

SFI - Practical Work Placement

Sweden

Language Policy



Good Practice Executive Summary

SFI (Swedish for immigrants) is a language training program for people who lack basic knowledge of Swedish. This language education is based on what influences you will get from the surrounding society, which means that while you learn the Swedish language you also study the culture life and the society in Sweden. SFI shall, as far as possible, be a way to find a job in order to support oneself.

Göteborg's Vuxenutbildning (VUX) is responsible for the municipality's overall adult education. In 2006 VUX wrote a contract with 3 different training providers, to start what today is called "Practical work placement, SFI". The reason for starting this was to find new ways to increase integration of the foreign-born immigrants in the Swedish society. It has been a known phenomenon that many of our immigrants have had major problems and difficulties in finding a job and hence entering the Swedish labor market. Moreover, the difficulty of learning the Swedish language, contributed to an involuntary alienation for many people. In this program, "Practical work placement, SFI" we will report how the program is running. This program is based on the participation of the students in the SFI-studies combined with the work-practice on a selected workplace. The aim is to gain the necessary skills both in the work-related Swedish language and from a workplace.

This program began as an experiment between 2006 -2007 and in 2007 had about 300 adult education received a vocational training place. Since this effort was successful, it was decided that Practical work placement, SFI should become a permanent working method for language studies and for continuing the integration of SFI-students. The mission was described as "developing a new rate structure with work-integrated learning within the SFI program. Sfi-teaching should in a greater extent lead to a work. This program should be characterized by an effective interaction based on a holistic approach".

This form of SFI-studies in a work placement is a full-day activity that runs for at least 30 hours per week. The language must be developed in cooperation with the workplace. This means that language learning should be stained by the profession and the workplace. At least 15 hours teaching a week is compulsory and the main part of the language training is at the school. This is the norm, but it may also be opportunities for different individual solutions to meet personal preferences. Approximately 3 months of training in a practical work placement, is considered of VUX to be an appropriate time to stay in a work placement.

The training at the work placement means that language studies is combined with practical work. The training place should be a workplace that has a

connection with either the students earlier work experience or the wish to start a new job career. This will make the studies more effective and the possible way to get a new job, much shorter.

Practical work placement, SFI, is operating after two objectives;

- **first**, after the local/regional political policy, based on, that the SFI-student shall as soon as possible, enter into the labor market in order to earn one's living and become a good tax payer
- **secondly**, the students must achieve their goals in the Swedish language training, following goals from The Swedish School Board. These goals follow the scale for the assessment of EQF, as the Council of Europe has decided.

To have a rapid entry into the labor market and getting an employment, which can also include; entry into the Swedish society with all its services and all available utilities is the ultimate solution for an immigrant. This **plus getting** increased language skills, means that this concept is considered as the fastest way to get a job.

Those immigrants who enter as refugees in Sweden will be registered in an authority IE (Immigration-Entry). From IE they will get support and financial compensation for 2 years in order to be able to enter the Swedish society. IE is working closely with various training providers engaged in SFI education. IE has a requirement that all who have come up to a certain level of language that is B-level should have working-experience from a workplace. This is compulsory to accept this offer otherwise the financial support will be withdrawn.

The uniqueness of this program and some of the reasons while this program is successful is based on;

- **The "Match"** which is to say that both the participant and the workplace have through interviews and meetings, carefully stated their wishes and preferences
- **The "Method"** meaning, to build your personal network and get more and more contacts in the labour market for the benefit of personal development but also language development

This method is built on; when the individual comes to his/her workplace they have had an profound interview with their teacher. That means they have had the opportunity to talk about preferences in the choice of profession, what skills and work experience they have, etc. The participants also completed a type of language tests that indicates on what level in the Swedish language they are.

By this Vocational training place-program the students shall be given an opportunity to find new contacts in the industry and also get a unique opportunity to build their own networks. And one may also be able to obtain references from a workplace and hopefully the benefit from the employer's

contacts. Vocational training place-program will in the future be working from a region level.

1. Reflects current EU and regional policy on multilingualism

The dossier file should confirm how the policy addresses life-long learning related to contextualised employment needs.

This education, Practical work placement, SFI is monitored and implemented by the Adult Education Authority of Göteborg. It is finally the municipalities to decide on which the priorities are, how the education budget is divided in the different regions in Sweden. Today, the work placement training is implemented in a number of different municipalities in Sweden. Practical work placement SFI, supports lifelong learning but also the mobility in the labor market since the participant becomes a professional and then can apply to various jobs in the whole of Sweden. The program is aiming at the entire Swedish labor market. From being a short-term test, this has now evolved to be a long-term form of education which has proven to be successful. The individual gets the opportunity to have an impact in the industry where he/she wants to try working.

It is obvious that the individual through this BP get drivers to enhance and further develop the language skills. Being able to master a new language and to understand and learn the social codes of the society that one lives in, is a strong example of lifelong learning. Higher language skills give of course also the possibility to continue studying at higher levels.

