to more investigations, more decisions, and continuous assessment; and
- (5) careful consideration of the local and national context across all four stages (Ochs, 2006, p.616).

The Corporate Director in the case referred to above, has pointed out:

We are not importing lock, stock and barrel. Instead we are attempting carefully to incorporate the strengths of other arrangements that bear especially upon our problems at local and national levels (Ochs, 2006, p.616).

In order to find out the differences and similarities between the Indigenous Australian organisation QATSIHWEPAC and the Swedish organisation SFI, an account of both organisations will be given below. This will also pose as a base to see what prerequisites as well as hindrances that exist within SFI for using the educational tools used by QATSIHWEPAC.

4. Results

In the following section the two educational contexts, which are in focus in this study, will be presented. The results from a thorough examination of the Swedish language education; Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) will be presented initially. Thereafter, the educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC will be introduced and the organisation itself will be presented. These presentations are made due to that, in a process of educational borrowing and lending, it is highly important to recognise both the context where the idea is to be implemented (SFI), as well as the context where the educational idea originated (QATSIHWEPAC) (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Uhrmacher, 1997).

4.1 Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)

SFI is a separate form of schooling for adults in the Swedish public school system (Kennerberg & Sibbmark, 2005). It is governed and regulated by the Swedish national curriculum (1985:1100, Chapter 13) and the statute (1994:865) concerning Swedish education for immigrants (SOU 2003:77⁵).

SFI – A brief history

SFI has been part of the Swedish education system since 1965 (Lindberg, 1996). Up until today SFI has changed and developed to a great extent. These changes have had an impact on what SFI looks like today. During the 1960s Sweden had a large immigration of foreign labour. As a response to this the Swedish government decided to start an education, free of charge, in the Swedish language aimed at immigrants. The purpose of this new education was for the participants to learn Swedish as soon as possible and adjust to and assimilate into the Swedish society (SOU 2003:77; Lindberg, 1996). During the late 1970s and 1980s the unemployment rates in Sweden increased and thereby also the students enrolled in SFI. As a result of this a great number of teachers needed to be recruited in a short amount of time in order for SFI to be able to provide education to the increasing number of students (SOU 2003:77). The most recent syllabus for SFI was introduced on the first of January in 2007. This syllabus is based on the proposition 2005/06:148 from the Government; “Issues relating to adults’ learning” (“Vissa frågor om vuxnas lärande”)⁶ (SNAE, 2007b⁷).

Aims

According to the new syllabus of 2007, “SFI is first and foremost qualified language education, where the emphasis is on communication in a broad sense” (SNAE, 2007a⁸, p.1). In this syllabus it is also stated that SFI should provide the student with the preconditions to master the Swedish language in order for the student to be able to participate in the Swedish community and labour market (SNAE, 2007a). “The purpose is to provide adults with the educational tools to enable them to exercise their rights and fulfil their obligations as citizens in Sweden” (SNAE, 2007c⁹). The education within SFI should give the individual “... the possibility to develop his/her ability to communicate orally and in writing in Swedish in daily-, community-and working life” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2007, p.2, authors’ translation), and it should be a

⁵ Swedish Government Official Report, SOU 2003:77. For sake of clarity the Swedish abbreviation (SOU 2003:77) has been used when further referred to.

⁶ Referred to in this study as: Government, 2005/06

⁷ *Comments, Syllabus for Swedish language instructions for immigrants*. Further on referred to as: SNAE, 2007b

⁸ *New syllabus for Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)*. Further on referred to as: SNAE, 2007a

⁹ SNAE’s homepage: <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/354/a/1256#paragraphAnchor4>, 2007

preparation for further studies. However, it is pointed out in the syllabus of 2007 that the education must also provide students with knowledge and understanding of the Swedish society, but that there should be a balance between this part of the education and the part concerning learning the Swedish language. SFI also aims to give individuals who are illiterate the opportunity to learn these skills (SNAE, 2007a). As mentioned in the introduction, knowledge in the Swedish language is a crucial factor for the individual's ability to establish him/herself in the society as well as on the labour market (Government, 2005/06).

Organisation and participants

The education within SFI is aimed at: "all adult immigrants who lack basic knowledge in the Swedish language" (Kennerberg & Sibbmark, 2005, p.1, authors' translation) and are over the age of sixteen (SNAE, 2007b). There may be just a few students or up to around 8000 students participating in SFI in one municipality (SOU 2003:77). It is the municipalities' responsibility to provide SFI to those individuals who are entitled to this education within three months after they have been registered in a municipality (Ministry of Education and Research, 2007; Government, 2005/06; Kennerberg & Sibbmark, 2005). However, if there are certain circumstances the waiting time can be extended (Kennerberg & Sibbmark, 2005).

Each municipality is responsible for how SFI is organised (Government, 2005/06) and it is the municipality's responsibility to make sure that those who have the right to participate in SFI also have the opportunity to do so. The municipality is also responsible for reaching those individuals who are entitled to SFI within their municipality and motivate them to participate in the education (Kennerberg & Sibbmark, 2005). The municipalities can choose whether they want to carry out the education themselves or outsource the courses (Directive for Government Official Report Committee, 2007; Kennerberg & Sibbmark, 2005). The education is according to the Swedish national curriculum (Chapter 1, §9) to be equivalent wherever it is organised (SOU 2003:77). However, SFI is not identical between municipalities and different municipalities offer education to an extremely varying extent. Therefore, participants in SFI have access to very different education and are taught under different conditions dependent on where they live. Individuals are not entitled to SFI in another municipality than he/she is registered within. This means that an individual who is not satisfied with the SFI provided in his/her municipality does not have the opportunity to change (Government, 2005/06).

It has been suggested that cooperation between municipalities would enable more municipalities to provide equivalent and qualified SFI education as well as to improve the education. If different municipalities were to cooperate this could facilitate for students to participate in courses in municipalities nearby. The municipalities would then be able to, through the increased pupil population, create groups where students' previous knowledge is on a more similar level. SFI would thereby create more homogenous and specified groups and the education would be more differentiated and individualised (Government, 2005/06).

Courses

SFI provides three different study paths, each of them consisting of two courses;

- SFI 1, courses A and B
- SFI 2, courses B and C
- SFI 3, courses C and D

The education is structured in this way in order to be able to provide an education for the heterogeneous group of students that participate in SFI. The reason why the courses B and C exist within two study paths is because they can function either as a beginner course or an intermediate course depending on the students' existing knowledge in Swedish. SFI's intention is to give all their students the opportunity to finish course D, however, it is possible to finish and receive a grade (pass or pass with distinction) after each course. The students' skills are assessed according to the objectives of each course. For the courses A-D national tests have been designed. These tests should not be used as an examination, but as an aid, and be a part of the teacher's basis for assessment of the student. The tests have also been designed in order to ensure that assessments of SFI students are as uniform as possible between different municipalities (SNAE, 2007a). SFI also includes a course in learning to read and write. This can be taken in combination with other SFI studies and should continue during the whole SFI period. In these courses no grades are given (SNAE, 2007a). The length of the education is recommended to be 525 hours and the student is entitled to an average of fifteen hours of instruction per week over a four-week period (SNAE, 2007b).

Individual evaluation

In order to find out at what level the student should begin their education, each student is assessed and evaluated before starting SFI. The assessment is done in order to receive information about the student's skills, prerequisites and other factors that can have an impact on the student's possibility of reaching the objectives within SFI (SNAE, 2007a). For example, it is stated in the proposition 2005/06:148, that the student's ability to profit from the education will to a great extent depend on his/her educational background (Government, 2005/06).

Individual plan

In Swedish adult education the individual's requests and needs should guide the education (Directive for Government Official Report Committee, 2007). This also applies to SFI, therefore:

The point of departure for both the education and learning is the students' different first languages, other language skills, occupational experience, educational background, and their interests and needs (SNAE, 2007b).

An evaluation of the student's needs and interests should therefore be carried through in order to be able to provide the student with individual guidance. This should be done together with the student (SNAE, 2007b) and in close cooperation with other involved actors. However, the municipality should still have the overriding responsibility for these mappings (Swedish Integration Board, 2004). The Swedish National Agency for Education provides municipalities with general advises and instruction material, regarding how the individual plan should be drawn up. However, the municipalities make their own agreements regarding the individual plans (Fryksmark, 2007¹⁰). The Swedish Integration Board (2004) emphasises in alliance with the investigation SOU 2003:77 that in order for studies within SFI to be successful SFI must provide their students with individual guidance, based on a mapping and study plan developed from the student's perspective (Swedish Integration Board, 2004). It is emphasised that the individual plan should consist of partial goals in order for the student to feel that the goals in the plan are reachable (SOU 2003:77). The guidance should include:

- A mapping of the individual's prerequisites concerning previous education, work experience, desires and economical and social situation.
- Information about education and labour market in a broad sense.
- Discussion about alternative ways or how the individual can achieve his/her individual objectives in the most efficient and suitable ways (SOU 2003:77, p. 241, authors' translation).

A mapping can provide students with an overall picture of their education. By providing students with such information they will be able to see opportunities and options that facilitate their future choices. The mapping must take its starting point in the student's needs, competence, goals and perspectives. A broad perspective should be applied in such a mapping and focus should not only be on the education within SFI but also on what the individual will do after the education is completed. It has also been emphasised that while doing the mapping the student must be seen from a holistic point of view, which means considering the student's conditions in life, including health. Therefore, the student must always stay in the centre of the mapping process. It is also of crucial importance that the mapping is not carried out only in cooperation with the individual student, but also with other involved organisations, such as the Swedish Employment Services, vocational training, reception of refugees, social services, rehabilitation and employers (SOU 2003:77).

Many of the students need a significant amount of support in their mapping process due to physical and psychological issues. It is also important to realise that many of the students have competences and experiences that cannot be directly transferred into a Swedish context. In order to be able to make use of these, a great amount of knowledge is required among those responsible for the mapping process (SOU 2003:77).

¹⁰ Johanna Fryksmark, Senior Administrative Officer, Ministry of Education, e-mail correspondence-April 24, 2007. Further on referred to as: Fryksmark, 2007

Support

In most of the municipalities the students within SFI have access to different kind of support structures. Most common is the access to careers office, while access to support from counsellors and psychologist is provided to a lesser extent within SFI (SNAE, 1997). The municipalities arrange the support structures themselves and thereby the structures differ to a great extent between the municipalities (Fryksmark, 2007). In a report concerning SFI in one municipality it has been pointed out that: "There is a need for support that sometimes is more extensive than the teachers have time for, some people need a lot of support" (Pelto-Piri, 2006, p.5, authors' translation). In an evaluation of SFI, carried out by the Swedish National Agency for Education in 2006, it was also shown that students experience that there is not enough guidance provided within SFI (SNAE, 2006a¹¹). A lack of support is also mentioned as a possible reason to why such a low number of students who begin in the lower courses of SFI reach the D level (SNAE, 2006b¹²). Something else worth mentioning is that recent research has shown that to receive support from a teacher who speaks the student's mother tongue is highly efficient for the student's language development as well as on his/her ability to acquire knowledge about society (SOU 2003:77).

