

# **When performance-based financial rewarding fails**

**A case study of SFI Bonus policy introduction and  
abolishment**

Rozana Sukaj

# Abstract

This study investigates the implementation failure of the pay-per-performance SFI Bonus scheme implemented in the adult language education in Sweden. The study builds on the synthesis of a top-down and bottom-up approach by employing the 'ambiguity and conflict' model for carrying out the investigation. The key theme of this paper is that the level of ambiguity and conflict surrounding the policy, shape the implementation process, and influence the policy outcome. The purpose of this study is to build a sufficient explanation of why this policy was abolished by using theoretical assumptions as a point of departure. Furthermore, this research is a case study that analyses the national policy intention and its local implementation, in Malmö Municipality, through the experience of local-level actors. Therefore, this study is twofold. It examines how 'ambiguity and conflict' embedded in the policy has shaped the implementation, and builds a plausible explanation for understanding to what extent and for what reasons SFI Bonus failed to achieve its policy goals. The data collection consists of government document analysis, political discussions in the Parliament as well as interviews with the local-implementers in Folkhögskola and Komvux. Findings from the study suggest that SFI Bonus is characterized by political implementation due to a high policy conflict and low ambiguity. Furthermore, power among central actors played a crucial role in implementing the policy. SFI Bonus failed to respond to the addressed issues before becoming national policy. Shortly, the study demonstrates that the SFI Bonus scheme failed to achieve its intention due to shortcomings embedded in the policy creation stage rather than the actual implementation stage. Therefore it emphasizes the benefit of employing a top-down approach for further investigation.

*Keywords:* Integration policy, SFI Bonus, implementation research, 'ambiguity and conflict' model, pay-per-performance scheme, language education.

*Words:* 18142

## **List of Figures and Tables**

Figure 1. Schematic overview of study paths and courses

Table 1. The research approach

Table 2. Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix

# Table of contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Abstract .....</b>   | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>1 Introduction .....</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Problem area .....  | 2         |
| 1.2 Purpose of the research and Research Questions.....               | 2         |
| 1.3 Background: Integration and language proficiency .....            | 3         |
| 1.3.1 Policy setting: Swedish For Immigrants .....                    | 4         |
| 1.4 Thesis disposition.....   | 6         |
| <b>2 Theoretical Perspectives .....</b>                               | <b>7</b>  |
| 2.1 Conceptualizing Implementation .....                              | 7         |
| 2.2 Conceptualizing Policy Failure.....                               | 8         |
| 2.3 Evolution of Policy Implementation theories .....                 | 10        |
| 2.3.1 Top-down and bottom-up perspectives.....                        | 11        |
| 2.3.2 Synthesizing the implementation literature .....                | 12        |
| 2.4 Framework of analysis – ‘Conflict-Ambiguity’ .....                | 14        |
| 2.4.1 Policy Conflict .....   | 14        |
| 2.4.2 Policy Ambiguity.....   | 15        |
| 2.4.3 Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix: Policy Implementation Processes..... | 15        |
| 2.5 Concluding remarks .....  | 18        |
| <b>3 Methodology.....</b>   | <b>19</b> |
| 3.1 Methodological assumptions .....                                  | 19        |
| 3.2 Case selection.....   | 20        |
| 3.3 Data collection methods.....                                      | 21        |
| 3.3.1 Document analysis .....   | 21        |
| 3.3.2 Interviews.....   | 22        |
| 3.4 Data analysis method .....  | 23        |
| 3.4.1 Reflection on the methods .....                                 | 23        |
| <b>4 Evidence.....</b>  | <b>25</b> |
| 4.1 Introducing SFI Bonus.....  | 25        |
| 4.2 SFI Bonus Proposal.....   | 27        |
| 4.3 The Parliamentary Debate.....                                     | 29        |
| 4.4 SFI-Bonus Abolishment.....  | 31        |
| 4.5 Local-Level: Views and Implementation.....                        | 31        |

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 4.6      | Summary .....                                   | 34        |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Discussion .....</b>                         | <b>35</b> |
| 5.1      | Mapping the policy conflict and ambiguity ..... | 35        |
| 5.2      | Mapping the implementation failure.....         | 37        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Conclusions .....</b>                        | <b>39</b> |
| 6.1      | Suggestions for future research.....            | 40        |
| <b>7</b> | <b>References .....</b>                         | <b>41</b> |
|          | <b>Appendix 1 .....</b>                         | <b>47</b> |
|          | <b>Interview list.....</b>                      | <b>49</b> |

## **Acknowledgements**

Before my work is read, I would like to thank my supervisor Tomas Bergström for the helpful assistance, comments, and pointing me out in the right direction and help me develop a deeper understanding of the subject. I am also very grateful to the people attending our thesis seminars. We have learned a lot from each other, and it has been a very fruitful experience.

This Master's program has been beyond my expectations. My best regards go to the lecturers of Welfare Policies and Management program for enriching my learning experience at Lund University. I am happy to be done and use the gained knowledge beyond academia.

# 1 Introduction

The use of financial incentives in educational settings has gained substantial attention among policymakers and economists. The literature on economic incentives in education reveals several randomized trials conducted in different settings, such as in high schools and university education, which aimed to investigate whether a financial reward would improve student enrollment and lower dropout rates. The majority of these randomized trials have been conducted in the American educational system, and they presented mixed results (Gneezy, Meier & Rey-Biel 2011). Some studies prove that a financial reward improved student enrollment and lowered dropouts (see: Kremer, Miguel & Thornton 2009; Fryer 2011) and other studies that showed the opposite (see: Fryer 2010; Angrist, Oreopoulos and Williams 2010). Besides, such schemes are quite recent, and there is no data on the long-run effects of incentives on education. Therefore, the inconsistency of results in different settings and lack of substantial evidence proving either way, offers low predictability when introducing a pay-per-performance scheme.

In 2009, the Government of Sweden presented a randomized control trial for implementing a performance-based financial bonus in Swedish For Immigrants (SFI) adult education schools. The scheme called SFI Bonus (Law 2010: 538) aimed to tackle students' motivation and improve their study progress. Quite soon, SFI Bonus became a national policy before its evaluation report was published, which led to a policy implementation case under high uncertainty whether it would be able to fulfill the policy intention or not. Despite the mixed evidence and the potential shortcomings that characterize economic incentives in an educational setting, SFI Bonus implementation showed positive effects in 3-4% of its target group. Consequently, the policy was short-lived and was abolished in 2013.

Despite the fact, false news has been running on online media that a financial reward is available for all individuals enrolled in SFI studies. Such news has no real grounds since the notion of a pay-per-performance scheme has not been followed up with new similar initiatives after the SFI Bonus abolishment. However, this invalid information has received substantial attention, which leaves room to think whether such a policy could potentially be a good initiative. Therefore it becomes interesting to investigate why SFI Bonus failed, even though now, a financial benefit for accomplishing SFI studies seems attractive to people (Löfström, 2015; Hansson, 2016; Migrationsinfo, 2016).

## 1.1 Problem area

The SFI system has been dealing with tuition deficiencies that have been addressed in various reports. As previously mentioned, political narratives pose a positive correlation between delayed SFI studies and immigrants' integration in the labor market. Therefore, it is of high political importance to introduce policy initiatives that shorten the study time in SFI, thus fasten the integration. Two key variables that receive significant attention for analyzing students' progress in SFI are the time students spent in SFI studies and student dropouts. The report of 2009 by the State Office, shows that for finishing the SFI studies, it takes an average of 63 weeks for students in study path 1, 55 weeks for students in study path 2 and 31 weeks for students in study path 3 (Statskontoret, 2009: 29). In 2009, the National Agency for Education reported that the national standardized tests of SFI in the school year 2002/3 showed that about 50-60% of participants were not able to reach the required language level after two years of enrollment in SFI (Miho, Moonhee, & Satya, 2010: 33). Also, 49% of participants who started SFI for the first time during the school year 2004/05 until 2006/06 had temporarily or permanently interrupted their studies.

Based on the aforementioned statistical results for the SFI system, the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality introduced the idea of using economic incentives for improving student enrollment and achievement. The "SFI Bonus," a pay-per-performance financial reward for the individuals enrolled in SFI who could finish the courses aligned with their study path, took place as a policy pilot in 2009-2010, which later became a national policy. The amount available was from SEK 6000 up to SEK 12000 per individual (ibid.). From an economic stance, the fundamental law of behavior is that individuals will put more effort and perform better if financial incentives are made available. In the case of SFI Bonus, the enrolled students are a heterogeneous group that comes from different backgrounds, nationalities, and migrated for various reasons and therefore the majority have little to no financial support. It can be expected that a financial reward towards the accomplishment of the language studies would be an excellent motivation for motivating them to achieve more.

## 1.2 Purpose of the research and Research Questions

To begin with, policy implementation emerges from the interaction of the policy with the setting. Therefore, such interaction, to various extents, dictates the policy outcome (Maynard-Moody, Musheno, & Palumbo, 1990). Therefore, policy implementation research is relevant in the context of providing knowledge that is useful for informing further improvement of governmental policy-making processes and for lowering the potential for policy failure (Saetren, 2005). The purpose of this study is to understand the abolishment of SFI Bonus by unfolding its implementation process and tracing its introduction and abolishment. The overall aim is to understand and build a plausible

explanation for the implementation failure. Secondly, the study aims to analyze the implementation through the lens of the 'ambiguity-conflict' theoretical model. This research analyses the time frame from 2009 when the policy was introduced, until 2013, when it was abolished. This investigation will be carried out through a case study research approach. The grounds for the theoretical choices and the employed methods are further elaborated in chapters 2 and 3. Two research questions guide this study.

To begin with, the main Research Question of this study is:

*"To what extent and for what reasons did the implementation of SFI-Bonus policy in Sweden fail to achieve its policy objectives?"*

Following the choice of theory, this study will answer the following question:

*"Assuming that policy conflict and ambiguity influence policy implementation, how did they shape the SFI-Bonus implementation?"*

It is essential to clarify why the study of SFI Bonus implementation failure is of significance. To begin with, the study of integration policies has become a topic of high political and societal relevance. Mass migration of the last years has shown its effects in the hosting societies. Therefore, immigrant integration policies that aim to ease the immigrant path toward the labor market have been presented and implemented in different policy settings. Future evidence-based policy implementation requires the use of significant knowledge provided by a substantial number of implementation studies. SFI Bonus was running in an under-investigated policy setting of adult education and language proficiency. It, therefore, was surrounded by high uncertainty whether a pay-per-performance scheme would be successful. Thus, the academic relevance of studying the SFI Bonus implementation failure is to enrich the implementation literature, and the results can be further used for future evidence-based policy implementation. Regarding political relevance, this study can inform future policy initiatives for more efficient political interventions when employing pay-per-performance schemes in different settings.

### 1.3 Background: Integration and language proficiency

Immigrant integration into Swedish society and the labor market has been a topic that has been part of the political debate for years. Like in many other OECD countries, the growing migration rates in Sweden have led to an increase of the attention given to the ability of immigrants to acquire the language of the host country (Kossoudji 1988; Budría, Colino, & Martínez de Ibarreta, 2018). Statistically speaking, a substantial number of immigrants' face difficulties integrating the Swedish society and, the labor market. Literature shows that the language skills of the host country are correlated with higher

labor market opportunities, higher earnings, and better establishment in society (Selmer & Lauring, 2011). In addition, political discussions also emphasize the importance of learning the Swedish language as a critical factor for moving forward and entering the Swedish labor market. Therefore, many different political initiatives and measures have been employed for helping newcomers learn the host country language more efficiently, as a way for breaking exclusion and facilitating integration.

The nature of the integration process differs throughout different time frames depending on the type of migration flow, migrant background, and the existing programs of the host country for assisting the immigrants upon arrival and settlement in the society. Different political blocks have also provided different approaches for improving SFI studies. The prevailing debates have been divided between different ideological assumptions of the left and right-wing coalitions and whether integration policies should be flexible or strict in terms of the time spent in educational programs such as the municipal adult education in Swedish tuition for Immigrants, which serves as the base for the newcomers integration. Lindberg (1996:227) notes that SFI students' success is not merely a result of the tuition quality or teachers' skills. Other factors, such as political initiatives and economic frameworks, attitudes, and values towards immigrants and refugees, play a significant role in shaping and influencing the SFI system's outcomes.

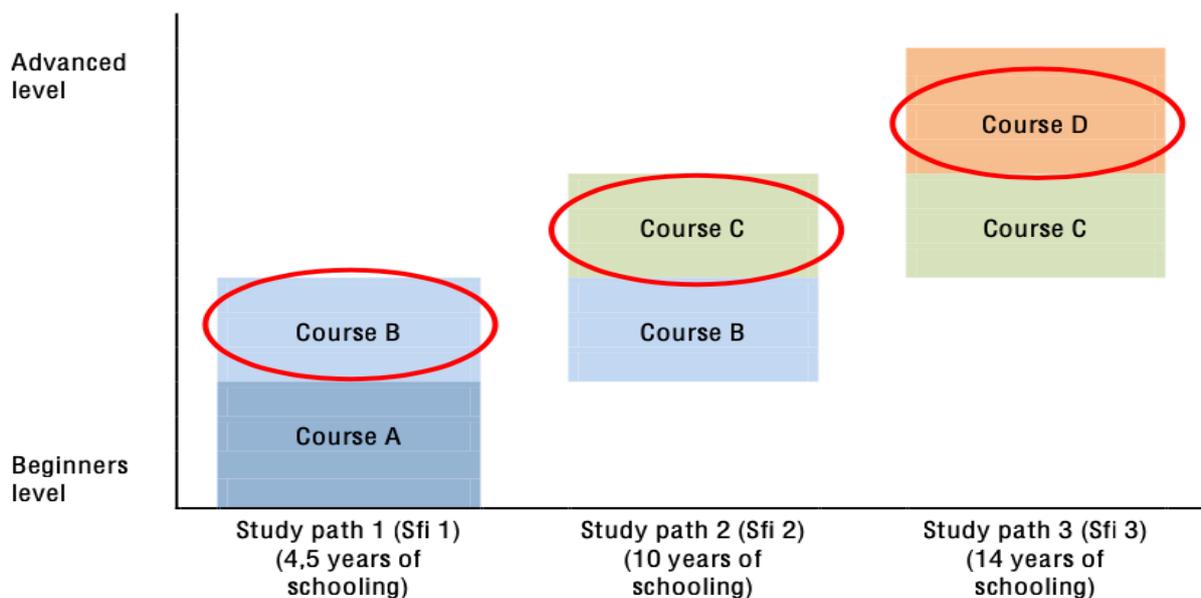
### 1.3.1 Policy setting: Swedish For Immigrants

In the Swedish welfare state, immigrants have been provided free access to adult education, such as Swedish language tuition since the 1960s. (Institutet För Arbetsmarknadspolitisk Utvärdering, Kennerberg, & Sibbmark, 2005) SFI, Swedish For Immigrants, is a language education that aims to provide basic knowledge of the Swedish language to the newly arrived adult immigrants that have a mother-tongue other than Swedish (Skolinspektionen, 2010; Skollag 2010:800). Besides, SFI also provides basic reading and writing assistances for students who lack such skills. Anyone who lacks Swedish knowledge, is aged 16 or older and has pursued a Swedish personal number, is eligible for SFI enrollment and has the right to choose its school. According to Skollag 2010:800, Municipalities are responsible for providing SFI and finance it through state grants or local taxes. Immigrants who show interest in starting their SFI studies should be granted a place in a SFI school within three months from the moment that they have applied and have met the criteria for admission. Generally, SFI participants are divided into two main categories: refugees and immigrants of other migration reasons. Consequently, SFI students are usually a heterogeneous group and the number of immigrants who start SFI for the first time is dependent on the migration rates of that specific year, and that varies among different years (Institutet För Arbetsmarknadspolitisk Utvärdering et al., 2005; Institutet För Arbetsmarknadspolitisk Utvärdering, Engdahl, & Åslund, 2012).

