



A question of time and place: student tutors' narrative identities in for- and non-profit contexts in Sweden

Marie Karlsson

To cite this article: Marie Karlsson (2021) A question of time and place: student tutors' narrative identities in for- and non-profit contexts in Sweden, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 51:8, 1241-1256, DOI: [10.1080/03057925.2020.1835462](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1835462)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1835462>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 20 Oct 2020.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 690



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)



Citing articles: 1 [View citing articles](#)

A question of time and place: student tutors' narrative identities in for- and non-profit contexts in Sweden

Marie Karlsson 

Department of Education, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

ABSTRACT

This paper takes a neo-institutional approach to the increase in supplementary tutoring (ST) in Sweden, understanding it as an ongoing expansion of the institution of formal education. A narrative analysis of tutors' narrated experiences of for- and non-profit tutoring improves our understanding of how actors animate the cultural clusters of the meaning of formal education in new educational contexts. The narrative identities of stand-by and self-sacrificing tutors illustrate how time and interpretation are crucial aspects of private tutoring in the dominant discourse on the importance of testing in formal education. The paper discusses the re-emergence of ST in Sweden and argues that the social and spatiotemporal settings of for- and non-profit tutoring relate to Swedish mainstream education in different ways, and that non-profit tutoring merits more attention from comparative international research on ST.

KEYWORDS

Tutor identities;
supplementary tutoring;
for- and non-profit contexts;
neo-institutionalism;
narrative inquiry

Introduction

This paper, through a narrative study of tutor identities, advances our understanding of how supplementary tutoring (ST) in for- and non-profit contexts may expand the institution of formal education in Sweden in different ways. Although Sweden, together with other Scandinavian countries, is viewed as having the lowest ST participation rate in Europe (Bukowski 2017), the recent growth of different kinds of for- and non-profit ST services makes it an interesting phenomenon to study in light of the worldwide spread of shadow education (Mori and Baker 2010) and Table 1 its different manifestations (Bray 2017).

Sweden, a welfare state with universal provision of compulsory education to children aged 6–15 years, has seen sudden growth in for- and non-profit ST over the last decade. While private tutoring co-existed with regular education in nineteenth-century Sweden (Bernhardsson 2016), it dwindled with the expansion of the mainstream educational system beginning in the mid nineteenth century. It re-emerged in 2007, when a household tax deduction reform for household services enabled the growth of a private market for ST (Forsberg et al. 2019). The reform was meant to weaken black market sales of domestic services, relieve families of economic burdens, free mothers from household duties, and create job opportunities for young unskilled workers

CONTACT Marie Karlsson  marie.karlsson@edu.uu.se  Department of Education, Uppsala University Uppsala, Sweden

Table 1. Overview of interviewed tutors.

Number of tutors	Gender	Birth year range	Range of tutoring experience	Experience in for- and non-profit contexts	Average time spent tutoring	Age range of tutees
27	21 females 6 males	1980–1999	2.5 months to 4.5 years	16 non-profit 7 for-profit 5 both	2–4 hours per week	6–22 years

(Karlsson, Hallsén, and Svahn 2019). This reform triggered a political reaction aimed at safeguarding equal rights to education. Under the slogan '*läxhjälp för alla*' (homework support for all), the tax reform was abolished in 2015 and replaced by offers of government grants to non-profit organisations and school organisers wanting to provide ST. Since 2017, non-profit organisations have been able to apply for state funding for tutoring activities. In 2020, this funding amounted to SEK 25 million. The question of ST in Sweden thus turned from a fiscal to an educational issue, with ST described in education policy as one of many ways to facilitate equal opportunities for student learning. Today, private companies and non-profit organisations provide ST in different organisational contexts that we still know very little about.

In some parts of the world, the tutor is a taken-for-granted actor in the education of most children, while in others, they are a resource available only to the wealthy (Bray 2006). Private ST is often conceptualised as a form of 'shadow education' (Bray 2020), shadowing, or working in the shadows of, formal education. According to Mori and Baker (2010, 39), however, there is so much evidence of private ST coming out of the shadows and spreading worldwide that its practices 'appear to be on the verge of becoming a standard feature of education in most nations'. Although world spanning, the educational practices of ST display different faces in different national contexts. If we want to understand how ST expands formal education in different nations, we must pay attention to the organisational contexts of ST.

Both for- and non-profit ST providers are non-government actors in the Swedish educational landscape that provide similar tutoring services that nevertheless differ in significant ways. For-profit ST companies sell customised tutoring services to parents of individual students, whereas non-profit providers organise tutoring for groups of students perceived to be in need, often as a means to reach overarching goals of social equality and social and cultural integration held by the providing organisation (e.g., the Red Cross). For-profit ST in Sweden mainly provides one-to-one tutoring in the tutees' homes, in other meeting places, or over the Internet. In contrast, non-profit ST mainly operates by offering free tutoring to various tutees in public facilities such as libraries, school buildings after school hours, and over the Internet.

A growing number of studies on ST focus on the perceptions and experiences of individual actors (Manzon and Areepattamannil 2014); this paper targets tutors' narrated experiences of working in the different organisational contexts of for- and non-profit tutoring in Sweden. The aim of this paper is, through a narrative analysis of tutor identities, to further our knowledge of how ST in for- and non-profit contexts may expand the institution of formal education in Sweden, and to discuss what makes the re-emergence of ST in the Swedish context stand out in relation to manifestations of ST in other national contexts.

