



School management, cultures of teaching and student outcomes: Comparing the cases of Finland and Sweden



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Two national cases of teaching cultures compared regarding management strategies.
- The logic of the market was embracing the cultures more in Sweden than in Finland.
- The logic of the profession had more impact in Finland compared to Sweden.
- These findings were related to international comparisons of school results.
- We questioned claims of efficiency of marketization and NPM in education.

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ABSTRACT

In this article we highlight the relation between school management, cultures of teaching and student outcomes in Finland and Sweden. We analyse how these two national cases of teaching cultures, as constituted by institutional logics, relate to alternatives in steering mechanisms by a reanalysis of a cross-national database. Our results show that the Finnish case embraces more of a professional logic and the Swedish more of a market logic. This is compared to the trajectories of the countries' PISA results, where the Finnish system is recognized as more successful. The identified patterns are discussed in relation to school management.

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1. Introduction

In this article we highlight the relation between school management, cultures of teaching and student outcomes. The paper can be seen as a response to the sometimes simplistic understandings of relations between teachers and student outcomes which is currently exerting world-wide influence.

In many national contexts, for example Germany and Sweden, schools are presented by mass media and policy-makers as being in crisis (see e.g. Ringarp & Rothland, 2010). This picture is based on declining results in international comparisons¹ carried out by

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¹ E.g. PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD); TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (IEA); and PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (IEA).

supranational organizations² and reports from consulting firms such as McKinsey (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010).³ However, we also find successful examples: for instance Finland is presented as having a high-performing system. These international evaluations have a great impact on policy and its rhetoric and thus become important for the governing of education (see, e.g. Adamson, 2012; Grek, 2009).

Many actors analyse these international differences in school results (see, e.g. Alegre & Ferrer, 2010) – researchers as well as others. McKinsey, one of the most influential consulting firms, comes to the conclusion that teachers and teachers' work – with a focus of the importance of recruiting the “right persons” – play a crucial role in the success of an educational system (Mourshed et al. 2010).

² E.g. OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; and IEA: The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

³ For a critical analysis of the McKinsey reports on education, see Coffield (2012).

In accordance with this, teachers' work is widely discussed out of context in policy and the media. This text, however, argues that such arguments are not adequate. We argue that teachers' work does not exist in a vacuum but is embedded in social, cultural and organisational contexts or as [Hodkinson, Biesta and James \(2007\)](#) put it “people are subject to structures even as they take agentic actions (...)” ([Hodkinson et al., 2007:418](#)). One of these important contexts is the use of school management strategies.

New Public Management (NPM) – business-like ways of organizing and governing – was introduced in education in the 1990s in order to increase efficiency and international competitiveness. This world-wide and highly influential movement is related to privatization and marketization in what can be called educational restructuring ([Hudson, 2007](#)).

Given this – the national differences in international assessments, the focus on individual teachers, the influence on policy from the market and consulting firms– it seems reasonable to study the context of teachers' work in relation to student outcomes. Here, we will see cultures of teaching as embraced by different management strategies in terms of institutional logics. We will study this variation and the relation to student outcomes as evinced in international assessments. It seems fruitful to do this in two countries with quite similar trajectories and characteristics but where the results in international assessments differ, so-called *Similar Systems with Different Outcomes* ([Steiner-Khamsi, 2013](#)). In this text we want to study these different outcomes in relation to differences in institutional logics at work, and for our purpose we use the neighbouring countries Finland and Sweden.

The national cases chosen have many similar characteristics – two Nordic Welfare State Education systems with similar reform movements since WWII and similar structures and policies ([Johannesson, Lindblad, & Simola, 2002](#)). The teachers' strivings for professionalism have differed somewhat in strength and origin, but the cases both have a long history of the logic of bureaucracy, and since the 1990s the logic of the market has been emphasized in both countries ([Lindblad, Lundahl, Lindgren & Zackari, 2002](#); [Lundström & Parding, 2011](#); [Wiborg, 2013](#)). Still, Finland and Sweden show different developments in terms of performance in international comparisons.

2. Conceptual framework: cultures of teaching and institutional logics

Like many others, we argue that no single factor determines student outcomes, and therefore agree with e.g. Coffield's criticism of the McKinsey report presented above ([Coffield, 2012:132](#)). In accordance with [Goodson \(2003\)](#) we regard teachers' work to be politically and socially constructed ([Goodson, 2003:52](#)), and we therefore want to widen the discussion of the importance of teachers by studying contextual aspects of teachers' work in our chosen national cases.

We use the concept of *teacher cultures*,⁴ which includes convictions, values and ways of acting ([Hargreaves, 1994](#)). Here we analyse differences in cultures of teaching in terms of *institutional logics*. These logics have been described and used by many researchers (e.g. [Freidson, 2001](#); [Scott, 2000](#); [Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012](#)). According to [Thornton et al. \(2012\)](#) an institutional logic perspective is:

a metatheoretical framework for analyzing the interrelationships among institutions, individuals, and organizations in social systems. (...) Institutional logics represent frames of

Table 1

Characteristics of institutional logics as frames of reference conditioning actors' choices.

Institutional logic	Characteristics
The logic of the market	Competition, customers. Assumes there are sellers and buyers who know the value of the goods on the market. Much information in order to make well-informed choices. Competitive prices and acceptable quality follows.
The logic of bureaucracy	Transparency, stability, hierarchical structures, rules and formal procedures. High degree of standardization. Often in the public sector.
The logic of professionalism	The workers themselves rule their work. Long education and training. Autonomy. Competence and experience as the base for decisions. A boundary toward other groups is common.

