



FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

# KEY CHALLENGES IN SFI EDUCATION: TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVES.

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Supervisor:	Dr.Adrianna Nizinska
Examiner:	Ilse Hakvoort
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# Abstract

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**Aim:** The study aims at investigating SFI teachers' perspectives about different types of challenges they confront with, and the impact that perceived challenges have on teachers' practices in Gothenburg, Sweden.

**Theory:** Socio-ecological framework was used to comprehend how multiple factors at various levels affect the teachers work and their practices as well. Three concepts of this theoretical model were applied as the lens to analyse and categorize the challenges based on public policy level as the macro level factor, institutional level as the meso-level factor and individual level as the micro level factor.

**Method:** Qualitative interview study was utilized to conduct this research. The study involved semi structured interview with five SFI teachers from three schools in Gothenburg.

**Results:** The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of the challenges confronted by SFI teachers and the impact of them on teachers' practices. Using thematic analysis, the findings highlighted that teachers did not have personal challenges ; however, they were frustrated that policy induced challenges are influencing their practices negatively. Thus, results revealed that challenges were produced at the policy level , which teachers experience at the institutional, and personal level. For those involved in education, the study's findings can be helpful in reducing the issues that instructors face and providing more support for them. The study highlights the necessity of addressing the SFI system's shortcomings and offers policymakers useful information for enhancing it and assisting SFI teachers and students.

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## List of abbreviations

<b>SFI</b>	<b>(Svenska för invandrare) Swedish for Immigrants</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</b>
<b>MAE</b>	<b>Municipal Adult Education</b>
<b>VET</b>	<b>Vocational Education and Training</b>
<b>ELT</b>	<b>English language teacher</b>
<b>FLT</b>	<b>Foreign language teacher</b>
<b>ESD</b>	<b>Education for Sustainable Development</b>
<b>SDGs</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b>
<b>TA</b>	<b>Thematic Analysis</b>
<b>SVA</b>	<b>(Svenska som Andra Språk) Swedish as Second language</b>

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

According to the report published by Statista Research Department, Mar 7, 2022 , there were over 272 million international migrants worldwide in 2019, or 3.5% of the world's population. The number of immigrants in Sweden in 2021 was 90,631 which has increased compared to 2020 (82,518). Due to this large number of immigrants in Sweden, this country provides adult immigrants with the chance to learn Swedish through a system of classes known as Swedish for immigrants (SFI). The program is provided through the municipal adult education system, which is how it is organized (in Swedish komvux). It provides each student with at least 15 hours per week for an average of four weeks, while the number of hours may be lowered if it is more appropriate for the participants (Skolverket Utbildningsinfo, 2010). Thus, in Sweden, educators in SFI classes work with the adult students of foreign origin, more often new to culture, and these students are often bringing with them anxiety related to the circumstances in their home countries, their moves to Sweden, and the challenges of adjusting to a new environment. Moreover, as Docquier & Rapport (2004) claim, adult immigrants who do not learn the host country's language would have difficulty in integrating into the society and finding a suitable job. This will cause sociological, economical, psychological issues for these individuals. Furthermore, for teachers working with diverse groups of students, this will also be challenging.

According to Orton (2010), teachers who teach in cross-cultural settings play a vital role in nurturing students' appreciation of cultural diversity, but they tend to experience tremendous challenges in their profession. Inadequately addressing these issues in a timely and efficient manner may undermine the standard of language teaching in addition to preventing teachers from developing professionally. As Öbrink Hobzová (2021) posits, teachers are under even greater pressure because of the SFI's policy of tailoring its courses to fit the needs of students from different backgrounds. However, they do place teachers in a position where they must constantly deal with new regulations and curricula. The performance of teachers, the learning outcomes of students, and the objectives of institutions can all be impacted by difficulties such as improper teaching and learning environments, inadequate teacher management system, poor finances, and other issues (UNESCO, 2017). Therefore, there should be support, to remove any potential obstacles to acquiring the host language in order to assist migrants in contributing to the economy and society and tackling these challenges will lead to achieving sustainability goals.

### **1.1.1 Adult education system in Sweden**

The significant role of adult and popular education has been emphasized and studied in the United Kingdom (Grayson, 2014), Canada (Gibb, 2015), Australia (Webb, 2015). In Sweden also, one of the most crucial resources for adult migrants' early language learning has long been adult and popular education and it is an important resource in the integration of the migrants in the job market and community. In Sweden since 1968, formal adult education has been a part of the formal higher education system. As Andersson and Wärvik (2012) report, when the outdated parallel school system, which had one stream leading to higher education and another to an educational end, was abolished, more young children had the option of carrying on to upper secondary school. Higher education was entered by new social groupings. Consequently, the educational gap across generations has been rapidly growing. A developing economic growth, a rising industry, and a deficit of workforce called for educated workers. Consequently, numerous innovations in adult education were introduced in the 1970s.

From then onwards, it has been reoriented a lot in order to meet the learners' needs. Andersson & Wärvik (2012) argue that national adult education systems nowadays are greatly influenced by international discourses on the information economy, international competition and recruitment, humanitarian values of citizenship, social integration, and personal growth. Moreover, Fejes and Dahlstedt (2017) posit that Sweden's adult education system is distinct since it offers adults free education as well as the opportunity to enrol in courses that can be used to qualify for admission to higher education, prepare students for particular careers, and simply prepare them for life as a citizen. Adult education is provided through welfare organizations like Municipal Adult Education (MAE), which offers Swedish to immigrants, and is funded by the state and municipality. As explained earlier, the municipality is responsible for supervising Swedish formal adult education, which includes general, vocational, and Swedish for Immigrants courses. Nevertheless, the municipality is not always responsible for course organization.

According to Wärvik (2013), a third-party supplier of vocational education and training (VET), a quality control procedure was put in place at the reformed MAE. Consistency in educational content and assessment was mandated under the plan. It governed and directed instructors' work, but it also gave rise to disputes over how they may uphold their own professional convictions and adapt their training to suit the particular needs of various students. Likewise, Sandwall (2010) indicated that, due to their tenuous employment status and increased financial control, teachers may find themselves in a difficult position where they must choose between the needs of their students and the objectives of the curriculum on the one hand, and the goal of the educational institutions to gather data that demonstrates how their programs lead to employment positions on the other. Regarding Swedish adult education, another significant aspect of it is its significant marketisation, with numerous commercial providers and a wide

range of course offerings. However, the municipalities are having provider quality issues, and some municipalities are thinking about increasing their “internal provision” (Andersson & Muhrman, 2022). As Fejes (2019) posits, MAE in Sweden has at least three purposes: the first goal is to prepare students for the workforce, the second one is to compensate for the absence of prior educational options or assistance which results in an incomplete degree, and finally to promote democracy . In terms of subject matter, MAE is separated into three educational levels: Swedish language instruction for immigrants (SFI), adult education at the upper secondary school level, and adult education at the compulsory education level (Fejes & Holmqvist,2019). In addition to having its own national curriculum, MAE is regulated by the Education Act of 2010 and the Adult Education Regulation of 2011 (SNAE, 2017). For basic courses (equivalent to obligatory school) and SFI, municipalities must provide a study spot to every candidate. Also, the availability of courses needs to be adaptable in terms of study speed, possibilities for remote learning, and ongoing enrolment. Municipalities are required to provide adult education options, although they have the legal authority to recruit external, private organizations to manage some or all of their MAE programs( Andersson & Muhrman, 2022).

Regardless of the vendor, the municipality is still in charge of quality and quality monitoring. In accordance with the Public Procurement Act 2016:1145, 2016, a quasi-market has emerged where many municipalities decide to undertake public procurements and hire private providers to host courses in place of or in addition to their own public suppliers (Fejes & Holmqvist, 2019). In another word, only the provider or providers chosen by the municipality as suggesting the best offer such as lowest price, are given the opportunity to manage schools through the procurement process, which works much like an auction in which suppliers compete for contracts. Municipalities must establish quality assurance systems to maintain surveillance on the service providers they have engaged through a procurement system. This is done to guarantee that contract requirements are met, and high quality is maintained so that the municipality will receive approval ratings from the National Schools Inspectorate (Dahlstedt & Fejes 2019). Furthermore, Dahlstedt and Fejes (2019) add that these quality inspections also put providers under pressure to establish processes that make it simple for them to demonstrate to the municipality that they fulfil their obligations under the contract. Building such systems runs the risk of standardizing instruction and restricting instructors' autonomy, according to research on MAE (see, for example, Fejes et al., 2016; Wärvik, 2013).

### **1.1.2 Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)**

The Swedish for immigrant program is provided and organised through the municipal adult education system, which is called komvux in Swedish. It is designed for anyone above the age of 16 who needs to learn the fundamentals of Swedish (Skolverket, 2017). It provides each student with at least 15 hours

per week for an average of four weeks, while the number of hours may alter according to the participant level (Skolverket Utbildningsinfo, 2010). In 2003 the SFI courses were categorized into three different levels. SFI includes three study pathways that are all intended for adult beginners in Swedish but each targeted towards a distinct learner target group, from unschooled pupils with minimal literacy ability (Study path 1) to those with secondary or advanced educational credentials (Study path 3). SFI 1 (comprises courses A, B, C and D), SFI 2 (consists of courses B, C, and D) and SFI 3 (courses C and D). Therefore, the SFI classes are essential to the integration process since they provide many immigrants the chance to learn the fundamentals of Swedish and advance in society (Carlson, 2002). As mentioned, in 1994 SFI has undergone numerous alterations and one of the biggest alterations was the shift of responsibility and management of adult education to municipalities. That is, municipalities became the primary managers of all schools.