The strongest driver for the community is the economic benefits to society as the outcome from this method, will give. The personal benefits for the participant is the possibility to get a job and become self-supported and hence a taxpayer.

In order to successfully carry out this BP municipality annually invests around 30 million SEK.

There are no special interests in this program, nor are certain sectors or parts of the labor market to be prioritised. In contrast, the society has gradually become aware that it is important that the "migrant workers" will "join" into the society and become active earners, taxpayers and society members.

Results.

After the first successful but modest, introductory year 2006, this activity has increased in scale and in 2009 was about 2500 people engaged in this program, of which around 530 persons got a permanent job.

Number of individuals each year, engaged in this program;

Year	Career	Total	enrollment
2007	350	1300	
2008	400	1900	
2009	530	2500	

2. Includes incentives to enhance and sustain language learner motivation and employment benefits

In this best practice, the targets for increased incentives and motivation and a possible employability of the students, are as follows;

- Above all, you are able to make your own active choice
- Get a possibility to show ones work experience
- Can come to one´s own selected workplace
- Employability increases
- The time for learning will decrease
- Get experience from another "new" (for individuals) interests, and hence search for another vocational training

The participant´s motivation increases when the student is given the opportunity to influence the choice of a selected vocational training place and even a future job. One can take into account the thoughts, "which workplace has the best future need to hire workers"? This may contribute to the choice of a employment as the student finally does.

It is also important for the language studies, that as far as possible, the studies should be adapted to the language that gives success in the labor market. The language to be used in a meaningful context, and language studies conducted in school should be tailored to the workplace needs. The language must be industry-tailored, which means that the language used in that particular industry, such as the construction industry is the language that the school shall teach. This will provide increased opportunities for entry into the labor market. Gradually, the individual has the listening comprehension, reading comprehension, etc. that is demanded in the specific job.

This program, Practical work placement, SFI is implemented in workplaces that has been quality-assured and personalized as approved as **integration sites**.

Purpose;

- **Early** be able to use the Swedish language in a meaningful context
- Get to know the **participation of a work-team**
- Get an early **glimpse** of a Swedish society and work-life
- Maintain and develop a professional interest or **professional skill**
- Faster achieve **self-support**

The individuals will also get a general insight into the Swedish society and working life. You learn what the cultural codes are. What am I expected to understand of the social and informal requirements in the labor-market? The idea is to get the student "*hooked on learning*" and to give the student the feeling, "*that one earned euro is better than a well-fare euro*".

The Adult Education Authority (VUX) in Göteborg has developed **guidelines** to be used for accepting a job as an integration site. These guidelines are outlining the requirements for an integration site/work placement.

The guidelines are;

- **The purpose** must be known, understood and accepted by management and co-workers and the union. It may not be used if there is a risk that regular needed employment will be pushed aside.
- A written **integration agreement** according to stipulated forms shall be established.
- A **supervisor** must be voluntarily appointed and made offered a supervisor-education.
- A **plan for the introduction** shall be made
- Good opportunities for **communication** must be available.
- Official **name badge** will be borne by the integration site owner
- Vocational training place must be well **matched** against the holder's study planning
- Opportunities for teachers and coaches to locate parts of their **working time** in the practical work placement shall be offered
- Opportunities for systematic **monitoring** of the practical work placement should be possible and the work placement has to as accept to participate in the evaluation of the language training

Finally, it is important to point out that the practical work placement must provide a language development environment and not in any way may be an option to get free labor.

3. Reflects regional strategy for employability and intercultural benefits

The strategy behind this mission that is based on learning the Swedish language and integrate into Swedish society, is as follows;

- "Develop a new course structure with work-integrated learning within the SFI program. SFI-teaching should to a greater extent lead to work that ends up in self-supporting. Work is characterized by an effective interaction based on a holistic approach".
- This program "practical work placement, SFI" turns to all kinds of businesses, both large and small
- Naturally the career prospects are significantly related to the language-level the person, in question has. If your language skills are improving all training possibilities are leading to opportunities for higher studies.
- All teaching takes place according to the Swedish national language requirements and examinations are carried out after the levels have been reached

The assignment of a vocational training place must follow the guideline and the management from the community. The rules that must be followed are;

- To look for a good integration has to start with a **matching** against a suitable location
- This matching has to **be checked** against the wishes both from the participant and the employer
- An **Appointment Meeting** will be held: where a **reconciliation of the conditions, opportunities, objectives and expectations from all partners has to be done**. Will the partners agree, an agreement contract will be signed and **a tutor in practical work placement is chosen**
- **Vocational training starts!** The teacher follows the trainee to the practical work placement
- **Monitoring!** Continuous monitoring from the teacher, tutor and trainee
- **Finish**

Gothenburg municipal adult education, has through its guidelines clearly demonstrated how the employer and the coach will work together on the participant's integration.