([Freidson, 2001](#); [Blomgren & Waks, 2015](#)).

reference that condition actors' choices for sensemaking, the vocabulary they use to motivate action, and their sense of self and identity ([Thornton et al. 2012: 2](#)).

[Coburn \(2001\)](#) sees institutional theory as a framework that “offers a broader cultural lens. It seeks to understand the persistence or change of structures, norms and patterns of social relationships in organizations by highlighting the ways in which they are linked to organizations' broader social and cultural environment.” ([Coburn, 2001:4](#)) and she further argues that (...) Most studies have focused on the influence of the institutional environment on school structures and organization, largely neglecting the relationship between the environment and teachers' work ([Coburn, 2001:4](#)).

In accordance with the above ideas on frames of reference conditioning actors' choices, we are using a theory of institutional logics. [Freidson \(2001\)](#) identifies three kinds of institutional logics – the market, bureaucracy and professionalism. These logics are seen as ideal types, i.e. they do not exist in their pure form ([Freidson, 2001, p 2](#)). Two ideal types are well known: the logic of bureaucracy and the logic of the market. However, [Freidson](#) argues for a “third logic” – the logic of professionalism. Professionalism here is not about following the typical classifying of professions or “seeking to find a general pattern or ‘essence’ of professionalism” ([Freidson, 2001:4](#)), but a way of steering and organizing work. It provides a fixed model to compare and use as an analytic tool.

In [Freidson's](#) words professionalism refers to “the institutional circumstances in which the members of occupations rather than consumers or managers control work. ‘Market’ refers to those circumstances in which consumers control the work, and ‘bureaucracy’ to those in which managers are in control” ([Freidson, 2001:12](#)). Institutional logics are here conceived of as framing the teachers' ways of acting and points of reference see [Table 1](#) ([Freidson, 2001](#)).

These logics include material and symbolical parts, concrete structures as well as ideas ([Blomgren & Waks, 2015](#)). Different management strategies are based on different institutional logics. We see the connection between them as reflected in the cultures of teaching, where these, sometimes conflicting, institutional logics are regarded to exist in parallel and to interact in different ways.

In this text we will focus on two of the logics: professionalism and the market of which NPM is a part. Our interest mainly centres them since they are the “challengers” to the more traditional logic of bureaucracy. [Leicht & Fennell, 2008](#), argue that “the rise of neo-liberal political and economic ideologies has threatened the expert claims of professional groups and the logic of professional organization as an alternative to and protector of client and public

⁴ ‘Cultures of teaching’ is used synonymously here.

welfare” (Leicht & Fennell, 2008:437). We will only briefly comment on the logic of bureaucracy.

According to Burch, 2007 institutional analyses of education have increased lately. For examples of both traditional and more recent work linking institutional theory and educational research see e.g. Burch, 2007. It is our point of departure that different cultures of teaching are composed by institutional logics in various ways. We are not interested in teachers' experiences as such but in teachers as informants concerning the institutional logics at work. We will analyse to what extent and with what emphasis these logics are embedded in the cases of Finland and Sweden.

Finland and Sweden will be used as connection points between, on the one hand, cultures of teaching as composed of different institutional logics and, on the other hand, outcomes of schooling as measured by different kinds of international comparisons. Hence, the comparative problem (Nóvoa & Yarıv-Mashal, 2003) in this study is to compare cultures of teaching and how these relate to school results. We will thus study school systems that are regarded as similar but are having different outcomes (Steiner-Khamsi, 2013) where our comparative analysis is based on the concept of institutional logics.

3. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this paper is to analyse relations between cultures of teaching as embraced by institutional logics and student outcomes as measured in international comparisons. It aims at giving a general picture and does not claim to give a full one. The study aligns with research on institutional logics (Freidson, 2001) and professional expertise under restructuring (Goodson & Lindblad, 2011). We pose three questions:

1. How are cultures of teaching in different national cases constituted by the logic of the market and the logic of the profession?
2. Does a culture of teaching that more embraces the logic of the market match a more successful position in international comparisons of school performances?
3. Does a culture of teaching that more embraces the logic of the profession match a more successful position in international comparisons of school performances?

Answers to questions like these are of significance in order to understand the context of teachers' professional lives in terms of institutional logics at work. But they are also significant as a way of widening and meeting the simplistic explanations of individual teachers' role when discussing the differences in outcomes in international comparisons.

4. Educational restructuring and school results in Finland and Sweden

In this section we will shortly describe the educational restructuring in Finland and Sweden during the last few decades.

Restructuring is here regarded as a way of changing the governing in terms of decentralization, deregulation, privatization and freedom of choice. Restructuring of education has been similar in Finland and Sweden, as well as in many other Western countries (Ball, 2008; Hudson, 2007; Wiborg, 2013). According to Johannesson et al. (2002) some researchers even talk about a “policy epidemic” influenced by a neo-liberal discourse (Johannesson et al., 2002:326). This kind of organizational principle suggests that the public sector is to be ruled in the same way as the private sector, that is, following a market logic based on ideas of NPM.

4.1. The market in Finland and Sweden

NPM has become a highly influential principle in different societal sectors. This change was driven by “closely related political demands on behalf of citizens, taxpayers, patients, pupils and other for greater accountability and transparency of service providing organizations (Power, 2000:113). In the educational context the overall idea is that it is supposed to lead to “variation as well as innovation producing a better school system” (Lindblad, 2011:68). In this text we will study aspects of the market influence, such as documentation, competition and evaluation.

