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## **Shortening the Path to the Swedish Labor Market**

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**Identifying connections in the action net renewed by Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland's efforts to improve, strengthen and expand programs for foreign academics**

## Summary

In 2009, *Länsstyrelsen* Västra Götaland started Projekt Utländska Akademiker (PUA) to attempt to, not only shorten the path for foreign academics in joining the Swedish labor market, but to make the process more coherent, cohesive and financially stable. In order to do this, they opened the existing action net, which had at its core, the labor market geared supplementary education commissioned by *Arbetsförmedlingen* called *Korta Vägen*. There were three areas of focus: accessibility of information, improvements to the core program, and creating a model that could be implemented nationally.

Looking at the interaction through the action net perspective, it was easier to see which connections were necessary to succeed in this endeavour. Because the action net was opened up, it was possible for more connections between collective actions to be achieved. However, missing connections still remain due to the lack of collective actions.

The concern for lack of sustainability resulted in the translation of the model of a shorter pathway to the labor market in Sweden for foreign academics. The efforts made by *Länsstyrelsen*, and later Saco, resulted in gaining attention from politicians and policy makers. An additional benefit from the attention was the mimetic connection that led to the spread of the concept and the widening of the action net.

Key words: Action net, mimetic connections, *Arbetsförmedlingen*, *Länsstyrelsen*, foreign academics, *Korta Vägen*

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# 1 Introduction

Immigrants have come to Sweden over the years for a wide range of reasons. Increasingly, more come as refugees and asylum seekers as a result of tragedy and hardships in their homelands and are often joined later by family members. Others come for work or education and decide to stay. In addition, many come to join Swedish partners (so-called “love immigrants”) or come with a partner who has come for work (trailing partners). Whatever reason brings them to Sweden, many find themselves trying to navigate a sea of regulations and customs in an effort to build a new life. The immigrant group I will focus on in this paper is the foreign academic, which, for the purpose of this thesis refers to those that have a university degree and some years of experience in their field.

Approximately one third of immigrants that are granted a residence permit each year in Sweden have an academic degree from their homeland and many of them with years of experience in their professions as well. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2009, p.1). Many issues they face are those shared with all immigrants. In a 2003 report by *Högskoleverket* (Swedish College Board, now replaced by *Universitets- och högskolerådet*) several factors have been found to contribute to the long path to relevant work, such as:

“...long and uncertain waiting time for a decision on residency, unsuitable municipality placement from a career point of view, lack of municipality introduction and *sfi* education, getting previous academic merits evaluated as well as lack of recognition of skills acquired in another country meaning that people are referred to unskilled jobs and education at a level too low for them” (Högskoleverket annual report 2003 cited in Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2009, p 2).

The number of immigrants with a foreign post-secondary education, particularly in the areas of technology, economy, humanities, science, medicine and art, increases by 4500 to 10,000 people each year (Högskoleverket 2010, p. 65). However, the average time it takes from the moment a newly arrived immigrant is registered to the moment they are working can be over 5 years for men and 10 years for women (Mipex cited in RiR 2011:16, p 13). Even after as much as 10-19 years after arriving in Sweden, only half foreign born academics have found work in the field they were trained for. (Andersson, J. and Lundström, K. 2010 cited in RiR 2011:16) The fact that this circa 50% is significantly lower than their Swedish born

counterparts, which is circa 80% (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 7) and have a higher rate of unemployment, work more part-time jobs, work without a permanent contract and are more often overqualified for the positions they hold (RiR 2011:16 p 14) shows that there is much to be done to level the playing field.

Before these items were addressed there had to be a realization and recognition of the value of the skills and experience that these foreign academics have and how they can contribute. Utilizing the skills of many of the new immigrants to Sweden with post-secondary education and often many years of experience in their field would be beneficial to Swedish society considering the large percentage of people entering retirement and the generation gap in the job market (RiR 2011:16, p 14). Done successfully, this could lead to many positive benefits for both the immigrants and Swedish society if they are given the opportunity to thrive and contribute to their own success and the success of the society as a whole.

Sweden's difficulty to come up with a sufficiently effective system to get foreign academics into employment, that meets their education as soon as possible, has resulted in a waste of human resources as well as a waste of the society's resources due to large amount of benefits paid to people that are at risk of being dependent on public benefits (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p 7). These long waiting times and unclear messages lead to a loss of motivation (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2009, p. 1).

This issue has gotten more attention in recent years, prompting a review from *Riksrevisionen* (The National Audit Office) review, which was an evaluation of the government's control and monitoring, as well as the government agencies' implementation of educational initiatives aimed at utilizing the skills and education of foreign academics. The evaluation, conducted between 2008 and 2010, reviewed the government, *Högskoleverket*, *Socialstyrelsen* (The National Board of Health and Welfare), *Länsstyrelserna* as well as colleges that, by direction of the government, arranged supplementary college educational programs for people with a foreign post-secondary education. The review followed the basic question "Is government action in education efficient and effective in order to enable graduates with foreign education to establish themselves in the Swedish labor market in accordance with their level of education?" (RiR 2011:16, p 9).

All of the coordinating efforts presented in this case study have one aspect in common and that is to ensure that foreign academics have the opportunity to take part in supplementary courses that are tailored to both the needs of the foreign academics and the demand of the

labor market (RiR 2011:16, p104). Skills enhancement is necessary for foreign academics to find their place in the Swedish labor market in a position that matches their education, including Swedish language instruction, which starts with *sfi* and some form of college level work enhancement (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2009). These are handled generally by different authorities. Primarily, it is the municipalities that deal with the administration of *sfi*, which is for adult education and supplementary education is handled by colleges, vocational colleges and other adult learning centers (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2009).

It should be a well-integrated system that encompasses the whole path from timely mapping, assessment and guidance to employment through occupation geared, individually tailored study in Swedish and eventual supplementing of education and internships (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2009).

In a pilot project, *Länsstyrelsen* (The County Administrative Board of) Västra Götaland gathered representatives from the partner organizations and authorities. They discussed many of the issues presented above and the conclusion they arrived at was that the following four issues needed to be addressed and thus served as a basis for Project Utländska Akademiker: a lack of a cohesive system, from early mapping to individuals in employment; no official common structure - the prospective should be widened from separate and disseminated initiatives to a well-integrated system; too few educational initiatives and those that exist need further development and need to be made more accessible; initiatives for newcomer foreign academics should be regular procedure, in other words, there should be a permanent organization and financing in place and be a part of the normal receiving and introduction process (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012).

The above points formed the basis for Projekt Utländska Akademiker (Project for Foreign Academics) which was led by the department for integration and social sustainability at *Länsstyrelsen* Västra Götaland. Henceforth I will refer to the project with the Abbreviation for the original Swedish name, PUA.

The actions involved in PUA were aimed at improving the organizing that leads to making Sure that Foreign Academics take the steps needed to get them on the right path. The main focus of the pathway is the concept of labor market based supplementary training programs, such as those commissioned by *Arbetsförmedlingen* (Swedish Public Employment Service). Often the problem lies with the foreign academic not getting the right information pertaining to such programs as well as not getting into an *sfi* program that takes their post-secondary

education into account.

PUA was studied from the perspective of organizing in action nets (Czarniawska, 2004) and how the actions in PUA both pre-existing and those added have been connected to strengthen the existing action net bounded to the pathway to employment of foreign academics in the Swedish labor market.

The purpose of this case study is to identify the attempts made in Projekt Utländska Akademiker (PUA) to improve, strengthen and expand on the connections between education programs, municipalities and other authorities to shorten the path to employment in Sweden for foreign academics. In additions to identifying the attempted connections, with varying degrees of success, this thesis will identify successful connections and missing connections, both addressed and not addressed in PUA that may or may not have contributed to the success of the action net in Västra Götaland. The following question only became apparent while writing the empirical and analytical sections of thesis, however I mention them here so that they can guide the reader through the thesis:

1. What actions and actants were added in the three main areas of focus of the pathway: Accessible information, improvements to the labor market geared programs and working toward a permanent national model and what the result of these actions were. and has there been added value because of it.
2. What connections were made and between whom/what?
3. What are the results of those connections?
4. Are there still any missing connections?



## **2 Theory**

The theoretical perspective for this case study is the concept of organizing in action nets, a term coined by Barbara Czarniawska (2004).

### **2.1 Action Nets**

By looking at the efforts to expand and strengthen the pathway for foreign academics to the Swedish labor market in PUA through the perspective of an action net, one can observe the actions performed by the actants in the attempt to organize and contribute to its quest for a permanent solution to the issue of the slow path that many foreign academics find themselves on. The issues of immigration and unemployment, both which are at core of the problem have been more and more frequently highlighted which gives it the momentum to succeed, because, as said by Czarniawska (2009(a), p 427), “As long as a problem is the focus of attention, all the ideas that can be related to it have a greater chance of being realized. All existing actions that can be represented as being coupled with it have a greater chance of being legitimized.”

The action net approach looks at the actions that occur before the organization or network existed (Czarniawska 2009a) to see how they have evolved. In such a study one needs to discover “what is being done, and how does this connect to other things that are being done in the same context?” (Czarniawska 2004, p. 784) rather than focusing on ‘who is doing what?’. The collective actions that make up the action net can encompass a variety of “organizations or groups of people organized loosely or temporarily” rather than the confines of just one organization (Czarniawska 2009b, p. 1).

### **2.2 Action nets and Actor networks**

Barbara Czarniawska (2004) introduced the concept of action nets which grew out of both actor-network theory (Latour 1986) and new institutional theory (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). The ideas from Powell and DiMaggio was the concept that “it is possible in every time and place to speak of a prevailing institutional order, in the sense of an arrangement of institutions that dictates which actions, by convention, should be tied together” (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 8).

Czarniawska's (2008 p. 18) story of the relationship between a university and its cleaning companies illustrates the "actual" and "virtual" connections in action nets made by these organizations that exist in different organizational fields, yet may have direct influence on each other: "A university must contract one or several cleaning firms, but cleaning firms do not belong to the organization field of higher education. Yet a cleaning firm on strike will seriously disturb the functioning of any university. The notion of action net permits the capture of both actual and virtual connections; there is no reason to differentiate between them a priori."

Before one becomes an actor they are an actant, or "that which accomplishes or undergoes an act" according to Greimas and Courtés (1982) cited in (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 8). The actant can be both human and non-human, from animals and objects to concepts, which have the potential to "acquire a character and become an actor or may remain an object of some actor's action" (Czarniawska 2009a, p. 425) depending on whether or not the actant has shown a "proven ability to act that way" (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 8). At the point when an actor-network forms, as a result of the actants' roles having been established due to stabilizing connections, the potential for the creation of macro-actors exists. " 'Actors' , 'organizations' and 'networks' can be seen in this way as the products or stabilized effects of organizing activities rather than something that exists a priori" (Porsander 2005, p. 18).

### **2.3 Action nets and organizing**

The best point to study action nets is either when it is being constructed or reconstructed (Czarniawska 2004, p 782) or when questions arise, when it is "being scrutinized rather than taken for granted." This allows for a clearer view of how "collective actions are tested, repeated, or dropped, connected, with connections dissolving or stabilized and actors forming as a result" (Czarniawska 2008, p 25). This implies a point before it has begun to stabilize. Czarniawska (2004) highlights that, one gets a "more comprehensive picture of how organizations are formed, stabilized, dissolved or relocated" by viewing the action net as a whole rather than studying the separate parts and their contacts with each other (Czarniawska 2004, p 783).

Organizational studies must start with the actions rather than the actors or actants in an action net perspective because "a change in actors or a loss of an individual actor will decisively alter the character of the network, whereas a similar event in an action net, however

important it may be, will change the net only slightly” (Czarniawska, 1997 cited in Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p 294).

#### **2.4 Boundary objects and procedures**

When studying an action net, one can look for the boundary object that the actions have in common. The actants are connected to the boundary objects by their common engagement for the objects even though it may have a different meaning for each actant. This connection is one form of translation in the action net. “The creation and management of boundary objects is a key process in developing and maintaining coherence across intersecting social worlds.” (Star & Griesemer 1989 cited in Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p 295). Often the concept or model can be “turned into an object that could travel in time and space carrying unchanged information” (Latour 1998 cited in Lindberg 2002, p 189) “and packaged to appear as recognizable by using established practice, and as unique in its combination of practices...that permitted the travel of the model and the expansion of the action net.” (Lindberg 2002, p 189)

One can also speak of boundary procedures, which, like the boundary objects, “acquire different meaning for different actors while themselves remaining unchanged” (Lindberg, 2002). Both boundary objects and procedures “act as stabilizers in an action net.” (Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p 295)

#### **2.5 Translations and connections**

The notion of translation, studied by Bruno Latour (1986) who developed it from the philosophy of Michel Serres, deals with transformation of some kind, be it linguistic translation between planners and users, or the translation of “objects, images and action,” whereby “words can be translated into objects or into actions” (Czarniawska, 2000 cited in Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p 295). According to Czarniawska, “It may involve displacing something, or the act of substitution; it always involves transformation. Consequently, that which is involved in translation — be it knowledge, people, or things — has an uncertain identity. Each act of translation changes the translator and what is translated” (Czarniawska 2009a, p 424). At the same time that translation takes on new meaning as it moves from one situation to another, it also must become something.

“A practice or an institution cannot travel; it must be simplified and abstracted into an idea, or at least approximated in a narrative permitting a vicarious

experience, therefore converted into words or images. Neither can words and images travel until they have materialized, until they are embodied or objectified” (Czarniawska 2009a, p 425).

Studying action nets is about studying the organizing going on in order to work towards a common goal, or boundary object, which can take place within an already stabilized organization or between several. The collective actions involved are held together by connections which are achieved through “translating the conditions of one collective action into those of another” (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 8). It can be a matter of cooperation, or “the connection can rest on the introduction of a new artifact” (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 8) “Connections can be established by individual human action,” which can be represented, for example by individual passing on the information by word of mouth or “mediated by long chains of actants, human or non-human.” (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 8)

“Objects—things or technologies—are necessary if durable social connections are to be achieved...” (Latour 1992 cited in Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p. 304). According to Zapata Campos and Zapata (2012, p. 327), translation is “the process whereby collective actions are connected to each other.” Through translation, some local actions can become translocal when they are connected to other actions and repeated in other locations (Czarniawska 2008, p 31).

“Imitation and innovation can both be regarded as cases of translation, while actions and the connections between them may be regarded in terms of the interplay between various efforts at controlling and influencing unforeseen events” (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996 cited in Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p 295).

## **2.6 Isomorphism and Mimetic connecting**

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), there are three main types of isomorphism: coercive, normative and mimetic. Coercive isomorphism is the result of political influence, while normative isomorphism is the result of professionalization (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Lindberg and Czarniawska (2006) propose that the cooperation element often associated and enforced with coercive and normative isomorphism can, not only, hinder cooperation, but can “in fact maintain the separation between organizations and their work activities.” They found that imitation was more conducive to cooperation and should be given

more focus when managing inter-organizational activities. (Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p. 305)

The mimetic connecting of actions is facilitated by the fact that people may be more open to the words, actions or symbols that will be “reinterpreted and redesigned” (Lindberg 2002, p 189). “Mimesis...does allow a field to be structured by loose connections between actions. Loose connections may be as sustainable and stable as tight connections (Granovetter 1973 cited in Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p 304). They may also be easier to achieve because they do not threaten established structures” (Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p 304).

## **2.7 Stabilization into institutionalization**

It is the stabilization of the actions that have been connected through translation that can lead into institutionalization or as simply stated by Czarniawska (2009b) “Institutions begin with some people doing something, then repeating it, and then joining what they do to what others do or have done” (Czarniawska 2009b, p 2). However action nets, “even strongly institutionalized ones, are constantly remade and renewed” (Czarniawska 2004, p 784) yet they can still “hold in ways that resist tractions and pressure to forces of deformation and displacement” (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 8).

One should “study organizing as the connection, re-connection, and disconnection of various collective actions to each other, either according to patterns dictated by a given institutional order or in an innovative way. Such collective actions need not be performed within the bounds of a formal organization...an action net can involve actions performed by several formal organizations or by assemblies of human and non-human actants. The actions can be connected loosely or temporarily” (Czarniawska 2010, pp.154-155).

### 3 Methodology

This is a case study of the project from *Länsstyrelsen* Västra Götaland department social sustainability. I approached it from the perspective of organizing in action nets. Initially, I tried to find different programs that tried to address the issue of foreign academics and their difficulties in gaining employment. I found three similar programs: *Korta Vägen*(The Short Path), Aspirant Utbildning and Invandrarakademin at Högskolan Borås. I found that in Gothenburg there was a project that had just ended, linked to *Korta Vägen*, which looked at the whole picture, from how they were informed about the project to what they would do. It had the elements that I felt needed to be addressed.

I started the empirical research into the situation for foreign academics, and what obstacles they faced, when trying to find employment in the profession they practiced in their countries of origin. My literature review consisted of articles on foreign academics in Sweden and abroad; information on national and local government directives and initiatives for immigrants and a national review on activities for foreign academics. Once I had chosen PUA as project for my case study, I read the ESF application, PUA project report (which was completed while I was doing my interviews) and the web portal [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se), as well as other documents pertaining to PUA and other labor market geared supplementary education programs.

I chose the theoretical framework based on the program that I chose to study, because the focus was very much on the importance of the cooperation of various authorities and organizations. For this reason, I chose to study the organizing and reorganizing in action nets that has occurred. For my theoretical literature review, I looked at articles not only relating to actions nets, but earlier studies of Actor-Network theory and organizing.

This project was very much about different organizations working together for one purpose, or boundary object, (Czarniawska and Lindberg 2006) which was the pathway to the labor market in Sweden. It was more about a concept and the actions dedicated to that concept rather than a group of people selected to act. It was the organizing of these activities that intrigued me and led me to the action net perspective when studying this case.

With the concept of Action Nets as a guide, I decided conduct my qualitative field study by interviewing the members of the action net. To me that meant both the directors and

administrators of several of the organizations and authorities involved as well as the foreign academics. For the first set of interviews with directors and administrators of the various organizations, I devised a list of questions to see what perspective each of the organizations had, how involved they were in this particular project, the knowledge and use of the website. I also had questions that pertained to the coordination of actants and the actions that connected them. In addition, I asked them if they thought any aspect was missing among the actions. This allowed me to get a better picture of what they felt they were offering. The interviews were semi structured, to allow for stories and their own impressions to come through.

From the answers to these questions for the PUA partners, I formulated the questions for the foreign academics. I wanted to find out if their perception of the actions matched the perception of the administrators and directors. I wanted to see if they felt they were working with the other actants. I also wanted to see if the efforts made for making the web portal, to get the message out, were really working.

I chose to look at two geographical areas, Gothenburg and Borås, for the interviews. I chose these two areas because I wanted to see what differences in actions could be seen between a large city and a small one.

Throughout the thesis, I discuss “labor market based education program such as *Korta Vägen*,” however, it was the coordination of *Korta Vägen* programs that was the basis for PUA. The foreign academics interviewed were all *Korta Vägen* participants (though, for the duration of PUA, Högskolan Borås referred to the *Korta Vägen* programs as PUA).

