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Successes and obstacles in the work of upper-secondary schools with newly arrived students: A constructivist-inspired analysis of teachers' verbal accounts regarding their schools' organizational and practical work

Emma MedegÍrd, Karolina Henrixon, Goran Basic

Abstract: This study presents new knowledge arising from teachers' verbal accounts of successes and obstacles in the organizational and practical work of upper-secondary schools with newly arrived students. The analysis reveals several dimensions contributing to the construction and reconstruction of successes and obstacles in the teachers' accounts. Teachers are constructed as actors with a power advantage relative to the "newly arrived student." They set the agenda for student behavior, with an inclusive approach that is crucial to achieving success and counteracting obstacles. The approach imposes demands on how upper-secondary schools organize their work with newly arrived students and plays a role in determining supports and room for maneuvering that teachers have. Through the presented analysis, the study contributes to the development of knowledge in terms of four areas. First is the narrative processing of the combination of success and obstacles in the work with newly arrived students. Second is the importance of these stories for the representation of social pedagogical recognition and lack of recognition in the school context.

The third area is identity creation and re-creation of professional actors (teachers), and the fourth area of knowledge involves alternative approaches to analysis compared to the typically expected didactic perspective. The study also contributes to the development of knowledge regarding the question of how a school's morals function in relation to the previous and current experiences of teachers and newly arrived students.

Keywords: school success, social pedagogical recognition, education, self-realization, norm, moral, deviant, oral account, representation, verbal emphasis, dramatization, second language teacher, mother tongue teacher, special education teacher, headmaster, counselor, language introduction program, Swedish as a second language, mother tongue study supervisor, subject teacher, integration

Introduction

Since 2015, more than 70,000 children and young people have come to Sweden, of whom more than 35,000 are unaccompanied by guardians (Swedish Migration Agency 2018a-c, 2022a-c).[1] Most of these children and young people come from war-torn countries, and the large influx has been a major challenge for the Swedish school system, which formally assumes that all students should be included and integrated into a community. Numerous situations surrounding the integration of newly arrived young people into school and society remain unknown and should be evaluated in more detail. This article contributes a detailed examination of some of these situations through analysis of verbal accounts regarding successes and obstacles in upper-secondary schools' work with newly arrived students.

Most newly arrived students in Sweden are enrolled in the language introduction program, and conflicts have been reported between teachers within this program and the national program. Previous analyses also show that mother tongue teachers, teachers of Swedish as a second language, and mother tongue study supervisors (the latter two of which have a specific mandate to support newly arrived students) experience major shortcomings in terms of cooperation with other categories of teachers (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2013, 2016; Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2017; Gothenburg Region, 2019; City of Malmö, 2019; National Agency for Special Needs Education, 2020).

[1] Some parts of this text were previously published in Swedish, in the thesis, "When collaboration becomes a struggle. A sociological analysis of a project in the Swedish juvenile care" (Basic 2012) and in the independent work at the second cycle "Successes, obstacles and collaboration in work with newly arrived students. A social constructivist analysis of special educators narratives" (Medegård and Henrixon 2020).

As an environment, the school can contribute to stability in the life of a newly arrived young person, whose education is a central resource for independence. Several studies stress that education is fundamental for the future establishment of young people and young adults in the labor market and for their participation in society as a whole (Foster, 2012; Ekstrand, 2015; Popov, Sturesson, 2015; Torbjørnsen Hilt, 2016; Fuller, 2018; Roos, Gadler, 2018; Björk, Danielsson, Basic, 2019; Warne, Svensson, Tirén, Wall, 2020; Basic, Matsuda 2020; Eek-Karlsson, Lundin, Torpsten 2020; Berggren, Torpsten, Järkestig Berggren, 2020; Johnsson, Blivik, Basic, 2021; Basic, Lokareva, Stadnichenko, 2021; Greve, Andersson, Basic 2021). Björk et al. (2019) draw attention to the importance of interpersonal collaboration for successful schooling and practical schoolwork. Their study emphasizes the importance of functional collaboration between various professional categories in the school context to achieve success for newly arrived students. These authors stress the importance of collaboration both among different types of teachers in the Swedish context (namely, teachers of Swedish as a second language, mother tongue teachers, mother tongue study supervisors, and special education teachers) and among different types of teachers and students – with the common goal of working together to help students achieve success in the school context.

The school context can be analyzed as a place where social pedagogical recognition can be given, which can strengthen self-esteem for both teachers and students as well as their sense of belonging, involvement, and inclusion. The social and pedagogical life of teachers and students is constructed and reconstructed through mutual recognition. The self-realization of students and teachers is created and re-created through participation in successful interactions that contribute to the production and reproduction of knowledge, desirable abilities, and experiences. This is possible only if teachers and students are recognized in the current school and pedagogical context, in close relationships, and in interaction with other actors in the context. The quest for social pedagogical recognition in the school context is sometimes based on the exclusion of the other. Discrimination, abuse, and bullying can negatively affect self-esteem in both teachers and students. Furthermore, exclusion from the school context risks destroying the actors' self-esteem. This risk applies in particular to exclusion of newly arrived students who have a lower status in the school context than, e.g., teachers (Berger, Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015; Fuller, 2018; Björk et al., 2019; Basic, Matsuda, 2020; Eek-Karlsson et al., 2020; Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021).