Research on private tutors

Much international research on ST describes private tutors as schoolteachers tutoring as a second job or working full time as tutors. This situation has been observed in, for example, China (Zhang 2014), Bangladesh (Mahmud and Kenayathulla 2018), Central Asia, Eastern Europe (Popa and Acedo 2006; Silova 2010), Russia (Kozar 2013), and African countries such as Ethiopia (Tarekegne and Kebede 2017). There is no doubt that tutors other than teachers also provide tutoring services in the above-mentioned countries. Nevertheless, research on ST shows that teachers figure more often as tutors in some countries with long histories of private ST. Students often figure as tutors in many parts of the world as well, for example, in Bangladesh (Imtiaz 2018) and the Czech Republic (Šťastný 2017). In an overview of for-profit ST in the European Union Bray (2011, 2020) showed that private tutors in some Western European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden (see Hallsén and Karlsson 2019 for more about tutors in Sweden) are often university students without any professional tutor or teacher training. According to Bray, big ST companies, working in national or international arenas in Western Europe, mainly employ untrained young tutors working part time.

Up until now, comparative studies on tutors have gathered and analysed quantitative data on tutor characteristics in terms of education, employment, main profession, and age. There is, however, a growing number of qualitative studies looking more closely at tutor identities and roles in different ST contexts (Barkhuizen 2017; Davis 2013; Hallsén and Karlsson 2019; Kozar 2013; Popa and Acedo 2006; Trent 2016; Yung and Yuan 2020). These studies focus, as qualitative research tends to do, on local manifestations of ST. Yet, they provide novel insights into the lives and practices of tutors that can enrich our understanding of ST by providing knowledge of a global phenomenon through its local particularities.

Research on tutor identities in the context of online advertising shows that tutor identities differ from traditional teacher identities while still being closely related to mainstream education. In a thematic analysis of the online self-presentations of twelve tutors working in Moscow, Kozar (2013) found that tutors presented themselves in different ways depending on their target groups. The tutors targeting school students emphasised preparation for high-stakes exams, whereas those targeting a wider range of students, such as adult learners and preschool students, referred to goals such as personal development and communication skills. The role of high-stakes exams in the formal educational system is relevant to tutor identities, as shown by Yung and Yuan (2020) study of tutor biographies posted online in Hong Kong, in which a discourse analysis illustrates how an entertainment business discourse was used to promote the hybrid tutor identity of the ‘exam expert–star teacher’ (p. 11). Formal education may be relevant to online marketing in other ways as well, as shown in a study of online ST marketing by Hallsén and Karlsson (2019). Through a positioning analysis of three consumer narratives used for marketing purposes on the website of a Swedish ST company, they illustrated how the tutor identities of stand-in teacher, older sibling, and parental control instrument were constructed in relation to a discourse on parental responsibility for children’s academic achievements. Although interesting, studies of tutor identities in online advertising tell us little about how private tutors themselves make sense of their tutoring experiences.

Studies of how tutors make sense of their roles and practices identify both strong and weak ties to formal education. The strong ties to formal education are obvious in contexts where teachers employed in formal education also work as tutors. Popa and Acedo (2006) interviewed secondary education teachers in Romania who also worked as tutors, and found that tutoring provided them with the social status and economic rewards denied them as teachers in formal education. In contexts where teachers work as full-time tutors, the relationship to formal education differs somewhat. In her qualitative study of five ST providers in the Australian tutoring industry, Davis (2013) focused on the lived experiences of tutors, parents, and students as stakeholders in order to study the educational legitimacy of ST providers and the social impact on ST participants. The tutors participating in the study were often experienced teachers working full time as private tutors. Davis found that the tutors described the tuition programmes they offered as unique and effective, and according to them as different from formal education. The tutors expressed a commitment to their job and a passion for teaching. They identified themselves as educators, but were reluctant to see themselves as part of a business.

Research on tutors who lack teacher training identifies other manifestations of ST. Trent (2016) interview study of tutors and professional identity includes six tutors, five of whom lacked teacher training, working full time for ST companies in Hong Kong. Trent found that they viewed themselves as different from, and in some cases inferior to, teachers working in formal education. They expressed a lack of collegial discussion and closeness to students, which they perceived as characteristic of the professional identity of teachers. In an interview study with tutors volunteering for a community-based organisation providing non-profit home tutoring in English to adult immigrants and refugees in New Zealand, Barkhuizen (2017) found that the tutors identified themselves as concentrating on social inclusion rather than on instruction, as teachers in formal education do. The studied tutors lacked teacher training and experience. In an earlier publication, Barkhuizen (2011) wrote that the tutors identified themselves as for example co-learners, community members, admirers/empathisers, and family friends in relation to the adult learners. Although Barkhuizen has not situated his papers in the research field of private ST, his results indicate the significance of organisational contexts for the shaping of tutor identities.

These four studies paint different pictures of tutors working in different countries and in various organisational contexts. The studies by Trent (2016) and Barkhuizen (2017, 2011) come closest to the study of tutor identities presented here, as they focus on how tutors without formal teacher training or experience make sense of their work as tutors. Besides the lack of research on the perceptions and experiences of tutors, what is missing is attention to the details of different manifestations of ST. If we look closer at the narrated experiences and identities of tutors working in different organisational ST contexts, we may learn more about how for- and non-profit ST can expand the institution of formal education.

Theoretical framework

Within the theoretical framework of neo-institutionalism, a narrative analysis of tutor identities as evident in tutors' narrated experiences of tutoring in different organisational

contexts facilitates an understanding of how private tutoring can expand formal education.

Neo-institutionalism conceptualises institutions as clusters of cultural meanings (Baker 2014) originating in and reproducing taken-for-granted classifications and scripts that individuals use to make sense of a disorderly world (Meyer and Rowan 2007). From this point of view, the institution of formal education is animated by actors (e.g., students, teachers, and parents) who think, feel, and act in relation to these taken-for-granted classifications and scripts. While ‘the tutor’ may be a taken-for-granted classification in the institutions of formal education in countries with a long history of organised ST, this is not yet the case in Sweden. If we are to learn more about how ST can expand formal education in Sweden and elsewhere, we need to understand more about the meanings ascribed to it and the identities performed by involved actors, such as tutors.

