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# High-Stakes counselling: when career counselling may lead to continuing residence or deportation of asylum-seeking youths

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## ABSTRACT

In this article we analyse what happens to career counselling when it is intertwined with the asylum process. A Swedish example is an amendment to the education legislation, regarding residence permits for upper secondary level students. Following the resulting changes in juridical, educational and interpersonal conditions, career counsellors must deliver 'high-stakes counselling' that can profoundly affect individuals' prospects of asylum or deportation. Our analysis is based on ethnographically inspired fieldwork, a survey and Bernsteinian theory. In current Swedish conditions, tight matching to demands of the labour market is essential in this 'high-stakes counselling'. We conclude that a consequence is institutional introduction of conditional citizenship of asylum-seeking students. This allows countries to select migrants through education, which severely conflicts not only with counselling ideals, but also democratic and equality values regarding possibilities to make choices for the future, thus creating ethical dilemmas for counsellors.

In this article we analyse what happens to counselling when it is co-opted into the asylum process, particularly effects of intertwining the process with students' career choices and performance. We do this by specifically addressing consequences of the Act on Residence Permits for High School Students (hereafter the ARP) (SFS 2017, 353) for career counselling practices in Sweden.

Recent migration flows to high-income countries, particularly the migration wave in 2015/16, have included large numbers of young, unaccompanied refugees (Menjívar and Perreira 2019). The large numbers of migrants have created challenges, not only for the young asylum-seeking migrants, but also for policy-makers and professionals in educational institutions in Europe. In response to the flows, laws and policies covering education (*inter alia*) have been rapidly amended (Scipioni 2018; Trauner 2016). However, several authors (Pinson and Arnot (2020) have argued that relations between migration flows, policy responses and the sociological consequences for educational institutions and professionals have received little attention. Hence, we seek to enhance knowledge of these relations here. Common foci in the field of sociology of education include (among others) educational

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strategies of individuals or groups with varying assets (Katartzi and Hayward 2020; Larsson and Hultqvist 2018; Vincent et al. 2012) and important elements of the field of reproduction (*sensu* Bernstein, see below): the educational institutions in which those strategies develop (Behtoui and Neergaard 2016; Jin and Ball 2020; Ljunggren and Orupabo 2020). It is important to analyse consequences of the education-related responses to migration flows on this level as migration flows are not new and will not cease in the future. Thus, both improvements in fundamental understanding of the issues and formulation of appropriate policies and practices are required (Arnot, Schneider, and Welply 2013; Alexiadou 2016). An important issue, particularly addressed here, is the risk that education may be co-opted to act as a sorting mechanism for migrants, playing a key role in deciding who can stay and who is deported. Such changes affect the work of all associated professionals, who have to adapt their individual and collective professional practices, but in this article we focus particularly on effects on the work of career counsellors (hereafter counsellors).

Sweden has accepted large numbers of refugees, and in 2015 alone received 35 369 applications for asylum for unaccompanied minors (The Swedish Migration Agency 2020). Thus, Sweden provides illuminating examples of responses to migration flows, including changes to policies and practices introduced by a new law, the Act on Residence Permits for High School Students (SFS 2017, 353). The ARP is intended to apply to young unaccompanied asylum-seeking migrants who are not considered to have met full legal requirements for protection as refugees. It allows an asylum-seeking young person to obtain a temporary residence permit (RP) for upper secondary school studies. If s/he successfully completes upper secondary level education and obtains a permanent full-time job within six months of graduation s/he can apply for a permanent RP. If migrants do not succeed at any stage within the time limits, they are at risk of deportation from the country.

Clearly, counselling is crucial for these students (Arar, Brooks, and Bogotch 2019). Therefore, we focus on the impact of the changes for counsellors working in upper secondary education in Sweden. Sweden has a highly decentralized school system. Local municipal authorities have primary responsibility for providing support for young people's career choices, but this is often delegated to the schools (Lundahl et al. 2020). Swedish upper secondary education is three years long, and for eligibility candidates must have qualifying grades from compulsory school in Swedish, English, mathematics and at least five other subjects for vocational programmes or nine other subjects for higher educational preparatory programmes. Students who lack sufficient merits from compulsory school to start an upper secondary programme are directed to an introductory programme (IP). There are four orientations of IPs, three that require merits in Swedish and a language introduction programme (LIP), mainly targeting newly arrived immigrants aged 16-20 years, the focal group in this article.