Both Finland and Sweden are influenced by similar government strategies: decentralization, deregulation, managerialism, individualizing, parental choice and privatisation (Johannesson et al., 2002:327). Both emerge from a centralized system with a strong focus on equality, where the idea was that everyone should attend comprehensive schools and get the same education (Johannesson et al., 2002). Antikainen, 2006 argues that “equity, participation, and welfare state have been known as the major socio-political attributions of the Nordic model” (Antikainen, 2006:230). In various degrees, these ideals are now competing with market ideals, or rather quasi-markets (Lundahl, 2002), although the countries still maintain “a universal welfare state regime and a comprehensive education system” (Wiborg, 2013:407). According to Wiborg (2013:408) Sweden more than other Scandinavian countries has adapted to these neo-liberal discourses, despite the fact that Sweden can be regarded “the most ‘social democratic’ country in Scandinavia”. According to Lindblad et al. (2002) and Johannesson et al. (2002) the changes have been expressed by the government as being inevitable in order to make systems better. Finland and Sweden seem to be similar in respect of the history of market influences, even though the extent to which they have adapted to them may differ.

4.2. Teacher professionalism in Finland and Sweden

Previously, sociological research on professions usually targeted differences between occupational groups, demarcating what makes a profession, using traits to define them. According to Foss Lindblad and Lindblad (2009) such definitions can be regarded as boundary work which has many interests and is highly political. The new models of research can be seen as a movement “toward models of professional organisations and knowledge claim (Leicht & Fennell, 2008:432). Evetts (2003:397) argues that “the operational definition of profession can be highly pragmatic”.

In Sweden, professionalizing talk about teachers can be seen as an imposed instrument for restructuring the educational system (Falkner, 1997). Several reforms were introduced in order to strengthen teacher autonomy and the teaching profession. According to Lindblad (1997) it was a political goal to present teachers as more professional and was not put forward by teachers from within. However, despite these policy intentions, instead of increasing their professionalism, teachers seem to be losing autonomy due to managerial supervision and inspection, which have grown in parallel. Thus, teachers' work seems to be undergoing re-configuration in important ways (Foss Lindblad and Lindblad, 2009). Blomgren and Waks (2015) state that contemporary Swedish educational reforms point in different directions; an “institutional crowdedness” can be seen: reforms which are typical of the logic of professions (e.g. teacher licence) are introduced at the same time as ideas typical of the logic of the market are predominant in other reforms (e.g. school vouchers and freedom of choice). Others, e.g. Lundström and Parding (2011) talk about “clashing logics”.

In Finland teachers, on the other hand, have long striven for professionalism themselves (Simola, 2005:460). “As early as 1890,

primary school teachers were claiming that their extension training should be organized at university level” (Simola, 2005:460). From the late 1950s the teachers' union demanded that the training of primary school teachers should also be at the university level (Simola, 2005:460). Teacher training has taken place at universities since the late 1970s – early 1980s; teacher education in Finland is popular and has remained so over the years (Sohlberg et al., 2008:28).

In TALIS (2013),⁵ an international survey for teachers with over 70,000 lower secondary teachers and their school principals in 23 countries as respondents (Schleicher, 2011:202), only 5% of the Swedish teachers experience that their job is highly valued and has a high status in society compared to 59% of the Finnish teachers (Skolverket.se, 2014).⁶ The mean for this in TALIS, according to the Swedish National Agency for Education, is 31%.⁷

There thus seem to be a difference in tradition regarding teacher professionalism between Finland and Sweden. Finnish teachers have a longer and stronger tradition of striving for professionalism. In Sweden the quest for professionalism has been shorter and more of a matter for the unions in combination with policy actions.

In this text we will study certain central aspects of professions and professionalism. We see professionalism here as a question of power, knowledge and education: the power to define one's task, to take part in decisions, share knowledge with colleagues and enhance the importance of education.

4.3. Student outcomes in Finland and Sweden as seen in PISA

PISA⁸ is an international study with over 70 participating countries performed by the OECD starting in 1997 with a focus on reading, mathematics or science (OECD, 2013). The results are open to anyone at <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>. The results are scrutinized, discussed and analysed in research (see e.g. Le Donne, 2014) and the media and policy-makers follow the results closely (see e.g. Adamson, 2012:647).

Although intensively followed and rather uncritically presented in the mass media, the PISA tests have been criticized for multiple reasons (see e.g. Adamson, 2012; Coffield, 2012; Simola, 2005; Uljens, 2005). According to Uljens learning is contextually and culturally embedded and therefore hard to compare (Uljens, 2005:3). The tests are not regarded as connected to curricula in the participating countries, and the task of an educational system is not merely to teach maths and reading, but also “cultural, democratic and social goals” (Coffield, 2012:133), which is ignored in the tests. Another critique is that the tests have been closed and thus lack scientific openness (Uljens, 2005:3). Yet another critique is the ways the results are used in e.g. league tables that tend to oversimplify the local contextual factors (Adamson, 2012: 647). Nevertheless, the tests are widely used and research based on them is widely published in scientific journals as other international large scale assessments. PISA results are highly visible and significant in public evaluations and discourses on education and used as the preferred measure of school excellence in several market-oriented discourses. Thus, PISA results are worth examining as an outcome of educational systems (see e.g. Jerrim & Choi, 2014) from an NPM point of view.

Finland and Sweden have clearly diverging results over time, as illustrated in Table 2. We note here that Finland consistently has a

Table 2

Finnish and Swedish results in PISA 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012. Ranking positions in relation to other OECD countries.