For the study participants that were involved in the planning of the project (PUA) and the labor geared programs, I chose a variety of partners in the program such as the Project leader: Alexander Oskarsson ( *Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland*; *Arbetsförmedlingen* caseworkers and administrators: Jack Jarschild ( came up with concept for labor market geared supplementary education , now retired), to Eva Karklins and Slavica Lundgren (caseworkers for medical professionals), Arne Nyrén ( caseworker for engineers and technicians) and Lennart Svanberg (general caseworker in Borås for foreign academics) *Korta Vägen* program directors: Lundgren ( UTI), Carlander ( *Korta Vägen* Folkunisverstitet) Annika Malm and LG Forslund (Borås college); University program representatives that run programs necessary for some regulated professions: Pernilla (program for health care professionals at GU), Samuel Heimann (equal opportunity department GU)

I prepared some questions in advance and altered some when deemed necessary during the interview. I started with the partners in the project. I wanted to see how they worked together, what they thought were the successes and what needed to be improved, Whom they worked with and whom they thought was missing. After reading the ESF grant application (the study was finished, but the final project report was not available when I had started the interviews) and spoke with the Project leader to get a basic idea of what it was about, I saw that already that the spreading of the information was an important aspect, and as a reflection of that they tried to set up a web portal. I wanted to see the level of success of the web portal so I asked the partners how the foreign academics found the programs. I asked about their feelings about integration factors in as a measure of success for the programs, not to determine whether there was successful integration, but rather to see if this was part of the motivation on their part for the programs. I also asked them each what the goal of the project was to get an idea of what they might be focusing on.

For the foreign academics interviews, I felt it was important to get a range of professions so I interviewed 2 in a medical profession, 2 teachers (regulated work) and 1 economist (non-regulated profession), 1 artist (non-regulated profession).

It was also important to interview people with various reasons for coming to Sweden, so I used discriminate sampling. Two came to Sweden as refugees (one was a quota refugee and one was an asylum seeker( Iman and Ahmad); one came to study and decided to stay (Nazila); three were love immigrants (Samantha, Khatol and Alexandra) and one was a trailing spouse (Elizabeth). Most study participants were recommended by directors at *Korta Vägen* programs in Gothenburg and Borås and I came into contact with other foreign academics to interview while in the process of conducting my field study. For the purpose of anonymity of the foreign academics, I have chosen to use only first names.

The interviews were verbal with the exception of two written questionnaires with the same questions as with the interviews. The interviews were done in Swedish with the exception of one that was done in English. They were recorded and translated by me with the help of online translation sites and advice from native speakers. The verbal interviews allowed more flexibility in the questions. I did take notes on visual cues one could not get from the recordings or questionnaire.

After the field study was complete, I reviewed the material to look for consistent opinions and compared it to the empirical literature review. I created a table of actions and their



connections ( see Appendix 4) so that I could get an overview of which actions connected the actants. My Interpretation of the interviews and empirical data reflects the use of action nets I saw in the project and my discussions center around the connection necessary for the sustainability of the local action net, either through national or local actions.

## 4 Empirical

In this narrative of the Projekt Utländska Akademiker, I present the program from the point of view of those involved. The resources from this section come primarily from interviews of the partners, the foreign academics and from the ESF application and final report of the project and its appendices.

### 4.1 Project Utländska Akademiker

#### 4.1.1 *Korta Vägen* as a basis

The basic rationale, which was the driving force behind the project, was that a quicker entrance into the work force by foreign academics is essential to giving them a fair chance in the labor market. This should be facilitated by timely access to initiatives that will shorten the process, such as early assessment of credentials, good supplementary education and access to relevant internships. These efforts to shorten the process will help keep motivation high and not lead to a loss in relevant skills due to being away from their profession for an unnecessarily long period of time.

During PUA the action net that was in existence supported the *Korta Vägen* programs that were primarily made up of actions by *Arbetsförmedlingen* and educational sites already in existence in Västra Götaland (county is West Sweden) which began long before the ESF application for the project. The action net was open to add elements that would better facilitate continuity and sustainability. PUA was a continuation of efforts of Jack Jarschild from the *Arbetsförmedlingen* (Swedish Public Employment Service) who spent nearly the last 8 years of his 35 years with *Arbetsförmedlingen* completely with integration. Jack Jarschild was instrumental in creating the *Korta Vägen* programs commissioned by the *Arbetsförmedlingen*. His basic assumptions on foreign academics, which are the same as the project leaders of PUA, have guided the development of programs aimed at them finding work in Sweden. The assumption is that those that come from other countries with an academic degree often have a good basic education, but what they don't have is the Swedish language or skills of how the Swedish labor market works such as project skills, knowledge

of labor laws, etc. It is about giving them a chance to succeed in the labor market, according to Jarschild. They need to be given the tools to compete. “They need to be supplemented with that which gives them a job, nothing else...everything else is unnecessary” (Jarschild).

It was with this mindset that the program *Utländska Tekniker och Ingenörer* (UTI) was developed in 2001 and started in 2002 which was aimed at the specific needs of technicians and engineers to enter the labor market. Similar projects that were happening at the same were *Invandrarakademien* (Immigrant Academy) at *Högskolan Borås* (Borås College) and the *Läkarlegitimation* program run by Region Västra Götaland. It was felt that the cooperation and development of such programs would be highly beneficial and would be strengthened if joined together. In 2005, *Arbetsförmedlingen* in Västra Götaland joined these together in a project, partially subsidized by the EU, called *Korta den Langa Vägen* (shorten the long path) which was shortened to *Korta Vägen* ( the short path). “*Korta Vägen* can be described in many ways: as an educational concept, a labor market educational program and a way to organize and finance initiatives for immigrant academics establishing themselves in the labor market” (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 16)

The number of programs in the project increased as other colleges took on the concept, including a highly successful program for economists that started at Gothenburg University in 2008. Arne Nyrèn, who started a few years *Arbetsförmedlingen* the UTI started, has worked with foreign academics who are technicians and engineers for many years as a caseworker at *Arbetsförmedlingen*. When these people come to *Arbetsförmedlingen* they are referred to him so that he can explore their options with them and if he feels they are right for the program, he then refers them to UTI. After seeing the success of UTI, Jack Jarschild, described by Arne Nyrèn as “someone who dared,” felt that such a program for economists would be beneficial as well and Nyrèn researched the possibilities.

In cooperation with GU Handelshögskolan, they started a similar program for economists. They had learned from UTI that they need to tailor the education to the specific needs of the labor market and thus decided to focus the economists program to accounting and audits because there is where most available jobs are. On commission from *Arbetsförmedlingen*, GU tailored the courses they had to the needs of the foreign academic. They decided not to offer finance or marketing in the program because of the lack of these positions. “It is better to gear the program to the parts of the labor market with the most chance of a job and the possibility for an internship” (Nyrèn). They need perhaps to be satisfied with doing simple audits and

simple mechanical jobs to start out with and build their way up, but it is still shorter with the labor market geared programs (Nyrèn). However the concept of adapting it to the labor market needs has led to arguments of potential inequality to foreign academics during times of labor surplus.

When the *Korta Vägen* EU project ended, the six specifically labor market geared programs involved became a part of the regular (however not permanent) activities commissioned by *Arbetsförmedlingen* at the colleges and university involved. Prior to the start of PUA, *Korta Vägen* was run by the local Länsarbetsnämnde (County Labor Board), but in 2008, their activities became centralized and Jarschild felt that these issues would be best addressed at the local level and thus formed the basis for the project idea. He asked administrators at Länsstyrelsen (County Administrative Board) Västra Götaland to take on the project, which would be partially funded by EU grants, as it fits this authority's responsibility for the coordination of efforts for immigrants. This project, to be partially funded by the EU, and *Länsstyrelsen* Västra Götaland became the lead partner for PUA. During the pilot project for PUA, the key hindrances to success for such labor market oriented programs were discussed; three issues stood out: getting the information to the target group regarding their options, continued improvement of the programs, the need for permanence and cohesion of such programs throughout Sweden.

*Korta Vägen* can be seen as the main focal point of PUA as all activities are geared to the awareness, development and the sustainability of *Korta Vägen* and other labor market oriented programs. There were six *Korta Vägen* programs that were combined under PUA: Utländska Tekniker och Ingenjörer (UTI), Yrkeshögskolan Göteborg; Utländska Ekonomer, Göteborgs universitet; Utländska Akademiker, Högskolan Borås; *Korta Vägen*, Högskolan Väst in Trollhättan; *Korta Vägen*, Högskolan Halmstad; *Korta Vägen*, Högskolan i Skövde. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 18). In 2012, Folkuniversitet started their own programs and became the coordinator for *Korta Vägen* programs for Gothenburg. Marianne Carlander, director for *Korta Vägen* programs in Gothenburg, says of *Korta Vägen*: "We are in the middle of the path." *Arbetsförmedlingen* plays an important role in this because they commission the programs and anyone wanting to apply to *Korta Vägen* must apply through them. They are also important in the process because the caseworkers will assist with the mapping that will show the options available to the foreign academics as well as assist them in getting their credentials and education assessed.

When the effort is made to help this target group, it benefits not only them but society as a whole. According to Lennart Svanberg of *Arbetsförmedlingen* in Borås “If those people take jobs that require a lower level of skills than they have, then that excludes those people that should have those jobs.” He wants to stop hearing stories about how “the taxi driver was a doctor”(Svanberg). Furthermore, it is a waste of skills that already exist, as expressed by Eva Karklins and Slavica Lundgren who were partners in the project and currently run a new project called Nationell Matchning. When someone has trained to be a doctor it would be a waste not to utilize that knowledge when the competence is needed in Sweden and it would otherwise cost 5 million and 7 years to educate someone to be a doctor in Sweden. (Karklins and Lundgren)

PUA had the focus of getting those foreign academics that have been in Sweden for less than 3 years. One reason was to show the necessity of starting the process early so that they can be set on the right path from the beginning and not have to take jobs not fitting their educational levels which can be detrimental to later success. According to Pernilla Hultberg, coordinator for the supplementary educational program for health care professionals at GU, “ The skills can be like perishables if not used... The longer a person is away from their occupation, the harder it will be to come back” (Hultberg)

#### **4.1.2 Obstacles for Foreign Academics addressed in PUA**

One hindrance at this level, experienced by Jarschild, is a conflict of opinion as to what is necessary, in terms of Swedish levels. *sfi* programs want the students to learn as much Swedish as they can and be as good as they can, but they need to learn how to do well in an interview and do well in a job, according to Jarschild. He feels they should not study more than what is necessary to get a job. The need for Swedish varies depending on the profession, according to Jarschild. Teachers and psychologists, for example, need more Swedish, but some jobs can be performed with Swedish that is just OK, which for many in the school system feels counterintuitive.

Although the social network and internet can be an important source to turn to, it is equally important to find a network of people who can guide you to the best resources, with the knowledge and willingness to do so (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013). It is essential that all authorities, educational programs and organizations involved cooperate to ensure that the

correct information is getting to the foreign academics at the earliest possible moment so that they can start to make decisions about their future. According to the recommendation from the National Audit, “The goal should be that coordinated, clear and timely information should reach the foreign academic”(RiR 2011:16, p 104). However, the fact that only one fifth of the educational institutions that organize supplementary college education reviewed felt that foreign academics had good knowledge of supplementary educational opportunities program is a strong testament to the fact that there is a large information gap (RiR 2011:16, p 95).

The coordination and collaboration at the national and communal levels, which includes clear accountability and clear responsibilities among the authorities is essential for a quicker, fairer path for foreign academics (RiR 2011:16, p 93). It is the communes responsibility to provide svenskundervisning för invandrare, *sfi* (Swedish instruction for immigrants), the most useful type for this group would be specific Swedish instruction for academics. 8 out of the 21 counties provide such programs. While the coordinating of the communes’ *sfi* programs would be more efficient if done by *Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland* and should be seen as part of its responsibility in the area of integration, the majority of county administrative boards have stated that more clarity in regards to their responsibility in regards to specially geared *sfi* would be beneficial ( RiR 2011:16, p 103). There are cooperative initiatives needed that will work within a common structure to bridge the structural hindrances that foreign academics often face today. Initiatives for newly arrived foreign academics should become part of the regular procedure and become a regular part of the reception and introduction of newcomers in West Sweden and Halland (*Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland* 2009).

Several issues were found to be hindrances to a smooth, quick path. As soon as possible After arrival, foreign academics should get the correct information in order to increase their chances of establishing themselves in the Swedish labor market. According a study by Saco, “Information and guidance has a huge potential to speed the newcomer’s establishment” (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013). It would be most beneficial if this knowledge were spread by those authorities that foreign academics come into contact with earliest, namely *Migrationsverket* ( Swedish Migration Board) and *Arbetsförmedlingen* (RiR 2011:16, p 95) and would be more beneficial if it is available in several languages (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013).

### **4.1.3 Goals of PUA**

After many discussions in the preparation stages regarding realistic goals about participants in employment, they started the project with the goal of having 70% either employed in their field of study and experience, or be either employed in a position that could lead to such employment or be involved in further education.

The focus reflected the need for permanence in the efforts that went into the project.

“to promote long-term and effective utilization of newly arrived foreign academics’ competence” (Länsstyrelsen 2012). The following list is what they considered to be the most important aspects of the project:

- Timely mapping, evaluation and counseling
- Individualized, supplementary educational programs
- Increased feeling of connection to Swedish society due to shorter path to employment
- Employment that matches the skills and education of foreign academics, After taking part in supplementary educational programs or involvement in other educational programs in their field or educational program which will lead them to self-sufficiency
- Focused attention to the issues facing foreign academics among the projects partners and in the surrounding community
- Self-sufficiency of participants
- Demonstrate socioeconomic benefits for a shorter path
- Increase in ethnic diversity in the labor market (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p.10-11)

### **4.1.4 Project organization in PUA**

There were four basic organizational forms that existed in the organization of this project. They are the project management team, the steering committee, the work groups and the network.

#### **Project management team**

Firstly, the project management team, which consists of a full-time project manager, a full-time project assistant and a part-time project economist. They are responsible for developing the agenda and supporting the steering committee. The project manager and project assistant work for the department for social sustainability at *Länsstyrelsen*, which deals with immigration, equality, public health and rights issues. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 12)

### **Steering committee**

The steering committee has the responsibility of prioritizing overall operations and activities. The steering group consists of representatives from the main participating authorities and organizations: *Migratitonsverket*, *Högskolan* ( College) Borås, *Hogskolan Skövde*, *Högskolan Väst*, Västra Götalands region, Gothenburg city/ *Yrkeshögskolan* (Vocational College) Göteborg, *Länsstyrelsen* Halland and Region Halland.( p. 13)

### **Work groups**

In the planning and in the early stages of the project the works groups focused on the three subprojects: timely actions, supplementary educational programs and 2012 target model. They were responsible for formulating the activity plan and implementation of the plan. In the fall of 2011 those groups were replaced by workgroups that were responsible for four theme groups: information, establishment of the project idea in municipalities, national establishment and development of educational programs. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 13)

### **Network (PUA term)**

A regional network for educational activities was formed in 2010 with the goal of exchanging experiences and working together on ideas as well as a way to spread the concept. In 2011, this concept and its methods were introduced to a national network. The network consisted of the project leaders, educational coordinators and relevant *Arbetsförmedlingen* caseworkers. This network continues to meet, even now since the project has finished, although not as frequently.

#### **4.1.5 Partners**



There were 3 main partners at the start of the Project. These were *Länsstyrelsen*, *Arbetsförmedlingen* and **the educational sites**.

- *Länsstyrelsen* Västra Götaland – project owner. *Länsstyrelsen* Västra Götaland took on the project because it falls under their responsibility for the coordination of efforts for newcomers.

"Länsstyrelsen will work to ensure preparedness and capacity in the county for the establishment of new arrivals and promote regional collaboration. The achievement of this goal requires cooperation and coordination between government agencies, municipalities, businesses and nonprofit organizations."  
(Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2014).

- *Arbetsförmedlingen* – co-financier. They finance the “*Korta Vägen*” educational programs that take place at the educational facilities below.
- Educational facilities-GU /Handelshögskolan, Högskolan borås, Högskolan Halmstad, Högskolan Skövde, Högskolan Väst and Yrkeshögskolan Göteborg worked together to further develop educational programs for foreign academics

Also Västra Götaland region and Halland region were involved since it pertains to their responsibility in regards to regional growth and development. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 14)

More educational sites were added throughout the program, the most prominent of them being *Folkuniversitet*, who gained a stronger presence since they became responsible for the *Korta Vägen* programs in Gothenburg under commission from *Arbetsförmedlingen* in 2012, two of the programs were subcontracted to Gothenburg Vocational College (UTI) and Gothenburg University (program for Economists).

Because the **foreign academics** are not financial or organizational partners by the project leaders, I have not listed them above. However I do recognize them as major actants and, as such, their opinions about the program are included in the description of the program and their role as actants will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

There were some peripheral bodies listed as partners, such as *Migrationsverket*, *UHR* and *Socialstyrelsen* that, in actuality, had less to do with the actions involved in the project itself,

but are a part of the action net. *Socialstyrelsen*, according to one partner, “did have a lot of contact with them at the beginning of the project...turnover in personnel resulted in less contact.” *Migrationsverket* was involved because of the importance of reaching foreign academics as soon as they arrive, but in practical terms, they had shared responsibility of the web portal- [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se) . There were others that were not listed partners, such as municipal *sfi* centers, whom they would like to take on a more prominent cooperative role in the future. Further in this thesis, their roles in the action net will be discussed.

As the concept spread, the project gained more partners: Folkuniversitet, SACO, West Sweden chamber of commerce, JUSEK, Skaraborg kommunalförbund (SAM-projektet), Göteborgregionens kommunalförbund, Rotary's mentorship project and various educational programs around the country. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012)

Saco, a Swedish professional association, became a very important partner. One of their main aims is to work for a well-functioning labor market for foreign academics. As part of their efforts to organize and spread the awareness of the labor market geared programs to shorten the path to the Swedish labor market for foreign academics, they launched the web portal Omstart in 2010. Omstart contains specific information for over 50 programs as well as information about how the Swedish labor market works [www.saco.se/omstart](http://www.saco.se/omstart). (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013)

In addition they ran a study of foreign academics because of the need they saw for better information and more guidance for foreign academics through their work trying to gather information for this group from various authorities and their contact with foreign academics. They interview foreign academics to see what they felt was good about such programs and what needed improvement. (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013)

## **4.2 Spreading the information**

### **4.2.1 Importance of early information**

Foreign Academics should be presented with their options, as soon as possible after arrival, so that they can make informed decisions about their future. Part of this process would include mapping their options and making sure that they send their credentials and degrees to

the appropriate authorities for recognition or the steps needed for recognition for those with regulated professions.

One of the first steps that should be taken by foreign academics is to have their qualifications evaluated, however in a study from 2011, only 52% of foreign born academics with a foreign education have had their qualifications assessed by a Swedish authority (SCB report cited in RiR 2011:16, p 14). *Högskoleverket* and *Socialstyrelsen* should review their internal processes in order to shorten the processing time (RiR 2011:16, p 104). According to the newly formed *Universitets- och högskolerådet* (The Swedish Council for Higher Education), there are many that don't know about their existence or how to apply and they are trying to inform more foreign academics about this possibility. Foreign academics interviewed stated that in their opinion, the best places to be informed are in *sfi* classes and at *Arbetsförmedlingen* (Kindenberg 2013, p. 10). There is a lack of information regarding the evaluation of their education. They are either not sending in all of the information required or are sending it to the wrong authority (RiR 2011:16, p 95). There isn't enough information in different languages so that people could already send in a request for evaluation of qualification even before they have learned Swedish. (RiR 2011:16, p 96)

Samantha, an artist, considers herself "just lucky" in this respect, because she is aware that quite often foreign academics don't hear about it when they should. She was handed her information/forms about getting her degree recognized from the person at Gothenburg municipality who signed her up for *sfi* courses. She was fortunate enough to have gotten the recognition back before starting *sfi* (Samantha). Alexandra, a dentist from Russia married to a Swede, came to Sweden 2 years ago, but only in *Korta Vägen* for three months, also was helped early on with sending her degree and credentials to *Socialstyrelsen* with the help of an *sfi* advisor, and received the decision within four months.