From the school year 2002/3, the structure of SFI education consists of three different study paths (1, 2, 3) and four total courses (A, B, C, D). Study paths are suited for individuals with different backgrounds, conditions, and goals, and the courses clarify the progression in education. Study path 1 consists of courses A and B, study path 2 consists of courses B and C and study path 3 consists of courses C and D. More in detail, study path 1 is suitable for students who have very few years of educational background from their home countries and can be illiterate. Study path 2 is for those who have, on average, ten years of previous education, and study path 3 is suitable for adults with more years of education; thus, they are used to studying and can be placed on a more advanced path. Therefore, the study design is shaped based on the characteristics of the enrolled students. The goal is to finish all courses in order to be done entirely with your SFI studies. There are no time constraints on how long an individual can continue to study in SFI, but a target of 525 SFI hours is expected to be seen as a reasonable maximum. Students are graded based on obligatory standardized tests (SKOLFS 2012: 13).

The following figure presents the schematic overview of study paths and courses that are explained above.

Figure 1. Schematic overview of study paths and courses



Source: IFAU, 2012

## 1.4 Thesis disposition

The precedent sections outlined the study context and scope. The following chapter sketches out the conceptualizations of policy implementation, and policy failure since this study makes a case of implementation failure. It also presents an overview of the implementation research field where particular emphasis is given to top-down and bottom-up approaches and the attempts to synthesize these two. The same chapter elaborates on the chosen theoretical framework and its applicability for understanding the implementation failure of the SFI Bonus scheme in Sweden. The upcoming chapter elaborates on the methodology employed and the methods used for data gathering and analysis aligned with the theoretical concepts as well as the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research. The following chapter encompasses chronologically the evidence gathered by the reviewed documents, debates, and interviews and sets the ground for analysis. After that, the chapter of discussion analyzes the evidence and builds the connection between the theoretical assumptions and the evidence gathered, thus leading to the answers to the research questions. The concluding chapter outlines the results of the study and future research recommendations.

## 2 Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter begins by conceptualizing policy implementation and policy failure. Different concepts from different scholars have been elaborated in sections 2.1 and 2.2.

Right after, section 2.3 will explore policy implementation research, and diverse perspectives will be discussed by analyzing and comparing the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The most prevailing theories that have served as steppingstones for the evolution of the field and have been explored individually, thus setting the background needed for elaborating on the suggested synthesis of both approaches. Lastly, special attention will be given to Matland (1995) and his 'ambiguity and conflict model,' where the last subsection 2.4 builds the framework of analysis that will serve as the theoretical ground of this research.

### 2.1 Conceptualizing Implementation

Since this is a policy-implementation study, it is important to consider how the implementation process has been conceptualized over time and why it is essential to study it. Among many conducted studies, different scholars have proposed many definitions of what Implementation is; however, there is not an agreed-upon definition. Generally, Implementation studies have seen Implementation as an administrative process, how a policy is carried out. Mazmanian and Sabatier present the following definition: "*Implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions. Ideally, that decision identifies the problem(s) to be addressed, stipulates the objective(s) to be pursued, and, in a variety of ways, "structures" the implementation process.*" Mazmanian & Sabatier (1983: 20). While Robert Levine (1972: 4) distinguishes planning and Implementation by elaborating that 'planning' is the process of laying out a program of actions and 'implementation' is the carrying out of this program of actions.' However, this planning stage also referred to as policy creation, does not guarantee success if the implementation stage is not conducted well. The employed definition of Implementation varies on the dependence of the purpose of the study. *Levine (1972) acknowledges the distinction that policy implementation is the follow up of a policy creation stage, which is embedded in a legal statute.*

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973: xv) have referred to the Implementation as "*the ability to forge subsequent links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results.*" They further argue that the process comes as a result of the interaction of goal setting and goal

achievement. Therefore, it becomes fatal if policy design and Implementation are separated. Due to the nature of this research, in terms of its chosen theoretical lens, and the study purpose, this study will look at the implementation process as the interaction of the policy design and its Implementation to investigate the policy outcome further. Thus, the definition by Pressman and Wildavsky seems feasible.

Furthermore, Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) argue that Implementation determines the policy's success or failure. Many scholars have attempted to identify causal factors and develop theories for analyzing policy implementation (*see: O'Toole 2000; Hill and Hupe 2003; Winter 2011; Saetren 2014; Saetren 2005*). Therefore, this investigation pays attention to both the interaction between the policy design and the actual implementation, for building more comprehensive research that looks at the causality within the two.

## 2.2 Conceptualizing Policy Failure

There is a substantial increase in awareness and research within the discipline of public policy regarding implementation and policy failure or success (Hudson, Hunter, & Peckham, 2019; McConnell, 2015). It is argued that understanding the nature of policy failure is crucial for assisting current and future policy initiatives. "Failure" is expected to be characterized by absolute nonachievement; however, such a scenario is quite surreal. Hudson et al. (2019:2) mentions that according to McConnell (2015), *"failure is rarely unequivocal and absolute ... even policies that have become known as classic policy failures also produced small and modest successes."* (McConnell, 2015: 231). Program success or failure may occur by problems in the formulation stage or the carrying out stage or even both. Literature has shown that the most common scenario is failure embedded in the carrying out stage. However, even in these cases, the root of the problem comes from the formulation process if the problem is inadequately conceptualized. In addition, political agendas reflect political demands, and such political pressure does not always correspond with a well-thought policy initiative (Wolman, 1981: 435). It is difficult to pinpoint which factors or conditions affect policy output since the political and social contexts play a significant role, and there is no 'one-size-fits-all' policy. Despite this, scholars have tried to bring up some of the most important factors that affect policies in their creation or implementation stages. The below-reviewed works shall serve as a guide for interpreting the study evidence gathered for explaining the implementation failure of SFI Bonus.

For this study, the discussion upon the implementation failure will assist in explaining the evidence gathered regarding the implementation failure of the SFI Bonus case. Both authors Matland (1995) and Hudson et al. (2019) have brought studies that look at the potential issues embedded in both policy formulation and Implementation. Therefore, it seems feasible to elaborate on how they have argued about policy failure and how such indicators have potential influence in the case under study. Hudson et al., 2019, brings a very recent study in which he identifies four frequent contributors to policy failure: (1) *overly optimistic goals*, (2) *implementation in dispersed governance*, (3) *inadequate*

*collaborative policymaking, (4) the vagaries of the policy cycle.* These four contributors contain characteristics embedded in both policy creation and the actual implementation stages.

'*Over optimistic goals*' can come as a consequence of high institutional complexity, lack of previous evidence regarding the costs, benefits and potential risks, stakeholders not sharing the same views, incentives and behaviors affect the direction of the policy implementation, and last but not least a requirement for fast results due to political pressure. (Hudson et al., 2019) Policy goals can be closely related to the ambiguity of goals. More precisely, Matland (1995) mentions two kinds of ambiguity; the ambiguity of goals and ambiguity of means. He argues that: "In top-down models, goal clarity is an important independent variable that directly affects policy success. Goal ambiguity is seen as leading to misunderstanding and uncertainty and, therefore, often is culpable in implementation failure. The position of top-downers is quite explicit—policies should be pushed in the direction of greater goal clarity" (Matland 1995, 158–59).

As for the 'implementation and dispersed governance,' Hudson et al. recognize a level of discretion and a degree of the local authority. Even in concentrated governance, the local context will affect the Implementation, and therefore the results will not be able to be the same everywhere (Hudson et al., 2019: 3). This view emphasizes the notion of 'street-level bureaucrats' by Lipsky 1980, where the influence of these actors can lead to unintended policy implementation. (ibid.) Additionally, the level of discretion is also related to ambiguity levels. Matland (1995: 151) notes: "Flexibility and autonomy might be appropriate when the goals of the policy formulators and implementers are the same, but if they differ greatly, flexibility and autonomy may lead to policies which result in lower performance on official goals." On the same note, Meyers & Nielsen (2012: 311) argue that when goals are unclear or contradictory (high goal ambiguity), local implementers have a higher chance of deviating from the policy intention by making discretionary decisions.

'*Inadequate collaborative policymaking*' remains one of the most common reasons for implementation difficulties, and it involves a lack of communication between stakeholders of different political levels (Hudson et al., 2019). Based on a case study conducted by Zhan et al. (2014) in China, Hudson et al. also argues that a lack of vertical communication and collaboration would pose problems in policy implementation. Their study showed that when a centralized political authority is dealing with a decentralized administration, even though it has a superior authority, the centralized political authority lacks institutional and organizational means. This combination leads to a deviation from the expected Implementation, and the policy will not be fully implemented. China's policy implementation experiences have been identified with symbolic policies due to a high number of such cases (ibid.). The suggested advice is that a connection among the involved actors vertically and horizontally would bring positive policy results (Hudson et al., 2019).

The last-mentioned factor that influences policy failure is the 'vagaries of the political cycle.' It refers to the lack of accountability that politicians show towards an initial failure and a great desire to aim short-term results. As a result, they push the agenda and propose policies as fast as possible without considering how this policy will work in practice.

Matland (1995: 164) argues that implementation outcomes are decided by power. In the case of a political implementation where ambiguity is low and conflict high, in order to make a proposal pass, involved actors or coalition will have to bargain to reach an agreement. This political behavior goes through three phases: (1) rising salience: the issue becomes politicized and thus pushed into the agenda; (2) building blocks: the government starts organizing all the relevant institutions and bodies that are involved in the policy process; (3) embedding: the delivery starts a political interest lowers (Hudson et al., 2019: 4).

Another way of grasping what policy failure consists of is by investigating what is considered a successful implementation rather than failure. Many definitions of potential influencing factors have been produced, but still, no definite answer has been accepted unanimously. Matland (1995) puts forth the question of whether the attention should focus on the direct relation of the statute and the outcomes, or the implementation actions and consequences. Grounded by the democratic theory, which gives the policy designers a normative power greater than the power of local implementers, the statute shows the will of those who are directly elected by citizens, and agencies should comply with the directives and achieve the goals in the statute in order to achieve policy success. Thus, it is legitimate to measure success based on the execution of the statutory mandate. On the other side of the medal, even though they lack such a normative power, street-level bureaucrats do have discretionary power, and their norms and values shape the policy implementation and outcome. From this discussion, Matland concludes that it is important to understand the level of goal ambiguity. Therefore, if goals are explicitly stated, compliance with the written statute plays a significant role in measuring success. If the goals are not explicitly stated, it becomes harder to choose a standard that will serve as a comparative norm towards the goal and the actual outcome. This is due to the level of discretion of the local-level implementers (Matland, 1995).

## 2.3 Evolution of Policy Implementation theories

Policy implementation research finds a substantial amount of literature, which recognizes the progressive development of the field. It dates as far back as the analysis of the Tennessee Valley Authority by Philip Selznick in 1949. His work derived from evaluation research literature and investigated how the local implementation context influenced and altered the process, affecting the obtainment of the policy goals and outcomes (Saetren, 2005). Substantial governmental changes and the increased number of failed policy attempts that followed up during 1960- 1970 lead to increased attention towards the implementation gap between policy intents and policy results. Thus, efforts were made to identify factors that could potentially influence policy outcomes and therefore inform future policy (Hudson et al., 2019). The literature is considered split into two major approaches, top-down and bottom-up. These approaches derive from the first and second generation of policy implementation researchers, which focus their studies on developing

analytical frameworks of implementation, based on factors solely related to policy design statutory language (see: Keating, 1977; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989; Sabatier & Mazmanian 1980; VanMeter & VanHorn: 1975), or by analyzing the local implementation solely (see: Lipsky, 1980). The third generation of implementation research focuses on combining both approaches (see: Elmore, 1979-80; Sabatier, 1986; Goggin, 1986; Berman 1978; Matland, 1995).

### 2.3.1 Top-down and bottom-up perspectives

Pressman and Wildavsky's book "Implementation" in 1973 is considered a structured study on policy implementation, which serves as a stepping stone for subsequent theories. The 'founding fathers' of implementation research (see Parsons: 1995) sought to explain why the federal jobs program in Oakland, California, produced too few jobs, aiming to find a concrete theory of implementation. The essence of their argument is that the success of implementation depends on the length of the chain of causality and its complexity, thus showing that implementation dominates outcomes (Pressman and Wildavsky: 1973). Their work identifies critical causal factors that affect the policy formulation and the success of policy implementation. As Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) argue, effective policy implementation can occur when the policy, the institutional setting, and the target group are considered, implying that both the intent of the policymakers and the behavior of local actors are essential factors. Thus, they suggest that both top-down and bottom-up approaches should be included in the implementation analysis (Mugambwa et al., 2018).

