

Motivations to Become a Teacher in Finland, Sweden, and the United States

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ABSTRACT

How does the motivation to become a teacher vary across countries? We conducted an exploratory study among aspiring teachers in three countries to explore the possibility of detecting differences in teacher motivation across education policy contexts. Using the FIT-Choice Scale developed by Watt and Richardson (2007), we found that participants in Finland and Sweden expressed different impressions of and attractions to the teaching profession. A sample from the United States revealed further differences still. Between-country differences were significant. Using these results, we suggest further comparative analyses regarding policy and the motivations of teacher candidates.

Keywords: *teacher motivation, comparative education, education policy*

In most countries the teaching profession requires as much education as many higher paying careers. Aspiring teachers need to feel a strong degree of commitment to teaching to bother pursuing it. Indeed, motivations to teach are positively associated with engagement and persistence in the teaching profession (Nesje, Brandmo, & Berger, 2018; Watt & Richardson, 2008). Precisely what draws an individual to teaching, therefore, has been a subject of interest among researchers and policymakers.

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In choosing a career, individuals consider the value they place on the rewards offered as well as their likelihood of reaping those rewards (Eccles, 2005). Perhaps the starkest differences in those rewards and their likelihood appear in comparisons of economically developed and developing countries (Han & Yin, 2016; Heinz, 2015), but within a given context the wrong professional conditions can demotivate teachers (Kiziltepe, 2008).

In this study we ask whether aspiring teachers in different economically developed countries might express differences in career motivations, expectations, and preferences. As an exploration of a possible link between education policy context and motivation, we analyze data collected from a university in Finland, another in Sweden, and one in the United States. Despite the small samples, noticeable differences emerge, suggesting that future research on possible effects of education reforms on teacher candidate pools could be fruitful. The paper begins with background about motivation theory and the three settings before describing data and analytical techniques used in the present study. It goes on to present results and a discussion of implications for future research.

Background

The push for holding institutions of public education accountable over recent decades is the result of interest in building countries' human capital to compete in the world economy (Hanushek, 2009). The intention of many education policy reforms has been to hold teachers more accountable for students' academic progress so that students will develop into skilled workers, despite concerns about increased competition within education (Sahlberg, 2006). But no two countries' education reforms are alike. As Bell and Stevenson argue, the details of education policy are the result of multiple steps of policy formulation and implementation. The surrounding discourse and strategic direction of the policy will influence what sort of principles, practices, and procedures might characterize implementation (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Thus, the circumstances of education policymaking in two different countries could explain why the nature of careers in teaching could end up with different rewards and expectations.

Following West and Nikolai's (2013) analysis of educational policy in regard to (in) equality of opportunity and public expenditure within the European Union and the United States, we are interested in two of four clusters of countries: the Nordic and the English-speaking. The Nordic model of education developed after the second World War and has persisted, at least on the institutional level, in terms of its purpose, structures, and main common values, such as "equality, equity, democratic participation, inclusion, and nation building" (Imsen, Blossing & Moos, 2017, p. 578). The growth of welfare states led to an evolution from a parallel educational system into a comprehensive public school for all. Variation within the cluster emerged regarding how centralized education governance was and the extent of streaming, both of which were strong in Sweden. As will be discussed later, more differences arose during the economic crises of the 1980s.

Hopmann (2015) describes different educational traditions that guide the discourse in the English-speaking cluster and the Nordic one. The mindset in the "Didaktik"

tradition is comprehensive and views schooling as more than the mere acquisition of knowledge. In contrast the curriculum mindset brings the teaching content forward, emphasizes results, and unites lesson planning with teaching. Noting whether Didaktik or curriculum mindsets dominate is important in the current situation, where an increasing number of external actors want to decide the content of instruction, student standards and assessments, and expectations for teachers. Finland, where teaching continues to be regarded as a high status profession, has held the Didaktik tradition close, while the United States and Sweden have embraced “the double game of curricula and testing” and minimized the importance of the teacher, risking an increased fragmentation of the educational systems and more social segregation (Hopmann, 2015, p. 19).