## 1.2 Aim of the study

This study aims to investigate and identify SFI 3 teachers' perspectives about the different types of challenges these teachers experience by using the Socio Ecological Model. Very much is known about the history of SFI. Also, extensive research has been carried out on marketisation of adult education, procurement and focus of it on labor market and employability. Furthermore, other studies examined vocational communication skills of immigrant students, marginalization and integration of them. Regarding Lindberg & Sundwall (2007), it is clear that in a tendering system, long-term goals of personal fulfilment, empowerment, and equal democratic rights are in danger of being surrendered to short-term economic concerns in municipalities that are already under financial strain. This will make working conditions less desirable for educators. Although students' and teachers' perspectives about the marketisation of adult education has been studied and discussed (Carlson & Jacobson, 2019), what is missing however, is teachers' perspectives about the numerous levels of challenges that exist, and there is a need to identify and investigate those obstacles because adult educators in SFI are dealing with diverse group of students.

## 1.3 Research Questions

To pinpoint some of the factors at different levels that might hinder and affect teachers' effectiveness and students' learning outcome at SFI classes in path 3, these two questions served as the direction for this study.

1. What types of challenges do SFI 3 teachers experience?
2. How do these challenges affect teachers' practices?

It is worth explaining that the original questions were rephrased and adjusted to the ones stated above. The expectation was generally about their pedagogic concerns and the challenges they might have in teaching multicultural students but unexpectedly their fundamental concern was not pedagogical challenges. Thus, after looking at the data and following the phenomena as represented to me by the participants of the study, I have decided to reformulate the questions, according to how the participants guided me. As written below, the original questions were focusing on the challenges that teachers had in teaching to adult immigrants with different higher educational background in a multicultural class however, after entering to the field it has been clearly stated by the teachers that they do not experience personal issues in teaching to the students and the challenges were stemming from the systemic policies of SFI. Therefore, they did not talk much about strategies or how they deal with the challenges and the support they expected for the challenges, since their perception was that the system and the policy of the system is the main problem and causing the other challenges, and that should be fixed or changed.

The original questions before rephrasing were as follows:

- 1 (a). What are the challenges of teaching Swedish to immigrants in Gothenburg from SFI 3 teachers' perspectives? How do they deal with those challenges?
- 2 (b). What are their overall expectations for support in addressing those difficulties and challenges?

## 1.4 Significance of the study

After marketisation of adult education, regarding SFI, this meant that the municipalities had a legal obligation to offer SFI lessons within three months of receiving an application, resulting in an open enrolment policy for learning centres (Öbrink Hobzova, 2021). A new curriculum and syllabi were also released for all types of education (Rydell, 2018) and as Dahlstedt and Fejes (2019) posit, the marketization and competitive system have been particularly apparent in SFI and impacted the prospective agents. Thus, the findings of the study can highlight crucial issues that need to be addressed by politicians and regulators in adult education and the current procurement in Gothenburg. This study provides a platform for SFI teachers to discuss their concerns about the obstacles and limitations they face, and the impacts of these problems on their practices. Additionally, the study is also expected to help instructors by recognizing and addressing their difficulties. As a result, work condition for teachers can be enhanced, learning outcomes will be improved, and immigrants will be able to contribute to the economy and society.

## 1.5 Thesis Organization

This thesis consists of five chapters, and there are different parts in each chapter. Chapter one includes an overview of the subject's history to introduce the topic. Also, I problematized the thesis's subject here and emphasized the importance of the research. The proposed research questions are followed by the justification for the study. Finally, I've included the thesis structure, which includes the data from each chapter all the way through the thesis.

Chapter two contains two sections. First, the thesis' theoretical framework and guiding principles are first presented, and second part is a review of the relevant literature, which establishes the relationship between earlier studies and explains why this study is relevant.

Chapter three is the methodology chapter that has numerous sections. First it starts with the presentation of a data collection method which is semi-structured interviews in order to gather comprehensive information from the participants. Following a description of the interviewing process, a sampling method is provided along with tables that outline the participant's demographics. Next part of this chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation that explains the analysis and interpretations of the data collected through interviews. It includes application of thematic analysis in detail and how these themes are interpreted and then organized and categorized according to the three concepts of socio ecological model. Following the section on ESD statements stating the study's connection to education for sustainable development, ethical considerations come. Thereafter, limitations of the study, and issues of trustworthiness follow.

Chapter four presents the results of the study that focuses on the different challenges perceived by SFI 3 teachers, and the impact of challenges on the teachers' practices.

Chapter five, which is the final chapter of this study, is the discussion and conclusion part followed by recommendations for further research.

# CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Theoretical framework

This following chapter starts with introducing and depicting the theoretical framework and concepts that was employed and guided the following study in organizing and discussing the findings and then moves on to the literature review part.

This study is guided by Socio-ecological framework by McLeroy et al. (1988) (which is an adopted model from Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory). Bronfenbrenner classified environmental effects from micro level to macro level on individual development. McLeroy et al. (1988), proposed a five-level socio-ecological model of the aspects that stresses the intricate interplay between multiple levels of influence on health behaviors and outcomes. According to the socio ecological model, human behavior and experience is shaped and affected by several interrelated factors operating at multiple levels. These levels can be summed up in this manner:

1. Individual or intrapersonal level include knowledge, behavior, developmental background, and abilities.
2. Interpersonal level Including formal and informal social networks and social support systems as well as the networks of friends, family, and co-workers.
3. Institutional factors: social structures with organizational aspects, in addition to formal (and unofficial) operating guidelines.
4. community factors: connections between groups, administrations, and unofficial interactions inside boundaries.
5. Laws and policies at the local, state, and federal levels.

Socio-ecological model takes broader influencing elements like the community, the educational institution itself, and the impact of policy in addition to accounting for intrapersonal (individual) and interpersonal aspects into account (McLeroy et al., 1988). As Quarmby et al. (2019) argues, Socio-ecological model provides a framework and is a map for identifying and comprehending the diverse factors that influence praxis and behavior .The socio-ecological approach establishes a solid framework for this study and is supported by the potential it offers to separate the impacts on teachers' work while also recognizing their dynamic connections with one another (Shestunova, 2022). Thus, it depicts how teachers' behavior and experience is not only the result of their individual traits and relationship, but the societal interactions at the institutional, communal, and public policy levels impact the teacher's praxis. The socio-ecological model is not only used in health-related fields, but it has also been used in the

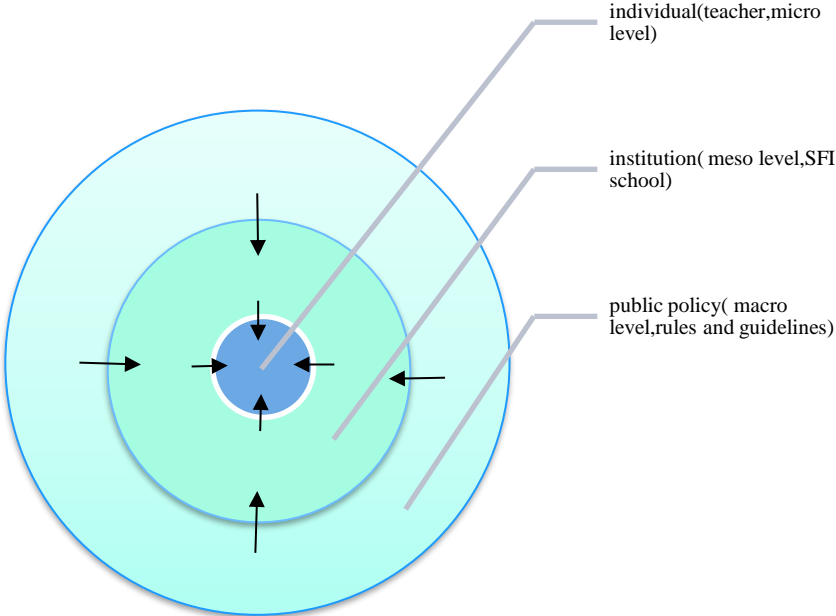
educational field. For example, Goh et al., (2013) employed socio-ecological models to investigate preservice classroom teachers' perceptions of obstacles to implementing movement integration in American schools. In another similar study, researchers investigated how different primary school teachers view physical education sessions, and mapped the obstacles to a socio-ecological model by identifying the various and interconnected layers of impact (Quarmby et al., 2019).

Erdem-Aydin (2021), also used socio-ecological model to examine and assess higher education instructor's viewpoint about emergency remote instruction used during the Pandemic. There was another research about teachers challenges in preparatory classes that adopted the socio-ecological framework (Shestunova, 2022). Regarding Shestunova (2022), teacher's satisfaction and well-being depend on a variety of social and ecological factors as well as the interactions these elements have with one another and with the environment and she classifies teachers' challenges to the 1. Individual, 2. Institutional, 3. Municipal, and 4. National level.

Thus, the socio ecological framework offers a thorough method for comprehending the interrelated elements that contribute to the difficulties SFI path 3 teachers confront and affect their work and the perceived challenges by SFI path 3 teachers can be explained as the result of the interaction of numerous factors at each level of the model.

For this study, however, the three concepts related to macro level (policies and regulations governing SFI system), meso level (the SFI institution) and micro level (Individual) are opted for. After entering the field and data collection, the responses and the perceived challenges by the participants guided me and I decided that the public policy, institutional, and individual concept would be more adequate in following the data and themes that have emerged. This provides a solid and thorough comprehension of how the policies and institutional structures of the SFI system shape the SFI teachers' experiences and how the individual level factors such as workload affects their efficiency in teaching SFI as well as quality of the learning outcome. It is expected that this provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors and elements that contribute to the challenges perceived by SFI teachers and identify prospective areas that need improvement and assistance and contribute to development of effective solutions and policies to address them.