Teachers are among the most important actors in the school context: they can contribute to achieving social pedagogical recognition, school success, and the successful integration of newly arrived students into society. Previous research shows that social pedagogical recognition, school success, and successful integration are more closely connected with the active action of individual teachers in the school context who "show up," engage, and help than to the school as an organization (Fuller, 2018; Björk et al., 2019; Basic, Matsuda, 2020; Eek-Karlsson et al., 2020; Johnsson et al., 2021; Basic et al,. 2021; Greve et al., 2021).

Björk et al. (2019) highlight how newly arrived students portray teachers in Sweden as both uninterested in teaching students and as disrespected by newly arrived students in their school contact. The analysis also presents a portrait of an active and strategic teacher who is an important player in the practical work with the students on an individual basis. Such a teacher acts as an interactive support to overcome obstacles that may otherwise hamper collaboration between teachers and students. Popov and Sturesson (2015) note the gap between the former learning culture of newly arrived students and that of their new society and the importance of actively helping these students bridge the differences. Both Björk et al. (2019) and Popov and Sturesson (2015) and Basic et al. (2021, pp. 5-6) stress the importance of not viewing newly arrived students as a homogeneous group. Both studies emphasize the value of getting to know each student as an individual beyond their categorization to more easily see and use their individual circumstances, experiences, and needs.

Eek-Karlsson et al. (2020) have analyzed equal treatment work in schools and interactive work in the school context that contribute to the construction and reconstruction of the actors' gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. These authors argue that there is variation in a school's different ways of working to combat discrimination – even as at the same time this work usually contributes to the strengthening of actions that are categorized as normatively right (morally right) and deviant (morally wrong). Eek-Karlsson et al. (2020) highlight the point that classroom teaching tends to focus on *the other* rather than broadening teaching so that it becomes norm-breaking and creates space for the increased inclusion of all participating students (including "the other"). The authors stress that schools have different starting points in their anti-discrimination work regarding who or which categories of students are considered to be problems or deviant. They also stress that through practical work, schools risk reinforcing, producing, and repro-

ducing stereotypes that otherwise and generally characterize school practice (see also Basic et al., 2021, pp. 5-6).

Trends from professional practice that permeate some of the above-mentioned research include emphasis on the newly arrived student's personal responsibility for interactive choices and achievements carried out in school contexts. In the interactive dynamic, "problems" that newly arrived students have with the new language, integration, health, and school failures are framed as personal and individually located. This framing can negatively affect their self-esteem, self-image, sense of belonging, identities, and patterns of action, contributing to a lack of social pedagogical recognition in the school context. Previous research has indicated a tendency in which different categories of teachers' risk individualizing students' problems in terms of the background and behavior of the students and parents. This tendency in turn ignores the analysis of other important analytical aspects that can, e.g., explain dimensions in schools' organization of practical work with newly arrived students. When problems are individualized, e.g., by simply focusing on the students' immigrant background as a starting point, the process becomes discriminatory and hinders their school success (Basic et al., 2021, pp. 5-6; Greve et al., 2021).

Björk et al. (2019, p. 18) consider that the dominant standard explanations of the category of newly arrived students (especially those who come from war zones) seem to focus on their psychiatric or medical needs. The common diagnoses that figure in the research include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, recurring nightmares, emotional apathy, and flashbacks to traumatic events (Longobardi et al., 2017; Masten, 2017; Pejovic-Milovancevic et al., 2018; Basic, 2022). Common explanations for absence in the school context include stomach aches, restlessness, anxiety, and depression, and competing explanations seem relatively de-emphasized. These may include (1) established inequalities in society and at school, (2) material and institutional difficulties in societal and school contexts, (3) bureaucratic hurdles in school and in the rest of society, (4) ethnic monitoring and social control in society and at school, (5) the humiliated identities of the actors in a societal and school context, (6) victimization in relation to the majority in the context; (7) demeaning ethnic categorizations in society and at school, and (8) discrimination in the school context and an overall societal context (Bhopal, Preston 2012; Basic, 2015; Fuller, 2018; Björk et al., 2019, p. 18; Johnsson et al., 2021; Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021). Additional competing explanations that seem to be relatively less emphasized in relation to

the diagnosis aspect are the interpretations of students themselves of the war and social conflict experienced in their homeland: "I have unique experience that I can benefit from in the new country"; "I have learned to cope with difficult things"; and "I am strong now." There are many interactive points of entry to the social pedagogical recognition of both students and teachers in the school context (Foster, 2012; Fuller, 2018; Björk et al., 2019, p. 18; Basic, Matsuda 2020; Eek-Karlsson et al., 2020; Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021), and no one single recipe always or most commonly applies. The actors' mutual recognition is produced and reproduced through a series of interactions in which actors first cite and are involved in identifications founded on ethnicity, class, and gender in different ways and secondly make use of/or suffer from their own identification streams or those of others in such interactions at school, at home, and in society at large (Johnsson et al., 2021; Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021; Basic, 2022).