Content and working methods

The Swedish education system is goal -, and result oriented. This means that the goals of the subjects are stipulated, but how to reach the goals are not. Thereby, teachers have the freedom to choose the content and working methods in his/her classes (Government, 2005/06). However, the teacher must consider that the education should take its starting point in the interests and needs of the individual student (SNAE, 2007a). In order for the teacher to choose a content and method that meet the students' needs and prerequisites this should be done together with the students. The teaching should take its starting point in students' everyday life, which could have a positive effect on the students' motivation (Government, 2005/06). In the most recent syllabus (2007) the proposition to base the teaching on everyday life has been realised and it is pointed out that:

... it is a great advantage for the individual if the language instruction is based on everyday life and that instruction in Swedish can to advantage be linked to instruction in language used at work (SNAE, 2007b, p.2).

The Swedish National Agency for Education (2007) points out that it is highly important that the student is provided with possibilities to practice the Swedish language in other situations and contexts than in SFI. This may be done by combining SFI education with other activities, such as work experience, traineeship or other education (SNAE, 2007a). It has also been shown in a number of investigations that in order to successfully integrate a person into the Swedish society and the labour market, the system must facilitate the occurrence of parallel efforts. This means that the process

¹¹ *Skolverkets lägesbedömning 2006. Rapport 288.* Further on referred to as: SNAE, 2006a

¹² *Skolverket, Nyhetsbrev, Positivt med betyg i fler kurser i sfi.* Further on referred to as: SNAE, 2006b

of learning Swedish should not be seen as a linear sequence i.e. a process of accomplishing separate steps, one at a time, such as step 1; learning Swedish, step 2; gaining knowledge, and having the competence validated, step 3; participate in a traineeship or a complementary education. Rather these efforts should be carried through at the same time, parallel to each other, in order to avoid the risk of immigrants ending up in long-term unemployment and dependence on the welfare system (Government, 2005/06).

The municipalities have the responsibility to organise SFI in a way that enables the individual students to combine his/her studies with other activities (Government, 2005/06). According to the law, the municipalities are obliged to cooperate with the Swedish Employment Services (Fryksmark, 2007). This forces the municipalities to enhance the students' opportunities to practice the Swedish language on the labour market (Government, 2005/06). However, the Swedish Employment Services are not obliged according to the law to cooperate with the municipalities (Fryksmark, 2007). Cooperation between municipalities and the Swedish Employment Services would enable students to combine SFI with activities such as work experience, validation, traineeship or other education. Introducing the student into the Swedish labour market at an early stage will enable him/her to learn how the system works at the same time as he/she can create a network (Government, 2005/06). The Swedish National Agency for Education (2007) emphasises that in order to accomplish a combination of SFI and other activities the education needs to be flexible and designed for the individual student (SNAE, 2007a).

Teachers within SFI

The students in SFI constitute a very heterogeneous group involving individuals of different ages, cultures, backgrounds and with different prerequisites, education and experiences in life (Government, 2005/06). Some students have just arrived to Sweden and do not have any previous knowledge concerning the Swedish society. To meet and work with the individuals within SFI puts high demands on a teacher's competence, flexibility as well as on his/her ability to reflect on his/her prejudices, limited perspectives and preconceived notions (SOU 2003:77).

Initially there were no set demands for teachers' qualifications within SFI (Carlson, 2002). Regulations for the competence of the teachers were drawn up for the first time in 1986. The great need for a fast recruitment during the 1970s and 1980s, mentioned earlier, had an impact on the level of competence the new teachers were required to have. A decrease in the level of teacher competence was the outcome due to lack of qualified teachers to employ. Several skills development projects aimed at teachers within SFI have been carried out over the years. Some of them have been long-term projects (for example in 1990, 1993/94 and 2002/03) (SOU 2003:77) and some of them have been more isolated and short-term projects (Lindberg, 1996).

The term teacher competence concerns knowledge within a specific subject as well as the ability to present the subject in an interesting way. The ability to present the subject includes methodological aspects as well as being able to adjust the content, and methods to work with a material in order to suit the needs and prerequisites of the students involved. This aspect of teacher competence also includes being able to initiate and support students' learning process and not to limit this process to the classroom. The competence of a teacher can be divided into subject competence and pedagogical competence. Subject competence concerns the teacher's education in the subject 'Swedish as a second language' and the pedagogical competence concerns every form of pedagogical or teaching degree (SOU 2003:77). All teachers within SFI should according to the Swedish National Agency for Education have competence in the subject Swedish as a second language, competence within adult education as well as the ability to cooperate with other organisations and companies in order to arrange traineeships for the students (Parliamentary Auditors, 2000). The reason why SFI teachers need to be able to arrange traineeships is to enable their students to practice the language skills they acquire during the course in other activities and contexts (SOU 2003:77). In reality all teachers do not have these qualifications (Parliamentary Auditors, 2000).

According to the Swedish national curriculum, municipalities are obliged to employ teachers with a subject competence within the field of the position at hand, if this is possible. All individuals with a Swedish teaching degree or an equivalent degree are however eligible for a permanent employment. If no qualified teacher is available another person who is assessed to have comparable competence as the required could be permanently employed. However, a person who does not have the required competence or equivalent competence may be employed, although only for one year at a time, i.e. temporary employment (SOU 2003:77).

Approximately seventy-five percent of the 1600 teachers who teach within SFI have a pedagogical education (Government, 2005/06). This number is relatively high in comparison to equivalent numbers in other parts of the Swedish school system. The term pedagogical education means that the individual has a degree in teaching. However, pedagogical educations may differ in terms of relevance to the teaching within SFI (SOU 2003:77). For example, in 2003, only eleven percent of those teachers with a pedagogical education teaching within SFI courses had studied forty credits (equivalent of forty weeks of fulltime studies) or more credits of the subject 'Swedish as a second language' (Government, 2005/06). It has been emphasised that not enough SFI teachers have both the competence in the specific subject, as well as a pedagogical degree (SOU 2003:77). There are also few university students within the fields of teaching and pedagogy who choose to study the subject 'Swedish as a second language'. The teacher training in Sweden is also mainly focused on compulsory school or upper secondary school (Parliamentary Auditors, 2000) and there is not an option at the universities or colleges to study the subject 'Swedish as a second language' with a focus on adult learners (SOU 2003:77). The teacher training does not prepare the students to meet adult immigrants and refugees (Parliamentary Auditors, 2000). Students in the teacher training are thereby not prepared for those special prerequisites

and conditions that characterise education for adult immigrants (SNAE, 1997). The conclusion is that the Swedish teacher training is not designed to educate future SFI teachers (SOU 2003:77). The combination of few teacher students choosing to study subjects connected to SFI and the prospect of many SFI teachers (about forty two percent according to the Swedish Teachers' Union) retiring within a ten year period will lead to a extensive lack of competent teachers within SFI (SOU 2003:77).

The education within SFI is aimed at a low status group in the society. The result is that the subject 'Swedish as a second language' receives a low status and thereby many teachers experience that also they have a low status in their professional role. This is reinforced by the fact that the wages for a SFI teacher is lower than for those teachers of the same age, with equivalent education, who works in other parts of the Swedish school system. In many municipalities being a teacher within SFI also means being fairly alone in ones professional role. For example, in 2002, sixty of Sweden's 290 municipalities had only one SFI teacher each employed (SOU 2003:77).

An increasing number of teachers within SFI lack a permanent employment. This is a factor that supposedly will not motivate the individual to fully engage in his/her job nor does it motivate the employer to invest in skills development for their employees (SOU 2003:77). Other factors, mentioned by teachers that can contribute to an insecurity for the teachers is; poorly regulated and not enough cooperation with other involved actors, a management who lack in competence and understanding and few possibilities to take part in skills development. However, other SFI teachers expressed confidence. This confidence is often based on the teachers' experience that they participate in a working situation that promotes their development and that they have the support from a competent and engaged management (SOU 2003:77).

In 2005 the Swedish Government emphasised that the need for teachers' skills development within SFI is significant. They propose that teachers within SFI should be provided with skills development within their subject matter; 'Swedish as a second language' as well as continuous updates in their knowledge of society and the surrounding world. This type of knowledge is necessary in order for the teachers to be able to teach and meet the needs of SFI's participants (Government, 2005/06).

Different perspectives

That immigrants in Sweden are provided with a chance to learn Swedish is important from many different aspects; integration, democracy, labour market, avoidance of dependence on the well fare system, et cetera (SOU 2003:77). Thereby, SFI is expected to be a part of the politics of integration, labour market and education. These three areas have different objectives due to their focus on different questions in society (Carlson, 2002) and different points of views concerning the objectives of SFI have been put forward. Whether SFI is to be regarded as a pedagogical organisation, with the objective to provide students with knowledge in the Swedish language and civics, as a tool for the integration policy or as a tool for the labour market politics is constantly debated and

there is a conflict among the different views. The interpretation of the purpose and which view of the education that dominates have an impact on the objectives of the education and thereby also the content of it. Major differences can be seen in the interpretation and views concerning the objectives of SFI between municipalities. These different interpretations result in varying focuses in the education in the different municipalities (SOU 2003:77).

These different views concerning what objectives SFI should have can take its expression in different ways. For example, the labour market authorities have expressed that the level SFI students have reached in the end of their studies is insufficient if the individual is to be able to establish on the labour market or participate in vocational training. However, according to the Swedish National Agency for Education, the level of the education has been too advanced for many students. This means that they are not able to finish their course, with the result that they cannot move on and participate in what the Swedish Employment Services have to offer, or in other education (SOU 2003:77).

In documents concerning SFI, education is taken for granted as the only way to make progress in society. There seems to be a set order in which to engage in order to reach independence in Sweden: “first education, then work” (Carlson, 2002, p. 90). Carlson (2002) points out that students within SFI cannot use the services provided by the Swedish Employment Services due to that they have not reached the level of pass in a SFI course. She also states that education in many cases is seen as the superior solution to all kinds of problems.

Power relations within SFI

As mentioned earlier, the students should be involved in planning their education from the very beginning (Government, 2005/06). However, in a study conducted by Marie Carlson where SFI documents and writings were studied, this democratic way of teaching does not seem to have been realised. According to Carlson, the material of SFI has a somewhat fostering tone, which thereby may overthrow the democratic starting point that SFI are supposed to have. In the same study it is also pointed out that a mentality of ‘taking care of’ and regarding immigrants as a ‘weak’ group can be seen in the formulations within SFI documents and writings as well as in Carlson’s interviews with school leaders and teachers (Carlson, 2002).

It can be said that the school passes on the fundamental values and norms of a society and it equips the participants with appropriate values and knowledge. The system in itself thereby legitimates the dominant group as the norm and the power holders. Carlson means that the Swedish society’s system and values can be seen in SFI documents to be normative also for the values and norms within SFI (Carlson, 2002). How to behave and act as a participant and citizen in the Swedish society is also integrated in SFI, according to Carlson (2002).

The negative view of SFI

As mentioned in the introduction of this study the education within SFI has for a long time been marked by a very negative view. This has had a negative impact on the education's reputation, status and also the teachers' working situation, as pointed out above (SNAE, 1997). The negative attitudes towards SFI also have an impact on those who participate in courses within SFI (Government, 2000/01).