#### **4.2.2 Sfi providers' responsibility**

One trap many foreign academics find themselves in is taking unnecessary courses in komvux without the proper knowledge because they streamed into it from *sfi*. There have been some that have successfully utilized what komvux, as an adult education center for the purpose of supplementing primary and secondary education, had to offer. Foreign academics, who have already completed post-secondary education in their own country, can supplement

their skills in terms of language and for those with regulated professions, other supplementary classes needed to fulfill requirements. However the system is not set up specifically for foreign academics and can, therefore, lead to foreign academics spending much longer, taking many unnecessary classes, because they were unaware of their options and the existence of complementary programs specifically geared to their needs. Such was the case for a classmate of mine, when I was taking Svensk B in *Komvux*, that was a trained physicist dealing with a situation where he was placed in an elementary math class, one that he was clearly overqualified to teach, let alone be a student in. He was eventually able to test out of it, but he was still taking other unnecessary classes.

Many of the *Korta Vägen* participants interviewed stated that they had heard about the *Korta Vägen* program by word of mouth. This was also reported by administrators at *Arbetsförmedlingen* in Gothenburg and Borås, Folkuniversitet in Gothenburg and Högskolan Borås. It is strongly felt that those that have early contact with foreign academics should have the responsibility to inform them of their options

The adult education system in Sweden was set up for those that need to complete secondary education and in some cases primary education. This situation occurs because the adult education system is where most *Svenska för Invandrare* (Swedish for Immigrants) or *sfi* programs exist. Once the highest level for *sfi* is complete, many are streamed into *Komvux* for *Svenska som andra språk* (Swedish as another language) or SVA. Many foreign academics followed SAS *Grund* (elementary) and SAS A and B (Secondary school level) in the komvux system – which has now been replaced by SVA *Grund* and SVA 1, 2 and 3 - along with many classes that are unnecessary for the level of education that they have. Many in this target group are unaware of the alternatives available. It is actually the teachers and administrators from the *sfi* programs that should inform potential participants of their options if they have not already been informed. Those that are in contact with this group should have the skill and the insight as to what that person will do in Sweden. According to Jarschild, “It makes sense there.” Annika Malm also feels that *sfi* would be the best place to have this information available and have tried to have conferences and talk to *sfi* directors to spread the word and bring up this issue They have seen that PUA has done a great deal in spreading the word to *sfi* centers (Malm).

To avoid this situation of being in a program not suited to their needs, that many foreign academics find themselves in, *sfi* administrators should find out from them early on if they

want to continue in the same profession or continue their studies. Those that want to find work in their profession should be informed of their options. It is, however, the hope that people find out about their options before starting *sfi*. Alexander Oskarsson feels that *sfi* centers should be given the “commission” of putting the foreign academics into contact with *Arbetsförmedlingen* so that they can have a more in-depth mapping in order to start planning for the long term. Sometimes *sfi* centers do a mapping with the foreign academics, but often it is not as thorough as what the *Arbetsförmedlingen* would do. (Oskarsson)

Khatol moved to Sweden from Afghanistan in 2012 to be with her husband, who is also from Afghanistan, but has been here for 14 years. She found out about *Korta Vägen* from *sfi* at Folkuniversitet. Khatol, a math teacher, was advised by the student counselor at Folkuniversitet. Student counselor advised her that she could study komvux or another way called *Korta Vägen* which could lead to an internship and would also teach her more of a concentration on Swedish language, which would include studying the society including culture and politics. She decided on *Korta Vägen* for the civic and culture classes and not just Swedish. (Khatol)

Khatol was fortunate enough to get advice early on when interviewing at komvux for *sfi* courses. After finding out about her teaching degree, she was advised to attend Folkuniversitet for *sfi*, which is specifically for those that have a post-secondary education (Khatol). This *sfi* program is at the same site as the *Korta Vägen* program.

Samantha was also sent to *sfi* at Folkuniversitet directly from the *sfi* office. After finding out that she had university education and the fact that she requested a course that was “full-time and intensive” (Samantha). While in the *sfi* program, Samantha heard about *Korta Vägen* from those ahead of her in the program, while Alexandra heard about it while already in komvux after *sfi*. The difference for Samantha was that she was that her *sfi* program was at the same site as the *Korta Vägen* program.

PUA has worked towards an increased inter-municipal cooperation in regards to *sfi* so that the municipality can offer foreign academics geared *sfi* and if possible branch *sfi*, regardless of size. From the beginning they are recognized as professionals (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, pp. 46-7). There have been improvements, but it is clear that more connections are necessary between *Arbetsförmedlingen* and *sfi* program directors.

### 4.2.3 Web portal

In an effort to make sure the information is available and accessible, PUA created a web portal in conjunction with *Migrationsverket*: [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se). It is a tool for all immigrants and authorities in contact with immigrants to use. It covers not only information about educational opportunities for all levels (with a very comprehensive section for foreign academics) but also information on housing and various social programs. Information is available in 10 languages. Despite the successful efforts made to make the web portal thorough, issues remain regarding awareness about the website itself.

The web portal needs to be very established, because when it is very established then there is more trust in the site. Alexander Oskarsson, project coordinator from *Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland*, feels they have come quite far with establishing the site, but not at the level necessary to reach whom they need to reach.

This is where coordination with *Migrationsverket* would be beneficial. There are some people there that are passing on the information, however not enough people are either aware of its existence or the need for the information to start with them. There is no systematic way of working and no real sign that it is in use by everyone as general resource (Oskarsson). At *Länsstyrelsen*, they would like to see the information already getting to the people who are applying for residency, seeking asylum (inside or outside of Sweden) or their dependents. ”I don’t think that somehow it is impossibility” (Oskarsson)

Despite the continued efforts to establish the site and spread the news about the *Korta Vägen* programs, it still has a way to go. In interviews with project partners and foreign academics, it was evident that there was insufficient knowledge of the website in the target community. Many had never heard of the web portal and most found out about the *Korta Vägen* program by word of mouth. Some however have found out about the program through the individual programs sites, like the UTI site and some have found out about the programs through *Arbetsförmedlingen* website. They have their own education program system so those who are signed up with *Arbetsförmedlingen* can look into a program, discuss it with their caseworker and send in an application. It is also the job of the caseworker at *Arbetsförmedlingen* to determine their education level and if they have a foreign degree and then refer them to the caseworker that deals with their branch so that he/she can go over their options with them and advise them which *Korta Vägen* program would be appropriate for

them. It is conversely the responsibility of those branch specific caseworkers to ensure that all caseworkers are aware of this procedure.

Some municipalities have been better though at spreading the word about the program outside of the web portal. In Borås, they have been rather successful at finding the various foreign academic groups. Those that can benefit from the establishment efforts under the new establishment reform get the information from *Arbetsförmedlingen*, while those that don't come into contact with *Arbetsförmedlingen* have a very high chance that they will not only find out about the *Korta Vägen* program from the *sfi* course, but will be very prepared if they do choose to take part in a labor market geared program, as the *sfi* courses move at an intense tempo so that they can "start the right way." In Borås, foreign academics are streamed into special *sfi* courses that are on site at the college in Borås, where there are two types of programs for this target group: a *Korta Vägen* program from *Arbetsförmedlingen* and their own *Invandrarakademin*. The city of Borås, who is responsible for *sfi* education, has special classes on-site at Högskolan Borås. The city of Borås provides the teaching staff and the college provides the classrooms and Borås city covers other costs. This has made for a very smooth transition for many. They have an academic counselor available to them as well from the college.

The individual must still be right for the program. Rolf Lundström says that he interviews the potential participants just as he would for an interview. Just like a company would, he chooses whom he feels would fit best in the program and gives a good impression. He looks at the language level relative to the amount of time they have been in Sweden (Lundström).

#### **4.2.4 Establishment reform and its effect on PUA**

In 2010, the government passed establishment reform. As a result, *Arbetsförmedlingen* became the responsible authority for the establishment of the newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers and their dependents by providing services to support their establishment in Swedish society and the labor market. They were given the right to establishment guides that would help by providing counseling for work or study. Under the establishment reform, the municipalities also were given the responsibility to provide social orientation ( Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013) . This and the national centralization of the *Arbetsförmedlingen* further

complicated efforts to form a cohesive (and all-inclusive) structure to fairly deal with all foreign academics (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012).

This target group, that is referred to *Arbetsförmedlingen* directly, could potentially get an establishment plan as quickly as 3 months after being granted residency. They can start *sfi* and civic orientation courses (often in their language) and find out about *Korta Vägen* programs. However, it is a concern that other types of immigrants that don't fall under the establishment practices - those that came to be with a Swedish partner, so-called "love immigrants," those that have studied here and decided to stay, and those that have come with a loved one that came for work (trailing spouses) – are at a disadvantage because of the unequal distribution of information. While *Länsstyrelsen* has no direct commission to make sure that all foreign academics get the right information, In SOU 2012:69 report –AKKA , “Med rätt att delta – Nyanlända *Korta Vägen*innor och anhöriginvandrare på arbetsmarknaden- it was stated that either *Arbetsförmedlingen* or the municipality has the commission to make sure that those that don't fall under the initiatives for establishment law should be called to a meeting to determine the needs that can shorten their path to the labor market ( Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013). However, this is often overshadowed by the directives aimed at refugees, asylum seekers and reunited dependents.

Though groups outside of those eligible for establishment activity are not excluded from *Korta Vägen*, they are not a prioritized group when it comes to admission to the program, according to Marianne Carlander, director of *Korta Vägen* program. Arne Nyrèn, foreign academics caseworker at *Arbetsförmedlingen*, newcomers – defined him as non- EU citizens who have been in Sweden less than 3 years- are prioritized and they then take those that don't fill that definition if they have space. They take 20-30 per year. However, they generally only fill half the spots with those that fill that technically qualify.

However, even for those that are able to benefit from the new reforms, things have not gone as intended. Ahmad, who came to Sweden from Yemen in 2011 with family for political reasons, arrived in Sweden and was first brought to *Migrationsverket* and according to him “They threw us out in the country...with my family alone almost nine months.” He started going to the *sfi* courses where he lived in Alingsås, but he had to complain a lot to the caseworkers at *Arbetsförmedlingen* about *sfi*. In his words: “You could say it was a catastrophe” They mixed them altogether, with and without education. It went very slow, with some discrimination, they didn't treat everyone equally. I complained many times.”



Finally, he got a letter from the caseworker at *Arbetsförmedlingen* about the project. This was a very positive move for him. “I was at C level for 6 months (in Alingsås) and here studying all the time in 6 months he finished all of the language classes. One can think ‘Why?’... I am very thankful to them (counselors at *Korta Vägen*)” (Ahmad).

While attempts have been made to fulfill his rights under establishment reform, his path has been far from smooth in many other areas. The *Arbetsförmedlingen* caseworker in Alingsås, trying to be helpful, sent his degree directly to *Högskoleverket*. When he came to *Korta Vägen* they informed him that he needed to send it to *Socialstyrelsen* (because his degree was in a medical profession). He sent his papers in and got an answer within a few weeks. *Högskoleverket* said his BA was good, but that wasn’t the right information, they told him at *Korta Vägen* that it must be sent to *Socialstyrelsen* for a decision. (Ali). This shows a lack of communication at *Arbetsförmedlingen* and *Högskoleverket* for not knowing that Ali’s papers should go to *Socialstyrelsen*. He was also assigned an establishment guide, but this person has been of little help to him. According to Ahmad, “the [establishment] guides don’t understand everything; there are only some that have the education. He is able to help those in other fields, like mechanics... sometimes I teach them... maybe I could open a business and say I am a [establishment] guide”(Ahmad).

The situation above is not just confined to areas outside of the larger cities, but it does illustrate the need for accessibility to everyone regardless of where they live, for more connections between programs, as well as the need for more connections between *Arbetsförmedlingen* caseworkers throughout the county.

### **4.3 The labor market programs commissioned by *Arbetsförmedlingen***

#### **4.3.1 Educational environment**

At Folkuniversitet in Gothenburg, the participants are divided up by branch: health care professionals, economists and a more general liberal arts group. The liberal arts group has a mixture of those with regulated professions, specifically teachers, and those without regulated professions. They are, however, working on a separate class for teachers.

In Alexandra's class for health care professionals, which includes doctors, dentists, a physical therapist and pharmacists, they "talk about different diseases" and have lectures and presentations. She has found the program very supportive (Alexandra).

Ahmad was very enthusiastic about the *Korta Vägen* course at Folkuniversitet. "It's a very good course, very good. I got a big advantage in learning the language, in understanding everything, almost everything. Before I started, I didn't understand anything. I tried to ask what I can do to get into the labor market. I didn't understand a thing. When I asked they said you just need to study. I asked my establishment guide what to do and he didn't know and kept saying 'ask later'... When I came here I understood everything... Here they are very helpful" They told him exactly what he needed to do (Ahmad). As positive as the written words here sound, they can't match the change that occurred in his demeanor from a very strained expression, when talking about the struggles with his *sfi* class in Alingsås, to a the smile that came on his face when he talked about starting at *Korta Vägen*.

#### **4.3.2 Difference between *Korta Vägen* programs and Academic programs**

While the main focus of PUA is on labor market education such as *Korta Vägen*. At Höskolan, Borås they run a *Korta Vägen* program alongside their own regular academic program called Invandrarakademin. This is a one year program that is set up as a college program with college points and a lesson plan. The Invandrarakademin has two terms of 30 points each. Those that choose this route are aware that they need to complete the entire program as opposed to the *Korta Vägen* program at Höskolan Borås, where one is not expected to finish the entire program if they get work. The Invandrarakademin has an educational focus and from the point of view of the college, they don't get funding for the student if he/she doesn't finish with all the necessary points.

*Korta Vägen* is definitely more geared to the labor market with instruction in writing CVs, finding internships and techniques for job searching. They tell them that as the focus is on finding work, they should not hesitate to stop the program if they get a job "It's a different way of thinking" (Forslund). Unlike program in Gothenburg, the *Korta Vägen* in Borås has only one program for all professions. In Gothenburg, there are 4 directions: Medical Professionals, Economists, Engineers and Technicians, and a general group. A new group specifically for teachers was being planned.

They did also write a lesson plan for the *Korta Vägen* program just because the administrators at the college felt the need even though it was not required by *Arbetsförmedlingen*. The two programs do work together; if students feel they would like to study longer than the *Korta Vägen* program, they can then join the *Invandrarakademin* and be given the 30 points for the time they spent in *Korta Vägen*. They can get advice from the student counselor that is available to students in both programs, as the counselor is employed by the college and not *Arbetsförmedlingen*. (Annika Malm). They did at one point have a separate coach from *Arbetsförmedlingen* but now the counselor takes on both roles. They also provide language counselors that do the language testing, as a result of PUA

It is, however, these issues with the point system and the school world at colleges that Jack Jarschild was trying to get away from as he was trying to develop the *Korta Vägen* courses. According to Jarschild, universities and colleges have no interest in whether someone gets a job, the interest is in the students getting a degree because “they get money for that, they don’t get money if they get a job” (Jarschild). He has had many discussions with universities and colleges that the value of *Korta Vägen* must be about finding a job: “it’s not the points that are interesting, it’s skills leading to the possibility of a job” (Jarschild)

The benefit of the programs commissioned by *Arbetsförmedlingen* is that they can be more flexible. Not only can they stop the program if they get work before they complete it, but it can be adjusted to their needs. Many occupations, like doctors, journalists, and lawyers do require a mastery of the Swedish language. However, some need more English and, for the purpose of a job, can get by with Svengelska. “Different fields have different needs. We can't have the same plan for everyone” (Forslund). For some that don't get positions, it has to do with language ability; some are turned away by the employer and some don't dare. Younger people do tend to have an easier time with the language. Sometimes, if possible, it would be more beneficial to go to programs in the larger cities like Gothenburg and Stockholm where there is more industry and more opportunity for internships (Malm). Malm and Forslund have seen better results with jobs in public administration, such as teachers, social workers and health care workers, both in internships and permanent positions.

### **4.3.3 Tailoring to the foreign academics needs**

Although the *Korta Vägen* courses are commissioned by *Arbetsförmedlingen*, The centers are allowed the flexibility to tailor the programs to the foreign academics' individual needs.

According to Samantha:

“They are obviously working with *Arbetsförmedlingen* and *Arbetsförmedlingen* rules... but it doesn't seem like there is so much cooperation... *Folkuniversitet* is running the program the way they want to run the program and I think that is working better for us as students. They are more able to see what we need and make it work for us, but we still have that computer class because they have to... We can fiddle with it if we can...every once in a while Ann-Christine can be convinced by one of us who is very computer savvy, we would rather read a book in Swedish or study Swedish than learn to do a budget in excel again and again and again. She has the right to work with you and come up with your plan; she backs you when it comes to what your specific study route is going to be” (Samantha).

This example, however, may point to the need for re-evaluation of the level of computer skills training. Elizabeth felt that the program could have presented better computer programs and systems and the lack of this may be due to the fact that there were people in the course with much less experience in this area.

Alexandra has also experienced the benefits of the attention to the individuals' needs. The week before she was to have the skills test required by Socialstyrelsen for licensing, after having a discussion with her coach about her need to study, she was able to stay home and focus on studying. “There are possibilities. It is very good” (Alexandra).

#### **4.3.4 Improvements to the existing program: validation model and language test/certificate**

Annika Malm and Lars-Gunnar (LG) Forslund were able to invest the time and energy, as part of one of the work groups, focusing on two specific projects to improve the *Korta Vägen* programs - as part of their involvement in PUA - for the future because the *Korta Vägen* program was up and running successfully at Borås college. The collective actions from the various groups working on the pathway have had successful connections which allowed them to work on the validation model and the language test/certificate.

Malm and Forslund, along with Meritea, worked to develop a system of evaluating the skills of foreign academics in the field with potential employers as part of an internship. This is in addition to the evaluation and recognitions of their qualifications that is required by UHR, or other professional organizations for regulated professions such as *Socialstyrelsen* for medical professionals. While it is not technically necessary for those in non-regulated professions, the resulting model is an added tool that is now available for evaluation (Malm).

This model is a way to evaluate a person's knowledge in relation to the education given in Sweden. The workplace took a look at what profile they were looking for and what competencies people should have when working with this type of work. When the employers in the pilot study worked out their profile, they realized they were better off for the future so they can plan for their own personnel, making it a positive contribution to the workplace. More than just helping someone or even finding someone that could be a potential employee; they can work more strategically with their own personnel needs (Oskarsson).