The LIP is intended to provide education with emphasis on the Swedish language to enable transition to a national upper secondary school programme or other forms of education (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2012). However, the ARP has introduced a major complication by obliging the school system to participate in the asylum process, as asylum-seekers' educational choices and school performance are criteria for their continuing residence in the country. Thus, this situation is affecting school professionals at all levels, but the main foci of the article are the professional and ethical dilemmas that the ARP has raised for counsellors. Following the changes in juridical, educational and interpersonal conditions, counsellors must now provide what we call 'high-stakes

counselling', analogously to 'high stakes decision making' in potentially disastrous situations with high levels of uncertainty and complexity, but low levels of normative guidance, described by Kunreuther et al. (2002, p 260). The stakes are clearly high in our context, as most young asylum-seeking individuals face uncertainty about their future opportunities, and due to the ARP Swedish career counselling can now have potentially life-or-death effects.

The ARP gives career counsellors responsibilities to communicate requirements of the legislation and the consequences of failing to meet them: deportation. This makes it difficult (in some cases impossible) to practice counselling in accordance with ideals described in national and international policy documents, and theoretical recommendations (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2011; OECD 2004; Schiersmann 2012; CEDEFOP 2019). In recent years educational, social and labour market policies, and associated services such as provision of career guidance, have been increasingly framed by neoliberal agendas (Bimrose 2020). Thus, the autonomy of individuals and implicitly personal accountability for careers, regardless of conditions has been strongly promoted in European policy documents (Bergmo-Prvulovic 2012; Hooley, Sultana, and Thomsen 2018). However, the constraints imposed on migrants clearly limit their autonomy, and counsellors' ability to treat them as autonomous individuals.

Moreover, Udayar et al. (2021) argue that counsellors could bolster the migrants' resources by implementing counselling that helps them to construct their personal stories. Counsellors have reported perceptions that they lack sufficient skills to manage the frequently significant linguistic and knowledge-based asymmetries in encounters with migrant students, as well as the mentioned discrepancy between counselling ideals and constraints associated with the students' situations (Sundelin 2017). To address this problem, Udayar et al. (2021) suggest that 'more systemic, context-centred actions may be necessary to reduce the barriers to their social and labour market integration' beyond individual-based counselling.

Clearly, migrants' participation in social institutions, such as school, and related barriers, are inseparable from overall experiences of the society. Moreover, the students' sense of belonging, safety, and participation is shaped by everyday experiences (Carpenter 2018). In all these phenomena the state plays a key role, framing the rights of migrant children through immigration and welfare policies (Devine 2009), and currently a major factor framing students' sense of belonging, safety and participation in the society is the ARP.

It is often uncertain whether migrant students will be able to create a future in the new country, and educational regulations cannot be ignored (Autin et al. 2018). Furthermore, when counsellors' conversational strategies, and inclusive ambitions, collide with societies' exclusive structures counsellors are at risk of contributing to stigmatization of migration experience and individualizing issues of discrimination (Hertzberg 2015; Hertzberg and Sundelin 2014).

The next sections describe our Bernsteinian theoretical framework, followed by our methodological approach incorporating ethnographically inspired fieldwork, interviews and thematic analysis. We then present out findings in an integrated analysis based on contextualisation of counsellors' work in Sweden, implementation of the ARP, and its consequences for counselling. Finally, we present our major conclusions and discuss our findings.

## Theoretical framework

Key theoretical starting points for this article are the concepts *field of production*, *official recontextualizing field,* and *instructing and regulatory discourses* introduced by (Bernstein 2003). In a field of production, discourses emerge and define how something is intended to be put into practice, for example laws, regulations, and policy documents. The field of production creates an ideology regarding the content of associated discourse (Bernstein 2003). The focal fields of production here are those affecting counselling, such as national and international laws and regulations regarding counselling definitions and practices.

In the official recontextualizing field (Bernstein 2003) a discourse, here regarding migrants' status, constraints and requirements, is moved from the field of production into local practice (the *field of reproduction*). This process is strongly influenced by the power relations involved, and manifested in our context by the local actors' interpretation of policies and their realization in practice.