Sivesvind and Wahlström (2016) argue that while Nordic countries are distinguished by a long tradition of national curricula emphasizing both content and method, they vary in the way policy formulation and adoption emphasize either a competence model or a performance model. Nordin and Sundberg (2016) argue that in Sweden the competence model has driven reforms. Mølstad and Karseth (2016) write that in Finland objectives and learning outcomes are all considered important, but teacher-student interactions are highly regarded. Therefore, professional judgements are considered crucial for teaching practice in the classrooms.

When economic recession spread in the 1980s, Swedish and Finnish public schools experienced a decentralization of authority to municipalities as part of a neoliberal strategy for economic recovery (Verger, Fontdevila & Zancajo, 2016). The two countries' education policies, however, ended up following different organizational principles. In Sweden, the corporate decentralization of schools (Dobbins, 2014) included a 1989 law making teacher employment a local government power (Lakomaa, 2011), severely weakening the national teachers union (Moe & Wiborg, 2016). Within a decade Sweden implemented a voucher scheme that helped middle class families leave the public schools and enroll in private or “free” schools (Lidström, 1999), further weakening the position of teachers and unions (Arreman & Holm, 2011). Despite the decentralization of school management, Sweden's educators are held accountable by a national standardized testing program (Daun & Siminou, 2005) and school inspections (Rönnerberg, 2012). Policy changes in Sweden have led some scholars to lament that “teachers are no longer addressed as thinkers, designers and co-developers of education who need abstract, powerful, theoretical knowledge content as key professionals in the realization of the national school project in the national interest” (Nilsson Lindström & Beach, 2015, p. 253).

In Finland, decentralization meant something completely different. While curricular and instructional decisions were devolved to municipalities, the negotiations of teachers' contracts were not. Nearly all students continued attending public schools, and the educator workforce consolidated into a single, powerful teacher union, the OAJ (Moe & Wiborg, 2016; Rinne, Kivirauma & Simola, 2002). In 2007 PISA scores earned Finland's public schools (and the union representing its teachers) global recognition and accolades, boosting the public's trust in teachers and public schools (Malinen,

Väisänen, & Savolainen, 2012). A slip from the upper echelon of PISA scores in 2009 put the OAJ on the defensive and gave support to those who thought Finland's success had more to do with the social, cultural, and historical peculiarities of Finland than with its school and teacher policies (Simola, 2005).

By contrast, the administration of public education had long been decentralized in the United States, but a 1983 report titled *A Nation at Risk* led to school choice and accountability, both of which became national law under No Child Left Behind in 2001 (Goldstein, 2015). American public schools became accountable to higher levels of government and had to compete with schools of varying degrees of publicness (Oberfield, 2017). When comparing the Nordic to the English-speaking cluster, West and Nikolai note that while public expenditures are high in both settings, the Nordic cluster is more egalitarian (West & Nikolai, 2013).

These three different policy directions – consolidation of education policy in the U.S., the market-oriented reforms of Sweden, and the empowerment of teachers in Finland – resulted in different working conditions for teachers. Finland's respect for and faith in public school teachers made entry into the profession highly competitive. With many talented applicants and a limited number of institutions entrusted with preparing educators, Finland can eliminate weak applicants before they begin their education training. In contrast, the popularity of teaching has declined in both the United States and Sweden as wages stagnated and reforms made the job more accountable through high-stakes testing and vulnerability to competition (Bjorklund, Clark, Edin, Fredricksson & Krueger, 2006).

In all three countries, the preparation of teachers occurs in universities and attracts mostly female students. In Sweden and the United States once students matriculate into a university they usually find entry into education programs relatively easy, but competition for Finnish teacher programs is fierce, producing acceptance rates that are sometimes less than 10 per cent (Sahlberg, 2015). Applicants in Finland complete a national exam and university interviews before they even enter the institution. They must also earn a master's degree. The result is, in the words of one author, "a teaching force made up solely of star students" (Goldstein, 2015, p. 9).

