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Causes of teachers’ turnover intentions in Swedish schools

A qualitative research

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the causes of teachers' turnover intentions in selected Swedish schools.

Research methodology – This research took the form of a qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the causes of teachers' turnover intentions within the schools selected for this study. The sample was composed by 9 teachers that work in Säter. In order to provide a different yet meaningful perspective, a further interview with the Säter school department has been conducted.

Results – Several of the results were coherent with the literature: elements such as motivations to teach, administrative support, workload, class size and collaboration were found to be related to teachers’ turnover intentions and therefore confirmed the previous studies. However, factors like salary, mentoring, autonomy, physical conditions and orderly environment were not found to have a connection with the respondents’ turnover intentions, hence constituting a result that did not confirm the literature.

Originality – This thesis extended the previous research related to the causes of teachers’ turnover intentions by focusing on Sweden, which had not been investigated yet to that matter. The Swedish context appears particularly worth researching because of both the particularity of its decentralized educational system and the widespread turnover intentions of teachers.

Keywords – Teachers, Turnover, Intentions, Causes, Retention, Schools, Sweden
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1 Introduction

Throughout the years, education has had huge scientific recognition as producer of beneficial effects for the society (Leslie & Brinkman, 1988). Having been defined “the foundation of the society of tomorrow” (Prasad, 1967, p. 65), education has been regarded as one of the main driving factors of economic and social growth (Becker, 1975; Rebelo, 1990).

The two major habitats in which the education process occurs are the family and the school (Ozoliņš, 2010); while the former constitutes the child’s primordial nest, the latter comes immediately after, as the place in which children spend usually thirteen years, “from childhood to young adulthood” (Ozoliņš, 2010, p. 414).

Within the scholastic context, teachers can be considered as crucial figures (van Driel, Beijaard & Verloop, 2001), as they are directly responsible of organizing the students’ learning experiences, therefore making them develop their human capital. In fact, in recent years, research has focused on teachers’ role evidencing that teachers constitute one of the most influential factors related to children learning and achievement, and that therefore they hold a key role in society’s development (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Ferguson, 1991; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Berry, 2004).

Teachers represent a category of workers that has globally started experiencing shortage issues since the 1980s (Ingersoll, 2002), an aspect numerous scholars devoted their efforts digging into (Chapman & Green, 1986; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener & Weber, 1997; Ingersoll, 2002; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004). Many of them (e.g. Ingersoll, 2002; Boe et al., 1997) found that teachers' shortage issues are mostly caused by high levels of teachers' turnover, which is defined by Ingersoll (2002) as “the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs” (p. 17).

High levels of teachers' turnover constitute a serious concern for affected schools (Ingersoll, 2002). In fact, this trend obstructs the implementation of coordinated instruction programs throughout the school (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012), and it often causes schools to hire substitute teachers with low preparation and experience, a move which has negative
implications on the student's learning process (Loeb, Darling-Hammond & Luczak, 2005). Moreover, high levels of teachers' turnover force schools to allocate excessive resources for recruitment, hiring and developing processes (Loeb et al., 2005).

These are just some of the reasons that indicate how detrimental high levels of teachers' turnover can be for schools that are affected by such trend. Therefore, it can be argued that knowing what makes teachers leave constitutes a topic of crucial interest for schools, in order for them to implement procedures to counteract such issue.

According to Galgóczi and Glassner (2008) numerous European countries have been experiencing a shortage in the teaching profession over the past years. Among the countries affected by such trend, Galgóczi and Glassner (2008) indicate England, Wales, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia and Sweden.

The situation in Sweden is particularly alarming. The latest PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) analysis, which measure school performance and education quality among OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, indicates that Sweden slipped to the 38th place out of 65 (OECD, 2012). In 2000, Sweden was reported to be among the first 9 countries. This is one symptom of an education quality that in Sweden is dangerously decreasing; teachers' shortage, which is well documented by reports issued by local institutes, may be a relevant reason why. Precise numbers related to the shortage have been provided by an analysis drawn up by Skolverket (2015a). It is there reported the urgent need of filling 84 000 full-time jobs across Sweden, from elementary to high school teachers; should this need be met, the number of graduates enrolling in the teaching profession would have to double compared to the current level.

These numbers show that Sweden is experiencing problems related to the recruitment of the teachers needed to fill the aforementioned vacancies; in such a situation, it becomes even more important being able to effectively retain the available workforce. However, reports show that most schools may not be effective for what concerns retaining their teachers. According to a survey sent by Lärarförbundet [Swedish teachers’ union] to its members in 2014 to verify their work satisfaction, 34 percent of them are strongly considering changing job, while 45 percent aged 40 or below indicated that they will definitely leave their job as teachers. These high percentages refer to teachers that are harbouring turnover intentions,
defined by Sousa-Poza and Henneberger (2004) as “immediate precursors to actual turnover” (p. 114) and with close relationship with actual turnover has been widely recognized by scholars (e.g. Sousa-Poza & Henneberger, 2004; Mobley, 1977; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 2013).

Despite the amount of statistical evidence about such issue, to the authors’ knowledge a research about the causes teachers intend to leave their job position has not been conducted in Sweden yet. The purpose of this study is to contribute to fill this gap. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the causes of teachers' turnover intentions in selected Swedish schools. Therefore, the research question that stems from such aim is “why the teachers of the selected Swedish schools intend to leave their actual job position?”

One of the reasons why conducting this study in the Swedish context appears particularly worth is constituted by the uniqueness of its education. In fact, Sweden has one of the most decentralised education systems in the world. It is divided into 290 municipalities of different sizes, ranging from just a few thousand inhabitants to over 800,000 people. Each municipality has the freedom to decide how to allocate its resources across different sectors and activities (OECD, 2011), and is therefore responsible for providing different basic services for the public, including education.

The decentralization of the education system in Sweden began in the early 1990s. It was the product of a structural change that included a shift of the teaching employment duties from the State to the municipalities. As a consequence, local actors were given room to craft strategies oriented to the fulfilment of “centrally formulated education goals” (Lundahl, 2006, p. 67). Thus, municipalities became government entities in charge of moulding teachers’ working conditions. Their strategic and financial autonomy toward that matter underlies often considerable differences between them, concerning the working conditions they offer (Lundahl, 2006). Hence, teachers’ working conditions offered by each municipality are unique, as they stem from the way in which each municipality decides to allocate resources to achieve common educational aims.
Some contextual reasons behind teachers’ turnover intentions in one municipality might reveal common to the whole Swedish background, which has not been investigated yet for this matter. From that perspective, this thesis could represent a first step toward identifying what makes teachers intend to leave their job position in Sweden. By offering a deeper understanding of the causes underlying teachers' turnover intentions in Sweden, this study might help municipalities and schools to adapt their teachers' retention strategies accordingly, therefore contributing to lower teachers' turnover rates.

In order to achieve the research aim, this study will be structured as follows. The next chapter will cover the conceptual framework. In the third chapter, the methodology will be depicted, while the results will be presented in the fourth chapter and analysed in the fifth. The sixth chapter will include the conclusions, and the seventh and last one will cover the research limitations.
2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework will be funnel structured and will include all the main concepts useful to understand the field this research dug into. First, the concept of turnover will be illustrated, covering both its definition and its consequences. Then, turnover intentions and their typologies will be defined. Thereafter, teachers’ turnover and turnover intentions will be explained, as well as the elements that influence them.

2.1 Turnover

2.1.1 Definition

Nowadays, one of the most relevant issues that organizations are forced to face is the turnover of their workforce (Ton & Huckman, 2008). According to Price (1977), turnover can be defined as the movement across the membership boundary of an organization. The type of turnover scholars usually focus their research on is voluntary turnover (Price, 1997; Bluedorn, 1982), since most causes of involuntary turnover (i.e. death, retirement) are uncontrollable and therefore a topic less worth researching (Shaw, Delery, Jenkins & Gupta, 1998). Voluntary turnover, or quit, is the result of the decision of an employee to leave an organization (Shaw et al., 1998).

2.1.2 Consequences of turnover

It has negative effects on organizational performance (Huselid, 1995; Ton & Huckman, 2008), and many of such effects stem from direct and indirect costs that turnover produces (Ton & Huckman, 2008). Direct costs are related to hire, train and develop new employees, as well as to the severance of the ones who left (Ton & Huckman, 2008). Indirect costs usually refer to the loss of key employees’ tacit knowledge (Droege & Hoobler, 2003), which includes professional know-how, skills and practical knowledge (Grant, 1996) that, due to their nature, are often impossible to codify and transmit to others (Powell, 1998). Tacit knowledge, if effectively leveraged, might constitute a major source of a firm’s competitive
advantage over its competitors (Collins & Hitt, 2006), and thus losing it constitutes a concerning issue (Nelson & McCann, 2010).

The immediate precursors of turnover are turnover intentions (Sousa-Poza & Henneberger, 2004), which will be explained in the subchapter below.