Professionals with relevant competence, in this case counsellors, consciously implement activities rooted in the discourse appropriated from the field of production in the field of reproduction. The instructional discourse consists of the counsellors' intentional implementation of ideas produced in the field of production, and reproduced in the official recontextualizing field. However, this is embedded in a regulatory discourse, which also derives from the field of production. The regulatory discourse has ascendancy over the instructional discourse (Bernstein 2003), because ultimately it is backed by full legal sanctions. Thus, the instructional discourse should be regarded as embedded in the regulatory discourse, rather than antithetical in any way. Moreover, a regulatory discourse is not problematic *per se*, but can become problematic when transformed into practice if it causes friction between transmitters and acquirers (here counsellors and students). In Bernstein's framework, the regulative discourse may include laws and formal regulations, but it primarily focuses on informal regulatory elements in interactions between transmitters and acquirers. However, the counselling we consider here is tightly constrained by the ARP, which thus dominates both formal and informal aspects of the counselling practices. Moreover, there is clear discrepancy between this key element of the regulatory process, which obliges counsellors to participate in the asylum process, and the instructional discourse, promoting the idea that counselling should be carried out according to the curriculum, professional ideals and untrammelled wishes of the student. The tension this causes is a primary concern of this article.

## Method

The analysis here focuses mainly on semi-structured interviews with six counsellors whose students were enrolled on the LIP and subject to provisions of the ARP. However, we also use relevant data obtained from semi-structured interviews with six teachers, six principals and six municipal politicians. The interviews were parts of a larger ongoing research project entitled 'Moving on: Youths attending an introductory programme and their career support in varying local contexts', in which material has been gathered through a survey, interviews and observations. Most studies on counselling have focused on services in cities, for reasons that are often not explicitly stated, and there is sparse research on counselling outside metropolitan regions. Thus, partly to address this gap, the participants in both the survey and

interviews were residents of, and/or worked in, three groups of municipalities categorized by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR 2017) as rural municipalities, small towns and commuting municipalities. Although the main focus is on the interviews with the six counsellors, contextualizing information obtained from 139 respondents (64 counsellors, 65 principals and 10 'others' engaged in IPs) who completed a questionnaire-based survey in 2018 is also presented to provide deeper understanding of this group of professionals. The survey responses covered 90 (87%) of the 103 addressed municipalities, and for both interviews and fieldwork two of each of the three municipality categories was chosen (six in total). The questionnaire mainly consisted of sets of Likert-type items covering several scales. As the number of respondents was relatively small, we conducted a descriptive analysis of the responses. The findings section starts with contextualisation based on findings from the interviews with teachers, principals and municipal politicians conducted by four researchers in the six selected Swedish municipalities with high proportions of students participating in IPs, during the autumn semester of 2018.

The broader project is rooted in ethnographic traditions, and thus focuses on cultural formations. The data acquisition has been based on direct involvement and long-term engagement with processual matters in counselling activities. In the part of the project reported here we adopted a selective intermittent time mode approach (Jeffrey and Troman 2004), i.e. the frequency of interviews was flexible and both their times and frequencies were dictated by relevance: we scheduled visits including interviews on days when career counselling activities were planned, for example.

Regarding ethical aspects of this study, our main interests do not involve individuals' ethnic background, political affiliations or religious opinions, but such information could potentially have been revealed. Hence, the project has been subjected to ethical review and approved by the Regional Ethical Review Board in Umeå (ref. no. 2018/173:31). In addition, in both the planning and implementation of the field work, we have followed ethical guidelines published by the Swedish Research Council (2017).

In all the interviews reported here a guide was used that was designed collectively by all five researchers engaged in the research project. It included questions about counselling students covered by the ARP and counselling related to the IP. Other questions concerned local educational structures in the municipality, educational support and efforts to help young people without full compulsory school merits, as well as work related to transitions between compulsory school, the LIP and other IPs, upper secondary education, adult education or working life. We transcribed our interviews with counsellors, then subjected the transcripts to thematic analysis, defining 'a theme' as any patterned response or meaning in the empirical data that seemed relevant to a focal issue (Braun and Clarke 2006). We also analysed the data through the previously described theoretical lenses provided by Bernstein (2003). In order to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and the empirical world of counsellors, we used the term high-stakes counselling as a sensitizing concept (Van den Hoonard 1996). This approach allowed us to explore the informants' world of meanings and relate their experiences to high-stakes decision-making. In addition, we analysed the responses from the survey related to the themes drawn from analyses of the interviews.