The participant who comes to the practical work placement must first have been evaluated in language skills. In this context, an **individual study plan** is settled. In this study plan, a description of the student's background, objectives and prerequisites should be made in order to be able to find the most suitable work-placement for each individual. (See above the **match**) From these assumptions the coach makes a "matching", by among other ways, looking for a suitable placement in an existing "workplace bank". Once you have found a suitable integration place the trainee with his coach, shall come for a meeting, at the intended practical work placement. If all given requirements and prerequisites are fulfilled and the practical work placement is confirmed, an agreement is settled and a tutor is chosen. The coach will visit and continuously follow up how the trainee is doing.

When training time is over the participant will get a certificate of “completion of practical experience”. Language education shall be completed at school when the participant has achieved the desired rating level.

If the individual has been employed at practical work placement the school try to adapt teaching to the times that are appropriate for the student. For example the availability of evening education has increased markedly in recent years. Much depends on practical work placement SFI.

4. Addresses local language minority and migrant community language resources

It is a little harder with the employability of minority languages. What has proven to be a solution is that there might be employment opportunities among the big companies in the Gothenburg region, such as Volvo, SKF, Astra Zeneca, etc. If a person comes to Sweden and have fairly high education, at best an academic education from one's home country and speak a minority language, one can get an employment as a kind of expert or specialist. That means if the individual has specialist skills in the form of both high education and unique language skills. For example, pharmaceutical companies have hired people based on those grounds.

The project with the practical work placement, SFI facilitates the ability to make such a match and find the right people. This is possible due to this detailed personal action plan for each participant, that has been mentioned above, and then matched against an employer's needs.

What can be mentioned is that when Volvo Car had a French majority owner, the number of French language courses in the municipality increased. The French school for children and youth, multiplied the number of classes with a French education.

5. Provides for international networking and/or mobility

The practical work placement, SFI trusts to train a new language in the workplace and the teaching parallel in school. The basic idea is that the language teaching must be related to workplace language, because this language will support the person's inclusion in the society.

Since many immigrants bring with them their international networks from their former home countries, the Swedish society will get much more international influences. Integration of many people with immigrant origin has to be included in its context and community, both physically in their own housings and in other means in different societies and organizations together with their compatriots. Based on these groupings many new networks have been created which also has led to many new jobs.

Teachers who are teaching in the language in this program has a clear mandate to deploy elements of (or all) the education to the work placement, where Swedish has to be the main spoken language. This is the requirement that VUX has. The employer shall provide adequate teaching facilities and create good opportunities for the integration of language teaching. This must be understood by the employer according to the guidelines that have been signed.

In order to facilitate studies Göteborg municipality has created 4 different training centers so-called "learning centers" in various neighborhoods in the city. In these places there are various opportunities to study digital both during the daytime but also at night. In this so called Lärcentrum there are also organized various training courses in cooperation between the local business community and adult education administration. Most of these programs are so-called blended learning ie they are based on a combination of instructor led classroom training with digital elements.

6. Incorporates the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) with transparent validation/ credits

All SFI teaching conducted by the Adult Education Authority of Göteborg, follows the guidance given in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). We work with the same assessment levels ranging from A to D level. The language material used has also been developed to comply with these guidelines.

This program can demonstrate that an interaction both from educational- and from business side, can find ways that benefits both parties. But above all, this will be an active support for the individual student to be able to enter the labor market.

Sweden has not been successful in its efforts to integrate our immigrants, mainly due to that our language from a (Germanic languages strain) is difficult to learn especially for those from Arabic-speaking areas. Therefore, this method is very important to increase opportunities for access to the Swedish labor market.

7. Can be readily & usefully implemented

The target audience for this BP is immigrant adults who shall be integrated into a new and different society, where especially the learning of the Swedish language is for many, a major obstacle.

This method “practical work placement, SFI” should easily be able to be implemented in different countries and with different language groups. The main objective is to work for a regular dialogue with the labor market and to coordinate the wishes and needs that can be noted. At the same time, the students should be given the opportunity to influence its entry into the labor market.

The "key elements" that are important for having a successful integration;

- Mapping
- Coaching
- Matching
- Integration Location
- Monitoring / Review
- Activity Reconciliation

The match is a success factor.

By offering, people who want to enter the labor market, practical work placement the visibility of the job-requirements that the employer has, becomes very clear.

The broad and basic identification of an individual's skills and preferences and the wishes from an employer, makes” the matching” one of the success factors in this program.

8. Transferability assessment

Transferability is totally dependent on political will and political decisions. The authorities in Sweden and Gothenburg are willing to financially support the practical work placement -program, because they are convinced that this leads to inclusion, employment and self-sufficiency without dependence on subsidies from society.

If the corresponding political will exists in other countries, the prerequisites in all European countries to implement the concept should be of no problem. This method works for immigrants, regardless of educational background. Low-skilled immigrants can have a good start in the new country, while high-skilled immigrants can have a good chance to get a qualifying work in companies with contacts in the old country. Mother tongue is a competitive factor in relation to other actors who do not have an equivalent qualification.

Each society must make its own calculus, but the benefits are obvious to all parties.

*References; The Adult education Authority of Göteborg, Sweden
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