2.2 Turnover intentions

2.2.1 Definition and typologies

“A person's intent is the resolve to act in a certain way” (Angelle, 2006, p. 321). Turnover intention, defined by Tett and Meyer (1993) as “a conscious and deliberate wilfulness to leave the organization” (p. 262) immediately precedes actual turnover (Sousa-Poza & Henneberger, 2004). In fact, a close relationship between turnover intentions and actual turnover has been evidenced by many scholars (e.g. Sousa-Poza & Henneberger, 2004; Mobley, 1977; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 2013).

Two typologies of turnover intentions exist. The first one is called organisational turnover intention, which is the employee/worker intention to change employer (workplace) within the same profession (Currie & Car Hill, 2012). The other one is the professional turnover intention, which is the employee/worker intention to leave the profession (Currie & Car Hill, 2012).

In the previous two subchapters, the concepts of actual turnover and turnover intentions have been explained with regards to organizations in general. Schools, as organizations characterized by unique traits, constitute particular contexts that are strongly affected by the turnover of teachers (Ingersoll, 2001; Guin, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary to first provide a definition of teachers’ turnover and then to explain why and how it strongly affects schools.
Teachers’ turnover intentions will also be covered. The next subchapters will present these aspects.

2.3 Teachers’ turnover

2.3.1 Definition and consequences

A definition of teachers' turnover has been provided by Ingersoll (2002), which describes it as “the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs” (p. 17). A high teacher turnover rate constitutes a concerning issue for schools, which tend to suffer particularly from the turnover of its workforce (Ingersoll, 2001; Guin, 2004). The reason for that is that schools are greatly dependent by commitment and cohesion among their members (Bidwell, 2001; Ingersoll, 2001; Lortie & Clement, 1975). This aspect has been corroborated by a relevant body of literature, which evidenced how a positive and stable community among teachers represents a key indicator of successful schools, those in which students tend to achieve more (Ingersoll, 2001; Grant, 1988; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Kirst, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Basically, a high turnover rate of teachers constitutes a relevant issue for schools due to different reasons. First, it weakens the aforementioned stable cohesion of the school's workforce hence undermining school performance (Ingersoll, 2001; Guin, 2004). Second, it obstructs the efforts to bolster coordinated instructional programs throughout the school (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012). Third, a high turnover forces schools to staff their classes with short-term substitute teachers (Shields, Esch, Humphrey, Young, Gaston & Hunt, 1999); this factor underlies the low quality of the instruction students experience because of the often low preparation of the substitutes and the low curricular coherence of an ever-changing workforce (Loeb, Darling-Hammond & Luczkak, 2005). Students that experience a sequence of under-prepared substitute teachers suffer a cumulative effect which is more detrimental to their learning than a year of poor teaching (Loeb et al., 2005; for an explanation of cumulative effects of poor teaching see Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Fourth, a high turnover weakens the
“collective knowledge” of a school, making it more prone to provide inadequate teaching (Loeb et al., 2005). Fifth and last, a high turnover weighs on the financial means of a school, forcing it to constantly allocate resources to recruiting, hiring and training processes (Loeb et al., 2005). This way, such resources are spent in a way that provides low long-term dividends (Shields et al., 1999).

2.3.2 Teachers’ turnover intentions

It can be argued that there are no reasons why the concept of turnover intentions already explained before (2.2.1) should not include also the turnover intentions of teachers. Therefore, teachers’ turnover intentions can be considered immediate precursors of teachers’ actual turnover. In that perspective, for what concerns the typologies of teachers’ turnover intentions, it can be debated that the organizational turnover intention is teachers’ intention to change employer (school). Professional turnover intention, on the other hand, is teachers’ intention to leave the profession.

*Literature found that teachers’ turnover intentions can be either fostered or prevented by the presence (or absence) of diverse elements. In the next paragraphs, such elements will be divided in two groups: motivations to teach and working conditions. These two groups will include a list and a description of the elements that pertain to them.*

2.4 Motivations to teach

2.4.1 Overview

The motivations that led graduates to enrol in the teaching profession may influence their turnover intentions once they become teachers (Sinclair, Dowson & McInerney, 2006). Among such motivations, academics identified: (a) the desire of working with children; (b)
the perceived worth of teaching; (c) the desire to help people; (d) the dissatisfaction toward a previous career; (e) the perceived benefits or convenience of teaching (related to factors such as work schedules, work hours, vacations and salary); (f) the perceived ease of enrolling in the pre-teaching courses or the job of teaching itself; (g) an intellectual stimulation, given by the satisfaction of teaching a particular subject; (h) the influence of others (i.e. parents); (i) the opportunities that the teaching job offers in terms of career advancement; (j) the opportunities that the teaching jobs offers in terms of social satisfaction through interactions with people (Crow, Levine & Nager, 1990; Allard, Bransgrove, Cooper, Duncan & MacMillan, 1995; Berg, 1992; Serow, Eaker & Forrest, 1994; Stiegelbauer, 1992; Pagano, Weiner, Obi & Swearingen, 1995; Sinclair, Dowson & McInerney, 2006; McKinney, Berry, Dickerson & Campbell-Whately, 2008).

2.4.2 Internal and external motivations

Each one of the listed motivations can be categorized as being internally or externally referenced (Sinclair et al., 2006).

*Internally referenced* motivations stem from the inner values and beliefs of an individual, and they foster a deep and lasting engagement in a task or an activity. Conversely, motivations that are *externally referenced* originate from conditions or people external to individuals, and they tend to underlie a superficial and weak engagement toward a task or an activity (Sinclair et al., 2006).

Engagement, defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295), has been found to reduce the intent to leave an organization (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Therefore, for what concerns teachers, it can be argued that those driven by internally referenced motivations are less prone to develop professional turnover intentions. The reason is that internally referenced motivations have been found to be strong enough to encourage a stable engagement toward the profession over time (Sinclair et al., 2006; Bruinsma & Jansen,
Conversely, teachers driven by externally referenced motivations are more predisposed to harbour turnover intentions (both *organizational* and *professional*), since their motivations have been found to underlie a weak engagement toward the teaching job (Sinclair et al., 2006; Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010). It can be argued that this happens for two reasons. First, externally motivated teachers value less the fact of being teachers compared to those internally motivated, since for the externally motivated ones the reasons for enrolling in such a job do not include the *intrinsic worth of teaching*. This aspect explains the more probability for externally motivated teachers to foster professional turnover intentions, compared to those who are internally motivated.

Second, it can be logically argued that externally motivated teachers that enrolled in the profession following main motivations like perceived benefits (e.g. salary x hours worked), will be more watchful for jobs or teaching positions that assure them better conditions. This aspect accounts for their more probable organizational and professional turnover intentions.

An exception about the association between externally referenced motivations and weak engagement has been pointed out by Sinclair et al. (2006). They identify *career opportunities* (i) and *social interactions* (j) as the only two externally referenced motivations that may promote a deep and lasting engagement in the teaching position and/or in the teaching activity. All these information are summarized on the next page in the table 1:
Table 1. Motivations to teach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Frame of reference</th>
<th>Engagement toward the teaching profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) working with children</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) worth of teaching</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) desire to help people</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) dissatisfaction prev. career</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) perceived benefits</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) ease of entry/work</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) influence of others</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) career opportunities</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(j) social interactions</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Deep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Sinclair, Dowson and McInerney (2006)

2.5 Working conditions

The second group of elements (which presence or lack of may foster teachers’ turnover intentions) is composed of teachers’ working conditions. They include different elements that shape and influence the teaching experience (Johnson, 2006). Several scholars pointed out how the working conditions that teachers experience influence their turnover intentions (Boyd et al., 2011; Ladd, 2009; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Loeb, Darling-Hammond & Luczak, 2005). They are listed and described below:

i. **Salary**: The influence that salaries have on teachers’ turnover intentions is an aspect widely demonstrated by existing literature (e.g. Podgursky, Monroe & Watson, 2004; Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1999). Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin (2004) claimed that salary increases were the major reason why teachers switched schools, while Kelly
(2004) found teachers’ turnover to be affected by wages. Kirby, Berend & Naftel (1999) demonstrated in their analysis how a salary increase caused a turnover decrease, while Brewer (1996) sustains that even the expectation of higher future salaries increases teachers' intent to keep their work position.

ii. **Administrative support:** Bowman and Dowling (2008) define administrative support as “the school’s effectiveness in assisting teachers with issues such as student discipline, instructional methods, curriculum, and adjusting to the school environment” (p. 380). Loeb et al. (2005) state that a lack of administrative support may cause an increase of the teachers' turnover rate, and Boyd et al. (2011) confirm such assumption, describing administrative support as a crucial factor related to teachers' intent to stay or leave their work position. Furthermore Worthy (2005), depicting his early teaching years, asserts that a lack of administrative support induced him to almost drop out of his career.

iii. **Mentoring:** Bey (1995) describes mentoring as all those activities that promote collaborative and constructive discussions between experienced teachers (mentors) and novice ones (mentees) through reflecting together on educational issues. Mentoring can be considered a process meant to ease the transition from the pre-service teaching education courses to the teaching profession (Fransson & Gustafsson, 2008), and scholars evidenced how teachers which experienced it as mentees were more prone to stay in the profession compared to those who did not (Hope, 1999; Bey, 1995; King & Bey, 1995; Tillman, 2003).

