

# ‘Emergency Education’ in Sweden: Implications for Sustainable Development through Education for Newly Arrived Students

Kerstin von Brömssen\*<sup>1</sup>, Karin Flensner<sup>1</sup>, Helena Korp<sup>1</sup> and Signild Risenfors<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Social and Behavioural Studies, University West, Sweden

Corresponding\*: [kerstin.von-bromssen@hv.se](mailto:kerstin.von-bromssen@hv.se)

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## Abstract

*This article reports part of a research project that investigated the learning and social inclusion conditions of ‘newly arrived students’ in Swedish primary schools in two municipalities. Newly arrived students are the category of students who have lived abroad and started their education in Sweden when they were seven years old or older within the last four years. Most of these children and youth have a history of migration. This article focuses firstly on the Swedish migration context, the ‘migration crisis’ in 2015 and the changes in the Swedish reception system that took place soon thereafter and, second, ethnographic observations from Primary Schools of two specific perspectives in education, namely a perspective on ‘Framing of the day and the lesson’ and ‘Study tutoring in the mother tongue in regular teaching’. The results indicated that strong supporting structures and structured social interaction are needed as well as caring and empathy on the part of teachers to promote learning and social inclusion of newly arrived students are required. Furthermore, study tutoring in the mother tongue in regular teaching seems to be important while the study tutors’ view of their mission varies.*

**Keywords:** education in emergencies, Sweden, migration, ‘newly arrived children and youth’, reception system, teaching.

## Introduction

This paper addresses the theme of ‘Education in Emergencies’ from a Swedish perspective. We argue, together with many educators in the international community (see Kagawa, 2005; Tawil, 1997), that education for refugees and asylum-seeking children and youth,<sup>i</sup> or as termed in the educational policies in Sweden, education for ‘newly arrived students’, is a challenging and very important question, not least for societies’ social sustainable development. In this article we present and analyse some of the complexities and challenges concerning migration and education in a Swedish educational context. The aim of the research was to explore how newly arrived students’ conditions for learning and social inclusion were organised out from a teaching and student perspective. The empirical data were produced in Primary Schools in two medium sized Swedish municipalities during the years 2016 -2018 (see Korp et al., 2019). The results show that teaching and learning in culturally diverse environments are complex and require strategic planning and teachers’ interactions out from a consciously intercultural approach (see Akkari & Radhoune, 2022; Gorski, 2008, 2009; Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

The significance of the study is twofold. It contributes to knowledge on migration in relation to the educational context and the reception system in Sweden, a Nordic welfare state. It also contributes to the literature in the field of the teaching of newly arrived students through rich

empirical data and analysis of two specific perspectives in education, namely a perspective on 'Framing of the day and the lesson' and 'Study tutoring in the mother tongue in regular teaching'.

### ***'Newly arrived students' and 'emergency' education***

'Newly arrived students' is a category of students who have lived abroad and commenced their education in Sweden when they were seven years of age or older within the last four years (Education Act, 2010:800; 'see Andersson, Lyrenäs & Sidenhag, 2015; Norberg & Gross, 2019).

Under certain circumstances, issues of migration and education can possibly be described as measures of emergency education 'in the South' (Kagawa, 2005), but need to be much more paid attention to and focussed also in the North as argued by Proyer et al. (2019), especially for those over 15 years of age. The international community has recognized this problem and 'education in crisis situations' has become a major concern (Tawil, 1997). Education is increasingly recognized as the 'fourth pillar' of humanitarian response in such crises, along with food and water, shelter, and health care (Kagawa, 2005). Also, the importance of education is underlined in the United Nations 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which states that migration and displacement are two global challenges. The agenda needs to be addressed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UN, 2017; 'see UNESCO, 2019). The issues are extremely important and urgent, also in the Nordic countries of which Sweden is a part. In the following section, we briefly present the Swedish context.

### ***Sweden - part of the Nordic region***

Sweden is the largest of the Nordic countries by size and population. With a population of a little more than ten million it is one of the smaller members of the European Union (EU). Like many other European countries, Sweden became a more profiled multicultural society after World War II. Currently, more than 2 million people in Sweden were born abroad, which is approximately 20 percent of the country's population (scb.se<sup>ii</sup>) and Sweden has emerged as one of the most multicultural countries in Europe (Borevi, 2012). As regards language, Swedish is the main language and the language that a majority of those living in Sweden speak. Sweden has also five national minority languages. All five languages received their status when the parliament decided to join the framework convention for the protection of national minorities in Europe back in 1999. In addition to Swedish, many other languages are spoken in Sweden due to recent migration. No statistics are available on the contemporary multifaceted linguistic development in Sweden, but it is estimated that around 200 different languages are spoken (Gezelius, 2019; Parkvall, 2016). From a European and Swedish perspective, education for children and youth in migrant situations is very important, and children and youth in migration are naturally in an 'emergency' educational situation. The emergency of addressing the need of young people in migration context was stressed by the critical theorist Homi Bhabha (2019) who argues:

*We cannot continue to fail the next generation of young people (and several more to follow) with dramatic shortfalls in access to basic rights such as quality education and health care, rights respecting employment, and access to a safe and life-sustaining environment (2019, p. 84).*

This article aims to present and analyse two specific perspectives on education in relation to the education of ‘newly arrived students’ and opportunities and obstacles in education from the current Swedish situation in terms of migration and education.

The article is structured as follows; we begin with a discussion of the definition of the concept of emergency to problematise and ‘open up’ this concept. Then Sweden and migration are described, followed by an introduction to the Swedish Welfare State and the Swedish reception system. This introductory part aims to contribute to the understanding of education, migration, children and youth in a Nordic and Swedish context. The article continues by presenting the aim, method, material, analysis, and findings of a recently completed research project which contributes to the empirical data for this article.<sup>iii</sup> This is done through examples under the headings of ‘Framing the day and the lesson’ and ‘Study tutoring in mother tongue in regular teaching’. The article ends with a concluding discussion of our main findings.