	Finland's ranking position	Sweden's ranking position
Mathematical literacy		
2003	1st	14th
2006	1st	15th
2009	2nd	20th
2012	6th	28th
Reading literacy		
2003	1st	7th
2006	2nd	9th
2009	2nd	15th
2012	3rd	27th
Scientific literacy		
2003	1st	12th

(From: Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture 2003, 2006, 2009 and Skolverket (the Swedish National Agency for Education) 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012).

top position, while Sweden is falling year after year with increasing differences between them as a result. Finland has become a role model for schooling, and Sweden and other countries with similar results are trying to find reasons for and solutions to this (Ringarp & Rothland, 2010).

5. Notes on data, methodology and research techniques

Our data originates from the database of a European research project (Goodson & Lindblad, 2011). The project aimed at capturing the intersection of teachers' everyday experiences of organisational change and concurrent policies. A survey was constructed for the project, where some items were replicated from other studies (Sohlberg et al., 2008:38). In addition to this, life history methodology with interviews and ethnography were used as described in Müller et al. (2007:3).

5.1. The sample

The empirical material in our database is based on a cross-national survey with individual responses and life history methodology. The sample consisted of 1100 teachers from primary and secondary schools. The survey was sent by post with two reminders, and the response rate was high – 70%. Since samples were taken with the help of central statistical institutions – Statistics Finland, Survey Unit in Helsinki and Statistics Sweden – who have great experience and good reliability, it “can be assumed that samples were taken on the random base” (Sohlberg et al., 2008:40) and the demographics and socio-economic status of the teachers and their students were randomly spread.

The survey was conducted in 2005–2006, good timing for our study since data are neither obsolete nor too new to be informative. The respondents' birth year ranged from 1941 to 1981, and the majority were women, and all were active teachers and had so been for the last 12 months.

In the research project the cross-national survey was combined in each country with ethnographic studies in similarly located primary schools where also professional life story interviews were conducted (Lindblad, 2007:11). In this study we complement the survey with such interviews with teachers from Finnish and Swedish Schools. Excerpts from these intensive studies are used in order to further validate our findings.

From Sohlberg et al. (2008) we know that the distribution of men and women in the sample is quite similar. In the Finnish sample there are 29% men and 71% women (total 731), and in the Swedish sample there are 30% men and 70% women (total 817). The sample is representative in respect to the gender distribution of the

⁵ The Teaching and Learning International Survey (2013), initiated by the OECD.

⁶ Skolverket = The Swedish National Agency for Education.

⁷ Skolverket.se 2014.

⁸ In this study we will only use PISA as a source of information. However, the results of TIMSS and PIRLS are quite similar for our cases.

population of teachers in the respective countries (Sohlberg et al., 2008: 41).

Also, the distribution of age seems comparable between the countries. Furthermore, we know that most of them were employed by tax-financed councils – over 94% in both countries. In Finland 2.5% of the sample were employed by profit-making companies, and in Sweden 3.9% were employed by profit-making companies.

One possible problem for us regarding the distribution of the sample was the slightly skewed distribution of teachers at different school levels (see Table A, Appendix A.). Sohlberg et al. (2008) state:

[p]rimary and lower secondary school teachers in the Finnish sample are over-represented compared with the teachers' population, while teachers from vocational and polytechnic [schools] are underrepresented (Sohlberg et al., 2008:40).

However, this possible problem of a skewed sample was corrected for in our analyses by comparing our indexes also across school forms and national cases. Nevertheless, the results presented below persisted. The relations were almost identical, regardless of school form. In terms of professionalism we could see a slight difference regarding vocational and polytechnic teachers. Here the difference was smaller than in the full sample, but it still existed. Thus we argue that the distribution of the sample did not have an impact on our results, and our conclusion is that the populations of the two countries are similar and thus possible to use for our purpose.

Having said this, we want to comment on one area where the teachers of the two countries differ considerably. This has to do with their highest educational level. More Finnish than Swedish teachers have the degree B.A or M.A.⁹ We will discuss this more in relation to professionalism.

5.2. Re-analysing data

The original survey was constructed in order to analyse professional work in restructuring welfare-state institutions, and not in order to directly answer our research questions. However, to our understanding, the contents of the survey can be translated into Freidson's (2001) institutional logics. We searched for variables that would inform us about the presence of different institutional logics in teachers' work. In a way the work was explorative; through factor analysis we identified variables that we had found theoretically relevant. Based on this we made reliability analyses to test their internal consistency. Finally, we created indexes for the respective logics, which we used for our analyses. Since we noted that some respondents had skipped one or more items, for the sake of simplicity we chose to assign them a mean instead of a sum. This continuous mean was rounded up to the original alternatives in order to obtain an ordinal scale.

5.3. A comparative approach

The original project had a comparative dimension, and so does this study. In our study the comparative angle is used in order to identify similarities and differences between two cultures of teaching as represented by samples from two different countries. The respondents of the survey were randomly selected from national samples of teachers active in the labour force during the last 12 months (Sohlberg et al., 2008:39–40).

It is always difficult to make comparisons between different national educational systems. Adamson, 2012, argues that the “use

of comparative education research is only effective when the act of comparing can add extra dimensions to the study and units of comparison have sufficient in common to make comparison meaningful (Adamson, 2012:647). We argue that our units of comparison have sufficient features in common, as presented earlier in this article, but we again remind the reader of the fact that this is a study of patterns and *not* a cause-effect study. We see this as a study dealing with cases of the recurrent problem of teaching and school management. We explore the space between educational system and outcomes (Steiner-Khamsi, 2013) with a focus on institutional logics.

5.4. Comments on the logic of bureaucracy

The logic of bureaucracy is known as an ideal type with a long tradition in both Finland and Sweden. However, in the interest of our research questions and the recent influence of NPM at the expense of professionalism (see e.g. Leicht & Fennell, 2008), we decided not to analyse the logic of bureaucracy here. However, we will briefly comment on it in order to further contrast its relation to the other logics.