It is hard to imagine that all things being equal, an aspiring educator would rather teach in Sweden than in Finland. Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) suggests that when choosing a career, individuals are motivated not only by their impressions of how likely they are to succeed and the rewards that success will bring, but also by the degree to which they value aspects of the career (Eccles, 2005). Applied to aspiring educators, EVT explains how valuing aspects of teaching leads to persistence in the career (Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2008).

Early studies assessed the degree to which aspiring teachers valued altruistic, extrinsic, and intrinsic aspects of the career and found differences between developed and developing countries (Bastick, 2000). Over time, models have become more complex, bringing clarity to the definitions of those terms and adding components related to perceptions of the career, one's own potential and preferences, personal goals, and

experienced socialization (Bråten & Strømsø, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2007). Further research has noted differences among economically developed countries. For example, pre-service teachers in Norway had lower expectations for addressing social equity in their careers than their counterparts in Germany, Australia, or the United States, and Germans reported higher salary expectations than Australians or Americans (Watt et al., 2012). Still, comparisons of countries in their aspiring teachers' motivations are rare; a 2018 literature review found that among 70 studies on teachers' motivations only six compared countries to one another (Fray & Gore, 2018).

Because teacher quality has such a powerful effect on student outcomes (Hanushek, 2011), policymakers must attract and train effective teachers. West and Nikolai (2013) identified four different education policy contexts that categorized economically developed countries by their expenditures and equity; different education policy contexts are likely to offer different rewards and chances for success in teaching, something that researchers have been more interested in studying. For example, Reimer and Dorf (2014), noting education policy differences between Finland and Denmark, found that education policy is related to the motivations of aspiring teachers.

In this study we compare the career motivations reported in samples of students from two Nordic countries with starkly different approaches to education policy. In Sweden, the market for teachers is affected by declining union power, universal vouchers, and the growth of independent schools. In Finland, teachers enjoy improved pay, higher status, and strong unions. The Nordic countries share many social policies that promote social cohesion and reflect egalitarianism in the form of comprehensive, government-provided social safety nets enabled by a substantial redistribution of income (Esping-Anderson, 1990). This study also includes a sample from the United States, a country that is similar to the Nordics in that it provides education that is more comprehensive than other OECD countries, but with fewer additional social programs and with less equitable outcomes (West & Nikolai, 2013).

Three Policy Settings

Finland, Sweden, and the United States have developed economies with large service sectors and public schools that are comprehensive, compulsory, and free. While the three countries are similar on many factors (see Table 1), a few exceptions stand out. First, in the United States income inequality is much greater and spending on social welfare programs is much lower, especially regarding services other than education. Relative to other professional salaries, teachers in Finland earn the most with Swedish teachers not far behind; American teachers earn much less, relatively speaking. Despite their higher pay, Finnish teachers have fewer contact hours with students, represented both by the hours spent in school and the instructional hours received. Nonetheless, student outcomes have been impressive in Finland, with recent PISA scores higher than average among OECD countries and high graduation rates.

Table 1: Comparison of countries

	LOCATION OF SAMPLE		
	FINLAND	SWEDEN	U.S.A.
<i>Social and Economic Indicators</i>			
GDP per capita, USD, 2017 ^a	44,500	51,200	59,500
Unemployment Rate, 2017 ^a	8.5	6.7	4.4
GINI index, 2013 ^c	27.2	28.8	41
Social welfare spending per cent of GDP, 2018 ^d	28.7	26.1	18.7
<i>Investment in Education</i>			
Public spending non-tertiary education per cent of GDP, 2015 ^b	4.0	3.6	3.2
Education expenditures (non-tertiary) per student, 2018, in USD ^b	10,025	11,052	12,424
Ratio of teacher salaries to salaries of tertiary-educated workers ^b	.91	.85	.65
Teacher working hours at school per year ^b	791	1360	1443
Instructional time for students ^b	651	766	970
Hours of instruction time, public primary ^b	4000	4500	6000
Average class size, public primary ^b	19	19	22
Primary students in private schools, per cent ^c	2	10	9
<i>Educational Achievement</i>			
PISA scores in 2015 ^e			
Science	531*	493	496
Reading	526*	500*	497
Math	511*	494	470+
Per cent with secondary education, 2017 ^b	89	86	91