There is limited knowledge about collaboration with regard to school practice among different categories of teachers and among different categories of teachers with newly arrived students. We know too little about the extent to which professional groups truly cooperate with regard to newly arrived students and how actors identify and play their roles in ongoing social and pedagogical processes in the school context. Knowledge needs to be developed on how or whether cultural and social and pedagogical differences contribute to common starting points in the work – and thus to success and/or obstacles in schoolwork with new arrivals. On this point, we hope to provide a contribution within the framework of this analysis.

This article is part of the research project, "School success for newly arrived students: possibilities, obstacles, identities and collaboration," which was conducted at Linnaeus, Lund and Kristianstad universities in Sweden, Hiroshima University in Japan and Zaporizhzhia National University in Ukraine (Linnaeus University, 2022). The purpose of this study is to develop new knowledge about verbal accounts from teachers regarding successes and obstacles in the organizational and practical work of upper-secondary schools with newly arrived students. The research questions addressed are as follows: (1) How are successes in the work with newly arrived students portrayed?, and (2) How are obstacles in the work with newly arrived students portrayed? The questions presented in the study are answered through analysis of the collected empirical data with the help of social constructivist theories, as well as contextualized within previous research on the phenomenon of successes and obstacles in work with newly arrived students.

Theory and Method

The study's general scientific theoretical starting point is constructivist (Burr, 2015). Burr (2015) believes that verbal categories and various ideas of community and morally right actions in different social and pedagogical contexts are created and re-created in interpersonal interactions (language – conversation) and are both constructed and reconstructed (or produced and reproduced) through myriad interactive flows in different situations. Burr emphasizes that these interactive constructions are both time- and individual-bound and are changeable and unsteady.

The constructivist scientific theoretical starting point is based on the position that an absolute truth (in the analysis of interpersonal interactions – language – conversation) does not exist. Rather, both the truth and the knowledge ought to be analyzed as changeable, alternating, and volatile phenomena. Burr (2015) argues that truth and knowledge are defined and redefined by actors who possess formal and informal power in different contexts, and that language in its spoken and written form is fundamental and crucial to how truth and knowledge are constructed and reconstructed. The construction of truth and knowledge also affects the construction and reconstruction of the individual – categorized in the interactive flow – to facilitate future interactions, constructions, and reconstructions (Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021; Basic, 2022).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), people interacting with one another attempt to make their social and pedagogical reality comprehensible and, in doing so, construct their identities. Here, categorization fulfills an important function. To divide and categorize individuals, professions, and events into categories/types – to identify them – is necessary if we are to navigate various everyday interactions. Categorization is not a static process and changes from one situation to the next. The actions of one person constitute a motive for and an answer to the actions of the other person, based on which their associations, self-esteem, and creation and re-creation of recognition in various social and pedagogical identities are shaped, modified, and validated. In light of these perspectives, the stories and practical actions of both the new arrivals and the teachers in the school context and analysis of these elements can be regarded as meaning-creating activities. These activities may contribute to the development of knowledge that can promote the involvement and success of both teachers and new arrivals in the school context (Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021; Basic, 2022).

Burr (2015) also draws attention to the fact that individuals in all social and pedagogical contexts are grouped and categorized in relation to power interactions in a context in which certain individuals/categories possess more power than the others. She argues that certain individuals in this context possess greater authority and higher social and pedagogical status than others, and thus have at their disposal the interactive power capital to define and redefine how society, groups, and individuals should be portrayed. In its most severe form, this structure may lead to the repression of individuals with lower social and pedagogical status (Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021; Basic, 2022).

The reasoning above is important in relationships between professional actors, who in this study act as informants from the school context (different categories of teachers). It also is important in relationships with the category of "newly arrived students." For this study, the implication is that accounts about experiences working with newly arrived students are analyzed less in terms of static "baggage" and more in terms of institutionally and materially situated interactions in the here and now. In the spirit of social constructivism, the study analyses how the informants themselves use identity-related and cultural resources (e.g., narratives, metaphors, vocabulary, roles, status symbols) in day-to-day life; for example, when they recount the exercise of power, describe working conditions, formulate criticism, and process their experiences. Working practically with newly arrived students can inspire sympathy and build up a distinct categorization (depending on the specific category of student, which may be associated with traumatization and victimhood). However, it also is associated with a certain status: the professional actor possesses personal knowledge and competence that others lack. In the present study, we analyze both the content of the informants' identity formation and its dynamic: how identities are used, managed, reinforced, or challenged (Basic et al,. 2021; Greve et al., 2021; Basic, 2022).

Constructionist perspectives on the institutional situation (school context) of professional actors (teachers) who work with newly arrived students capture the essence of their experiences as professionals and their social and pedagogical representation, as well as the substance and components of their personal accounts (Gubrium, Holstein, 1997; Potter, 2007; Riessman, 2008; Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021; Basic, 2022). The study thus adheres to the scientific theoretical and methodological traditions of the social sciences in which verbal accounts are regarded as both discursive and experiential.