There is, however, no requirement and little incentive for the college/university to do this. It's a rather extensive and long process and it costs as well. They also tried to show *Arbetsförmedlingen* that this type of method can be combined with efforts that is has, like yrkeskompetensbedömning (worker competence assessment) – though not as structured as the PUA validation model - where one can go to an employer and have their competence judged/assessed for a shorter period. It can be used to identify gaps that need to be supplemented by the intern. For the employer, it can be used as a quality assurance tool to evaluate the competence and educational needs of all employees. With minor adjustments, it can fit different types of work branches. (Länsstyrelsen 2012)

With the PUA validation model they produced, the employer could get compensation, which may make the process accessible to more people. If there is compensation, the employers may be more willing, a sentiment that both Oskarsson and Malm expressed. It may not always be necessary to do such a deep evaluation, but when it is necessary it is important that it exists. They have shown that, if they have the necessary resources to implement it, the model could be successful (Oskarsson).

Another improvement Annika Malm and LG Forslund, in cooperation with Meritea, were also involved in, was developing a language certificate for the *Korta Vägen* program which involved a study to determine any needed improvements to the TUA test they currently have. The benefit of this test is that it can be more flexible and they don't have to wait the 6 month

intervals for the national Tisus tests. In the tests they have done in the study, they have seen that they are comparable to national Tisus tests. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012) Those that want to continue to university education in order to get their licenses in Sweden still need to be complete SVA 3 (equivalent to C1 in EU scale and the former SAS B) in order to get into programs. The test they have developed is currently used at HB and H Skövde.

The most commonly accepted proof of Swedish equivalency for university entrance is SVA 3 or the Tisus test. One significant difference between the two is the cost. At *Korta Vägen*, one can test up to SVA 2 for free, but they are not able to test out of SVA 3. Many have to go to komvux for that, which is also free, so this is often preferred over the Tisus test. The Tisus could potentially be taken after the *Korta Vägen* program, with no guarantee of passing and it is very expensive. In addition, if you don't pass you have to wait 6 months before taking the test again. If the testing method they developed could be implemented and incorporated for those in regulated professions in *Korta Vägen* or any academically based program so that it would be accepted nationally by all colleges and universities as the equivalent of SVA 3 or Tisus, it would mean one less step for those that need to apply for university courses.

#### **4.3.5 Internships**

Though all *Korta Vägen* programs have the common commission from *Arbetsförmedlingen*, they all have individual characteristics. This is especially true when it comes to the UTI program and its director Rolf Lundström, a strong believer in a more personal approach, who says that because they work with the foreign academics so much (8-4, Monday - Friday) they get to know them and their level of motivation. While this can be said of the other *Korta Vägen* programs as well, Lundström does seem to take a much more hands-on approach to finding internship placements for the foreign academics. When looking for internships for foreign academics, he tries to arrange meetings with many of his personal contacts with companies that he has built up since starting with UTI in 2007. He looks at the foreign academics, "who they are and how they work," and tries to find a company they would match best with because he believes it's better for "individuals to meet individuals at companies" (Lundström), which he prefers to do personally at the companies, rather than over the phone. The internships are important because they have no other references in Sweden.

He may have gotten to know them as a person but cannot attest to their skill level (Lundström).

Most other programs depend on the participants finding the internship places themselves and then they will provide them with further support. *Arbetsförmedlingen* may also be involved, but not always. Samantha, who found out about an opportunity through another mentoring program through Gothenburg municipality called inflyktningsmentor, was helped by the coach at *Korta Vägen* to get an interview and accompany her to the interview. She feels discouraged by the thought of asking for help from *Arbetsförmedlingen* and would rather get one through *Korta Vägen* because they help more. "Siv makes it so it works with *Arbetsförmedlingen*...that is a huge benefit" (Samantha). Iman, a math teacher from Iraq, also found an internship opportunity herself. She spoke to a teacher at her daughter's school who suggested she help students with their math and help with language translation. She then spoke to the school director, who gave her the opportunity to apply.

Sometimes the internship experience had been so successful for both parties that it led to a permanent position, as is the case with Nabila, an economist, who actually came to Sweden from Iran 7 years ago to get her Master's degree. She didn't go through the *sfi* process, but rather learned Swedish through a voluntary program while studying for her Master's. She heard about the program from her teachers in the Master's program (Nazila)

#### **4.3.6 Further support for the foreign academics**

At *Folkuniversitet* in Gothenburg, students have a variety of academic counselors such as Lena Somerström who helps those that may need to go on to further university education as well as helping the foreign academics determine where to send the transcripts for Swedish recognition. They also have coaches that have a full overview of the students, like Samantha's and Iman's coach Ann-Christine. Iman, who has been in Sweden over 10 years, feels that having a coach at *Folkuniversitet* functions very well. She is always around to ask how things are going and helps with writing CVs and personal letters as well as discussing their future and inquiring about their needs (Iman). The programs at *Folkuniversitet* also have counselors for internships that help to organize them and accompany the foreign academic on internship interviews. (Samantha)

Others, like Khatol in Gothenburg and Nazila in Borås had coaches at *Arbetsförmedlingen*, with whom they met every 1-3 weeks for extra support with writing CVs, personal letters, and sending them out to get contacts for internships. Nazila feels very happy with the help she got from her coach at *Arbetsförmedlingen*, saying that she helped her become more self-confident.

Another aspect of *Korta Vägen*, which is not obligatory, but in Samantha's words, "the best part," is the arrangement of a mentor in your field, in cooperation with Rotary of West Sweden. Her mentor is gallery owner who is helping her meet people in her field. They meet about every month to set goals and talk about art. For her that is the most helpful. While it will be difficult for a job to come out of this relationship because he is a gallery owner and she is an artist, it may result in an exhibition. Another successful mentor match was made for Alexandra with a dentist who completed the program the year before Alexandra started the program. Sometimes it is more difficult to find a mentor, as in the case of Ahmad, because there are few mentors in his field of x-ray nursing. There was only one other x-ray nurse who finished the program, that he tried to contact, but was not interested in being a mentor (Ali).

#### **4.3.7 Specific needs for foreign academics in regulated professions**

Once the foreign academics that need to further supplement their credentials in order to get their license finish the *Korta Vägen* or similar program, they can apply to university for further education. Currently at GU there are three programs for foreign academics that have been commissioned by the government under integration initiatives: Health care professionals, lawyers (UTLEX) and teachers (ULV). These programs are government commissions under their integration initiatives

(<http://www.gu.se/omuniversitetet/vision/likabehandling/rapporter/kompletterande-utbildningar/>)

One of these programs, the 1 year program for supplementary education for foreign health care professionals - doctors, nurses and dentists - first started out of a need in Swedish society for qualified health care professionals. While some who were trying to fill this need went outside of Sweden, specifically in Italy and Germany, others felt that perhaps there was a resource still in Sweden. A county board inventory of *Arbetsförmedlingen* in West Sweden



found 100 unemployed or underemployed doctors whose education and practice was done outside of Sweden.

The *Korta Vägen* programs can be of great benefit to those applying to these programs, even for those that don't technically need further supplementing of their education, such as EU nationals. According Marianne Carlander even though EU nationals in regulated professions can actually just go out into the labor market, they may be missing out on valuable training in how the Swedish medical system, government and society, as a whole, function. "They are well-educated individuals and they will figure it out, but they don't have the package when they go out" (Carlander).

According to Pernilla Hultberg, educational coordinator for the program, the *Korta Vägen* and similar programs help prepare the students with the Swedish language and other skills that will help them get accepted to these programs and contribute to their future success in their chosen field. Because all of the literature and lectures are in Swedish, it is important that their Swedish is good enough to follow. Hultberg feels they are prepared well at the *Korta Vägen* program with branch Swedish. "When I look at the applications and see that they have done *Korta Vägen*, at Folkuniversitet for example, I think, 'this will be good' and it is often correct"(Hultberg).

Part of the selection process has to do with the perishability of the skills and knowledge. They have to choose from the many applications they receive and have to choose based on whom they feel has the best chance of being successful, including Swedish language skills and how long it has been since they have practiced, "they still may have had contact with the branch, but if they have been away from the job 10 years and not studied it will be difficult. We have learned that that has an effect," which is another reason why getting foreign academics into these programs early is so beneficial.

Not all of the foreign academics can go directly to university because they can't take the SVA 3 exam through *Korta Vägen* and they may need to supplement other subject skills as well. These professionals may need to study in *Komvux* (municipal adult education). Khatol, for example, still needs to have SVA 3 (see term clarification), and perhaps one term of English before she can go to the program for teachers at the university, which may also be done through distance education (Khatol). Iman is also planning to see if she can test out of SVA

2, but she must study SVA 3 through komvux, then she can apply to the ULV program at the university.

There are those however that have made it work without the benefit of the University programs by choice or circumstance. A doctor, who declined to be interviewed because he was so busy, did all of his necessary language classes through komvux. He sent his credentials to *Socialstyrelsen* took skills tests and did a one year internship and is now practicing at my local family medicine practice.

Alexandra had just started the *Korta Vägen* program at the time of the interview, despite having been in Sweden for two years, she had only found out about *Korta Vägen* from her SVA teacher at komvux. Her mapping was only done in June when she started *Korta Vägen* and while she already has completed SVA 3, she felt that she would still benefit from the added specific branch language support from the *Korta Vägen* program for medical professionals, especially since she was unable to get into the Sahlgrenska/GU program. Even though it would be better, one doesn't necessarily need the course, one can still take the test. She has already received word from *Socialstyrelsen*, so she knows that she needs to take the skills tests – basic, medical and orthodontic skills. Once these are passed and she does an internship, she can get her license. Although Pernilla Hultberg believes in the education program at GU she acknowledges that “students from vuxenutbildning can also be successful, especially if they get branch language training, they study more, also if they get internships they see more and speak more, also really valuable.”

Ahmad, whose *Arbetsförmedlingen* caseworker was misinformed as to where his credentials should be sent, now knows the path he needs to take. First he must do another Swedish language course, do a skills test and then an internship. He will do skills test in December, but he must directly start an internship. Unfortunately, he is having difficulty finding an internship, but he is motivated to make it work “I had done that job almost 12 years... I can't change my profession, it's very difficult” (Ahmad).

#### **4.4 Finding a permanent solution**

##### **4.4.1 Two parallel models**

The third major aspect of PUA was to present a model for a nationwide program aimed at providing the opportunity for foreign academics to gain employment in their fields of study and practice. One initiative in PUA was to commission a review of the current situation for foreign academics. The review, conducted by Lars Walter and Andreas Dietrich of Gothenburg University, focused on the need for permanent organizing and financing for initiatives for foreign academics. The scope of the review was the educational aspect of the labor market geared supplementary programs and not for the efforts made before or after, or the university programs some may need to enter after.

While it may still be possible for local initiatives to occur and some extremely driven people in the right authorities that arrange for the necessary initiatives for foreign academics and arrange for the financing and organizing within the parameters that exist, there is still the problem that the initiatives are so different in the different counties and regions and that access is dependent on where one lives. Permanence of the programs is also uncertain. This lack of consistency in such programs leads to a lack of transparency, which makes it very difficult for foreign academics to actually find the programs and determine if the program available is a good match with their situation and goals (Walter and Dietrich 2012).

“The intervention’s temporary nature and that they are often conducted as a supplement to, and in addition to regular activities, can also mean that they, in different ways, risk being marginalized or made conditional.” (Walter, L. and Dietrich, A. 2012, p 42)

The already existing training/educational programs vary greatly depending on the needs and educational backgrounds of those involved. Some need further university education to get the qualifications to work in their field, but some just need training to help them get work in Sweden (Walter and Dietrich 2012). Permanent funding and coordination of labor market geared programs will enable educational sites to be more specialized and reach people regardless of the area they live in (Walter and Dietrich 2012).

Walter and Dietrich presented two complimentary parallel models to meet the needs of all foreign academics. Model I is for a permanent academic program for supplementary study, similar to *Invandrarakademin* at Högskolan Borås. With this model, the foreign academic will have the security of a permanent financial structure (Walter and Dietrich 2012). Model II would be a labor market oriented program similar to *Korta Vägen* which can be individually tailored so that they get the skills specific to their needs which includes efforts directed

towards foreign academics which exclusively provides labor preparatory efforts. The starting point is the translation and matching problems that are common to many immigrant academics. This justifies a support designed to adjust, package and communicate the academic skills in such a way that it is perceived as relevant, attractive and legitimate in a Swedish labor market (Walter and Dietrich 2012). According to Walter and Dietrich (2012), because of this model's relevance to *Arbetsförmedlingen*'s current programming for supplementary training, they are still the most qualified, suitable public actor to be responsible for organizing, financing and implementing such programs.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the two models presented by Walter and Dietrich (2012)**

Model I Points to bear in mind-	Model II Points to bear in mind-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“ Educational programs should have a clear academic educational content, form and framework, and also pronounced academic goals in the form of a degree or academic competence</i></li> <li>• <i>The program, in principle should not differ from other academic programs and should, above all, be able to be run within the normal organizational and financial model that applies to the university or college in general</i></li> <li>• <i>That in the design of the educational program takes into account the specific conditionsthat the group foreign academics has, by:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Form targeted efforts to identify, reach, communicate and assess the group of foreign academics, in order to facilitate admission to relevant academic education.</i></li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>“That the participants already have a university education and background that, in level and direction, can be expected to be relevant in the Swedish labor market</i></li> <li>* <i>That the educational organization provides individually tailored measures designed to supplement the participant's skills and knowledge in regards to specific Swedish conditions, such as occupational Swedish , presentation skills, professional IT training, English, project methodology.</i></li> <li>* <i>That the educational organization provides support to facilitate the participants' entry into the labor market, such as job coaching and other tutorials on how to find a job.</i></li> <li>* <i>That the educational organization has a</i></li> </ul>

<p>2. <i>Take into account the fact that foreign graduates, as a group, is more likely heterogeneous than the average Swedish student groups , thereby requiring more resource demanding pedagogical models that, among other things, allows a higher degree of teacher-led instruction and greater opportunity for individualized training .</i></p> <p>• <i>The group, which often has limited experience of the Swedish labor market, has a particular need for internships in the education program”</i></p> <p>(Walter and Dietrich 2012 pp. 47-48)</p>	<p><i>good understanding of, is deeply rooted in and otherwise perceived as a legitimate and credible player on the labor market toward which effort is directed.” .(Walter and Dietrich 2012, p. 49 in Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 40)</i></p>
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The models above could be utilized simultaneously because of the difference in focus.

Further recommendations include the need for more municipal cooperation in the area of branch oriented *sfi* to ensure that the foreign academics will be sufficiently prepared to follow the programs (Walter and Dietrich 2012).

In the study, many issues presented are those that resonated among the interviewees:

- The need for a cooperation to create a clear and predictable path
- Timely information which gives the foreign academics the opportunity to make an informed decisions
- Cooperation amongst *sfi* learning centers and *Arbetsförmedlingen* to ensure that foreign academics get the same clear information.
- Clear division of responsibility and permanent programs necessary to overcome the following obstacles:
- Large variation in activities and unequal geographical distribution of initiatives which means the accessibility of programs is dependent on where one lives
- Potential participants having difficulties finding information relevant to their situation
- Negative effects to the rights of potential participants, potentially leading to exclusion

- Uncertainty about the goals of the various activities
- Supplementary education is currently dependent on the market need and a part of a regular program, which means there is always the risk of the program stopping

(Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p.43)

#### 4.4.2 Akademikerförmedlingen

The term *Akademikerförmedlingen* refers to a model of cooperation based experiences from PUA and many of the recommendations by Walter and Dietrich (2012) as well as those in the Swedish National Audit office review. It is not a description of a function or of an organizer of the various activities, rather of a process to be implemented for the benefit of foreign academics (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p.46). It consists of three stages:

**Informing** - Accessible information for all foreign academics, regardless on their reasons for coming to Sweden.

**Preparation**- Before the supplementary education begins, there should be a mapping of the individual's opportunities for getting back to relevant work. Also their credentials should be judged and eventually the supplementary activities needed for certification in Sweden should be determined. This requires the cooperation of several authorities such as *Universitets-och högskolerådet*; *Socialstyrelsen* and other organizations that regulate professions in Sweden; *Arbetsförmedlingen*; and colleges and universities. Parallel to this should be specific foreign academics geared *sfi* (SFUA)

**Complementing**- Based on assessed needs from the preparation stage a plan of gaining supplementary education will be followed either in an academic program or a labor market oriented program. In some cases their skill level will be validated according to HB/Meritea model (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012)

A major issue having to do with the success of permanent solution is the funding. For Jack Jarschild, there was constant dependence on him convincing his bosses to provide funds for the program. According to Jarschild, you need to make sure that the ordinary functions can deal with everyone and that is seen as a part of the regular work methods.

*Akademikerförmedlingen* was built upon the of the following principle ideas:

- “The individual must have timely information on what their path looks like, so they can make a realistic decision.

- This requires a system that is understandable and predictable for the individual and the authority.
- This is dependent on how clear the assignment is for the respective actors and that the responsibilities are clear.
- Parallel actions should happen when they are effective and contribute to synergies.
- Actions should, if possible, be tailored to the individuals conditions and needs

(Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 57)

Diagram 1 (see p. 45) is a representation of the path promoted in the akademikerförmedlingen model for labor market geared programs.

#### **4.4.3 Why permanence is needed**

The cooperation has improved because of PUA on different levels, but not the same as when it was a project. There is not the same continuity and not the same resources to ensure it will continue. There is not the same clear commission to work on the issues of cooperation in the same way which means that someone else needs to take that role on if they want to have the same form of cooperation as there was during the project. Unfortunately there is no one to take on that role. They can try with the ability and the time that they have, but it is no longer part of their regular duties, which is quite a concern (Oskarsson).

In terms of the connections of actions through the web portal, now that the project is over it is harder to control the updating. There is no system where everyone has to report changes from their own institutions and authorities, making it harder to ensure that it is updated quickly. At the meeting they had with the partners before the summer of 2013, there was, however, still a strong interest and willingness to work together on these issues and they hope that the updating will continue, but it won't be as systematic as it was during the program.