^aCIA Fact Book
^bEducation at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators
^cWorld Bank
^doecd.org
^ePISA 2015: PISA Results in Focus
 *Significantly above OECD average
 +Significantly below OECD average

Aim and Methods

The main aim of the present study is to analyze how motivations to become a teacher vary among student teachers in different countries with different education policy contexts. A comprehensive empirical study would require extensive sampling across many countries; here we use a more modest dataset to explore the question of a relationship between education policy context and teacher motivation to see if such a study might be warranted. An additional aim is to explore how the motivations of aspiring teacher might vary by students' social background.

Our study is designed as a classic comparative case study, the type Maxwell (2013) would call variance-oriented due to our choice of a survey methodology in contrast to a process-oriented case study. We use individual survey results gathered from

students in teacher education programs at three universities, two of them in the Nordic countries of Sweden and Finland and one of them in the United States. We compare the units horizontally and treat them as homologous units (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016) as we ask the students in a survey the same questions (besides ethnic background; see below) based on the FIT-Choice scale of motivations to teach developed by Richardson and Watt (2006) and further by Watt et al. (2012) as dependent variables. Because we are interested in differences across education policy contexts, we use country as the main independent variable. While regional or local policies are likely to vary within countries, such analyses are beyond the scope of this exploratory study.

We explore these questions using convenience samples of undergraduate preservice teachers from each of the three countries. We had 81 participants at Tampere University in Finland, 182 at Stockholm University in Sweden, and 191 at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in the United States. All participants were in the early to middle stages of their university's teacher education program for primary or middle grades.

A comparison of background information about the participants drawn from several items on the survey and converted to dummy variables appears in Table 2. The first distinguishes older from younger respondents using the ages 29 and 30 as a cut point while the second one distinguishes male respondents (a minority in all three samples) from others and a third distinguishes those who identify themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority (see Richardson & Watt, 2006, and Shillingford & Karlin, 2013). Ethnic minority means different things in the three counties; our surveys in Sweden and Finland asked respondents whether their parents were native Swedes or Finns. In the U.S. setting, we asked whether the respondent identified as white and treated any other answer as indicating an ethnic minority. Another item asked whether the respondent's mother had completed a college degree (see Garg, Kauppi, Lewko & Urajnik, 2002). Finally, we recognized that a students' awareness of education might be affected by whether they had a family member who worked in the industry, so we included a dummy variable from the results of that question as well.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for background variables, all of which use values of 0 and 1

	FULL SAMPLE		FINLAND		SWEDEN		USA	
	N	MEAN	N	MEAN	N	MEAN	N	MEAN
30 or Older	442	.176	78	.179	174	.305	190	.058
Male	437	.101	79	.113	182	.093	176	.102
Ethnic Minority	443	.275	77	.091	181	.431	185	.200
Mother College Educated	445	.539	80	.501	180	.522	185	.551
Family in Education	452	.327	80	.413	182	.346	190	.274

To obtain measures of motivations to teach, we chose an instrument developed by Watt and Richardson (2007) which includes a survey measuring these concepts among

students in training to become teachers. The creators introduced their FIT-Choice scale of motivations to teach in 2006 (Richardson & Watt, 2006) by testing it on 1,653 aspiring teachers at three Australian universities. Drawing from the work of Wigfield and Eccles (2000) on EVT, Richardson and Watt constructed an instrument that presents subjects with a series of statements about teaching and asks them to express their agreement on a scale of one to seven. Each item represents a different factor related to the decisions to teach and can be grouped as reflecting perceptions about teaching (such as the task reward or demand), value given to aspects of teachers' work (such as intrinsic, social utility, or personal utility), and social influences (such as whether others suggested becoming a teacher). The instrument also asks participants whether they believe they are well suited for teaching.