Something which has contributed to the negative view of SFI is that numbers and statistics concerning pass rates and other result oriented figures of SFI that are presented often seem to be very low. However, it must be clarified that sometimes different reports focus on pass rates from different courses, and these can differ to a great extent. For example according to a report from 2006, distributed by the Swedish National Agency for Education, almost sixty four percent of the students starting in SFI in the spring of 2003 had passed one of the courses in the fall of 2005 (SNAE, 2006a). Other reports focus on how many students reach the D-level. For example one report illustrated that of all the students in SFI courses in 2003, only thirty five percent had passed course D in 2005 (SNAE, 2006a). Other figures show that eight percent of the students who start in the lower levels of SFI reach the D course within three years. However, figures like these might be misleading (Lindberg, 1996). Many factors have an impact on the results of the students within SFI. For example, the students' age, educational background, general well being, motivation and social conditions have an impact on the teaching and its results (SOU 2003:77). The Swedish National Agency for Education has also brought up possible reasons for the low numbers shown above. These are; a lack of motivation to study beyond the point where one can get by in the Swedish society, unpredictable events which makes it difficult to physically or psychologically manage the studies, or the lack of enough support within SFI for students with a short educational background (SNAE, 2006b). Also how many students a teacher have in a class (Government, 2000/01), the structural conditions in society and in which municipality the students are enrolled in SFI, are significant factors for the results of SFI and its students (SNAE, 1997). It has also been pointed out that due to the participants' different mother tongue, cultural background, social situation, psychological and physical health, age and achieved proficiency in Swedish at the start of a course, it is not possible to easily measure and compare quality and results of SFI (SNAE, 1997). There is also a difficulty in providing numbers concerning yearly pass rates of SFI due to that students may choose not to continue after he/she has finished one of the courses, and thereby not reach the D-level (the final level) (Fryksmark, 2007). However, numbers concerning pass rates have been published even though these are not annual pass rates, as seen above.

Another factor, which may contribute to the negative view of SFI, is that sometimes a lack of distinction occurs between SFI and parts of the integration policy, such as the introduction program provided to refugees in Sweden. In these cases SFI may be given the full responsibility for the integration of a refugee into the Swedish society. If such an effort fails the blame is also put on SFI. This is an unfair allegation because the prerequisite for a successful integration is that several actors have a common responsibility and cooperate (SOU 2003:77).

Cooperation

It has been stated that in Sweden there is little cooperation between different agencies, government authorities, the research community and the population at large. One reason for this could be lack of sufficient encouragement and support (O'Dowd, 2006).

As a member of EU, Sweden is obliged to outline a national action plan against poverty and social exclusion. Such a plan was outlined in the first half of 2003. The action plan specifies what priorities the specific member state has in relation to the objectives in the area of poverty and social exclusion. In this action plan all member states are required to set targets to reduce "... the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion [...] and draw special attention to the risk of poverty and social exclusion among immigrants" (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003, p.2). It has been shown that in order to be successful in these aspects it is essential that the local level, local strategies and action plans collaborate with national policy (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003).

EU has emphasised, in directives and guidelines, the importance of efforts being made on the local level to increase employment as well as to fight poverty and exclusion. It has been pointed out that; "Social exclusion is mainly a consequence of the fact that people have no connection with the world of work" (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003, p. 49). Participation by actors on the local level is not sufficient. In order to reach the objectives there is a need for partnerships, a holistic approach and a bottom-up perspective. Partnerships are important and necessary in order to accomplish a better coordination between local bodies as well as between different institutional levels. Such coordination includes that administrative boundaries are crossed and that collaboration between public authorities and voluntary organisations is made possible. In order to reach success, local partnerships that bring relevant bodies together are an important factor. The action plan must be based on a holistic approach and coordination if it is to have any real impact. A bottom-up perspective involves that:

Local strategies and activities must be based on an analysis of local needs and local skills to make it possible to find appropriate solutions. Activities must be designed and implemented with a view to the individuals concerned and their participation (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003, p.46).

If the action plan is to be realised it is of crucial importance that all policy areas contribute to implementing the plan as well as that all relevant bodies take part in the implementation. To organise joint training for relevant bodies on the local level is pointed out as a way of facilitating cooperation between these. It is also important that sufficient time is given to the different bodies to become involved in order for them to build mutual confidence. "Political will, good forward planning, economic resources and broad political support at all levels are necessary in order to achieve positive and lasting results and participation" (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003, p.48-49). One problem with implementing this action plan is that within local authorities many people are not familiar with EU strategies and the Swedish national action plan (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003).

A network has been formed in order to prevent social exclusion (The Network Against Social Exclusion). In this network extensive knowledge and experience of social integration and creating dialogue with users exists. The network constitutes of representatives involved in the social sector at the local, regional and national levels (such as social economy organisations, client and user organisations, women's organisations, religious denominations, the disabled persons' movement, immigrant organisations et cetera). This network is to function as a forum for dialogue where different organisations can exchange experiences and attempt to influence policies in order to achieve a more inclusive society (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003).

An account for the Swedish language education, SFI has now been given. In order to be able to see if the educational tools of the Indigenous Australian organisation, QATSIHWEPAC may be of any use in this education an account of QATSIHWEPAC as well as of the educational tools used by this organisation will be given.

4.2 Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC)

The organisation

The organisation QATSIHWEPAC is situated in Cairns, Australia. The core business of the organisation is to train Indigenous Australians from all parts of Australia to be health workers. The board of the organisation is made up of representatives from different Indigenous communities, and QATSIHWEPAC is thereby a community-controlled organisation.

Aim

QATSIHWEPAC's vision is:

...to create awareness, endorse mindfulness and understanding by the wider community of the need for culturally appropriate training courses specifically designed for health providers to reconcile the differences in health status, for the betterment of Indigenous People (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006, p.31).

The aim of the courses is to provide the students with a possible career in life as well as to try to overcome health problems in Indigenous Australian Communities. It was found that the developers of the course, the CEO, the trainers and the students to a great extent worked towards the same goal and had the same aim with what the course should lead to. However, the aim did not seem to have been explicitly expressed (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006).

Courses

At QATSIHWEPAC the courses certificate III, certificate IV, diploma and advanced diploma are provided. The courses are delivered over a six month period and are divided into three blocks. Each of these blocks lasts for two weeks. Between the blocks the trainers aim for the students to work. To help those students who do not have a job, trainers try to arrange work placements in order for the students to keep up and develop the skills they acquire during the course in a practical setting.

Staff and participants

All of the employees at QATSIHWEPAC do not have a teaching degree, however all of them are qualified trainers¹³. This means, according to the CEO of QATSIHWEPAC, that they are professional people in their field with a trainer competence added to their qualifications. QATSIHWEPAC provides their students with tutors both within as well as outside the classroom. The participants in the courses at QATSIHWEPAC range from seventeen to about fifty years of age and there are in total about 175-180 students. In order to be able to participate in the program the student has to identify as an Australian Aboriginal (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006).

Individual assessment and pass rates

Prior to each course all the students are individually assessed¹⁴ in order to determine on what level the students' existing knowledge is and thereby place the student in the appropriate course.

Over a calendar year QATSIHWEPAC has a pass rate of seventy-five percent (if those students who are allowed to continue over the next year are included the number is eighty-five percent). Within courses for Indigenous Australians these pass rates are considered to be very high (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). In 2004 QATSIHWEPAC received the 'Department of Employment and Training Queensland Indigenous Peoples' Training Initiative Award'. They were selected for this award due to their extensive work in developing and implementing health worker training and career pathway through a project called "The Opening Doors Program". Partnerships between QATSIHWEPAC, North Queensland General Practitioners, Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE, state as well as federal governments has resulted in this program.

The program satisfies the need for training Indigenous health workers to work in general practice, providing primary health care to Indigenous patients throughout north Queensland - either in place of Aboriginal Medical Services or in areas where no such services exist (QATSIHWEPAC's homepage, 2007¹⁵).

¹³ They will further on be referred to as trainers instead of teachers.

¹⁴ This assessment is equivalent to an evaluation.

¹⁵ <http://www.qatsihwepac.com.au/achievements.htm>, 2007

The educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC

In the previous study (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006) it was pointed out that QATSIHWEPAC used a number of educational tools. It was concluded that these educational tools were the reason for them being able to create a successful learning situation. Not all of these educational tools will be included in this study due to some of them being developed specifically for the Indigenous Australian culture. The educational tools, which will be included are; support, cultural awareness, and flexibility. QATSIHWEPAC provides a lot of support for the students, academically, socially, emotionally as well as culturally. Cultural awareness is used as an implicit educational tool and is used, for example, through regarding the cultural codes in the Indigenous Australian culture. The organisation used the educational tool flexibility since they have applied a flexible approach in the design and delivery of the education. The educational tools above have been chosen since these are the ones that feasibly could be of use for SFI. However, this choice could be problematic and will therefore be discussed further on.

4.3 Summary of the results

An account of the two organisations SFI and QATSIHWEPAC as well as the process of borrowing and lending has now been given. Educational borrowing and lending is, as shown above, a complicated process. It involves several steps; cross national attraction, decision, implementation and internalisation/ indigenisation. In all of these steps and throughout the process of educational borrowing there are difficulties to be aware of and considerations to make in order to minimise the risk of failure as regards to the expected outcomes of educational borrowing. Examples of difficulties to consider is being too enthusiastic about an idea and therefore disregarding crucial aspects in the borrowing process, making quick fix or phoney decisions or not considering the involved contexts and the importance of these being considered. If it is to be examined what educational tools may or may not be borrowed from QATSIHWEPAC and used by SFI these aspects need to be kept in mind. It has been pointed out that it is extremely important to examine both the context where an idea has originated as well as the context where it is to be implemented. In what has now been given an account for it can be seen that SFI and QATSIHWEPAC are two very different organisations but that they also share a few similarities. In order to clarify these differences and similarities a summary of both SFI and QATSIHWEPAC will be illustrated below.

Table 4.1 Summary of SFI and QATSIHWEPAC

SFI	QATSIHWEPAC
External disagreement concerning aims	Aligning aims among involved actors
National organisation, municipalities responsible for education	Community controlled, local organisation
Varying number of participants in different municipalities (a few up to 8000)	175 -180 students
Aimed at immigrants over 16	Aimed at Indigenous Australians
Teachers are free to design the classes and be flexible in class (must consider national goals and national syllabus)	Teachers are free to design the classes and be flexible in class
Teaching should take its starting point in the students' every day life	Teachers use real life experience in class
Individual evaluations should be carried through before the course starts	Individual assessments are carried through before the course starts
Different study paths	Different courses provided in blocks
Parallel efforts (such as combining SFI with work) are advocated, municipalities are responsible	The students work between blocks, teachers help with vocational placements
Teachers (teaching degree)	Trainers (professional people in their field with a trainer competence added)
	Aim to only employ Indigenous Australian staff
Different support structures between municipalities (most common; careers offices, less common; counsellors and psychologists)	Holistic support provided (tutor, counsellor, reachable trainers, peer support network groups and cultural support)
Marked by a negative view	Marked by a positive view (received an award)

5. Analysis

The purpose of this study has been to examine whether the educational tools from QATSIHWEPAC could be of use in SFI. The purpose consists of two research questions:

- 1) What are the prerequisites for the educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC to be of any use for SFI?
- 2) What are the hindrances for the educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC to be of any use for SFI?