(Oskarsson)

Karklins and Lundgren have felt that the commitment of people to continue the actions is one of the most important aspects of the project. The people involved “really try to find the information and aren't afraid to contact others.” Oskarsson agrees, but is concerned that it might not be enough. The concern is that “the cooperation among Swedish authorities is often built on the fact that there is willingness among respective organizations that want to, often connected to a person or someone that feels engaged in the issue which drives the

cooperation.” He feels that the desire alone has not worked well enough and that there is a mission statement needed with responsibilities for the respective organizations to work together on this issue; otherwise it will be “weakened in the long run.” It lives as long there is a project, but as long as there is not cooperation it falls apart more easily when the project ends. The benefit of project form was that each had a responsibility and an assignment and there were resources available. (Oskarsson)

When Lennart Svanberg of *Arbetsförmedlingen* expressed the hope that the government understands the benefits of the project and that there is a lot of money that could be saved. “It’s a small amount of work for a large return.” It would be an “unbelievable waste” if people can get into the labor market quickly (Svanberg). Karklins and Lundgren feel that they are restricted by the lack of permanence that comes with project work, they feel that dealing with these issues should be a regular part of their function, but are frustrated that they have a good model but as they said “We have a goal that doesn’t go hand in hand with *Arbetsförmedlingen* goal” They are trying to work on “this chain” of getting the foreign academics into the labor market as quickly as possible. (Karklins and Lundgren)

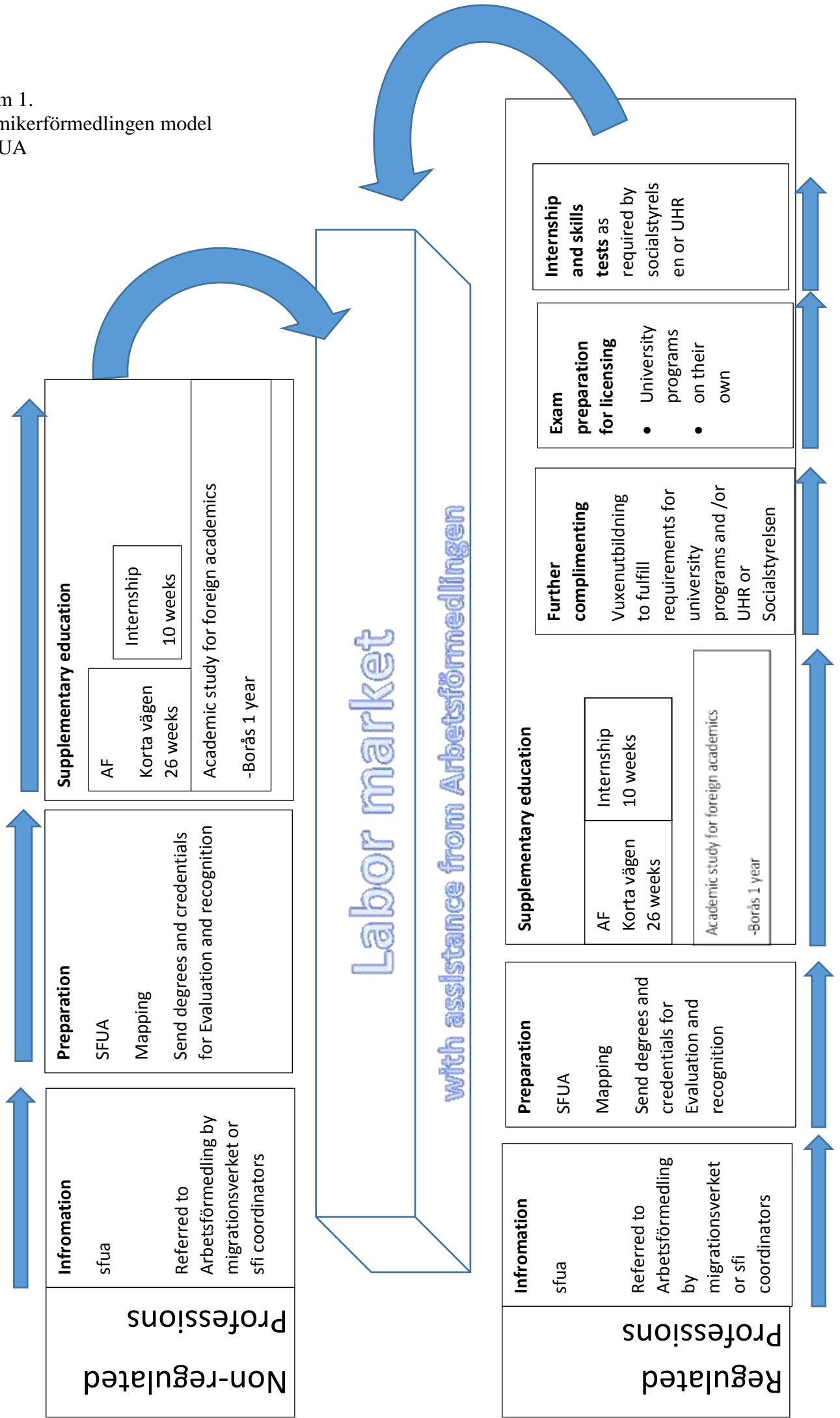
Although there has been some success in the current project form, a “more effective introduction and reception” is needed (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012). In addition, the current project form that the labor market training program exist because of the need in the labor market which means it can disappear when demand no longer exists. Foreign academics “are at risk of becoming a buffer in the Swedish labor market that is brought in when needed, but at other times are ‘forced’ into work that they are overqualified for” (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012). Moreover, when foreign academics take jobs they are overqualified for, those jobs aren’t available for whom they are better suited.

foreign academics should also be given the opportunity to compete at times of both demand and surplus of professionals in the labor market which would be facilitated by permanent organization and financing of supplementary education programs, which, according to Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland, would also give education program organizers the possibility for continuity and long-term planning, which can only improve the programs and lead to an increase in specialization in the various educational programs and facilities. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012)

Today there is no clear commission or clear delegation of responsibilities. Just like the negative effects of the temporary nature labor geared projects, there can also be negative



Diagram 1.  
Akademikerförmedlingen model  
from PUA



effects from a lack of interaction that comes from the lack of permanent organization and financing. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012)

#### **4.5 Communication and cohesion**

Working on all of these issues will require, in some way or another, a unified path joining the project partners and the target group. PUA tried to not only work on getting the information to the target group, but also improve the communication between the partners and one that has been enthusiastically taken on by several of the partners. According to Lennart Svanberg, those at *Arbetsförmedlingen* and the colleges have discovered the value of meeting and have a greater appreciation of the potential contributions that each can make. He is very motivated and feels the motivation from the partners to keep the communication going strong and will continue to meet now that the project is over because “We believe in the model from West Sweden...and we are still working on it.” Svanberg feels that the cooperation between the different authorities and municipalities is the most important part of the project because *Arbetsförmedlingen* can't do it alone; they are dependent on colleges and *Länsstyrelsen* to hold it together.

During the project, there were efforts in both Västra Götalands and Halland counties for inter-municipal cooperation. In those sub-regions that already work together, there was focus on bridging the activities, involving *Arbetsförmedlingen* and educational coordinators. In other sub-regions and in Halland, the project, in cooperation with county administrative boards and funding help from paragraph 37 funds, which allows for compensation to municipalities and local authorities for initiatives for establishment activities, works towards increased cooperation. There is now existing cooperation or cooperation building efforts underway throughout Västra Götaland and Halland counties (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, pp. 46-7).

Most of the communication, which happens almost daily, is between *Arbetsförmedlingen* and the educational institutions. At Högskolan Borås and Folkuniversitet *Korta Vägen* programs in Gothenburg, the majority of the participants heard about the program through word of mouth. Many call the educational sites directly, unaware that they need to apply through *Arbetsförmedlingen*. They can now get information and apply through [www.kortavagen.se](http://www.kortavagen.se)

but the application still goes through *Arbetsförmedlingen*, who then contacts the applicant to come in for an interview, where they look at several factors, including language prognosis and motivation. Once they have been accepted by *Arbetsförmedlingen*, they are then referred to the *Korta Vägen* program. All applications are discussed by *Arbetsförmedlingen* caseworkers and directors within the educational programs. The communication continues during the program especially when the foreign academic is looking for internships.

Svanberg says he feels that it functions quite well right now with *Länsstyrelsen* as project leader “to hold the project all together... partially because they can be neutral and look at issues from another perspective. We, at *Arbetsförmedlingen*, have our own rules and own culture... Colleges have their value and their culture, how they look at the issues. It is good to have a neutral authority, a neutral platform where we can meet, that is important.”

One issue of cohesion that exists has to do with the mapping. Some *sfi* centers do it to get some idea of where to start, actually there are several different places where they might get a small mapping done for the purposes of that authority or institution, but according to Oskarsson, it would be so much more beneficial if they there were put in contact with *Arbetsförmedlingen* as early as possible to have a more thorough all-encompassing mapping, which would allow for a more natural transition among the organizations and institutions. Ideally, the foreign academic would have the same caseworker, from the beginning of the process to the point where they get employment, as there are certain caseworkers that have better skills to assist members of this target group.

While their program is commissioned by the government and not *Arbetsförmedlingen*, Pernilla Hultberg from the GU program for supplementary education for health care professionals feels she is part of a very valuable network, with lot of contact, cooperation and a lot of networking with the other partners involved, especially Folkuniversitet and Borås college, Halmstad and all of the colleges that participated, but not so much contact with *Arbetsförmedlingen*.

Samuel Heimann, Equal Opportunity Coordinator, says the administration decided to take part in the project because of one of its aim to remove the obstacles this group of people had to overcome to gain a smooth entrance to university; “it was about integration into the university” They didn’t have much contact beyond the project management team and certain educational sites because the university comes at the end of the process for those that need

licensing. They did take part in the project by mapping the supplementary programs that exist at GU. According to Heimann, it could have been beneficial if the legal and teaching programs had representation like the program for doctors, nurses and dentists had. (Heimann) Karklins and Lundgren explained that the communication continues beyond the meetings. They work with the same issues and have the opportunity to discuss these issues and can also call with questions. From their perspective, it can be very useful to have this type of inter municipal contact in terms of internship placement. While the overall focus of PUA should be for all foreign academics, it is apparent that some are particularly focused on certain groups. Karklins and Lundgren add that for them it is about “integration and establishment especially for newcomers, particularly refugees and their dependents”, which they stressed as a special focus group for *Arbetsförmedlingen*.

Rolf Lundström, director at UTI supports the need to look at different way of communicating and working on spreading the concept, he was not so involved in the various subprojects that took place. He attended the group meetings and while he appreciated the opportunity to talk with the others involved in the labor market geared programs, he felt they should have been a bit more informal to allow the opportunity to learn more from one another, such as how they work and how they make contact with businesses. Now that the project has ended he feels that should be more opportunities to meet with the other partners and share information informally (Lundström).

There was a meeting before the summer of 2013 for project partners where they discussed what the future would look like and how to move forward. There are also other networks that meet up, like educational coordinators in the rest of the country and also just in the west. There is also communication between educational coordinators and *Arbetsförmedlingen*. The project worked toward a focus of finding a system where these types of efforts would be a permanently organized and financed and see the needed development areas which will be important so that it could be made even better (Oskarsson). The focus for *Länsstyrelsen* is in creating a more encompassing system.

In West Sweden, educational administrators who have been commissioned to start *Korta Vägen* programs, as a result of efforts in PUA, with whom they meet and exchanged experiences with teachers counselors, course directors, etc. Each time they meet there are new members. They still meet up now that the project is over, though not as often. They are

also involved in national communication, through meetings and by mail. There is less contact now with *Länsstyrelsen* now that the project has ended (Forslund).

The presence of certain authorities and organizations has been missed by the project partners. According to Karklins and Lundgren, it would be beneficial if employers who deal with these issues and see the importance of diversity in the workforce were more involved in the communication. Pernilla Hultberg feels *Socialstyrelsen* would be another beneficial group to have more communication with because they are involved in the decision process for the recognition of the foreign academics' credentials. A further group whose presence was missed is *Migrationsverket*. As they are the first authorities most of the foreign academics meet, it would be beneficial if they had the information to give out and tell where they need to go.

Currently, the minister of Integration Eric Ullenhag has shown interest. Lundström feels that if Ullenhag and *Migrationsverket* were more interested it would be beneficial and it would "be a win in getting people to work quicker" (Lundström). "It's not about finding a job; it's about finding the right job. If someone has experience they should be able to use it in Sweden... There are tools but we don't use them... that's a shame because we are missing a lot of competence that's missing in Sweden. It's out there we are just bad at capturing it" (Hultberg). Hultberg feels that one goal of PUA is that it should be a part of the regular functions of those involved and no longer in project form, with a limited time and budget. She expressed the need for "a clear commission" to assess someone's qualifications and help them further.

## **4.6 Meeting the goals**

### **4.6.1 Participant survey**

PUA conducted a participant survey in the fall of 2012. Based on a 60.1% response, it was shown that 67.5 % of those respondents were in a relevant occupation according to the guidelines (*Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p.31*). 63 % of the project's 507 participants got a job after completing the program. What should be taken into consideration with these figures is that, since the program ran from 2009 to 2012 and the survey was taken in 2012,

not all had the opportunity to find work. In addition, some of the participants that did find a job were no longer employed at the time of the survey which means that the percentage of participants employed at the time of the survey stood at 48%. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 29-30)

Done in 2010, based on prognosis and 2012 based on the figures they got from the actual results of the project, the project leaders feel it is a “reasonable assumption” that the type of efforts made for immigrants in PUA could shorten the time it takes for them to 2-3 years instead of the circa 5 years it would otherwise take (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 37). Even though some lost the jobs that they had, for the 48 % that were employed, it took an average 2.7 years for them to find work, compared to the commonly presented fact that it can take on average 7 years for a foreign academic to get a job. This means that the time was shortened by more than 4 years, meaning that the socioeconomic profit for this group was around 327 million sek. In a more conservative view if the time it takes to get into a job is shortened by just 2 years the total socioeconomic profit for the group involved in the *Korta Vägen* programs during PUA is closer to 73 million sek. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 37) It comes to quite a savings and “politicians listen to that” (Malm). In terms of a specific *Akademikerförmedlingen* organization, Annika Malm wasn't sure if that would be a viable option, but that that would be for the politicians to decide.

#### **4.6.2 Success for whom?**

Oskarsson had hoped for more progress in terms of the model becoming part of a national program but was very confident that they had provided a model that can work on a national level. Others, such as Annika Malm at Högskolan Borås, feel it was about trying to influence the government and department of education by presenting different models. Annika sees it as having been quite successful because it has “lifted the issue to a national level” as well as “gotten the attention of the labor market department” (Malm). She sees success in the number of programs that have started since the beginning of PUA. Programs such as *Korta Vägen* have been around for much longer in West Sweden. They mentioned a study visit they went on to Stockholm where they were presenting this “new” concept that they had already had in West Sweden for many years (Malm and Forslund). They have gotten calls from *Arbetsförmedlingen* offices all over Sweden asking how it's done and if they could come for

a study visit. PUA had spread the word; people started hearing about it from other people but not officially through *Arbetsförmedlingen*. (Malm)

### **4.6.3 Motivation**

Ultimately it is the motivation of the person that can determine the success of their process. There are other ways, even for those that need to be licensed in Sweden. Some have successfully gone through komvux and taken the skills test and done an internship. However, unless the process starts early, there is a risk that skills will be outdated or lost and the language learning will suffer which in combination may lead to feelings of discouragement and lack of motivation (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p.16). For those foreign academics, like Alexandra, that have had many years of experience in their fields, their motivation is high, as Alexandra states, “I worked for 20 years so it is very hard sit and not work” (Alexandra). Ahmad has worked in his field of health care many years and doesn’t want to do anything else and he is confident that he has the skills required to do the job: “Many rules here ...to learn, but the medicine is the same.” (Ahmad)

Iman, a Math teacher from Iraq, comes to the program with a rather different background. She is mother of 4 and grandmother of 3. She has been in Sweden since 2002 and after waiting for four years for a residence permit, studied Swedish for three years, getting to SVA B, but had to stop because of issues at home, which kept her away from her path for 4 years. She is now finally able to get back to her studies. After doing an internship that utilized her math skills, but not teaching related, she felt even stronger that being a Math teacher was what she wanted to do. Although the prioritized group for these program are newcomers, due to the fact that they have the best chance for success, Iman was accepted into the program and her motivation to do what she needs to do to succeed is clear.

### **4.6.4 Integration as an issue**

Through the translation of integration to an issue of employment by the enactment of the establishment reform promoted by Erik Ullenhag, the policy makers clearly made the connection between actions for integration and actions toward helping at least one group of foreign academics toward the labor market in Sweden. All of those that I interviewed see the

fact that a person can find a job in their field as one of the many contributing factors to a feeling of integration and what integration means for each person: a feeling of belonging in society, a feeling of contributing to society or an equal mixture of receiving and giving to society. The scope of this issue is too great to address in this paper, it is however a partial driving force for the coordinators of the project and the foreign academics themselves and, therefore, a large piece of the puzzle to what *Länsstyrelsen* calls *Kasam* (känsla av samanhang), which is one of the general goals of the project. Although determining the effect that employment has on integration is not the purpose of this thesis, the question was asked to show that many of those involved in this project are motivated by this belief. Integration is very important as a long term goal for the project.

According to Svanberg, it is important that they are able to support themselves as quickly as possible, hopefully as close to their own education as possible. “It is the cornerstone, that’s part of it the whole time, always in our thoughts” (Svanberg). According to Rolf Lundström, integration follows when they are able to work in their field of study.” If they get into a Swedish company, there will be good integration, it functions well this way.” Formerly called “Diversity College,” integration has always been an important goal due to the large population of immigrants in Borås. It has always been important to work against the obstacles (Malm).

## **4.7 Communication with *Arbetsförmedlingen***

### **4.7.1 Foreign academics’ experience with *Arbetsförmedlingen***

In order to get into the program, foreign academics must apply through *Arbetsförmedlingen*, and then be interviewed by Folkuniversitet to see if they are right for the program and to determine their goals and expectations. The manner in which the participants found out about *Korta Vägen* can have an effect on their pathway. If they were already signed up with *Arbetsförmedlingen*, and been forwarded to the appropriate caseworker before completing *sfi*, then it may be a smooth transition.

For those that are already in *sfi* programs for foreign academic and are referred to *Arbetsförmedlingen* because they need to be signed up in order to apply for *Korta Vägen*, the process should also be smoother, at least in theory. Samantha, who had to go through



*Arbetsförmedlingen* (Culture), because she is an artist, found it to be a very upsetting experience. “I try not to go there because quite frankly...I always feel not in the loop ...my first experience with *Arbetsförmedlingen* Culture was so bad that I don’t ever go there, I mean I left crying...It was ridiculous and it was thoughtless “The first person she spoke to wouldn’t help her “until she spoke Swedish and that was pretty intense “I try not to go there...It’s not my favorite place” (Samantha). She found that she had to “learn how to deal with them.” She was successful the following time, when she brought someone with her, but if she can “get away with just an email” she would prefer that. She was accepted then put on a list to be interviewed by someone at *Korta Vägen*. Alexandra, on the other hand, was already signed up with *Arbetsförmedlingen* and yet found out about the *Korta Vägen* program from a komvux teacher because her first caseworker had never informed her about the program (Samantha). Another foreign academic felt that many of the caseworkers at *Arbetsförmedlingen* are not very helpful for someone in his field: “*Arbetsförmedlingen* knows nothing about this, only the few that work with this know” His impression was that the caseworker in Alingsås only knew about the financial support and was not concerned that he spent 6 months in level C at Lernia (Ahmad).

Many in Saco’s nationwide study have reported that, while *Arbetsförmedlingen* should be the one to help, they have not been very successful at doing so due in part to their indistinct commission and role. (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013)

It has also been said that with *Arbetsförmedlingen*, “it’s about luck. Coordination and cooperation between various authorities is needed, as well as clearer guidelines and administrative support within *Arbetsförmedlingen*”(Edström and Tafur Jonsson 2013, p. 10). *Arbetsförmedlingen* should strengthen their skills in what academics need and “improve their internal guidelines and administrative support, as well as individually tailor their information” (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013, p.11). One commented in the report that she got information about the UTI program from her Swedish language program and not from *Arbetsförmedlingen* and wondered how it could be that, even though she very frequently spoke to *Arbetsförmedlingen*, but they never mentioned the program to her.( Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013, p 29). Another found out about a program for foreign teachers from an announcement in Metro which would have been perfect for her, but she was not informed about it at *Arbetsförmedlingen*. (Edström and Tafur Jonsson 2013, p.29)

#### **4.7.2 Other authorities and educational institutions experience with *Arbetsförmedlingen***

There is need for a cohesive set of actions within *Arbetsförmedlingen* as well. There are so many different types of initiatives at *Arbetsförmedlingen* and so many types of preparatory programs that it's difficult for individual caseworkers to get a picture of everything that exists and find the right way in the system. This is an issue mentioned both by Alexander Oskarsson for *Länsstyrelsen* and Karklins and Lundgren from *Arbetsförmedlingen*. They try to keep the caseworkers updated and remind them that such programs exist, but they still find that most foreign academics that apply for the *Korta Vägen* programs have found out about them through word of mouth (Karklins and Lundgren). Although not always the case, when foreign academics come into *Arbetsförmedlingen* they are sent to caseworkers that have experience with this target group. "They all understand where they should study Swedish and why there," according to Eva Karklins and Slavica Lundgren. This is the situation in Gothenburg and Borås where they have had more success. In smaller municipalities there have been more difficulties as with a man from Alingsås that applied who felt that he was stuck in sfi ( I believe this to be Ahmad, but as his interview was after this interview, I have not confirmed this). He told them he felt as if it would take him at least a year to get into D because "there are just different standards."