We were inspired by Gordon, Hynninen, and Lahelma (2006) and general tenets of collective ethnography as we planned and reflected on our study. The authors read transcripts we had produced to identify main concepts and ideas, as well as their possible relationships and implications. We also screened the concepts and ideas for relevance in

relation to the scope of the project. Each of the five authors focused on the data s/he had personally collected, and the first author also addressed material collected from one of the municipalities by another member of the project team. However, the investigation was strongly jointly planned, and to develop reflexive interpretations of the focal material we conducted collective discussions.

After collective discussions, the first author continued the analysis by selecting thematically classified excerpts of the interviews. The excerpts were then organised into a narrative and the first author shaped discursive comments (Holliday 2016) regarding each excerpt to highlight the key thematic point(s) it illustrate(s) and strengthen the analysis by connecting the point(s) to the theoretical framework.

## Findings

The analysis based on the interviews with the six counsellors is structured by the theoretical concepts, beginning with a description and analysis of the field of production and other important contextual elements. Attention then turns to implementation of the ARP and its consequences for counselling. However, the findings section starts with contextualisation based on the 18 interviews of the other material produced in the project (as described in the preceding section) and the Swedish case in relation to the broader sociology of education research published in English, to root the analysis more broadly in accessible knowledge and theoretical understanding of educational institutions. In efforts to avoid losing depth in the analysis in relation to the research questions, the rest of findings section is mostly based on the interviews with the counsellors.

### *Contextualisation*

In response to migration flows, European countries have amended laws and regulations covering education. On an aggregated level, some of these amendments can be seen as similar and as adaptions to EU policies, but with some country-specific orientations. For example, in the UK, compulsory citizenship and language tests have been introduced. The ARP in Sweden has fundamental differences in design from similar regulations in the UK, but there are some similarities in effects. Some argue that hurdles such as the UK's tests and the Swedish ARP allow governments to 'cherry-pick' migrants with expected potential to become ideal citizen subjects (Morrice 2017). Both the UK's tests and ARP exclude persons with low literacy, which affects chances of success of migrants from countries with low literacy rates. Women are especially disadvantaged since schooling conditions are also gendered in many countries (Morrice 2017). Hence, regarding citizenship education, Wood and Black (2018, p 193) suggest that 'education policy needs to promote a more flexible, responsive and expansive understanding of citizenship that better reflects the diversity of the students in our classrooms'.

To set the broader scene created by the ARP, the counsellors must, as agents in the recontextualization field, relate to different local contexts, different school organizations and principals. For example, in commuting municipality 2 most of the upper secondary students are enrolled on IPs and a minority are enrolled on a few national programs, while the opposite pattern applies in other municipalities considered in the study. The interviews

with teachers showed that this places them in a difficult situation since the grading determines if their students will have a chance to stay in the country. Some mentioned that they are often socially committed to their students, which makes the grading and professional evaluation emotionally loaded. Further, one teacher explicitly said she had activist aims based on understandings of social justice. Thus, conditions in the recontextualization field are affecting the teachers' capacity for agency in their activism (Mills et al. 2019). The interviews with the principals revealed that they were struggling to some extent with limited staff resources and organisational issues connected to their pedagogical leadership, such as guiding and supporting the staff in grading practices and career choices that are inextricably tangled with migration issues. The principals are also responsible for the wellbeing of the school staff and students, which they said has become more difficult and more serious following implementation of the ARP. Municipal officials stated that political decisions imposed financial constraints on the resources they can provide for the principals' organizations. Interviewed municipal politicians also recognized that the ARP poses dilemmas, clearly stating that it creates trapdoors for the students, and that the school staff are obliged to accept and work in accordance with the system. Thus, the ARP deeply affects not only the students' chances of staying in the country, but also tasks of the school staff (e.g. teacher's professional grading and counselling) and their abilities to work in accordance with their ideals, as well as both municipal officials' and municipal politicians' distribution of resources.