### ***Migration – an emergency situation***

The concept of emergency needs to be understood from its political, social, and economic contexts. In the Merriam-Webster wordbook<sup>iv</sup> emergency is defined as an ‘unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state that calls for immediate action’. As mentioned by Kagawa (2007), the state of emergency often inhabits a narrow focus on economic development which Kagawa finds problematic, and he argues that the concept needs to address comprehensive development towards quality of life for all. Definitions of ‘emergency education’ have a reference to education programmes that are organised ‘in situations where children lack access to their national and community education systems due to occurrence of complex emergencies or natural disasters (Kagawa, 2007, p. 494)’, situations that might naturally overburden a society.

One such course of ‘emergency’ event recently in Europe and Sweden, was the arrival of many asylum seekers and refugees, especially during the year 2015. The situation was not totally unforeseen, as the world was experiencing several severe conflicts and violence at the time. The war in Syria that started in 2011 forced people to flee their homes to an increasing extent and many people tried to get to the European Union to seek asylum. In addition to the refugees from Syria, refugees and asylum seekers also came from Afghanistan, many as unaccompanied minors. Refugees from several parts of Africa, including Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia tried to reach the European Union, too (scb.se<sup>v</sup>).

Both in media and in the societal discourse, these events were reported on and discussed using terms such as ‘crisis’ (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017), ‘migration crisis’ (Bauman, 2016), and

'European migration crisis' (Norberg & Gross, 2019; 'see Skodo, 2022). The term 'crisis' was in the European and Swedish discourse used both for the conditions that were assumed to be behind the asylum seekers' journey to Europe, including the large number of deaths and drowning accidents, and also for the tasks that many European countries were faced with when they had to care for many asylum seekers in a relatively short time. The discourse built on the assumptions that this 'crisis' was the 'largest and most complex facing Europe since the Second World War' and that the 'EU governments were facing huge policy and practical challenges in determining and addressing the immediate and longer-term needs of refugees and other migrants' (Metcalf-Hough, 2015). During this period in 2015, over one million asylum seekers arrived in Europe and more than 390 000 in 2016 (Eurostat statistics<sup>vi</sup>). The OECD (2016) concluded that in 2014–2015 Sweden saw the largest per capita inflow of asylum-seekers ever recorded in an OECD country (Emilsson, 2018). Hagelund writes about this as an 'exogenous shock' (Hagelund, 2020, p. 1). At that time, Sweden had quite an open migration policy and an integration policy based on a multicultural approach (Borevi, 2012). These former policies are, however, currently contested and have changed since 2015, raising the question whether this signals the end of what has been called the Swedish exceptionalism to migration and the opening of doors to refugees (Dahlstedt & Nergaard, 2016; Kenes, 2020; Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2016).

Was this a 'crisis' or even an 'emergency'? That question has been debated in Sweden, and the discourse of crisis is used not least by populist right-wing parties campaigning on strong anti-immigrant and anti-refugee platforms. What can be considered problematic is the fact that the extreme right-wing is no longer found only in the civil sector in Sweden and Europe, but it has conquered political parliament too, as shown by the success of 'National Front' in France, 'Golden Dawn' in Greece, 'Jobbik' in Hungary, 'Alternative for Germany', 'Freedom parties of Austria' and 'Sweden Democrats' in Sweden (Djorić, 2016). Accordingly, Sweden has experienced an intense debate on migration and several new laws have been passed to restrict migration (Garvik & Valenta, 2021). The number of asylum seekers in Sweden decreased soon during the late autumn 2015. This was mainly caused by a reverse in Sweden's' asylum policy by tighter border controls, both between Turkey and Greece and within Europe, which reduced Sweden's intake of refugee to the EU-mandate minimum.

From a comparative perspective Sweden was certainly not in a state of 'emergency'. The 'newly arrived' children and youth in migration into Sweden in 2015 did not lack access to national and community education systems and the society was not overburdened or on the verge of a 'system breakdown' (see Scarpa & Schierup, 2018).

### ***Migration and the Swedish context***

Sweden has experienced waves of migration since the end of World War II, and children and youth have arrived as asylum seekers, children to labour migrants and for family reunification since long back, although not in such large numbers as in 2015. Currently, the most common

country of birth for foreign-born people is Syria, followed by Iraq. Migration from the Horn of Africa is also quite extensive where Somalis are the largest group from Africa living in Sweden (in 2018 there were more than 100 000 Somali people living in the country (scb.se<sup>vii</sup>). Statistics show that during the 2019/2020, six per cent were ‘newly arrived’ pupils in Swedish compulsory school (The National Board of Education, 2020).

Sweden used to be described as one of the Nordic welfare states and it enjoyed an international reputation for combining generous welfare state entitlements with rapid economic growth, low unemployment, and high levels of labour force participation, particularly among women. This welfare model, characterized by generous, non-tested benefits, a strong element of redistribution in the systems and high taxes, was developed after WW-II, but had ideological roots in the labour movement of the late 1800s (Esping-Anderson, 1990; von Brömssen et al., 2022). One example of the welfare model is that Sweden offers free education from age six to 19 and free school lunches for all children in compulsory schooling, which covers the age range between six and 16 in Sweden. Over the last 20 years, the welfare model has been challenged due to Europeanisation, globalization, technology changes and an increase in international financial competition (Greve, 2007, p. 44; OECD, 2010), which leads inter alia to challenges concerning social inequalities (Kvist et al., 2011).