iv. **Autonomy:** Ingersoll and May (2012) define autonomy as the degree of teacher control over classroom activities. Such control is related to factors like “selecting textbooks and other instructional materials; selecting content, topics and skills to be taught; selecting teaching techniques; evaluating and grading students; determining the amount of homework to be assigned; disciplining students” (Ingersoll & May, 2012, p. 445). Research has found that autonomy has an influence on teachers' turnover intentions (Guarino, Santibanez & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll & May, 2012). This
assumption is corroborated by different scholars, which state that teachers which perceive to have poor autonomy are more inclined to move to another school or leave the profession (Berry, Smylie, and Fuller, 2008; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb and Wyckoff, 2008; Ingersoll and May, 2012).

v. **Class size:** research has shown how class size affects teachers’ turnover intentions. Weiss (1999) points out how it represents one of the most crucial factors related to whether teachers’ plan to stay in the profession; Theobald (1990) evidenced that larger class sizes may increase teachers turnover intentions, and Loeb, Darling-Hammond and Luczak (2005) confirm these findings.

vi. **Physical conditions:** Firestone and Pennell (1993) define adequate physical conditions as facilities which provide enough space and receive regular maintenance. Teachers that perceive to work in inadequate facilities tend to not feel valued and are more prone to leave their job position (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Hansen & Corcoran, 1989).

vii. **Workload:** the teaching workload is a factor that depends upon class sizes, the amount of courses taught and the amount of preparation needed to teach such courses (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). The influence that the teaching workload has on teachers’ turnover has been evidenced by existing research (Karsenti & Collin, 2013; Corcoran, 1988; Rutter & Jacobson, 1986).

viii. **Collaboration:** collaboration happens when two or more teachers perform a task together. Such interaction can occur under the form of planning programs, peer coaching or team teaching (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). Collaboration comprehends two aspects: one, cognitive, related to learning and receiving feedback. The other one, affective, connected to instituting a community sense among teachers (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Guin, 2004). Collaboration has been found by several scholars to affect
teachers’ turnover intentions (e.g. Martinez-pons, 1990; Harrington, 1987; Singh & Billingsley, 1998).

ix. **Orderly school environment**: Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) define a school characterized by an orderly environment as school context in which behaviour policies are obeyed and applied by the principal, the teachers and the students. Different academics assert that such environment fosters teachers’ intent to stay and may decrease teachers’ turnover intentions (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Kushman, 1992; Martinez-pons, 1990; Ingersoll, 2001).

All the aforementioned work conditions are summarized in the table 2 in the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work conditions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Fixed compensation paid to teachers for their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative support</td>
<td>School’s effectiveness in assisting teachers for different issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Activities that promote collaborative discussions between mentors and mentees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Extent to which teachers exercise control over classroom activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>Number of students in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical conditions</td>
<td>Size and maintenance level of school facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Amount of work a teacher is expected to perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Frequency and extent to which teachers interact to perform tasks together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orderly school environment</td>
<td>School context in which behavioural policies are obeyed by students, teachers and the principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sinclair, Dowson and McInerney (2006)
3 Methodology

This chapter will cover the research approach – and related issues – adopted to explore the causes of teachers’ turnover intentions in selected Swedish schools. The research strategy will be described, as well as the methods of data collection and analysis. The selected schools and the sample will be depicted. Finally, the usefulness of the pilot interviews, the data quality and ethical considerations will be explained.

3.1 Research strategy

The aim of this study is to explore the causes of teachers’ turnover intentions in selected Swedish schools.

To fulfil the aim, a qualitative research was conducted. Qualitative research is appropriate to explore personal and sensitive themes (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007). Turnover intentions constitute one of them (Birdseye & Hill, 1995), especially from the point of view of employees, often anxious and concerned that disclosing their intentions may lead to organizational consequences (Birdseye & Hill, 1995). Moreover, using a quantitative research would not fulfil the “exploring” element of the aim: since quantitative research instruments are based on existing theory, contextual turnover intentions’ causes (Ingersoll, 2002) would be impeded to emerge.

This qualitative research took the form of a multiple case study, one for each school involved in this research. Yin (2013) suggests to use a case study design when: (a) the goal of the research is to answer a “why” question; (b) there is small or no possibility to influence the behaviour of the people that constitute the research sample; (c) there is the will to include contextual factors due to their relevance in relation to the research aim. The condition (a) can be met because, as already explained at the end of the introduction chapter, the research aim can be connected to the research question “why the teachers of the three selected schools intend to leave their actual job position?”; the condition (c) can also be met because unique contextual elements might significantly influence teachers’ turnover intentions (Ingersoll,
2002) in Swedish schools. Therefore, should such contextual factors be found, they would be relevant for the fulfilment of the research aim. For what concerns the condition (b), such risk exists. The authors cannot exclude that the interview process might lead the interviewees to look at their job condition from a different perspective. Potentially, such perspective might make them consider aspects they had not thought before.

Baxter and Jack (2008) define a qualitative case study as a research approach meant to explore a phenomenon within its context using different data sources. Phenomena include organizational behaviours (Roethlisberger, 2007), and turnover can be considered one of them (Nedd, 2006). Context is defined by Johns (2006) as “situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behaviour as well as functional relationships between variables” (p. 386). Various types of context exist (e.g. Bamberger, 2008; Johns, 2006; Li & Meyer, 2009), and the need to place boundaries on a case (for example through a precise contextualization) has been evidenced by Yin (2013) and Stake (1995) in order to avoid answering a research question that might be too broad.

For these reasons, this multiple case study will be limited to three institutes established in the same municipality: a preschool (named Kungsgårderndskolan), a middle school (named Enbacka skola) and a seventh to nine grade school (named Klockarskolan). The purpose of this choice is to observe whether the schools’ type and specificity account for differences related to the causes of teachers’ turnover intentions. All three schools are located in Säter, a small municipality located in the region of Dalarna. They will be further described in the next subchapter.

The choice of Säter is supported by contextual and convenience reasons. For what concerns the contextual motivations, as explained in the introduction, Sweden is actually affected by a shortage of teachers. Reports evidence that this trend, expected to persist in the future, stems from the difficulty to recruit teachers and from their high turnover rate; the latter has detrimental effects for schools due to the aspects that have been described in the conceptual framework.

The situation in Dalarna region constitutes no exception to this trend. According to another report published in 2015 by Skolverket, the region of Dalarna will need the following number of elementary to high school teachers, divided for five-year spans: 2015-2019: 2040
(teachers), 2020-2024: 1680 (teachers) 2025-2029: 1520 (teachers). The second and third 5-year spans indicate a diminishing demand, but they are subject to change if the 2015-2019 related vacancies are not filled (Skolverket, 2015). A report from Arbetsförmedlingens that analyses the period 2015/16 confirms such shortage (Arbetsförmedlingens, 2015).

Relating to the aforementioned convenience reasons, Dalarna’s proximity allows the authors to collect primary data without experiencing the hurdle of long trips. Among the small Dalarna municipalities that have been contacted, Säter resulted to be the only one that agreed to participate in the research. The authors were able to contact the head of the HR department designated to handle the recruitment and retaining processes of teachers in all Säter schools; this contact confirmed the turnover issues evidenced by the Swedish reports presented in the introduction part, by stating that also the Säter schools investigated in this study are subject to them.

3.2 Selected schools

3.2.1 Kungsgårdsstskolan (preschool)

In the 2015/16 scholastic year, Kungsgårdsstskolan counted 60 preschool children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Kungsgårdsstskolan number of kids divided by gender

Source: Kungsgårdsstskolan website

- Teachers: 5
- Average children per teacher in 2015/2016: 12
3.2.2 Enbacka skolan (middle school)

In the 2015/16 scholastic year, *Enbacka skolan* counted 124 students from 4\textsuperscript{th} to 6\textsuperscript{th} grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Enbacka skolan* website

- Teachers: 10
- Average students per teacher in 2015/2016: 12.4

3.2.3 Klockarskolan (high school)

In the 2015/16 scholastic year, *Klockarskolan* counted 270 students from 7\textsuperscript{th} to 9\textsuperscript{th} grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Klockarskolan* website

- Teachers: 27
- Average students per teacher in 2015/2016: 10.0
3.3 Method of data collection

Primary data was collected by the authors through semi-structured interviews. This particular format is appropriate to explore complex and sensitive issues (Barriball & White, 1994), and from an employee perspective, turnover is one of them: Bryman (2009) pointed out that questions related to job intentions and perceptions are sensitive and may make the respondents feel threatened.

Semi-structured interviews make the author able to extensively investigate themes, allowing her to ask the interviewees to expand and develop their answers (Barriball & White, 1994). In fact, the freedom the authors have in crafting each individual interview is meant to allow a likewise freedom for the interviewee to fully express his/her thinking, feelings and perceptions. Doing so, during the interview some specific themes could become more worth talking for the interviewee, making possible for the author to address the interview in order to focus on such emerged themes (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman, 2009).

Since the aim of this study is to explore causes, open questions were used also because of their appropriateness to fulfil such exploratory aim (Saunders et al., 2016). Interviewees were asked open questions in order to encourage them to reply with detailed and comprehensive answers (Saunders et al., 2016).

