

Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik

Teachers meeting the  
challenges of the Swedish  
school system  
Agents within boundaries

av

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# Abstract

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The overarching aim of this thesis is to provide the reader with a better comprehension of the notion of ‘teacher quality’ within the context of the work that teachers perform in the classroom, at school, and within the broader landscape of the Swedish national education system. Realist social theory serves as the underlying theoretical framework to this investigation. Data that was used in the studies of this thesis is derived from TIMSS 2011 and TIMSS 2015 (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) with special focus on mathematics teachers. The main analytical approaches that were employed are confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling.

This dissertation includes three empirical studies, which address teacher quality from different, yet related, perspectives. Study I investigated the relationship between aspects of teacher professional competence and students’ mathematics achievement as well as student-assessed instructional quality, in the Swedish context. The main finding of the study was that the amount of teacher coursework in mathematics was positively associated with the classroom mathematics achievement. Study II explored job satisfaction of the Swedish 8th grade mathematics teachers. It identified the perceived adequacy of workload, opportunities for collegial cooperation, professional development, and student behaviour as important factors for teacher job satisfaction. Besides, female teachers and teachers with higher self-efficacy beliefs tended to have higher levels of job satisfaction. Study III examined the role of the school climate in reducing student bullying in the Nordic countries. Results indicated that bullying was relatively frequent in Swedish schools compared to other Nordic countries, and that bullying was also associated with lower student outcomes.

Overall, the results of the studies that are included in this thesis underline the relevance of the interplay between teacher agency and classroom/school structures, which forms the basis for the integrated discussion section of this dissertation.