**Figure 1. The generated socio ecological theoretical framework to understand SFI teachers' challenges adopted from Mc Leroy et al.,(1988)**



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This is the framework that is used to organize and analyse the data according to the (macro level) that is public policy, (meso- level) including institution , and (micro level) individual, that is SFI teachers' practices . That is, after coding the findings of the study as well as identifying and developing the themes derived from the data, generated themes are classified and organized according to these three levels. The other two levels were not mentioned as a challenge affecting SFI teachers work and experience and therefore they were excluded in this study.

**2.2 Literature review**

To contextualize this study within the body of existing research on the topic, I reviewed the different available studies about second language teachers' challenges, changes in SFI system, marketisation and impact of it on teachers work experience, as well as SFI teachers' challenges.

To search and find the relevant articles consistent with the topic to be studied, different search engines including Gothenburg University Library, Swepub, google scholar, google, Education Research Complete, Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), ERIC (EBSCOhost) as well as other specific databases like Taylor &Francis, sagepub were applied. Various search terms and keywords

combinations, such as Swedish for immigrants, SFI and marketisation, sfi OR “Swedish for immigrants,” sfi teachers’ challenges, Privatisation and marketisation of adult education, teaching Swedish to immigrants, and combination of several key words in EBSCOhost database such as “second language” teaching OR L2, AND challenge\* OR barrier\* OR difficult\* AND teacher\* OR instructor\* AND education\* were employed. After locating pertinent articles or book chapters I also looked through their references to identify additional sources.

### **2.2.1 Previous studies on SFI**

Regarding Rosén (2013), SFI was a subject that had received relatively little investigation for a long time, but there has been a noticeable shift and most studies on Sfi have been qualitative research based on ethnographic observations and interviews (Lundgren et al. 2017). There are mostly qualitative studies done about the Swedish language programs for adult immigrants. For example, Carlson (2002), studied the sociological constructions of knowledge and learning in Sfi. She addresses participants learning viewpoints and knowledge formation in SFI from macro level (history of education in Sweden), meso-level (the SFI institutional framework), and micro-level viewpoints (interviews with SFI students, teachers, principals, career advisers, a school nurse and welfare case workers).

Later, Franker (2011) made a study on the visual literacy of low-literate SFI student and findings demonstrated how the participants' linguistic, educational, and cultural interpretation, as well as the graphic, visual, and textual design of the posters, influence the reconstructions of the visual texts. Therefore, for making the intended interpretations, some degree of verbal skills, formal schooling, and familiarity with current conversation appear to be necessary.

Sandwall (2013) also, by doing a case study, investigated and analysed the possibilities for interaction and language acquisition at work internship for adult second language learners. She suggested that learners' opportunities for communication and language development were influenced by several circumstances. These elements relate to interpersonal interactions, work-related duties and participant relationships, workplace procedures, and educational requirements (Sandwall,2013). However, there is a limited possibility in students' interactions in the internships and some of those internships are not based on the learners' interests.

Another study that has been done, was about the policy changes in SFI programs and students' experiences and attitudes in relation to this marketisation or how teachers perceived neo liberalising adult education and the pedagogical and professional limitations it caused for them (Carlson & Jacobsson, 2019).

Ahlgren and Rydell (2020), using two qualitative data sets consisting of interviews that were conducted in 2001/2002 and 2015/2016, respectively, investigated how SFI students reflect on their language learning experiences generally, and how they reflect on their participation in the language program. This time was marked by significant societal changes, including an increase in immigration, increasing disagreement between discourses on the rights and responsibilities of adult migrants living in Sweden, and a further marketization of the country's educational system based on neoliberal ideas.

There is also another study that addresses how language courses have evolved over time, the current situation of these courses, and the problems with the current approach. It also gave an understanding of issues related to immigrants' marginalization in Sweden (Öbrink Hobzová, 2021). The author claims that personalizing the SFI courses to make it more appropriate for the students with different backgrounds puts even more pressure on teachers. These alterations can cause confusion and negatively impact teachers' proficiencies and learning outcomes subsequently. Hence, as Quarmby et al. (2019), claims understanding the obstacles within and outside of the school is crucial for longer term effectiveness.

Generally, a great deal of studies is done to investigate SFI students' perspectives and experiences about the role of SFI education in their integration into the society or how the students perceive the privatization of SFI education, labor market policy and orientation of courses, and its focus on the labor market. The studies showed that the opportunity of interaction for the students is not much, and the courses are not based on students' personal preferences and interest and these constant changes caused problems for teachers.

### **2.2.3 Impact of marketisation of adult education on SFI**

According to Beach, 2004; Beach and Carlson, 2004 as the provision of adult education shifted to be more labour market focused, students' freedom of choice did not increase. Instead, consequences, including greater expenditures for administration, quality control, and monitoring as well as less professional flexibility for teachers whose work market has been extensively privatized, could be observed. Thus, to maintain their profession within the adult education sector, teachers have had to give up some of their professional autonomy and adapt to the market. In the same way, Fejes et al., (2016) also examined how marketization affected adults' education principals, teachers, and students. Their findings suggest that while instructors more strongly demonstrate resistance to the institutional logics of a marketized system, principals and pupils generally adhere to the pressures that emerge. In line with these, Öbrink Hobzová (2021), maintains that one of the problems related to this marketisation, is the increase (8.7%) in the number of participants and the intensified burden and tension on the system which led to lack of resources and funding. Andersson and Wärvik, (2012); Dahlstedt and Fejes, (2019)

condemn that the adjustments and changes in SFI courses and curriculum are mostly to fill the urgent demands of the job market. The "work first principle," a new labour market policy, which asserts that it should be more beneficial for an individual to work than to be unemployed, and that individuals are responsible for their own employability, reflects this readjustment.

On the contrary, Öbrink Hobzová (2021) declares that SFI has a strong emphasis on individualization, and the goal of these alterations is to customize language instruction to meet the needs of each participant. However, she asserts that this could affect the integration attempt in both positive and negative ways. The benefit is that participants can study whenever they want, for as long as they desire and as long as they make significant progress as active students, and this can speed up participants' integration into the job market. The negative aspect of these changes in SFI courses can be overwhelming and challenging the teachers with continuous changes (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2007; Öbrink Hobzová, 2021). Similarly, Carlson and Jacobsson (2019) argue that the SFI courses are characterized by a work orientation (making students employable) and a monitoring and assessment attitude, with reduced professional freedom in the educational venture. They further proposed the difficulties related to the teachers' dual professional responsibilities as educators and administrators in a setting where there is constant competition. A conflict of internal and external requirements was felt by teachers. The teachers, as they explain, described a scenario of "increased workload, bureaucratization, and marginalization of pedagogy, and draw the conclusion that adult education no longer nurtures its democratic and civic roles" (p. 135).

Furthermore, according to Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003), long-term members of a teaching community can indeed encounter challenges from the outside that alter internal working procedures which might be more apparent in periods of reform. Second language instructors deal with a variety of difficulties both inside and outside the classroom (Khan & Khan, 2016). For instance, Buchanan (2015) demonstrates how instructors' worries for their pupils influence the way they respond to change, while Tsui (2007), discusses how the instructor is conflicted between the obligation to the students he or she feels and the organizational demands of how to educate. Similarly, Rappel (2015) condemns teachers of second languages in adult education confront with concerns including competence and changes aimed at enhancing instruction and learning. In line with this, Sandwall (2013) demonstrates how SFI teachers are hampered by the municipalities' demands for instruction that emphasizes occupational learning and the curricular requirements for teaching languages.

Overall, neo liberalisation of SFI had consequences for SFI stakeholders. Extensive burden on the teachers and institutions, limiting teachers' autonomy as well as restricting the students' freedom of choice.

## 2.2.4 Second language teachers' challenges

Several studies have been done about the foreign language teachers (FLT) or second language teachers (SLT) challenges.

Haufiku et al., (2022) investigated the difficulties English Second Language (ESL) teachers experience in their instruction in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia. Questionnaires, focus group discussion, and observations were used to collect data from a sample of sixty ESL teachers who were already teaching. According to the study, one of the issues that ESL teachers in the Ohangwena Region faced was teaching in crowded classes. The participants stressed that they found large classes to be a strain since they were unable to meet the needs of all students, particularly the slow learners who needed extra support. Aligned with this, some other scholars like Mann (2018), Davila (2019), and Botes et al., (2020) also claim that teaching ESL in a packed classroom is demanding, exhausting, and frustrating. In a similar vein, Mahmoud (2018) and Emery (2012) argue that teaching in overcrowded courses is counterproductive because there is little to no engagement between the instructor and the students, and there is also little student participation. Makielski (2018) moreover, condemns that when a teacher can provide one-on-one training or educate a small group of students, the students are more likely to learn well. Meador (2019) on the other hand believes that growing class sizes is a price that many schools must pay to remain operating in a time when education funding is inadequate.

Learners' absenteeism was the other challenge that participants pointed out and they emphasized on the negative effect of this on the students' learning results. Two other similar studies by Iiping (2013) and King (2013) regarding the difficulties in teaching English as a second language found that teachers were on the idea that it is extremely difficult to teach students English as a second language if they are consistently absent from class.

The other challenge identified in Haufiku et al.,(2022)study, was lack of resources for ESL instruction and learning in their schools. Although the data was collected through the use of questionnaires, focus groups, and observation, which can enhance the validity and credibility of the findings, the study was conducted primarily in a rural area, so it is not possible to generalize the findings to other Western developed countries because this issue can be more common in developing nations.

Another case study was conducted in Turkey by Ünsal and Baskan( 2021) to identify the challenges that teachers encounter in teaching to immigrant students. The authors did semi-structured interviews with ten teachers who were teaching to immigrants. The most significant problem that the participants pointed out was the language barrier. However, one of the limitations of the case study is generalizability.