### ***Education, the European Union, and the Swedish Welfare State***

A large body of research shows that education plays a significant role in health and wellbeing, as well as in integration in the ‘new society’, and education has been identified as one of the most important institutions for newly arrived migrant children (Anderson et al., 2004; Hek, 2005; Morland & Birman, 2016; Rutter, 2006; Svensson, 2017; Svensson & Eastmond, 2013). This is in line with one of the focus topics for the European Union. The Union states that, ‘All citizens in the EU have the right to high-quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning’. Therefore, the European Commission has formed an action plan to integrate ‘third-country nationals’ and has identified three priorities for education: to integrate newly arrived migrants into mainstream education structures as early as possible, to prevent underachievement among migrants, and to tackle social exclusion and foster intercultural dialogue.<sup>viii</sup> The educational systems in Europe all have different reception systems in place, although these systems differ in many ways (Crul et al., 2019).

### ***Newly arrived students and the Swedish reception system***

There are special challenges with the education of newly immigrated students. A large body of research points to the need for appropriate measures on the transition to host countries’ education systems (Anderson et al., 2004; Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2022; Bunar, 2015; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Pinson & Arnot, 2020; Rutter, 2006; Tajic & Bunar, 2020). Hek (2005) argued that:

*It is no exaggeration to say that refugee children’s well-being depends to a major degree on their school experiences, successes, and failures. Because they are*

*unfamiliar with the education system and particularly when they do not speak English; parents cannot help their children as they would wish to, and children may be left to deal with difficulties alone (p. 29).*

It is likewise important to remember that refugee children are not a homogenous group and have a range of different needs experiences and expectations (Hek, 2005). There is a tendency to create 'a simple universal idea' of refugees, and who they 'are' (Loizos, 2002, p. 42). Papadopoulos, among others, underlined that a 'loss of home is the only condition that all refugees share' (2002, p. 9; 'see Hek, 2005, p. 15).

The rules and regulations concerning education in Sweden are decided at a national level and it is the municipalities that have the concrete responsibility for organising education for all children between 7 and 16 years of age. All children registered in a municipality are subject to compulsory school attendance, regardless of their legal status. Core values promoted in the Swedish national policy documents are equivalent and equitable education for all students. Moreover, education should be adapted to each student's needs, based on the student's background, earlier experiences, language and knowledge, irrespective of where in the country it is provided (Education Act, 2010:800). This is explained as follows:

*The education in the school system aims for children and students to acquire and develop knowledge and values. It should promote the development and learning of all children and pupils as well as a lifelong desire to learn. The education must also convey and anchor respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society rests. (p. 4)*

The following quote conveys the core values in the Swedish national curriculum:

*Education must be designed in accordance with fundamental democratic values and human rights, such as the inviolability of human life, the freedom and integrity of the individual, the equal value of all human beings, equality and solidarity between people. (Education Act, 2010, p.5).*

The equivalence in the Swedish school is currently challenged and increasing differences in results are noted between groups of students with different cultural and economic assets in society (Cerna et al., 2019; Löfstedt, 2019). The differences between schools' results have increased for several years and the National Agency for Education (2015) concludes that the increasing differences in results between schools are due to an increased sorting of pupils in different schools – that is, increased school segregation – which means that students with different backgrounds meet increasingly infrequently (Böhlmark, Holmlund & Lindahl, 2015).

As mentioned above, the municipality is responsible for the reception of newly arrived students and the municipalities' experiences of receiving new arrivals vary greatly in Sweden. Sometimes the teachers have extensive experience and strategies for this kind of work, but not always.

Therefore, the teaching of newly arrived students sometimes rests on staff who do not have a firm foothold in the specific school and without knowledge about how to work with students with a recent migration history (Korp et. al., 2019).

In 2016, a new set of legislative changes from the Government was adopted concerning newly arrived students (Government Bill 2014/15: 45; SKOLFS 2016:2). This new legislation stated that the knowledge of a newly arrived student must be assessed, and the result should be included in the basis for a decision on placement in grade and teaching group, for how the teaching should be planned and how the time should be distributed between the subjects (The National Board of Education, 2016). The assessment consists of three subsequent steps: (a) gathering basic information on a student's background, experiences, the language(s) spoken, number of years in formal or informal education; (b) the attained level of knowledge in numeracy and literacy according to age; and (c) the attained level of knowledge in academic subjects. The results are stored in a student's personal file, which teachers can access when they plan teaching activities (Tajic & Bunar, 2020). Moreover, a newly arrived student must, within two months of his or her arrival in Sweden, be placed in a grade that is appropriate to his or her age, prior knowledge, and personal circumstances in general. It is also stated that a newly arrived student who lacks sufficient knowledge of the Swedish language to be able to follow the regular teaching must be partly taught in a preparatory class. The headmaster is responsible for organizing the reception of newly arrived students based on what is judged to work best for teaching and the ability to offer newly arrived students a well-functioning introduction to the education in the Swedish school. New students are sometimes placed directly in a regular teaching group. It is also common for students to be placed in some form of preparatory class. The teaching in a preparatory class in a certain subject should be interrupted for the newly arrived student as soon as the student is judged to have sufficient knowledge to be able to participate in the regular teaching of the subject. The teaching in a preparatory class for the newly arrived student shall not last longer than two years and a student is not regarded as a newly arrived student after four years (Government Bill 2014/15: 45; 'see Bunar, 2017, pp. 3–6).