Since the students face risks of deportation if they do not fulfil requirements of the ARP and, as refugees, severe risks of weak connections to the labour market and socioeconomic disadvantages, they require support and strategies for their future choices (Albæk et al. 2015). However, according to our survey, there are some differences between the municipality types regarding offers of recurring activities that provide knowledge about education. Knowledge of both educational options and the labour market is crucial to meet requirements of the ARP successfully, but the recontextualization field in the different municipality types meets the students' needs to varying extents. Recurring activities for knowledge of the labour market are relatively low in all municipalities considering the students' urgent needs due to the ARP. From our survey, 61% in rural municipalities, 64% in smaller cities, and 67% in commuting municipalities states that they offer recurring activities to increase their students' knowledge of the labour market. Regarding recurring activities related to educational options, there were more variations between the municipality types, the commuter municipalities had the lowest rate of positive answers (67%), the small cities report the highest (83%), and the rural municipalities (73%) related to this question.

Turning specifically to the context of the counsellors we first consider the field of production (Bernstein 2003) of counselling. According to the 2010 Swedish Education Act (SFS 2010, 800) and national curricula, counselling should be based on the individual's need for support and broaden her/his perspectives. It should challenge ideas about occupations based on gender, social and cultural background, and strengthen individuals' abilities to assess and compare educational and vocational alternatives (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2011). These policies are translated in 3-year university education for counsellors into dominant discourses of what is considered good counselling practice. A counselling ideal is also established through international influences (CEDEFOP 2019; Schiersmann 2012; OECD 2004). Counselling may contribute to social justice and efforts to promote equality, but the approaches need to be problematised (Sultana 2014). The production field of counselling prioritizes increases in integration and promotion of equal

chances for success regardless of demographic factors, which thus become norms for counselling practice. However, here too there are local differences in organization of the recontextualization field and possibilities to implement ideals from the production field. Only 55% of responding counsellors in our survey who were based in the rural municipalities fully or partly agreed that there is an official strategy regarding counselling practice, compared to 80% in smaller cities and 77% in commuting municipalities

Work- and economy-related policy documents in combination with holistic approaches to the definition of career imply 'that individuals, in designing their careers, that is, their lives, need to learn to adjust, adapt and readjust their life paths for the purposes of utility in order to correspond with the needs of the market' (Bergmo-Prvulovic 2012, p 165). Thus, the context for counselling in Sweden includes a highly decentralized school system, which often transfers the responsibility for providing career support for young people from the official recontextualization field in the municipalities to the schools, in combination with national and international policy documents that reflect market needs.

The ARP was generated in the field of production and came into effect on 1 July 2018.[1] In addition to the previously mentioned characteristics of unaccompanied children migrants covered by the ARP, they must be at least 17 years old but not yet 25, and should have applied for asylum in Sweden before the 24th of November 2015. Overall, the legal context is highly complex and the municipalities' interpretations of the ARP within the official recontextualization field have varied.

The field of production for counselling includes conflicting discourses from educational authorities and migration authorities. Strains may arise between what are considered to be counsellors' ideal practices, and other duties connected to the ARP that counsellors must deal with. Through its requirements, the ARP creates an agenda for counselling content and design that concerns not only the students' careers but also their right to stay in Sweden. In practice, this agenda is often expressed as a regulatory discourse in the practice of counselling that may not correspond to what is considered as good counselling practice, thus the instructive discourse varies across a spectrum from weakened to impracticable in practice.

### Implementation of the ARP in varying contexts

In this section we describe, with the help of illustrative excerpts from the interviews, the official recontextualization field and implementation of the ARP in counselling.

The official recontextualization field can be visualized through the interpretations and implementation of discourse generated in the production field and associated norms for counselling practice. The ARP is interpreted and implemented by the municipalities and Swedish Migration Agency (SMA), regarding how guidance and the ARP should be implemented. However, each municipality's strategy for implementing the counselling ideal and Act depends partly on its resources, particularly in this context the range of educational options available for the counsellors to guide students towards.

When large number of refugees arrived in 2015–2016, many of the municipalities and schools were not prepared for their reception.

> I think it was a shock that so many [refugees] came, and there was no career counsellor who could handle all that […] and I'm brand new, I hadn't worked as a career counsellor before either (Helena, smaller town 2).

Many municipalities had to establish organisations quickly and hire staff who had to rapidly learn and adapt to their new job. At the same time, national politicians (agents in the field of production) passed the ARP and demanded its urgent implementation by the municipalities. Our data show that the municipalities (agents in the field of recontextualization) had little preparation for those rapid changes, thus the counsellors often felt obliged to interpret and implement the ARP in isolation. All interviewed counsellors requested support and guidance from the SMA regarding implications of the ARP to interpret the new conditions. A criticism highlighted in the interviews concerns the paucity of information from the SMA, which was and is beyond the municipalities' control, but as a contributor to the regulatory discourse affected the municipalities counselling practices.