As a leading proponent of the top-down frameworks, Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) emphasize a distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation. That being said, their work consists of a top-down approach of policy implementation, which offers a rational comprehensive approach to implementation with an emphasis on the statutory language and a view from the government to the policy (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983). Their top-down approach is built on the identification of variables that affect the achievement of the policy goals. These variables are divided into three major categories: "(1) *the tractability of the problem(s) being addressed*; (2) *the ability of the statute to structure favorably the implementation process*; and (3) *the net effect of a variety of political variables on the balance of support for statutory objectives*." (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983: 21) Their perspective is 'policy-centered,' and the argument says that the policy's outcomes can be measured against the policy objectives mentioned in the statute. Hence, clear and defined objectives and the incorporation of the adequate causal theory have a direct effect on policy success or failure (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983: 22). Matland (1995) acknowledges Mazmanian and Sabatier (1989) work as the most developed model regarding the top-down literature.

The results of a top-down analysis do offer valuable recommendations to policymakers regarding the potential improvement areas and future policy development when creating new policies. This approach aims to provide 'generalizing' policy advice. To do so, they look for consistent and similar patterns in different policy areas. (Matland, 1995: 146) However, a critique of the top-down approach is that it fails to give attention to the actors

involved in the implementation process, thus providing only a static picture of the implementation process. That being said, top-downers only explore the behavior of the implementing institutions, thus almost wholly ignoring the local-level implementers. Another criticism is the exclusive attention that they put on the statutory language and seeing the implementation process as purely administrative (Paudel, 2009). Therefore, implementation scholars have explored other approaches that aim to shed light on the carrying out of a policy decision.

The second generation of implementation, as previously mentioned, consists of studies that focus on exploring the relationship between policy and practice. (Paudel, 2009: 39) Some of the crucial outputs that derived from these researches are: policy cannot always mandate the means individual incentives and beliefs do play a role in the local response, a strategic balance of pressure and support lead to a successful implementation, political realities that exist for complex policies do influence the implementation (McLaughlin, 1987: 176). Second-generation scholars continue to be struggling with theory-building regarding the implementation process research (Winter, 2003). Therefore, besides some well-reviewed works, hence Lipsky, 1980; Hjern and Hull 1982; Hanf 1982, compared with the top-downers, bottom-up approaches are behind when it comes to having clear theoretical frameworks which can serve as strong research bases (Paudel, 2009: 36).

The bottom-up approach has a starting point in the lowest level of the policy implementation scale; thus, street-level bureaucrats are considered central in the political process. The theory of 'street-level bureaucracy' by Lipsky (1978) places the attention on "*those who are charged with carrying out policy rather than those who formulate and convey it*" (Lipsky, 1978: 397) As Lipsky argues, the behaviors of street-level bureaucrats are crucial for the implementation process. It can explain cases where a policy is implemented in unexpected and unintended ways. In these cases, only analyzing the policy statute through a top-down analysis would not be sufficient. According to the theory, street-level bureaucrats can make policy by exercising discretion and a level of freedom from organizational authority, thus letting these variations in the coping mechanisms affect how the policy is carried out. Besides offering a new perspective on understanding implementation, the theory lacks specific causal mechanisms to explain the policy output. Consequently, it provides a lack of parsimony (Winter, 2003: 6).

### 2.3.2 Synthesizing the implementation literature

So far, there is no overall implementation theory that has gained general agreement among scholars. This theoretical pluralism has led a field of research characterized by studies that employ diverse theories and variables to make sense of their research aims (Paudel, 2009: 46). Both top-down and bottom-up offer valuable results from different perspectives but also have weaknesses, and that is ignoring what the other perspective covers. Therefore, attempts of synthesis of both perspectives have spread quickly. Regardless, the critique from the second-generation implementation researchers (Goggin, 1986) states that continuous bottlenecks are too many case studies, not enough replication

or generalizable results. As Elmore (1985: 601) notes, most implementation studies are case studies, which carefully offer context-specific policy advice and not generalizable findings in the broad sense of the implementation field. Therefore, a synthesis of approaches is seen as a suitable way for research that aims to provide the strengths and benefits of both approaches and recognize different levels of interaction.

Berman 1978 offers an implementation policy model based on the study of the implementation of federal social programs in the United States. The main finding of his work is that the distinction between the process of micro- and macro-implementation rises from their institutional setting (ibid.: 10). He claims that implementation consists of two levels: macro-level of implementation, which is seen as one authority creating a policy, and micro level of implementation, which looks at how local authority responds and carries out the macro-level plans. The analysis consists of four 'couplings' which recognize four policy steps starting from the authoritative policy decision and ending with the outcome. On the macro-level of implementation, a level of ambiguity in the policy program can lead to a deviation between the policy intent and the following governmental actions. (March and Olsen, 1976 mentioned in Berman, 1978: 15) Whereas, in the micro-level of adaptation, a 'slippage' (a deviation from the expected path) between policy guidelines and the local response can happen and consequently affect the intended policy implementation. The argument of Berman (1978) that the implementation process usually faces problems when the policy interacts with this micro-level leads to the conclusion that the policy output is primarily dependent on the local implementation, thus emphasizing the usefulness of including a bottom-up analysis.

Another attempt to combine both approaches has been made by Elmore (1979 and 1980). He introduces the concept of forward and backward mapping, thus attempting to combine both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Forward mapping "*... begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policymaker's intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementors at each level.*" (Elmore, 1985: 602) As for backward mapping, he claims that it "*...explicitly questions the assumption that policymakers ought to, or do, exercise the determinant influence over what happens in the implementation process.*" (ibid.) Elmore's definitions seem to resemble a joint of the ideas behind Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983 and Lipsky, 1978 work. However, Elmore's model lacks explanatory power due to the lack of concepts and causal connections, making the model worth the discussion but unable to offer predictions or generalized behaviors. (Matland, 1995: 151)

Sabatier (1986) reviews the enormous amount of 15 years of implementation literature and outlines a new conceptual framework for analyzing policy implementation. He argues that the previous generations either offered a wholly top-down analysis used in case studies or attempted to be more analytical towards the actors involved and offered comparative studies. Building from his work with Mazmanian (1983) and the literature review, Sabatier contributes with the 'advocacy coalitions framework of policy change.' The author suggests that such a framework should be used in a 10-15 years time-span to portray an objective analysis by including the potential policy changes in different periods. (Sabatier, 1986: 38) As a unit of analysis, advocacy coalitions are different organizations, either private or public, which have a say in the policy process. Thus,

Sabatier (1986) and Matland (1995: 149) encourage the use of the networking methodology from Hjern (1982) and Hjern and Hull (1983) and their strategy for creating a networking map through interviewing local implementers about their goals, problems, activities, and contacts. However, besides recognizing the importance of moving beyond a top-down approach, same as Elmore, Sabatier does not provide causal connections between the presented variables (Mugambwa et al., 2018: 218-219; Matland, 1995: 149-152).

## 2.4 Framework of analysis – ‘Conflict-Ambiguity’

As the literature review showed, implementation studies are characterized by a substantial number of variables which lack the adequate explanation of the theoretical relationships between them. Therefore, it is foreseen that whatever approaches are chosen, will not cover and analyze all potential factors involved in policy implementation. In this myriad of concepts, factors and theories that aim to grasp the implementation through different approaches, yet still unable to provide parsimony, Matland (1995) contributes to the implementation research not by adding new elements but rather by proposing a model which captures when each approach is most appropriate. Thus, allowing the investigation of both implementations ends in one study. Therefore, the departing point of this study is not to pinpoint whether this policy is better described from a top-down or a bottom-up perspective by using an explicit theory, but instead exploring both political dimensions of policy creation and the actual implementation. The 'ambiguity - conflict' model by Matland (1995), identifies the conditions under which implementation research would provide practical policy recommendations. (Mugambwa et al., 2018: 218; Matland, 1995: 153) The model grasps the level of conflict surrounding the policy and the level of ambiguity in the policy formulation and implementation. Through the variation of these variables, the author has created an analytical tool consisting of four types of policy models. One 'Central Principle for Determining Outcome' characterizes each implementation model. Therefore, the policy implementation analysis can provide a sufficient explanation for the rationale behind the policy failure.

### 2.4.1 Policy Conflict

*"For conflict to exist there must be an interdependence of actors, an incompatibility of objectives, and a perceived zero-sum element to the interactions (Dahrendorf 1958). Policy conflict will exist when more than one organization sees a policy as directly relevant to its interests and when the organizations have incongruous views"* (Matland, 1995: 156). Matland puts forth the distinction on the degree of goal congruence between two different decision-making models. The rational decision-making model assumes that goals are agreed upon, whereas the bureaucratic politics model does not support the

statement. Head and Alford (2013) add that lack of congruence brings difficulties for achieving consensus and usually comes from a reflection of different values and experiences. When conflict is present, Matland argues that actors will resort to bargaining mechanisms if they have to. The importance of the policy and the way it is perceived by the different actors involved plays a role in the intensity of the conflict. If a new policy falls into conflict with an existing policy or goal within the implementing agency, the stakes are that few resources and little support will be invested in this new policy; consequently, leading to an almost inevitable failure (Matland, 1995: 157). A decrease of the conflict level would lead to an implementation process in which the statute has a normative power greater than street-level bureaucrats' discretion. One of the most significant effects of the policy conflict is the ease of access to the implementation process. Low policy conflict is associated with easy access, and high policy ambiguity is associated with entry barriers.

#### 2.4.2 Policy Ambiguity

Matland brings forth the idea of two existing kinds of policy ambiguity: the ambiguity of goals and means. From a top-down perspective, clear policy goals are seen as a significant variable for determining policy success. A high goal ambiguity level would translate into a high chance of misunderstandings and uncertainty among the involved actors and, therefore, be associated with policy failure. However, Matland notes the negative correlation between goal conflict and ambiguity. Goal ambiguity has served as a way to avoid conflict since implicitly stated goals can be perceived differently by different stakeholders, thus preventing the chance of seeing this policy initiative as a threat to their initial interest.

Consequently, a legislative compromise can be achieved. As for the ambiguity of means, Matland mentions: (1) the lack of the needed technology for reaching the policy goals, (2) the uncertainty about the roles of the involved actors and organizations involved in the implementation process, (3) a complex organizational environment that creates confusion of the policy tools that can be used, how they can be used and what is the result expected. Ambiguity levels affect not only policy outcomes but also how these policies are monitored (Matland, 1995: 159).

#### 2.4.3 Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix: Policy Implementation Processes

Table 2. Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix

| Concept        | Conflict | Ambiguity | Central Principle for Determining Policy Outcome |
|----------------|----------|-----------|--|
| Administrative | Low      | Low       | Resources  |
| Political      | High     | Low       | Power  |
| Experimental   | Low      | High      | Contextual Conditions                            |
| Symbolic       | High     | High      | Local Coalition Strength                         |

Source: adapted from Matland 1995: 160

### **Administrative implementation: Low Policy Ambiguity and Low Policy Conflict**

The core principle of this implementation is that resources determine the outcomes. Given that the policy goals are clearly stated (low goal ambiguity), resources needed are known (low ambiguity of means), and the conflict is low, resources determine the chance of failure. There is top-down information flow, and at each level of the implementation, actors know explicitly what they are supposed to do. Thus, standardized procedures are developed, and bureaucrats carry out the implementation loyally. Due to its explicit nature and the known technology, this type of policy implementation is closed to outside influence.

Consequently, the results of this policy are relatively uniform in many settings at the microlevel. Taking all this given, Matland notes that a problem that can arise during this implementation model can be technical failures coming from the local implementers' level of expertise and their ability to comprehend and use this technology. Even though the initial communication is clear, passing the information through the communication network can distort due to potential misunderstanding or poor communication (Matland, 1995).

### **Experimental implementation - High policy ambiguity and low policy conflict**

Experimental implementation operates in areas where there is insufficient previous knowledge for creating a programmed implementation, and consequently, it is characterized by high ambiguity of goals and means. Even when goals are known and agreed upon, there is not a clear way how these goals will be met. In such a policy, Matland argues that the outcomes will be highly dependent on the resources and local-level implementers involved since contextual conditions dominate this process. In addition, this model's decision-making process is associated with the 'garbage can' model when the stream of actors, problems, solutions, and choices produce an outcome that is hard to predict. Such uncertainty comes from somewhat ambiguous goals, uncertain technology (high ambiguity of means), and fluid participation of actors. As Matland notes, the way of interaction between these variables will be highly dependent on the policy setting. Such a model is even more influenced by outside factors than the

previously elaborated 'political implementation.' In such cases, policy success is not measured by achieving specific benchmarks but, most importantly, if this policy contributed to policy learning. A bottom-up approach would be better at describing an implementation coming from the above-mentioned conditions of this policy. The high level of ambiguity creates the opportunity to analyze how local-level implementers are responding concerning a policy when there is not much control and command coming from a top-down perspective (Matland, 1995).

#### **Symbolic implementation: High policy ambiguity and high policy conflict**

Many scholars have suggested that to make a policy reach consensus, a high level of ambiguity would lead to a reduced policy conflict. However, symbolic implementation is not the case. They come as a need for supporting salient symbols and confirming new goals, reshaping old goals, or emphasizing essential values. Such policies are usually conflictual with existing relationships and gain substantial attention in the adaptation stage, but ultimately, they are highly associated with substantive failure. Symbolic and ambiguous goals, such as decreased crime, increased welfare, and so on, lead to multiple interpretations from different actors involved. Different professionals would recommend different ways of implementing this policy. Since the high level of policy ambiguity would lead to different outcomes in different sites, the strength of local coalitions would determine the outcome (Matland, 1995: 168). Depending on the preferred interpretation, different conflicting coalitions can arise in the same setting. Therefore, there is a high potential for different interpretations of how the local authorities shall implement the policy. Contrasting from the 'political implementation,' local actors have a crucial role in determining the implementation of this policy, and central actors are unable to exercise control. Matland argues that such policy falls in between a top-down and a bottom-up approach, but leaning more towards a bottom-up approach due to the emphasis on the local level of implementation. The reason why it fails to be wholly appropriate from a bottom-up approach is that such theories fail to acknowledge the highly political nature that characterizes symbolic implementation (Matland, 1995).