### **The research project for this article**

This article builds on the results of a research project investigating reception strategies and inclusion for newly arrived students in schools in two municipalities in Sweden and included both quantitative and qualitative data. The research also included the migrant students' own reflections on these issues. The research was carried out from 2016–2018.<sup>ix</sup> We decided in cooperation with the operational managers of the reception units in both municipalities to focus on students of middle and high school age (approx. 11-15 years). It was done because 1) students starting Swedish primary school after primary school age, have more difficulty to achieve the same knowledge results as peers and therefore the issue of equivalence is more critical in middle and upper secondary school 2) the older students can more easily formulate and reflect on different

aspects of their educational situation. The case studies in the schools are based on lesson observations and on interviews with newly arrived students, with teachers, study tutors, special educators, social pedagogues, and other staff who work with newly arrived students in school and teaching, as well as with headmasters of the selected schools (Korp et al., 2019, 23-24).

In this article we focus on two teaching and learning situations in Swedish classrooms where newly arrived students are included and take part. These aspects are a) framing of the day and the lesson and b) study tutoring in mother tongue in regular teaching. The newly arrived students are part of larger groups of students with a migration background, with varied cultural and language backgrounds and length of stay in Sweden. This makes the teaching situation challenging in order to 'adapt education to each student's needs, based on the student's background, earlier experiences, language and knowledge, irrespective of where in the country it is provided', as stated in the Swedish Education Act (2010:800).

### **Methods and material**

The part of the study presented in this article is based on ethnographic work and interviews from eight primary school units with different conditions and ways of organizing teaching for newly arrived migrant children (Korp et al., 2019). In our research for the whole project, we interviewed students and their guardians, followed handover conversations from teachers in the reception unit to regular class teachers, made lesson observations and follow-up calls. The selection of students was made in consultation with the head of the school units and teachers at the reception unit in each municipality. Thus, students from both middle and high school are included, the gender distribution is quite even, and neither the students themselves nor their guardians suffer from mental illness or particularly difficult life circumstances. We also had access to an interpreter in the current language if needed. However, the recruitment of students for this part was complicated as the students were in the reception unit for a short time, difficulties in getting interpreters, the school placement came often too close to the start of regular school and of students moving across municipal borders. Five students from the same number of school units were added in this way, but to slightly different degrees depending on the circumstances. At the other schools, we followed a group of students. An interpreter was used in most of the interviews. The observations were documented through field notes and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. On the next page is a table of collected material at the schools throughout the research project (Krop et al., 2019).

### ***Analysis***

The data were analysed step by step through open qualitative thematic analysis with the aim of finding overarching discursive themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Schreier, 2014). The interviews and fieldnotes were coded and text segments were inductively developed into categories and patterns of similarities and differences out from the two lenses for this article, namely 'Framing of the day and the lesson' and 'Study tutoring in the mother tongue in regular teaching' which



were two overarching themes that we identified and found interesting across our data set. We work based on a social constructionist epistemology where events, meanings, and experiences are seen as articulated out from existing discourses in society (Burr, 1995). In line with such an epistemology, we seek to theorize the sociocultural contexts and structural conditions that make the individual provided accounts possible.

Following Braun and Clarke (2006) we went through the six phases of analysis, moving back and forth in our data throughout the working process. The process of coding meant that we organised data into meaningful groups, thereafter, sorting the different codes into potential themes. For the first theme 'Framing of the day and the lesson' the organised coding included the data groups: starting the lesson, teacher interaction, teacher planning, working methods, language use, language approach and content. For the second theme 'Study tutoring in the mother tongue in regular teaching' the coded groups were: working tasks, role, motivation for work, problems, language approach and cooperation. The identified themes were then put into a context of earlier research findings on 'emergency education' and teaching 'newly arrived students'.

**Table 1**

*The study's data*

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7	School 8	Total
Student interviewees	5	2	4	2	6	2	2	4	27
Teacher interviewees	2	3	5	2	3	3	2	5	25
Study tutor interviewees	5	3	1	1	3	2			15
Headmaster interviewees	1	1	2	1	1		2	1	9
Other interviewees	1 parent, 1 head	1 parent	1 coordin ator		1 teacher* 1 receptio n staff	2 parents	2 teachers*	1 parent, 1 mentor	12
Participatory observation days	6	4	6	4	6	6	2	6	40

\* *Special education teachers*

### **Ethics**

According to Swedish law concerning ethical conduct code (SFS 2003:460), participation in a research study is voluntary, confidential, must be approved by parents if the participants are underage, and participants are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Children, teachers, and parents in this study were informed of this and all gave their consent. Newly arrived students and their guardians have received written information in their mother tongue and provided written consent to participate in the study. The research proposal went through ethical

review by the regional Ethical Committee. We have engaged in the research in line with the formal regulations and have tried to act in a respectful and dialogical way in order to continue to maintain public trust and confidence in human research (Good Research Practice, 2017; Korp et al., 2019).

### **Newly arrived students learning situations in education**

This part of our article deals with two different cases or situations in the project, showing the great challenges in the Swedish school system in education, both for newly arrived students and their teachers. The first case highlights the students' opportunities for learning different subjects and how students are affected by the teaching structure and content, and by, for example, working methods, framing, and the teacher's ability to work with an approach to language that contributes to students' language development.

### **Framing the day and the lesson**

In most of the classrooms we studied, the teachers went through and informed students about the day's layout and content before the lesson started. Times and content for the lessons were clearly noted on the board by the time the students arrived at the classroom to give a clear picture of what would take place during the lesson and the day. At one of the schools, lessons and the breaks were symbolized by images that are plasticized and attached in chronological order within a box of red tape on the board at the front of the classroom.

The lessons were also framed in a similar way. The teachers wrote down the workflow on the board while they explained which area they were going to work with, what the students should learn, and what tasks or elements the lesson would contain. Sometimes the planning was available digitally and displayed with the projector. A lesson usually contains several elements of different nature, such as tasks or activities to be done jointly/in group/individually; oral and written assignments; moments where students listen or see a card of film, and where they themselves are active in, such as writing, presenting, or solving problems. Another common feature of the teachers who worked with a clear framework was that they spent a short time on the overall planning but introduced various steps and tasks in more detail as they moved forward in the planning. They checked that the students had understood the various steps and tasks before proceeding and explained more if needed. It is clear that these teachers are well prepared and have thought through teaching and the students' different conditions for taking part in the teaching carefully (Korp et al., 2019). Below we give examples and analyses of interactions in the classroom that show careful moves in education out from a clear framework planned by the teacher.