According to the review of the articles, there are different issues that language teachers who teach to immigrant students experience. Some of these challenges are classroom level issues such as students' motivation, teaching to a large number of students in the classroom and dealing with students with different socio-cultural and educational backgrounds. However, some other issues such as the scarcity of resources and an excessive and overwhelming workload, limitation of time, unstable employment conditions, are the institutional level issues that teachers were struggling with. When it comes to SFI teachers, it is obvious that the change in the system and regulations, and its focus on marketisation and labor market has greatly impacted the relevant stakeholders including teachers.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Research design**

The following chapter provides the description of the procedure and methods used in this research, that is, the research design including the research methodology, data collection tool, sampling method, data analysis, ESD, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study, as well as issues of trustworthiness.

According to de Vaus (2001), the primary goal of the research design is to establish a framework for the research (research method, techniques opted by the researcher to conduct a study) to eliminate uncertainties and ensure that information and evidence obtained during the research help answer the research questions as accurately as feasible. In order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest, qualitative research employs the collection, analysis, and interpretation of extensive narrative and visual (non-numerical) data (Jackson et al., 2007). Thus, a qualitative interview methodology is employed in this study since it focuses on investigating the perspectives of SFI teachers on teaching and working in SFI schools, as well as the various degrees of obstacles they encounter, and how do these challenges impact their practices. As mentioned above, the research was conducted through a qualitative research approach by employing interview as a data collection method. Qualitative research is an approach for collecting the data in the field, where the participants experience that phenomena or issue under the study (Creswell, 2014). Regarding Creswell and Creswell (2017), the entire qualitative research procedure is centered on understanding the participants' perceptions of the problem or issue. Thus, the qualitative research method assists in gathering a variety of perspectives from individuals in the field, allowing the researcher to draw solid findings and offer suggestions. Furthermore, according to Creswell, (2014), in qualitative inquiry, the information is collected by speaking to participants directly, observing their attitudes and behaviors in the natural setting and having face-to-face interaction. The researchers can collect the data themselves through analyzing documents, seeing behavior, and interviewing the participants and they can even collect multiple types of data, like interviews, observations, document analysis.

### 3.2 Data collection method

Given the qualitative character of this study, interviews are employed as a strategy to obtain thorough information and data from the person's viewpoint (SFI teachers) who is experiencing the issue to be studied. Interviews, in accordance with Creswell and Creswell (2017), are employed for qualitative design because they allow for direct interaction between the researcher and participants. The researcher also joins the participant's environment through the interview, which gives a more complete picture. These interviews can take place in-person, over the phone, or in focus groups of six to eight people.

Therefore, the interview was opted as a data collection method. To elicit more detailed information on SFI teachers' challenges and enable the participants to express their experiences and feelings, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with five SFI path 3 (course C, D) teachers were conducted. One-on-one interview is a conversational type of data collecting method to gain authentic and broad perception of participants' thoughts, experiences, emotions, and attitudes about a particular phenomenon (Patton, 2002). According to Ryan et al., (2009), the flexibility and adaptability of a semi-structured interview enables the interviewer to explore a number of less structured questions as well as any unplanned concerns brought up by the interviewee. So, it will give the freedom to explore and discuss more about the subject and help the researcher just to follow it as a guide and to make sure any steps are not missed. Thus, more detailed follow-up questions were asked about how SFI teachers have been perceiving and experiencing working and teaching at SFI schools. So, this interview method assisted me to explore and study "real life context" and have a face-to-face interaction with teachers who were dealing with the issues. An interview guide (see appendix 2) was developed to serve as a guidance and to familiarize the participants with the study and procedures of the interview. Moreover, before doing the interviews, each participant had received interview guide and interview questions (see appendix 2) together with an informed consent letter. As teachers preferred, the interviews were done via Zoom for their convenience. Therefore, five teachers from three distinct SFI schools in Gothenburg were interviewed lengths of which were ranging from twenty-five to forty-five minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded by my phone's voice-memo. The interviews were conducted in English due to my limited Swedish knowledge, however some of the words were expressed in Swedish since it was difficult for some of the participants to find the English word for it. Those words were later translated to English and were confirmed by one of the participants later.

However, regarding Ryan et al., (2009), bias may appear during interviews depending on the way the interview is performed, how the interviewees are chosen, and whether the interviewer has impacted the interview process. To reduce the danger of bias and improve the rigor of the data, it is essential that the interviewer is aware of it and considers these factors.

### 3.3 Participants, Sample criteria and Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting a subgroup from a larger population or sampling frame. The sampling method is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that involves choosing a sample based on previously specified criteria, that means the researcher chooses people who can best assist them in comprehending the research challenge and the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As Sidhu (2014) posits, purposive sampling strategy helps the investigator to find participants who can contribute in-depth and extensive information about the topic under study. This sort of sampling is used primarily to concentrate on particular traits, select samples that best match the study's goal and help the researcher in responding to research questions (Campbell et al., 2020).

The participants in this study are five SFI path 3 teachers (course C & D) that were chosen purposefully since the primary intention to conduct this study was to comprehend the pedagogical difficulties teachers can encounter while working and teaching to immigrant students with different higher educational backgrounds. Therefore, by using this method of sampling, I was able to find teachers who are the main focus of this study. However, after entering the field the study took a different direction. In addition to the fieldnotes, to recall the information, ensure the accuracy of the information provided by the interviewee and to transcribe and analyze the data, the conversations were audio- recorded (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

To reach out to the participants, I emailed the principals of five different SFI schools to inform them about the study and its aim and asked them to forward my mail to the related teachers. Out of those five schools, only three of the principals wrote back to me, saying that they had forwarded my email to the intended instructors (course C&D teachers). The fifth school's principal, however, declined to collaborate with the study and share my email with the teachers. I sent a second email directly to the third school's instructors after they did not respond, but they declined to participate as well.

Five teachers ultimately decided to participate, and each of these five teachers received a separate informed consent letter (see appendix 1), interview guide, and interview questions. The primary issue was that the teachers were extremely busy and for the best time that suited them, I had to wait for more than three weeks. I conducted the first interview as a pilot study, in order to see whether there are any defects in the interview design and make sure if I need to make required revisions and modifications before the study done. According to Malmqvist et al., (2019) for projects involving qualitative research, pilot studies are usually carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the research instruments. After doing the pilot study, I made some modification and alterations in the order of questions and follow up questions to elicit more detailed responses. The following table gives a description of the participants:

**Table 1: participants' educational background and the work experience.**

Respondent Number.	Gender	Nationality	Educational background	Duration of work experience
Teacher 1	female	Non-Swedish (To avoid the identification of the teacher, country is not stated)	Qualified teacher in history, philosophy & SVA	1 year
Teacher 2	Female	Swedish	Qualified teacher for preschool up to gymnasium, PE teacher, & SVA	More than 12 years
Teacher 3	Male	Swedish	Qualified teacher in teacher training program from Gothenburg University	2 years
Teacher 4	Female	Swedish	Master's degree in Italian & Swedish	15 years
Teacher 5	Male	Swedish	Gymnasium teacher in religion, history & SVA	17 years

### 3.4 Data analysis and interpretation

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data collected by the interviews. Regarding Braun and Clarke, (2006) and Nowell et al., (2017), thematic analysis (TA) is a technique for locating, examining, and deciphering meaningful patterns (or "themes") within qualitative data. TA can be used to look for patterns in data that correspond to participants' personal experiences, ideas and perspectives, behavior,

and practices. This will enable the researcher to extract codes and themes from qualitative data in a structured and intuitive way. Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2006) claim that thematic analysis is a valuable technique for exploring the viewpoints of various research participants, showing patterns and variances, and producing unexpected findings and they also explain that the process of analysis entails constantly switching back and forth between the complete data collection, the coded extracts of data you are analysing, and the analysis of the data you are producing.

Braun and Clarke (2006), define all the information gathered for a specific research project as the “data corpus” which in this case the collected data from teachers, and all the information from the corpus used for a specific analysis is referred to as the “data set” that is, the transcripts of the interviews held with teachers. The term "data item" is used to describe each unique piece of information gathered, which collectively forms the data collection or corpus, that in this study refers to each individual interview with the SFI teacher that are analysed and are labelled by a small word or phrase that are called “codes.” Finally, the data extract that refers to the coded section of information, which is taken from a data item, like a theme. A theme is a key component of the answer to research question since it displays a recurring pattern or significant data set response (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Regarding Lester et al.,(2020) approach, TA involves seven main stages:

Phase 1. Preparing and organizing the data for analysis: As mentioned earlier the data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with five teachers through Zoom and the interviews were audio-recorded and stored in my phone Voice Memos until to be transcribed and then be deleted.

Phase 2. Transcribing the data: at this stage I listened to each recording in turn, and then manually typed and turned the interview data from the audio recorded interviews into a transcript on my computer.

Phase 3. Becoming familiar with the data corpus: Since I obtained the data through the interview, I was already familiar with the data that I was going to analyse. But after transcription, I started reading the transcriptions several times, so that I became more familiar with the data set and this made the comprehension of the teachers’ perspectives better and made the analysis part easier and quicker (Lester et al., 2020).

Phase 4. “Memoing” the data : After doing the transcription and familiarizing with data corpus I started to take notes, highlighted, and underlined the important and relevant data points throughout this procedure, like it is frustrating that we don’t have time to do our main job, I don’t like bureaucratic work and administrative tasks , it takes up my time, it is tricky that we have new students every three weeks, and all the other relevant information that teachers stated as their challenges. This process helped me comprehend the data better and identify the similarities and patterns before moving on to the second stage of analysis.