#### **Political Implementation: Low Policy Ambiguity and High Policy Conflict**

According to Matland, the combination of Low Policy Ambiguity and High Policy Conflict leads to a political implementation, implying that power is determinant for implementation outcomes. Furthermore, this system is very much open to outside influence since the success is very much dependent on holding the compliance of the disagreeing actors that provide vital resources for the policy implementation. Central authorities can create sufficient legislative coalition power to force their plan that usually derives as a response towards political pressure, or because this policy is seen as sensible. Matland argues that many of these supporters are not interested in the implementation stage, and such non-interest can shift the results towards a policy non-implementation or even failure. Since this policy has clearly defined goals, but they are perceived as incompatible among different actors (high policy conflict), it leads to the development of a conflict over means/resources. In such cases, Matland argues that successful implementation depends on either having sufficient means for implementation or

sufficient power for 'forcing' key actors to comply with one's desires. Thus bargaining is a way for achieving an agreement on means. Coercive mechanisms are a way of achieving compliance among different actors involved in the implementation. However, it can fall into difficulties when municipalities show a high degree of independence. Nevertheless, in such a case, the local implementers can not exceed the power of an unambiguous and explicitly stated policy, emphasizing the importance of a top-down approach (Matland, 1995).

## 2.5 Concluding remarks

This study keeps a rather open approach that does not pinpoint from the very beginning whether the implementation of this policy case can be investigated from a top-down or bottom-up perspective, as the majority of the literature suggests. Therefore, the use of a theory such as 'conflict and ambiguity' offers a more profound and broad level of investigation that requires evidence that traces both dimensions, starting from the actual policy creation until its implementation. There is no numeric value present for measuring whether the policy conflict or level of ambiguity is high or low, but rather the data should be carefully discussed and presented in accordance with other elements within the theory for building a trustworthy discussion, which will lead to answering the research questions. Furthermore, it is of high importance to gather a substantial amount of data that can support the claims that this study aims to deliver. Therefore, this study shall provide a specific chapter for presenting the relevant gathered evidence. In addition, the policy failure determinants by Hudson et al. (2019) are aligned with the theoretical assumptions of the Matlands' model. Therefore, they shall be used for explaining the policy outcome in the discussions chapter.

# 3 Methodology

This chapter elaborates on the methods that have been used for constructing the research. It starts by bringing forth methodological assumptions and outlines the ontological and the epistemological assumptions contexts of the study. Right after is motivated case selection as well as data collection methods and their method of analysis.

## 3.1 Methodological assumptions

A case study research approach is employed for analyzing and explaining the policy implementation failure of SFI-Bonus. This explanatory policy study traces the implementation process for explaining its outcomes. The aim of studies that use process tracing methods is to explain a particular puzzling outcome either by being theory-centric or case-centric. Theory-centric process tracing tries either to test or to build a theory, whereas case-centric process tracing is instead an outcome-oriented process tracing. As literature of research methodology shows, explaining-outcome process-tracing is, in particular, useful for studies that attempt to open up the 'black box' of mechanisms by making a within-case inference (Gerring, 2007: 45). This form of process tracing is employed in a single-case study seeking to build a plausible explanation for a puzzling outcome in a specific contextual case (Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 18). Such a case-centric approach is in line with many qualitative scholars. All process tracing methods are oriented on causal mechanisms, but as Beach & Pedersen argue, 'causal mechanisms' are different from 'causality,' which is often understood as congruence between variables or intervening variables. The notion of 'mechanisms' is seen as interacting parts of a system that work together to produce an outcome. Outcome process tracing can be pursued either by following the deductive path of theory-testing, the inductive path of theory-building, or by sequentially combining these two (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

Thus, this research begins by exploring the existing literature and establishing potential 'mechanisms' that can explain the case-specific outcome. The utilization of the 'ambiguity and conflict' model has notes of causal interference among the variables accounted for in the implementation; thus, it offers a suitable base for using process tracing in a deductive way. Still, as Beach & Pedersen argue, in several cases, theories might fail to provide sufficient explanations. To prevent such theoretical failure, the study combines a deductive and inductive approach of outcome process tracing sequentially. Therefore, the

inductive stage of the research occurs when the empirical data gathered is used to identify case-specific mechanisms that might go beyond the established theoretical model. Consequently, the primary mechanisms provided by the theory will be reconceptualized until a sufficient explanation for the case-specific outcome is reached (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

This study positions itself in the critical realist school of thought, where there is a shared ontological position with positivism, but on epistemological terms, it relates to interpretivism. Causal inferences are seen as an essential part of the analysis, which can explain the phenomena under study by providing causal statements by including both agency and structural accounts. Regarding agency, this study acknowledges the way that individuals give meaning to their experience and the influence imposed by the surrounding social and political context, but with less emphasis on discourse and linguistic analysis (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 12; Braun & Clarke 2006; Lowndes, Marsh & Stoker: 2018). Thus, interpretation takes the form of explanation.

## 3.2 Case selection

SFI Bonus was an initiative that, at first glance, gives the impression that it will guarantee success. It is directly providing higher incentives to SFI students by offering them a performance-based financial award based on performance, which is supposed to motivate them more to finish their studies faster. Initially, it looks like there is little to suspect that such a policy would provide unsuccessful results. To begin with, the SFI Bonus was implemented as a one-year trial test in 13 municipalities in Sweden. Interestingly enough, SFI Bonus became a national policy before the full report of SFI Bonus trial results was presented.

Nevertheless, out of the expected 20% of the enrolled students in each of three available study paths, only a small percentage could reach this Bonus during the national implementation of SFI Bonus. (Institutet För Arbetsmarknadspolitisk Utvärdering et al., 2012) These results, followed by the SFI Bonus abolishment, led to the interest of picking this policy as a case study and analyzing its implementation process to understand what contributed to its failure. Such policy cases can be analyzed from different theoretical assumptions, levels of analysis, and angles with the supremacy of structures or actors. However, for this study, the focus will be on the 'ambiguity and conflict' model and its suggested research elements.

Case selection in a single case study is challenging but crucial for achieving the overall study objectives and avoiding selection bias. Besides an overall argument that the type of case study determines case selection, there is little to no particular characteristics mentioned that influence such selection. (Keman & Woldendorp, 2016: 424-425) However, when applying process tracing methods, case accessibility is the overarching criteria for case selection. The researcher should be able to gather substantial empirical data that provides a deeper understanding of structural factors and perceptions of relevant actors (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). For conducting phenomenological interviews, the

researcher should seek interviewees that have been involved in the implementation process. They should be able to have a common understanding of the topic and questions with the interviewer. (Roulston, 2010c: 3) For interviewing local-level implementers, it is seen feasible to conduct this research based on the Malmö municipality. This choice is grounded on the fact that it is easily accessible by the researcher and the fact that Malmö is among the cities that have faced the highest rates of the immigrant population; thus, integration policies as the one under study are seen of high importance. Therefore, due to its practical relevance and social importance, Malmö was considered plausible for case selection.

### 3.3 Data collection methods

This study offers a multi-methods approach by employing document analysis and interviewing. The primary data sources are: (1) the documents and parliamentary sessions as part of the first debate when SFI Bonus was proposed to become a national policy; (2) the output of the debate which is the policy statutes; (3) case study evidence of local-level implementers perceptions of policy and implementation. The following table clarifies the research approach:

Table 1: the research approach

| <b>Concept</b>        | <b>Data</b>  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Conflict</b>       | (1) the documents and parliamentary sessions as part of the initial debate when SFI Bonus was proposed to become a national policy |
| <b>Ambiguity</b>      | (2) the output of the debate; policy statute   |
| <b>Implementation</b> | (3) case study evidence of local-level implementers perceptions of policy and implementation                                       |

#### 3.3.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is seen as a popular research method in qualitative case studies that aim to produce detailed description upon a chosen ‘phenomenon’ (Stake, 1995). Bowen (2009: 27) defines document analysis as a systematic way of reviewing documents in a printed or electronic form. Such written sources help the researcher explore, understand, and analyze the research problem. They also serve as 'witness' of past events and help the researcher understand how a specific issue has evolved. In sum, documents provide essential information about background and context and can they serve best when there

is no longer an opportunity to observe the phenomena under study, such as the case of SFI Bonus policy (Bowen, 2009: 30).

Thus, for this study, document analysis of official textual materials obtained from the official Swedish government website such as official reports of SFI Bonus trial/experiment, SFI proposal, and its finalized policy statute is used as the main source of data for conducting this research. Such written documents are seen as feasible for studying the policy conflict by analyzing the initial political debate before the SFI Bonus became a national policy. The actual policy output, the SFI Bonus statute, including the suggestions of opposing bodies, have served as a foundation for discussing the policy ambiguity. Document analysis is used in combination with qualitative interviews in a sequential manner; however, they both come informed from the same theoretical assumptions rather than each other. The rationale for this data triangulation, meaning the use of multiple methods upon the same phenomenon, is to provide evidence that breeds credibility and validity and reduces source bias.

### 3.3.2 Interviews

A phenomenological approach has guided the organized qualitative interviews. The purpose of phenomenological interviewing "is to generate detailed and in-depth descriptions of human experiences" (Roulston, 2010b: 10). Such choice has grounds on the fact that this study is investigating a policy that is not current, but it belongs to the past. The interviewees have to refer to their experience for answering the questions. To conduct such interviews successfully, Roulston (2013: 10) suggests that it is crucial to identify participants that have experienced the phenomena under study and elaborate on it. By saying "their experience," it implies their interaction with the processes, events, and strategies of the implementation process that they were involved in.

For finding interviewees, the scope of analysis has been narrowed down in the local delivery bodies. The interviewees' relationship with the study is that they were part of the implementation process in their respective local education schools for adults that provide SFI; therefore, they are seen as suitable for providing essential data about the SFI Bonus implementation. A total of 3 online based interviews have been conducted for this study. Interviews have been conducted with one rector of a Folkhögskola SFI in Malmö, one principal from Komvux SFI Malmö, and one administrator responsible for managing the bonus process in the same Komvux. A combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling is used where the first interviewee helped identify the following others. The rationale of these sampling choices is the difficulty in identifying individuals who have worked with the Bonus during that time, and that would be willing to accept an interview about the SFI Bonus. Another reason is that a study of this kind has a high political relevance, which could potentially affect the interviewees' willingness to participate in the interview. The interviewees were informed about how the interview data will be used in this study. In addition, their consent was taken for recording the interview and how their information will be handled in this study.

The nature of the interviews was semi-structured, followed up by probes if there was a need for clarification or if the given answer led to a new interest that was not foreseen. Since the theoretical model by Matland argues that policy ambiguity and conflict shape the implementation, the interview guideline used such themes but also contained more general themes that would allow the interviewee to elaborate on potential insights that were not foreseen (see: appendix I, Interview Guideline). As Roulston (2013: 8) suggests, the interview protocol was used as a guide even though the questions might not have been asked in the same written order, which leads to an asymmetrical structure. The interviewees tended to elaborate and touch on different themes as they were explaining their experience during that time. Thus, even though the interview guide has notes of close-ended questions, it was not the case that the interviewees replied with a simple yes/no response but provided in-depth descriptions.

## 3.4 Data analysis method

The gathered data has been approached with a thematic analysis, which is known to be a flexible data analysis strategy that can fit different epistemologies. This data analysis method is used to identify patterns and themes in a data set, and, after that, it offers a simplified way to organize and interpret the data. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is commonly suitable for qualitative studies that start with deductive reasoning, and it assists in interpreting the data in the research context. Therefore, it is particularly suitable for this study since it assists in revealing the presence or the absence of the expected theoretically-deducted themes related to the purpose of this study.

Since the researcher aims to generate objective interview results with less emphasis on the discourse and linguistic analysis, a semantic approach is employed towards the interview data. Thus, the research does not examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, or conceptualizations of the interviewee but rather identify themes through the interviewees' explicit meanings (Braun & Clarke: 2006).

### 3.4.1 Reflection on the methods

In terms of internal validity, case studies are considered to have a comparative advantage against large-n studies. As Blatter & Haverland (2012: 64) argue, the recognition of case, specific contexts, and indicators allows the researcher to reality ensure that the measure approximates the true meaning of a concept. However, "*...case analysis is very sensitive to the way investigators conceptualize variables and classify cases into categories.*" (Liebersohn 1991 mentioned in Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 65). Therefore, data triangulation has been used to draw evidence from different sources and increase the level of validity. Usually, case studies offer generalization only in a small population, and that implies that the external validity of results is limited. However, this study has foreseen

such implications and is thus focused on providing a case study that prioritizes internal validity over replicability.

## 4 Evidence

This section investigates the ongoing debate surrounding the SFI Bonus chronologically. It starts by introducing the rationale behind the proposal and the policy statute. It further establishes the discussions and doubts of the referral bodies and how the Government has responded to them. Right after, the main discussions in the Parliament about the Bonus are presented as well as the voting results for passing the National SFI Bonus law. After that, the rationale for the abolition of SFI Bonus is elaborated, and the views of the local implementers about the Bonus are presented. Lastly, a summary presents the prevailing themes that surrounded the debate.

### 4.1 Introducing SFI Bonus

In the 2007 Economic Spring Bill, it was proposed by the Government the possibility to investigate further promotion for immigrant integration by finding ways that can strengthen the individuals' incentives to speed up their SFI studies, thus entering the labor market faster. More concretely, the Government introduced the idea of setting up a financial incentive compensation for individuals, e.g., in the form of a bonus for those who would finish their SFI studies within a set timeframe and under certain conditions. The full form of this proposal was planned to enter into force during 2008 as a pilot and, after that, become national (prop. 2006/07:100 ).

In the following memorandum (Ds 2008:19), the Government presents the SFI Bonus framework. SFI Bonus would offer a *"performance-based compensation to stimulate more newcomers to start their Swedish studies, make greater efforts to learn the language quickly, and improve their chances of getting a job."* (Ds 2008:19: 39) The Government bases their argument on the statistics of 2002/3 and argues that SFI students on all study paths took on average 22 months between the start and the end date, but if no study interruptions were done, then studies would have been complete within eight months time frame even for illiterate students enrolled in study path one. SFI Bonus should motivate SFI-students to improve their attendance and put extra effort into quickly finishing their studies and therefore improve their chances to enter the Swedish labor market. The bonus levels were half a bonus (SEK 6000) on course B on study path 1, two-thirds bonus (SEK 8000) on course C in study path 2, and a whole bonus (SEK 12000) on courses in study path 3. The Bonus would be a tax-free benefit, and it would not be counted as financial assistance under the Social Services Act (2001: 453). Under these arguments, the

Government estimates that the proportion of eligible students who can speed up their studies and receive SFI Bonus should increase by 20% in each study path. (Ds 2008:19)

Such Bonus was available for individuals that had achieved a passing grade within 12 months from the beginning of their studies and within 15 months from the moment they were registered as a resident in a municipality. Exclusion for the 12 months study period was foreseen for students who would prove that their long absence came from an illness or parental leave for a child under two years old. In such a case, an extension with a maximum of 6 months was available if the individual could support his claims with medical certificates or a statement from the Social Insurance Agency in the case of the paid parental leave. Study interruptions of less than a month or unsupported by documented proof were not included in the fore-mentioned rule. The target group was individuals between 18 and 64 years old who had obtained a residence permit and had received a personal number. SFI Bonus would not include guest students or EEA citizens who came to Sweden for working purposes (Ds 2008:19: 45).