The study's empirical material is collected and analyzed with inspiration from qualitative methods and ethnographic research (Gubrium, Holstein, 1997; Silverman, 2006; Hammersley, Atkinson 2007; Riessman, 2008; Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, 2011; Guest, MacQueen, Namey, 2012; Silverman, 2015). The study's empirical material is based in part on 33 qualitative interviews with professional actors working with newly arrived students. It also relies on 11 fair copies of field notes from observations conducted over about 45 hours (divided into 11 occasions) during lessons in classes where newly arrived students were taught, and during staff meetings where teachers and other actors in the upper-secondary school context discussed the organization of their practical work as it related to newly arrived students. Within the framework of that research project (Linnaeus University, 2022), qualitative interviews were also conducted with 15 newly arrived students, but the present study does not involve analysis of that part of the study's empirical data. All of the study's empirical material was collected in autumn 2019 and spring 2020 after an advisory statement from the Regional Ethical Review Board was granted (Ethical Vetting, 2018).

The professional categories that appear in the study's empirical material are as follows: teachers from the language introduction program, mother tongue teachers, teachers of Swedish as a second language, mother tongue study supervisors, special education teachers, subject teachers, headmasters, and counselors (program coordinators). To facilitate future analysis, all actors who provide accounts in the presented empirical sequences in the sections *Analysis: verbal accounts regarding success* and *Analysis: verbal accounts regarding obstacles*, are designated as "teachers." Empirical sequences presented in this study were themed in the material within two categories of dimensions. The first category is the success dimensions, with three subthemes: good relationships between teacher and student; unique students — not a homogeneous group; and decent and personalized plans – a fast track in work with newly arrived students. The second category is obstacle dimensions, with three subthemes: school absences; lack of support in upper-secondary school, support to which newly arrived students are entitled under Swedish law; and the dual mission (the knowledge mission and the socialization mission) and the potential imbalance in its implementation in upper-secondary school.

In thematizing accounts and field notes, markers were identified in the study's empirical process that enabled analysis of teachers' verbal accounts regarding successes and obstacles in the organizational and practical work of upper-secondary schools with newly arrived students. A small part of

the study's empirical data is presented to the reader in the context of future analysis, but the presented empirical sequences allow for an analysis in the social constructivist sense, which focuses on analyzing an empirical underlying part of the social and pedagogical reality of the school context (Gubrium, Holstein 1997; Potter, 2007; Riessman, 2008; Burr, 2015).

Analysis: Verbal Accounts Regarding Success

Verbal accounts about the practical work with newly arrived students create and re-create a series of images of success in the school context. These images are made visible in the analysis of the verbal interactive dynamic, when the study's actors talk about: (a) the importance of creating a good relationship between teachers and newly arrived students; (b) the importance of seeing each newly arrived student as unique and relating to the student based on the student's educational background and previous experiences of schooling in the home country – rather than basing one's approach on the practical work with the student category "new arrivals" as if it were a homogeneous group; and (c) the objective of creating a decent and personalized plan for the newly arrived student that is feasible within the timeframe in which the student attends upper-secondary school, recognizing the importance of speed in working with students when it comes to expected results.

One of the constructions of the actors' accounts regarding success is the importance of creating a good relationship between teachers and students. One teacher recounts successes at school in the practical work with newly arrived students. During the interview, the teacher emphasizes the many dedicated teachers at the school in question who endeavor to "see" each student and who try to create and re-create good relationships with these students. The interviewer asks if the teacher can exemplify this, and the teacher recounts:

> *Our success is that we are a small school and one, as we say, with a big heart. /…/ We have many committed teachers, and we try to see every student, and we build good relationships. The students are very grateful. And most of them are motivated /…/ it's a commitment to try to get them further, and with the resources we have, we try to be responsive and listen to students and to teachers, and to adjust the organization as best we can.*

During another interview, another teacher says the following when successes in the school context are discussed:

> *I think it's very much about the relationship with the students, and there we're still so small (the school) as well, so there's an opportunity to bond and create relationships; the class is a bit too big but it's doable. /.../ I think there can be no success in school without creating a relationship with the students.*

The construction regarding the importance of creating a good relationship between teachers and students is in line with previous research on successes and obstacles in working with newly arrived students. This research highlights the importance of good relationships in a school, where the teachers are portrayed as actors who listen, "see," support, and guide their students. Another construction dramatized by actors in the study's empirical data is the importance of seeing each student as unique and relating to the student based on the student's educational background and previous experiences of schooling in their home country. One teacher talks about taking the right approach in relation to this category of students and about the importance of "seeing every person":

> *Well, you can't, like, relate to these groups of students as new arrivals and think that they all work in the same way, just as you can't talk about autism and ADHD in that way. Instead you kind of need to be very interested in putting together the puzzle of what these students have brought with them.*

Another teacher portrays the importance of finding individualized solutions and thus creating and re-creating success for newly arrived students:

> *If you come to Sweden as a 17-year-old illiterate child and have never gone to school, then it's unreasonable to say that the goal of that student's study plan is that she or he should become eligible for 3-4 year national higher education program. That doesn't work /.../ It's completely impossible, and then we have to have a decent plan for those students and give them opportunities. And if you've worked as a car mechanic since you were seven years old and have a lot of knowledge about that, well then I really don't understand why not that can't be worth just as much? And that you can then take vocational courses and maybe do an internship at a tire company ... become employable within that field /.../ Because that's our mission — to make sure that these students become employable and/or educated.*