This paper takes a narrative approach to the question of how ST can expand the institution of formal education in Sweden. According to an understanding of narratives as socially situated practices and identity performances (Mishler 1999), people make sense of experience and perform identities by telling stories. When we tell a story about our past experience to another person, we also tell that person who we were then, who we have become, and who we wish to be, and we do this by invoking or resisting cultural discourses available to our audience and ourselves. To expose the identity aspect of storytelling, a model of the positioning analysis of narrative identity performances, developed by Bamberg (1997, 2006), is applied. This approach involves assumptions about storytelling as embedded in culturally available discourses related to the topics treated, in this case, the classifications and scripts of the institution of formal education. When tutors tell stories about their experiences, they draw on such discourses to make themselves and others understand what the stories are about and what is at stake in them. As tutors are relatively new actors in the Swedish educational landscape, we have much to learn about how ST can expand formal education from how tutors animate the dominant discourses of formal education when narrating their experiences of tutoring in different organisational contexts.

Data and method

The study was conducted as a sub-study within the research project ‘Homework support as shadow education’, financed by the Swedish Research Council. Twenty-seven one-hour individual interviews were conducted with university students working as tutors in for- and non-profit organisations. The interviewees were recruited through announcements posted in various campus facilities at Uppsala University. The interview conversations took place in my office, lasted approximately one hour each, and were conducted in an open-ended manner. They centred on six themes: 1) reasons for enrolment in ST, 2) first experience of tutoring, 3) experiences of meeting and relating to students and other actors, 4) tutoring methods, 5) rewarding and challenging aspects of tutoring, and 6) own experiences of schooling and education. These themes were presented to the interviewees on a piece of paper placed on the table before the interview began; it remained there as a common point

of reference during the conversation. All interviews were audio recorded and the recordings transcribed verbatim.

An initial thematic analysis revealed both similarities and differences between the tutors' accounts of their tutoring experiences. Often mentioned motives for tutoring were: wanting to help others, personal interest in specific academic subjects, gaining work life experience, and, in the case of for-profit tutoring, earning some extra money. There were also similarities in how the tutors, regardless of organisational context, talked about the joys and difficulties of tutoring and the importance of tutees being motivated to learn. The differences concerned the social constellations in which tutors in different contexts find themselves. Tutors from non-profit contexts never mentioned parents, while they were described as key actors in for-profit contexts. Tutors volunteering for non-profit organisations often described tutor cooperation, while for-profit tutors rarely met and never worked with other tutors. Taken together, these emergent themes pointed towards a major difference concerning how the organisational contexts of for- and non-profit ST shaped the tutors' relationships with the tutees.

The two stories analysed here were selected to capture these similarities and differences emerging from the thematic analysis, but also to further investigate how tutors from the different organisational contexts position themselves as tutors. The stories were selected from interviews with two tutors who had each worked in ST for over two years. One had experience in a for-profit and the other in a non-profit context. Their stories depict similarities and differences characterising the interview data as a whole, and can therefore be seen as typical of this small corpus of qualitative data. The similarities concern both of their stories being success stories in which the tutors are portrayed as helping students reach their goals. The differences concern the organisational contexts of the tutoring, which became evident through the interviewees' respective narrative renderings of the tutor-tutee relationship and social interactions. The rich interview data of course hold many other stories about tutors being successful or failing in their work that could highlight differences between for- and non-profit contexts. However, an understanding of narratives as socially situated practices and identity performances (Mishler 1999) entails that we should study how people perform identities by telling stories to make sense of their personal experiences. In other words, while a thematic content analysis may reveal recurrent patterns in interview data, a narrative analysis helps us place these patterns in the contexts of individual life stories and in the context of storytelling in research interviews. Data selection thus set the stage for a narrative analysis of tutor identities that helps answer the question of how ST can expand formal education in different organisational contexts.

Data analysis

Bamberg (1997, 2006) model of positioning analysis was used to analyse the two stories as socially situated performances of tutor identities. The model accounts for

the multidimensional performance of narrative identities as it targets the story, storytelling, and use of cultural discourses of formal education as three dimensions of identity work in this case. The positioning analysis was done in three steps and aimed at answering the following questions: 1) What is the story about and how are the story's characters positioned in relation to each other in the story realm? 2) How do the interlocutors (i.e., the interviewee and interviewer) position themselves and each other in the interactive situation? 3) What cultural discourses related to the classifications and scripts of formal education are invoked or resisted in positioning the characters in the stories and storytelling? The first two analytical steps distinguish the stories told from the act of storytelling by separating the positioning of the story characters in the story world from the positioning of the interviewee and interviewer in the immediate interview conversation. In other words, the interviewed tutors may be positioned one way as story characters and another way by how they tell that same story to the interviewer. The third step in the analysis targets the positioning established in the story and storytelling to discern how the interlocutors draw on the classifications and scripts of formal education as culturally available discourses, to make 'claims that the narrator holds to be true above and beyond the local conversation situation' (Bamberg 1997, 337).

Results

In the following, I will illustrate how different tutor identities take shape in and through the telling of the two tutors' stories about practising ST in different organisational contexts. At first glance, the stories analysed here are very similar. They are both 'success stories' as they depict the tutors over a longer period helping students achieve their various goals. Both the students figuring in the stories are striving to succeed in formal education, mainly by preparing for tests. The differences lie in how the tutors position themselves, the students, and the other characters in their stories, and in the modes of storytelling. These positionings draw on cultural discourses related to classifications and scripts from the institution of formal education in ways that permit an understanding of how private tutoring in different organisational contexts may expand formal education.