Regarding the administrative means, SFI Bonus was handled by the Municipalities since they were entitled to provide SFI to its residents who are lacking basic Swedish skills. Besides, it was their responsibility to work actively to reach out to the eligible individuals for SFI Bonus and to motivate them to participate in education. Municipalities were responsible for informing the newcomers, deciding, and paying out the Bonus. The application for the Bonus must have been received to the municipality within three months from the moment that the passing grade was obtained in the respective study path. Local governments would then be reimbursed for the Bonuses and other administrative costs under the argument that SFI Bonus is a state initiative, and the state shall cover it financially (Ds 2008:19).

Governments Bill (Prop. 2008/09:156) proposed the implementation of SFI Bonus pilot in no more than 15 municipalities. The new law was expected to enter into force on October 1st, 2009. To measure and compare the effects of this Bonus, a controlled pilot/trial took place where the result of municipalities with SFI Bonus would be compared with municipalities that did not have such Bonus implemented. The Government ran the pilot in collaboration with the Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU). Out of 50 municipalities that were offered to participate, 35 showed interest. After selection, 13 pools of pairs were organized for conducting the pilot, of which Malmö was not chosen to be included in the pilot, but it was expected to be represented by the results from Stockholm and Gothenburg (Prop. 2008/09:156).

Two years after SFI Bonus became national, the final evaluation of SFI Bonus published by IFAU in 2012, reveals that from the total of 13 pools, significantly positive results show in 4 cases, there was no significant difference in 6 cases, and negative results were present in 3 cases. The overall outcome showed that student achievement was quite significant in metropolitan areas and almost zero in the other treated areas (highest: 361 cases in Stockholm; lowest: 9 cases in Trelleborg). Study path 3 dominates the results with a total of 62% of those who got the Bonus, whereas study path 1 is far behind in achievement with only 11% of the total students who got the Bonus. Besides, the

evaluation states that the chance that 3-4 students out of 100 could get the Bonus was possible (Institutet För Arbetsmarknadspolitisk Utvärdering et al., 2012: 20).

On a side note, this evaluation analyses the total number of SFI students that have received a bonus and the specific study path the SFI students belonged to. The general picture, comparing the total of students enrolled in SFI during the time that the Bonus was implemented compared to the proportion (in %) who received the Bonus is not investigated. Therefore, it is tough to see if such a scheme would achieve the expected improvement with 20% in each study path. Moving on, the evaluation concludes that the quick enrollment of SFI students was noted only in Stockholm. The evaluation report argues that a rationale for this could be the institutional advantage of larger cities. However, such a claim is not backed up by data.

## 4.2 SFI Bonus Proposal

The overall proposal of a Bonus for stimulating SFI students to speed up their learning met few reserves from 14 referral bodies and substantial reserves from 12 referral bodies. Interestingly, The County Administrative Board of Stockholm County (in Swedish: Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län) rejects the proposal under the argument that this Bonus would increase the prejudice against the group of newly arrived and potentially lead in xenophobia, the proposal lacks a gender perspective. It would not lead to positive results as expected. A general concern of opposing bodies was if this policy would affect the target group. Starting with the target group itself, the State School Authority (in Swedish: Skolverket) and The School Development Authority (MSU), (in Swedish: Myndigheten för Skolutveckling), point out that there is little knowledge about the reason for drop-out and the delay for starting SFI. Thus, the introduction of this Bonus does not seem feasible for improving the situation. Another dominant concern is the potential administrative burden and increased bureaucracy. The State's Office (in Swedish: Statskontoret) and MSU argue that such an initiative would increase administrative burden and pressure. The National Center for Swedish as a Second Language and SFI (in Swedish: Nationellt centrum för Svenska som andraspråk och SFI) suggests that the Government should wait for the results of SFI evaluation and after that suggest this proposal. Some counter-arguments do emphasize a lot the importance of SFI teachers' quality. Again, The National Center for Swedish as a Second Language and SFI and Sweden's Municipalities and County Councils (SKL) (in Swedish: Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting) suggest that improved competences of teachers and additional training should be offered if such Bonus is put into force. Also, it is argued that this Bonus can have a rather negative effect on the pressure that it puts upon the teachers to hand out a passing grade without corresponding knowledge (Prop. 2008/09:156: 11-13).

A concern raised by State School Authority points out the inclusion and exclusion of specific individuals and how this can affect the teaching. They argue that SFI Bonus is considered eligible for SFI students from the age of 18 years old, whereas SFI is provided

for individuals starting at the age of 16. They point out the question of how this rule will affect the teaching in a classroom where there are students included and excluded by the law. In addition, the Teachers Union (in Swedish: Lärarförbundet) argues that this Bonus can negatively affect the relationship between the students and the teachers (Prop. 2008/09:156: 14). The Government addresses this argument by pointing out that the Bonus goal is to motivate individuals that can enter the labor market; thus, individuals under 18 are not seen as feasible.

Another critical discussion is the unfairness of this Bonus towards those who are not quick learners. The majority of the opposing bodies have argued that the way this Bonus is formulated reflects unfairness for those who have a hard time learning a new language fast, and for this, people should not suffer to reach the Bonus. The State Office argues that this Bonus gives incentives to the wrong group, namely individuals with a more educational experience and thus greater capability to learn faster. In addition, individuals coming from countries that do not use the Latin alphabet are highly discouraged. The National Center for Swedish as a Second Language and SFI believes that such a proposal is disadvantaging students in study paths 1 and 2 and is clearly stimulating students in study path 3.

An essential point of discussion is the time limit of SFI Bonus. The County Administrative Board in Norrbotten County (in Swedish: Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens län) argues that there is an uninvestigated issue that prevents the majority of the new arrivals from studying Swedish within the 15 months of their registration in the municipality. There is no safe guarantee that the SFI course will be offered within three months from the moment of application. Therefore, several referral bodies have pointed out that the time frame is too tight for obtaining a passing grade. More concretely, the Municipality of Malmö suggests that the time limits should differentiate based on study paths and other individual conditions (e.g., working beside studying) (Prop. 2008/09:156: 16). Regarding the differentiated amount paid for each study path, The County Administrative Court in Uppsala County and The Municipality of Malmö suggest that the same amount should be paid despite the study path. Whereas SKL suggests that the lower study paths should receive a higher bonus, especially study path 1. The Government responds with the argument that the proposed system aims to stimulate the students to finish as many courses as possible (Prop. 2008/09:156: 16).

Strong objection was made upon the fact that this Bonus would be tax-free and not counted as a social benefit under the Social Services Act (2001: 453) nor as an introductory compensation according to the law (1992: 1068). Many municipalities have argued that this rule could fall into conflict with the principle of equality in the municipal law. The National Board (in Swedish: Socialstyrelsen), the exclusion of this Bonus from the aforementioned rules, would affect the basic principle for calculating economic assistance. Furthermore, they argue that such a Bonus could lead to differences and inequalities within specific groups. Therefore it is recommended to include this exemption in Chapter 4. 1 a § Social Services Act. Malmö Municipality states that such exceptions should be made for individuals sent to the Enforcement Office (in Swedish: Kronofogden). The Government addresses these claims by saying that since the Bonus is eligible for everyone in the stated target group and is offering the same amount despite

the economic situation of the individual, it should be seen as a way of promoting equality rather than the opposite (Prop. 2008/09:156: 21-22).

Regarding the administration of SFI Bonus, a few referral bodies requested clarification of what would be the "appropriate" way for administering the Bonus since there is no specification on how the process should be handled. Furthermore, The Swedish Financial Management Agency (in Swedish: Ekonomistyrningsverket) is requesting the pros and cons of alternative solutions that can be employed by the Municipalities. Furthermore, they suggest further analysis of the currently proposed framework for deciding which administration could be the most cost-effective alternative but also protective towards privacy-sensitive information. Another suggestion comes from the Malmö Municipality and Växjö Municipality, which suggests that the decision and payment of SFI Bonus could be made automatically through the State School Board (in Swedish Skolverket) and thus simplify administration and reduce transactions. The Government states that the administrative process of the Bonus should be simple, and the responsibility is placed on the Municipalities since they have easier access to the data regarding the individuals' eligibility. In addition, the Government states that the State School Board shall assist the Municipalities and provide a database for containing routine information and information that will minimize the risk of double payments of bonuses (Prop. 2008/09:156: 22-26).

### 4.3 The Parliamentary Debate

The above-presented proposal Prop. 2008/09:156 has also been debated in a parliamentary session held on May 14th, 2009. The Government at that time was opposed by the Red-Green Alliance of Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterna), the Left Party (Vänsterpartiet), and the Green Party (Miljöpartiet), who were not in favor of passing the SFI Bonus.

Maria Stenberg from Social Democrats opens her speech by stating "*I want to reject the bill, which contains a proposal for the introduction of a new law on experimental activities with performance-based incentive compensation in SFI, so-called SFI Bonus, and requests the joint reservation of Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Green Party. We consider that the starting point of the bill is completely incorrect.*" She argues that the Government sees the newcomers as lazy and unmotivated for studying Swedish and finishing the courses. She further argues that the newly arrived immigrants are a rather heterogeneous group due to their previous conditions, educational levels, and experiences, and this bonus system is unfair to those who are illiterate or have little educational background. In the speech, Stenberg emphasizes that the amount spent for the Bonus would be much more efficient if used for teacher education and training (Stenberg, 2009, May. 14).

Kalle Larsson from the Left Party agrees with what the previous speaker said and adds that the Swedish language's importance is acknowledged, and the discussion is not about

that but instead about how the Government is trying to encourage people. Instead of putting the pressure of success or failure on the individual, further attention should be given to SFI areas that need improvement. Ulf Holm from the Green Party adds that it is bizarre and incomprehensible that this proposal continues to be on the table despite many objections and doubts, sharp criticism from referral agencies, and many shortcomings that are pointed out. In conclusion, the Red-Green Alliance calls the rejection of the bill and approval of the reservation (Larsson, 2009, May. 14; Holm, 2009, May. 14).

Reza Khelili Dylami from the Moderates emphasizes the importance of SFI and the importance of finishing the studies in a shorter time. According to Dylami, meetings with teachers have been conducted, and the output was that such a performance-based bonus would be an excellent way to motivate SFI students. He further argues that such a policy is for people who have tried to learn Swedish for a long time, failed, or interrupted their studies at one point. Dylami brings forth the example of a woman from Afghanistan who has been studying SFI for 13 years and never succeeded in finishing. This example is questioned by Holm, who elaborates that there is no point in bringing such an example when this woman has no chance to get the Bonus since she does not meet the criteria proposed for SFI Bonus. Therefore, the real question is how to motivate these individuals who have not succeeded in their SFI studies for such a long time? The debate brings mixed arguments whether the issue is on the lack of motivation of the students or on the quality of SFI that contributes to a long period for finishing studies. Lastly, Eva Flyborg from the Liberals argues that it is essential to note what students think of the proposal. A few months earlier, a survey was conducted by the Statistics Office, where students were asked if they would learn Swedish faster if they got a bonus in return, and the results were 40% positive. Ending on this note, Flyborg, on behalf of the majority, approves the proposal and rejects the reservation.

Despite the opposition, as mentioned above, the SFI Bonus pilot was conducted. On February 25th, 2010, the Government sent the law proposal for the National SFI Bonus in The Council of Legislations (in Swedish Lagrådet). SFI Bonus was again debated in the parliamentary session held on May 20th, 2010. Luciano Astudillo, on behalf of Socialdemocrates, mentions the preliminary results of SFI Bonus even though it will take some time until the final report is published. He further argues that the preliminary analysis from IFAU suggests that SFI Bonus did not deliver the expected results. Politics is about managing resources, says Astudillo, and in this case, the Government is putting the resources on the already prioritized individuals. Ulf Holm, on behalf of the Green Party, raises the question of why there is a need to implement SFI Bonus in the whole country before the release of the evaluation for the pilot. The response given is that people enrolled in SFI have been asked about their studies and shown dissatisfaction with their SFI experience. However, a new question was raised about whether this dissatisfaction comes as a result of a lack of motivation or from poor SFI quality. No previous evaluation has pointed out that SFI studies are affected by students' motivation.

As a result of the ongoing debates, on March 25th, 2010, the Social Democrats, the Green Party, and the Left Party proposed the motion 2009/10: A14 for rejecting the proposal of National SFI Bonus due to the previously mentioned arguments. The Parliament rejected the motion 2009/10: A14 and approved the Bill 2009/10: 188 by the

Government for National SFI Bonus with 144 votes pro, 139 against, and 66 abstentions. Consequently, SFI Bonus became a national policy on July 1st, 2010.

## 4.4 SFI-Bonus Abolishment

On November 20th, 2013, in the report 2013/14: AU1, The Labor Market Committee (in Swedish: Arbetsmarknadsutskottet) discussed the Government's budget for 2014 for the Integration section and Gender Equality as well as the motions proposed with an impact in 2014. The Government proposes to reduce expenditure for SFI Bonus under 2014 by SEK 50 million instead of SEK 100 million per year. Representatives from Swedish Democrats party propose the motion 2013/14: A394 that SFI Bonus should be abolished immediately. They argue that this Bonus gives the wrong signals to reward specific individuals for accomplishing what is expected for them in the first place. In addition, the Bonus is inefficient and unfair because it stimulates the individuals that are already advantaged and is of no help for the ones who need help. They conclude that it is good that the Government finally realized such shortcomings and recommends its abolishment. Social Democrats propose the motion 2013/14: A288 for abolishing SFI Bonus under the same arguments. The committee brings forth the results of the SFI Bonus pilot, and they point out that the results show no significant impact nor substantial contribution to make SFI students learn faster. As a result of the debate, SFI Bonus was abolished, and its legal power expired in mid-year 2014 (2013/14: AU1).