In the database we see that the Finnish teachers more than the Swedish colleagues state that they have experienced obstacles from legislation and steering documents (Sohlberg et al., 2008:172). This could imply that the Finnish teachers more than the Swedish experience a clash between the logics of bureaucracy and professionalism. It might have been due to a higher presence of the logic of bureaucracy in the Finnish example; however, we also used the database for information on the presence of hierarchies (Sohlberg et al., 2008:150) and the view on managers' importance (Sohlberg et al., 2008:192). In these examples the cases are rather similar. Our conclusion is that there is not much difference between Finnish and Swedish teachers' relations to the logic of bureaucracy. The next sections come in the light of this.

5.5. Variables: operationalizing the logic of the market

From the original survey with a high number of variables, we identified those that would tell us something about the institutional logics of professionalism and the market, based on Freidson (2001). However, we also wanted to analyse how the variables connected to each other. We did this by using an explorative factor analysis. In doing so we identified variables with content that would indicate signs of the logic of the market. These we used for our further analyses (see Appendix B for the variables chosen and test of significance).

The index constructed for measuring the logic of the market was based on six items covering institutional competition, the requirement of written documentation and evaluation of work, all of which are components of NPM.

The requirement of written documentation is likely to have different meanings in different contexts. In a way it overlaps with the logics of bureaucracy, professionalism and the demand for information in the logic of the market. It can be seen as the profession's tool, but it can also be seen as a trace of accountability and the logic of the market. In our reliability test *documentation* correlated with the logic of the market and is used in the *market* index. To us it points to an imposed professionalization, based on e.g. Lortie's (1975/2002) conception of the school teachers as lacking documentation and on more recent profession theories on professionalization as a disciplinary mechanism (Fournier, 1999). We also see a connection to Coffield (2012), who says that “teachers are burdened with these administrative tasks because of the demands for data made by management and the state” (Coffield,

⁹ B.A: Bachelor of Arts; M.A: Master of Arts.

Table 3
Cultures of teaching: Embracing the logic of the market. Percent (n 1541).

	Higher embracing of the logic of the market %	Lower embracing of the logic of the market %	Total (%)
Finnish culture of teaching	38	62	100%
Swedish culture of teaching	64	36	100%

Index based on 6 variables as presented in Table B, Appendix B. Higher embracing equals above average; lower embracing equals below average.

2012:141). To us it thus seems reasonable to use the demands for documentation with the logic of the market.

5.6. Variables –operationalizing the logic of professionalism

When operationalizing the logic of professionalism, we focused on the inner features of professionalism and the outer features of professions. Among the inner characteristics we use participating in organisational decision-making, which often is regarded as important in professions. To this we added information on colleagues as sources of knowledge and one's own conceptions of how work should be done. Among the outer characteristics we used the length of teachers' education. To our understanding these variables indicate an embracing of professionalism, as previously described in Table 2.

After having identified these aspects theoretically (e.g. Foss Lindblad and Lindblad, 2009) we went on to perform a reliability analysis. The internal consistency was good, Cronbach's alpha 0.660. See Appendix C for the variables chosen and test of significance.

6. Results

We will present our results with a focus on the national cases and the respective logics. The results prompt questions, discussions and further research.

6.1. National cases and the logic of the market

We used explorative factor analysis for each national case with a following reliability test using Cronbach's alpha in order to see if the two indexes with the chosen variables were consistent. Usually *documentation* can be said to overlap between demands for professional case documentation in the logic of professionalism and the demands for information needed for New Public Management in the logic of the market. As mentioned earlier, in our reliability test *documentation* correlated with the logic of the market and is used here. Our results show that the six variables reach similar Cronbach's alpha in both Finland (0.541) and Sweden (0.582), overall (0.595) and both countries see documentation as belonging to the logic of the market, which to us is a good argument for seeing it as part of New Public Management.

We used crosstabs with our index *Logic of the Market mean* as the independent variable and the countries as dependent variables. Our results present a significant difference between Finland and Sweden. Fully 62% of the Finnish case evinces a lower embracing of the logic of the market. However, for the Swedish case the corresponding percentage is 36%. Swedish cultures of teaching embrace the logic of the market more in daily work, 64% (Swedish) compared to 38% (Finnish), as seen in Table 3.

In the project's life history database, Tina, an experienced female Swedish teacher, born in the early 1940s further illuminates that the market influence is visible in a teacher's daily work. She states:

Tina: They should have noticed the educational level. The children here don't reach the goals. They should have emphasized this much *more*. We should have more resources to divide the

children into groups. To do other things. Of course you can use resources in different ways but these reductions, going on since the nineties are troublesome. *More and more is happening* in society, also because we don't take care of children in a right way. The school is a good institution for taking care of children. We have them here for a long time. We have them from *when they are little*. And we reach the parents, in most cases. And the independent schools caused problems, a little. Yes, we can have independent schools but now you cannot say so much to children and parents any more. Because then they move to an independent school or another municipal school (Wärвик, 2007:64).

Here, the teacher expresses a concern over the influence of market principles in terms of competition and free choice of schools, which she maintains could diminish the teachers' leeway. Teachers must say the "right things" or there is an easy "exit" for active parents. As a parent, it is easy to change schools for your child, and consequently the school loses income in terms of the child's voucher. There is nothing the teacher can do about it.