In their verbal accounts, the teachers above construct and reconstruct

the importance of the practical work of upper-secondary school, which aims to create a decent plan for students that is feasible to accomplish within the timeframe in which the students attend upper-secondary school. In other words, teachers stress the importance of rapid results in their practical work in the context of upper-secondary school. Another teacher emphasizes the importance of speed in working with students and relates it to integration in a more comprehensive social pedagogical context:

> *Work more for integration and find easier professions /…/ and faster. I guess that's what we need to work on. Getting them out to simpler jobs. Then if they want to continue their studies later in their life, Sweden has all the opportunities for doing so. 'But I feel that everyone should get university qualifications now while they're teenagers', right? That isn't reasonable; there should be other ways to advance oneself in Sweden.*

The importance of speed in interpersonal interactions is also highlighted in the study's field notes, but in this type of empirical data from the study, speed acquires a different meaning. Newly arrived students are presented as efficient and quick in carrying out practical elements of their instruction. One student is portrayed as being so efficient and quick that they seem to be a help to the teacher during class:

> *The teacher begins with a review up by the board, a whiteboard. The subject of the lesson is geometry, more specifically the area of squares and triangles. The review is conducted in interaction with the students. The teacher draws on the board, asks questions, gets answers, and continues writing and drawing on the board. After the review, the students continue to work in their books on their own and at their own pace. /…/ I walk up to some students. Partly to see what they are working on in their books but also to support/help them with the tasks. I see that the same picture (the front of a house) that the teacher drew on the board is also depicted in the students' mathematics books. An Arabic-speaking student is soon finished with the relevant pages in the mathematics book. The student takes out their computer and starts working with mathematics in a mathematics program. When I ask the teacher about this, I am told that the program enables differentiation in the assignments. The student seems to choose for themselves what they want to work with in that program. Meanwhile, another Arabic-speaking student seeks out the "fast" student, presumably to ask for help. The students communicate in Arabic, and it seems to have been about the tasks in the mathematics book, because the student who reached out*

> *starts to write in their booklet. The teacher, whose mother tongue is Arabic, mainly speaks Swedish, but sometimes also communicates in Arabic when going around to help/support the students individually.* (Field notes)

Verbal portrayals of the study's informants emphasize the importance of not viewing the student category "new arrivals" as a homogeneous group. The construction of discovering and looking after newly arrived students' needs is dramatized as successful if it is based on personalized plans and solutions ("The teacher /…/ mainly speaks Swedish, but sometimes also communicates in Arabic"). The actors' accounts regarding personalized plans and solutions are produced and reproduced in everyday interaction, and the verbal basis of these interactions is the production of practical work based on a series of representations of social and pedagogical comparisons of newly arrived students' past and present educational experiences.

Success in the teachers' work, as dramatized in the constructions above, creates an interactive space in which to develop a positive relationship with newly arrived students and with themselves in their role of teacher. Constructions that are analyzed as a product of the dynamic and involvement in myriad interactions in the school context portray images of social pedagogical recognition in both the role of "teacher" and in the role of "student" – produced and reproduced as autonomous and individual unique actors in the school context. According to previous research, social pedagogical recognition is necessary to the self-realization of both teachers and students in the school context. In the context of this analysis, the social pedagogical recognition of teachers and newly arrived students refers to the fundamental formation of individual identities. This formation is essentially based on the production and reproduction of individual actorship characterized by autonomy and morally right action in relation to themselves and to others (meaning other teachers and newly arrived students), as well as their past and present experiences inside and outside the school context.

The constructions and reconstructions of successes in teachers' practical and organizational work with newly arrived students analyzed above highlight several dimensions that are created and re-created in the verbal interactive dynamic. For example, one of these dimensions comprises accounts regarding the importance of being able to offer new arrivals other landscapes for social pedagogical recognition, instead of the school context ("do an internship at a tire company /…/ become employable within that field"). Previous research has highlighted the importance of critical analysis

of oppressive and exclusive narratives, actions, and attitudes, both in the school and overall social pedagogical contexts. These stories, actions, and approaches create and re-create status hierarchies in contexts in which the privileged actors occupy higher positions of power than the marginalized actors, who are at risk of exclusion and alienation. The above account regarding the importance of offering newly arrived students other landscapes for social pedagogical recognition can be interpreted both as success in the teachers' work with newly arrived students and as an expression of the exclusion of newly arrived students from the school context. School success is constructed when actors with higher status in the school context (teachers) highlight the importance of looking after students and planning an educational approach based on their previous knowledge of newly arrived students. The newly arrived student is depicted as a deviant and marginalized actor ("come to Sweden as a 17-year-old illiterate child") who is at risk of being excluded from the school context and who ends up becoming alienated in relation to that context.