Phase 5. Coding the data: Regarding Nowell et al., (2017), Coding enables the researcher to streamline and concentrate on particular data qualities. Thus, I categorized the highlighted parts related to the research questions, made these preliminary lists of concepts, and labelled them, that is, assigned a code for each challenge. Like the following: having too limited time for teaching, too much administrative tasks, system of SFI, procurement, privatisation and marketisation, not a consistent syllabus, national test, student's intake, placement of new students, insufficient salary, long working hours, supporting the students, quality of education, and fast pace of SFI path 3. After that I reviewed each code and similar codes were combined into higher-level categories, and unnecessary codes were moved to a separate category.

Phase 6. Moving from codes to categories and categories to themes: following this, the information related to previously classified patterns were categorized and organized into themes and into a coherent framework that clearly showed the key ideas and concepts that arose from the data. The following themes regarding the difficulties and elements affecting the job of SFI 3 teachers were identified and developed as: Time constraints and workload; SFI system, marketisation, and procurement; student's intake and placement; language barrier; curriculum and National test; salary dissatisfaction; supporting the students and quality of education, fast pace of SFI path3. To check the coherency of the themes I went back many times to the transcriptions and went through each of them to make sure that the developed themes were accurately and meaningfully reflecting and representing the teachers' viewpoints about the challenges and there were not any missing or overlooked data to be coded (Nowell et al., 2017).

Phase 7. Is making the analytic process transparent: That is the researcher will ensure that the analytic process is transparent and open, and the findings are supported by the data.

### 3.5 ESD statement

This thesis is inspired by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were formally presented and agreed by all 193 UN members in September 2015. Goals included eradicating poverty, fostering prosperity, and safeguarding the environment for all living things on this planet Earth now and in the future (UN, 2015). According to the 2030 agenda, one of the central requirements of the education for sustainable development (ESD) is ensuring and providing quality education. Educators still play a critical role in assisting students in making the transition to sustainable lifestyles in a time when information is readily available everywhere and their position is drastically changing. Teachers in various types of educational environments can inspire students to alter both themselves and society by helping them in understanding the difficult decisions that sustainable development necessitates. Thus, teachers must be empowered and equipped with the information, skills, beliefs, and behaviors necessary for this shift in order to lead and empower students (UNESCO,2017).



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As Hofman (2015) asserts, ESD equips everyone with the knowledge necessary to decide in favor of social justice, economic viability, and environmental integrity for both the present and the future. To face the difficulties of sustainable development, it tries to give the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required. Furthermore, obtaining goal 4 (quality education) demands qualified, competent, sufficiently paid, exhilarated, and inspired teachers (UNESCO,2017). Findings of the study help in identifying the challenges of SFI teachers and their impacts on teachers' practices. Thus, addressing and alleviating the Sfi teachers' challenges can enhance and improve the learning and teaching quality that is in line with goal 4 of ESD.

### 3.6 Ethical consideration

There is no other goal for conducting this study than academic research in a field related to my interest as a language teacher to explore more about the challenges of the SFI teachers in Gothenburg. The ethical standards and literature used in this study are in line with those set forth by BERA, (2018) ,and Vetenskapsrådet(2022), a document supplied by the Swedish Research Council (2022). Research is

generally about human beings and one of the most crucial factors in research is ethics. Thus, to avoid any harm to the participants and enhance ethical practices, the researcher shouldn't neglect ethical considerations (de Vaus, 2001) Therefore, as explained earlier, the first thing I did, was sending a mail to the SFI school principals to inform them about the study and its aim . Then after getting the school directors' approval, I sent an informed consent letter via mail, with the interview guide and interview questions, to the relevant participants to obtain their consent. And to ensure the transparency of the study, I informed them about the aim of the study and provided a brief description about myself . Doing so, they were informed about the aim of the research, their voluntary participation, and their withdrawal right anytime they feel not willing to continue taking part in the study anymore. Confidentiality and privacy of the participants was ensured as well. To anonymize the participants, pseudonyms(T1,T2,...) were used, and the schools names were kept unknown as well, to avoid identification or any potential harm for the participants (Kaiser, 2009). Before starting the interview, I introduced myself again in either Swedish or English, but the interviews were done in English due to my limited Swedish language. Each interviewee was separately asked for permission for the audio recordings of interviews and when they approved, I started the recording.

The recordings were kept in a separate file only for a short period of time to be deleted from the phone's voice memo after the transcription and analysis. For the teacher's convenience as they requested the interviews were conducted by Zoom. To assure the credibility, proper member check has been done by offering the text and asking all participants to comment on the transcribed interview themes and check if the identified themes exactly reflect their views and opinions. Three of them have replied and had an exchange of opinion with me that gave me a good sense of having a proper understanding of their stories. Therefore, the participants of this study were not only involved in data collection, but they were also involved in reading and exchanging their thoughts on the findings with me. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), in order to test the findings and interpretations with the participants, the process of member checking can also be used to increase credibility.

### 3.7 limitations of the study

The study has been done in a limited time, and one of the problems that I had, was getting access to the considered participants. They were either refusing to take part in the study or were extremely busy to devote time for this study and they wanted me to wait until end of March at least. So, for making the interview and finding the suitable time that suited them, I waited for three weeks in order to interview with three of the teachers. Thus, I conducted this study with five available teachers who ultimately could cooperate with me and could not include more teachers' viewpoints.

The fact that this study was conducted in a limited time, and as the goal was to have deeper insight into teachers' problems, primarily considers the opinions of teachers. However, if the time was not

limited this study could have included a diverse group of SFI instructors with different work history from different areas of Gothenburg to obtain more data and perspectives. Subjectivity and researcher's bias would always be an issue when it comes to qualitative study and according to the nature of the qualitative study, the researcher cannot be expected to be objective. Notwithstanding, beside my preconceptions about SFI program, I tried to give voice to the teachers in the study and follow my data and stories that my participants shared and provided for me and be transparent and prioritize my participants voice and perspectives to minimize and reduce the bias in the data.

### 3.8 Issues of trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for trustworthiness, which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The following considerations were taken into account to ensure the trustworthiness.

For assuring the credibility, an interview guide was sent to participants to go through them and be prepared for the interview and provide relevant and precise information and also ensure that a uniform data collection method is applied to get the same data from participants. Furthermore, doing the pilot study provided the possibility to check and adjust the interview questions to confirm that collected data is related and connected to the research questions and goals.

To ensure the transferability, a thorough description of the context of the study, participants, as well as methods that were used for data collection and analysis was provided. Another step taken into consideration for ensuring the transferability, is employing purposive sampling technique to choose participants who present a variety of perspectives and experiences pertinent to the study and provide detailed descriptions of the participants and their circumstances.

To assure the dependability, an audit trail has been considered. That is, thorough descriptions of my methods, data collection, analysis, and all the adjustments and decisions throughout the course of this study were recorded and explained in order to make sure the research process and all steps taken in the study are transparent.

Furthermore, to enhance the confirmability, effort was made to give voice to SFI teachers and reflect their opinions and thoughts. This was accomplished by following the data and prioritizing the participant's perspectives and experiences, and describing each and every step and decisions taken, to make the study process transparent. And as mentioned earlier, a member check has been offered to the participants to read the findings and exchange their ideas and add their comments. This was done to make sure that identified themes from the transcriptions align with what they said and meant.

# CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

## 4.1 Findings presentation

This chapter is the presentation of the data that, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, were gathered through the semi structured interview with five SFI path 3 teachers teaching at three separate SFI schools in Gothenburg. Using thematic analysis, made it possible to thoroughly examine the data, identify patterns emerged from the data, which were important and connected. After transcribing the interviews, the patterns were identified, highlighted, and coded accordingly. Coded data was categorized and then the categories were assigned a label and the relevant themes were combined to each other. I was focusing on both the challenges and the impact the challenges had on teachers while identifying the themes. Finally, eight themes emerged from the data as presented below:

### 4.1.1 SFI system, marketisation, and procurement

This theme is related to the challenges that SFI teachers experience due to SFI system's focus on marketisation and procurement policies. According to the rich information provided by the participants of the study about the flaw in the system of SFI, it is clearly stated that the system's focus on marketisation and procurement of SFI resulted in many other subsequent challenges and put the teachers under pressure and excessive workload. Regarding the participants, teachers working within the SFI system are suffering from excessive workload and struggle balancing the demands of the market and providing quality education and support for their students. They all are passionate about their job and enjoy working with students. However, they all indicated their frustration about the way SFI is structured and run, and how these regulations constrain them and contributes to other problems that they experience in their institution which consequently affect the quality of education.

For example, one of the teachers explained that:

I always get a lot of energy from the class and get the impression from the students that SFI is important for them, so it is important for me to give the best education in line with the workplace condition, but when the condition for our job is not enough it is very difficult and frustrating for me and all teachers. The system makes it hard for teachers and students subsequently to reach their goals of the course and that closes many doors for them in Sweden(Teacher 2).

Another participant who has been working as an SFI teacher for long, explained that he was very passionate about his job, but he believed that the whole system of SFI was problematic and unfair! For example, he explains:

For me, the entire situation that SFI is in, in the Swedish educational system, is the problem. I think the entire system of SFI is in the system of difficulties for different reasons. And I think the educational system is very being mistreated. There are so many people with an interest in SFI that want to make something out of it! You know the expression “too many cooks spoil the broth”! (Teacher 5).

In the same way participants of the study also were of the belief that due to the marketisation and procurement of the SFI system, their work was difficult and overly demanding. One of the teachers talked about the situation of the privatisation and doing business with the commune, and noting that since the prices were lowered, the teachers were instead required to have more classes and teach more. For example:

If you want to work full time, then you have to be and teach in classes 27 hours out of 40 hours work week and that is too much and you only have 13 hours for planning, meeting, and short break! I wish adult education were not a capitalist market but started from people / students and their educational needs (Teacher 3).