The proximity of the interviewees allowed the authors to conduct face-to-face interviews, which are types that qualitative researchers usually rely on when conducting semi-structured interviews (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). Face-to-face interviews particularly fit this study: factors like trust and intensity of a personal encounter, which usually arise just through a direct, personal interaction, are decisive to obtain sensitive information (Vogl, 2013).

All the interviewees were asked about their preference to conduct the interview in English or in Swedish. Except the first one, all the interviews were conducted in Swedish, which is the native language of one of the authors of this thesis.

Before the data was collected the authors conducted two pilot interviews with two teachers.
3.4 Pilot interviews

A pilot study can be considered a small, preliminary version of a complete study (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). The utility of conducting it include the identification of flaws related to the proposed research methods and the assessment of the research instruments’ adequacy (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002; Thabane, Ma, Chu, Cheng, Ismaila, Rios, Robson, Thabane, Giangregorio & Goldsmith, 2010).

In that perspective, the authors conducted two pilot interviews with two teachers employed in schools (one middle school and one 7th to 9th grade school) located in two municipalities in region of Dalarna. In particular, the goals of such interviews were:

- Verifying if the interviewees were familiar with all the elements included in the framework;
- Ameliorate the questions through making them as much concise and neutral as possible in order to minimize response bias, as suggested by Saunders (2016);
- Gather potential preliminary evidence of contextual elements not included in the framework.

All three purposes were satisfied. First, the interviews showed that the respondents were familiar with the elements of the framework. Second, they helped the authors sharpen up the questions, making them more neutral (e.g. the question “Would a low salary make you consider leaving your position?” became “Among the elements just discussed, which ones would make you consider leaving if you were unsatisfied with them?”). Third, both interviewees discussed about parental interference, which is an element that was not included in the framework since the authors were unable to find any reference to it in the existing literature. That made the authors aware of a potential new contextual element and led
them to implement questions meant to investigate whether parents actually meddle in teachers’ work.

3.5 Sample

The head of the HR department of Säter’s municipality sent a mail to all the teachers employed there, explaining the aim of this study and asking who among them would have agreed to be interviewed for such purpose. Nine teachers agreed, and composed the sample of this research. All teachers are female and their age has been purposefully not shown in order to protect their privacy. A description of each one is shown in the table 6 in the next page:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Pupils’ age</th>
<th>Class size</th>
<th>Subject taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1 16 years</td>
<td>Preschool (Kungsgårds-skolan)</td>
<td>1 to 6 years old</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>All activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2 16 years</td>
<td>Preschool (Kungsgårds-skolan)</td>
<td>1 to 6 years old</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>All activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3 19 years</td>
<td>Middle school (Enbacka skola)</td>
<td>10 to 12 years old</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Swedish, Math, Science, English, History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4 15 years</td>
<td>High school (Klockarskolan)</td>
<td>13 years old</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Biology, Physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5 4 years</td>
<td>High school (Klockarskolan)</td>
<td>14 years old</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>History, Social science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6 14 years</td>
<td>High school (Klockarskolan)</td>
<td>13 to 15 years old</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7 14 years</td>
<td>Middle school (Enbacka skola)</td>
<td>10 to 12 years old</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Swedish, Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8 8 years</td>
<td>Middle school (Enbacka skola)</td>
<td>10 to 12 years old</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Math, Social science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9 8 years</td>
<td>Middle school (Enbacka skola)</td>
<td>10 to 12 years old</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Swedish, Math</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: interviews with the respondents R1-R9

Identifying an appropriate sample size in qualitative research is often ambiguous (Wilson & Sharples, 2015), therefore qualitative data was collected until theoretical saturation was reached, as suggested by different scholars (Saunders, 2016; Bowen, 2008; Morse, 1995). Bowen (2008) describes theoretical saturation as the point in which the newly gathered data does not provide any new insights and themes, so basically “when nothing new is being added” (Bowen, 2008, p. 140). Saunders (2016) agrees, stating that saturation is reached when the collected data are unable to provide any new insights.
With regards to this research, data saturation was reached with the first six interviews: the analysis of the last three interviews further confirmed the elements emerged from the previously gathered data, without adding any new elements nor insights.

Also an interview with the deputy of the head of Administration within the school department of Säter was conducted. Since such department is in charge of the recruitment and retention of school teachers, this interview will allow the authors to adopt two different views: one from the side of the employer, while the other one from the side of the employees. This two-sided perspective permitted to gain a deeper understanding of the issues, and may eventually lead the authors come up with useful suggestions.

3.6 Method of data analysis

First, the conducted semi-structured interviews were recorded. Then, the native Swedish author proceeded to fully transcribe them, translating in English the eight interviews that were conducted in Swedish. The first one, conducted in English, was transcribed by the other author.

Thereupon, the transcribed interviews have been the object of a template analysis (Saunders et al., 2016) carried out separately by each author. The initial template was composed by codes (common to the two authors) that have been put a priori, related to the categories that constitute the conceptual framework (i.e. a higher-order, a priori code has been motivations to teach). The other codes have been added by each author to their template once the transcripts have been analysed and coded. As the analysis advanced, their initial template underwent a process of adaptation and revision that culminated in two final templates, each author’s own. Both were organized in the same way, since they were characterized by the same categories. Such common categories constituted the structure of the findings section.
3.7 Data quality

3.7.1 Reliability

Being conducted in the form of a case study, this research will reflect and be based on contextual conditions (i.e. the exact circumstances related to the moment in which the data is collected) that may be unique and therefore not replicable by other researchers. This condition of non-repeatability poses a serious issue about the reliability of the findings (Saunders et al., 2016). Yet, the inner characteristics and strengths of this type of study are exactly what makes almost impossible for other researchers to replicate it (Saunders et al., 2016). In fact, the strength of the case study method stems from the flexibility to adapt to unique contextual conditions, flexibility which is essential (Saunders et al., 2016) to fulfil the research aim. Therefore, as suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2014), the authors wrote down notes regarding different aspects (i.e. about the data collected, data analysis choices) of the study. As asserted by Saunders (2016), this will allow other researchers to better understand the processes that led to the findings.

3.7.2 Bias issues

The bias-related issue of this research is related to the sensitivity of the topic. Bryman (2009) evidenced that answering to sensitive questions regarding job intentions and perceptions may make the respondents feel threatened, and Saunders et al. (2016) state that this may lead to biased answers.

The pilot interviews led the authors to modify originally intended questions that addressed somehow the interviewees’ answers. When the first interviewee of the pilot study was asked about whether he would have considered leaving his position had he experienced conflicts with his colleagues, he replied that he did not consider that aspect until that point. Therefore, some questions were restated in a neutral way, in order to both avoid addressing the respondents’ answers and make them perceive interviewer bias. One example is rephrasing
the aforementioned question, indirectly including all the elements without addressing the answer toward any of them: the interviewee was asked “Among the elements just discussed, which ones would make you consider leaving if you were unsatisfied with them?” instead of “would the presence/lack of the element x lead you to consider leaving your position?”

The pilot interviews also led the authors to change the order of the questions, putting the most sensitive questions (related to salary and relationship with colleagues) for last and the softest ones (related to the motivations to teach) first. The reason for this choice was to have more time to establish an atmosphere characterized by confidence and trust, in order to minimize the amount of threat felt by the interviewees when asked about the most sensitive themes.

3.7.3 Generalisability

Issues related to the generalisability of this research stem from its qualitative nature, which due to its characteristics is based on the use of a small and unrepresentative number of cases/respondents (Saunders et al., 2016). However, the purpose of case studies is not to generalize to the population as in statistical research, but to generalize to theoretical propositions (Yin, 2013). Marshall and Rossman (2014) agree with this assumption, arguing that the more related to existing theory the findings are, the broader significance they gain. To this concern, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that “the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods” (p. 12). Therefore, this case study could for example encourage researchers to compare its findings with the results of a quantitative research conducted on a broader sample.
3.7.4 Validity

The term *validity* refers to the extent to which the findings offer a faithful rendering of the observed data. To use the words of Saunders (2016), validity concerns “whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about” (p. 157). While quantitative researchers measure validity in relation to whether the research result is replicable and whether the means of measurement are accurate (Golafshani, 2003), qualitative researchers find these criteria inadequate to be extended also to qualitative studies (Golafshani, 2003; Maxwell, 1992).

In order to try to solve the dilemma of how to measure the validity of qualitative research, Maxwell (1992) conceptualized five validity categories, applicable to qualitative studies. They are listed and shortly described below:

- **Descriptive validity**: it refers to the degree of correctness of the data. In order to achieve it, the data should be truthfully reflect what the respondent did or said and no gathered data should be omitted (Maxwell, 1992; Thomson, 2011);

- **Interpretive validity**: it relates to the extent to which the researcher is able to capture the interviewee’s meaning of events and behaviours, to interpret them based on the respondent’s perspective and not on his/her own (Maxwell, 1992; Thomson, 2011);

- **Theoretical validity**: depends on whether the researcher is able to reach coherence between the concepts he elaborates through the data analysis and the relationships among the concepts in relation to the context and the phenomena observed (Maxwell, 1992; Thomson, 2011). In other words, in order to achieve theoretical validity, the researcher should make the elaborated theory fit the data collected.