## 4.5 Local-Level: Views and Implementation

As a point of departure, for clarifying if there are major administrative differences between a folk high school (folkhögskolor) and Komvux that could have potentially affected their reflection, the interviewees were asked to elaborate on such matters. As explained, the basis is that the municipality has the main responsibility for adult education, and the municipality can give this procurement to other organizations for providing SFI. Regarding Komvux, there are different kinds, but this specific one is especially for providing SFI. On the other side, folk high schools are so-called an adult liberal education, and in contrast with Komvux, they are run from civil society. Therefore, all kinds of movements can fund a folk high school, for example, a church, a political party, and so on. Regarding student enrollment, a folk high school is smaller than Komvux, and they differ significantly in the number of students. In an SFI folk high school, half of their students are enrolled in study path 1, and the rest are distributed in study paths 2 and 3. They usually have around 100 literate SFI students. Whereas, Komvux has larger numbers ranging between 2000-3000 students distributed in different study paths (interview subject nr 1; interview subject nr 2). Usually, a folk high school

follows a different curriculum from the state, but in the case of SFI, they are no different from the curricula of Komvux. Therefore, their implementation of SFI-Bonus should not differ (interview subject nr 1; interview subject nr 2).

The interviews touched upon different matters related to the policy. Interestingly, the interviews share similar views with the above elaborate debates about the Bonus. An interesting finding from the interviews when asked about why such policy was introduced in the first place, was the emphasis of the political importance that time spent in SFI studies has: *"That is what is important to the politicians, they really look at the time so that we do not have students for a long time in SFI otherwise they should stop reading SFI. So there must be progression. And if you measure how much it takes until you're out on the labor market and have a job, it takes a long time. And that's why I think they wanted to shorten the time in SFI"* (interview subject nr 2). In addition, it is noted that relying solely on statistics does not provide all the information needed for introducing such a policy: *"It has always been a difficulty with the SFI Statistics because from year to year we have different kinds of students, it is not the same pattern. Because of that, it is also difficult because we can't say that we have this many % in each study path. That number is not equal throughout the years. That is why it is hard to analyze the statistics in the SFI. And you can't see exactly what this difference (in study paths) means. What is the difference between the years? That is important to analyze"* (interview subject nr 2).

Another important point that was touched during the interview was how the local authorities met this policy. They all shared the same opinion regarding the policy and the idea behind it. The following quote illustrates their general opinion: *"We did not like that kind of action from the Government. We did not think that was a good idea. Mainly because it was based on a thought that our learners are not motivated, and they will not work hard unless they get a bonus. I mean, they presumed that SFI learners are lazy and unwilling to study, and that is not our opinion at all. The majority of our learners, their dream is to finish SFI as soon as possible and get out there and get a job, and they are very keen and ambitious. We did not like the idea of SFI Bonus, and we think it was based on wrong ideas and wrong opinions."* (interview subject nr 1) In addition, they note that the law was very rigid and strict regarding its timeframe and expectations from each study path. *"One-year timeframe for everyone, for those who are very much educated from the beginning and for those that are not much educated from the beginning. Of course, the odds were not very difficult to guess"* (interview subject nr 3).

Another key matter touched during the interview was about the target group that SFI Bonus was aiming to motivate. Again, all interviewees shared the same comments. There was an overall excitement from students when they got to know that there is a possibility to get a bonus. However, there was a mismatch between the stated target group and the actual policy effects: *"The law in itself missed the target because the point was to stimulate some of the groups and they stimulated the group that is already stimulated in a way, because it is not so easy to sit in a classroom when you are middle age when you do not have so much education from your country then you are going to sit and learn a new language."* (interview subject nr 3) The system was mainly disadvantaging SFI students enrolled in study path 1 because, in normal teaching curricula, they are expected to finish their studies in about 24 months. Consequently, another interviewee has stated:

*"It is not realistic to have 12 months for study path 1 with illiterate students the same as you do with study path 3. And if students get sick, are absent for different kinds of reasons the system should not be rigid and totally remove the chance of them getting the Bonus. So if you have 12 months in study path 3, you should have 24 months in study path 1. The system was not really adjusted to reality"* (interview subject nr 2).

Interviewees were also asked about their practices and the administration of the Bonus. In general, the responses tell that it was easy to handle, and there was a need for more human resources for its implementation. One interviewee notes: *"... once we had learned how to do it, it was not complicated. It was also the learner who had to fill in the application for the Bonus. It was our responsibility to inform the learner of what was available"* (interview subject nr 1). For administering the Bonus, the process involved the SFI schoolteachers, the responsible administrator, and the responsible person in the so-called The Guidance Center (in Swedish: Vägledningscentrum). The students will be notified that there is a possibility to receive a Bonus from the moment that they were applying for SFI. The SFI teacher was responsible for informing the eligible students about the criteria and rules that applied to get a bonus from the beginning of their studies. After the student had received a passing grade in its respective study path, the student had to apply for receiving the Bonus. At this moment, it was the administrator who would look through the applications and the corresponding law and decide if the student gets the Bonus or not. In addition, if there was any need for needing assistance in different implications, an interviewee states that the communication was good, and the needed assistance from the School Authority was received at any time.

However, as the policy states, the Bonus was not for everyone. Another shared pattern is the clash between the new policy and their existing values. Therefore, interviewees elaborate on how this inclusion and exclusion of certain students has affected the teacher-student relationship. The following quote illustrates this argument: *"... of course they crashed with our values because the Bonus in itself would not be an encouragement for our learners. It created a distance between the learners in the classroom between one who could get the Bonus and one that could not. I mean, we always tell our learners not to compare with others but to compare with themselves. And if I discuss with a teacher when it is about time to do a test, we always want the person to take the test when they are ready for it when they have the level for it because if you even take the test, you could not take the Bonus."* Another interviewee adds: *"That is very difficult because you are coming into a classroom and you say, 'some of you have the possibility to get 12000 (KR), but some do not.' This was really, really negative, and I think that many many teachers did not want to speak about it in the classroom, but they had separate discussions. I really understand that because you have to answer so many questions, and you are not responsible for creating this law"* (interview subject nr 1).

Interviewees also touch upon the fact whether investing in SFI-Bonus was the right choice to begin with. The argument revolves around the idea that this amount of SEK 100 million could have been more efficient if it was invested in the teachers' development instead. This way, there would be a higher pay-off instead of what the Bonus system offered. *"If we have more skilled and certified teachers, we get better results, and you can trust the grades that they give. In our school, I can say that there are 85% of teachers*

*who are certified for teaching in SFI, but that is different from school to school and from municipality to municipality. So I think that it is very important to have qualified teachers that grade the students properly, absolutely!"* (interview subject nr 2). Another approach suggested was that if the scheme had different time frames for each study path related to their levels of difficulty to achieve language proficiency and was flexible towards unpredictable situations such as illness or pregnancy, the policy could have been more successful.

## 4.6 Summary

Interestingly, this chapter showed that, generally, the debate surrounding SFI-Bonus emphasizes the same 'themes' (referring to the prevailing arguments). Before its implementation, it was foreseen by some opposing bodies that by the way it is formulated, the Bonus would not really affect the target group. Local-level implementers also noted this concern when they state that this policy missed the target group and that it would motivate those who are already quick learners. Such discussion brings forth another argument that the Bonus has been perceived as unfair, both by political bodies in the parliament debates and local-level implementers. This point is followed by the discussion of the strict time limit that this policy had, and how it was disadvantaging SFI students in study path 1. Furthermore, the inclusion and exclusion of SFI students in a classroom have been seen as a negative factor that, to various extents, could negatively affect the student-teacher relationship. Both politicians participating in the parliamentary debates and the interviewed local-level implementers have pointed out that resources are being placed in the wrong matters. Furthermore, they argue that investment in teacher education and training would have brought better results.

Regarding the administrative means, opposing bodies had shown a concern that this system would lead to an increased administrative burden and increased bureaucracy. However, local-level implementers argue that SFI Bonus was easy to administer in practice, and it did not require extra staff to take care of it. Moving on, the policy has faced substantial critique regarding the idea behind SFI-Bonus. The majority of opposing bodies have argued that there is no previous data that point out that SFI studies are affected by students' motivation. In addition, interviewee data shows that the idea that students are not motivated is based on the wrong assumptions, and it clashed with their beliefs. In the proposed motion for abolishing SFI-Bonus, the respective party argued that this Bonus was giving the wrong signal since SFI studies are an expectation that every newcomer should meet with or without a bonus.

## 5 Discussion

This section builds on the evidence gathered and connects it with the aforementioned 'ambiguity-conflict' theoretical concepts. It begins by analyzing the policy conflict surrounding the development of SFI Bonus policy as well as both ambiguity of goals and ambiguity of means. Right after, a discussion on the policy implementation outcome is built. This chapter further answers the research questions by concluding how the 'ambiguity-conflict' model shaped the implementation and built a plausible explanation for the policy outcome.

### 5.1 Mapping the policy conflict and ambiguity

The preceding chapter has outlined the ongoing debates and has shown that the SFI-Bonus scheme has been highly contested debate, and despite the addressed shortcomings, the policy became national before the report of the trial was made available. Hudson et al. note that once a policy intervention becomes highly politicized, the Government will then push the agenda and prepare the means for implementation as soon as possible even if the policy has not been well thought through. As Matland points out, it is important to investigate how the policy is perceived by different actors, as it plays a role in the intensity of the conflict. The intensity of the conflict has been shaped by the conflicting views of the different actors involved. From the Government's side, the policy has been attentively written to not fall into conflict with other normative policies. However, opposing political bodies expressed a rather clear contest towards the rationale behind the SFI-Bonus under the argument that it is assuming that SFI students are lazy and such assumption is not backed up by data. However, it instead comes from the ideological stance that the Government had about the immigrants. Referring to the evidence, SFI-Bonus was perceived as a policy promoting injustice and inequality and thus fell into conflict with current values and norms in the local implementing agencies. Such narratives are very much dependent on an actor's position and role in the policy since the Government who proposed the Bonus saw the policy as a way of further promoting equality, and the opposite was seen from the opposing bodies and local-level implementers. Therefore, the high level of conflict has been shaped by conflicting views of the involved actors in political levels, as well as the local implementing level.

Evidence gathered has also provided insights regarding the policy ambiguity. As Matland notes, there should be paid attention to the ambiguity of goals and means. As for

the ambiguity of goals, the policy statute elaborated in the preceding chapter shows a rather clear policy goal: to improve SFI student attendance and finish their studies faster, and that could be measured by the number of individuals who achieved the Bonus. Specifically, the policy sets the expectation that 20% of students enrolled in each study path, following the eligibility criteria, must be able to achieve SFI-Bonus. Furthermore, the evidence has not brought up the issue of goal misunderstanding in the sense that the goals have not been misinterpreted among the different actors involved. Once again, the debate comes as a result of different ideological stances of the involved political blocks. When it comes to the ambiguity of means, the policy proposal had left it quite open about how the municipalities should implement the policy in the "proper" way. Opposing bodies have pointed out this ambiguous expression and asked for clarification, which was addressed in the following sections of the proposal. According to the data gathered in this study, there was no uncertainty about the roles of the involved actors and organizations. Besides, from a local-level perspective, no evidence showed a complex organizational structure that could create confusion among actors nor a lack of needed technology. An interviewee pointed out that if the policy were more complex, it would require a more sophisticated administrative procedure for implementing it, but this was not the case. Thus, the initial concern that the Bonus system would increase the administrative burden and lead to a complicated implementation did happen in the actual implementation.

This discussion aims to define how 'ambiguity and conflict' have shaped the policy implementation and thus answer to the second research question. When it comes to the Administrative Implementation and Experimental Implementation types, they are both characterized by a low policy conflict, which does not seem to represent the case of SFI Bonus due to its continuous debate from the very beginning until its abolishment. In addition, the theory states that such implementations are either determined by lack of resources, lack of expertise of the local level implementers to use and comprehend the technology, or poor communication. Furthermore, the theory suggests that there is a high chance that the characteristics of the 'garbage can' model can influence the implementation in the presence of fluid participation and uncertain technology. The evidence gathered from the interviews showed that in practice, the policy had quite easy implementation procedures, and it did not require extra resources that were not foreseen by the policy proposal, such as administrative costs and bonus payments with the set budget of SEK 100 million per year. Therefore, chances that the implementation of SFI Bonus could be substantially affected and determined by a lack of resources are quite low. Furthermore, as the evidence showed, the policy required a simple administrative process, and the communication between the organizations involved was not characterized by poor communication. Therefore, the SFI Bonus does not fall into these implementation categories.

Symbolic policies exhibit similarities with political implementation since they both are conflictual and have high policy conflict. SFI-Bonus can be seen as a policy that came to reshape old goals and emphasize the importance of finishing SFI studies and therefore fell in contradiction with the views of other actors. To some extent, it shares some characteristics with Symbolic Implementation, since these policies gain substantial attention in the adaptation phase and are usually associated with substantial failure.

However, there is little to no evidence that supports the claim of a high policy ambiguity. Matland argues that the high level of ambiguity can result in different implementation ways in different local authorities. Also, in a Symbolic Implementation, local-coalitions determine the outcome without overpowering the policy statute, thus creating a somewhat unclear line of whether the policy falls into a top-down or bottom-up approach. Nevertheless, as noted from the evidence, the ambiguity of implementation is rather low since both represented schools did not differ in how they administered the Bonus, thus portraying a low implementation ambiguity.

According to the theoretical assumption, policy conflict and policy ambiguity have a negative correlation. Thus, a high level of goal ambiguity would serve as a way of dimming the policy conflict. In the case of SFI-Bonus, it seems that a rather low level of goal ambiguity has created the opportunity for a quite broad and consistent policy conflict. Evidence shows that the design of the implemented policy is what created the conflict. Matland argues that in the case when resources are enough, but different stakeholders have different opinions on how they should be put in use, there will be a need for having sufficient power for the policy to pass the legitimation stage. SFI Bonus did not need the use of a bargaining mechanism. Despite the opposition, the scheme did not face changes from its initial proposal, and the Government passed the Bill with a fast result of 144 votes pro, and 139 against the policy. Such political action comes as a response since the Government sees the policy as sensible. The outcome of a policy characterized by Political Implementation is also determined by power. Holding the compliance of the disagreeing actors is crucial for granting a successful policy. Also, the 'power' remains on the central actors, and the degree of independence of the local-level implementers does not overcome the normative power of the policy statute. However, the power of discretion in local implementing bodies is acknowledged, and it can be present in various settings, but in subtle ways. The discussion indicates that it is plausible to claim that SFI Bonus was characterized by high conflict and low ambiguity, thus falling into the Political Implementation type, where power is seen as the central determinant for the policy outcome. The political implementation of SFI-Bonus emphasizes the power of central actors and the opportunity of using a top-down approach for further investigations.