> It is still a bit fuzzy description because there is no practice from before, therefore they have left it open, they say that they are working to make clearer frameworks around the new law, but it's a bit too late now (Chris, rural municipality 1)

The paucity of information has led to uncertainty among counsellors. In the interviews with the counsellors, critical voices were raised concerning both the ARP and its application. Interestingly, no critique was aimed at the level of recontextualization, i.e. the counsellors did not even seem to expect any support from their local municipalities. However, more than half (56%) in our survey answered that the counsellors are solely responsible for providing information and conversations about educational and vocational choices. Many of the interviewed counsellors confirmed that although they had teachers and other colleagues at their schools, they had sole responsibility for providing information and guidance. In addition, information on the SMA's website and answers from their staff were sometimes contradictory, which exacerbated the uncertainty. The following excerpt illustrates the perceived shortcomings of the SMA's services and the absence of guidelines from agents in the field of recontextualization.

> I'm not working at the Migration Agency! I'm not the person they [the students] should really talk to, it's the Agency. What's the Agency doing to clarify the situation for the students? They tell us career counsellors what we should do so the students can get a residence permit, we should guide them properly so that they may be able to get a residence permit, huh?! That's a pretty big responsibility! (Sara, rural municipality 2)

In order to implement the ARP, the counsellors claim that clear information is needed about the asylum application procedure, and what should be done. Instead, they perceive the SMA as distancing itself from the practitioners and a lack of agents filtering and recontextualizing the ARP in relation to counselling issues. This seems to have resulted in a shift of responsibility towards the counsellors, who now seem to act almost as the sole agents in the recontextualising field, and consequently feel isolated and overwhelmed

### *The ARPs' consequences for career counselling*

In this section we describe and provide illustrative excerpts regarding consequences of the ARP for counselling.

Because of the absence of guidance from the recontextualization field and uncertainty about information from the SMA, the counsellors find themselves in a difficult position, as they cannot give counselling about migration matters, which leads to professional stress

in this respect. Uncertainty regarding the ARP makes it almost impossible to guide the students to informed decisions regarding these issues that have such major effects. Moreover, the counselling content is narrowed to the options that seem most likely to result in a job, based on the sparse information available and unpredictable changes in the labour market. Hence, the limitations result in counselling practice that communicates that the only realistic option is to meet a current need in the labour market in order to gain an RP.

The outcome of the regulatory discourse is described as having to prepare the students to choose an educational option strategically. The counsellors said that the preparation includes provision of labour market information, to increase the students' chances of staying in the country, and manage expectations of some students, who do not realize the severity of the situation.

> Actually, you can say that some students really have no choice, 'Now you have no choice, you must to do this nursing training in adult education, that's what we can offer'. You can apply to another municipality, but it's very uncertain that you'll be accepted… I don't know if he [the student] grasped the seriousness of it, because he wanted to become a mechanic, we can't offer that here in this municipality … It becomes very limited career counselling (Chris, rural municipality 1)

This excerpt highlights not only the seriousness of the situation and pressure on counsellors to communicate it, but also the geographical variations, as some municipalities have fewer educational options than others. Thus, the constraints on students' choices depend on the range of educational options in the geographical area. The articulated problem is that neither the counsellors nor the students can navigate in a satisfactory manner, despite the seriousness of the situation and to some degree *because* of its severity. It is also difficult for counsellors to discern how they should conduct their 'counselling', when there is no real choice for a student.

The counsellors stated that their work is also framed by students' background factors that affect the feasible options. For example, many of the students have only been in Sweden for a short time, sometimes after months or years without schooling due to migration. Thus, aspirations must often be tempered, as their grades do not match their capacities, so they are excluded from some otherwise suitable upper secondary programmes. Even if a municipality offers many educational programmes, the counsellors work with students whose choice may be restricted to just one or a couple of programmes. The counsellors also stated that it is difficult for students who have special needs or a poor study background to meet the performance criteria to obtain an RP.