- **Generalisability**: it has been covered in the previous paragraph;
- **Evaluative validity**: it refers to whether the researcher is able to comprehend, interpret and depict the data without being judgmental or evaluative.

The authors developed the research with the purpose of achieving all the aforementioned validity typologies: the interviews were transcribed two times and the transcripts were confronted, in order to avoid the omission of data. The concepts and the words used by the respondents were accurately translated in order to convey their perspective as faithfully as possible.

Hoepfl (1997) links qualitative validity with the concept of credibility, intended as the adequacy with which the observed reality is represented. In order to enhance credibility, she states, segments of raw data should be made available for other researchers to analyse (Hoepfl, 1997). From that perspective, translating the transcripts in English should make them accessible to a bigger number of researchers.

### 3.8 Ethical considerations

In research, ethical issues are related to volunteerism, confidentiality and anonymity (Saunders, 2016). To this regard, the authors verbally presented ethical issues to the respondents before starting to interview them: such ethical issues were explained as related with the interviewees’ right to privacy, their voluntary participation to the research, the maintenance of their anonymity. Respondents were also informed about their right to not answer any questions and the possibility to discontinue their cooperation in any moment at their will. In order to secure the anonymity of the interviewees, the authors made the collected data non-attributable and removed the respondents’ names. Reference codes will be used to distinguish them. The data were handled and managed with confidentiality and were not used for other reasons than the actual study (Saunders et al., 2016). The interviewees were also told that the interviews were audio recorded, and agreed about all the aspects presented above.
4 Results

The respondents R1 to R9 are all working as teachers in Säter. The interviews with them provided these results, which have been categorized by element in the same order as they were listed and described in the framework.

4.1 Motivation to teach

All the respondents except R8 declared to have one or more internally referenced motivations to enrol in the teaching profession. In particular, it emerged that all the internally motivated respondents chose to become teachers because of their inner desire to work with children. Internally motivated teachers showed strong commitment to their role, as this was evident when they were supposed to answer about the reason why they enrolled in the teaching profession. Some of them talked about becoming teachers as a long time aspiration: R3 stated “[smiles] It has always been my dream to work and teach to children” (R3, personal communication, April 5, 2016); likewise, R6 declared: “[…] I knew since I was a kid that I wanted to become a teacher” (R6, personal communication, April 6, 2016); R7 said “I [emphasis added] always knew that someday I would have ended up on the other side [of the classroom]” (R7, personal communication, April 7, 2016). Again, among all the internally motivated teachers, the recurring theme was enrolling in the profession because of their wish to work and interact with children.

R5 was the only one which explained that she chose the profession because of the intellectual stimulation given by teaching a particular subject. In fact, R5 cited interacting with children as a subsidiary characteristic of the teaching job, saying: “I really like the subject of History; I really want to work with the subject. But I also like to work with people and kids” (R5, personal communication, April 6, 2016).

The respondent R8 was the only one to refer to externally referenced motivations when explaining why she enrolled in teaching. She cited a dissatisfaction toward the previous career related to working during the night and in the weekends: “I have worked so many long shifts in my previous job […] a lot of nights, weekends, and so” (R8, personal communication,
April 7, 2016). She pointed out the convenience of teaching related to that matter, asserting: “[I started thinking] teaching was an option since I get to work on daytime and not nights and weekends” (R8, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

4.2 Salary

When asked about their salary, the respondents offered different perspectives. R1, R3 and R8 expressed strong dissatisfaction about their wage, albeit for different reasons: R1 feels that the pay “[…] it is not appropriate for the job and the hours I do, I think it is low […] and I think it is one of the reasons why the job is… unappreciated” (R1, personal communication, April 5, 2016). R3 believes that the salary is low if “compare[d] to how much we invest in our studies to become teachers” (R3, personal communication, April 5, 2016). R8 became irritated while stating that the teachers’ wage is low compared to other works that do not require specialization courses: “I have studied at the university and some workers in the municipality that work in different sectors are more paid then me, and they just went to high school” (R8, personal communication, April 7, 2016)

Despite basically all the respondents admitted their salary could be higher, no one of them asserted that would harbour organizational turnover intentions due to dissatisfaction related to the wage. R1 asserted that during her career, she already left a job position to be employed in a school that paid her more: “I already did. When I was in [omitted] I changed school because of the low salary” (R1, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

Anyway, she admitted she would not do it again: “[…] here I like my colleagues, children and parents. But of course I have been thinking about it, but I do not think it is the right thing either [to change because of the low salary]” (R1, personal communication, April 5, 2016).
4.3 Mentoring

None of the respondents was offered any kind of formal mentoring from the school in which they started their career. All teachers except one (R6) stated that they felt the need to rely on a formal mentor in their first year of teaching, in order to reduce the stress given by the transition from their education to the real work. Even though the majority of them affirmed to have received a sort of informal support from more experienced peers (R1; R2; R3; R4; R5; R7; R8; R9), they declared that, in the prime of their career, they would have needed formal and regular meetings with a mentor.

Anyway, none of the interviewees declared that harboured any type of turnover intentions due to the lack of mentoring offered by the schools at the beginning of their teaching career.

4.4 Autonomy

All the respondents declared that they experience a considerable degree of autonomy. Such autonomy, they affirm, relates to the freedom they have to decide how lessons will be conducted, what kind of activities the kids are allowed to perform and the choice of instructional materials (e.g. books).

The interviewed teachers expressed their satisfaction related to how much autonomy they enjoy: “I have a lot of freedom!” (R3, personal communication, April 5, 2016); “I have total freedom” (R4, personal communication, April 6, 2016); “I have full freedom […] to plan the lessons” (R6, personal communication, April 6, 2016); “I have total freedom to plan what I do there. There is no one that tries to control me on how I plan and do the lessons” (R8, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

The element of trust emerged when teachers talked about their autonomy. R4 and R5 related the autonomy they enjoy with the fact that the school trusts them; R6 said that the full autonomy she experiences “[…] shows that the management trusts you” (R6, personal
communication, 6 April, 2016). When asked about autonomy, R9 affirmed that “She [the principal] trusts me and it feels good” (R9, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

No one of the interviewees talked about a lack of autonomy among the motivations which would make them consider leaving their position or the profession of teaching.

### 4.5 Administrative support

All the respondents except two (R1; R4) declared that, despite a recent increase of the administrative work they are expected to carry out, the administrative support that the school provides them did not increase accordingly. This discrepancy between administrative work and administrative support is an element that makes all the teachers affected by such dynamic unsatisfied for that matter.

R5 complained about the IT system that should ease the completing of the administrative work: “We have an IT system that does not work well, and it takes time to fight with that. I would desire a new system that works much better” (R5, personal communication, April 6, 2016). R2 stated that increasing the amount of administrative support should be “[…] the priority number one at this stage […] so we do not have to do […] the administrative work during night time” (R2, personal communication, April 5, 2016). R9 would desire “Some kind of support from the school somehow” (R9, personal communication, April 7, 2016). R3 feels the need of more administrative support because the administrative work takes time away from the actual teaching. R7 would desire the management to be more present to support the increased administrative tasks because “[…] now it [the administrative work] takes too much energy” (R7, personal communication, April 7, 2016). Two of them (R1; R7) stated that, in the schools they used to work, a lack of administrative support was the main reason why the relationship between them and their principals fell apart; as a consequence of this rupture, they decided to change school.
Among the teachers interviewed, R1, R4 and R7 asserted that a lack of administrative support would make them harbour organizational turnover intentions.

### 4.6 Class size

When the interviewees were asked about the size of the classes in which they teach, all except one (R2) asserted that it does not constitute an issue at all. R2 affirmed: “I would desire fewer kids in the working group. Right now there are 20 and I think they are too many” (R2, personal communication, April 5, 2016). R2 continued on the topic, stating that “If you get fewer kids, it [positively] affects everything. You have less documentation [to produce] and more time with the kids” (R2, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

When asked which aspects are important enough to relate with the possibility to leave, R2 was the only one among the interviewees which replied that she would harbour both organizational and professional turnover intentions due to class size issues: “If the children groups increase and the staff do not, I could change school and even profession” (R2, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

However, all teachers agreed upon the fact that class size could be a concern if the number of students would be high enough to make the workload rise too much.
4.7 Physical conditions

The majority of the teachers interviewed affirmed that they are satisfied by the conditions of the facilities in which they work. The only exceptions are R1 and R2 that, when asked about the school facilities, replied explaining that they are currently working in a temporary small environment with noise problems. They do not feel that aspect actually concerning because they affirmed they would move into new school facilities two weeks after the interviews were conducted.

None of the respondents asserted that the physical conditions of the school context where they teach would be an element that would lead them to consider harbouring organizational turnover intentions.