Ochs (2006) points out that it is important to ask the question what factors of an educational idea are necessary to implement, and what ideas could lead to effective and innovative education practices in ones own context. This leads to the following question; can any of the educational ideas and educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC contribute to improve the education within SFI? When having thoroughly looked at the two organisations it is clear that some, but not all, of the educational tools used by QATSIHWEPAC could be of use in SFI. The educational tools that will be focused on are; support, cultural awareness and flexibility. This will be done in relation to the contexts of the two educations and the contextual prerequisites of SFI. There are implications in making a selection of educational tools in this way and other educational tools might be just as important to regard as the ones chosen. However, the authors are aware of this. The first educational tool to be analysed is support, followed by cultural awareness and flexibility.

5.1 Support as an educational tool

There are many prerequisites within SFI for the possibility of implementing the educational tool support from QATSIHWEPAC. However, there are a number of hindrances as well. These prerequisites and hindrances will be briefly illustrated in the following tables and then clarified below.

Table 5.1 Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool support

Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool support as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC
Awareness exists of the importance of providing support
Some support is already provided
Individual evaluation
Individual guidance is emphasised as important
The student should be seen from a holistic point of view
Support for a holistic approach exists
Obligation to cooperate with the Swedish Employment Services exists
Requirement to follow Sweden's action plan against poverty and social exclusion 2003-2005
Existing network

Table 5.2 Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool support

Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool support as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC
Awareness of the importance of providing support has existed for some time
Existing support structures
External disagreement concerning the aims of SFI
No obligation for the Swedish Employment Services to cooperate
Inadequate teacher training
Lack of permanent employment for SFI teachers

A lot of support is provided to the students within QATSIHWEPAC, both during and between the training blocks. The support is provided academically, socially, emotionally as well as culturally. The support structure of QATSIHWEPAC consists of:

- Assessing the students individually before the course begins in order to find out how much support the students will need as well as find out about personal issues that may interact with the student's education, e.g. gaining knowledge concerning the student's personal and social situation.
- Having a tutor, a student representative and a counsellor.
- Helping students with vocational placements.
- Providing peer support network.
- Being reachable for the students to contact between blocks.
- Providing cultural support by recognising the Indigenous Australian history and regarding the impact this has had on the students' self-images and trying to increase students' self esteem (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006).

The support provided by QATSIHWEPAC is thereby both practical and personal, and this holistic way of providing support was found to be a significant factor in the successful learning situation that QATSIHWEPAC has managed to create (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006).

5.1.1 Prerequisites and hindrances within SFI for using support as an educational tool

The support QATSIHWEPAC provides their students with takes its starting point in a holistic view of their students and is thereby of a holistic character. As mentioned above, this was one the main reasons why QATSIHWEPAC had managed to create a successful and appreciated support structure for their students (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). The question is whether the context of SFI allows for an implementation of such a support structure described above. It has been pointed out that more support for students within SFI is often needed (Pelto-Piri, 2006) and that there is not enough support provided to students with a short educational background (SNAE, 2006b). The Swedish National Agency for Education also points out that students experience that there is not enough guidance provided within SFI (SNAE, 2006a). This, in addition to that a lack of support is mentioned as a possible reason for poor educational achievement (SNAE, 2006b), shows that an awareness exists within SFI that it is important to provide the students with support, if SFI is to reach its educational goals. This awareness and knowledge of the importance of support is a prerequisite within SFI to improve and change their support structures. However, such awareness seems to have existed for some time (SNAE, 1997), but still the structures are not sufficient for the needs of the students (Pelto-Piri, 2006; SNAE, 2006a; SNAE, 2006b). Arguably, this could pose a hindrance for improving the support structures since it seems that this has not been prioritised in the past.

Different kinds of support are already provided to SFI students within most municipalities, such as careers office and in some cases counsellors and psychologists (SNAE, 1997). However, these support structures are different between municipalities, since they are free to arrange the support in the way they consider to be appropriate (Fryksmark, 2007). Thereby, participants in SFI have access to very different support structures. These existing differences might pose a hindrance when implementing a new common support structure. As emphasised by Uhrmacher (1997), it is important to realise that an educational idea will change when moved to a new context in order to fit into that new context (Uhrmacher, 1997), and it will be interpreted by those who are to use it (Bungum, 2006). Thereby, the new support structures might be interpreted differently between municipalities and be given different meanings depending on who is interpreting it. This fact will have an impact on, and might distort, the idea and meaning of the original support structure that is to be borrowed, not only at the level of policy making within SFI, but also within different municipalities.

Individual assessment/evaluation

An individual assessment is carried out with students at QATSIHWEPAC before they start the courses. The assessment is carried out in order to find out how much support

the students need as well as to find out about personal issues that may interact with the student's education (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Within SFI an evaluation of each student should be carried through before the initiation of his/her participation in SFI. This is done in order to receive information about the student's skills, prerequisites and other factors that may have an impact on the student's possibility of reaching the objectives within SFI (SNAE, 2007a). This evaluation could, in addition to its educational purpose, pose as a forum, where the support the student need in his/her life situation outside of SFI could be discussed. A support plan could also be drawn up, and the individual evaluations could thereby be used as the individual assessments are used by QATSIHWEPAC. To provide this kind of personal support may not be a responsibility of SFI. However, if SFI is able to cooperate with other authorities concerning support, both from the educational aspect as well as the personal aspect, this would make it possible to provide the student with a holistic support as the students of QATSIHWEPAC are provided with (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006).

Regarding SFI, it has been stated that it is of crucial importance that the evaluation and the drawing up of a plan for the students is carried out in cooperation with other involved organisations, such as the Swedish Employment Services, vocational training, reception of refugees, social services, rehabilitation and employers (SOU 2003:77). Such cooperation could pose a prerequisite for SFI improving its support structure. This holistic approach would also be in alignment with how the educational tool support is used by QATSIHWEPAC, where support is provided from many different perspectives of the student; educational, social, emotional and practical (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). This could pose a prerequisite for SFI applying the educational tool support as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC.

That immigrants in Sweden learn Swedish is important from many different aspects; integration, democracy, labour market, et cetera (SOU 2003:77). These different areas have different objectives due to their focus on different questions in society. The organisations mentioned above are all parts of these areas and thereby, they also have different objectives for SFI (Carlson, 2002). These differences in objectives may make a cooperation between them somewhat complicated (SOU 2003:77) and thereby this could pose a hindrance for a holistic support structure.

Counsellor support

One part of the support provided by QATSIHWEPAC is that they have a tutor, a student representative and a counsellor (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Regarding SFI, most municipalities provide support in the form of careers office and in some cases also counsellors and psychologists are provided to the students (SNAE, 1997). It has been emphasised that in order for studies within SFI to be successful, SFI must provide their students with individual guidance (Swedish Integration Board, 2004). Focus should not only be on the education within SFI, but also on what the individual will do after the education is completed, i.e. continue in other education or work. The student should be seen from a holistic point of view, i.e. the student's conditions in life, including health, should be considered (SOU 2003:77). This holistic approach is a prerequisite for a

support structure being set up for SFI students, both from an educational and a personal perspective, which is how QATSIHWEPAC provides support. That these structures already exist within SFI can be a good basis to build on in order to develop the support structures and thereby make them more holistic.

Vocational training

QATSIHWEPAC help their students arrange vocational placement between the training blocks (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Regarding the provision of support to students within SFI, in terms of contacting the labour market, the municipalities are according to the law obliged to cooperate with the Swedish Employment Services (Fryksmark, 2007). This is a strong prerequisite for SFI to be able to provide their students with vocational support. However, the Swedish Employment Services are not obliged to cooperate with the municipalities (Fryksmark, 2007). This could pose a hindrance for such cooperation to take place and thereby also a hindrance for SFI to provide such support.

Peer support networks

To establish a peer support networks is also a part of the support structure in QATSIHWEPAC (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). This is something that is not seen within SFI. This effort is a part of the holistic support in QATSIHWEPAC (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006) and it might be advantageous for the students within SFI to be part of such networks.

Teacher support – being reachable

The trainers at QATSIHWEPAC are highly engaged in their students and they try to always be reachable and assist their students (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Within SFI it has been pointed out that an increasing number of teachers lack a permanent employment. This is a factor which supposedly will not motivate individuals to fully engage in their job (SOU 2003:77). The support to SFI students might thereby decrease, in cases where the teachers do not have permanent employment. It has also been pointed out that the Swedish teacher training does not prepare students in the teacher training to meet adult immigrants and refugees (Parliamentary Auditors, 2000). Students in the teacher training are thereby not prepared for those special prerequisites and conditions that characterise education for adult immigrants (SNAE, 1997). This may pose a hindrance for the teachers being able to provide support to their students.

Holistic approach to support

As seen above, support within QATSIHWEPAC is provided in a holistic way, i.e. academically, socially, emotionally as well as culturally (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). The organisation is also involved in a network, called ‘The Opening Doors Program’,

where they have established partnerships with several different organisations in order to be able to cooperate with them (QATSIHWEPAC's homepage, 2007¹⁶).

It has been stated that there is little cooperation between different agencies in Sweden (O'Dowd, 2006). Regarding SFI, there seems to be a need for cooperation between different agencies in the Swedish society. It has been pointed out that the support structures discussed above, requires cooperation between different agencies. For example, the evaluations are supposed to be carried out in cooperation with other authorities and organisations (SOU 2003:77). If this were to be done the evaluations could be used to provide SFI students with educational as well as personal support. In order to provide SFI students with tutors, student representatives, counsellors (as in QATSIHWEPAC) as well as careers office and psychologists, this requires that SFI is part of a support network. It has also been pointed out that SFI should be combined with other activities (SNAE, 2007a). In order for this to work, cooperation between different agencies is necessary. To establish a peer support network would also require cooperation between different agencies. Therefore, in order for SFI to provide the students with such support structures there is a need for cooperation between different authorities and organisations in each municipality, but also on a national level. Cooperation between SFI and other authorities and organisations would be supported by Sweden's action plan against poverty and social exclusion 2003-2005. One of the action plan's main standing points is that cooperation between different authorities and organisations needs to be enhanced and improved. In order for this to occur coordination between different agencies is required. In this action plan it is pointed out that there is a need for partnerships in Sweden in order to accomplish a better coordination between local bodies as well as between different institutional levels. This means that public authorities as well as voluntary organisations need to cooperate. In order for this to be successful there is a need for a holistic approach and a bottom-up perspective. A bottom-up perspective involves that "Local strategies and activities must be based on an analysis of local needs and local skills to make it possible to find appropriate solutions. Activities must be designed and implemented with a view to the individuals concerned and their participation" (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003, p.46).