### ***Example A***

The students enter the classroom gradually and sit down at their own places, take out their books, and chat quietly with each other while waiting for the lesson to begin. The teacher greets everyone with a nod and a smile, and a few words – 'Are you feeling well now?' 'Did it go well yesterday?' We present an excerpt from our field notes as follows:

*Like every morning, she (the teacher) begins by showing the time planning/schedule, which she had written down on the board before the students entered the hall. Then she goes into what is new or special:*

*- In social science today, we will start with a completely new area, and I think that you will find it very exciting. We're done with the history part now and we are going to start with geography, and we are going to talk about population distribution in the world, where people live and why there are so many people living in some places, and almost none in others. We'll talk about that. Then in the arts we will start with something I know that you think is great fun – clay! We have bought lovely new clay we will put our hands into and shape. [The students are very happy about this, jump a little on the chairs and shouts 'yeah!']*

*- And then we will have to burn the things you have done in a very hot oven, so that they become durable. But first the objects that we have made have to stand and dry for a few weeks in the classroom. Yes, it is going to be a lot of fun!*

*-Tomorrow, dear friends, is a special day at school – does anyone know? There have been posters at school ... [one boy knows; it is International Reading Day].*

*- Well, now we start the lesson! We will work with oral presentations today, and you should get to talk together first and make one common mind map, and then you will get to watch a small film. I will not say what it's about yet!*

*The teacher writes on the board:*

*- Oral presentations*

*- Mind map*

*- Film*

*(From field notes, Korp et al., 2019, p.66).*

Javed, a newly arrived student in the class, says in an interview later that he values the clear framing and teacher's approach:

*I think the X-school has been the best because I just feel that here, I am learning more ... It's the teachers, they're really trying to teach us, they are kind and say what we need to improve. But at the same time, you have to take responsibility for what you have to learn! ... They are clear, show what you should do, say if you should do this and then you should do that. They have planning. (Interview, student, Korp et al., 2019, pp. 66–67).*

Javed came to Sweden almost four years ago and attended several different schools. His favourite school is the one he attends now.

The teachers framing of the lesson by presenting a clear plan is something we have seen in most classrooms, but in many cases additional reinforcing structures are needed if that lesson content should be available to newly arrived students. The teacher in the example above speaks clearly, with well-chosen words and a sense of what words are new and difficult for some students. Overall, teachers make eye contact with the students and are alert to signals that they do not understand. They listen to the students and convey that learning takes place in a social context, where both the teacher and other students contribute and help each other (Korp et al., 2019). Research shows that inside the classroom it is important that the teacher creates a positive learning environment that strengthens newly arrived students' self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. Therefore, the teaching needs to be well planned so that students with different language backgrounds are given the opportunity to use their previous language skills when learning (Cummins, 2001). We also claim that structured social interaction between teachers and students enables students to understand a new social context as well as an opportunity to learn.

### **Example B**

In other classrooms, it is much harder for the newly arrived students to understand what the lesson is about and what is expected of them. The example below is taken from a lesson at a school where the teacher does not adapt the teaching to newly arrived students who have different abilities in their second language development, which is Swedish.

*The teacher comes into the classroom like the rest of the students. It's pretty quiet when the students enter. The five newly arrived students [who are also the only ones in the class who have a migration background] sit at the back of the classroom, and behind them are one Arabic-speaking and one Somali-speaking study tutor. The teacher greets the students when they have sat down, and asks how it has been today, have they been able to stay calm and do what they are supposed to do, focus on the tasks and do not talk about anything else that might interfere with the lessons.*

He/she says the lesson today will be about the car and points to a plan that he/she has written on the board:

- *Development of the car*
- *Internal combustion engine*
- *The car and society*

*The teacher also mentions that the students have homework to read by tomorrow, pp. 5–9 in the book and the stencil about the engine. He/she speaks quickly and doesn't repeat or pay attention to subject words and concepts that may be new to the students. The newly arrived students who have been in Sweden for 1.5–3 years (two boys with Arabic as mother tongue and two with Somali) look attentive, but the two girls (Jasmin and Houda), who have been shorter time in Sweden (Jasmine only a couple of months)*

*seem sleepy and to be thinking about other things. The teacher does nothing to check if they understand the content of the lesson.*

*The study tutors stand silently behind ‘their’ students throughout the lesson.*

*The Arabic-speaking study tutor is busy with his mobile phone (perhaps he is researching concepts he does not understand). He/she has been a short time in Sweden and is studying SFI. He/she sometimes bends forward and whispers a few short words to the girls.*

*The teacher shows a film about technology/transport history, which spans 250 years. The narrator speaks quickly and, in addition to a variety of historical and technical terms, uses many abstract and metaphorical expressions. Most students seem to be watching and listening to the movie. However, Jasmine soon puts her head in her arms. Houda looks at an Arabic TV series on her own computer.*

*When the film is over, the teacher turns on the light and says (to everyone), ‘Time to wake up!’ He/she begins to summarize the main features of the film by asking questions to the class: Who invented the steam engine? How could it be that the car suddenly became so common? What was invented that made it possible to start manufacturing everything much faster and cheaper? He/she does not explain any of the concepts or expressions that have appeared in the film and can be difficult, especially for the newly arrived students, to understand. Only four or five boys raise their hand and answer the questions. Of the newly arrived students, it is Mahmoud who participates, and he answers one question. The teacher confirms the answers, and reflects on them at a fast pace, asks new questions, points to connections and asks, for example, what driving forces are behind the technology development, and how technology development in an area can lead up to development in completely different sectors and in society as a whole. (Field notes, Korp et al., 2019, pp. 67–68)*