4.8 Workload

High workload and its subsequent stress and dissatisfaction of the teachers were a constant theme during the interviews. In fact, the majority of teachers indicated the recent increase of the workload as a very relevant issue. Its rise takes the form of a large amount of administrative work that teachers are required to effectively handle, even if it is not included in their professional duties (R1; R2; R3; R5; R6; R7; R8; R9). To this concern, R6 asserted: “It [the administrative workload] has increased because I need to document more and more and it takes time. You document just to be safe if someone complains about something. It is an unnecessary thing” (R6, personal communication, April 6, 2016).

More teachers doubt the usefulness of the information produced to fulfil the administrative tasks. When asked about administrative workload and tasks, R5 complained about the inutility of the school’s IT system and added:
The parents do want information about [emphasis added] EVERYTHING! So that increases also the administrative work a lot and when they want information about everything it just takes time from the students and us. The information is not necessary for the parents.

(R5, personal communication, April 6, 2016)

R8 offers a similar perspective:

The documentation [to produce] has increased and that is not good because it takes more time from the teaching… but I have learnt to not overwork [for] the administrative tasks because it takes only time and it is useless, it is better for me to focus on the kids.

(R8, personal communication, April 7, 2016)

All the respondents that pointed out such issue declared that the fulfilment of the administrative tasks takes away the time originally devoted to teach the kids and plan the lessons. R2 stated that the increasing workload forces her to do the planning during the night. Administrative tasks can include producing pupils’ evaluations and manually transferring manual data into the school management systems (R1; R2; R5; R7); photocopying (R2); investigate the reasons behind students’ prolonged absences (R5); producing pupils’ evaluations through reports to show and discuss with parents during the teachers-parents meetings (R3; R8; R9).

The relevance of the workload element is exacerbated by its potential influence toward the interviewees’ intentions to leave. In fact, the majority of the teachers interviewed (R2, R3, R5, R8, R9) stated that an increase of the workload would lead them to harbour organizational turnover intentions.
4.9 Collaboration

The almost totality of respondents to be generally satisfied about the collaboration they have with their peers, including both those teaching the same subject and the other ones. Though, a recurring theme was that all of the interviewees expressed their need for even more time to collaborate. Such need, they asserted, would be useful to improve through getting feedback, get new ideas and perspectives about how issues can be solved.

An interesting background was explained by R9: once a month, the teachers of the school in which she works meet the teachers of another school. To this regard, R9 stated “I find it very helpful and that is something I would want more because I get new perspectives and it helps me to develop my own teaching” (R9, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

One respondent (R5) defined the other teachers as incompetent and defined the collaboration with them as troublesome. Nonetheless, R5 affirmed she never harboured any type of turnover intentions due to that.

Among the teachers interviewed, two of them (R1, R7) declared that they would consider harbouring organizational turnover intentions if they start experiencing serious collaboration problems with their colleagues.

4.10 Orderly school environment

All the respondents mentioned that, in the schools in which they work, the rules are generally respected by the principal, teachers and students. Minor concerns are related to how sometimes teachers interpret and apply the same rules in a different way (R7), or too soft punishments for students that broke the rules (R5).

Either way, no one of the teachers interviewed claimed that would harbour organizational turnover intentions due to a discipline worsening in the school in which they work.
4.11 New element: parental interference

A contextual element which is not part of the conceptual framework was found through the interviews conducted with the teachers. This element already emerged during the pilot interviews, and was widely confirmed by the teachers interviewed. In fact, the vast majority of the respondents complained about the issues related to an increased meddling of children's parents into their work. Parents’ interference manifests itself through different dynamics: parents often insist on being involved in teaching decisions (R1; R3; R5; R6; R8), mostly because they are convinced that they have more rights and authority than before to influence teachers’ job (R1; R6). An extract of the interview with R1 sums up well the bother caused by parents that meddle in teachers’ work too much:

Today I have a lot of friends that are working as teachers and parents [want to] be involved in everything almost saying us what to teach... and I mean we have been educated for that for 4 years and we are supposed to know what to do, and they have to trust us also that we can do the right thing... the teachers 100 years ago... the status of the job was extremely high and now it lowered... sometimes we have to say “no, I know what I am doing” but it is hard... and sometimes we do not have the principals [on our side] because they [the principals] do not want to make the parents upset.

(R1, personal communication, April 5, 2016)

The interviews with those that complained about it indicated that the issue got worse with the time. In the words of R3: “Today the parents interfere more, I can feel the change. The parents do think they have more rights these days to say how the teaching should be conducted […]” (R3, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

R6 agrees: “But I feel that now parents do think they have more freedom interfering on how we teach, how we set the grades… and it has increased more and more” (R6, personal communication, April 6, 2016).
The words of R8 sound even more severe, as it seems that the parents perceive to be nowadays in a position of power with regards to teachers:

Parents threaten us more now. They only care about their kids and cannot get the big picture. Parents have got more influence now if you compare to what they had before. And they can say that they will change schools for their kids.

(R8, personal communication, April 7, 2016)

The interview with R5 is even more meaningful to this matter. Albeit being a teacher since just 4 years, she experienced already enough of the issue: “Yes, it gets worse and worse every year! They [the parents] are more aware of their power now and they can move their kids away from the school and the school loses money [if that happens]” (R5, personal communication, April 6, 2016). The teachers that complained about the parents’ meddling were way more irritated while discussing it than any other issues they talked about.

Moreover, some teachers declared that children's parents do not show enough respect toward them (R1; R2; R8); among these teachers, R2 stated that such lack of respect takes the form of parents leaving their children in the school for longer than the opening hours, forcing teachers to stay there more hours than they should and get paid for. Teachers (R5; R6; R8) explained that parents demand an excessive and unnecessary amount of information about their children. Such requests make teachers’ administrative workload rise, often forcing them to reduce the time originally devoted to plan and to teach, in order to attend teachers-parents meetings (R5; R8). R8 affirmed: “[...] There are a lot of talks with parents [to attend] and it takes a lot of energy and time from me and it affects my teaching of course because it takes time and energy from my teaching” (R8, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

Furthermore, as explained by some respondents, these pressures from the parents influence also their relationship with their principals (R1; R5). This aspect is well described by R5:
It is hard sometimes to get the support [from the principal] if you have an issue with the parents because the kids’ parents are the customers and can move the kids to another school. […] Yes, it gets worse and worse every year! They [the parents] are more aware of their power now and they can move their kids away from the school and the school loses money [if that happens]. When the students break the rules they do not have consequences because the management fear that the parents will take the students out of the school and the school would lose money.

(R5, personal communication, April 6, 2016)

In fact, principals tend to not make the parents upset, often fulfilling their requests to the detriment of teachers' needs (R1; R5).

The relevance of this issue is highlighted by how it influences the interviewees’ turnover intentions. In fact, three interviewees asserted that they would consider leaving their job position if parents' influence becomes intolerable (R1, R5, R8). One teacher (R3) declared that, should the relationship with the parents get worse, she would harbour organizational turnover intentions: “If I get into conflicts with the parents I could leave [the school] because Säter is a small town” (R3, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

The table in the next page summarizes the findings.
Table 7: schematisation of the findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>R3</th>
<th>R4</th>
<th>R5</th>
<th>R6</th>
<th>R7</th>
<th>R8</th>
<th>R9</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Not needed</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

Source: interviews with the respondents R1-R9

Legend:
S: satisfied with the element on the left
D: dissatisfied with the element on the left
Orange box: the element on the left might harbour organizational turnover intentions of the related teacher
Red box: the element on the left might harbour organizational and professional turnover intentions of the related teacher
4.12 Interview with Säter school department

In order to provide a different yet meaningful perspective toward the research problem the authors hinged this thesis on, an additional interview was conducted. The interviewee (R10) works as the deputy of the head of Administration within Säter school department. His point of view offered insights that are worth to analyze and that may explain the causes that underlie some of the issues emerged from the interviews with the teachers. It seems appropriate to start from what is done by the department to minimize the turnover of teachers. To this regard, the respondent stated that the Säter school department, in order to foster the retention of teachers, focuses on five elements:

- improving teachers’ work environment;
- offering training and development programs to teachers;
- offering appealing salary development plans for teachers;
- avoiding that teachers focus too much on the administrative work;
- making sure that principals develop leadership traits by making them attend leadership programs.

From the interviews conducted, it emerged that the first point is fulfilled. Teachers declared to be considerably satisfied about their work environment, as the majority of the facilities are new and provide enough space.

Also the second point is satisfied. Teachers did not discuss much about their development, but they did not complain either and it can be argued that the issues that they evidenced were not related to the lack of provided development nor training.

The third point appears realized too, as the majority of teachers – even with very different amount of work experience – stated to be satisfied by their salary.

The fourth point deserves to be mentioned separately. It can be argued that the amount of administrative work that the respondents are required to produce constituted one of the aspects that they related more with their dissatisfaction and their possibility of harbouring turnover intentions.
With regards to the fourth point, the discrepancy between the goal itself and what has been achieved leads to the fifth aim, which is the one that the deputy prioritizes over the others.

In fact, when asked about what aspects he thinks are more important to retain teachers, he answered: “That we have a good leadership. That way we have leaders that make the teachers understand they are important and that they get their voice heard” (R10, personal communication, April 11, 2016).