It is also pointed out in the action plan that it is of crucial importance that all policy areas contribute to implementing the plan as well as that all relevant bodies take part in the implementation if it is to be realised (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003). SFI, as a part of a public authority, should according to this action plan be required to participate in such cooperation, in order to contribute with their part in the process in making coordination possible. However, the action plan has pointed out that people must be trained in this and to organize joint training for relevant bodies on the local level is pointed out as a way of facilitating cooperation between these. It is also important that sufficient time is given to the different agencies to become involved and build mutual confidence (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003). This action plan could pose a prerequisite for SFI making their support structures more holistic, since

¹⁶ <http://www.qatsihwepac.com.au/achievements.htm>, 2007

cooperation with other agencies would facilitate the establishment of such support structures.

It is also important to consider that a network with the aim to prevent social exclusion already exists. This network is made up of representatives who are involved in the social sector at local, regional and national levels. This network is supposed to function as a forum for dialogue where different organisations can exchange experiences and attempt to influence policies in order to achieve a more inclusive society (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003). That such a network already exists would pose a prerequisite for SFI being able to improve their support structure. An idea would be for SFI to join this network. Such a forum could also help SFI enhance their support structures, since this could pose an opportunity for SFI to network, in order to be able to arrange other activities than SFI for their students, which they aim at doing. However, this holistic approach and the collaboration between different actors might be hindered by the fact that different actors have different views concerning the objectives of SFI (i.e. pedagogical, integration policy or labour market) (SOU 2003:77). If the objectives of providing support to students are different between the cooperating organisations, these different opinions might pose a hindrance in the cooperation process. These differences need to be overcome if cooperation is to be accomplished and a holistic support is to be provided to the students within SFI.

A great deal of what has been mentioned above are parts of a support structure for students in their practical situation. However, at QATSIHWEPAC a more implicit support is also provided to the students; cultural awareness (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). This type of support will be clarified below.

5.2 Cultural awareness as an educational tool

In order for SFI to use the educational tool cultural awareness, as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC, a number of prerequisites as well as hindrances need to be considered. These prerequisites and hindrances will be briefly illustrated in the following tables and clarified below.

Table 5.3 Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool cultural awareness

Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool cultural awareness as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC
Awareness concerning the importance of teachers being aware of their own prejudices exists
Updates of the society and surrounding world should be provided to teachers
Teaching should take its starting point in students' everyday life
Teachers are free to choose content and working methods

Table 5.4 Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool cultural awareness

Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool cultural awareness as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC
SFI students - a heterogeneous group
Inadequate teacher training
Fostering tone
Mentality of 'taking care of'
Immigrants regarded as a 'weak' group
Swedish society's system and values in SFI
Primarily supporting Swedish culture within SFI

Cultural awareness is used as an educational tool by QATSIHWEPAC in order to recognise the Indigenous Australian culture, and thereby support the students in their cultural identity. Cultural awareness means trying to have an understanding of the students' culture and consider and support their cultural identity inside and outside of the classroom. The reason to apply cultural awareness is to strengthen the students' self-images and self-confidence. This educational tool takes its expression in that:

- QATSIHWEPAC tries to employ only Indigenous Australians.
- The trainers reflect on their own culturally influenced behaviour and how this behaviour interacts with the students' behaviours.
- The trainers try to have an understanding concerning the students' circumstances in life due to social, historical and political issues.
- Indigenous Australian culture is included in the curriculum.
- The trainers regard and teach cultural codes in the Indigenous Australian culture (e.g. the trainers try not be on a teacher-student level, the usage of a holistic approach and visual tools et cetera) (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006).

5.2.1 Prerequisites and hindrances within SFI for using cultural awareness as an educational tool

Trainers/trainers influence

In QATSIHWEPAC an aim, which is nearly fulfilled, is to employ only Indigenous Australian staff. This aim exists in order for the trainers to be able to better understand the students' situation and thereby be able to support them both personally as well as in their education. That the trainers are Indigenous Australians also enables them to pose as role models for their students (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Recent research also shows that to receive support from a teacher who speaks the mother tongue of the student is very efficient for the student's language development as well as on his/her ability to acquire knowledge about society (SOU 2003:77). However, students within SFI constitute a very heterogeneous group involving individuals from different countries, cultures and backgrounds (Government, 2005/06). This could pose a hindrance for teachers within SFI to be culturally aware, since there are many different cultures to regard. It has been pointed out that to meet and work with the students within

SFI puts high demands on the teachers' competence and flexibility (SOU 2003:77). However, it has been stated that the Swedish teacher training does not prepare students to meet adult immigrants and refugees (Parliamentary Auditors, 2000) and students in the teacher training are thereby not prepared for the special prerequisites and conditions that characterise education for adult immigrants (SNAE, 1997). This lack of preparation could pose a hindrance if the teachers within SFI are to provide cultural support to their students.

Trainers at QATSIHWEPAC are prepared and have the knowledge of their students' cultural background due to themselves being Indigenous Australian. They also try to have an understanding concerning the students' circumstances in life due to social, historical and political issues (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). The question is if to employ only individuals with similar backgrounds as the students would be a possibility or even desired within SFI. SFI is supposed to enable their students to participate in the Swedish community and labour market (SNAE, 2007a). Would having only teachers with a similar background contradict this aim in that the Swedish culture becomes excluded? However, that the teachers have an understanding of the students' situation should be desired to attain also within SFI. It has in the proposition 2005/06:148 been emphasised that the teachers should be provided with continuous updates in their knowledge of society and surrounding world (Government, 2005/06). It is not clear what these updates in the knowledge of society and surrounding world means exactly. However, such updates could include knowledge about countries and regions where the teachers' students come from. If this were to be included in the updates provided to the teachers, it would be a step forward for the teachers to reach the understanding of the students' situation, which is strived for in QATSIHWEPAC.

The trainers within QATSIHWEPAC try to reflect on their own culturally influenced behaviour and how this behaviour interacts with the students' behaviours (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). It has been pointed out that to be a teacher within SFI puts high demands on his/her ability to reflect on his/her prejudices, limited perspectives and preconceived notions (SOU 2003:77). This shows awareness of the importance that teachers are aware of their own prejudices, and the influence these might have on their behaviour in the classroom. The continuous updates of society and surrounding world that should be provided to the teachers, mentioned above, might pose as opportunities for the teachers to gain knowledge about different cultures, as well as their own. Such knowledge could be a basis for SFI teachers reflecting on their own prejudices, limited perspectives and preconceived notion and what impact these might have on the students. This could thereby pose a prerequisite for SFI teachers applying the educational tool cultural awareness.

Inclusion of the students' culture

To include the Indigenous Australian culture in the curriculum is a part of the cultural support provided at QATSIHWEPAC (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Within SFI the teaching should take its starting point in students' everyday life (Government, 2005/06) and teachers within SFI have the freedom to choose content and working methods in

their classes (Government, 2005/06). Therefore, teachers have the support from the guidelines to include the students' culture, and this could pose a prerequisite for SFI teachers applying a cultural awareness in the teaching. However, students within SFI constitute a very heterogeneous group involving individuals of different ages, cultures, backgrounds and with different prerequisites, education and experiences in life (Government, 2005/06). To expect SFI teachers to include all the different cultures of their students may be too much to ask, and the responsibility should not solely be on the teachers. At QATSIHWEPAC there is only one culture to support, the Indigenous Australian culture (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). In SFI there are many cultures mixed in one class (Government, 2005/06). The cultural awareness must therefore take a broader approach in SFI than it does in QATSIHWEPAC. It is thereby important to note that it is not the specific actions of QATSIHWEPAC that should be implemented, it is the idea of a cultural awareness and a cultural support in the classroom that should be used. As Phillips (1989) has pointed out; when an educational borrowing is to occur it is of great importance that the borrower is aware of the fact that the model has been developed in another context to suit that context's specific needs.

An example of cultural awareness in the Indigenous Australian contexts is that the trainers at QATSIHWEPAC try not to be on a teacher-student level in the classroom. The trainers pointed out that it is important to not see themselves as any better than their students (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). This is an approach that suits the Indigenous Australian learners due to their culture and history. It is thereby necessary that SFI understands QATSIHWEPAC's contextual framework in order to see why the ideas have originated (Uhrmacher, 1997).

Implicit support

It is not only on the actual teaching and learning level that cultural awareness needs to be included. This awareness and support also need to be included on a more implicit level, in the formulations of official documents and in the attitudes of management as well as teachers.

Cultural support, as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC, means to support individuals in their cultural identity and the idea is to support students, not take care of them (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). According to Carlson, formulations in official documents and writings of SFI have a somewhat fostering tone. A mentality of 'taking care of' and regarding immigrants as a 'weak' group also exists in the material (Carlson, 2002). This fostering tone and the mentality of 'taking care of' and regarding immigrants as a 'weak' group, could pose a hindrance for teachers within SFI to apply cultural awareness as an educational tool as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC.

It can also be said that the school passes on fundamental values and norms of a society and the system in itself thereby legitimates the dominant group as the norm and the power holders. Carlson states that the Swedish society's system and values can be seen to be normative for the values and norms also within SFI. How to behave and act

correctly as a participant and citizen in the Swedish society is also integrated in the documents and material of SFI. This means that it is primarily the Swedish culture that is supported within the frames of SFI (Carlson, 2002). In QATSIHWEPAC the Indigenous Australian culture is viewed as important and it poses a guideline in the material of the organisation. Cultural support pervades the whole organisation, from the policymakers to the teachers, and it is also appreciated by the students (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). If cultural awareness is to be used as an educational tool by SFI the tool needs to be supported by all the involved actors and pervade the whole organisation, as it does in QATSIHWEPAC.

5.3 Flexibility as an educational tool

In order for SFI to use the educational tool flexibility as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC, a number of prerequisites as well as hindrances need to be considered. These prerequisites and hindrances will be briefly illustrated in the following tables and clarified below.

Table 5.5 Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool flexibility

Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool flexibility as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC
Municipalities arranging education
Students can continue until they pass
Different study paths
Combination of SFI and other activities supported
Awareness of the importance of taking a flexible approach exists
Teachers are free to choose content and working methods
Individual evaluation
SFI education should be designed for the individual student
Teachers are supported to base their teaching on students' everyday life

Table 5.6 Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool flexibility

Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool flexibility as it is used in QATSIHWEPAC
External disagreement concerning the aims of SFI
Insufficient cooperation
Inadequate teacher training
National syllabus and national goals
Possibly the national tests
Some teachers insecure in their professional role
No obligation for the Swedish Employment Services to cooperate

Within both QATSIHWEPAC and SFI the need for a flexible approach in the education is emphasised. However, after examining an extensive amount of documents within SFI it has been realised that flexibility can be extremely complex and if an organisation expect their teachers to apply flexibility in their teaching they must also have the prerequisites to do so. It is clear that there is a difference between the flexibility used in QATSIHWEPAC and the flexibility aimed for in SFI.