The teacher him/herself believes that it is a dilemma how to work to include the newly arrived students in the subject. He/she says that he/she has chosen to put them together in the classroom so that they can discuss and get help from each other and get close to the study tutor, too. Of the newly arrived students, he says:

*In the name of honesty, they do not get a lot out of the subject knowledge, because they know so little Swedish yet. But they are included in the class, and they hear the Swedish language around them all the time. But of course, there is a feeling that you are not doing enough for the newly arrived students, and the teaching materials in technology are unfortunately not recorded yet’ (into different languages). (Fieldnotes in connection to the lesson, Korp et al., 2019, p. 69).*

In this lesson it is clearly shown how difficult many teaching situations are for newly arrived student when teaching isn't thought through. We certainly do not want to put blame on teachers and enter upon 'teacher bashing'. Yet, we see a great need for continuing teacher training on how to cope with situations as the one discussed above. This is also noted by teachers themselves. In an investigation by one of the teacher unions it is stated that 70 percent of the teachers do not consider themselves to have sufficient competence to teach newly arrived students (Skolvärlden, 2016).

### **Mother tongue tutoring**

In Sweden, it is the school's task to organize the teaching for students with another mother tongue so that they are given the conditions to develop knowledge in all the school's subjects at the same time as they learn the Swedish language (The National Board of Education, 2022a). A way to satisfy this need is to continually tutor the students in their mother tongue. How the teaching for newly arrived students should be designed, which subject teaching in the regular teaching group they can participate in, and to what extent this can take place is decided based on the assessment of the individual student and decided by the school headmaster as stated above (Education Act 2010:800; The Swedish National Board of Education, 2019). Preparatory classes are one possible way to give the newly arrived students the skills they need to be able to participate in regular classes. When the school after some time assesses that the student can follow the regular teaching in the subject, the student should leave the teaching in the preparatory class and, in all cases, studying in a preparatory class should be no more than two years (Educational Act 2010: 800, Chapter 3; Tajic & Bunar, 2020). The purpose of this legislation is to avoid the reported existence of students being 'stuck' in preparatory classes for extended time, and often experiencing them as spaces for 'othering' and marginalization (e.g. Brännström, 2021; Korp et al. 2019; Folke, 2017; Skowronski, 2013; Dávila, 2017).

### **Study tutoring in regular teaching**

Another way of supporting newly arrived students in education is study tutoring in the mother tongue in the regular teaching (The National Board of Education, 2022b). Tutoring in the mother tongue during the regular class teaching is a teaching support that may be given to students with another mother tongue than Swedish. This means that bilingual staff support students in acquiring subject knowledge in their mother tongue (Avery, 2017; Bunar, 2022; Straszer et al., 2019). The purpose of this initiative is to develop, with the help of the mother tongue or the strongest school language, the subject knowledge of the students in parallel with the development of the language. According to the Official Report of the Swedish Government (SOU 2017), this is the most important effort to develop the newly arrived students' knowledge development and to increase their goal fulfilment (Cummins 2000, 2017; Thomas & Collier,1997). The tutoring can be conducted in different ways; by a multilingual teacher, or by a teacher together with a study tutor who masters the student's mother tongue or the student's strongest school language (The National

Board of Education, 2019). Study tutoring can take place before, during or after the regular lesson. Regardless of which variant is chosen, it is important that the study tutoring begin from the students' needs. Also, the cooperation of the regular teacher and the study tutor is seen as being of great importance for teaching (Sheikhi & Uçar, 2017). The subject teacher needs to understand that the study tutoring is not the same as subject teaching, and that the study tutor must be able to explain the workflow at the same time as he/she explains the subject content (Glogic & Holm, 2017). Currently, the headmaster at the school determines how the study tutoring shall be organized and there is no limit to how long and to what extent a newly arrived student may be entitled to tutoring – this should be governed by the student's needs (The Education Act, 2010: 800, Chapter 3). Research holds that study tutoring in regular teaching is crucial for the student's inclusion and school success (Axelsson, 2015; Cummins 2000, 2017; Thomas & Collier, 1997) even though there are no scientifically reliable researches confirming how participation in study tutoring influences the student's results. We also know from research that access to tutoring varies between municipalities and schools but far from all new arrivals receive the support (Bunar, 2022; Lainio, 2012).

In the following, and as our case two, we want to highlight study tutoring in mother tongue in regular teaching as an interesting function in the reception of newly arrived students. We do this through three examples. Through our classroom observations and in interviews with study tutors and teachers, it emerges that tutoring in the mother tongue is a complex task that varies based on the study tutors' own qualifications and view of the assignment and how the study tutor is positioned in the school. Our research shows that there exist different views on what the assignment as a study tutor implies; namely, as educator and knowledge mediator, as language and cultural interpreter and as a study tutor also having a 'caring' task. Below, we explore the three main ways of interpreting the assignment of working as a study tutor for newly arrived students. We do this through analyses of interviews with three different study tutors (Korp et al., 2019; Risenfors et al., 2018).