A bit further in the interview the same teacher comments on a consequence of the competitive situation where parents move their children to another school:

Tina: Yes we have seen the result. /.../ at Christmas, in the middle of a school year. They have divided a class and taken away the teacher. That's what they are after, then they can save money. Some children to that class, some to that class and some to that class. No matter. And teaching is rather personal, really. You are not the same teachers as I am. You cannot be and should not be. But the children must adapt here and there. And small children need security.

Researcher: It is something different?

Tina: It is totally different. But it's really different all over Sweden. They're saving money (Wärвик, 2007:65).

A school class was split in the middle of the school year as a consequence of children changing schools, and there was an organisational need for costs to be cut. We argue that these cases present valid statements concerning the working of New Public Management under the logic of the market corresponding to our extensive findings.

Our findings were then related to student outcomes in international comparisons. A more marketized way of steering the public sector is said to increase outcome at lower cost through more efficient management. However, we found that when the logic of the market is stronger, such as in the Swedish case, the results in PISA is lower. Instead, we saw that cultures of teaching with less market influence have students performing better in international comparisons of study assessments.

6.2. National cases and the logic of professionalism

Professionalism is strongly associated with education. Therefore, we first need to state that Finnish teachers in general have a longer education than the Swedish, as seen in Table 4.

This is a first indication of the logic of professionalism in favour of the Finnish teachers, which should be borne in mind. Furthermore, a higher proportion of Swedish teachers worked without teacher training (18%)¹⁰ compared to Finnish teachers (12%). This is

¹⁰ Since 1 December 2013 a teacher licence is demanded in Swedish schools; however due to a lack of certified teachers, untrained teachers still work in schools.

Table 4
Educational level among teachers in Finland and Sweden. Percent (n 1548) (Sohlberg et al., 2008:49).

Teachers' educational level/National cases	College or seminar, not completed university education (%)	Bachelor of education (%)	B.A. or M.A. (%) ^a	Other (%)	Total
Finland	12	0	85	3	100%
Sweden	18	58	14	10	100%

^a B.A.: Bachelor of Arts, M.A.: Master of Arts.

also is an indication of professionalism in favour of the Finnish. In professions, education can function as a closure to other groups. Only the “trusted or initiated” can perform the task, which to a lesser extent was the case in Sweden.

In order to find indications of professionalism in our sample we started by creating an index, including the variables described above and in [Appendix C](#). We did this by assigning them a mean, in order to cover for missing answers. Overall 76% of the teachers embrace the logic of professionalism to a lesser degree and 24% to a higher.

When we split the two national cases the result is different. Again there is a contextual difference, this time the opposite situation as compared to the logic of the market. We see that the Finnish culture of teaching significantly more than the Swedish embraces the logic of professionalism as seen in [Table 5](#).

It is worth noticing that when we split the index and only compared taking part in decisions, which is one important aspect of professionalism, we saw an even larger difference between the national cases. Finnish cultures of teaching take part in different kinds of decisions to a much greater extent than the Swedish. This is also visible in the interviews. This statement comes from Tuula, a Finnish teacher with 16 years of teaching experience ([Koksonen and Houtsonen, 2007:152](#)):

We discuss a lot of things in meetings. I mean we have quite a functional school, everybody can influence here if they just want to. We discuss and...I mean we don't have a dictator here to rule from the top. Of course it's needed in some issues, but anyhow, we have a possibility of influencing matters here in our own school, and we manage to do that in quite a positive atmosphere ([Koksonen and Houtsonen \(2007:167\)](#)).

Tuula also acknowledges that there are things that she and her colleagues cannot decide upon; however, there is a positive sense of having influence on their own work. In our next excerpt, Tilde, a rather experienced Swedish female teacher seems much more negative regarding this. This statement highlights a sense of powerlessness and distrust in and distance to the management:

Tilde: Yes, we say so, we don't reach the goals. But there are lots of things we can change, to be better organized as a group when

Table 5
Cultures of teaching: Embracing the logic of professionalism. Percent (n 1549).

	Higher embracing of the logic of professionalism (%)	Lower embracing of the logic of professionalism (%)	Total (%)
Finnish culture of teaching	28	72	100%
Swedish culture of teaching	20	80	100%

Index based on 7 variables as presented in [Table C, Appendix C](#). Higher embracing equals above average; lower embracing equals below average.

we complain, I think. More unified, be more clear and distinct. And some of us are like that. And then we got a fuzzy mass in between. So I think we can change. Us. And have to do so. But then it is also, as we talked about when he (the city district manager) was here, the management must change and be clear. To think about what damage they cause when they make certain statements, such as when it wasn't eleven posts that should be eliminated but seven. And as our, what's her name? at the city district management, in the press says that the teachers must sharpen their pedagogy. This does a great deal of damage, to make such statements, I think. So there's a crisis of confidence between management and teachers I think ([Wärvik, 2007:68](#)).

Tilde expresses mistrust against management, who are in charge, while Tuula seems to think of herself as part of the chain of decisions. We interpret this as a case of how the institutional logics influence the teachers' work lives. Where the sense of professionalism is higher, the teachers in our study feel more influential and valued. As noted in the introduction this is also a conclusion from the TALIS survey, where a much higher proportion of the Finnish than the Swedish teachers express that their job is highly valued¹¹

Since our sample was somewhat skewed, we compared responses from teachers with the same educational level in the two national cases and achieved corresponding results. Thus, we argue that it is not the educational level as such that matters here.

When comparing these results to the Finnish and Swedish student outcomes in PISA as presented above, it seems that cultures of teaching that to a higher extent embrace the logic of professionalism are more successful in their schooling outcomes.