> Most of them cannot enrol on an upper secondary school programme. […] And some have chosen adult education, because there were, at least, some vocational education options that they could access. But it is not the same choice as young Swedish adults have (Helena, small town 2)

The counsellors describe educational options for the asylum-seeking students as circumscribed, different and not equal to those of native peers. They also describe the newly arrived unaccompanied students often finding the new education system difficult to navigate and requiring support for this.

> There are great needs for help to understand the Swedish school system, what it means, what is needed to move on (Susanne, commuting municipality 1)

The counsellors also often work under time pressure to enable their students to obtain information about the education system in the short time they are given.

In the interviews, the counsellors also expressed doubts about the students' real opportunities to meet the high requirements for acquiring a permanent RP as they must often overcome major knowledge, linguistic, social and/or cultural barriers to get an upper secondary education and permanent employment. The counsellors also stated that it is difficult for their students to find a full-time job in such a short time, and that many are recruited instead for illegal activities during their upper secondary studies due to financial difficulties. In the counselling practice, the counsellors deal with the high pressure on their students to complete upper secondary education and get a full-time job, as well as the very high risks of failure, which include deportation. This puts pressure on the counsellors to keep the students informed about strategies for getting an RP and keep them motivated to avoid deportation.

> Some students tell me 'I must get a residence permit, I have to focus on the school, I have to fix this, I have to get into a programme'. And I tell them 'Yes, but this is the grades you need' and they reply 'Then I won't be accepted'. And what can I do as a career counsellor? I can't do anything about it and if they won't be accepted, well then it's us [career counsellors] they'll talk to (Sara, rural municipality 2)

The unreasonable demands on the students are, of course, most devastating for the students, but they also create professional stress for the counsellors who are obliged to support them. Moreover, the counsellors are among the first to hear and inform students that they may soon be deported. These are difficult conversations that are not covered in the counsellors' training from the field of production. Thus, severe professional clashes arise in counselling conversations between the harsh regulative discourse regarding the ARP's requirements and the instructional discourse regarding counselling ideals and aspirations to find accessible paths based on individuals' interests and dreams. The counsellors expressed feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness as they do not know how to manage the relations with the students and their vulnerable situation.

> You're not friends, and you're not a parent, but you are some kind of important adult in their lives [...] Sometimes they seek me out in my spare time because they want help with something (Christina, smaller town 1)

Meeting young people in such situations of high-stakes counselling and human suffering also raises ethical stress for counsellors, and challenges in the instructional discourse during counselling conversations regarding how the counsellors should relate to their students when they are facing ARP-related requirements. The challenges may be particularly acute when meeting students with aspirations that differ from vocational education and, for example, want to go to university. Such situations may potentially severely strain relations between the counsellors and their students.

> It's not the career counselling that you're used to 'There's so much to choose from and freedom of choice and you can choose what you want'…it doesn't work here. I try to stamp into all of their minds that 'OK, I understand, you have a dream, but the most important thing right now is to get a vocational education and a job, and establish yourself so to say then, later that dream will come' (Ann, commuting municipality 2)

In counselling practice, the regulatory discourse shaped by the ARP's requirements seeks to restrain the horizon of action—range of options recognized as desirable and possible —of any students in the migrant category considered here who has any ambitions other than the immediately available alternative(s). This is in stark contrast to the regulatory discourse shaped by the Education Act and associated professional instructional discourse that seeks to broaden individuals' horizons of action. The counsellors described being caught in a stressful situation where they were obliged to do something very different from giving the kind of counselling they were trained to provide. They did not perceive the work with the asylum-seeking students to be counselling. Instead, they regarded it as informing the students about the over-riding requirements to obtain an RP and associated constraints, then striving to restrain their horizons of action and accept one of the few available choices.

## Discussion

From a sociological perspective, the counsellors' work affects the students' choices and movements in the societal structure. In relation to the ARP, the counselling becomes a function that no longer only reflects labour market needs (Bergmo-Prvulovic 2012), but forces young migrants into working-class occupations and allows the state to 'cherry-pick' individuals for citizenship, as expressed by Morrice (2017). Further, counselling is used to put a political message into practice (perform adequately in study/work or get deported) and to facilitate structures in the society due to their temporary RP, which makes them secondary citizens. Specifically, the findings highlight the significance of migration and societal structures for educational organisation. We can see that the production fields of counselling and migration are intertwined: the production field of migration creates a regulatory discourse that strongly affects counselling practices and the work of counselling, as well as students' career choices.

