PISA i skolan
Hur lärare, rektorer och skolchefer förhåller sig till internationella kunskapsmätningar

Daniel Arnesson

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i N 320, Naturvetarhuset, måndagen den 12 december, kl. 13:00. Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på svenska.

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Abstract
This thesis addresses the local reception and use in Sweden of the major international large scale assessments (ILSAs) of student performance: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). The aim is to describe and analyze how Swedish teachers, principals and school directors interpret and possibly use ILSAs in their professional practice. ILSA is treated here as a new idea or a new social technology defining what constitutes good (or bad) education. The theoretical framework combines a top-down perspective provided by Rogers’ (2003) Diffusion of Innovation theory, and a complementary, more critical Policy Enactment approach (Ball et al. 2012), stressing the importance of context and local actors’ perspectives. Empirically, the thesis is based on 40 semi-structured interviews carried out in the 2011-2012 school year with teachers, principals and municipal school directors in five municipalities and 12 compulsory schools, selected to cover diverse municipalities, schools, and respondents.

The respondents perceive ILSAs as valid evaluations of the Swedish school system. Most think it is important to compare results of different nations, although ILSA is not expected to cover the whole curriculum. Most interviewees are aware that Swedish ILSA results have been declining for years and perceive an urgent need to reverse this trend. However, few of the directors, principals or teachers believe that Swedish schools are in a deep crisis, as described in Swedish media. The participants frequently regard schools as primary determinants of ILSA results, and few blame family, socio-economic, cultural and contextual factors for the Swedish decline in ILSA rankings. There are significant differences between the three occupational groups in their reception and use of ILSA. Municipal school directors who are very well-informed emphasize the influence of ILSA on their local development efforts. Principals and teachers say that ILSAs have had modest direct effects on their work, but they argue that poor Swedish results in international assessments have had indirect effects, for instance by prompting the introduction of a new national curriculum.

Keywords
compulsory education, international large scale assessments (ILSA), PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, ICCS, OECD, IEA, municipal school directors, principals, teachers, local reception, diffusion of innovation, policy enactment

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