Marianne Carlander feels that the communication between Folkuniversitet and *Arbetsförmedlingen* runs quite smoothly and most of the caseworkers are informed. Unfortunately they don't give out as much information as they should, but Carlander explains that the fact that there is so much change-over with personnel and services that it makes it difficult to keep everyone up-to-date. They have on occasion had to intervene when students have had issues, but according to Carlander, "There is always a way to work it out" (Carlander).

#### **4.8 Advocacy efforts of *Länsstyrelsen* during and *Arbetsförmedlingen* PUA**

Due to the actions in PUA, there was national dissemination of this type of employment geared training. After 2010, there were a total of 12 *Korta Vägen* programs and after 2012 there were nearly 20 *Korta Vägen* programs financed by *Arbetsförmedlingen*. While PUA

continued to only work directly on developing those original 6 programs in West Sweden, all programs were connected through networking meetings, which included caseworkers at *Arbetsförmedlingen*, with the aim to share their experience and methodology as well as a way to bring awareness to the situation of Foreign Academics in Sweden and possible permanent organization and financing

Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland has, from the beginning, been focused on trying to get the implementation of the successful strategies of labor market geared programs into a national program. These have been presented and discussed at numerous regional and national conferences and seminars. One such seminar occurred in the spring of 2011 in cooperation with Saco in regards to the *Riksrevisionen* review “Government’s actions for graduates with foreign education – predictable, efficient and effective?” (RiR 2011:16) giving PUA the opportunity to present the concept of a national plan (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 49). The main question of this seminar was “What obstacles exist for foreign academics in establishing themselves in the labor market?” The follow up conference in 2012 - “Time for a new Swedish model” led with the question: “How do we remove these obstacles?” The hope was to contribute to the upcoming integration policy strategy. Among other things PUA presented the model for the *Akademikerförmedlingen* (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 49).

At Almedalen 2012, PUA arranged, with the help of West Sweden’s chamber of commerce, the seminar “Are foreign academics a resource we are wasting?” to highlight the issue that exists for foreign academics as well as presenting *Akademikerförmedlingen*. Those involved included Integration Minister Eric Ullenhag, Saco’s chairman Göran Arrius and former vice president at Volvo technology, Malin Persson, as well as two former participants of the program (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p 50). The focus of the final conference of the project was to present the final results and stimulate future discussions on how to move forward. Those involved in the conference were: Eric Ullenhag, Governor Lars Bäckström of Västra Götaland, representatives from Saco and West Sweden’s chamber of commerce and former participants of the program. The Seminar ended with an evening of mingle, panel discussion and lecture with Eric Ullenhag, Minister of Integration, who met with several of the foreign academics as well. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012)

Throughout the program as well as *Arbetsförmedlingen*, there were several discussions with decision makers because “[a]n important part of successful advocacy is to communicate with

decision makers. It was therefore PUA's ambition to create a dialog with the country's decision makers." In the fall of 2011, PUA project leaders met with Eric Ullenhag's state secretary Jasenko Selimovic where they presented the project, highlighting the establishment reforms limited value for the target group as well as how narrow interpretation of the so-called "arbetslinjen" could hamper the foreign academics possibilities to get work in the field they studied for and have experience in. (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012). There was much interest in the project and its results by members of parliament that were involved with the education and/or labor market committee. Many motions and referral were sent to the parliament, specifically the Education Committee and the Department of Education, Integration and Equality by Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland.

Before the reforms for newly-arrived labor market establishment came into effect in December 2010, the project owners sent in a motion to highlight foreign academics need for certain actions and the risk of foreign academics finding themselves forced into work that doesn't meet their qualifications due to a too narrow interpretation of the so-called "labor line"

In conjunction with the parliamentary education committee dealing with the government's motion (Regeringen 2011) to the parliament in regards to the *Riksrevisionen's* evaluation of initiatives for immigrant academics (RiR 2011:16), the project owners CAB Västra Götaland wrote a motion to the committee (with a copy to the department of education where they presented the need for various actions and about the experiences they had in the project that could be useful coming integration political strategies (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 51)

In order to call attention to the situation the foreign academics face and prepare the society for the demographic changes and generation gap, PUA published several debate articles, many with Governor Lars Bäckström, Saco's chairman Göran Arrius as well as West Sweden chamber of commerce director Johan Trouvé, all to highlight the need for change in regards to the long pathway for foreign academics in entering the labor market.

#### **4.8.1 Efforts since the end of the project**

There are now 23 *Korta Vägen* programs in the country. Currently not functioning the way they had hoped, but there is continuous improvement according Alexander Oskarsson. *Länsstryelsen* is currently working with *sfi* programs to make sure that they get on “the right track as early as possible” (Oskarsson) Marianne Carlander from Folkuniversitet also feels that this is the right place to start with the right information. Not only with information regarding the appropriate supplementary programs, but the appropriate *sfi* language courses as well. At Folkuniversitet, they separate the *sfi* groups out early. There are continued efforts to meet with other authorities to find continued ways of working together in their ordinary activities to try to solve issues keep working on cohesion among the former partners. There was contact in the beginning of the summer with *Migrationsverket* and there is now interest in using the web portal more, Oskarsson said in more positive note. He feels they have been working on the communication.

#### **4.8.2 Saco takes the lead**

During the project, Saco took a great interest in the concept and helping it spread. They became a major actant in the efforts to helping to make the concept of the *akademikerförmedlingen* a national plan. The efforts they made involved a study of foreign academics on their view about what would be most helpful for getting foreign academics on the path to employment in Sweden. In addition they took part in several of the conferences to promote the idea and get the interest of politicians. In a more practical step they created a web portal with information about all *Korta Vägen* programs. Their efforts to promote the concept have helped to spread it to many other municipalities and get the attention of many politicians.

According to Saco, coordination of information is necessary. If the national government makes the effort to coordinate, then they can have a better overview of whether or not there is equal opportunity, regardless of region or reason for immigration.

Ultimately though it was felt in the Saco study the government should take responsibility to see that the information is collected and spread:

“The government should take responsibility for gathering and compiling relevant information from authorities and organizations in a national guidance plan to the Swedish labor market. Such a plan will create good conditions for

newcomer academics to plan for their future and make informed decisions... In undertaking this work, and there after continuously update, guidance should involve a large number of authorities and organizations... The government must lastly ensure that the national guidance plan reaches out to all the people that, for different reasons move to Sweden”(Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013, p. 45).

Furthermore, Saco feels the authorities should focus on improving coordination and cooperation (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013). It was recommended by several interviewed in the study by Saco that with the letter *Migrationsverket* sends regarding their residency, they should include information that would start them out right (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013). In this letter they can be informed of the appropriate authority to visit to sign up for *sfi* and include a brochure for the web portal [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se). Another recommendation in the Saco study was that the information can also come from Skatteverket, when they receive their personal number. These two authorities are generally the earliest encountered for immigrants and early information will was the main focus of the project.

## 5 Analysis

### 5.1 Opening the action net

This case study began just after the completion of the EU funded project was completed, while still in the process of the re-creation of the action net. When I started with my case study, the strongest connections already in existence were between *Arbetsförmedlingen* and the educational institutions that provided the *Korta Vägen* program in Gothenburg and Borås. The collective actions that were already connected in the action net that existed before this project resulted in a successful outcome for the foreign academics that found the appropriate caseworkers. Because of this they received the appropriate guidance and were referred to the program for foreign academics, if it was right for them. The project management team for PUA opened the existing action net in order to improve the lines of communication for information, improve the *Korta Vägen* programs and develop a model for a permanent national program.

Since a large focus in the project was about early information, the directive that came out in 2010, while PUA was underway had a direct effect on the actions they had planned. With the government directive for establishment activities aimed at refugees, asylum seekers and their dependents, the initiatives created an inequality in access to information. This resulted in several missing connections resulting in a lack of action in the action net for the most expeditious pathway for foreign academics entering the labor market in their field of study and practice.

### 5.2 The Actants

Earlier, this thesis introduced the partners involved in the organization of the project PUA, which was set up for the purpose of improving the action net for the shortest path to the Swedish labor market for foreign academics. Here below, the actants and their roles in this action net will be presented. Not all of the actants mentioned below were partners in PUA, but certainly have a role in the action net. There were also some additions to this action net because it is also possible for new actants to become a part of already formed action nets,

“thus recreating and stabilizing these connections” which are formed during translations in various forms (Czarniawska 2004, p 783).

*Länsstyrelsen* - The management team has always been a part of this action net. PUA worked as an umbrella project to oversee and to improve the transition from one stage to the next, as well as the promotion of the concepts involved. PUA had as its management team, three people from *Länsstyrelsen*. PUA also set up a **steering committee, work groups and network meetings**. All members of these three subgroups were already actants in the action nets, collective actions can be seen as temporary boundary procedures to facilitate the improvements attempted under PUA.

The core actants of the original action net were the branch professional caseworkers at *Arbetsförmedlingen*, the **educational program administrators and teachers**, and the **foreign academics**. As the founding authority for labor geared educational supplementary skills training, *Arbetsförmedlingen* is responsible for commissioning the programs with local (vocational) colleges and universities as well as meeting with the foreign academics for mapping and helping with sending their degrees and licenses to the appropriate authorities: **UHR** or *Socialstyrelsen* depending on the branch. *Arbetsförmedlingen* is also responsible for determining which applicants will be suited to the *Korta Vägen* program. The successful applicants are referred to the **educational sites**, which are responsible for further interviews. The sites provide the foreign academic with the opportunity to improve their language and other skills that will supplement the skills they hold as well as prepare those that need to study further at **university programs** in order to pass exams to get their Swedish licenses.

Newly arrived **foreign academics**, both **those with refugee status** (on arrival or through asylum) **and re-united dependents and others** (including students that have decided to stay, love immigrants and trailing spouses) should have equal chance to apply and be accepted to *Korta Vägen* programs. However, the latter group is at risk of not getting referred to *Arbetsförmedlingen* due to the increased focus on the former group as a result of the 2010 establishment reform. Those that have been given, or found the information on their own, and have successfully applied to the programs, separate paths based on their professional branch. In programs in smaller municipalities like Borås, **those in regulated professions** and **those in non-regulated positions** are placed in the same program. In Gothenburg, they are placed in branch appropriate groups, such as the UTI and Economics programs and the health



care professionals program. The further they are along on their path, one can see the different connections necessary for this group (discussed in 5.4). I see the foreign academics as actants in the action net because of their own agency in the process, but they can also be seen as beneficiaries of the action net. The labor market can also be seen as a beneficiary of the action net because with a well-connected action net, the foreign academics will have the skills needed for the jobs available.

**Migrationsverket** was a partner in the project, mainly for the joint effort to set up the web portal that has a wide range of information from housing to information specifically for foreign academics. There was also representation from *Migrationsverket* on the steering committee. The goal was for the employees at *Migrationsverket* to refer all newcomers to the web portal so the foreign academics could find the information pertinent to their situation. While these actions proved to be few and far between during the project, since the end of the project there have been more discussions and a more positive attitude towards their role in the action net.

**SFI educational programs** were not a part of the project, but guidance counselors and administrators from some *sfi* programs were already actants in the action net.

**The employers** accepting the interns and employees because they see the value of their education and the ability to improve the Swedish were actants in the action nets from before the attempt to recreate it. In addition, though not specifically listed as partners in the project, the creation the model whereby some employers could be financially reimbursed opens the opportunity for more for validation.

**Mentors** from the rotary club were partners that were added after the start of the program and they were also new actants in the action net.

**Saco** was also a new partner in the project added after the start. They also were a new actant.

### 5.3 The Action Net

The action net diagram for the pathway to employment for foreign academics (see diagram 2, p. 62) gives an overview of some of the more necessary connections (see section and missing connections of concern (see section 5.3.3)

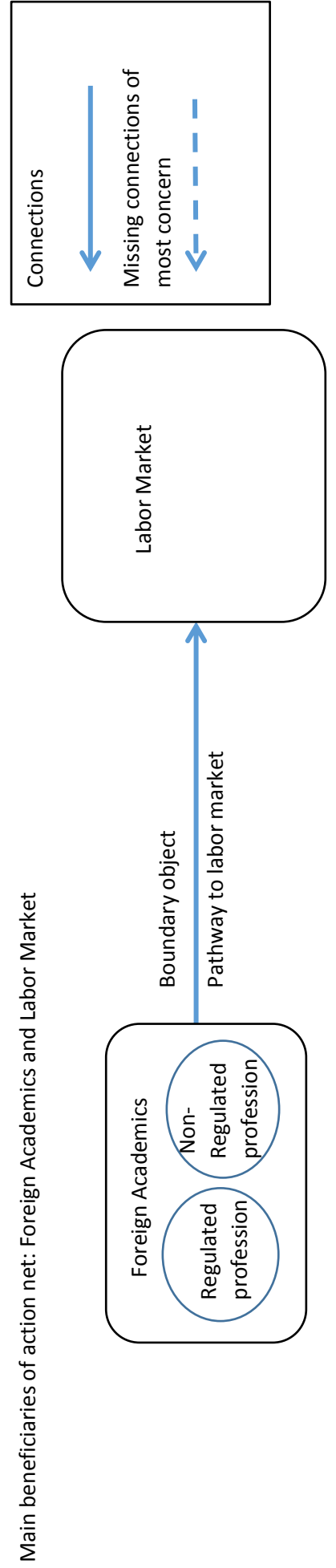
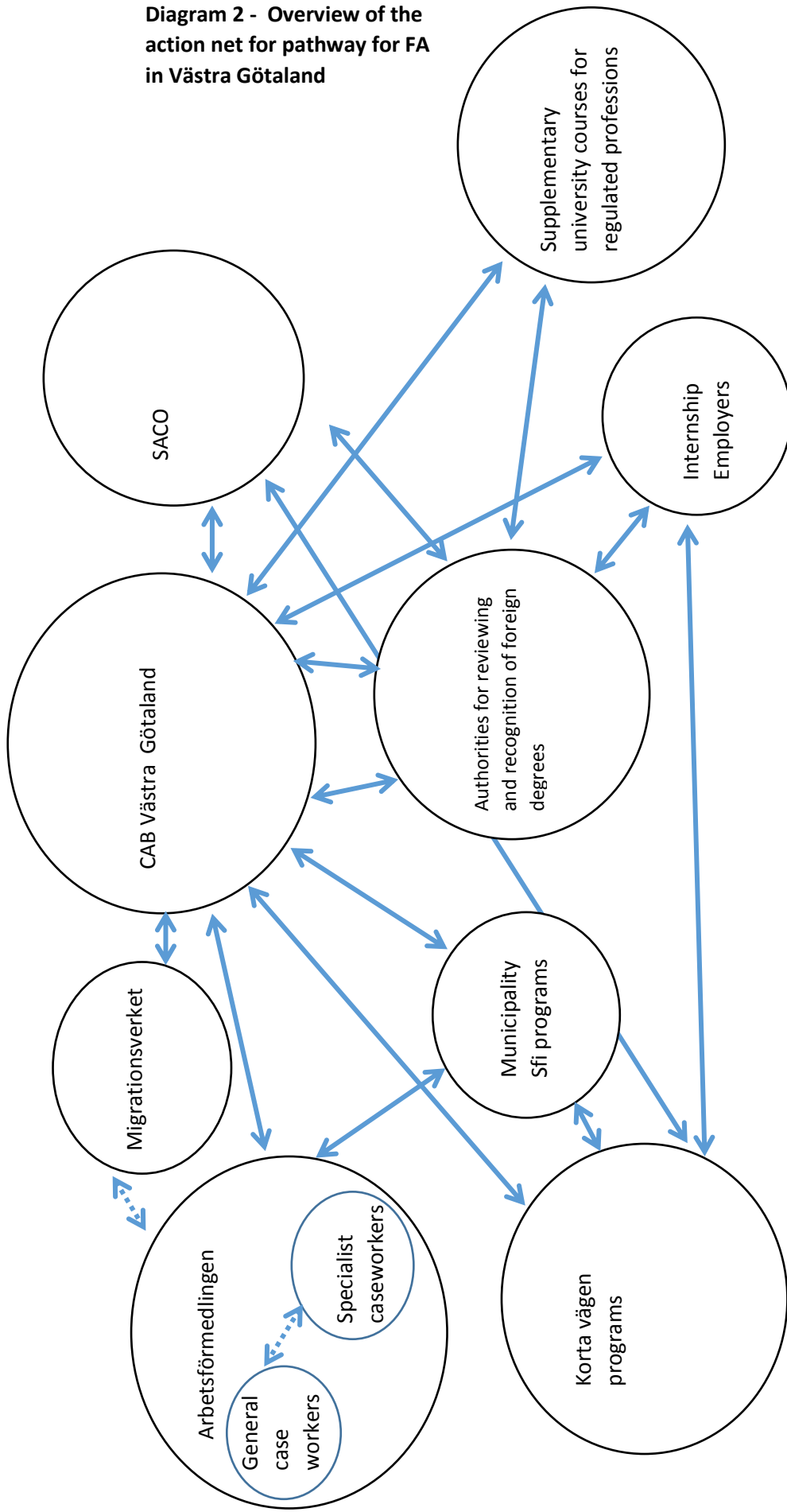
### 5.3.1 Boundary objects and procedures

In Lindberg and Czarniawska (2006), boundary objects and procedures are discussed as a way to “act as stabilizers in an action net.” (Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p 295) They bind the actants together in the action net, regardless of the different meanings they hold for the various actants. In their study of the Högsbö model - health care for senior citizens between hospitals and care homes - Lindberg and Czarniawska (2006) described the patients as boundary objects of the coordinated actions on their behalf. In PUA, the agency of the foreign academics is an integral part of the pathway and therefore I see this path and not the foreign academics themselves as the main boundary object and the foreign academics as actants in the action net. In addition, the focus for *Arbetsförmedlingen* in this pathway is utilizing the valuable skills of the foreign academics both the benefit of the foreign academics and the demands of the labor market. One example of the agency of the foreign academic is the struggle and effort that Ahmad went through in order to get someone to look for a program that suited his needs.

One boundary procedure in the action net that was being expanded under PUA was their own so-called “network meetings” They all gathered to discuss their part in shortening the path, they shared stories from their part of the action net in order to strengthen the action net and learn from one another. Another boundary procedure can be mapping of the foreign academic. This activity takes on a different meaning for each actant. For the education centers it is a way of seeing what needs to be supplemented or what course would be best for them. For *Arbetsförmedlingen*, it is a way of seeing how they can be employed.