The stand-by tutor

Henrik is in his late twenties and is studying to become an engineer. He has worked for a tutoring company for three years and as a freelancer for another year. He has considerable experience of meeting different tutees. During the interview, he talked about two types of tutees: the ones who need help to understand the basics and the ambitious ones who want good grades. In the local context of the interview conversation, the story he told presented an example of the type of tutees who wants good grades. The story depicts Henrik as first being hired as a tutor for a girl studying at a sports-profile upper secondary boarding school through the tutoring company, and then as making a deal with her parents to keep tutoring her without the company as an intermediary.

Henrik	Yes, 'I want good grades, how do we do this, I don't understand this' – and it was often like this, for example, with this girl I helped.
I	After as well.
Henrik	Yeah, it felt to me as if she was an overachiever. She wanted good grades, and then it was often 'there is a test coming and I don't understand this' and I came and helped her for a few hours.
I	Yes, so it was like selective measures in relation to what she had [on her agenda]?
Henrik	Selective measures, but they were – I noticed that she could follow and she was smart and understood most of it, but wanted help because she, she attended a, I think it was an upper secondary school with a sports profile. So, she trained a lot and didn't have much time. And there, she actually went to a boarding school. So there it was, the students who went to this school lived in a dorm together, and then, I guess her parents lived in Stockholm.
I	So you came there to help her when she called?
Henrik	Yes, to her small student apartment, when she needed help <i>At the end of the interview, this topic re-entered the conversation.</i>
I	But then you continued, or you continued with this homework support or coaching in the same way as you did when you were employed by the company?
Henrik	Yes, it was the same. We, often she, after those ten times, ten hours, I often just got a text where she asked 'I need help with this now, do you have spare time?' And I'd say, 'I can meet you on Thursday'.
I	She was one of those who aimed for good grades.
Henrik	Yes, it was more like, I noticed that my help was needed when she had a test coming up.
I	Mm, was she the one attending that boarding school?
Henrik	Yes she was, the sports girl.
I	Yes, it was her, and for how long did you continue to, it was, as you said before, it was for quite a while?
Henrik	I don't remember exactly, but I must have continued with her for at least a year after the first hours [with the company] were done. And it was a bit more at first, but then it could be months before I heard from her again. And then, she must have graduated a few years ago, so I guess she finished school. That was the kind of contact we had, and then – I didn't think about it – and then she stopped contacting me, didn't need any more help.
I	But she must have been rather pleased with you?
Henrik	I guess so.
I	Yeah, it must have worked out, because I think, even if it was all very task oriented and you, it has to, chemistry must matter when you work so close together, in a way.
Henrik	With her, it was also much about her wanting to learn.
I	Yes, she wanted, like, yes, in contrast to that other one [referring to another tutee].
Henrik	She could be more like, if I didn't know what to do at first, she would, she would try to help both me and herself.
I	Solution driven.
Henrik	She was, often she just needed a little help on the way, and like I said, maybe she felt like if she, her parents paid for it, so if they paid for two hours, maybe she wouldn't have to sit for six hours on her own. I don't know, I guess that was how she looked at it. I think it had a lot to do with time shortage and, like, quick homework support to gain an understanding, wanting good grades but not having that much time, and training and – yes.

The main characters in this story are the tutor and the student. Other characters are the student's parents, the school, implicitly present through mentioning tests and grades, and the tutoring company where Henrik was employed at first. Throughout the story, the student is positioned in relation to the tutor as an *ambitious student* through descriptions of her as an 'overachiever', 'smart', and as someone who 'wanted to learn' and 'wanted good grades'. She is also positioned as *stressed* in relation to the school through descriptions of her as not having 'much time' or having a 'time shortage' due to intensive athletic training, and in relation to the tutor as needing 'quick help'. This positions the tutor in relation to the student as a *reactive supporter*, as the tutoring was organised entirely around the student's needs instead of following a set schedule. Although the student's parents and the school appear as background characters in the story, the school emerges as an agent creating a need for tutoring, and the parents as the ones who enable it.

The sports-profile upper secondary school is indirectly positioned as *expecting double achievements* from the student through how the student is described as wanting to perform well both academically and athletically. This is especially obvious in the tutor's repeated mentions that the student's training led to time pressure affecting studying for tests.

The story is told in a good-example mode. Henrik told it during the interview conversation to illustrate the type of tutee who is ambitious and wants good grades. He had previously talked about another type of student, the one who, sometimes unwillingly, has tutoring to understand the basics. This comparative framing of the storytelling in the local interview context is evident through how Henrik describes the tutoring of this particular student as easy and unproblematic. Through telling this good-example story, Henrik positions himself as *an experienced tutor* in relation to the interviewer. Moreover, the repeated use of direct reported speech (Berger and Doehler 2015) to present the student's requests for tutoring – 'there is a test coming and I don't understand this' or 'I need help with this now, do you have spare time?' – serves to position Henrik as *an accessible tutor* and as having had *rappport with the student*. When Henrik describes how the tutoring ended when the student stopped asking for help, the interviewer's response somewhat troubles the good-example mode of the storytelling. The rhetorical question posed by the interviewer, 'But she must have been rather pleased with you?', serves to confirm Henrik's claimed position as *an experienced tutor* at the same time as the use of the conjunction 'but' indirectly troubles Henrik's claimed position of having had *rappport with the student*. In the following turn, Henrik's answer, 'I guess so', is followed by an account in which the interviewer tries to reaffirm Henrik's position as having had *rappport with the student* by stating that 'it must have worked out', and then describing the qualities of tutor–tutee relationships in general as dependent on both task orientation and personal chemistry. Henrik responds to this reaffirmation by turning the focus of the conversation away from the tutor–tutee relationship and back to this particular student's wish to learn. Through this change of focus, Henrik positions himself as tutor as *an instrument for ambitious students*, downplaying the importance of the tutor's ability and the quality of the tutor–tutee relationship. Overall, the story depicts the student as the driving force behind the tutoring in a way that positions the tutor as *a stand-by tutor* who offers tutoring services on demand.