## 5.2 Mapping the implementation failure

This section discussed to what extent and what plausible explanation can be built from the evidence gathered in this study understanding the SFI-Bonus implementation failure, thus answering the main research question of this research. SFI-Bonus came as a pilot policy for testing if such a pay-per-performance scheme would improve student performance in a setting that has not been studied before, therefore having high stakes for delivering unexpected outcomes. Before analyzing its implementation mechanisms, it is

of importance to discuss to what extent this policy failed. As literature showed, failure should not be seen as an absolute nonachievement, since even policy failures do deliver modest success (McConnell, 2015). Implementation of the Bonus does not represent the general SFI student achievement or overall enrollment in SFI schools. Its implementation failure is only limited to that part of the population that the policy targets and those are individuals who have been registered in the Municipality starting from 2009 and started SFI for the first time within 15 months from their first census. The evaluation from IFAU (2012) shows that the policy was unable to deliver the expected results. From the expectation that 20% of the eligible enrolled students in each study path, only a probability of 3-4 out of 100 students achieve the Bonus. This ambitious goal served as a benchmark for measuring success, and they failed substantially to achieve them. In addition, the Bonus was implemented for a short time. Therefore, it is hard to say if it would have been a substantial failure in the long run. Maybe its performance peak could have been in the beginning, or it would gain popularity with time, thus attracting more eligible individuals. However, better conclusions could be drawn on this matter if these four years of SFI Bonus implementation were concluded on a final official report by the competent authority.

Wolman (1981) notes that the roots of implementation failures are typically embedded in policy formulation. This study shows that SFI-Bonus was debated for its policy design and its underlying assumptions. The evidence gathered shows the supremacy of the arguments that emphasize that the SFI-Bonus had unrealistic expectations regarding the time frame set for each study path. Furthermore, this study indicates that SFI Bonus had a miss congruence between policy expectations and its target group; therefore, it delivered an unsuccessful policy. Such a result leaves space to think that the problem could be miss conceptualized in the first place. The data of the report from the State Office in 2009 showed that, on average, it takes 63 weeks for students in study path 1 to finish all SFI courses, with a fast pace and no significant study interruptions. SFI Bonus predicted a maximum of a 1-year study, despite the study path. Political opposing bodies and the interviewees claimed that such expectation was not realistic, and it should have differentiated between paths according to their disadvantages.

This study shows that SFI Bonus became a national policy before the evaluation of the policy pilot was made available. Thus, the implementation of the scheme was conducted in a setting with little known insights. Matland notes that such rapid political moves can be explained as a use of power for implementing a policy that was seen feasible. Another explanation that comes from Wolman (1981) is that political bodies can push the agenda for achieving short term results even though it has not been initially thought how such a policy will work into practice. In addition, the SFI Bonus was characterized by a lack of previous evidence regarding the benefits and potential risks; thus, its goals can be considered quite over-optimistic. From the above-elaborated discussion, it is plausible to say that SFI Bonus became a policy due to the government's sufficient power to pass the policy.

## 6 Conclusions

This study was able to unfold the implementation process of SFI Bonus by tracing its progress from its initial stage of policy creation until the actual local implementation. The 'ambiguity-conflict' theoretical model guided the research. Several points have been made in the last two preceding chapters that aimed to present the gathered evidence and discuss it to answer the research questions.

In regard to the theoretically oriented research question, on the assumption that policy conflict and ambiguity influence policy implementation and how they shaped the SFI-Bonus implementation, the result of this study is that SFI Bonus falls into the Political Implementation model. A high policy conflict characterizes the case as a result of incongruent views among the actors involved. Opposing political bodies disagree with the policy due to its underlying assumptions regarding the SFI students. On the other hand, local implementers saw the policy as unfair and disadvantages for the target group rather than a way of motivating them. These narratives come as a result of low goal ambiguity, which offers the opportunity that different actors can oppose a policy due to its clash with current practices or values.

Furthermore, the low ambiguity of means showed that SFI Bonus did not face implementation challenges in the sense of insufficient resources or high organizational complexity. Interview evidence showed that the Bonus procedure was smooth, and the needed support from other supporting organizations was available. Theory suggests that a Politically Implemented policy requires enough power for the policy to pass the legitimation phase. Evidence gathered shows that despite the harsh opposition, SFI Bonus policy became national without changes in its initial statute due to the sufficiency of votes from the Governments coalition. Thus, proving the supremacy of central actors in the policy. Due to a clear policy that comes as a result of low policy ambiguity, even though the policy was not liked among local-implementing bodies, the policy's normative power can not be exceeded by the level of local discretion.

Regarding the main research question on the extent to which and for what reasons the implementation of SFI-Bonus policy failed to achieve its policy objectives, this study was able to build a plausible explanation. The policy failure did not affect nor represent the whole SFI system but rather only a segment of it. Thus, the extent to which the policy failed to achieve its objectives remains limited to the target group it aimed to motivate. As the presented relevant literature suggested, there is no absolute non-achievement but rather modest success. SFI Bonus managed to show positive effects in 3-4% of the targeted students during its policy pilot stage. The policy was short-lived and thus left space for reflecting if, in the long run, the policy would have shown more positive effects since it would have gained popularity and thus attract more students from the target group. The set benchmark that 20% of students in each study path were expected to achieve the

Bonus was quite overly optimistic for a policy that is being run in a setting that lacks previous knowledge. Therefore, this study concluded that SFI Bonus showed very modest results compared to its expectations, and it failed to gain the compliance of the involved political bodies.

Furthermore, the agenda was pushed without having the necessary knowledge if such a scheme would work well in practice. As argued earlier, such political move happens when the political coalitions in power see the policy as feasible and aim to achieve fast short-term results. The Bonus policy was seen as unfair towards the lower study path groups. Evidence showed that the time frame set for SFI students despite the study path was seen as unrealistic. Such views come from local actors that worked closely with the target group and were able to see their study difficulties. Therefore, a miss conceptualization of the problem can be a reason for providing an inadequate policy. The lack of motivation as a factor for delayed studies was not backed up by previous data. The parliamentary debate showed how both political blocks at that time had opposing views towards the immigrant and their will to integrate. The initiative for implementing a pay-per-performance scheme was seen as an initiative that gave the wrong ideas in such a sensible policy setting. This study also showed that in the investigation of the local implementation in Malmö Municipality SFI schools was no significant evidence that pointed out a high local discretion. Therefore, the results emphasize a supremacy of a top-down approach towards the case, which means that the statutory language has a great influence in the policy outcome. Despite being characterized by a low ambiguity, SFI Bonus failed to deliver the expected outcome. Therefore, from the evidence gathered and the elaborated discussion, this study concludes that SFI-Bonus failed due to the earlier discussed shortcomings embedded in the highly contested policy formulation stage and therefore led to an unsuccessful implementation.

## 6.1 Suggestions for future research

This study presented how ambiguity and conflict embedded in the policy shapes its implementation. This study notes the importance of the policy formulation stage as a critical determinant for policy success or failure. Furthermore, the results of this thesis suggest that such a policy can be further investigated from a top-down approach. However, this study limited itself to investigating only the local implementation in the Malmö municipality. Thus, a broader analysis of various municipalities implementing SFI schools could potentially draw deeper and broader conclusions regarding discretion in different implementation settings. Such a study would also contribute to understanding if any institutional advantages were depending on the Municipalities' size.

## 7 References

- Arbetsmarknadsutskottet. (2013). 2013/14:AU1 Utgiftsområde 13 Integration och jämställdhet. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://data.riksdagen.se/dokument/H101AU1>
- Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. B. (2013). *Process-Tracing Methods*. Michigan, United States of America : The University of Michigan Press.
- Berman , P. (1978). The study of macro and micro implementation of social policy. *Public Policy*, Vol. 26(No. 2). Retrieved from <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2008/P6071.pdf>
- Blatter, J., & Haverland, M. (2012). *Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research* (1st ed.). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/qrj0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Budría, S., Colino, A., & Martínez de Ibarreta, C. (2018). The impact of host language proficiency on employment outcomes among immigrants in Spain. *Empirica*, 46(4), 625–652. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10663-018-9414-x>
- Dahrendorf, R. (1958). Toward a theory of social conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2(2), 170–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200275800200204>
- Elmore , R. F. (1980). *Forward and Backward Mapping: Reversible Logic in the Analysis of Public Policy*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED258011.pdf>
- Elmore, R. F. (1979). Backward Mapping: Implementation Research and Policy Decisions. *Political Science Quarterly*, 94(4), 601. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2149628>
- Elmore, T. M. (1985). The Era of ACES: Tradition, Transformation, and the Possible Dream. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 63(7), 411–415. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1985.tb02821.x>
- Fryer , R. (2011). Financial Incentives and Student Achievement: Evidence from Randomized Trials. . *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(4), 1755–1798. Retrieved from <https://scholar.harvard.edu/fryer/publications/financial-incentives-and-student-achievement-evidence-randomized-trials>
- Fryer, J. R. G. (2010). Financial Incentives And Student Achievement: Evidence From Randomized Trials. *NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH, Working Paper 15898*, 1–79. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w15898.pdf>
- Gerring, J. (2006). Case Study Research. *Cambridge University Press*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511803123>
- Gneezy, U., Meier, S., & Rey-Biel, P. (2011). When and Why Incentives (Don't) Work to Modify Behavior. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 25(4), 191–210. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.25.4.191>
- Goggin, M. L. (1986). The “Too Few Cases/Too Many Variables” Problem in Implementation Research. *Political Research Quarterly*, 39(2), 328–347. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591298603900210>

- Hanf, K. (1982). Regulatory Structures: Enforcement as Implementation. *European Journal of Political Research*, 10(2), 159–172. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1982.tb00015.x>
- Hansson, M. (2016, February 1). Nej, SFI-bonusen kommer inte att höjas – den finns inte. Retrieved May 10, 2020, from <http://80.72.1.78/artikel/nej-sfi-bonusen-kommer-inte-att-h%C3%B6jas-den-finns-inte-xr>
- Head, B. W., & Alford, J. (2013). Wicked Problems Implications for Public Policy and Management. *Administration & Society*, 47(6), 711–739. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399713481601>
- Hill, M., & Hupe, P. (2003). The multi-layer problem in implementation research. *Public Management Review*, 5(4), 471–490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1471903032000178545>
- Högman, B. (2008). med anledning av prop. 2008/09:156 Sfi-bonus – försöksverksamhet för att stimulera nyanlända invandrare att snabbare lära sig svenska Motion 2008/09:A12 av Berit Högman m.fl. (s, v, mp) - Riksdagen. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-200809156-sfi-bonus-\\_GW02A12](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-200809156-sfi-bonus-_GW02A12)
- Högman, B. (2009). med anledning av prop. 2009/10:188 Nationell sfi-bonus Motion 2009/10:A14 av Berit Högman m.fl. (s, v, mp) - Riksdagen. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-200910188-nationell\\_GX02A14](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-200910188-nationell_GX02A14)
- Hudson, B., Hunter, D., & Peckham, S. (2019). Policy failure and the policy-implementation gap: can policy support programs help? *Policy Design and Practice*, 2(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2018.1540378>
- Institutet För Arbetsmarknadspolitisk Utvärdering, Engdahl, M., & Åslund, O. (2012). *The value of earning for learning: performance bonuses in immigrant language training*. Retrieved from <https://www.ifau.se/globalassets/pdf/se/2012/r-2012-27-ekonomiska-drivkrafter-och-studierresultat-effekter-av-sfi-bonus.pdf>
- Institutet För Arbetsmarknadspolitisk Utvärdering, Kennerberg, L., & Sibbmark, K. (2005). *Vilka deltar i svenska för invandrare?* (2005:13). Retrieved from <https://www.ifau.se/globalassets/pdf/se/2005/r05-13.pdf>
- Johansson, Y. (2013). Utgiftsområde 13 Integration och jämställdhet Motion 2013/14:A288 av Ylva Johansson m.fl. (S) - Riksdagen. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/utgiftsomrade-13-integration-och-jamstalldhet\\_H102A288](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/utgiftsomrade-13-integration-och-jamstalldhet_H102A288)
- Keating, T. (1977). *The Implementation Game: What Happens After a Bill Becomes a Law*. By EUGENE BARDACH. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1977. Pp. xi, 323. \$17.95.). *Political Research Quarterly*, 30(4), 593. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591297703000428>
- Keman, H., & Woldendorp, J. (2016a). *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*. Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Keman, H., & Woldendorp, J. J. (2016b). *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science (Handbooks of Research Methods and Applications series)*. Retrieved from <https://scholar.harvard.edu/kremer/publications/incentives-learn>
- Kivisto, P. (2005a). *Incorporating Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age* (1st ed.). Retrieved [https://books.google.se/books?id=aSYeCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA188&lpg=PA188&dq=Greeley+and+Gordon,+1964&source=bl&ots=TBq8EdCIWQ&sig=ACfU3U3dB17GVIS6UfnQBYRpY5yV\\_uBo-Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewitwIPZxbnpAhUM86YKHfboA-UQ6AEwEnoECA4QAQ#v=onepage&q=Greeley%20and%20Gordon%2C%201964&f=true](https://books.google.se/books?id=aSYeCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA188&lpg=PA188&dq=Greeley+and+Gordon,+1964&source=bl&ots=TBq8EdCIWQ&sig=ACfU3U3dB17GVIS6UfnQBYRpY5yV_uBo-Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewitwIPZxbnpAhUM86YKHfboA-UQ6AEwEnoECA4QAQ#v=onepage&q=Greeley%20and%20Gordon%2C%201964&f=true)