Just as the Högsbo model was turned into the boundary object known as the chain of care model so that it could be translated for use by others, (Lindberg 2002 p 189), the path to employment in Sweden was translated into the concept of the akademikerförmedling so that it could be translated.

**Diagram 2 - Overview of the action net for pathway for FA in Västra Götaland**



### 5.3.2 Strong Connections

In the *Korta Vägen* program itself some of the new connections were with branch mentors facilitated by Rotary of West Sweden. There were attempts to involve employees more with the validation model they produced. Some of the connections in the action net are more stabilized because the actions have been repeated and institutionalized. This is especially true of the connections the UTI program has with branch professionals. From the very beginning of the program, they are observing the foreign academics as they would for a job interview. The goal of internship is that it could potentially lead to work. The director there likes to have personal contact with employers that he thinks would work well with foreign academics in the programs that he has gotten to know very well, followed up by personal interviews between the two.

#### 5.3.2.1 *Migrationsverket* at the start of the path

As a way to counter the perceived unfair effects of the establishment reform, the project management team at *Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland* tried to, with limited success, engage *Migrationsverket* in spreading the information to all foreign academics about which authorities and organizations can help them, or at least refer them to the web portal. Had there been collective actions on the part of *Migrationsverket*, connections could have been formed with to *Arbetsförmedlingen*, but the translation of the need for the for foreign academics to be informed at the earliest possible moment- even before learning the language - into the web portal only formed a weak connection. *Migrationsverket* may only be virtually connected, since they are neither in the field of education or the employment service, but if the actions are carried out and the foreign academic are then led to *Arbetsförmedlingen* which leads to greater opportunities to get the supplementary education they will need to enter the labor market in Sweden, their collective actions have played an necessary role.

The concern of the unfair advantage of the refugees and asylum seekers, and in some cases the re-united family members may have over the other groups is only one example of the missing connections. From an integration point of view, Oskarsson sees the split as a hindrance for those that don't fall under these groups, including the dependents that come later that may not be referred to *Arbetsförmedlingen*. This perceived hindrance is based on the assumption that once they are with *Arbetsförmedlingen* they will be properly taken care

of. From my field study, I have seen that this is quite often not the case. It is clear that there are some very qualified caseworkers doing an excellent job at guiding the foreign academics in the right direction. The collective actions of Arne Nyrèn, who advises engineers and technicians; Eva Karklins and Slavica Lundgren, who advise health care regulated health care professions in Gothenburg; as well as Lennart Svanberg in Borås, have strengthened the action nets. They are all well informed about what is needed for the branch groups they are involved with as well as those in other branches. They are confident that, currently, the best chance for success lies in getting them to the right program and their actions represent those beliefs. The connections between the right people at *Arbetsförmedlingen* and the educational facilities are strong. At *Arbetsförmedlingen*, the missing connections are among the general caseworkers and the branch specific caseworkers (See section 5.3.2.4).

### **5.3.2.2 Attempted connections with the website**

Their aim for the website , which was created as a joint effort between *Migrationsverket* and *Länsstyrelsen* and the various actants, was to be the one place that everybody could go to in order to connect. Connections could not only be made between the foreign academics and the necessary authorities and organizations, but connections between the various authorities and educational programs. This boundary object could have different meaning for the different actants. For the foreign academics is what information to help guide them. For the educational programs it was a way to reach potential students. For *Arbetsförmedlingen* it was a way to reach potential employable people. For all of those that came into contact with the foreign academics it was a tool to look up the most recent information.

The web portal itself has the potential to be the useful tool it was intended to be.

Unfortunately the knowledge of its existence was not sufficiently spread. In this field study, none of the foreign academics that I interviewed had heard of the site before they started in *Korta Vägen*. In addition, since the end of the project, there was less opportunity to have an overview of the web portal and see that all the appropriate updates and additions were being made so that not only the foreign academics would have the latest information, but the authorities and organizations that came into contact with them as well.

### **5.3.2.3 Missing connections within *Arbetsförmedlingen***

A large number of foreign academics is not getting referred to the appropriate caseworkers within an appropriate time frame, or at all. Many of the general caseworkers are not aware that they should be referred to these special caseworkers. A common excuse given was that there is so much turn over in personnel that it is difficult to ensure that they are aware of all of the training options available. The connections are missing. There is some acknowledgement of these missing connections; however, there were no planned actions in the project to address the issue. These connections are missing within individual offices and between offices and in smaller municipalities that don't have specific caseworkers for foreign academics and those that do. The experience that Samantha had with the first caseworker *Arbetsförmedlingen* (Culture) that wouldn't help her until she improved her Swedish is indicative of the lack of knowledge of *Arbetsförmedlingen*'s role in this particular action net. The person saw his task as helping those who are ready to find work. The collective actions of *Arbetsförmedlingen* are also to help supplement what they don't have and Swedish is seen as the skill that these actants don't have and, therefore, this caseworker should have been willing to see what could be done for her to make her ready for employment. There was no specified action in the project to address the missed connections and thus no translation of the concept of Swedish as just another skill needed in order to be successful in the Swedish labor market.

#### **5.3.2.4 Municipal sfi educational programs and *Arbetsförmedlingen***

An important step in the path that works in the foreign academic's favor is getting into the right *sfi* program for foreign academics from the beginning. The foreign academics applying for *sfi* with Gothenburg stad should be referred to the *sfi* at Folkuniversitet and those applying in Borås city they should be referred to the program at Högskolan Borås. In these two municipalities, the connections have been established between the specific *sfi* for foreign academics and *Arbetsförmedlingen*. It is best if they are sent to the programs geared specifically to foreign academics because these programs take their previous education into consideration. In addition, they are more likely to get information about the *Korta Vägen* programs, or the additional Invandrarakademin at Högskolan Borås, while in the *sfi* programs. The actions of actively informing the foreign academics of their options have already been connected to the *Korta Vägen* and other supplementary programs for foreign

academics. While other *sfi* sites, that may sporadically pass on information, have not become an integral part of this action net.

### 5.3.3 The Translations

The connections above are possible because of translations that occurred before hand. Below are some of the larger translations that occurred in PUA or earlier to create the action net that was re-created as a result of PUA. Connections hold together collective actions which are achieved through “translating the conditions of one collective action into those of another” (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 9).

One of the earliest translations in the action net, which occurred long before the PUA began, but is the basis for the shortened pathway, was the very concept of the labor market geared supplementary education program being translated into the EU project *Korta den Långa Vägen*. This is something that was innovative when seen from the perspective of the academic institutions. It came at education from a different approach than traditional academic educational institutions, which can be seen by the individuality of the program – not all need to have the same level of Swedish when they finish. In the fact the foreign academics don’t even need to complete the program to be successful. If they complete the program early because they have found employment, they have been successful. This is in opposition to the situation in the traditional educational institution, where the education is finished when the class is finished and the points have been earned. Another translation that occurred here was taking the idea of Swedish language education and translating it to one of job skills training through the commissioning of the labor market geared programs.

In some cases “the connection can rest on the introduction of a new artifact” (Corvellec and Czarniawska, 2014 p. 8). This type of connection can be represented in the first focus area of the project - more accessible information - by the introduction of the web portal. With the web portal the idea that the foreign academics should have more information and it should be accessible to all regardless of location or language skills was translated into the web portal. When the view of the foreign academics changes from that of a potential burden on society or person that needs protection from the state to a resource not to be wasted, the foreign academics evolved from a position of boundary object to an actant. The decision to move the

establishment activities to *Arbetsförmedlingen* can be seen as a translation of the foreign academics from a group that needs to be taken care of to a group that can contribute to society. From this point I see the new boundary object as being the path that the foreign academics takes to employment in Sweden in their field of study and practice. This change of attitude toward refugees in particular was expressed by Eric Ullenhag at the final conference for PUA:

“...the compassionate refugee policy has sometimes taken over how we've taken care of the refugees who have arrived. We have thought that we should feel sorry for those who have fled. We have asked not what they can do and how they can contribute. Instead, we have asked what needs to be done for them.” (Ullenhag 2012 in Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland 2012, p. 59)

In PUA, the model of the foreign academics' path to *Akademikerförmedlingen* in order to facilitate the spread of - or the travelling of the concept - so that it could be translated for use by politicians, policy makers to create a national plan and other counties and municipalities to facilitate starting up more programs (Lindberg 2002, p 189).

#### **5.4 Innovation and Mimesis**

The fact that there is no clear assigned responsibility for non-refugees does hinder the opportunity for resources from authorities to be spent on all foreign academics. A National directive which facilitates Länsstyrelsen's ability to coordinate efforts, by providing funding and commissioning responsibility for all foreign academics would go a long way in ensuring more stability in the actions. However one should not discount the effect that mimesis has had on the spreading of the concept. Lindberg and Czarniawska's finding that imitation was more conducive to cooperation should not be overlooked (Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p. 305). It is also through mimesis that local initiatives can be more innovative. The translation that occurred due to the imitation and innovation has only helped to strengthen the action net.

#### **Mimeses**



From the interviews with various partners who have expressed a desire for the government commission, the various recommendations found in the National Audit Reports and the study by Walter and Dietrich (2012) and other sources presented in this case study, it is clear that there is a desire and need for some form of regulation and funding so that such programs continue regardless of the fluctuating market demand. However it is also important to see what has been achieved through mimesis. Since the beginning of PUA, the *Korta Vägen* concept has spread from the 6 original programs in Västra Götaland to over 20 spread throughout the country, without national coordination, but rather through mimetic connection. In addition, many connection in action nets that have formed because of the project, have continued even the after the completion of the project. Other action nets have grown in other parts of the country and are now connected to the original action net in Västra Götaland through meetings and conferences with educational programs across Sweden. The mimetic connections between the *Korta Vägen* programs can be quite a positive factor in the institutionalization of such labor market geared education programs. As stated above, Lindberg and Czarniawska (2006) found that imitation was more conducive to cooperation and should be given more focus when managing inter-organizational activities (Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p. 305). This is in part to the potential of mimetic connections for being as “sustainable and stable as tight connections” such as these that would be created with stronger directives from the national government. These mimetic connections are less threatening to “established structures” and thus more achievable. Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006, p. 304).

The ultimate goal of PUA was to create successful small scale model that could then be presented nationwide. Throughout the project they engaged in promoting the model and making sure the concept spread. Their efforts, such as the many conferences and debate articles, in addition to connecting with Saco have helped to gain a lot of political attention as well. Saco had taken a major role in the continued fight for the directives going national while *Länsstyrelsen* Västra Götaland is working to ensure that what they have continues with the resources they have. Though the reason for the political attention was to gain the attention of policy makers, it contributed to the mimetic isomorphism and other parts of the country learned about the concept that had been translated into the model.

When the national establishment reform came, which targeted only one section of the target group of PUA, the main effect was that the other foreign academics weren't getting the same access to information. Those involved agree that a main goal in getting started on the right path is early information. Therefore, in order ensure that all get equal access to the

information, responsibility should be assigned to inform all newcomers of the appropriated authorities in terms of their path to the Swedish labor market and funding in terms of actions leading to this should be allotted equally. Despite the fact that municipalities actually have the responsibility to inform newcomers about *sfi* option, fewer than 10 % actually do. (Edström and Tafur Jonsson 2013, p.17)

The *Akademikerförmedlingen*, the translation of the short path concept for foreign academics was primarily for permanently organizing the various aspects of initiatives for foreign academics, but I believe that the momentum is there for these programs and directive for regulation of access to information is merely one more action to strengthen the action net. The actions by Saco in this action net have led to the translation of the perceived need for collection and coordination of information into their own web portal for this purpose as well as their continued advocacy efforts for foreign academics.

They have set up their own website to collect information and the sites are coordinated so that information from many actants in the action net can be shared. This study is not on who should have done what, but rather showing that normative and mimetic forces have led to the spreading of the concept and the coordinating a collecting efforts at a national level over coercive mimeses, which is then connected back to the action net in Västra Götaland.

In addition to the mimesis there were also normative isomorphism, such as the translation above, as well as goals express by Annika and LG from Borås college, which was to show other municipalities and county administrative boards what can be done and try to get them to do it that way so they can all join in a network for this (Annika and LG). This can also prove to be a strong force behind the concept spreading throughout Sweden.

## **Innovation**

The basic concept the labor market geared supplementary education program and it's translation into the EU funded project *Korta Vägen* can be seen as innovative when compared to traditional academic institutions. The success of this innovation led to a regular, though not permanently funded, program of the same name that is the basis for PUA. It came at education from a different approach than traditional academic educational institutions which

can be seen by the individuality of the program and the ‘moment’ at which the program was successful for them.

In the *Korta Vägen* approach, as stated above, the program should be adaptable, based on the needs of the individual. The translation that occurred here was taking the idea of Swedish language education and translating it to one of job skills training through the commissioning of the labor market geared programs. For example, for the purpose of employment, not all foreign academics need to have the same level of Swedish when they finish. Doctors, lawyers and teachers, for example, need to have a high level of Swedish because of their contact with the general public, however, some engineers for example, that may get work with an international company where Swedish is not the main language spoke. The other non-traditional concept found in *Korta Vägen* is the understanding of when the program is complete, as discussed in section 5.3.4. In traditional education programs there is a course plan that everyone needs to complete in order to get their points and the universities funding depends on the points earned.

It was recommended by several interviewed in the study by Saco that with the letter *Migrationsverket* sends regarding their residency, they should include information that would start them out right (Edström and Tafur Jonsson, 2013). In this letter they can be informed of the appropriate authority to visit to sign up for *sfi* and include a brochure for the web portal [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se). Another recommendation in the Saco study was that the information can also come from Skatteverket, when they receive their personal number. These two authorities are generally the earliest encountered for immigrants and early information will was the main focus of the project.

## **5.5 The potential effects of the collective actions translated into connections in PUA and beyond**

The connections that have occurred in the above situations have helped to create smoother transitions from one stage to the next without unnecessary detours. Firstly those that get the information at least about the website will know which authority or educational site to see to get assistance. The authorities and organizations that have the crucial contact with the foreign academics are better informed of what the other person is doing and how they can help each

other to provide the best information. Those foreign academics that have connected with the appropriate caseworkers at *Arbetsförmedlingen* will be informed of the opportunities available to them.

Focusing attention on the missing connections, such as those between the general caseworkers and the foreign academics caseworkers, will only strengthen the action net which will lead to even more foreign academics supplementing their skills, creating a more even playing field for all.

The actions by *Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland*, Saco and certain politicians to raise the issue of foreign academics need for a shorter more cohesive path to employment in Sweden will work toward more translocal connections between various initiatives. The more the concept spreads throughout the country, any potential directives or assignments of responsibility will be only strengthened by the growing local interpretations of the concept, which will lead to more security for these local action nets.

## 6 Conclusion

Foreign academics, whether they are in need of protection from the state, love immigrant or trailing spouses, or have come to study in Sweden and decided to stay, all have the potential to contribute as professionals in the Swedish labor market. Unfortunately it has taken much longer than necessary for many foreign academics, which diminishes their chances of success. One key to shortening this time, would be supplement their education with the skills they need to compete in the Swedish labor market, including branch language, Swedish civic orientation and job hunting skills. This can of course only happen if the foreign academics are aware of the opportunities and can make decisions regarding their future soon after they arrive. After many years in Sweden, quite often foreign academics find themselves in employment positions well below their level of education and experience.

Since 2003, in West Sweden, there have been specific labor market geared training programs commissioned by *Arbetsförmedlingen*, both for specific fields as well as general programs to accommodate all professions. They have continued in large part as temporary projects, but PUA, the project that is the subject of this case study, wanted to help find permanent funding and coordination, as well as improving accessibility to information and strengthening the labor market geared programs available in West Sweden.

The fact that there is no clear assigned responsibility for non-refugees does hinder the opportunity for resources from authorities to be spent on all foreign academics. There is a willingness to keep the momentum going but if the funding and commission is limited not all resources that all foreign academics can offer are missed, simply because they are not getting the information. Through Projekt Utländska Akademiker, Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland tried to create a smoother path for foreign academics that could potentially be a national plan

PUA focused on the *Korta Vägen* programs commissioned by *Arbetsförmedlingen*, but this is not the only type of labor market geared program in Sweden. The idea is for the foreign academics to have the proper information so that they can make an informed decision on what is best for them. For those that have successfully found the *Korta Vägen* programs, the results have been encouraging. PUA was created to address certain inequalities and

deficiencies in the pathway to employment in Sweden for foreign academics that involves the *Korta Vägen* programs. The first issue they aimed to focus on was the accessibility and availability of the information regarding the KY program. The second is trying to improve upon certain aspects of the *Korta Vägen* program. Thirdly, PUA strived to create a model that could work as a permanently coordinated national program.

This thesis has examined the actions - new and continued - in the action net for the pathway to employment in Sweden for foreign academic. The theoretical starting point for this study was the organizing in action nets that took place. PUA opened it up to try to add more actions in order to improve and strengthen with the intention of addressing the inequalities and lack of coordination that existed.

This thesis has identified the existing connections, the added connections and the missing connections, both addressed and unaddressed in the project planning. The development of the web portal, which was an action to address the inequality and unequal accessibility in the spread of information, had limited success in the beginning because not many people had heard of it. This was in part because one potential authority which could have acted as an informant, were not taking on this role early in the project. In order to improve upon the *Korta Vägen* programs, attempts were made to connect the actions of the work group for the creation of validation model, which led to the potential for both foreign academics and employees to get a deeper understanding of the necessary skills for jobs in their profession. Another attempt to utilize the expertise of professionals in their fields was the addition of the mentor facilitated by Rotary of West Sweden. Thirdly in an attempt to create a permanent model that could work on the national level, the concept of the pathway was translated into the *Akademikerförmedlingen*, which has helped the concept to spread.

While PUA had addressed the missing connections that could be helped by the involvement of *Migrationsverket*, other missing connections that this case study identified were the missing connections between general caseworkers at *Arbetsförmedlingen* and foreign academic specialist caseworkers. This particular issue was not addressed as a specific point for improvement in PUA; however, these missing connections can be just as much of an obstacle to the foreign academics getting on the right path as any of the other hindrances mentioned, such as the inequality in the referral of certain foreign academics to *Arbetsförmedlingen* and not others.

This thesis showed the importance of focusing on the organizing to determine which were necessary contributions and identify potential points for further improvement. The web portal, which was slow to gain recognition as a tool for foreign academics, in fact still serves to connect all the partners that took part in PUA as well as being linked to Saco's web portal which acts to collect information about various supplementary education programs around the country.

Although it has been a major issue that people are not finding out about the programs early enough or at all, the *Korta Vägen* programs themselves have been successful for many that have found them. In many respects *Arbetsförmedlingen* has allowed a lot of autonomy to the individual *Korta Vägen* programs, which I think is very beneficial and allows for the *Korta Vägen* programs to tailor to the individual in the programs and allows for innovation. Through the interviews, this study revealed that there is a certain amount of flexibility in how the *Korta Vägen* programs are run at each site, which can lead to more innovation.

The actions to get national attention in order to get politicians and policy makers behind the idea of the *Akademikerförmedlingen* may not have succeeded yet in a national directive for implementation of the model, but it did result in mimetic connections between *Arbetsförmedlingen* offices and educational sites in other municipalities and regions, which resulted in many more action nets forming for the purpose of shortening the path.