At QATSIHWEPAC the educational tool flexibility is a part of both the design and the delivery of the education. It is part of the design in that;

- All the trainers work towards the same goal and aim, which enables them to be flexible due to an agreement of what the education should lead to.
- The students are allowed to continue with their training over the next year due to the organisation's awareness of issues in the communities that may cause delays for the students in their education.
- Different courses are provided in order to suit the students' knowledge.
- The training is provided in blocks.

The flexibility in the delivery of the education is shown in that;

- The trainers have support from the organisation to take on a very flexible approach in their teaching and are free to choose teaching methods.
- The trainers change modes of teaching in order to teach at the students' current level of knowledge and when there is a need for it, for example having the class outside on a warm day.
- The students are assessed previous to the courses in order to have a curriculum that starts from what the student bring to class.
- The trainers do not teach everyone the same way.
- The trainers are free to assess the students in ways that suits the students (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006).

In the previous study it was concluded that a flexible approach was one of the main reasons why QATSIHWEPAC were able to create a successful learning situation (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006).

5.3.1 Prerequisites and hindrances within SFI for using flexibility as an educational tool

Flexibility in the design of the education

External disagreement

In QATSIHWEPAC the aim was not explicitly expressed, but still the CEO, trainers, students and the developers of the course worked towards the same goal to a great extent, and had the same aim with what the course should lead to for the participants. Due to the fact that there seemed to be an agreement concerning what the aim of the education should be, this enabled the trainers to apply a flexible approach in their

teaching, because they knew what they were aiming at. Worth mentioning is that QATSIHWEPAC is a community-controlled organisation and there is no external disagreement on what the purpose of the education should lead to. This also contributed to that it was clear for the trainers what they should work towards (Sjöblom & Wernesten). There is some external disagreement concerning the aim of SFI between different policy areas in Sweden. This concerns whether SFI is to be regarded as a pedagogical organisation, as a tool for the integration policy or as a tool for the labour market politics. This has led to major differences in the interpretations and views concerning the objectives of SFI among municipalities (SOU 2003:77). As shown above, the fact that the trainers within QATSIHWEPAC are working towards aligning aims and are not influenced by any external disagreement, seemed to be one of the prerequisites for the trainers being able to take a flexible approach in their teaching. The external disagreement concerning the aims of SFI could pose a hindrance for the teachers' flexibility within SFI.

Flexibility in the length of the education

Within QATSIHWEPAC students are allowed to continue their training over the next year due to the organisation's awareness of issues in the communities that may cause delays for the students in their education (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Within SFI, 525 hours have been recommended to be the length of the education (SNAE, 2007b). However, this is only a recommendation and the municipalities have the freedom themselves to arrange the education (Government, 2005/06), as long as it is designed for the individual student (SNAE, 2007a). The municipalities could thereby arrange for students to continue SFI as long as they need to and this could pose a prerequisite for SFI applying a flexible approach towards their students in the length of the education. The fact that the municipalities are free to arrange their education could also pose a prerequisite for SFI applying the educational tool flexibility, since this could enable them to arrange SFI education in a way that suits their specific needs.

Flexibility in the courses

The education at QATSIHWEPAC is provided in different courses, and each student is placed in a course that is appropriate for him/her (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). SFI also provides different courses and study paths in order to be able to provide an education for the heterogeneous group of students, which participate in SFI (SNAE, 2007a). Providing their students with the opportunity to follow different study paths enables the students to attain their objectives. The delivery of the education is designed this way due to awareness that there is a need for flexibility in the education if the needs of the students are to be met (SNAE, 2007b). This awareness is a prerequisite for SFI to apply the educational tool flexibility as it is used by QATSIHWEPAC.

In QATSIHWEPAC the training is divided into different blocks in order not to exclude those individuals who have difficulties being away from home for long periods, as well as to provide their students with a possibility to work in between blocks. The reason why the students should work is because QATSIHWEPAC aims for the students to keep up and develop the skills they acquire during the courses. The trainers help the students

with vocational placements (due to awareness that it can be very difficult to arrange such placements for the students themselves), which has proven to be very successful and appreciated by their students. This shows flexibility from the organisation towards their students, in that they adjust the education to suit the students' needs (Sjöblom & Wernesten). By combining training with vocational placement, QATSIHWEPAC provides their students with parallel efforts. Parallel efforts are also advocated to be included in SFI and it has been pointed out that learning Swedish should not be regarded as a linear process, but learning Swedish and participating in other activities should be done at the same time (Government, 2005/06). SFI should therefore be combined with other activities, such as work experience, traineeship or other education in order for the students to practice the language in other situations and contexts than in SFI (SNAE, 2007a). The Swedish National Agency for Education (2007) has pointed out that a combination of SFI and other activities require that the education is flexible and designed for the individual student (SNAE, 2007a). The fact that the syllabus of 2007 supports the idea of combining SFI with other activities, that there is an aim within SFI for the students to keep up and develop the skills they acquire during the courses in other forums than in school, and that the municipalities according to the law are obliged to cooperate with the Swedish Employment Services (Fryksmark, 2007) pose as prerequisites for SFI to be combined with other activities. This could also help SFI apply a flexible approach towards their students while designing their education. However, the fact that the Swedish Employment Services are not obliged to cooperate with the municipalities may pose a hindrance in the process of arranging other activities than SFI for the students and, thereby, a hindrance for SFI to provide students with a flexible education.

Flexibility in the delivery of education

Teachers' flexibility

In QATSIHWEPAC the flexibility of the trainers is a reality in their daily activities and this flexibility is appreciated by the students. That the trainers within QATSIHWEPAC are able to be as flexible in their teaching as they are, is due to that they have support from the management in this approach (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Within SFI, the need for flexibility in the education has been emphasised and it has been pointed out that there is a need to adapt to the different groups' and individuals' needs (SNAE, 2007b). This due to the fact that students within SFI constitute a very heterogeneous group involving individuals of different ages, cultures, backgrounds and with different prerequisites, education and experiences in life (Government, 2005/06). Therefore, an awareness of the importance of taking a flexible approach towards the students already exists within SFI. That such awareness even is stated in the syllabus should pose a prerequisite for SFI to be able to use the educational tool flexibility in both the design and delivery of the education.

As mentioned above, in QATSIHWEPAC the trainers have support from the organisation to take on a very flexible approach in their teaching, which means that the trainers have the freedom to choose the teaching methods (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Within SFI there are no set regulations on how to reach the goals of the subject. Thereby, the teachers have the freedom to choose the content and working methods in

their classes (Government, 2005/06). However, the education within SFI should, according to the syllabus of 2007, take its starting point in the interests and needs of the individual student (SNAE, 2007a). This indicates that SFI teachers, in theory, have support from the organisation to take on a flexible approach in their teaching. If the teachers are aware of this it is a prerequisite for them to apply a flexible approach. However, the teachers have a national syllabus to follow and national goals to consider (SNAE, 2007a) and the fact that SFI teachers must regard these might pose as hindrances to apply a flexible approach.

Individual assessments/evaluations as a facilitator for flexibility

At QATSIHWEPAC the trainers are able to provide the students with a curriculum that starts from what they bring to class due to that each student is individually assessed prior to the course. All trainers are familiar with their students' assessments. This has contributed to a situation where the trainers are able to constantly change modes of teaching in order to teach the students at their current level of knowledge as well as to change focus if they see that the students are losing interest. Something else these assessments have contributed with, is that all students are not taught in the same way due to the trainers' awareness of the students' different educational backgrounds and family situations (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Within SFI, similar evaluations are carried out previous to the education. In these evaluations knowledge regarding all of the students' skills, prerequisites and other factors that could have an impact on the students' possibilities of reaching the objectives within SFI, can be found (SNAE, 2007a). If the teachers are familiar with these evaluations it can enable them to follow the aim stated in the syllabus of 2007; to take a starting point in the interests and needs of the individual student in their teaching (SNAE, 2007a). Such knowledge could pose a prerequisite for teachers being able to teach at students' current level of knowledge, which would mean that they would not teach every student in the same way and be flexible in their teaching.

Trainers within QATSIHWEPAC base their teaching on real life experience and thereby on students' everyday life. In order to be able to do this, trainers need to be flexible in their teaching, due to that different students will have different life experience. The reason why trainers within QATSIHWEPAC are able to base their teaching on real life experience and students everyday life, is because they have knowledge regarding their students' educational backgrounds and family situations, due to the assessments discussed previously (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Teachers within SFI have the prerequisite to base their teaching on everyday life due to two factors: 1) The teachers can acknowledge their students individual evaluations 2) It is supported by the organisation, since in the syllabus of 2007 it is pointed out that it is of great advantage for the individual if the language instruction is based on everyday life (SNAE, 2007b). One reason for basing the teaching on everyday life is that it could have a positive effect on students' motivation (Government, 2005/06). It was also shown in QATSIHWEPAC that usage of everyday life experiences in the education had a positive effect on students' motivation (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). The two organisations share the knowledge concerning this particular aspect within their teaching in common. This should pose a prerequisite for SFI teachers to base their teaching on students' everyday

life, since the awareness exists of its advantages in the education. However, to do this SFI teachers would be required to be flexible, since SFI students are a very heterogeneous group (Government, 2005/06) and thereby have very different everyday life.

It has also been pointed out that it would be advantageous if such language that is used in a work environment could also be included in the teaching within SFI (SNAE, 2007b). Illeris points out that adults learn what they experience to be relevant and meaningful to them as regards to their own goals (Illeris, 1999). Therefore, if such language that is used in a work environment were to be included in SFI teaching, this could have a positive effect on the students' motivation. This due to that such an inclusion could make the students feel that the education is meaningful to them and could be used in practice, for example in a work situation.

Flexible assessments

As mentioned above, trainers at QATSIHWEPAC have support from the management to be flexible in the whole process of teaching, and thereby also in how they assess their students. The result of this is that students who are weak in literacy instead have the opportunity to take tests orally or in other ways that suit them better. This prevents the students from getting caught in the education without real possibilities to pass (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Teachers within SFI are provided with national tests for all courses except for the course 'learning to read and write'. These tests should not be used as an examination, but only as an aid, and be a part of the teacher's basis for assessment of students. However, the national tests also have the purpose to ensure that the assessments of SFI students are as uniform as possible between different municipalities (SNAE, 2007a). Since the education within SFI looks very different between different municipalities (Government, 2005/06), how the national tests are used probably also differ between the municipalities and different teachers. Information about how these tests are used in reality and what purpose they are given in different municipalities has not been obtained. However, as Spreen has pointed out; "what might be the same on paper is understood and implemented very differently at the classroom level" (Spreen, 2004, p.110). Teachers might thereby interpret differently how the national tests should be used, which may have an influence on what role the national tests play in the assessments. If the purpose of the national tests is to assess SFI students in the same way, might the national tests then not pose a hindrance for the flexibility, rather than promoting teachers' flexibility when assessing their students? Do SFI students actually gain from being assessed in exactly the same way?