The self-sacrificing tutor

Nasrin is in her mid twenties and is studying to become a primary school teacher. She has worked as a volunteer tutor for a non-profit organisation for over three years, and has many stories to tell about her experiences. She tells this story in answer to a question from the interviewer about whether she remembered any particular student from when she volunteered as a tutor. It tells of a migrant student she tutored over six months, and who then passed the test for entrance to upper secondary school.

- Nasrin Yes, there was a student who was failing Swedish in upper secondary school – no it was SPRINT, it is a programme before upper secondary school in Sweden, and to finish that, to gain entrance to upper secondary school you have to pass SPRINT, introduction something. And then she had Swedish, and she came for homework support for a whole semester and I helped her, and we did, like, everything, and then she passed the national test and then she brought presents and stuff – it was really, it made me very happy. It was things like that that kept me going. But towards the end I just felt ‘I’m done with this’, because I’m the kind of person that when I’ve done something for years, I want to do something else.
- The interview conversation moved on to other subjects for a while before we returned to the same student once more.*
- Nasrin That girl that I helped – then they read a book about the Sami people. There were a lot of words in that book that were difficult for me to understand, because it was like Sami bla bla bla, Finnish – I don’t know what. So I thought, ‘Why are you reading this book?’ I don’t know, they were supposed to do a lot of assignments in it as well. Maybe it was meant to deal with social exclusion, minorities, but I thought the book was difficult. I read it to help her and I did it in my spare time, actually. But it was because I really wanted her to make it, so I did it. It was things like that that could happen, and you had to work in your spare time.
- I How was it that you came to, because this is a little story with a happy ending. It’s good actually. I can imagine that you carry it with you, in a way.
- Nasrin She came to the homework support.
- I She came there, and it was you who took care of her that first time?
- Nasrin And it worked out well, and then she started to come more often, and then it was a lot of work. I remember that I read that book myself. I would prepare things at home, but I wanted to at that time, I felt like doing it, but I wouldn’t do it today – that’s the way it is, you change a little.
- The conversation moved over to Nasrin’s experiences of tutoring in general for a while before the interviewer returned the focus to her experiences with this student.*
- I But what was it that made you engage with this [student]?
- Nasrin It was because she was always so grateful. She said ‘thank you’ all the time and really appreciated what you did. And she came back and gave feedback on what we did – ‘what the teacher thought’, ‘the teacher said this’ – it was kind of a process. It wasn’t ‘do my homework, I’m leaving, bye’. Instead she followed up and I followed up, and then I started to care about her. She studies in upper secondary school now and is about to graduate.
- I That’s good to hear. So you had some kind of indirect contact with her teacher as well? Because she told them she went to homework support, so the teacher knew there was a . . .
- Nasrin And they were shocked at the progress she made. It wasn’t actually me who helped her that much really, she knew quite a lot. It was just a question of having the courage to speak, because they had this speech assignment. It had to do with having the courage to speak and with believing in oneself.
- I How old was she then?
- Nasrin She was seventeen, sixteen.
- I And for how long had she been in Sweden when you met her?
- Nasrin For two or three years. So she could – she was really good and really ambitious and she was really good at maths and science. There were language problems. Because she was very clever and smart, so it wasn’t that we did her homework for her. She came and had already done what I had told her to do the week before. I could say ‘read these three chapters so that we can work through them together’, and then I had to read them as well to be able to work through them, but she would have read them too.
- I So she was committed.
- Nasrin It wasn’t like she would come and say ‘no I haven’t read [this]’. It is when that happens that you just feel ‘in that case I don’t want to do this’. But when someone does what you ask them to do – it is like that with pupils – that makes you happy.
- I Yes, sure, and she will probably be grateful to you for the rest of her life.
- Nasrin Mm, I believe so, I learned from it too.
- I Yes, and you had seen and worked with her for about six months then? And then she passed that test and then?
- Nasrin She kept coming.
- I After that as well?
- Nasrin Yes, but not just to me, she had to go to others as well, if she had assignments in history or something.
- I When she had started upper secondary school?
- Nasrin Yes, she kept coming.
- I But she came and gave you a present when she had passed.
- Nasrin Yes, I got flowers and chocolate.
- I That was sweet.
- Nasrin Yes, it was really sweet, you almost get teary-eyed.

As in the previous story, the main characters in this story are the tutor and a student. Other characters are teachers, other tutors, other tutees, the non-profit organisation providing the tutoring, SPRINT (a language-introduction programme for migrant students), and the upper secondary school. The story begins ‘There was a student ...’ and can be described as a classical narrative, as it begins with an orientation (Labov and Waletzky [1967] 1997), setting the stage for the story about how Nasrin helped the student study the Swedish language so that she could reach her goal of gaining entrance to upper secondary school. The tutor figures most frequently of all the characters in the story. Through the descriptions of how she put in a lot of time and hard work to help the student with assignments and test preparations, Nasrin is positioned as an *ambitious tutor* who put in more work than could be expected from a volunteer tutor. This position is prominent in the passage focusing on how the tutor struggled to help the student learn from a book about the Sami people. To help the student do assignments related to this book, Nasrin read the book at home, struggling herself to understand all the words. The tutor is also positioned as *emotionally motivated* through the descriptions of her feeling ‘happy’, ‘starting to care’ for the student, and that she ‘really wanted her to make it’.

Throughout the story, the student is positioned in relation to the tutor as *a good student*, through the descriptions of her as being ‘really good’, ‘really ambitious’, and ‘clever’. This position is also ascribed through Nasrin’s descriptions of what the student did not do: ‘It wasn’t ‘do my homework, I’m leaving, bye’, and ‘It wasn’t like she would come and say ‘no I haven’t read [this]’’. These negations conjure other imagined tutees as story characters, positioned as *unmotivated* and *lazy students*. Another recurring position of the student in the story is that of the *grateful student*. This position emerges through the descriptions of her repeatedly thanking the tutor – ‘she said ‘thank you’ all the time’ – and bringing the tutor presents after passing the test for which she had been studying.