In the same vein, another teacher also explains how procurement affects the quality of education. She explains:

Every third year all the private schools need to make procurement for contracts “upphandlingar om avtal” and the Gothenburg city chooses which schools win and then they have the right to run SFI for the coming three years in the city you know! They always pick the schools that has the cheapest price of the SFI, so the school with the cheapest price get all the SFI and the rest of the schools get just a small number of students or need to close or find other forms of SFI like distance, etc. This also impacts the quality of the education and workload. I believe it is not ok that schools compete about the things such as the lowest price in education and we need another type of procurement in Gothenburg! (Teacher 2).

#### **4.1.2 Time constraint and workload**

Regarding the teachers, another issue was the pressure that the system puts on the teachers in relation to managing their teaching time and administrative tasks. Participants were blaming and criticizing the system and explaining that they do not have enough time for doing their main job and being overwhelmed by the extra administrative tasks which was the other major challenge that teachers in this study were highly suffering from. They believed that the limited amount of time that they had to cover the curriculum, plan, and prepare for the class, follow up the student and provide feedback and support

for them, impacts the quality of the education consequently. They expressed dissatisfaction with their workload and being overburdened by their extra administrative tasks. One of the respondents expressed her frustration about the limitation of the time for teaching as below:

We do not have time to prepare, give feedback or support the students the way we wish and the way we were taught at university! We have less time for the actual job as a teacher since our job nowadays includes a lot of administrative tasks!!(teacher 2).

Regarding the time constraint and administrative tasks, the other teachers pointed out to the uselessness of the documentation, and he said:

I do not like administrative and bureaucratic work; it is pointless and takes up my time and my students' time indeed! We have too little time for planning, correcting students' assignments, following up and monitoring the students because of the documentation and administrative tasks. I do not have time to correct so many texts, I only handle them by unfortunately not doing my work as well as I wish!

(Teacher 3).

Similarly, teacher 2 brought up the pressure that the documentation task causes for the teachers as follows:

Another difficult situation is the pressure and expectation that a teacher should do documentation in different areas and that takes much time away from the actual job as a teacher we have!!

Teacher 4 also commented:

We have a lot of administrative work of course! We have to control all the time if someone is absent for a long time! We have to contact them then! So, it takes time to find the students' ID number which is different from the students' personal number due to "GDPR." So, we have to log in to the page and find the students ID there and then copy and paste it to the administration and that takes extra work we have to do!

#### **4.1.3 Students' intake and placement**

Regarding teachers, having new students all the time is another frustrating situation for them as four of the teachers mentioned. Which is again due to the SFI system and the marketisation policy of it as they explained.

For example, one of the teachers explained:

Every 3 weeks we get new students into our classes even if our classes are full, and it is always a challenge to find placement and make sure we send a good number of students to national tests (NP), so we keep the flow going. This school needs to take care of a high percentage of all students in Gothenburg city. It is a lot about the economy and money! So even if there are spots in other schools and our classes are full, we still need to take them in! we add a temporary class with a substitute teacher or have a too high number of students for a short time in the class therefore! This is sometimes stressful as we want to give quality into our teaching as well! (Teacher 2).

Similarly, another teacher also commented on this as follows:

It is tricky that we are having new students all the time, but it is also tricky that we have new classes all the time because we cannot have new teachers all the time! In Gothenburg, a year ago we used to have very few numbers of new students but now it is not like that! So, then to start a new group and class we have to put maybe two groups together if the groups have been smaller, so moving around the students is a lot of the job we are doing all the time! About path 3, since the pace is fast in course C and D when a new student comes after a month to the same class it can be intimidating for that student, because after a month students start speaking even in the evening classes that are much slower than morning classes (Teacher4).

However, one of the teachers was of the idea that it is good for students at the same time, for example he said:

In a way it would have been much better to have a start for all the students and then an end. But I also think it is good for those hardworking who need extra time, they can stay longer, and it goes faster for some people so they can finish it in a shorter time! And it is a very nice thing about SFI, but you have to weigh in as a teacher in that situation and manage all the individualities and of course when you keep the student( Teacher 5) .

#### **4.1.4 Salary dissatisfaction**

Four of the teachers also condemned their dissatisfaction with the salary that they receive and were finding it insufficient and believed that SFI teachers' salary is very low compared to other teachers.

For example, one of teachers compared her salary to her sister who was also teacher in the commune and explained

SFI teachers do not get paid very well. My sister is a teacher also in "Kommunen" ( the commune) and she had extra salary we call " lärarlyftet" (teacher promotion), so she gets 5000 extra every month just for being a good teacher! But we do not have it because we are private! So, why we could not have it? Laughing... That is weird! (Teacher 4)

Likewise, another teacher said: "The money that we get is very less according to the workload that we have!" (Teacher 1).

Similarly, one of the teachers mentioned that "if we want to get more then we have to change our school and work for the other schools that offer and pay more."

#### **4.1.5 Curriculum and national test**

This issue was also brought up by one of the teachers who believed that there is no consistency when it comes to the syllabus and the contents that students need to learn. He believed that course books were not completely connected and covering the syllabus (60%) and if a teacher wants to work through the whole syllabus, then they have to make their own syllabus and that is a lot of work and takes a lot. The teacher expressed that the focus is on short-term results rather than long-term educational outcomes.

He explained that:

National test is a small test that is not covering and testing the entire curriculum, so it is a test that should be used as a guideline to know how we should assess our students but sadly it has been used as an exam for the entire course ! So, all teachers and students are working for the national test, and they have it as a goal ! But according to the guidelines and the syllabus of the SFI the national test is just a test for some parts of the course! So, I am frustrated that students do not learn and get the knowledge that they have the right to, and it is unfair! And for me that is the biggest challenge! (Teacher 5)

He also believed that there is a lack of responsibility when it comes to control!

It is the parliament at first that makes sure that we have the syllabus in the Swedish school like "skolverket," so they make sure that everyone has the same syllabus and are following it! So, everyone has the right to get the same education everywhere they go in Sweden. Skolverket(school board) is the one who is writing the syllabus and school inspectors control the schools ! but unfortunately, they are all blaming someone else! I feel there is lack of responsibility, and someone should take the responsibility. So, government who makes the decision for writing, therefore, they are the one who is responsible that every school is following them! ( Teacher 5)

#### **4.1.6 Language barrier**

Lack of effective communication with students who have limited Swedish knowledge was seen as a challenge only according to two of the teachers who were new to the field. However, they have also developed and made their own strategies to address this issue.

One challenge is also how to communicate in Swedish with students who do not know Swedish!

(Teacher3).

The biggest challenge for me is how to make them understand me and understand grammar! But I use body language, google images, google translate or anything else that can help! (Teacher 1).

#### **4.1.7 Fast pace of the SFI 3**

Fast pace of SFI path 3(course C & D) was also brought up by only one of the teachers. She believed that the given period for students studying in path 3, is very short. She also mentioned that the students are supposed to study and finish courses C and D within some months (six to nine months) which is not enough for the students. She explains:

I think it is very fast from knowing nothing to do and pass the D test. Although we give extra time for those students who need more time, but that is extra administrative work, and we might receive opposition from the principal for keeping them long! ( Teacher 4).

#### **4.1.8 Supporting students and quality of education**

Regarding the interviews one of the most recurring themes in the findings was quality and support for students. As the teachers in the study mentioned, one of their biggest concerns was the quality of education and the support that they could have provided for the students, but they believed that the

system made this a big challenge for them, and they could not support their students the way that they wished to. For example, one of the teachers explains:

It is important for me to provide the best education in line with the workplace conditions, but when the condition for our job is not enough, it is very frustrating for me and all teachers! Sometimes the system makes it harder and administrative tasks have a negative impact on the planning time we are given and takes much time, so it can be hard to provide and give the students that kind of support we really want. That is very stressful as we want to give a quality into our teaching as well! (Teacher 2).

Or regarding the SFI system and student's intake she also mentioned that:

To manage the student's intake, we have to add temporary classes or have too high a number of students for a short time in the class, this impacts the quality of the education of course! (Teacher 2)

Similarly, she blamed the system for the quality issue, and said "politicians and the system are the reason why the best quality isn't the most important – it is the price!"

In the same manner, another teacher also explains the hard time he has when supposed to do the administrative works and says:

we have too many teaching hours per week 27 hours out of 40 working hours and it is too much for a teacher to be able to do a good job, so you don't have time to follow up and support all the individual! I can handle the administrative tasks unfortunately by not doing my work as well as I wish! Because I have too little time to be able to do it! You do not have time to correct so many texts or create your own tasks! (Teacher 3)

Likewise, one other teacher, describes that “

If you want to work full time, then you have to be and teach in classes 27 hours out of 40 hours work week and that is too much and you only have 13 hours for planning, meeting, short breaks. (Teacher 5)

About providing quality education and support one of the participants expresses:

We don't have enough condition to do our best, we know what is best for our students, but we don't have time to prepare and give feedback or support the way we wish and the way we were taught at university! (Teacher2)

One other participant also believes that having large classes reduces the efficiency and quality.

Having large classes with limited time makes it hard for teachers to provide individual attention to each student. (Teacher 1)

As explained by the teachers, it is clear that it is the System of SFI that triggers and causes all the above-mentioned challenges and puts the teachers under even more pressure and makes their job stressful and overwhelming. And according to the data all teachers in the study are passionate about their job and

love teaching and working as an SFI teacher, and it is important for them to provide the quality education and necessary support for their students, and this was one of their biggest concerns .