The researchers tested their FIT-Choice scale in two Australian settings (Watt & Richardson, 2007). A series of international studies then used the instrument in various settings, including Turkey, the United States, China, the Netherlands, Croatia, Germany, and Switzerland (Watt & Richardson, 2012), Canada and Oman (Klassen, Al-Dhafri, Hannok & Betts, 2011), Finland and Germany (Goller et al., 2019), and the United States, Germany, and Norway (Watt et al., 2012). A 2018 review of the literature described the FIT-Choice scale as "clearly the most popular methodological approach used to examine factors influencing the choice to teach" (Fray & Gore, 2018).

We used the FIT-Choice model to conduct surveys at one university in each of our three countries. The version we used was a short form provided by Watt and Richardson based on the analysis conducted in their 2007 study validating the FIT-Choice scale and instrument. The authors' Short Form of the scale includes thirteen items, three that address personal utility value, four that address social utility value, two that address intrinsic value, two that address prior experiences relevant to teaching, one that addresses self-perception, and one that checks for entering teaching as a fallback career. This abbreviated version has been tested and used with success in other studies (Torsney, Lombardi & Ponnock, 2019). To obtain measures of expectations about teaching and other influences we added seven items from the longer form of the FIT-Choice instrument, two addressing task demand, three addressing task return, one addressing social dissuasion, and one that asks how happy the respondent is with their decision to teach (Watt et al., 2012). Our survey also included several individual background questions.

With the goal of learning whether the motivations and expectations of aspiring teachers might vary by country, we used these data in ordered logistic regression analyses with the responses in the FIT-Choice scale as dependent variables. Each of these variables ranged from 1 to 7 with higher numbers representing greater agreement. Our main independent variable in each model was a nominal variable indicating which country the respondent was from. We chose Finland as the reference category, so results indicate how Swedish and American respondents were different from those in Finland. We also included five dummy variables for age, gender, ethnicity, mother's education, and family working in education.

Results

Respondents overall expressed agreement with the intrinsic, social utility, and personal utility values of teaching, although agreement with personal utility items was not as strong as with the others. Respondents also generally perceived teaching as having significant task demand and task reward. The greatest variation by country appeared on the task reward items; social influences and preferred type of school in which to work also varied by country. We explore these country differences in finer detail using the results of analyses presented in this section.

The first set of ordered logit regression models include responses to items from the FIT-Choice Scale Short form (Watt & Richardson 2007) and appear in Table 3. Feeling “suited” for teaching was lowest among Swedish respondents and highest among those who had immediate family working in education; other variables did not show a statistically significant association. “Liking” teaching was also lowest in Sweden but highest among older aspiring teachers. Also related to the intrinsic value of teaching (as reported in Watt & Richardson 2007) is wanting to work with children or adolescents, which drew less agreement from Finnish respondents than the others. Both male and older respondents expressed less enthusiasm for working with children or adolescents. When asked whether they were unsure about their career choice, male respondents were more affirmative than female respondents as were those without family in education, but in both these cases the results only met a generous standard of significance.

Table 3: Ordered logit regression results using agreement with statements about a teaching career as the outcome variables

	SELF-PERCEPTION	FALLBACK CAREER	INTRINSIC VALUES	
	I am Suited to Teaching	I am Unsure about Career	I Like Teaching	I like Children
Sweden	-.620*	.323	-.606*	.982***
U.S.A.	-.270	.035	.257	.903***
30 or Older	.185	-.200	.520*	-.425+
Male	.270	.500+	-.289	-.856**
Ethnic Minority	.022	.114	-.173	-.294
Mother College	.231	.102	.268	.270
Family in Education	.484*	-.353+	.184	.056
N	412	410	411	413
Log Likelihood	-567.9	-717.3	-565.1	-466.1

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, +p<.1

Note: Finland is the reference category for respondent's country.

Note: See Watt and Richardson, 2007.

Items about the personal and social utility value of teaching also come from the Watt and Richardson Short Form (2007). Here, American respondents expressed the highest degree of agreement with statements that teaching is secure, offers time for family,

and provides flexibility. While Finland gave the lowest scores on these measures, they were only statistically different from Sweden on the measures of time for family and flexibility. Only two of the other independent variables had significant relationships with the personal utility outcomes. Males were more likely to say that teaching is secure and older students were more likely to say teaching provides time for family, but again these were only significant at the .10 level.