There are two parallel modes of storytelling. On one hand, there are good-example stories, like Henrik’s story and like that of Nasrin successfully helping a motivated and hardworking student achieve her goals. In contrast to Henrik’s way of telling the story, Nasrin and the interviewer repeatedly emotionally evaluate the narrated events: Nasrin was ‘very happy’ that the student did so well; she ‘started to care about her’, and thought it was ‘really sweet’ that she thanked her with presents, and almost got ‘teary-eyed’. The interviewer affirms this emotional discourse by saying to Nasrin: ‘I can imagine that you carry it with you, in a way’ and that the student ‘will probably be grateful to you for the rest of her life’. This is interesting, as the story is also told by Nasrin as an ‘I have-moved-on story’. Nasrin positions herself as *a different person today* in relation to the interviewer by repeatedly stating that even though she was glad to help this student, tutoring was too much work in the end. This position is evident when she describes the feelings of her past self – ‘I’m done’ – after she finished tutoring the student. It is also reaffirmed when she states, ‘I’m the kind of person that when I’ve done something for years, I want to do something else’ and ‘I wouldn’t do it today – that’s the way it is, you change a little’. These statements serve as what Labov and Waletzky ([1967] 1997, 35) called a coda, ‘a functional device for returning the verbal perspective to the present moment’. Nasrin also draws on her experiences of teacher education and teaching practice, positioning herself as a *schoolteacher* during the interview. This was done through her description of getting indirect positive feedback from the teachers at the SPRINT programme who ‘were shocked at the progress she [i.e., the student] made’, and through her comparison

between the student and the kind of pupils in schools who ‘do what you ask them to do’. Overall, the story depicts Nasrin’s tutoring experience with this student as an emotionally rewarding but taxing endeavour in ways that position her as *self-sacrificing tutor* who put more work into tutoring this student than could be expected.

ST as provision of time and interpretation

Following the first two steps in the analysis of the positioning established in the story and through the storytelling, the third and last step focuses on how the positioning of the characters and narrators invokes or resists dominant discourses on formal education (Bamberg 2006). The tutor identities of stand-by and self-sacrificing tutors emerging through the narrative positioning analysis clearly invoke the dominant cultural discourse in formal education on *the importance of tests*. Tests are a taken-for-granted part of the cultural clusters of meaning underpinning the institution of formal education in Sweden and elsewhere. Upcoming tests are at the core of both stories, as what drives the students’ need for tutoring and the tutors’ social interactions with the tutees. In the following, I discuss ST as an expansion of formal education in relation to how the discourse on *the importance of tests* is put to work in the two stories.

Both students are preparing for tests, to get good grades in or to gain entrance to upper secondary education. That tutors’ work supplements formal education by preparing students for tests is a well-known characteristic of ST all over the world (Kozar 2013; Yung and Yuan 2020). The question for this paper concerns how ST can extend formal education in different organisational contexts. As shown by Henrik and Nasrin’s stories, time provision and interpretation in test preparation tutoring become somewhat different things due to the social and spatiotemporal settings of for- and non-profit tutoring. In Henrik’s story, he tutors the student in her student apartment on an on-demand basis, while tutoring in Nasrin’s story becomes a time-consuming task as she prepares, at home in her spare time, for upcoming tutoring sessions with the student visiting the homework support centre. In the discourse on the importance of tests, both tutoring activities pertain to the importance of time for and the interpretation of schoolwork. Tutors who, as in Henrik’s story, provide on-demand tutoring can save students time by helping them understand content faster than they would if studying on their own. Tutoring can also be about, as in Nasrin’s story, tutors’ sacrificing their own free time to help migrant students struggling with a new language to interpret school assignments.

The organisation of much for-profit tutoring in Sweden is as described in Henrik’s story: formally contracted and paid for one-to-one tutoring at locations chosen by the tutees or their parents. The tutor brings the interpretation services to the student at a mutually agreed time. The opposite is characteristic of the organisation of much non-profit tutoring, as in Nasrin’s story. Here, the tutees seek out the tutors, who make their interpretation services available at public facilities at times set by the organisation. The spatiotemporal settings of tutoring in these organisational contexts, in turn, condition the social interaction between tutors and tutees. In non-profit tutoring, tutees depend on the tutors being available within the timeframes set by the organisation, making the narrated long-term interaction between Nasrin and the student stand out as unusual and Nasrin’s engagement something out of the ordinary, which she herself comments on during the interview. In contrast, the social interaction between Henrik and his tutee is

portrayed as a business transaction between a provider and a consumer of tutoring services (for further discussion of this topic in Sweden, see Hallsén and Karlsson 2019) in which personal engagement like that described by Nasrin would stand out as unusual.

Discussion

The aim of this paper is, through a narrative analysis of tutor identities, to further our knowledge of how ST in for- and non-profit contexts can expand the institution of formal education in Sweden, and to discuss what makes the re-emergence of ST in the Swedish context stand out in relation to manifestations of ST in other national contexts. Student tutors such as Henrik and Nasrin, publicly employed teachers who tutor students after school (Popa and Acedo 2006; Silova 2010), and self-employed full time tutors (Kozar 2013) all contribute to the worldwide expansion of formal education (Baker 2014). Seen from a neo-institutionalist perspective, many tutors are providing versions of the education activities they take part in during their everyday lives as students and teachers, by animating the cultural meanings of formal education in various contexts of ST. While neo-institutionalism provides a theoretical framework for understanding the impact of (private) ST on a global scale, qualitative approaches, like the narrative analysis presented here, help us understand the human meanings of this public issue. Student tutors in other parts of the world could probably relate to and to some degree recognise themselves in the stories told by Henrik and Nasrin. If that is the case, it is an interesting finding in itself as it tells us something about the global culture of education (Baker 2014). However, the identities of stand-by and self-sacrificing tutors, like any constructions of tutor identities, become meaningful in the context of comparative and international research on education when seen as part of a bigger picture, in this case, the re-emergence of ST in Sweden.