The most important aspect to notice related to this sentence is the fact that the most reliable answer to such question should be provided by the teachers themselves. Given the interviewees conducted, it seems safe to assume that if the same question were asked to them, their answer would not have matched with the one provided by the deputy.

The logical consequence of this assumption is that there is a discrepancy between what the Säter school department think is best to retain teachers and what teachers think is best for them to not leave their job position.

The reason for such discrepancy has been given by the deputy himself. When asked about what the school department actually does to identify the needs of teachers, he answered: “Before we had one specific survey for schools. Now we have one for the whole municipality, not any specific for the schools” (R10, personal communication, April 11, 2016).

Therefore, it emerges a clear communication issue between the school department and the teachers. Such problem stems from trying to understand the issues of a very particular work category such as teachers without any procedure (questionnaire, interview) specifically targeted for them.

Thus, Säter school department should consider adopting a communication approach expressly tailored for teachers. It may include questionnaires and interviews, as well as meetings between teachers and representatives of the department. The aim should be making the communication between the department and teachers as direct as possible in order to specifically figure out teachers’ needs to minimize turnover risks.
5 Analysis

The analysis will include a comparison of the results with the literature and a discussion related to all the elements divided by school. Such discussion will have the purpose of evidencing school-specific issues and proposing suggestions that might be useful to counter them.

5.1 Our results compared with the literature

The results of this study partially confirmed those of some scholars. Elements such as motivations to teach, administrative support, workload, class size and collaboration were found to be related with the turnover intentions of teachers. This was already confirmed by numerous academics (Sinclar, Dowson & McInerney, 2006; Bruinsma & Jensen, 2010; Loeb, Darling-Hammond & Luczak, 2005; Boyd, Grossman, Ink, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2011; Karsenti & Collins, 2013; Billingsley, 1998).

However, it is interesting to notice that some of the findings of this thesis are not always coherent with the literature. In fact, elements such as salary, mentoring, autonomy, physical conditions and orderly environment did not confirm the results of different scholars (Podgursky, Monroe & Watson, 2004; Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1999; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2004; King & Bey, 1995; Hope, 1999; Tillman, 2003; Berry, Smylie & Fuller, 2008; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2008; Ingersoll & May, 2012; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Hansen & Corcoran, 1989; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Kushman, 1992; Martinez-pons, 1990; Ingersoll, 2001).

For what concerns the interviewees’ motivations to teach, the findings confirm the studies of Sinclar, Dowson and McInerney (2006) as well as those of Bruinsma and Jensen (2010). In fact, the respondents’ inner motivations to teach emerged to positively influence their commitment to the job, as it was clear from their sentences: “I would never leave the profession, I like teaching too much to do something else” (R3, personal communication,
April 5, 2016); “I never thought about leaving the profession!” (R4, personal communication, April 6, 2016); “I thought about leaving school but I would not leave the profession” (R5, personal communication, April 6, 2016); “I never thought to leave the profession of teaching because I love the work itself” (R7, personal communication, April 7, 2016); “What would I do instead? I cannot imagine anything that would give me so much like teaching kids” (R9, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

To this regard, it is interesting to notice that the only teacher that declared to have already harboured professional turnover intentions, questioned them due to his/her inner motivation to teach children:

[Replies to the possibility of leaving the profession] Yes I have thought about it, but is it worth it? If the children groups increase and the staff do not, I could change both profession and work [meaning both profession and work position]. But on the other hand, it is the joy of being with the children that makes me stay in the profession.

(R2, personal communication, April 5, 2016)

The almost totality of the teachers interviewed has been found to be internally motivated. However, it was not possible to conclude whether this depends by the majority of applicants in Säter enrolling in the profession being internally motivated or Säter being able to tailor its recruitment strategy just toward internally motivated applicants. Therefore, this aspect should be further investigated focusing on a broader sample.

The inner motivations of nearly all the respondents partially contribute to explain why the findings of this study do not confirm those of Podgursky, Monroe and Watson (2004), Dolton and van der Klaauw (1999), and Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (2004). While these scholars identified salary as being perhaps the most relevant element related to teachers’ turnover intentions, the results of this thesis evidenced the opposite. It can be argued that this aspect seems caused by two main reasons.
The first one is constituted by the different composition of the sample in relation with the interviewees’ motivations to teach. When considering leaving the profession, inner motivated teachers tend to consider the reasons that made them enrol in the profession. Those are motivations that stem from their inner values and beliefs, and therefore cannot include external conditions such as the salary. Hence, the fact that all respondents of this thesis but one had internal motivations contributes to explain why these results are not in line with the aforementioned scholars, who examined a broader sample that comprehended a more balanced ratio of internally and externally motivated teachers.

The second reason is contextual. As already pointed out in the introduction, the decentralization of the Swedish school system included a transfer of the teaching employment duties, from the State to the municipalities; from then on, they became able to craft and manage independently the working conditions of teachers. From this perspective Säter seems to be effective. A policy common to all Säter schools states that “Childcare and Education should be an attractive employer with opportunities for development and a good salary level compared to neighbouring municipalities”. Such good salary level is perceived by the majority of the teachers, as it emerged from the interviews: R5 affirmed “I am satisfied from the teachers’ perspective. You know that teachers are underpaid so I am happy if you compare to the profession” (R5, personal communication, April 6, 2016). When asked about the salary, R6 declared “I am quite satisfied if you compare it to the profession” (R6, personal communication, April 6, 2016) while R7 stated “I am satisfied with my development and salary overall and I cannot complain at all if I compare it to the profession” (R7, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

Unlikely as found in previous studies, the results evidence that the salary seems an element not related to the turnover intentions of the interviewees. However, given the specificity of each Swedish municipality in terms of working conditions offered, the unrelatedness of salary to turnover intentions cannot be generalized for what concerns schools based in other Swedish cities.
Also for what concerns mentoring, the results did not confirm the literature. According to King and Bey (1995), Hope (1999) and Tillman (2003), teachers who could rely on mentors were more prone to stay in the profession compared to those who did not. The findings of this thesis are not in line with those of the aforementioned scholars, since none of the teachers interviewed in this study affirmed that they harboured any type of turnover intentions due to the lack of mentoring offered.

The reason behind this difference could be explained with the informal mentoring that all the interviewees experienced during the prime of their career. Despite official mentoring was not provided to any of the interviewed teachers during the prime of their career, all of them could count on more experienced peers that helped them informally.

It is safe to assume that the previous studies’ respondents, if ever offered any type of informal mentoring, were not satisfied about it as the participants of this research. Therefore, mentoring-wise, the results of this study are hardly comparable with the previous literature.

The findings regarding autonomy did not confirm the previous literature either. All teachers interviewed declared themselves satisfied by the amount of freedom they have in choosing the teaching materials and the interviews evidenced how they enjoy the degree of autonomy that the schools guarantees them. This situation stems from the philosophy adopted by all three schools, which let the teachers decide what they believe is the best way to reach the instructional goals decided by Säter’s school department.

Therefore, it can be argued that this high amount of autonomy provided by the schools to the teachers constitutes the reason why these results are not in line with those of Berry, Smylie and Fuller (2008), Boyd, Lankford, Loeb and Wyckoff (2008), and Ingersoll and May (2012). The studies made by these scholars highlighted how the participants complained about the interference of the principal in teaching duties they thought to have the right to decide about.

The findings of this research related to the connection between schools’ physical conditions and teachers’ turnover intentions did not confirm the previous studies by
Firestone and Pennell (1993) and Firestone and Rosenblum (1988). This discrepancy between the results can be explained by the difference of the schools’ conditions. In their studies, the aforementioned scholars investigated urban contexts where often the schools’ were located in old and poor buildings, highlighting how teachers working in such environments were more prone to develop turnover intentions.

Conversely, the teachers interviewed for this thesis evidenced how the facilities where they work are new and spacious. R1 and R2 were the only two teachers that complained about being forced to work in temporary facilities, but they recognized it as a small issue because they were expected to move in a new school in two weeks from when the interviews took place.

Therefore, it can be argued that the difference between the results of this thesis and the previous literature is given by the different characteristics of the facilities in which teachers have to work. Old and poor spaces tend to make teachers unhappy and have been found to potentially make them develop turnover intentions; yet, given the fact that the interviewees of this study were satisfied about the facilities of their schools, a relation between the schools’ physical conditions and teachers’ turnover intentions could not be identified within this research.

The results of this thesis in terms of orderly environment do not confirm the literature either. While some academics (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Kushman, 1992; Martinez-pons, 1990; Ingersoll, 2001) indicated how a lack of an orderly school environment made teachers more prone to harbour turnover intentions, this study could not confirm such results. In fact, all the teachers interviewed rejected the possibility to develop turnover intentions due to a lack of the orderly environment in the schools where they work.

The reason for this discrepancy can be explained by the cultural traits of Swedish people. Swedes are people who will to conform to norms and rules that the society expects them to obey (Birkinshaw, 2002). Such polite behavioural tendency was confirmed by the interviewees, which, despite recognizing the occasional disciplinary issue of the students, evidenced how within the school context the rules are respected at all levels, from the principal to the pupils.
Since all the respondents always taught in Swedish schools, it can be safely argued that, given the aforementioned contextual politeness, probably none of them experienced big problems in terms of students’ conduct and norms not respected. The fact that none of them would consider harbouring turnover intentions due to a lack of orderly school environment might be explained also by the fact that they probably never experienced an environment where rules are not observed.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the politeness of the school context where the interviewees have been working until this research may have accounted for making the findings of this study different from those of the literature.