Analysis: Verbal Accounts Regarding Obstacles

Verbal accounts regarding the practical work of newly arrived students also create and re-create a series of images of obstacles in the school context. These images are visible in the analysis of the verbal interactive dynamic, when the actors of the study recount their experiences regarding: (a) school absence among the newly arrived to upper-secondary school; (b) the idea that newly arrived students do not receive the support in school to which they are entitled under Swedish law; and (c) an imbalance in the implementation of the dual mission (the knowledge mission and the socialization mission, Roos, Gadler 2018) in upper-secondary school.

One of the constructions in the actors' accounts regarding obstacles is that of school absences among newly arrived upper-secondary school students. A high rate of absenteeism is associated with an obstacle to the students' educational and social pedagogical development. When the interviewer asks during a group interview if informants can describe obstacles in their work, they recount "a terribly high rate of absenteeism":

> *Teacher 1: There's a terribly high rate of absenteeism — like, for real. They had — we had classes where we had 17 students, and maybe four showed up.*
> *Interviewer: Wow!*
> *Teacher 1: For months.*

Teacher 2: And that frustration, and continuing to work despite that frustration about the teachers' experience of their situation was extreme. Because then suddenly four more show up, who've never gone to school.

Actors who appear in the study construct and reconstruct absence as an obstacle and highlight and dramatize their competence in overcoming that obstacle. One teacher recounts that it was mainly the threat of non-payment from the Swedish Board of Student Finance (Centrala studiestödsnämnden, "CSN") that led most newly arrived upper-secondary school students to go to school: "Now you can frigging chase them down with CSN and say 'oopsie daisy, now things are starting to look dangerous for you,' and then they show up again." Another teacher tells us: "When there's a big problem, we contact the parents and inform them that the student has a high rate of absenteeism." Another teacher describes absenteeism as "a huge problem" that had to be handled by "the student health service": "It's been a huge problem, so much so that the entire student health service decided to take over absence management and all that work." Even absences that are the product of the teacher's practical actions in the school context fulfill a dual function, both to dramatize the absence as an obstacle and to construct and reconstruct the teacher's competence in the creation and re-creation of "rules." One teacher recounts:

First of all, there are clear rules. I apply the same rules every time I meet them. Our team decided that the students would have to hand in their mobile phones — to put them in some kind of mobile phone daycare or something like that. And so all the students have to hand in their mobiles, even the tough students, because from the beginning I explain that they have two choices: they can either hand over their phones or leave and get an absence — there is no third option.

The representation of school absences among upper-secondary school students as an obstacle is also dramatized in the study's field notes. In the field notes, this obstacle is loaded with a different interactive meaning than in the empirical sequences from interviews presented above. Newly arrived students are portrayed as orderly because they had duly "reported absences of which the teacher was aware". In the field notes, the teacher is portrayed as treating the "students in a respectful manner":

The lesson is a Swedish lesson in which they're supposed to go through some chapters in a book together and analyze the content. These chap-

ters were assigned to the students as homework prior to this lesson, i.e., they were asked to read some specific chapters of a book that the class is reading together. It turns out that there are seven students who had reported absences of which the teacher was aware. Of the other eight students present, two had read the chapters they had been assigned as homework. Some said they didn't "know" they were supposed to read these chapters. The teacher receives this information calmly and treats the students in a respectful manner. The teacher asks those students who have not read the chapters before the lesson to read them now and chooses to conduct the planned lesson with the two students who had read the chapters. (Field notes)

A few days later, the same class is observed and the following is recorded:

I've observed this group of students before, together with the same teacher. That time, half of them were absent with valid absences, and only two of the others had read their books. This time it seemed that pretty much everyone had read the text. (Field notes)

It seems that there is a great variety in the way absenteeism is portrayed as an obstacle in the school context, both in terms of the reason for the absence and in terms of how teachers handle absenteeism as an obstacle. Previous research suggests that absence must be understood as an act that occurs in a school context and is thus school-related. A further dimension of the phenomenon emphasizes the importance of students' "health," which is portrayed as both school-related and non–school-related. Precarious relationships, ill health, and existence in a social pedagogical context that are characterized by vulnerability, exclusion, and absence can create and re-create low self-esteem among both newly arrived students and teachers working with that category of students. Thus, when reciprocity is not made possible and both newly arrived students and teachers lose the social pedagogical recognition of others, these factors may stand in the way of self-realization and stable identity formation.

Another construction that is dramatized by actors in the study's empirical data is that newly arrived students do not receive the support in school to which they are entitled under current Swedish law. Previous research is permeated by the portrayal of a discrepancy between formulation dimensions and realization dimensions that seems to be a direct result of practical obstacles from the school context. Realization dimensions in previous research emphasize the fact that not all policy decisions are always imple-

mented in various bureaucratic contexts (in this case, in the context of upper-secondary school). Newly arrived students do not receive the support to which they are entitled, despite the fact that policy decisions are produced to demonstrate, at least outwardly (to the public in the surrounding society), that decisions taken by politicians also ensure equal education in practice. One recurrent example in previous research is the lack of competence in language development teaching that characterizes upper-secondary school. Both mother tongue teaching and mother tongue study guidance lag behind, as schools are represented as having problems in providing the right competence.