A major difference between the UK's language and citizenship test (Pinson and Arnot 2020; Morrice 2017) and ARP in Sweden is that the former takes a relatively short amount of time, while the latter requires sustained performance over several years, not only in education but also in the labour market. The consequences may be particularly extreme in the kind of high-stakes counselling recognized here, connected to the regulative discourse shaped by the ARP. In the ARP's implementation, the counsellors lose the ethos of their work and are forced to tailor their counselling practice towards preparing their students to meet labour market needs and the consequences of failure may be deportation. Some counsellors express this as 'a death sentence', as some students could be deported to war zones or other dangerous areas. This creates professional and ethical stress among the counsellors, as a consequence of the ARP is that the students' success in seeking asylum may depend on the counsellors' work.

Our study also highlights risks of injustice arising from variations in geographically-related local conditions and the associated recontextualization field. The survey shows that the counsellors' framework for implementing counselling partly depends on the municipality type (here: rural, small town or commuter). Moreover, provision of recurring activities providing knowledge about education or the labour market is crucial for meeting requirements set by the ARP, but varies because of variations in geographical conditions and associated possibilities to offer counselling

Overall, the nature of the counselling is strongly affected by the inclusive ideal (Sultana 2014; Hertzberg and Sundelin 2014) being subordinated by the exclusionary force of the ARP. Like the teachers with social justice ambitions described by (cf. Mills et al. 2019), the recontextualization field in our study affects the counsellors' capacity for agency in pursuing inclusive counselling ideals. The counsellors cannot counter the structurally individualizing assignation of responsibility for asylum-seeking students to identify and accept options that will enable them to meet the almost impossible requirements. The counsellors' frustration caused by the ARP's requirements shapes the students' normative and cognitive expectations. The counsellors try to maintain the students' focus and motivation, even if they regard the ARP's requirements as unrealistic. Frequently, the counsellors seek support in the official recontextualizing field, but find it does not cover high-stakes counselling. Nor does the field of production cover the circumstances, content or any potentially mitigating actions to reduce the severity of adverse consequences in high-stakes counselling.

Our analysis indicates that although regulative discourses are certainly not necessarily antithetical to instructional discourses, they certainly seem to have strongly conflicting elements in the focal context. The ARP obliges counsellors to ignore ideals regarding challenging ideas about broadening students' horizons and occupational restrictions based on gender, social and cultural background. However, the regulatory discourse in counselling conversations dictated by requirements of the ARP may also indirectly direct asylum-seeking students into a certain social class, thereby further loosening the inclusive ambition for counselling (Hertzberg and Sundelin 2014).

The counsellors' work, created in the field of production, is crucial to help the asylum-seeking students to understand and navigate in the education and labour market. However, the regulative discourse steers the counselling practice to include various assessments. *Inter alia*, counsellors have to assess students' individual abilities to assimilate a particular education and social skills to perform well enough in job interviews to obtain a job. In order to guide the students, the counsellors have to assess not only accessible local alternatives and possibilities but also risks associated with every option (e.g., each student's probability of being accepted for an educational programme, and each sector's potential to offer work opportunities within timeframes dictated by the ARP).

Our findings show that some helpful strategies in high-stakes counselling may include recognition and clarification of the situation and efforts to find ways to provide emotional support for the students. But also, to act on several levels, e.g. to collaborate with colleagues and to build contacts and influencing different agents as agencies, politicians, municipal officials etc.

We conclude that language and citizenship tests together with laws such as the ARP result in hurdles that allow countries to select migrants through education. This severely conflicts not only with counselling ideals, but also democratic and equality values regarding possibilities to make choices for the future, thereby creating ethical dilemmas for counsellors. This is serious, of course, for counsellors, but further research should focus primarily on the most devastating consequences: institutional introduction of various forms of conditional citizenship for asylum-seeking students and effects of the protracted processes on educational practices of the professionals as well as the students.

## Author contributions

All authors have been planning and discussing the idea of the article. Jonna Linde has, as first author, been responsible for the deeper analysis beyond the joint discussions as well as the text production, including revisions. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## Note

1. In January 2019 the Swedish Migration Agency had received 11 745 applications, of which 5216 were granted, 2449 were rejected, and 3938 were pending a decision (The Swedish Migration Agency 2019).

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