What makes ST in the Swedish context stand out in comparison with ST in many other countries concerns the context and consequences of its recent re-emergence (Forsberg et al. 2019). For-profit ST re-emerged as a fiscal issue related to household services, and later turned into a political struggle for social equality in education (Karlsson, Hallsén, and Svahn 2019). I will contextualise the tutor identities of stand-by and self-sacrificing tutors in a discussion of two aspects of the Swedish case, the dominance of student tutors and the different social and spatiotemporal settings of for- and non-profit tutoring and their relation to mainstream education.

One political argument underpinning the tax reform of 2007 was that it would provide job opportunities for young people (Karlsson, Hallsén, and Svahn 2019). Even though the tax reform was abolished in 2015, most tutors working in organised forms of for- or non-profit ST in Sweden today are young students. ST has not become an attractive part- or full-time occupation for teachers in Sweden, as it may be in, for example, Romania (Popa and Acedo 2006), Russia (Kozar 2013), or Ethiopia (Tarekgegne and Kebede 2017). A discussion of the reasons for this would require a paper of its own, but one reason is that the survival of the comparatively small tutoring industry in Sweden depends on the flexibility offered by the part-time employment of students (see also Bray 2011). Swedish student tutors are often called study coaches, study buddies, and homework supporters, but are rarely called teachers. Online marketing of for- and non-profit services depicts tutors as academically and socially gifted students who enjoy helping others overcome obstacles and reach desired goals in mainstream education (Hallsén and Karlsson 2019).

They appear more as good students and helpful friends than as the ‘exam expert–star-teachers’ (Yung and Yuan 2020, 11) observed in Hong Kong. The narrated experiences of Henrik and Nasrin also make visible the second aspect I want to discuss as interesting in the Swedish case: the different social and spatiotemporal settings of for- and non-profit tutoring.

The results of the narrative positioning analysis indicate that ST, within the dominant discourse on the importance of testing, can expand the institution of formal education through the provision of time and interpretation by stand-by and self-sacrificing tutors outside regular school hours and facilities. Although time and interpretation are taken-for-granted aspects of educational practices in formal education, the success stories told by Henrik and Nasrin reveal nuances in what these aspects of formal education can become in different contexts. The collective form of tutoring, with many tutors available to tutees at the same time, provided at set times and locations by non-profit organisations, is more comparable to mainstream education than are the individualised tutoring services provided by for-profit organisations in Sweden. Of course, there is a much wider variety of for- and non-profit tutoring contexts in Sweden, and in other countries, than the ones discussed here. However, the tutor identities and different social and spatiotemporal settings emerging through the narrative analysis tell us that the re-emergence of ST in Sweden can expand the institution of formal education in different ways.

From a neo-institutional perspective, private ST is on the verge of becoming an institutionalised component of formal education (Mori and Baker 2010). This paper shows that even though Sweden is far from such a scenario, tutors in both for- and non-profit organisations operate, through the provision of time and interpretation related to school assignments and test preparation, within the formal educational system. While for-profit ST is the most researched form of shadow education (see, e.g., Bray 2013), this paper argues that non-profit tutoring deserves more attention from research in other parts of the world as well. While a prevailing view of for-profit ST in comparative international research is that it ‘maintains and exacerbates social stratification’ (Bray 2006, 526), the Swedish case paints a somewhat different picture. Since 2015, the Swedish government has allocated state funds to non-profit organisations that facilitate ST outside of regular school hours (SFS 2014:144) and depend on the unpaid labour of volunteer tutors such as Nasrin. State funding of non-profit ST is incorporated into Swedish education policy as a means to manage social inequality and facilitate integration (Karlsson, Hallsén, and Svahn 2019). In 2020, as many as 108 non-profit organisations shared the SEK 25 million in state grants earmarked for tutoring services by the Swedish Board of Education (Skolverket). This development changes the Swedish educational landscape in ways that we still know little about, and it is a phenomenon deserving much more interest from international research on ST than it has attracted so far.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by the Swedish Research Council [2015-01754].