Problems in providing the right social pedagogical competence in the context of upper-secondary school are portrayed by the study's actors as a common obstacle in working with newly arrived students. Through their accounts, actors highlight their own competence in the field and at the same time portray other teachers to whom the story relates as lacking competence. One example from the study's empirical material is in the following interview of a teacher who believes that obstacles exist because of other teachers who lack "a language development mindset" and "a holistic perspective":

> *And now I'm not saying that they (other teachers) are not good at their jobs, but, like, that's the way it is. This whole thing with having a language development mindset, a holistic perspective, that it's not just me and my subject ... you have to have the whole thing /.../ they think they're working with school development, or language development, but they really aaaaaaren't. /.../ To be completely frank, I feel like they don't focus on language development. They focus on subject competence. And that approach gets you nowhere.*

The construction that newly arrived students do not receive the support in school to which they are entitled and that the schools are represented as having problems with providing the right competence is in line with previous research on successes and obstacles in working with newly arrived students. Both substandard mother tongue teaching and mother tongue study guidance and the misapplication of teachers' competences are represented as reasons why many second-language students lag behind in terms of their academic performance. The empirical sequence above raises the question: What should teachers actually work with in relation to newly arrived students ("they don't focus on language development. They focus on subject competence. And that approach gets you nowhere")? Certain actors in the study assert the position that both the socialization mission and the knowl-

edge mission are important in relation to newly arrived students. Other actors in the study assert the position that the socialization mission in relation to newly arrived students takes up too much space and too much time and that upper-secondary schools must focus more on the knowledge mission. An interview sequence provides examples of verbal portrayals of imbalance in the dual mission in relation to newly arrived students:

> *Above all, there are a lot of conversations with other authorities. There's a lot of contact about the so-called 'social needs' of the student. /…/ Since they have no network of contacts with other social supports outside of school, there's a lot that needs doing. Various authorities are involved, and there's a lot of paperwork to be filled in and then the student needs support in filling out the papers. So there's a lot of those kinds of practical things that take up a lot of time for the students /…/ usually it's the mentor who's the primary contact and support person for the new student, and then it is how it is, when a mentor has a class, if there are a lot of kids who need support or if there are few who need it, that decides how quickly all the processes get started. /…/ Then it's the counsellor who quickly gets involved once you've, like, initiated things and mapped needs. /…/ And then there's also the student's emotional state, which goes up and down, and where the school shows an incredible amount of understanding, but it also hinders the student's study development.*

Another interview sequence also provides examples of verbal portrayals of imbalance in the dual mission in relation to newly arrived students. The meeting that is observed is a team meeting, where the participating teacher categories are mother tongue teachers, teachers of Swedish as a second language, and mathematics teachers. During the meeting, topics of discussion include:

> *… the use of the 50% of X's teaching responsibilities that involve arranging internships at local companies for certain students. Y is quite influential in this discussion and also raises this question about their own role. They currently allot 20 percent of their time for a project called CSAL, which is a cross-municipal project on working methods for language and knowledge development. X seems to get a bit irritated and seems to feel challenged by colleagues. "I can stop if you want." The team "drops" the issue and begins to discuss the subject of English. Perhaps they should reduce the English classes in the A Group and add English as individual elective. They also briefly touch on the issue that*

when cuts need to be made, it's the special education hours that "go" first. The team finds no solutions. In the end, they decide that perhaps they should create a focus group that could develop proposals in a different way (it is unclear how). (Field notes)

Another construction portrayed by actors in the above empirical data from the study pertains to imbalance in the implementation of both the knowledge mission and the socialization mission (the so-called dual mission) in upper-secondary school. The construction of imbalance in the dual mission is portrayed through the actors' accounts ("There's a lot of contact about the so-called 'social needs'" and through conversations during a team meeting ("arranging internships at local companies"). Previous research can identify a variation in empirical examples regarding the actors' practical actions and representations of what actors in the school context do to create and re-create balance in the implementation of both the knowledge mission and the socialization mission, and how they do it. Previous research emphasizes the importance of the equal valuation of the knowledge and socialization missions.

The work of upper-secondary schools (teachers) with newly arrived students that are constructed and reconstructed above can be analyzed as an institutional context that actively contributes to the creation and re-creation of obstacles that make impossible the social pedagogical recognition of teachers and newly arrived students in their roles (as teachers and students). The portrayals of school absence among newly arrived upper-secondary school students, the argument that newly arrived students do not receive the school supports to which current Swedish law entitles them, and an imbalance in implementation of the dual mission (knowledge and socialization) produce an image of the upper-secondary school that stands in the way of the social pedagogical recognition of teachers and newly arrived students. It does so by maintaining the construction and reconstruction of both newly arrived students and their teachers as deviants from normal and normatively right (morally right) schooling. The work of upper-secondary work with newly arrived students analyzed above seems to produce and reproduce barriers and obstacles to the academic careers of both teachers and newly arrived students. In the upper-secondary school context analyzed in this study, schooling perpetuates the construction and reconstruction of new arrivals and their teachers as deviants from regular schooling in upper-secondary school.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to present new knowledge arising from teachers' verbal accounts regarding successes and obstacles in the organizational and practical work of upper-secondary schools with newly arrived students.