7. Conclusions and discussion

In this text we have had the ambition to highlight, discuss and question the sometimes simplistic explanations of results of international assessments. We did this by using cultures of teaching as comprised of different institutional logics. Teachers do not choose what logic to be embedded in; even as agents they work in a context. In theory on institutional logics it is argued that the logics in which people work are important for how they act in their work life; the logics set limits ([Freidson, 2001](#)). It is likely that a dominant institutional logic matters in terms of what the teachers are able to observe, experience and act upon; it is an important prerequisite for their work life and how schooling is done. Hence we use the concept of institutional logics to develop our understandings of the differences in schooling outcomes, in systems that seem similar.

Our national cases have traditionally been governed mostly according to the logic of bureaucracy and to some extent according to the logic of professionalism, but lately management strategies based on the logic of the market also have proliferated. [Blomgren and Waks \(2015\)](#) say that there is “more of everything” which also means that there could be more of clashes between these logics. In this study we found how these logics have permeated teachers' working life, somewhat differently in the two historically similar national contexts.

Our first research question dealt with the variation of the cultures of teachings' embracing of the institutional logics of the market and professionalism. First of all, we see a significant

¹¹ Skolverket.se 2014.

difference in our two national cases and how they are infused by the logics studied. In our study the Swedish culture of teaching more strongly espouses the logic of the market than does the Finnish culture. This is visible in e.g. the presence of external evaluation and competition among schools. Secondly, when it comes to the logic of professionalism, it seems that the Finnish culture of teaching is more strongly characterized by this compared to the Swedish. In our study this is for instance visible in the way the Finnish teachers take part in decisions and in terms of their longer university education.

Our second and third research questions dealt with relations between the embracing of the two respective institutional logics and outcomes in international comparisons. As mentioned earlier, even though the Swedish culture of teaching embraces the logic of the market to a greater extent than the Finnish, Finland performs better in international comparisons. Thus, here the logic of the market thus does not match better student outcome in international comparisons. On the contrary, the Finnish culture of teaching is more informed by the logic of the profession than the Swedish. It thus seems that, of these two logics, the logic of professionalism best matches high scores in international comparisons. This is worth noticing in relation to the rhetoric of market principles being a solution to educational excellence, and large scale international assessments is regarded as a way to measure such excellence (e.g. Mourshed et al., 2010).

A few words concerning the limitations of our study: first of all, it is a focused study using indexes and correlations in characterizations of cases. We do not attempt to explain the diverging results of the PISA tests. However, we depart from the fact that Finland and Sweden have different outcomes and that teachers and teaching are often regarded key factors when explaining the differences. Here, we analyse how cultures of teaching relate to such results in terms of institutional logics. Secondly, the variables in our study were not originally produced in order to answer our research questions, but by using factor analysis combined with theoretical concepts, we managed to deal with this issue. An extra dimension was added through the use of life histories and ethnographies in our data material.

It is problematic to compare educational systems in terms of student outcomes in large scale international comparisons, since educational systems are complex working in different contexts and are having different tasks outside the assessments done. However, there are studies with such limitations stating that they are able to explain differences and give advice to actors in different national contexts. Some of these studies have gained major influence and attracted considerable attention. We agree with Coffield (2012), who argues that studies such as the McKinsey reports are simplistic and do not get the full picture, yet they claim causal relationships in their findings. These reports have been taken as evidence and have had a great impact on policies worldwide. The argument that teachers are a key to success in education holds true as an abstract statement, but we argue that it is necessary to study the context in which teachers work (c.f. McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). The institutional logics in which they work set constraints and opportunities for teachers' work.

This study is one way of putting into perspective individual teachers as a key factor and the positive rhetoric on governing by market-like principles. We claim that causal explanations should be avoided in this kind of study of extensive pattern study (e.g. Sayer, 2000). Instead, we see our study as a way of discussing and shedding light on these issues. We offer no simple answers, but we point at a relation which we think is of importance. How much can teachers themselves be blamed or blessed when their work is embedded in political and social contexts? What do cultures of teaching look like? We see that there is a difference in the nations'

espousing of different institutional logics and argue that these cultures of teaching shape schooling, not the individual teachers.

It is often argued that market-like governance will lead to efficient schools, with good results at low cost (see a critical discussion of this in e.g. Lindblad, 2011). However, in this study, in accordance with e.g. Simola (2005), Uljens (2005) and Coffield (2012), we conclude that more of the logic of the market is not associated with improved student performances.

We identified the logic of professionalism by means of length of education, professional autonomy and collegiality as well as participation in organisational decision-making. Based on such measures the Finnish cultures of teaching did embrace more of this logic. This is not surprising, however, given the fact that professionalism has been an important issue in Finland for a long time and is regarded as congenial to school assessment such as PISA (Simola, 2005). It is also worth noting that one of the targets during the last decades of policy-making in Sweden have been to make teachers more professional, but experiences of the Swedish culture of teaching seem to point in another direction (see also Foss Lindblad and Lindblad, 2009).

In our example, when relating our findings with the outcomes of PISA the results are higher for a culture of teaching that comprises more of the logic of professionalism and not, as might be expected in accordance with current rhetoric, the logic of the market and new public management.

At present we regard this study and its findings as a way of discussing teachers' work, different institutional logics and their relations to cultures of teaching. This study shows that a culture of teaching that embraces more of the logic of the market embraces fewer traces of the logic of professionalism. This holds true the other way around, as well. However, interaction and clashes between different institutional logics is in need to be clarified in further studies. For instance, it can be argued that elements of the logic of bureaucracy would be part of an efficient organization in market terms (e.g. including a high degree of standardisation, formal procedures and hierarchical structures). In this sense the logics of bureaucracy and the market could be seen as conflated. Another issue concern different practices in teaching, such as documentation of work, as boundary objects moving between different institutional logics and by that changing their meaning – e.g. as tools for New Public Management or in professional decision-making. Taken together, there is a need for further analyses of configurations of institutional logics in education and their implications.