- Kivisto, P. (2005b). The Nature of Assimilation. In M. M. Gordon (Ed.), *Incorporating Diversity: Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 111–210). Retrieved from [https://books.google.se/books?id=aSYeCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA188&lpg=PA188&dq=Greeley+and+Gordon,+1964&source=bl&ots=TBq8EdCIWQ&sig=ACfU3U3dB17GVIS6UfnQBYRpY5yV\\_uBo-Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewitmIPZxbnpAhUM86YKHfboA-UQ6AEwEnoECA4QAQ#v=onepage&q=Greeley%20and%20Gordon%2C%201964&f=true](https://books.google.se/books?id=aSYeCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA188&lpg=PA188&dq=Greeley+and+Gordon,+1964&source=bl&ots=TBq8EdCIWQ&sig=ACfU3U3dB17GVIS6UfnQBYRpY5yV_uBo-Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewitmIPZxbnpAhUM86YKHfboA-UQ6AEwEnoECA4QAQ#v=onepage&q=Greeley%20and%20Gordon%2C%201964&f=true)
- Kossoudji, S. A. (1988). English Language Ability and the Labor Market Opportunities of Hispanic and East Asian Immigrant Men. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 6(2), 205–228. Retrieved from [https://www.jstor.org/stable/2535042?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2535042?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)
- Lieberson, S. (1991). Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases. *Social Forces*, 70(2), 307. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2580241>
- Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. New York, United States: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Löfström, J. (2015, August 7). Myt: SFI-bonus (updaterad september 2014). Retrieved May 10, 2020, from <https://motargument.se/2012/10/02/sfi-bonus/>
- Lowndes, V., Marsh, D., & Stoker, G. (2018). *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (4th ed.). New York, United States: Macmillan Publishers.
- March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1983). The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life. *American Political Science Review*, 78(3), 734–749. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1961840>
- Matland, R. E. (1995). Synthesizing the Implementation Literature: The Ambiguity-Conflict Model of Policy Implementation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 145–174. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a037242>
- Maynard-Moody, S., Musheno, M., & Palumbo, D. (1990). Street-Wise Social Policy: Resolving the Dilemma of Street-Level Influence and Successful Implementation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 43(4), 833–848. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299004300409>
- Mazmanian, D. A. (1989). *Implementation and Public Policy* (Revised ed.). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Mazmanian, D. A., & Sabatier, P. A. (1983). *Implementation and Public Policy*. -, United States of America: Scott, Foresman.
- McConnell, A. (2015). What is policy failure? A primer to help navigate the maze. *Public Policy and Administration*, 30(3–4), 221–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076714565416>
- McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). Learning From Experience: Lessons From Policy Implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9(2), 171–178. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737009002171>
- Meyers, M., & Nielsen, V. (2012). Street-Level Bureaucrats and the Implementation of Public Policy. *The SAGE Handbook of Public Administration*, 305–318. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446200506.n20>
- Migrationsinfo. (2016, April 20). Frågor och svar om etableringsersättningen. Retrieved May 10, 2020, from <https://www.migrationsinfo.se/fragor-och-svar-om-etableringsersattningen/>

- Miho, T., Moonhee, K., Satya, B., & Janna, T. (2010). *OECD Reviews of Migrant Education: Sweden 2010*. Retrieved from [https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=3SKJmH\\_0pI8C&printsec=frontcover](https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=3SKJmH_0pI8C&printsec=frontcover)
- Mugambwa, J., Nabeta, N., Ngoma, M., Rudaheranwa, N., Kaberuka, W., & Munene, J. C. (2018). Policy Implementation: Conceptual Foundations, Accumulated Wisdom and New Directions. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 8(3), 211. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v8i3.13609>
- O'Toole, L. J. (2000). Research on Policy Implementation: Assessment and Prospects. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10(2), 263–288. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024270>
- Parson, W. (1995). *Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis*. Massachusetts, USA: Cheltenham and Northhampton.
- Paudel, N. R. (2009). A Critical Account of Policy Implementation Theories: Status and Reconsideration. *Nepalese Journal of Public Policy and Governance*, xxv(2), 36–54. Retrieved from [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/96cb/1a5f553dfe89767763005fa65f474af8e6d3.pdf?\\_ga=2.233709534.1556445373.1585604123-1109510679.1567593495](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/96cb/1a5f553dfe89767763005fa65f474af8e6d3.pdf?_ga=2.233709534.1556445373.1585604123-1109510679.1567593495)
- Pressman, J. L., & Wildavsky, A. B. (1984). *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; Or, Why It's Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All, This Being a Saga . . . Morals on a Foundation (Oakland Project)* (Third ed.). California, United States: University of California Press.
- Regeringen . (2008). Sfi-bonus - stimulans för nyanlända invandrare att snabbare lära sig svenska (Ds 2008: 19). Retrieved May 10, 2020, from <https://lagen.nu/ds/2008:19?attachment=sfi-bonus---stimulans-for-nyanlanda-invandrare-att-snabbare-lara-sig-svenska-ds-200819&repo=dsregeringen&dir=downloaded#sid1-img>
- Regeringen. (2007). *2007 års ekonomiska vårproposition Förslag till riktlinjer för den ekonomiska politiken och budgetpolitiken samt tilläggsbudget m.m.* (2006/07:100). Retrieved from <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/57FC456D-91F4-47A6-B793-7EA2A5B86364>
- Riksdagen. (1992). Lag (1992:1068) om introduktionsersättning för flyktingar och vissa andra utlänningar Svensk författningssamling 1992:1992:1068 t.o.m. SFS 2005:721 - Riksdagen. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-19921068-om-introduktionsersattning-for-sfs-1992-1068>
- Riksdagen. (2009). Nationell sfi-bonus Arbetsmarknadsutskottets Betänkande 2009/10:AU12 - Riksdagen. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/nationell-sfi-bonus\\_GX01AU12](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/nationell-sfi-bonus_GX01AU12)
- Riksdagen. (2010, May 20). *Debatt om förslag 20 maj 2010. Betänkande: Nationell sfi-bonus* [Video file]. Retrieved from [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/debatt-om-forslag/nationell-sfi-bonus\\_GX01AU12](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/debatt-om-forslag/nationell-sfi-bonus_GX01AU12)
- Riksdagen. (2010, May 27). Lag (2010:538) om prestationsbaserad stimulansersättning inom utbildning i svenska för invandrare Svensk författningssamling 2010:2010:538 t.o.m. SFS 2013:155 - Riksdagen. Retrieved March 20, 2020, from <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2010538-om-prestationsbaserad-sfs-2010-538>
- Riksdagen. (2013, September 30). *Slopande av sfi-bonusen. Motion till riksdagen 2013/14:A394* [Video file]. Retrieved from [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/motion/slopande-av-sfi-bonusen\\_H102A394](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/motion/slopande-av-sfi-bonusen_H102A394)

- Roulston, K. (2010a). Analyzing and Representing Interview Data. *SAGE Research Methods*, 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288009>
- Roulston, K. (2010b). Asking Questions and Individual Interviews. *SAGE Research Methods*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288009>
- Roulston, K. (2010c). Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice. *SAGE Research Methods*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288009>
- Roulston, K. (2010d). Theorizing the Qualitative Interview. *SAGE Research Methods*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288009>
- Sabatier, P. A. (1986). Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches to Implementation Research: a Critical Analysis and Suggested Synthesis. *Journal of Public Policy*, 6(1), 21–48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0143814x00003846>
- Sabatier, P., & Mazmanian, D. (1979). The Conditions of Effective Implementation: A Guide to Accomplishing Policy Objectives. *Policy Analysis*, 481–504. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42783358>
- Saetren, H. (2005). Facts and Myths about Research on Public Policy Implementation: Out-of-Fashion, Allegedly Dead, But Still Very Much Alive and Relevant. *Policy Studies Journal*, 33(4), 559–582. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2005.00133.x>
- Saetren, H. (2014). Implementing the third generation research paradigm in policy implementation research: An empirical assessment. *Public Policy and Administration*, 29(2), 84–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076713513487>
- Sayre, W. S. (1949). TVA and the Grass Roots; A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization. By Philip Selznick. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1949. Pp. ix, 274. \$3.75.). *American Political Science Review*, 43(5), 1031–1033. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1950244>
- Selmer, J., & Lauring, J. (2011). Host country language ability and expatriate adjustment: the moderating effect of language difficulty. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(3), 401–420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.561238>
- Signe, L. (2017). Policy Implementation – A synthesis of the Study of Policy Implementation and the Causes of Policy Failure. *OCPP Policy Center*, 9–26. Retrieved from <https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/OCPPC-PP1703.pdf>
- Skolinspektionen. (2010). *Svenskundervisning för invandrare (sf) – en granskning av hur utbildningen formas efter deltagarnas förutsättningar och mål (Rapport 2010:7)*. Retrieved from <https://www.skolinspektionen.se/globalassets/publikationssok/granskningsrapporter/kvalitetsgranskningar/2010/sfi/webb-slutrapport-sfi.pdf>
- Skolverket. (2012, May 13). Förordning om ändring i förordningen (SKOLFS 2009:2) om kursplan för svenskundervisning för invandrare; SKOLFS 2012:13. Retrieved May 10, 2020, from [https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.b173ee8160557dd0b834f6/1516017581765/pdf\\_1.pdf](https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.b173ee8160557dd0b834f6/1516017581765/pdf_1.pdf)
- Skolverket. (2019, September 16). Rätt till sfi. Retrieved December 16, 2019, from <https://www.skolverket.se/regler-och-ansvar/ansvar-i-skolfragor/ratt-till-sfi>
- Socialtjänsten. (2001). Sweden - Social Services Act (2001:453). Retrieved May 6, 2020, from [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=en&p\\_isn=60673](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=60673)
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research* (1st ed.). Retrieved from [https://books.google.se/books?id=ApGdBx76b9kC&printsec=frontcover&source=gb\\_s\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.se/books?id=ApGdBx76b9kC&printsec=frontcover&source=gb_s_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Statskontoret. (2009). *Sfi – resultat, genomförande och lärarkompetens. En utvärdering av svenska för invandrare* (2009:2). Retrieved from <http://www.statskontoret.se/globalassets/publikationer/2009/200902.pdf>

- Utbildningsdepartementet. (2010, June 23). Skollag (2010: 800). Retrieved May 10, 2020, from <http://rkrattsbaser.gov.se/sfst?bet=2010:800>
- Van Meter, D. S., & Van Horn, C. E. (1975). The policy implementation process: A conceptual framework.. *Administration and Society*, 6(4), 1. Retrieved from <http://www.sciepub.com/reference/156877>
- Westholm, A., Borevi, K., & Strömblad, P. (2004). *Kunskap för integration. Om makt i skola och utbildning i mångfaldens Sverige*. (Vol. SOU 2004:33). Retrieved from <https://www.regeringen.se/49bb03/contentassets/947ebd6246e641359f1dc6f5f17ba5a8/kunskap-for-integration.-om-makt-i-skola-och-utbildning-i-mangfaldens-sverige>
- Winter, S. C. (2003). Implementation. *Handbook of Public Administration Implementation*, 205–211. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/>
- Wolman, H. (1981). The Determinants of Program Success and Failure. *Journal of Public Policy*, 1(4), 433–464. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0143814x00002336>
- Zhan, Y., Paolicelli, R. C., Sforazzini, F., Weinhard, L., Bolasco, G., Pagani, F., ... Gross, C. T. (2014). Deficient neuron-microglia signaling results in impaired functional brain connectivity and social behavior. *Nature Neuroscience*, 17(3), 400–406. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nn.3641>

# Appendix 1

## Interview Guideline

### Statement

This interview will be used in my thesis where I am writing about policy implementation and failure and have chosen the “SFI Bonus” as a case study. I am interested in theoretically explaining the policy by basing my previous assumptions on the Ambiguity-Conflict Model, which tries to grasp the conditions under which this policy implementation has bases on and how these factors have potentially affected the policy outcome. Beside document reviewing and analysing the Policy Statue, I am also interested to see how this statute has been perceived by local implementing agencies, in the Municipality of Malmö. Therefore, I would like to ask you about your experience during this time (2010-2014). My interest is on how policy goals have been perceived, was there a level of goal ambiguity, were resources available for the implementation, was there a conflict between the new policy and existing policies, was it clear who does what and so on.

Everything that you say will be confidential and you are of course not required to answer all the questions if that's what you will. If you have any questions or are interested to know more about this interview and how its outcome will be handled, please contact me anytime. May I have your consent to record this interview?

### Interview Questions

#### **Theme 1. Role description of the organization (Komvux) and practices**

**Q1.** How was the work divided? (Who does what)

- What was the role of Komvux for implementing this policy?
- What was your role for implementing this policy?
- Which local actors were involved in the process? (within Komvux)

**Q2.** How was the collaboration with other relevant offices for implementing the Bonus?

- Which other organizations were involved in the process?
- Was collaboration a smooth process or did it run into difficulties? (What kind?)
- How was the communication between stakeholders?

**Q3.** Could you briefly explain the process of the implementation?

- How much freedom did you have to organize the work?

- Was there a prescribed way on how the implementation should be structured in each Municipality?
- When is the first moment an eligible SFI student gets to know that they get to receive financial compensation if they meet certain criteria?

## **Theme 2. Understanding the level of Policy Conflict**

**Q1.** How was this policy met by local level implementers?

- Was this policy incompatible with other existing goals or policies?
- Were the policy goals perceived as in/appropriate for implementation?
- Is there a high level of discretion within the organization (Komvux)? (How much do you have to be accountable to higher political bodies?)

## **Theme 3. Understanding Goal Ambiguity**

**Q1.** Was it easy to understand what you were supposed to achieve?

- Were goals perceived correctly?
- Was there any confusion about what the goal/s is/are?

**Q2.** Was the 20-20-20 (%) a fair benchmark for measuring success? (20% of all eligible enrolled students in each study path were expected to receive the Bonus)

- What could have been different?

## **Theme 4. Understanding Ambiguity of Means (resources)**

**Q1.** Was it clear to understand how this policy would actually be implemented?

- Did you have the needed resources?
- Was it clear to understand who does what?

## **Theme 5. Understanding the SFI Bonus outcomes**

**Q.1** What are your general thoughts about SFI Bonus policy?

**Q2.** Under which argument was it abolished?

- Were the goals too ambitious?
- Was it really a failure?

**Q3.** As a comparison, was there a better student performance during the policy or after it was abolished?

# Interview list

Mornerud, Elisabet [ Hylie Park Folkhögskola, Rektor ] Interview. 20 March 2020.  
Sweden

Olsson, Fredrik [ Komvux Malmö Södervärn, Principal ] Interview. 20 March 2020.  
Sweden

Huskic, Minka [ Komvux Malmö Södervärn, Administrator ] Interview. 20 March 2020.  
Sweden

\*All interviews have been conducted online and they were recorded digitally and transcribed.