The verbal accounts regarding successes in the organizational and practical work of upper-secondary schools with newly arrived students are made visible in the analysis of the verbal interactive dynamic, when the study's actors talk about three aspects. The first is the importance of creating a good relationship between teachers and newly arrived students. Second is the importance of seeing each newly arrived student as unique and relating to the student based on educational background and previous experiences of schooling in the home country, rather than basing the approach on the practical work with the student category "new arrivals" as if it were a homogeneous group. Third is the objective of creating a decent and personalized plan for the newly arrived student that is feasible within the time frame of the student's upper-secondary school attendance, emphasizing the importance of speed in working with students when it comes to expected results.

Verbal accounts regarding obstacles in the organizational and practical work of upper-secondary schools with newly arrived students are made visible in the analysis of the verbal interactive dynamic. The actors of the study make it visible in recounting their experiences regarding school absence among newly arrived upper-secondary school students, the idea that newly arrived students do not receive the supports to which Swedish law entitles them, and an imbalance in the implementation of the dual mission (knowledge and socialization) in upper-secondary school.

The construction of normatively right (morally right) and deviant (morally wrong) action in the verbal interactive dynamic contributes to the creation and re-creation of both the social pedagogical recognition and exclusion of teachers and newly arrived students in and from the school context. This interactive dynamic implicitly highlights how actors with higher status in the school context (teachers) can use verbal means (language) as an interactive assertion of power to mark the position of actors with lower status in the school context (newly arrived students). The power to define and redefine the actor with lower status in the school context is conveyed, acted out, and exercised by teachers using verbal accounts. These interactions provide the space to control and oppress newly arrived students who, in that situation, occasionally are also engaged in a struggle for recognition in the school con-

text. Previous research draws attention to the importance of raising awareness of teachers' professional role in relation to power aspects and language used in interpersonal interactions in the school context.

In relation to the constructions and reconstructions of successes and obstacles in teachers' practical and organizational work with newly arrived students analyzed above, accounts appear regarding a lack of social pedagogical recognition, control, oppression, and exclusion, which interactively synchronize with the teachers' power and status positioning and language use. The teachers' construction of the powerlessness of newly arrived students and the teachers' power advantage creates and re-creates the image of the actors' interactive actions that cements a positioning of the power-taking actor (the teacher), setting the agenda for how the new arrivals should act to fit into the prevailing normatively and morally right order in the school context (see also Basic et al., 2021; Greve et al., 2021).

If newly arrived students do not receive the education and social pedagogical recognition that upper-secondary school ideally should provide, other educational institutions in society may come forward and offer alternative platforms for education and self-realization. Education is one of the most important platforms for new arrivals and teachers to restore a positive view of themselves and thus has great potential in the social pedagogical context. The possibility of pedagogical development and social pedagogical recognition is embedded in a number of interactive dimensions in the school context. Newly arrived students' good relationships with teachers and other professional actors in the school context constitute an important dimension, wherein social pedagogical recognition is interactively based on caring, trust, and mutual interactions. The inclusive approach of teachers is crucial for inclusion of newly arrived students in the school context, as well as their ability to develop and change in relation to interactive flows in the school context and beyond. Such an inclusive approach imposes demands on how upper-secondary schools organize their work with newly arrived students and plays a role in determining what support and room for maneuvering teachers and other professional actors in the school context are afforded in their practical work with that category of students. These factors operate both in relation to the expected normatively right (morally right) and deviant (morally wrong) actions in the school context and in relation to guidelines and policies that to some extent govern practical work in upper-secondary school.

An interesting question raised during this analysis is whether the various categories of teachers that figure in the school context draw attention to the

importance of didactic issues in their practical work with newly arrived students, and if so how. It is of interest to examine how didactic questions such as the following are addressed narratively and in the teachers' practical actions: What should teachers teach newly arrived students about? What is the teaching content and the goal of the teaching in relation to the student category of newly arrived students? Why should teachers choose that particular content in their teaching and not something else? How can newly arrived students be motivated to learn about the chosen teaching content? Who is the newly arrived student who is tasked with learning in the school context? Who will decide on the content of teaching for this particular category of students?

Another interesting aspect of these didactic questions is how the narrative and practical actions of teachers in the teaching situation contribute to the creation and re-creation of (1) success and obstacles in social pedagogical work with newly arrived students, (2) recognition and lack of recognition in the role of teacher and the role of student, (3) teacher identities and student identities, and (4) moralizations in teaching situations in relation to the past and present social pedagogical experiences of teachers and newly arrived students.

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Authors:

Emma Medegård, Master
Child and Educational Administration Fischerströmska (Fischerströmska Upper Secondary School)
Karlskron
Sweden
E-mail: emma.medegard@skola.karlskrona.se

Karolina Henrixon, Master
Child and Educational Administration
Östergårdsskolan (Östergård Primary School)
Halmstad
Sweden
E-mail: karolina@henrixon.se; karolina.henrixon@halmstad.se

Goran Basic, Professor
Department of Pedagogy and Learning
Faculty of Social Sciences
Linnaeus University
351 95 Växjö
Sweden
E-mail: Goran.Basic@lnu.se