ORCID

Marie Karlsson  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6830-7488>

References

- Baker, D. 2014. *The Schooled Society: The Educational Transformation of Global Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bamberg, M. 1997. "Positioning between Structure and Performance." *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7 (1–4): 335–342. doi:10.1075/jnlh.7.42pos.
- Bamberg, M. 2006. "Stories: Big or Small: Why Do We Care?" *Narrative Inquiry* 16 (1): 139–147. doi:10.1075/ni.16.1.18bam.
- Barkhuizen, G. 2011. "Home Tutor Cognitions and the Nature of Tutor—Learner Relationships." In *Beyond the Language Classroom*, edited by P. Benson and H. Reinders, 161–174. London: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1057/9780230306790.
- Barkhuizen, G. 2017. "Investigating Language Tutor Social Inclusion Identities." *The Modern Language Journal* 101 (S1): 61–75. doi:10.1111/modl.12369.
- Berger, E., and S. P. Doehler. 2015. "Direct Reported Speech in Storytellings: Enacting and Negotiating Epistemic Entitlements." *Text and Talk* 35 (6): 789–813. doi:10.1515/text-2015-0023.
- Bernhardsson, P. 2016. *I Privat Och Offentligt. Undervisningen I Moderna Språk I Stockholm 1800–1880. Studier I Utbildnings- Och Kultursociologi [In Private and Public Modern Language Teaching in Stockholm, 1800–1880]* 9, 256. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. ISBN 978-91-554-9666-1.
- Bray, M. 2006. "Private Supplementary Tutoring: Comparative Perspectives on Patterns and Implications." *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 36 (4): 515–530. doi:10.1080/03057920601024974.
- Bray, M. 2011. *The Challenge of Shadow Education: Private Tutoring and Its Implications for Policy Makers in the European Union*. Luxemburg: European Commission.
- Bray, M. 2013. "Benefits and Tensions of Shadow Education: Comparative Perspectives on the Roles and Impact of Private Supplementary Tutoring in the Lives of Hong Kong Students." *Journal of International and Comparative Education* 2 (1): 18–30. doi:10.14425/00.45.72.
- Bray, M. 2017. "Schooling and Its Supplements: Changing Global Patterns and Implications for Comparative Education." *Comparative Education Review* 62 (3): 469–491. doi:10.1086/692709.
- Bray, M. 2020. "Shadow Education in Europe: Growing Prevalence, Underlying Forces, and Policy Implications." ECNU Review of Education [East China Normal University]. Vol.3. doi:10.1177/2096531119890142
- Bukowski, P. 2017. "Shadow Education within the European Union from the Perspective of Investment in Education." European Expert Network on Economics of Education. <http://www.eenee.de/eeneeHome/EENEE/Ad-Hoc-Questions.html>
- Davis, J. 2013. "Educational Legitimation and Parental Aspiration: Private Tutoring in Perth, Western Australia." PhD diss., University of Western Australia.
- Forsberg, E., T. Mikhaylova, S. Hallsén, and H. M. Bowden. 2019. "Supplementary Tutoring in Sweden and Russia: A Safety Net Woven with Numbers." In *New Practices of Comparison, Quantification and Expertise in Education: Conducting Empirically Based Research*, edited by C. E. Molstad and D. Pettersson, 207–229. London: Routledge.
- Hallsén, S., and M. Karlsson. 2019. "Teacher or Friend?: Consumer Narratives on Private Supplementary Tutoring in Sweden as Policy Enactment." *Journal of Education Policy* 34 (5): 631–646. doi:10.1080/02680939.2018.1458995.
- Imtiaz, A. 2018. "Exploring Factors Influencing Satisfaction of the University Students Who Work as Private Tutors." *International Education Studies* 11 (5): 133–143. doi:10.5539/ies.v11n5p133.
- Karlsson, M., S. Hallsén, and J. Svahn. 2019. "Parental Involvement in Sweden Exemplified through National Policy on Homework Support". chapter 10. In *Parental Involvement Across*

- European Education Systems: Critical Perspectives*, edited by A. Paseka and D. Byrne, 120–132. London: Routledge.
- Kozar, O. 2013. “The Face of Private Tutoring in Russia: Evidence from Online Marketing by Private Tutors.” *Research in Comparative and International Education* 8 (1): 74–86. doi:10.2304/rcie.2013.8.1.74.
- Labov, W., and J. Waletzky. [1967] 1997. “Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience.” *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7 (1–4): 3–38. doi:10.1075/jnlh.7.02nar.
- Mahmud, R., and H. B. Kenayathulla. 2018. “Shadow Education: Patterns and Scale of Private Supplementary Tutoring in English in Secondary Education at Urban Dhaka in Bangladesh.” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 48 (5): 702–716. doi:10.1080/03057925.2017.1340827.
- Manzon, M., and S. Areepattamannil. 2014. “Shadow Educations: Mapping the Global Discourse.” *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 34 (4): 389–402. doi:10.1080/02188791.2014.969194.
- Meyer, H.-D., and B. Rowan. 2007. “Institutional Analysis and the Study of Education.” In *The New Institutionalism in Education*, edited by H.-D. Meyer and B. Rowan, 1–14. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Mishler, E. G. 1999. *Storylines: Craft Artists’ Narratives of Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mori, I., and D. Baker. 2010. “The Origin of Universal Shadow Education: What the Supplemental Education Phenomenon Tells Us about the Postmodern Institution of Education.” *Asia Pacific Education Review* 11 (1): 36–48. doi:10.1007/s12564-009-9057-5.
- Popa, S., and C. Acedo. 2006. “Redefining Professionalism: Romanian Secondary Education Teachers and the Private Tutoring System.” *International Journal of Educational Development* 26 (1): 98–110. doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2005.07.019.
- SFS. 2014. 144. Förordning om statsbidrag för hjälp med läxor eller annat skolarbete utanför ordinarie undervisningstid [Swedish Code of Statutes no. 2014:144. Regulation on state funds for help with homework or other schoolwork outside of regular school hours]. Stockholm.
- Silova, I. 2010. “Private Tutoring in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Policy Choices and Implications.” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 40 (3): 327–344. doi:10.1080/03057920903361926.
- Štastný, V. 2017. “Private Tutoring Lessons Supply: Insights from Online Advertising in the Czech Republic.” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 47 (4): 561–579. doi:10.1080/03057925.2016.1259064.
- Tarekegne, W. M., and M. A. Kebede. 2017. “Perceived Impact of Supplementary Private Tutoring on Students: The Case of Upper Primary School Students.” *International Journal of Education* 9 (4): 43–61. doi:10.5296/ije.v9i4.10062.
- Trent, J. 2016. “Constructing Professional Identities in Shadow Education: Perspectives of Private Supplementary Educators in Hong Kong.” *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 15: 115–130. doi:10.1007/s10671-015-9182-3.
- Yung, K. W. H., and R. Yuan. 2020. “The Most Popular Star-Tutor of English’: Discursive Construction of Tutor Identities in Shadow Education.” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 41 (1): 53–168. doi:10.1080/01596306.2018.1488241.
- Zhang, W. 2014. “The Demand for Shadow Education in China: Mainstream Teachers and Power Relations.” *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 34 (4): 436–454. doi:10.1080/02188791.2014.960798.