## 4.2 Organization of the themes in relation to the theory

This part of the paper is about categorization of the eight themes connected to the difficulties and elements that affected SFI 3 teachers, according to the public policy, institutional, and individual levels in the Socio-ecological model. As discussed earlier the socio-ecological model is used to comprehend how social and environmental elements and factors at various levels impact individuals' practices and behavior (McLeroy et al., 1988). Due to the major challenges that were identified in this study, from the macro-level, the other problems originate and stem because of this macro level issue and are overlapping indeed. Thus, regarding the findings, most of the themes are located in the public policy level but are perceived and experienced in either institutional or individual level.

### 4.2.1 Public policy level

In light of the laws and rules that control the delivery of SFI services in Gothenburg, and with regard to the economic and market forces that influence how SFI services are delivered, these themes are categorized at this level. That is, the SFI system is controlled and governed by national policies and regulations and that is the Swedish government who sets the objectives and targets of the SFI system. The Privatisation and marketisation of the SFI system are also influenced by national policy choices, such as the implementation of a voucher system that enables providers to offer SFI courses. The curriculum is also decided by the public policy level however, administration and implementation of national assessments are normally handled at the institutional level. Nevertheless, the way the curriculum is implemented and applied as well as the influence of national tests, can also affect individuals' characteristics likewise.

### 4.2.2 Institutional level

According to the socio-ecological model, the social and physical environment that teachers work, has an impact on them at the institutional level. So, this level focuses on institutional guidelines, procedures, and legislation that might affect SFI teachers' behaviour and practices. At this level of the schools being studied, time constraint and workload; students' intake and placement; fast pace of SFI are felt as challenging by the teachers. However, according to the more saturated data on the systemic structural disfunction it is clear that it is not the institution that causes them, but it is the broader framework, that

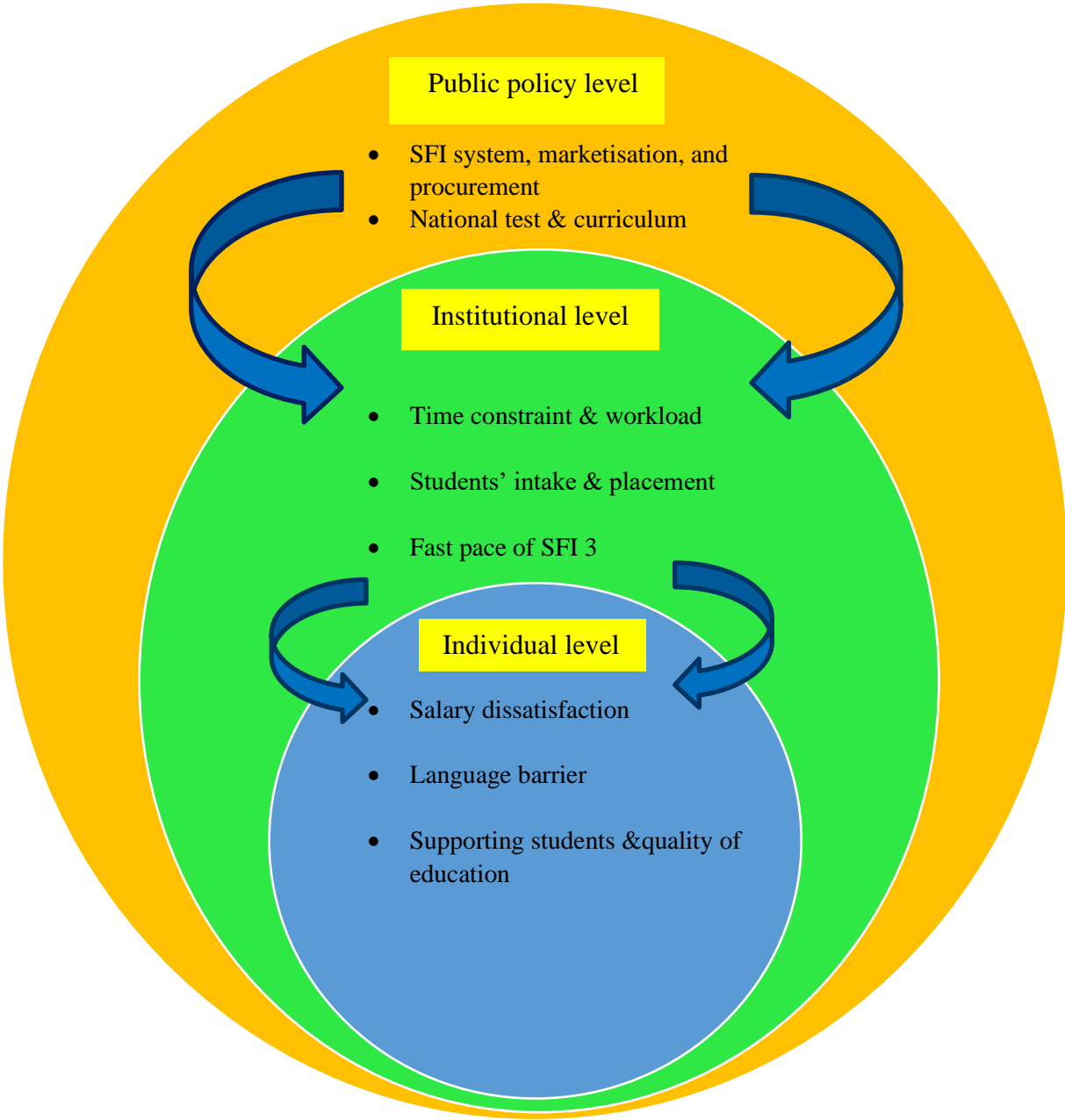
is the SFI system, which causes them. To put it in another way the SFI education system's institutional level issues were repeatedly brought up in this study by participants. But it's important to realize that these difficulties are deeply rooted into the larger SFI system, not isolated instances that just affect specific institutions. By examining and looking at the data through the lens of socio-ecological model, I was able to identify the systemic elements that contribute to these challenges. The analysis showed that the policies, and structural limitations of the SFI system influence how each institution functions, leading to common difficulties faced by SFI teachers. This perspective is consistent with earlier studies in the field, which also pointed to the structural and systemic characteristics as important causes of the difficulties SFI teachers encountered (Carlson & Jacobson,2019; Andersson & Muhrman,2022; Fejes et al., 2016).

### **4.2.3 Individual level challenges**

Attributes of a person, such as their gender, age, background, employment history, and degree of education, are considered at the individual level. Four of the teachers were native however one of the teachers was not Swedish. All the participants were qualified teachers with work experience ranging from one to seventeen years. The findings show that teachers also experience some challenges at the individual level like insufficient salary, providing support for students and quality of education, and language barrier. However, it was clear that insufficient salary, and concern about the quality of education and support for the students, are not with their own experiences but again due to the current system of SFI, and how it is organized and functions.

So, to categorize the challenges felt by teachers in relation to these three levels, I believe that all of the problems are because of the major challenge, which was identified within the macro-level, the public policy, and all the other difficulties are emerging due to the major one. Therefore, I would argue that the identified challenges in the current study overlap, and all belong to the public policy level, but some of them are experienced at the institutional level and some at the individual level. The model below depicts the overlapping interactions and relations between the elements at mutual levels.

**Figure 2. Themes organization and categorisation in relation to the Socio-ecological model (McLeroy et al., 1988)**



So, this model represents that public policy level serves the main overarching factor that impacts the other levels of socio-ecological model. The institutional level is directly influenced by public policies and regulations about the SFI and the teachers that are affected at the individual level by these regulations governing the institution. Similarly, teachers as individuals who are working in the institution are also directly impacted by their environment in which they are working.

# CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMENDATION

## 5.1 Discussion

In the following pages I will discuss the methodology applied in this study, the main findings of the study in relation to the theoretical framework, existing literature on the topic, and ultimately answer to the research questions: (1). What types of challenges do SFI 3 teachers experience? (2). How do these challenges impact teachers' practice? As indicated previously, the prospective study was designed to investigate the various types of challenges and impact of them on SFI 3 teachers in Gothenburg.

The study used a qualitative research design to investigate the difficulties faced by SFI teachers. Employing a qualitative method and making the interviews as a data collection method enabled me to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences in relation to the research problem to be explored. Furthermore, sampling strategy was suitable for capturing the precise and specific ideas and experiences that were intended to explore. By intentionally selecting SFI instructors who had had firsthand knowledge of the issues I could gain extensive and comprehensive information about the subject matter. Likewise, conducting semi structured interviews by formulating interview guides and questions guided and allowed me to have direct engagement with the teachers to elicit rich and pertinent information about their issues. To analyze the interview data, thematic analysis was adapted and guided by Lester et al., (2020). This technique, as discussed in the methodology chapter, enabled me to decipher and identify the patterns and codes. First of all, the interviews were audio recorded in phones' voice memo, and then the recordings were listened to many times and transcribed manually. By reading the transcripts repeatedly and getting more familiar with the data set later I could identify, underline and highlight the pertinent parts to categorize and code. Then patterns were classified into themes and later common themes and patterns were identified and combined to be discussed. To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the data and analysis, member checking with the participants was also done. Ethical issues, like getting approval from school administrators, seeking the participants informed consent, ensuring their confidentiality, obtaining their consent for the audio-recording of the interviews, and complying by ethical guidelines were enhanced. Recruiting participants, however, as mentioned earlier was one of the challenges of this study, therefore including more diverse perspectives of the teachers was one of the limitations of this study according to the time limitation of this study procedures. However, this study could obtain very dense and comprehensive data from the participants and effort was made to prioritize the teachers voice and reflect their perceptions and

thoughts to avoid and reduce the possibility of biasness. Furthermore, by ensuring diversity of the participants via purposive sampling, credibility and alignment with the research goals the subjective bias, validity and richness of the data was enhanced. The trustworthiness of the study was guided by incorporating Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria, such as credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability.