## **6.1 Recommendations for further study**

From the beginning of PUA to the time of the last interview with the project leader, the number of programs grew from 6 to over 20 programs. Many connections were created merely by the efforts to gain national attention for the model. If there ever is a government commission for a plan like the *Akademikerförmedlingen*, which would assign responsibility and provide funding for the responsible parties, then a study should be made to determine how this contributes to increased numbers and if it strengthens the local action nets that already exist. It would also be beneficial to see which aspects had the most effect, the funding or the government commission itself.

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#### **Interviews from Partner authorities and Organizations**

Marianne Carlander (Director of *Korta Vägen* program at Folkuniversitet)

Samuel Heimann (Dept. of Equal Opportunity at GU)

Pernilla Hultberg (Director of program for health care professionals at GU/Sahlgrenska)

Jack Jarschild (Founder of *Korta Vägen* for *Arbetsförmedlingen*)

Eva Karklins and Slavica Lundgren (Caseworkers at *Arbetsförmedlingen* for health care professionals)

Rolf Lundström (Director at UTI)

Annika Malm and Lars-Gunnar Forslund (Högskolan Borås)

Arne Nyren (*Arbetsförmedlingen* Borås)

Alexander Oskarsson (Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland)

Lennart Svanberg (Caseworker at *Arbetsförmedling*, Borås for foreign academics)

### **Interviews of foreign academics in *Korta Vägen* programs**

Ahmad (X-ray nurse from Yemen, Refugee)

Samantha (Visual artist from U.S.A, Love immigrant)

Iman (Teacher from Iraq, Assylum seeker)

Nazila (Economist from Iran, studied in Sweden, remained in Sweden)

Alexandra (Dentist from Russia, Love immigrant)

Elizabeth (Economist from Ethiopia, studied in Sweden, Trailing Spouse)

Khatol (Teacher from Afghanistan, Love immigrant)

## 8 Appendices

### Appendix 1. Translations and clarifications

Original Swedish terms (in italics) have been used for authorities and organization, municipalities and counties and project names. When referring to the types of places in general terms, the English terms will be used. Gothenburg is used in most cases as this is an established English name for Göteborg.

**Akademikerförmedlingen** is the education model for the necessary steps for supplementary training and activities and accessible information for such programs for foreign academics.

*Arbetsförmedlingen* is the Swedish Public Employment Office.

**Foreign Academics** is the term given to those immigrants who have either completed a foreign degree and have worked in that field or to those that have at least three years of post-secondary education.

**Högskolan / Yrkeshögskolan** – college /vocational college

**Högskoleverket** was the previous authority for recognition of college qualifications, replaced by UHR which covers both university and college education. (see below)

**Komvux** (short for KOMmunal VUXenutbildning, literally "municipal adult education") is a form of secondary education for adults in Sweden. The government of Sweden allocates funds to the municipalities for this type of education.

*Korta Vägen* - Labor market geared supplementary programs for foreign academics.

**Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland** is the County Administrative Board for the county of Västra Götaland in West Sweden.

**Migrationsverket** is the Migration Board of Sweden.

**PUA - Project Utländska Akademiker** is an umbrella project from Länsstyrelsen VG to improve the information path, programing and sustainability of the *Korta Vägen* and similar labor market geared programs for foreign academics.

**Riksrevisionen**- The Swedish National Audit Office Review

**SACO -Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganization** is a trade union with 22 affiliated association for university graduates or professionals with a college degree.

**Socialstyrelsen** is The National Board of Health and Welfare, which is the authority for the recognition of degrees and licensing of health care professionals who studied outside of Sweden.

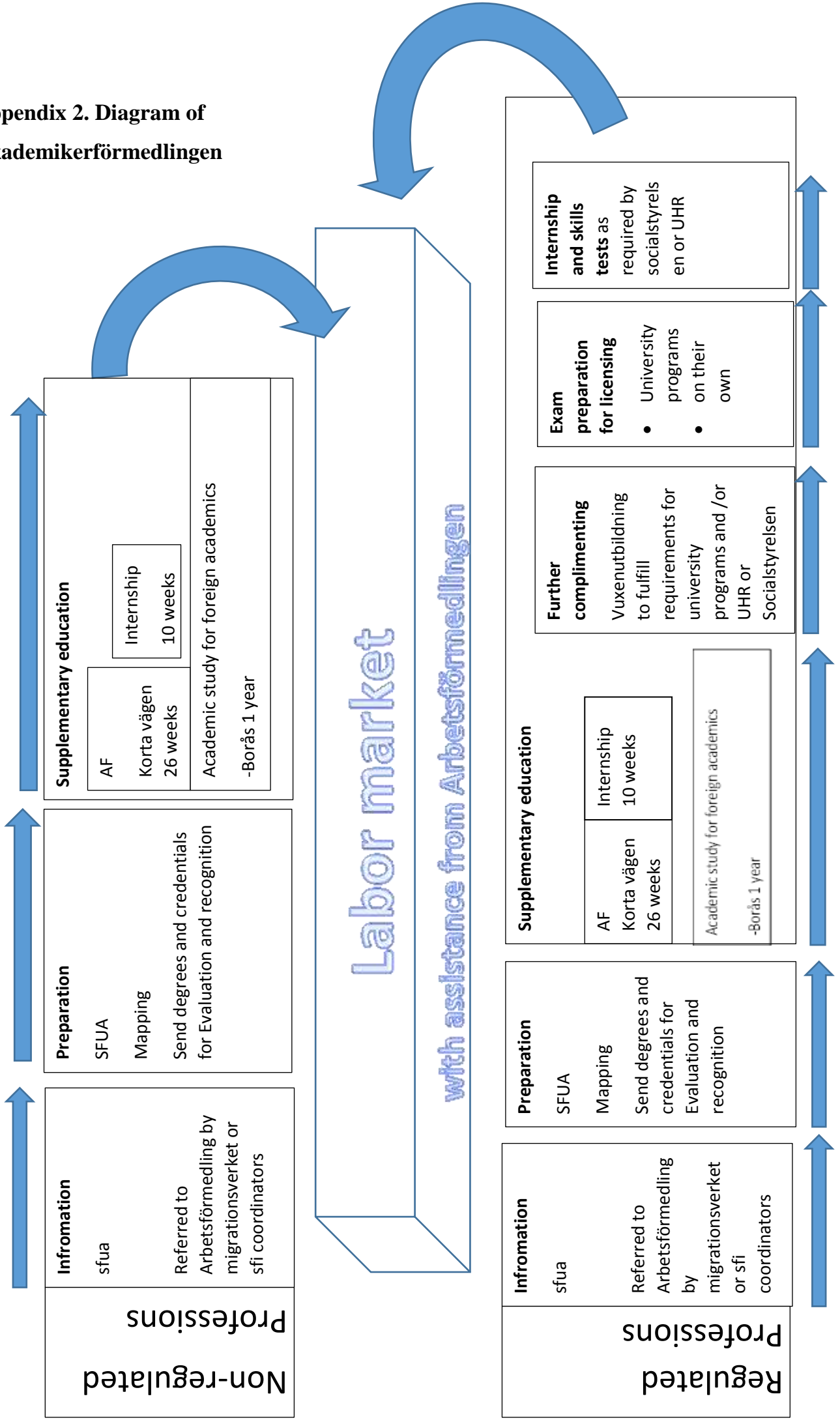
**Sfi – Svenska för invandrare** is Swedish language instruction for immigrants

**SVA 1, 2, 3** - SAS A and B have been changed to SVA 1, 2 and 3

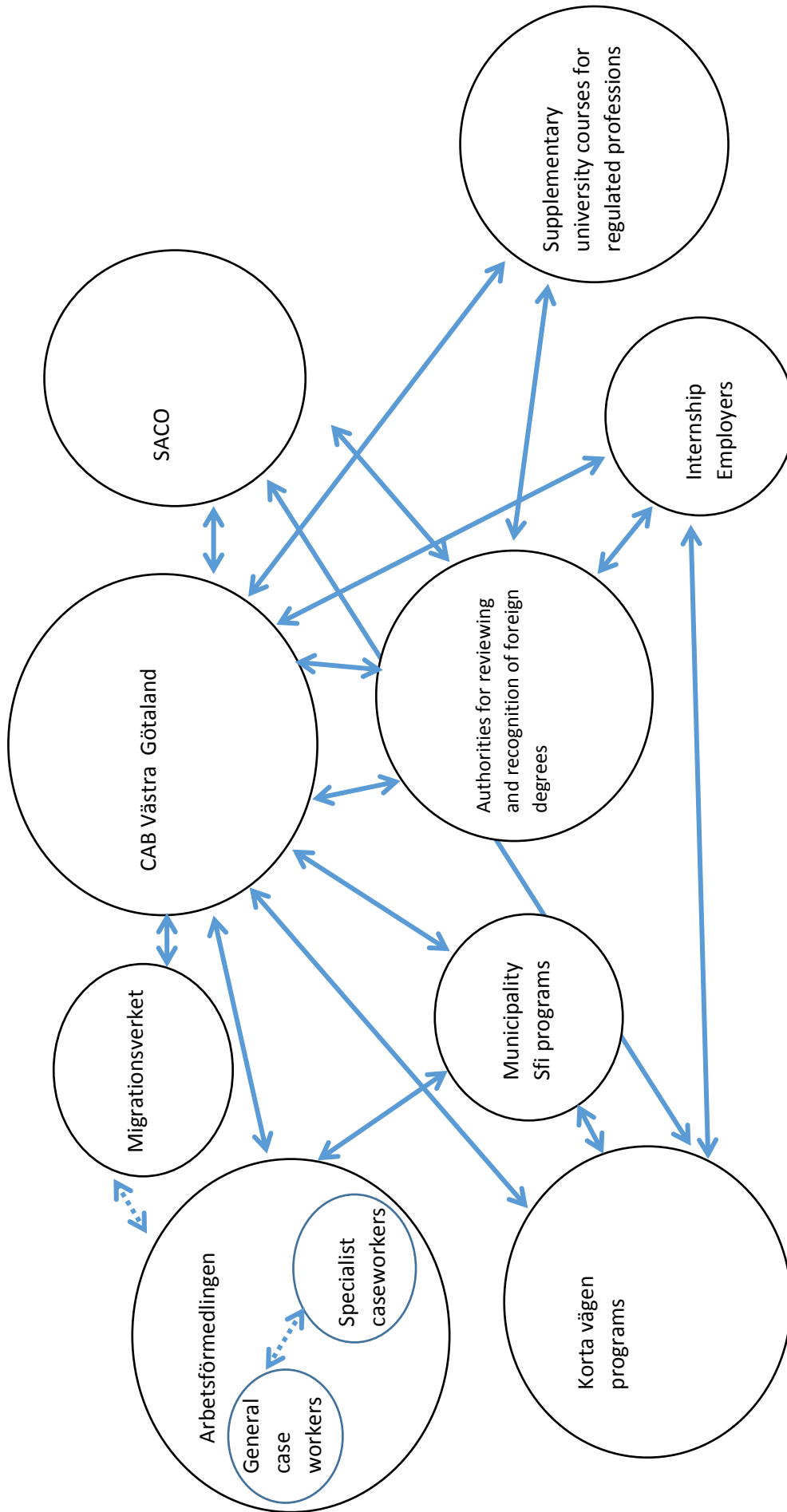
**Universitets- och högskolerådet** (The Swedish Council for Higher Education) is an authority for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

This model reflects the stages in the two different paths necessary for FA with regulated and FA with non-regulated professions.

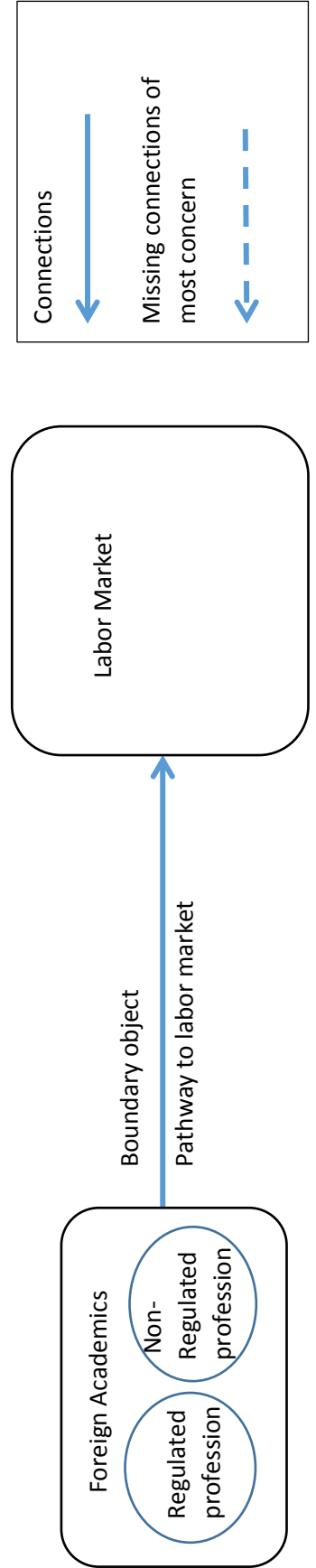
## Appendix 2. Diagram of Akademikerförmedlingen



### Appendix 3. Connections in the action net



Main beneficiaries of action net: Foreign Academics and Labor Market



#### Appendix 4. Table of connections

Actants	collective actions (prior to PUA and since the start of PUA)	missing actions of specific concern	connected with
Länsstyrelsen	Coordinate actions working on integration		all other actants
	Took on leadership of PUA		
Management team PUA	Oversee program		politicians, sacco, policy makers
	Efforts toward spreading the akademikerförmedling permanent		other <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> and education sites
	Spread the <i>Korta Vägen</i> concept		Migrationverket and continuous connections with all PUA partners, sfi sites and foreign academics
Steering committee	Plan and coordinate the actions for the project		foreign academics potential employers
Work groups within PUA ( 3 examples)			Other <i>Korta Vägen</i> program and <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>
Web-portal	Develop web portal		Other <i>Korta Vägen</i> program and <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>
Language test	Work on new language test		University programs
Validation Model	Work on validation model		Employers
Members of network (PUA title) of educators and <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>	Meet and share knowledge about their aspect of the action net.		Other <i>Korta Vägen</i> program and <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>
<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>			



foreign academics/branch specific caseworkers	<b>informing general caseworkers of the need to refer foreign academics to them</b>	not all general caseworkers being informed of the need for foreign academics to be referred to foreign academics caseworkers	<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> general caseworkers
	<b>Interview for program</b>		<i>Korta Vägen</i> programs
	<b>Helping them to arrange internships</b>		Internship employers
	<b>Helping them find work</b>		Employers
General caseworkers	<b>Refer foreign academics to foreign academics caseworker</b>	Not all foreign academics being referred	foreign academics/branch specific caseworkers
Educational sites for labour market geared programs	<b>Educating them with the skills they need to enter the Swedish labor market</b>		
	<b>Helping them find internships</b>		<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> caseworkers
	<b>Guidance in the education program</b>		<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> , KY programs or other labor market geared programs
	<b>helping to tailor the program to the foreign academics needs</b>		employees
Foreign Academics	<b>mapping at <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> or educational administrators</b>		<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> all other actants through web portal
	<b>Determine the best path to the Swedish labor market.</b>		<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> or counselors at <i>Korta Vägen</i> programs
	<b>Doing the supplementary programs</b>		Foreign Academics in regulated professions
	<b>Doing internships</b>		Internship employers
Migrations verket	<b>Primarily referred those in need of state protection to <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i></b>	No set program for referring all foreign academics to web portal or <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>	<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>

	<b>Occasionally Referring all types of foreign academics to website and Arbetsförmedlingen</b>		<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>
UHR	<b>Review credentials and let the foreign academics know what is needed for recognition</b>		<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>
Socialstyrelsen	<b>review credentials let the foreign academics know what is needed for recognition for regulated professions in Health Care</b>		<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>
Municipal sfi educational sites	<b>Inform foreign academics of the special <i>Korta Vägen</i> programs</b>		Arbetsförmedlingen
Employers	<b>Be open to interns from <i>Korta Vägen</i></b>		<i>Korta Vägen</i> programs
	<b>Be open to employees from <i>Korta Vägen</i></b>		foreign academics
Universities	<b>Run programs to help students pass their skills tests for recognition of their regulated professions</b>		Labor market geared programs
Mentors	<b>Help foreign academics learn more about their particular field in Sweden</b>		Länsstyrelsen
	<b>Meet with foreign academics to give them insight into how their professions function in Sweden</b>		
Saco	<b>coordinate and collect information specifically for foreign academics</b>		All actants
	<b>Promote a national plan "akademikerförmedling"</b>		politicians and policy makers

## Appendix 5. Questions for PUA partners

1. Kan du berätta om dit program för utländska akademiker?
2. Kan du berätta om dit position här?
3. Kan du förklara hur din skola har varit en del av PUA?
4. Vad var bästa aspekten av PUA?
5. Finns denna aspekt redan, nu att projektet har avslutat?
6. Har PUA bidragit nånting till din program?
7. Hur mycket kontakt har du haft med samarbetspartners i PUA?
8. Hur ofta träffades ni andra partners?
9. Känner du fortfarande ansluten till övriga partner?
10. Hur jobbar du tillsammans med *Arbetsförmedlingen*?
11. Har du fortfarande kontakt med Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland?
12. Vilken andra myndigheter har du kontakt med, beträffande utländska akademiker?
13. Tror du att utländska akademiker och samarbetspartners får mycket nytta av web portalen? Har du bidragit till den?
14. Får alla utländska akademiker en coach? Från *Arbetsförmedlingen* eller din skola?
15. Tycker du att det vör någon myndighet eller organisation som saknades i projekt?
16. Tycker du att integration är lättare när man har rätt jobb?

## Appendix 6. Questions for foreign academics

Frågor om din erfarenhet med PUA

Var kommer du ifrån?

Hur länge har du varit i Sverige?

Varför har du kommit till Sverige?

Vilket yrke hade du i ditt hemland?

Vad vet du om Project Utländska Akademiker?

Vad hörde du talas om första: PUA eller *Korta Vägen*?

Hur hörde du talas om programmet?

Vart gjorde du ditt sfi?

Har du haft en etableringslots?

Om ja, vist dem om PUA?

Har du haft en coach?

Från skolan eller *Arbetsförmedlingen*?

Kan du ge ett exempel på vad du har diskuterat med din coach?

Hur ofta har du sett din coach?

Fick du några råd från *Migrationsverket* ...

om arbetsförmedling?

*Korta Vägen*?

webportalen [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se)

om ett bäst sätt att hitta arbetet i ditt yrke?

Fick du några råd från *sfi* läraren

om arbetsförmedling?

*Korta Vägen*?

webportalen [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se)

om ett bäst sätt att hitta arbetet i ditt yrke?

Har du haft kontakt med *Arbetsförmedlingen* innan du började med programmet?

Hur mycket kontakt har du haft med *Arbetsförmedlingen* under programmet?

Vad har du gjort för praktik?

Har din coach arrangerade några kontakter som har lett till praktik för dig?

Har du haft dit betyg bedömt?

Visste du ordna det själv? Om nej, vem har hjälpte dig med den?

Har du sett portalen [www.informationsverige.se](http://www.informationsverige.se)?

Om ja, har du sett den för innan du har börjat med program?

Var det hjälpsam?

Vad tyckte du bäst om PUA?

Vad kunde ha varit bättre?

Var det något som saknas från programmet?

Vad gör du nu?