### ***Example 1 – Sumaya: educator and knowledge mediator***

Some of the study tutors, like Sumaya, have a pedagogical education, although not a Swedish teacher's degree, and she highlighted especially the pedagogical task in the interviews. Sumaya stated:

*Sumaya: There are more math teachers, but not many that can speak Dari (language spoken in Afghanistan) so I'm making a big effort right now. I can help students into Swedish school.*

*Interviewer: But you get a much more inconvenient job?!*

*Sumaya: Yes, I travel many miles back and forth every day and work in 10 schools, but it is important to have study tutors who are also trained teachers. I think I can*

*motivate in math and such subjects early. Right now, I am probably doing the best as a mother tongue teacher and study tutor.*

But it is not only trained teachers who see the role of a study tutor as primarily pedagogical. Amin, who had no professional experience at all when he started working as a study tutor said: 'I visit the Swedish National Agency for Education's website almost every day and learn a lot about teaching and pedagogy. That is my mission'. In the role of educator and knowledge communicator, the study tutor talked about the importance of working together with class and subject teachers, something that also appears in class teachers' stories as follows:

*I think it was Halima's first week. She would join the group and present a country in Europe. And she was there and did it already the first week. [...] She did it in Swedish words with a lot of help from the study tutor. They sat at home with Google Drive and worked on a shared document. She and the study tutor sat late one evening and wrote [laughs] because she wanted so much. Yes, so she stood there and could not speak many Swedish words. But she did it. (Interview with the class teacher, see Korp et al. 2019, p. 70).*

The above quote illustrates how the student's willingness to participate is encouraged and supported by both the teacher and the study tutor, who show great commitment to enable the newly arrived student to successfully participate in the teaching and take a place in the group.

### **Example 2 – Hossein: language and cultural interpreter**

The other task that the study tutor took up is to 'school' or socialize the new arrivals in a careful way in the Swedish school system. Many students come from school systems that are very different from the Swedish one and it takes time to understand what is expected in Swedish schools (BRIS report 2018). This is highlighted by many researchers and for example Huitfeldt (2015) underlined this from examples in the subject 'Physical Education and Health' in Swedish schools. The importance of students' previous experiences and growing up conditions means a lot for their self-confidence and attitude towards school, where notions of gender, economics, and religion, for example, might play a role different from in Sweden. One aspect of this is teaching students to take responsibility for their studies and not just trusting the teacher, Hossein underlined. But he also said, 'It is difficult, because the teachers in Sweden have nothing to object to when the students do not obey, and the new arrivals can think, 'Here it is luxury like ... you do not have to work'. Hossein sometimes gets angry when he sees how students behave and says: 'Sometimes I boil inside me and shout: Hello! What are you doing? You must respect all teachers, so, get it together!'

The study tutors, as Hossein described, are also language and cultural bridges for what they call 'the Swedish students'.



*I must point out that all students in classes must understand who the newcomers are. They just think [the Swedish students] that they come from the desert and have never been to school. They're just being bullied. The students say, 'We do not want to work with him/her because he/she does not understand anything (of the Swedish language) but, they, he/she [newcomer] understands! It's just that it's the language that hinders them.*

The quote above shows how marginalization of the newly arrived can take place and the challenges put on schools and teachers to handle many complex situations. Therefore, the role of study tutors is underlined as important for all students, not only for the newly arrived students.

Several of the study tutors discussed their role as 'cultural bridges' between students, they emphasized the dilemma between being inside the classroom, on one hand, and being a cultural bridge for all students, on the other. Sometimes they have to teach newly arrived students separately about concepts or how the Swedish society works.

### ***Example 3 – Salma: Study tutor and 'caring'***

A third area that appears in the study tutors' stories is that the students often turn to them when they need security and comfort. Gay (2010) described this task as 'caring'; that is, taking care of the students, their emotions, and potential problems. Many of the newly arrived students have experiences with war, violence and dramatic experiences and they often turn to the study tutors. Salma in this excerpt expressed that she wants to help and comfort, but also that this can be difficult.

*Salma: I want to help them, especially the newcomers. They have been hit by war and they need help. I like it. I joke with them, and I speak the same language.*

*Interviewer: Many have been through difficult things. Can you take care of that?*

*Salma: Yes, I have had to leave (the classroom) because I have cried and felt that I could not bear it. I come from a country that has been at war and I recognize, and in the end, I feel that I cannot take it anymore.*

*Interviewer: How do you cope?*

*Salma: I cannot bear it. Sometimes it feels like I cannot talk to parents and especially not with the legal guardian,<sup>x</sup> because that is when the parents are left in the home country. It is really difficult.*

Another issue related to the 'caring role' is about being torn between having moral responsibility for a student and still not having the right mandate for this, as Iman discussed.

*I am the one who is in contact with guardians, and I am an assistant mentor (study tutor). It's a lot of work, and a study tutor should not really be an assistant mentor. The problem is that I take care of the students but at the same time I am not the main*

*person responsible for them. And there are conflicts with the teachers sometimes. The teachers do not know the students and want us to help because we know them from the preparation group, but at the same time we are not real mentors. (Interview with Iman, study tutor).*

It is not uncommon for the study tutors to be given a mentoring role without the task being in their duty, and it may even happen that the students 'fall between the cracks' so that in practice they do not get a mentor at all. One of the teachers believed that mentoring is the role of the study tutor because the teacher himself does not know the student well enough. The study tutor, on the other hand, said that she had not been assigned an official mentoring role and sighed: 'Often the study tutors may be unofficial mentors' without either a mandate or salary for it.

## **Conclusion**

This article deals with what can be framed as emergency education, education for newly arrived students in compulsory education in Sweden, one of the five Nordic welfare states. The study investigates reception strategies and inclusion for newly arrived students in schools in two municipalities in Sweden, as well as the migrant students' own reflections on these issues (Korp et al., 2019).

The year 2015 was a year of unprecedented migration, particularly from the Middle East to Europe. Sweden received almost 163,000 asylum applications and this situation challenged the Swedish school system and teachers on how to organize and prepare for teaching and learning in a new situation for many schools and teachers even though Sweden has been a country that has received migrants since long back, especially after the WW-II. Thus, the situation of receiving migrants were not new, but experiences and knowledge of working with migrant students varies widely between regions, schools and among teachers.