Turning to social utility values, Swedish and American respondents expressed greater agreement with statements about affecting future generations than Finnish respondents. The other two statements, about addressing disadvantage and being worthwhile, did not vary by country. Older participants were more likely to say teaching is worthwhile. Other variables were not significant with social utility outcomes.

Table 4: Ordered logit regression results with degree of agreement with statements about the social utility resulting from teaching as the outcome variables

	PERSONAL UTILITY VALUES			SOCIAL UTILITY VALUES		
	SECURE JOB	TIME FOR FAMILY	FLEXIBILITY	GENERATION	DISADVANTAGE	WORTH-WHILE
Sweden	.410	.729**	1.131***	.601*	.308	-.414
U.S.A.	.648**	1.360***	1.583***	1.175***	-.087	.562
30 or Older	.139	.439+	-.117	.125	.357	.501*
Male	.563+	-.397	.059	-.011	-.167	.095
Ethnic Minority	-.099	-.132	-.052	.163	.262	-.020
Mother College	-.229	.271	-.055	.231	.205	-.026
Family in Education	.148	.094	.429	.242	.163	-.049
N	411	411	412	412	413	410
Log Likelihood	-752.0	-739.9	-771.0	-493.3	-598.1	-548.7

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, +p<.1
 Note: Finland is the reference category for respondent's country.
 Note: See Watt and Richardson, 2007.

Social influences play an important role in the theory advanced by Watt and Richardson. The FIT-Choice Short Form's items regarding role models and others thinking the respondent should teach appear as dependent variables in Table 5, as does an item asking whether respondents have been discouraged from teaching by anyone. Overall, American respondents were more affirmative about others' influence (or attempted influence) on their decision to pursue teaching than respondents from the other countries. Those from Finland were least likely to agree that others think they should teach, and Swedish students were less likely than the others to say that people discouraged them from teaching. Among the other independent variables, only one association appeared somewhat significant: older students were less likely to say they had been discouraged from teaching.

Table 5: Ordered logit regression results with agreement with statements about social influences related to the decision to become a teacher

	SOCIAL INFLUENCES		
	ROLE MODELS	OTHERS THINK I SHOULD TEACH	OTHERS DISCOURAGED
Sweden	-.328	1.565***	-.587*
U.S.A.	.886***	1.401***	.702**
30 or Older	-.401	-.219	-.482+
Male	-.013	.269	.276
Ethnic Minority	-.085	-.566	.199
Mother College	.150	-.016	.154
Family in Educ.	.077	.214	.288
N	413	411	412
Log Likelihood	-671.3	-747.1	-765.2

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, +p<.1

Note: Finland is the reference category for respondent's country.

Note: See Watt and Richardson, 2007.

The next set of results explores aspiring teachers' expectations for their career's task rewards and demands (Table 6). Finnish students, on average, expressed more agreement with teachers being of high status and valued. They were similar to Swedish students in their assessment of teacher pay, while American students were much less likely to agree with that statement. Older students were more likely to agree with teachers having high status and being valued. Male and ethnic minority students were more likely to say teachers are valued. Students with college educated mothers expressed less agreement with teachers being paid well and those with immediate family working in education expressed more agreement with teachers having high status.

Swedish students expressed the least agreement with the notion that teaching requires expert skills. Americans agreed with that statement less often than Finns, but not to the degree of the Swedish respondents. Swedish and Finnish students were similar in their impression of teachers' workload while Americans were more likely to describe it as heavy. The other independent variables had no significant associations with respondents' impression of teachers' workload, but older students and those whose mothers were college educated or had an immediate family member working in education were more likely to say teaching requires expert skills.

Finally, our survey asked students about the sort of school in which they aspired to teach. Americans, and to a lesser degree Swedes, expressed more interest in teaching in a high achieving school, as did those respondents whose mother had attended college. Americans expressed more interest in teaching in a disadvantaged school than respondents from the other two countries. Students identifying as belonging to an ethnic minority were also more likely to find disadvantaged schools appealing.