### **5.1.1 Types of SFI teachers' challenges in Gothenburg**

Overall, the result of the study suggests that SFI teachers in Gothenburg face substantial difficulties at the public policy level that have an impact on them and their work. Regarding the first research question, the results showed that the SFI system itself, which is heavily influenced by marketization and procurement procedure, is the most significant barrier, contrary to predictions regarding potential pedagogical issues teachers may face. The data showed that the policy level challenges contribute to difficulties experienced by teachers at the institutional level, as well as personal level. In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that privatisation and competitive system of SFI affected the stakeholders of SFI education (Beach,2004 ; Beach & Carlson, 2004; Sandwall,2010; Fejes et al., 2016 ; Carlson & Jacobson,2019; Ahlgren & Rydell,2020; Fejes & Holmqvist,2019; Andersson &Muhrman,2022 ). For instance, Fejes and Holmqvist (2019) describe the result of the marketisation, and procurement system causes instability for the staff, and conditions for teachers at public and private vendors differ. Öbrink Hobzova (2021), also revealed that the policy of personalizing SFI courses to fit the needs of students from different backgrounds, put more demands on the teachers.

According to the findings in the study, SFI system and its focus on marketisation and procurement is considered one of the overarching challenges at the public policy level for the SFI teachers and teachers are highly affected by the policies and rules in the system indeed. The flaw in the SFI system is exposing teachers to even greater pressure of doing extra overwhelming administrative tasks and constraining their time for doing their major duty as a teacher. This is in line with the findings in Carlson and Jacobson (2019), that teachers describe a system of increased workload, bureaucratization, and marginalization of pedagogy. Likewise the findings of Khong & Saito (2014) study about the second language teachers confront in the US context, showed that insufficient time for instructors to teach learners the regular curriculum and help them develop their English language skills and meeting their students' need were some of their difficulties. Marketisation and procurement of SFI also affected the Institutions in marginalizing the syllabus and curriculum and overemphasizing on the National test as the main goal of instruction and learning outcome according to one of the participants. However, this is an important issue that is in line with Sandwall,(2010) , and Carlson and Jacobson (2019) , that for the courses to compete, they need to be explicitly goal-directed and result-oriented and test results are a key component

of success evaluation and have a significant impact on classroom pedagogy. Students' intake and their placement as a challenge for the teachers also is confirmed by Carlson and Jacobson (2019).

Due to the procurement, constant student intake, and their placement was the other identified problem, which is also confirmed by the findings in Mufic and Fejes (2020) as cited in Papadopoulos (2022). This challenge was also identified as one of the public policy challenges for the preparatory teachers in Finland (Shestunova,2022).Consistent with Madalińska-Michalakand Bavli (2018) and Shestunova (2022),the results of the study also identified insufficient salary as one of the other discontents for the teachers as experienced at the personal level.

### **5.1.2 The impact of challenges on teachers' practice**

Surprisingly, no personal challenges were expressed by teachers in the study; however, they were frustrated that public policy level created other challenges which influenced the quality of instruction and support they could have provided for their students and students' learning outcome consequently. One of the participants' major complaints was doing extra bureaucratic tasks that took more of their time and energy that they could have spent on their students. Having to do administrative tasks, teachers could not spend quality time for teaching, correcting, following up their students and providing more support for the individuals. Teachers believed feeling fatigued and overwhelmed affect their work quality and leads to poor quality of education and learning outcomes. The challenge of meeting individuals needs and supporting them, was also confirmed in a study of second language teachers in Finland and Germany (Häkkinen & Mikkilä-Erdmann, 2021) and in the US context as well (Khong & Saito, 2014). What is obvious from the data, is that these problems are affecting the quality of learning outcome and alleviating these challenges will make the teachers more focused on their job as providing quality education rather than doing bureaucratic tasks.

Reflecting on the new knowledge generated by this study, it became clear that the difficulties faced by SFI professors go beyond the boundaries of certain institutions. The unique difficulties that SFI teachers encounter at the institutional and individual levels are highlighted by findings, but a more thorough investigation demonstrates that these difficulties are tightly intertwined with the whole SFI system. This realization undermines the widespread belief that institutional problems only arise within the boundaries of a specific educational environment. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the structural obstacles and regulatory constraints that affect SFI teacher practices and, ultimately, student results by exposing the systemic problems inside the SFI system. Thus, this reflection recommends a paradigm shift in approaching and addressing the problems SFI teachers face, highlighting the necessity of

comprehensive structural reforms rather than concentrating only on discrete solutions inside specific institutions. By recognizing the systemic nature of the challenges, this study encourages policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to contemplate comprehensive and transformative approaches to reforming the SFI system in order to produce more supportive environments for SFI teachers and improved educational possibilities for immigrant students.

**Table 2: Summary of the findings**

Summary of the findings	
Research questions	Generated themes
1. What types of challenges do SFI 3 teachers deal with in Gothenburg?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SFI system, marketisation &amp; procurement</li> <li>Time constraints and workload</li> <li>Students’ intake and placement</li> <li>Salary dissatisfaction</li> <li>Supporting students and quality of education</li> <li>National test and curriculum</li> <li>Language barrier</li> <li>Fast pace of SFI path 3</li> </ul>
2. How do these challenges impact the teachers’ practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not being able to provide support and meet their students’ needs.</li> <li>Reduction in the quality of education and learning outcomes</li> </ul>

**5.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study has shed important light on the numerous difficulties experienced by SFI teachers and how these difficulties affect their instructional strategies. Significant themes have been

identified that indicate the structural and systemic impediments within the SFI system through an extensive analysis of the institutional, individual, and public policy levels.

The findings highlight the necessity of a comprehensive strategy that surpasses discrete solutions and targets the root causes at the systemic level. Understanding the relationship between institutional practices, individual experiences, and policy frameworks will help us strive toward transformative changes that improve and foster inclusive and supportive learning environments for both SFI teachers and immigrant students. This study's importance goes beyond the immediate context of SFI education. It emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing the unique issues experienced by both teachers and students in a diverse educational context, and it contributes to a broader discourse on educational policies and practices for immigrant populations.

### 5.3 Implications and suggestions for further research

As was pointed out in the limitations of the study, this study aimed at giving insight to SFI teachers' challenges from their perspectives and the impact of confronted challenges on teacher's practices in Gothenburg. This study advocates for additional investigation and study of the changing difficulties of SFI education, taking into account the dynamic nature of migration patterns and educational regulations. Future research can expand on the results presented here by going into greater detail about particular subgroups of the SFI teacher population, examining the long-term effects of these challenges on teacher well-being and maintenance, and looking into effective measures to develop an educational environment that encourages the successful integration and academic achievement of immigrant students by addressing the difficulties faced by SFI teachers and working toward long-lasting improvements. Thus, the current study encourages policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to think about comprehensive and transformative approaches to enhance and improve the SFI system in order to reduce the impact of the privatization and marketization on teachers' practices and education standard and quality and create more welcoming environment for SFI teachers and better educational opportunities for immigrant students by acknowledging the systemic nature of the challenges. This would boost the general efficiency and sustainability of the SFI educational system in addition to improving the working conditions and procedures for SFI teachers that improves and ensures goal 4 of the ESD, which is quality education.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: interview guide & consent letter

Hello!

My name is Fatemeh Aghazadeh Heravi, and I am a second-year master's student of International Master programme in educational research in the department of Education and Special Education at Gothenburg University. This semester I am doing research for my master's thesis, which is about Swedish for immigrant (SFI) teachers' perspectives about the challenges of path 3.

I will focus on what are the different types of challenges that SFI teachers face with, and how do the challenges impact their practices .

I would be very grateful to you if you could assist me by participating in this study! If you want to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview for about 30-45 min about the same topic.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed to have more precise data.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without having to give any reason. If you want to cancel your participation, please contact me (heravifati@gmail.com). Your data is confidential and will be securely stored, which means it will only be handled by me and shared with my supervisor Dr Adrianna Nizinska PhD. You can get in touch with my supervisor via her mail adrianna.nizinska@gu.se in any case for further questions and confirmation. I will use a pseudonym to refer to you, and the published results will not lead back to you.

The material will only be used for the research in my master's thesis. My hope is that the results will contribute to addressing the Sfi teachers challenges and increase the learning outcome.

Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have about this study at any point via mail.

Thank you for your help.

F. Aghazadeh Heravi

I HAVE READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME..... DATE .....

SIGNATURE.....

## Appendix 2: Interview questions

### **2.1 Background information provided during the interview.**

Hello, my name is Fati, and I really thank you and appreciate again for agreeing to answer my questions. This interview will be audio recorded as you read in the consent form, and I will delete the recording immediately after I transcribe it. As you already know the purpose of this interview is to identify some of the challenges that Sfi teachers experience while teaching in Sfi path 3. The research results will be published in the Master Thesis I am working on, but your identity will remain anonymous. If at any time you feel that you are struggling to find the words in English, feel free to fill in the gaps and switch to Swedish. And please do ask for any clarifications of the questions if and whenever needed. Do you have any questions before we start? If you feel ready, shall we start now?

### **2.2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Could you please talk a little about yourself? (Name, age, nationality, educational background)
2. How long have you been working here? (Teaching at Sfi)
3. How do you like / does it feel like working as a Sfi teacher?
4. Is/ was there any specific thing or situation that caused you difficulty or challenged you? If yes?
5. Can you explain what/ why? (Was it about the students/class/ colleagues/school or administrator?)
6. What type of challenges do you think you mostly have? (With students, inside the class or institution, enrolment, placement, either with colleagues / administrator)
7. How do/did you manage / deal with them?
8. Have you received any support or help?
9. Do you think you need any type of support for dealing with these challenges? If yes!
10. Whom do you expect more support from, to address these difficulties? (Institutional support/ organizational, government & policy makers)