In order to prevent students from feeling inferior when being assessed, due to inabilities like illiteracy, trainers within QATSIHWEPAC have chosen to assess their students in ways that suit them. It has been shown in QATSIHWEPAC that if students are provided with the possibility to be assessed in ways that suit them, the students' confidence can grow with every accomplishment, instead of being broken down with every defeat (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). Since SFI education should be designed for the individual student (SNAE, 2007b) SFI would have the prerequisite to also be flexible in

how the students are assessed. However, it is feasible to assume that the national test might pose a hindrance to apply a flexible assessment. The purpose of the national test is also to ensure that the assessments are equivalent between the municipalities. This problem does not exist within QATSIHWEPAC to the same degree. This due to that QATSIHWEPAC is a small organisation, situated on the same site, and the trainers are thereby able to cooperate and keep their assessing in alignment with the other trainers in the organisation. Thereby, the different characteristics of the organisations might pose a hindrance in the implementation of different ways of assessing in SFI. Arguably SFI would gain from letting their teachers apply a more flexible approach to assessment and students would gain from differential assessments.

Teacher competence

Within QATSIHWEPAC most trainers are Indigenous Australians, a deliberate strategy in order to provide their students with trainers who are familiar with, and aware of their social situation (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006). The trainers gave an impression of being very confident in their professional role and this seemed to be one of the reasons why they were able to be flexible in their teaching. Insecurity in ones professional role seems to be a problem among some SFI teachers, resulting from lower wages than other comparable teacher groups, poorly regulated cooperation, not enough cooperation with other involved actors, a management who lack in competence and understanding, and few possibilities to take part in skills development. Also, an increasing number of teachers within SFI lack a permanent employment (SOU 2003:77). These factors might pose a hindrance for SFI teachers to apply flexibility in their teaching, since an impression was given in the previous study (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006) that flexibility requires that teachers feel secure in their work situation and in their professional roles.

Both QATSIHWEPAC and SFI have flexibility in their organisations. However, the flexibility seems to be used in different ways. At QATSIHWEPAC the flexibility is supported by the management and in the design of the education. It permeates the whole organisation and is a holistic effort. Regarding SFI, there is an aim to be flexible in their approach. However, SFI face some hindrances to fully apply a flexible approach. If this educational tool is to be used in the same way as in QATSIHWEPAC these hindrances within SFI must first be overcome.

5.4 Summary of the analysis

The existence of both prerequisites and hindrances within SFI to use the educational tools support, cultural awareness and flexibility as they are used in QATSIHWEPAC has now been shown. These prerequisites and hindrances are summarised in the following tables.

Table 5.7 Summary of SFI's prerequisites to use the educational tools support, cultural awareness and flexibility

SUPPORT	CULTURAL AWARENESS	FLEXIBILITY
Awareness exists of the importance of providing support	Awareness concerning the importance of teachers being aware of their prejudices exists	Municipalities arranging education
Some support is already provided	Updates of the society and surrounding world should be provided to teachers	Students can continue until they pass
Individual evaluation	Teaching should take its starting point in students' everyday life	Individual evaluation
Individual guidance is emphasised as important	Teachers are free to choose content and working methods	Teachers are free to choose content and working methods
The student should be seen from a holistic point of view		Awareness of the importance of taking a flexible approach exists
Support for a holistic approach exists		Different study paths
Obligation to cooperate with the Swedish Employment Services exists		Combination of SFI and other activities supported
		SFI education should be designed for the individual student
		Teachers are supported to base their teaching on students' everyday life

Table 5.8 Summary of SFI's hindrances to use the educational tools support, cultural awareness and flexibility

SUPPORT	CULTURAL AWARENESS	FLEXIBILITY
External disagreement concerning the aims of SFI	SFI students - a heterogeneous group	External disagreement concerning the aims of SFI
Inadequate teacher training	Inadequate teacher training	Inadequate teacher training
Awareness of the importance of providing support has existed for some time	Fostering tone	Insufficient cooperation
No obligation for the Swedish Employment Services to cooperate	Mentality of 'taking care of'	National syllabus and national goals
Existing support structures	Immigrants regarded as a 'weak' group	Possibly the national tests
Lack of permanent employment for SFI teachers	Swedish society's system and values in SFI	Some teachers insecure in their professional role
	Primarily supporting Swedish culture within SFI	No obligation for the Swedish Employment Services to cooperate

Considerations in educational borrowing and lending

It has been pointed out by Phillips (1989) that it is not possible to only pick and choose those particular features that seems to be attractive in an educational idea in order to solve the educational problems another educational system might face. However, not all authors are in agreement regarding this. For example, Arnove (2003) proposes that even though systems are socioculturally attached to the society from which they have originated, general principles or parts of a school system of a society may be decontextualised and applied in another society.

There are many things that need to be considered in a process of educational borrowing and lending. In order to be able to make a successful transfer of educational principles, recognition of the context from where the educational idea has originated from is vital (Uhrmacher, 1997; Phillips, 1989). The organisation QATSIHWEPAC was examined in the previous study (Sjöblom & Wernesten, 2006) and this has contributed to an understanding of the context where the educational ideas (the different educational tools) have originated. However, as pointed out earlier, it is important to be familiar with the contextual framework in which the idea is to be implemented (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Uhrmacher, 1997). In order to accomplish this, SFI has thoroughly been examined and an effort has been made to provide the reader with a full account of the organisation. QATSIHWEPAC and SFI, make up two very different contexts and they are part of two different contexts (the Indigenous Australian society and the Swedish society). However, they share some similarities and it is feasible to assume that it is possible for SFI to borrow educational ideas from QATSIHWEPAC in spite of their differences.

A borrowing of educational ideas from QATSIHWEPAC to SFI should not be used as a quick fix model. As stated earlier, a strategy found somewhere else cannot be used as a quick fix model and if someone is to borrow a model it is of great importance to be aware of the fact that this model has been developed in another context to suit that context's specific needs (Phillips, 1989). The educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC have been developed to suit their specific needs in their specific context. This fact needs to be kept in mind when considering an implementation of these educational tools in the context of SFI.

It is also important to be aware that an educational idea will be reinterpreted in the new context and this interpretation may change the meaning of the original idea to suit the new context (Bungum, 2006). If the educational tools from QATSIHWEPAC are to be used by SFI it is important to bear this in mind. The borrower must realise that when teachers are being introduced to ideas created and initiated in another school system and a different national culture they will interpret these ideas differently, which will have an effect on how the ideas are being implemented (Bungum, 2006). Therefore, there is a great risk if the educational tools from QATSIHWEPAC are to be borrowed that the teachers within SFI and also the different municipalities interpret the educational tools differently, even though they all have access to the same information on how to use the

educational tools; “what might be the same on paper is understood and implemented very differently at the classroom level” (Spreeen, 2004, p.110).

5.5 Conclusion

If the educational tools support, cultural awareness and flexibility are to be of any use in SFI the previously discussed difficulties concerning the process of educational borrowing and lending need to be kept in mind. The educational tools also need to be fully implemented, i.e. the whole idea behind these educational tools need to be considered and implemented, in order for them to be of any use. If these considerations are made, a conclusion can be drawn that the educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC will be of use in SFI.

6. Discussion

Educational borrowing and lending

As has been shown above the process of educational borrowing and lending is a very complicated process. That a thorough examination is carried out of both the lending as well as the borrowing context is crucial if a successful borrowing is to occur. However, are such examinations carried through today? One example is the ongoing Bologna process where universities from several different contexts and traditions of learning are to form one unison organisation. What impact will this new organisation of learning have on the different contexts and the learning within them? Have such questions been asked by the decision makers?

Not only educational ideas are borrowed from other contexts, other types of ideas are also borrowed and lent between contexts. For example, regarding management literature today, a great part is developed in other contexts than the Swedish. What consequences does this have on Swedish managements who are inspired by ideas and strategies in such literature, and in continuation, what impact does this have on the Swedish labour market over all? Borrowing different types of ideas, developed in one context to suit that contexts' needs and prerequisites, occur everywhere without real consideration of the complexity of such a process.

The organisations

SFI and QATSIHWEPAC make up two very different contexts. This makes a borrowing of educational tools difficult, however, it should not be regarded as impossible. If the contexts are both thoroughly examined and described this is a good starting point for an educational borrowing to occur. When discussing whether such a borrowing would be possible it is important to consider that the two organisations are very different in size. It is also important to remember that QATSIHWEPAC is a community controlled organisation, whereas SFI is regulated by the government but provided to the students by the different municipalities. The fact that SFI is an education

which is controlled by the government, but provided by the municipalities, results in that there are several steps to go through before an educational idea can be borrowed. The decision is made and the control documents are drawn up on a central level and the implementation is made on a local level. Thereby, the educational idea will pass through several steps before it reaches its users; the teachers within SFI. In these steps the educational idea can be changed due to that it will be interpreted in a way that suits the contexts of the different levels (Bungum, 2006). Thereby, if the educational idea is to pass through all the levels, from government to the teachers in the classroom, there is a great risk that the educational idea is given a completely different meaning in how it is actually used than it was supposed to from the beginning.

This leads to the question; how could SFI be organised in order to be able to implement and use the educational ideas of QATSIHWEPAC? If the educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC are to be implemented it is important to realise that it should not be expected that all the municipalities would use them in the same way. The Swedish national curriculum (Chapter 1, §9) requires SFI education to be equivalent wherever it is organised (SOU 2003:77), but this is not the case (Government, 2005/06). Even though the students should have access to equivalent education, arguably the goal should not be for the municipalities to provide identical SFI educations, since the municipalities have very different students with different prerequisites and backgrounds. Is it even possible to keep the existing model; municipalities providing education, and thereby also SFI, with governmental control? Is it also possible to require the different municipalities to provide equivalent SFI and how are such equivalence guaranteed? There might be a need to give the municipalities an extended freedom to handle their own situation in a way that suits their needs and prerequisites. However, the national curriculum (Chapter 1, §9), might reduce the possibility for the municipalities to do this, since this requires SFI within all the municipalities to be equivalent. One idea could be that SFI should be more decentralised in order for the municipalities to be completely free to provide SFI as it is needed in their specific context. However, what impact would such a reorganisation have on the equality and the quality of SFI in the different municipalities? Would the municipalities then develop the education in order for it to suit, and be sufficient for, the needs of their students, or would other areas than SFI be prioritised in the municipalities? A risk with such a decentralisation could also be if some municipalities neglect SFI economically if they experience that they can handle SFI in any way they want.

Alignment in the organisation

If support, cultural awareness and a flexible approach are to be provided to the students within SFI this needs to pervade the whole organisation, as it does in QATSIHWEPAC. According to the authors, it is of crucial importance that the teachers have support from the organisation to do this. However, even if teachers within SFI would have this support the teachers must be aware that they have this freedom in the classroom. The management must thereby explicitly support the teachers in order for them to use the opportunity to provide students with sufficient support, be culturally aware and take a flexible approach. For example, it can be extremely difficult to have courage to be flexible if you do not have this support from the management. Even though it seems like

the teachers actually do have this support (since it is stated in SFI's syllabus of 2007), the authors propose that this needs to be explicitly clarified to the teachers and through out the whole organisation.