Table 6: Ordered logit regression results with agreement with perceptions of teaching’s rewards and demands as the outcome variables

	Task Reward: Teachers are...			Task Demand: Teaching Requires...	
	OF HIGH STATUS	VALUED	PAID WELL	EXPERT SKILLS	A HEAVY WORKLOAD
Sweden	-1.617***	-.581*	.389	-2.215***	-.036
U.S.A.	-1.438***	-1.937***	-2.236***	-.452+	.721**
30 or Older	.428+	.636*	.035	.526*	.324
Male	.446	.851**	.100	-.401	-.341
Ethnic Minority	-.118	-.531*	-.028	-.139	-.342
Mother College	-.216	-.192	-.360+	.316+	.264
Family in Education	.353+	.201	.186	.366+	.128
N	412	410	407	412	412
Log Likelihood	-680.3	-688.1	-579.1	-609.8	-509.1

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, +p<.1
 Note: Finland is the reference category for respondent’s country.
 Note: See Watt et al., 2012.

Table 7: Ordered logit regression results with agreement with statements about preferred setting for teaching as outcome variables

	PREFERRED SETTING	
	HIGH ACHIEVING SCHOOL	DISADVANTAGED SCHOOL
Sweden	.501+	.038
U.S.A.	.987***	1.433***
30 or Older	-.285	.117
Male	-.157	-.128
Ethnic Minority	-.337	.761***
Mother College	.338+	.087
Family in Educ.	.037	.023
N	412	412
Log Likelihood	-717.6	-700.9

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, +p<.1
 Note: Finland is the reference category for respondent’s country.

Discussion

In this study we use the FIT-Choice scale, grounded in Expectancy-Value theories of motivation, to measure differences in motivations to become a teacher in Finland, Sweden, and the United States, which we expected would reveal aspiring teachers with differing motivations and expectations for their careers reflecting different education policy contexts (see Bell & Stevenson, 2006). The underlying theory of teaching being a career that attracts people for its intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic rewards was supported by the data; participants in all settings mostly agreed with such statements.

However, we found differences in strength of agreement that varied by country. Overall, respondents in the sample from the university in Finland gave lower scores to items assessing motivations and higher scores to the items describing expectations. Much has been made of the trust that the Finns have in their teachers (Darling-Hammond, Burns, Campbell & Hammerness, 2017; Goldstein, 2015; Sahlberg, 2015), and so it is no surprise that aspiring teachers in the sample from that country had higher expectations of status and feeling valued in their professional futures. Respondents in the sample from Finland were similar to the Swedes in their expectations to be paid well, while Americans were far less likely to share that expectation (teacher salaries in Finland have been relatively high and those in Sweden have been rising). The Finnish respondents also viewed teaching as delivering less personal utility than the participants from the other countries (although Swedes were similar on the job security item). Although we cannot draw conclusions about entire countries using such small samples, we see these results as evidence supporting the notion that the view of teachers as professionals with the inconveniences and respect that such a description carries with it. Further support comes from responses to the item about whether teaching requires expert skills; Swedes were far less likely and Americans somewhat less likely than Finns in our samples to agree with that statement. Results for the workload placed on teachers were less clear, with Americans in our sample more likely to perceive the workload as high when compared to the other two countries.

Participants' impressions of the altruistic role of teachers showed little difference between countries. But while there were no significant differences by country on the items describing teaching as worthwhile or helping the disadvantaged, Finnish respondents were less likely than the others to describe teaching as helping future generations. While we find this response intriguing, we have no theoretical explanation for the difference.

One clue might be found in the item about liking the idea of working with children. Finns in the sample were less likely than the others to agree that working with children attracts them to the profession. Perhaps another aspect of the elevation of teaching to an academic profession shifts the emphasis away from teachers nurturing individual students and towards their participation in a broader mission of advancing the field of education. The fact that in Finland applicants to teacher education programs need to have some awareness of current education research might align with this argument.