As a comparative study we had the ambition to understand why seemingly similar educational systems as in the Nordic Welfare states are producing different outcomes as measured by the PISA outcomes. In our analyses we put in the predominance of different institutional logics as measured by teacher experiences. This resulted in quite different cultures of teaching at work in the two systems studied and thus different contexts for teachers' work. Our results point to the importance of institutional logics as a contribution to comparative education studies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2013), for instance in order to capture why similar educational systems produce different outcomes.

Finally, as shown by other studies (e.g. McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006) as well as ours, it is of vital importance to capture cultures of teaching in contexts and not to de-contextualise teachers and their work. This is to our understanding a matter for research on teaching as well as for teacher education. From our study two issues emerge here: firstly, the importance of educating future teachers in managing institutional logics and in contributing to the development of professional cultures of teaching, and, secondly, the need to question the effectiveness of current demands for efficiency as promoted by New Public Management – even market efficiencies have their costs!

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Appendix A

Table A

Distribution of teachers at different school levels (Sohlberg et al., 2008:40).

	Primary and lower secondary school (%)	Upper secondary school (%)	Vocational, polytechnic and other schools for 16–19 years youth (%)	Total (f)
Sample of teachers in Finland	74	15	11	730
Population of teachers in Finland	62	10	28	71,892
Sample of teachers in Sweden	71	29 ^a	–	817
Population of teachers in Sweden	73	27	–	13,7666

^a Upper secondary schools have been combined with vocational schools under the same administrative form (*gymnasium*) since 1971. For the last 15 years all secondary education has had the same duration, but some programmes consist of practical occupational training, while most programmes mostly consist of theoretical subjects (Sohlberg et al., 2008:41).

Appendix B

Table B:1

Variables used for operationalizing the logic of the market.

Questions from the original survey

Q30. When you look back to the day you started working in your occupation as a teacher – what are your general impressions today, compared with earlier? What do you think of the following statement?

30:2 There is more of competition between schools nowadays. 30:8 The demand of written documentation is greater nowadays.

30:8 The demand of written documentation is greater nowadays.

Q32. How much would you say that the following factors influence your everyday work as a teacher?

32:3 Demand for documentation of work

32:4 Competition with other schools/hospitals

32:5 Evaluation of work

Q36. How true are the following statements about you current job as a teacher?

36:12 The considerations and decisions I make in my job need to be well documented.^a

Cronbach's alpha for these variables is 0.595 (Finland 0.541, Sweden 0.582) and from these we made the index "embracing of the market". We use a mean instead of a sum, which yields a more reliable index when many answers are missing. This continuous mean is divided into 1–2 where 2 is the most positive value (higher).

^a Usually *documentation* can be said to overlap between the logic of professionalism and the demand for information in the logic of the market/NPM. In our reliability test *documentation* correlated with the logic of the market and is used here.

Table B:2

Cross tabulation: the logic of the market and cultures of teaching.

Cross tabulation: the logic of the market*National cultures of teaching (n 1549)			Cultures of teaching		Total
			Finnish	Swedish	
The logic of the market (index, mean)	Lower	Count	450	291	741
		Expected Count	349	392	741
		Per cent	62%	36%	
	Higher	Count	280	528	808
		Expected Count	381	427	808
		Per cent	38%	64%	
Total	Count	730	819	1549	
	Expected Count	730	819	1549	
	Per cent	100%	100%		

Test of significance: Pearson Chi-Square = 105.471 at 1 df indicating statistically significant differences between the cultures of teaching in this respect.

Appendix C

Table C:1

Variables used for operationalizing the logic of professionalism.

Questions from the original survey

Q 28. How often do you use the following sources of knowledge to get knowledge in your work as a teacher?

28:4 Colleagues from my workplace.

28:5 Colleagues or partners from other workplaces.

Q 32. How much would you say that following factors influence your everyday work as a teacher?

32:1 My own conception of how work should be done.

Q39. As part of your job as a teacher describe whether and, if so, how you are involved in these policy decisions

39:1. Do you participate in general policy decisions about the distribution of funds within the overall budget of the place where you work?

39:2. Are you personally involved in decisions to increase or decrease the total numbers of people employed in the place where you work?

39:3. Are you personally involved in policy decisions to significantly change the basic methods or procedures of work in your workplace?

39:4. Are you personally involved in policy decisions to significantly change the services delivered by the organization for which you work?

Cronbach's alpha for these variables is 0.660 (Finland 0.661, Sweden 0.660) and from these we made the index "embracing of professionalism". We use a mean instead of a sum, which yields a more reliable index when many answers are missing. This continuous mean is divided into 1–2 where 2 (recoded) is the most positive value (higher).

Table C:2

Cross tabulation: the logic of professionalism and cultures of teaching (n 1549)

Cross tabulation: the logic of professionalism*Cultures of teaching			Cultures of teaching		Total
			Finnish	Swedish	
The logic of professionalism (index, mean)	Lower	Count	527	653	1180
		Expected Count	556	624	1180
		Per cent	72%	80%	
	Higher	Count	203	166	369
		Expected Count	174	195	369
		Per cent	28%	20%	
Total	Count	730	819	1549	
	Expected Count	730	819	1549	
	Per cent	100%	100%		

Test of significance: Pearson Chi-Square = 12.091 at 1 df, indicating statistically significant differences between the cultures of teaching in this respect.

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