During this year, 2015, Europe witnessed initially a mobilisation of solidarity and demands for a humane response articulated by government officials as well as voices in the media. The government responses then changed quite rapidly and were replaced by a discourse of 'crisis' and after the autumn peak in late 2015, the borders were more or less closed due to new restricted Swedish migration laws. Fewer refugees have arrived and it has become more difficult to get the right to stay in Sweden (Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö, 2022).

A new set of legislative changes from the Swedish Government was adopted in 2016 concerning newly arrived students and education (Government Bill 2014/15; SKOLFS 2016). The new directives included an obligatory and individual assessment or 'mapping' of newly arrived students to elucidate the students' language and experiences, literacy, numeracy, and the students' knowledge in different school subjects. This was done to be able to place the students in the right grade and teaching group.

We have in this article discussed how the Swedish school system and teachers reacted and tried to deal with the situation of trying to accommodate and possibly integrate many newly arrived students with a very recent migration history in school. We have done this through two different cases; one case exploring how teachers develop a strategy of ‘framing the day and the lesson’ through clear information and explanations on what will happen during each lesson and the whole day. This gives the students a clear view of how the day is organized, what they are expected to do and thus provides security for the students. As Swedish is the majority language in Sweden, teachers use pictures and several other devices to help the students to understand the Swedish language. They clearly care about the students and stop and ask, explain words and concepts. Teachers listen to the students and make sure that learning takes place in an environment where both the teacher and other students contribute and help each other. This situation is however not the case in all classrooms as we have shown from another teaching situation where the teacher does nothing language wise to check if the newly arrived students understand the content of the lesson. Here we want to emphasise that we do not want to contribute to ‘teacher bashing’ or point a finger towards the teacher. Teaching is a challenging activity and to become a knowledgeable and well-functioning teacher, supporting structures must be in place. Especially an approach to language and multilingualism where teaching focuses on active and authentic language use and where the formal aspects of the language are gradually integrated, are important. In one of the examples we have described, the teacher did not know how to cooperate with the students or how to support students’ language development. Also, the caring and empathy aspects seemed to be missing.

In our case number two, we describe and discuss the work that are performed by the mother tongue study tutors in regular teaching. Study tutoring in the mother tongue is seen as an important part of the school’s pedagogical work and can help multilingual students to succeed in school (Avery, 2017). We show in our study how different the mother tongue tutors view their work assignment. This kind of employment is also very vaguely described in regulations, and education and training for study tutors are almost non-existent. Also, as stated earlier by Avery (2017) tutoring does not function in the way it is envisaged in the national steering documents. There is a lack of time for joint planning and there are no teaching materials suitable for tutoring in the mother tongue or time to develop. This is something we also identified in our research.

As pointed out by Tajic and Bunar (2020) the Swedish legislation concerning newly arrived students with a migration biography, a wide range of adopted measures could be, in international comparison considered as advanced and, in many parts, in accordance with research recommendations (Crul et al., 2019). Stating this, we can conclude that there is still a lot to be done to create an education for newly arrived students that responds to their needs and that also takes care and develops resources that the newly arrived students bring with them. We argue in line with Bhabha (2019) referenced earlier in this article, that we cannot continue to fail young

people with quality education. We think teacher education in all parts of the world needs to respond and prepare teachers to the relevant contexts. In this article we have shown how multicultural and multilingual identities in classrooms have great impact upon and challenge traditional and ingrained ideas about teaching. Teaching is a complex work activity, not least in today's globalized world where migration is a natural part of almost each nation and will presumably continue to be so also in the future. Accordingly, all nations need to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (our italics) as stated in the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4. We are just a bit on the way.

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### Authors Note:

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- i. *The terms ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum-seeker’ have specific legal meanings. An asylum seeker is a person who has crossed an international border in search of safety and applies to be given refugee status under the 1951 UN Convention. A refugee is someone who has gained refugee status under the 1951 UN convention relating to the status of refugees.*
- ii. <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/manniskorna-i-sverige/utrikes-fodda/> [2022-04-10].
- iii. *This research was performed within the project ‘Kartläggning av nyanlända elevers utbildningssituation och övergångar i grundskolan’ (KAN) and has been published in Swedish in the report Inkludering och likvärdighet för nyanlända elever i grundskolan - en fallstudie i två kommuner [Inclusion and equivalence for newly arrived pupils in compulsory school – a case study in two municipalities] written by H. Korp, K. von Brömsen, K. Kittelmann Flensner & S. Risenfors (2019). Published online: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333702770\\_Inkludering\\_och\\_likvardighet\\_for\\_nyanlanda\\_elever\\_i\\_grundskolan\\_-\\_en\\_fallstudie\\_i\\_tva\\_kommuner](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333702770_Inkludering_och_likvardighet_for_nyanlanda_elever_i_grundskolan_-_en_fallstudie_i_tva_kommuner) [Retrieved 2022-06-29]. [In Swedish].*
- iv. *Merriam Webster: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emergency> [Retrieved 2022-06-25].*
- v. <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-bamne/befolkning/befolkningsframskrivningar/befolkningsframskrivningar/pong/tabell-och-diagram/invandring-och-utvandring-efter-kon-och-fodelseland-samt-framskrivning/> [2022-07-04].
- vi. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr\\_asyappctza/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyappctza/default/table?lang=en) [2022-04-13].
- vii. <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/sverige-i-siffror/manniskorna-i-sverige/utlandska-medborgare-i-sverige/> [2022-06-04].
- viii. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/about-eea/working-groups> [2022-04-11].
- ix. *Children who come to Sweden without parents (‘unaccompanied refugee children’) must, according to Swedish law, be assigned a legal guardian.*