Results for the sample of Swedish respondents point to a possible disenchantment with the teaching profession (see Nilsson Lindström & Beach, 2015), even among those who plan to pursue it. Three of the items on which that sample of respondents deviated from the other two the most were about teachers needing expert skills, liking teaching, and feeling suited for teaching, all of which they expressed less agreement with when compared to the other two samples. Interestingly, they were also the least likely to say that someone discouraged them from entering teaching, so their hesitancy seems to be more internal than coming from others. In fact, their agreement with "others think I should teach" was stronger than that of Finnish participants and

on par with American participants. We find this to be another intriguing pattern without a clear explanation.

Responses in the sample of Americans tell a different story about social influences. These respondents were more likely to say that their own teachers included good role models and to say that others had discouraged them from entering teaching. The American sample deviated from the other two on preferences for future teaching environments. Interestingly, respondents in the American sample were more likely than those in the other two countries to express interest in teaching at a “high achieving school” and at a “disadvantaged school”. This difference in responses might reflect differences in the egalitarianism of education in these countries. Aspiring American teachers are likely to be quite familiar with segregation concerns and wide variation in school quality in their country, and thus find appealing the idea of teaching in a school that is more effective than most or doing more to advance social equity (or both). Again, this could be another area for future comparative education research.

We find the results of our other independent variables – or lack of them – equally interesting. That differences in age, gender, ethnicity, mother’s education, and relatives working in education so rarely had any association with respondents’ agreement with items on the survey is noteworthy. Perhaps our operationalization of these variables in binary formats were too blunt for effective analysis or perhaps self-selection into teacher preparation programs minimizes any effects of such background characteristics, but their lack of statistical analysis gives us more confidence that the country differences we detected are meaningful and worthy of further investigation.

Of the independent variables, perhaps gender deserves more attention. Across the motivation variables, males were no different from other respondents, save for a possible greater likelihood of seeing teaching as secure and a smaller likelihood of enjoying working with children. There was also a possible greater likelihood of males treating teaching as a fallback career (which seems to match their impression of job security). In terms of expectations, being male was associated with a stronger impression of teachers being valued, but there was no gender difference on the other measures. As the teaching workforce is disproportionately female in all three settings from which samples were taken, it may be useful to note how motivations and expectations of teaching vary by gender.

Given its small scale, the present study is only intended to be exploratory, yet the results yield promise for further international comparison for the purpose of understanding effects of policy. More specifically, this project points to three main, if tentative, conclusions. First, our study gives more support to the FIT-Choice instrument, even in its condensed form, as a useful tool for measuring motivations to teach and for comparing differences between samples. Second, as our application of EVT suggests, the decision to teach includes aspects of both the expectations for a career in education and the value the individual places on different aspects of the work. Third, we present our results as evidence that education policy context is associated with individuals’ thoughts about teaching careers. Rather than there being a “teacher type” who would

be a teacher no matter the education policy context, aspiring teachers find their way into education programs for a complex array of reasons. While with only these data we would not go so far as to say that a specific policy difference caused these differences in our survey responses, we think the results suggest that further research on that question could be fruitful and should not be confined to comparisons of economically developed and developing countries. Of particular interest might be investigations of social influences on decisions to teach, the appeal of working with children, and impressions of how teachers affect future generations.

Limitations

Despite our selection of institutions that are typical among sources of teachers in each country, we do not suggest that the results are representative of the full population of aspiring teachers in each country (or even each locale). Representative samples could reveal more subtleties in the different motivations among Finnish, Swedish, and American preservice teachers. We simply present these results as a starting point for future studies about the relationship between policy environment and teacher recruitment.

We also acknowledge that the FIT-Choice measurements have some limitations. They do not, for example, address the appeal of learning skills that could be transferred to other professions. Furthermore, any time a survey is given in multiple languages or cultural contexts there is a risk that differences in interpretations will result in measurement error or bias. It was for this reason we chose to use the FIT-Choice scale, which although not impervious to bias, has been used successfully in other studies to show differences in teachers' motivation.

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