A common conceptualisation of the meaning of the educational tools within the context of SFI, that have been proposed to be borrowed, therefore needs to be made. However, due to the size of SFI and the amount of actors involved (policymakers, decision makers, management, teachers et cetera) this might be a difficult task. The fact that the educational idea was created and initiated in another school system and in a different national culture means that it will be interpreted differently in the new context (Bungum, 2006). In the context of SFI, where the municipalities have the freedom to design their education, this means that several different interpretations will be made. Since major differences can already be seen in the interpretation and views concerning the objectives of SFI among municipalities, this common conceptualisation might be difficult to attain.

Swedish norms as normative within SFI

It has been pointed out that Swedish norms and values seem to be normative for education within SFI (Carlson, 2002). What impact does this have on the students who may not share these norms and values due to their different backgrounds, cultures and experiences? If Swedish norms and values are normative, what does that say about other cultures' values and norms? There seems to be only one society in focus, and possible contributions the participants' previous knowledge and experiences might make, are not focused on. Another question is what these norms and values of SFI mean for the teachers within SFI. Is it possible for them to go outside of these implicit frames in order to encourage and support other than Swedish norms?

There is also a mentality of regarding immigrants as a weak group (Carlson, 2002). A possible outcome of this mentality is that instead of strengthening and believing in the individual's capability, he/she is viewed as someone who needs help and is treated according to this assumption. Within SFI there is also a somewhat fostering tone (Carlson, 2002). To foster is to shape an individual and the question is; what impact does this fostering tone have on the participants? It seems that, within SFI, there exists a subtle effort to shape the participants in order for them to 'fit' into the Swedish society.

Choosing SFI

As mentioned several times, a municipality cannot accept individuals that are not registered within their municipality to participate in SFI, since individuals are not entitled to SFI in another municipality than he/she is registered within (Government, 2005/06). If municipalities would have support from guidelines to be flexible in this aspect, this would mean that an individual who is not satisfied with the SFI provided in his/her municipality, would have the opportunity to change and participate in another. Maybe an idea would be to let students themselves choose SFI, regardless of what municipality he/she belongs to, in the same way as students in Sweden are free to

choose any upper secondary school, regardless of the municipality they are registered within. The fact that SFI students are not able to choose their SFI education could be seen as a result of the mentality of ‘taking care of’, that has been found in SFI documents and was discussed above. If the students were able to choose SFI, municipalities would give an impression of trusting their own students to be able to choose the SFI that suits them the best. Something else this could contribute with is that if the students were to choose their own SFI this might lead to an enhanced pressure on different municipalities to improve their education. Arguably this could also make it easier for those students who combine, or wants to combine, SFI with work. This due to the fact that the students’ work might not be situated within the municipality where they are registered, and if they were allowed to choose SFI, they could attend SFI in the municipality where their work is situated.

Education first

In the documents concerning SFI, education is often taken for granted as the only way to make progress in the Swedish society. There seems to be a set order in which to engage in order to reach independence in Sweden: “first education, then work” (Carlson, 2002, p.90). Education is thereby given a major role in individuals’ chances to take part in the Swedish society.

SFI students are often not accepted into programs provided by the Swedish Employment Services, due to that they have not passed a course in SFI. This makes it very difficult to take another path than through education to be a part of the Swedish society. A contradiction between SFI and other authorities in the Swedish society can thereby be seen. If parallel efforts are to be accomplished, cooperation between SFI, other authorities and organisations needs to be established. However, the contradiction does not only seem to exist between SFI and other authorities, but also within SFI itself. On the one hand, parallel efforts are advocated, but on the other hand, education is, in the documents of SFI taken for granted as the first step; “first education, then work” (Carlson, 2002, p.90). It is feasible that the underlying assumption – education first, work after – may pose a hindrance in providing the students with parallel efforts. Another question regarding this mentality, education first, work after, is what happens to those who cannot make use of the education, but need to practice the Swedish language in another forum than the classroom. Individuals with little or no educational background may not be able to profit from the education as it is provided in the classroom setting. Maybe they are the ones who get trapped in SFI and never enter the labour market. Are there alternative ways for these individuals to learn the Swedish language or is it up to themselves to seek other paths?

Enhanced cooperation

If cooperation between different agencies were to be organised, as supported by Sweden’s action plan against poverty and social exclusion 2003-2005 (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2003), this could be advantageous. Such an enhanced cooperation between SFI, other authorities, organisations and companies could contribute to help students establish on the labour market. For example, the Swedish

Employment Services could help students to apply for jobs, look at their CV et cetera, while companies and organisations could arrange vocational placements et cetera. Vocational placements could work as a way towards employment. If companies and organisations were involved, this would mean that the students would be in direct contact with them. SFI students would thereby be provided with opportunities to network. This could help them to establish a contact net that they could use when they have finished SFI. This closer contact with 'the life after SFI' might be a motivation for the students not to get caught in the education but to see that there is something afterwards. SFI already aims in their mapping process to focus not only on the education within SFI, but also on what the individual will do after the education is completed. There is already support for the mapping being carried through together with the student as well as in cooperation with other involved organisations, such as the Swedish Employment Services, vocational training, reception of refugees, social services, rehabilitation and employers (SOU 2003:77). However, if the mapping is going to be carried out in this way in reality, it requires enhanced cooperation with the other agencies. Such enhanced cooperation would thereby facilitate for SFI to make holistic mappings as well as help the students establish on the labour market.

The negative view of SFI

As mentioned in the introduction of this study the education within SFI has for a long time been marked by a very negative view. This has had a negative impact on the education's reputation and status and the teachers' working situation has been influenced by this negative view (SNAE, 1997). Negative attitudes towards SFI also have an impact on those who participate in courses within SFI (Government, 2000/01). The fact that SFI is aimed at a low status group in society results in that SFI, as an education, also receives a low status (SOU, 2003:77). A question that should be asked is what impact the Swedish society at large has on the view of SFI. Is there a will to see SFI as a failure? Are there underlying assumptions that SFI is a failed education, and therefore the negative factors, like pass rates et cetera, are emphasised? The education is compared to other parts of the Swedish school system, for example the adult education KOMVUX. Is this a fair comparison? The content of what is to be learnt within SFI (a new language) is extensively different from other educations. Is it fair to expect SFI students to reach the level of knowledge where they can pass a course in the same time that it takes to complete a course with entirely different objectives and goals?

SFI is aimed at a low status group in the Swedish society (SOU 2003:77). Does this have an impact on the education and the development of this? For example what influences that wages for SFI teachers are lower than wages for other teachers? Is it the low wages that make teachers within SFI experience that they have a low status in their job or is it the low status job that influences the wages. And what influence does this low status have on decision makers who are to decide how much resources should be put into the different educations? The question can also be asked what impact the negative view of SFI has on the labour market's idea of how employable students from these courses are. If the labour market has a negative view of SFI this might have a negative effect on SFI students and their chances to enter the labour market. There are many questions that need answers regarding the Swedish language education, SFI.

However, that was not the focus of this study, but the authors believe it is important to further examine.

In the introduction of this study the presidents and vice presidents of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) were quoted. They have stated that SFI does not reach its objectives, that it is a dead end for the participants, and a way out may be to discontinue SFI. The question is why SFI becomes a dead end for the participants. For example, is SFI themselves responsible for the negative view posed on them and the fact that some people believe it to be a dead end? Or is it external factors that they cannot control that contribute to these negative views and opinions? The authors interpret this study to show that the critique of SFI, when the organisation is contrasted and compared to QATSIHWEPAC, is somewhat misdirected. SFI has many prerequisites to be a successful organisation, however, maybe this negative view has worked as a hindrance. It has also been shown that the statistics within SFI might be misleading (SOU 2003:77; Lindberg, 1996). Something the authors think may have contributed to this, is that all students who quit SFI before finishing a course, might not quit due to negative factors. Some of them might have instead gained employment. In those cases the statistic is very misleading, since within SFI, when students do not finish a course, this will look as a failure. However, SFI has still reached one of its aims; to enable their students to enter the labour market. However, in the statistics this will not be shown, and it will be seen as SFI has failed.

According to the authors, a discontinuation of SFI would not be a good solution, rather it would be counter-productive, since at present there are no alternatives. However, even though the authors think the arguments regarding the discontinuation of SFI are counter-productive, they pose an opportunity for a discussion regarding future possibilities and development of SFI. In such a discussion an important question to ask is; even if SFI would succeed in making immigrants employable, are they also employable on the Swedish labour market? Because even if SFI would do everything they possibly could, it will not help if there is no labour market for SFI students to enter. Attitudes towards immigrants must according to the authors change on the labour market in order for immigrants to receive employment. The need to improve cooperation between SFI and other authorities, organisations and companies, discussed earlier, could work as a way to change negative attitudes towards immigrants. Because such cooperation could help more people to understand what competence and knowledge people from different cultures and different backgrounds could bring with them and contribute with¹⁷. The labour market must understand that in order to develop its employers as well as the company people from different cultures and with a different background are crucial. Before such understanding is reached, no changes in attitudes will ever occur. To get back to the initial question, whether or not SFI is a dead end, the authors have concluded that; if no labour market exists for the immigrants, then yes – SFI will be a dead end. However, if attitudes were to be changed and the labour market

¹⁷ For further reading concerning this see literature regarding ‘Diversity Management’, for example, Cox, Jr. Taylor (2001). *Creating the Multicultural Organization- A strategy for Capturing the Power of Diversity*

would be more open-minded to employ immigrants, then no – SFI will not be a dead end, but rather a good basis to build on. As shown above, SFI has many prerequisites to develop and evolve, in order to reach the aim of enabling SFI students to participate in the Swedish labour market.

6.1 Further research

It is not possible to know for certain what impact an implementation of the educational tools of QATSIHWEPAC would have on SFI before this has been tried in a real setting. It would therefore be interesting to carry out a pilot study in one or a few municipalities in order to see how the educational tools would function in a real context. Hopefully such a research project and a thorough analysis of the results will be carried out. Since this study has focused only on the immediate contexts of SFI and QATSIHWEPAC, it would also be interesting to focus in further research on the surrounding contexts. The context where an education operates and has originated from influences it to a great extent. Therefore, the impact of the Swedish context on SFI and how this specifically effects the education would be interesting to further examine. Another interesting aspect to further examine is what influence it would have on SFI education to involve stakeholders, i.e. immigrants, in designing SFI education. To involve stakeholders in the development of education would also be interesting to look at from other perspectives, for example in universities and in labour market projects. The negative view of SFI, a common perception in the Swedish society, has also been brought up. It would be interesting to further examine what this view is based on and how this view influences the education and its participants in their daily activities as well as on a management and decision making level.

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Appendix

List of tables

Table 4.1: Summary of SFI and QATSIHWEPAC	p.31
Table 5.1: Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool support	p.33
Table 5.2: Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool support	p.33
Table 5.3: Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool cultural awareness	p.38
Table 5.4: Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool cultural awareness	p.39
Table 5.5: Prerequisites for SFI to use the educational tool flexibility	p.42
Table 5.6: Hindrances for SFI to use the educational tool flexibility	p.42
Table 5.7: Summary of SFI's prerequisites to use the educational tools support, cultural awareness and flexibility	p.49
Table 5.8: Summary of SFI's hindrances to use the educational tools support, cultural awareness and flexibility	p.49