The politeness of Swedes influences to some degree also the findings of this thesis in terms of collaboration between teachers. Almost all the interviewees considered the collaborative relationship with their colleagues as satisfactory.

The only exception (R8) is dissatisfied by the outcomes of cooperating because she believes that her colleagues are not competent enough, but she does not criticize the collaborative will of her peers.

Such results are coherent with the personality of the Swedes: their cooperative will within the work dimension is strong and stems from their collectivist culture (Birkinshaw, 2002).

Given these premises, the results of this research are in line with the literature with regards to collaboration (Billingsley, 1998; Martinez-pons, 1990; Harrington, 1987). Two teachers (R1; R7) would develop turnover intentions should the collaboration level with their peers get worse in the future. Thus, a relation between a low quality collaboration and turnover intentions has been found. In this case, though, it seems safe to assume that since both R1 and R7 are both satisfied for that matter, the fact that they would develop turnover intentions due to that is not caused by a lack of cooperation but further evidences the importance they credit to collaborating with their colleagues.

The findings related to the administrative support, workload and class size are all interrelated and coherent with the previous studies. The relation between the respondents’ dissatisfaction

Differently from the literature in which each one of these three elements was considered individually through a quantitative analysis, what was found through this study is the high degree of interconnection between them.

The first interesting thing to notice is that the respondents which identified workload as a problem did not complain about having to teach too many hours or being forced to plan too much. They all complained about the recent rise of administrative workload they have to carry out.

Such rise is strictly connected with a lack of administrative support: teachers complained about the fact that while the administrative tasks have increased, the support has not. This imbalance made the administrative workload weigh on their shoulders too much: a meaningful example is R2, often forced to bring the work home and carry out the administrative tasks overnight while not being paid for working overtime.

It emerged also how the teachers’ workload is highly influenced by their class size. In fact, a bigger number of students in the class means a bigger number administrative documents to produce and hence more administrative tasks for teachers, as evidenced by many respondents. The majority of teachers did not define all three elements (workload, administrative support and class size) as potential factors that could make them consider leaving their job position. Nonetheless, each one of them has been found to be potentially related with the respondents’ turnover intentions. Therefore, the results of this thesis are coherent with the aforementioned literature, and the interrelatedness between these three elements confirms even further this assumption.
5.2 Issues and suggestions

5.2.1 Motivations to teach

All interviewees except R8 were found to be internally motivated to teach. It was also evidenced how internal referenced motivations are related to a deeper commitment to the profession. Therefore, schools should focus their recruitment process toward identifying inner motivated candidates that are more likely to deeply engage in the teaching profession.

5.2.2 Salary

It is interesting to notice that among the three schools in which the respondents work, Klockarskolan (high school) was the only one whose all interviewees (R4, R5 and R6) declared themselves satisfied about the salary. To this concern, it can be also significant to notice that Klockarskolan interviewed teachers are all satisfied about their salary despite their different work experience, which ranges from 4 years (R5) to 15 (R4) and 14 (R6) years experience. That may suggest that, despite the common policy that equates all three schools, Klockarskolan is able to deal better with salary development matters than the other two.

For what concerns Enbacka skola (middle school), the two teachers dissatisfied with their salary indicate two different reasons for that. R3 claims that teachers are underpaid compared to how much they invest in their studies; R8 feels that, within the municipality, there are jobs that are paid more than teachers and which require fewer qualifications. Either way, their motivations lie outside their specific school thus detecting any Enbacka skola responsibility behind their dissatisfaction would be rash.
The discussion related to Kungsgårdsskolan (preschool) deserves to be developed. The two interviewed teachers (R1 and R2) expressed two different perspectives. R1 stated that she is dissatisfied with her salary because she feels it is inappropriate if related to the importance of the job in the society and if related to how many hours she works. Despite often the planning activities would require her to work above the hours she gets paid for, she is unwilling to do so.

Among her colleagues that bring the work home, there is R2. Albeit R2 declares herself generally satisfied with her salary, the theme of having to work above the hours she gets paid for emerges also in her interview, and as with R1, it is an issue that ties the salary to the workload. This matter acquire even more relevance, given that R2 indicated a further increase of the workload as an element that could make her harbour both professional and organizational turnover intentions.

For these reasons, Kungsgårdsskolan should consider countering these issues, either by paying teachers for the overtime work they conduct, or by offering them more support for planning. Examples might be reducing the hours they are required to stay with the children in order to give them more planning time, or give them digital tools (e.g. IT platforms) to accelerate their planning tasks.

5.2.3 Mentoring

With its latest school policy, the municipality of Säter decided that “Newly qualified teachers should be offered skilled mentors during their introductory year”. Such policy is valid for all the school based in Säter and therefore also for those included in this thesis. Such policy has been issued in September 2014 and the reason why all interviewed teachers could not rely on formal mentors is that all of them started working earlier and some of them in different municipalities.
5.2.4 Autonomy

All teachers interviewed declared themselves considerably satisfied about the degree of autonomy they enjoy while teaching. This means that all three schools seem to guarantee an extent of autonomy teachers are happy with.

5.2.5 Administrative support

Teachers from all three schools complained a lack of administrative support.

From what concerns Kungsgårdsstskolan (preschool), R2 identified the need for administrative support as the number one priority. Its lack make the administrative workload weigh so much on her timetable that she declared to work overnight to plan the teaching activities. The need to bring the work home and how such practice is not uncommon among Kungsgårdsstskolan teachers was confirmed by R1 too as a consequence of the scarce administrative support. Albeit R1 refuses to work overnight like her colleague because she is not going to get paid for that, the two interviews highlight a relevant issue for Kungsgårdsstskolan: it cannot be excluded that feeling forced to work overtime, moreover without being paid (as specified by both R1 and R2), could constitute an aspect that may lead teachers to harbour turnover intentions.

Therefore, Kungsgårdsstskolan should consider countering these issues as a priority to reduce the possibilities of its teachers harbouring turnover intentions. As previously suggested in the “salary” discussion specifically related to this school, solutions may include paying teachers for their overtime work, giving them more planning time and making available IT tools that help them deal with planning activities more efficiently.

The interviews conducted with Klockarskolan (high school) teachers offered an interesting perspective that may be related with the different work experiences of the interviewees. The
two teachers that complained about the lack of administrative support had two different ways to address the problem.

R6 recognized the problem, but had troubles figuring out what could be done to counter the issue: “I get little support in this [administrative] tasks, it could be more. But on the other hand how is the school going to give me more support?” (R6, personal communication, April 6, 2006).

Conversely, R5 addressed the issue, implicitly pointing at a possible solution. In fact, she declared that the school’s IT system does not work well, and that she would desire a new, better IT system.

It seems interesting to relate these two different perspectives to the work experiences of the two teachers, which are 14 years for R6 and 4 years for R5. Although R5 has 10 years of experience less than R6 and despite she started working in Klockarskolan just in 2012, she is aware of the IT system Klockarskolan teachers have at their disposal as a tool conceived to help them deal with administrative tasks; moreover, she complains about its uselessness.

Despite the more work experience and the fact she started working in Klockarskolan 4 years earlier than R5, R6 is dissatisfied about the administrative support provided and clueless about how the school could support teachers more. She never cited the IT platform, and that might be a sign that she barely – if ever – utilizes it. Whether or not these two perspectives indicate that younger teachers are more comfortable and familiar with technology and the use of IT platforms, one thing that Klockarskolan should make sure to do is to ask teachers if they are familiar and satisfied with the all the tools at their disposal. To this regard, the school could organize meetings between technicians and teachers to present the functionalities of the IT platform. Such events could be adequate to ask teachers for feedbacks and host troubleshooting sessions.

The interviews with Enbacka skola (middle school) teachers highlighted a similar problem. It is rather interesting noticing that, among the four teachers interviewed, the only one satisfied by the amount of administrative support provided (R8) is the only one that talks about the school IT platform. It emerges a similar pattern to the one observed within Klockarskolan: the teachers with more work experience complain about the scarce amount of administrative support received (R3 has 19 years of experience and R7 has 14). R8, which has 8 years of
experience, when asked about administrative support replied: “[...] we have an IT system that supports us. It is there if you want it!” (R8, personal communication, April 7, 2016).

Similarly to Klockarskolan, Enbacka skola should consider organizing technicians-teachers events with the purpose of making all teachers aware about how the IT platform works, giving feedbacks and solving related problems.

5.2.6 Class size

The only teacher which declared herself dissatisfied toward the class size is R2, from Kungsgårdsstskolan. As evidenced in the previous chapters, more students in the classroom translate into a heavier workload; should R2’s assumptions be confirmed also by her peers, an understaffing issue would be identified.

Thus, Kungsgårdsstskolan should proactively investigate this matter, asking its teachers if they think the school is understaffed in relation with the number of kids. Listening to the opinions of teachers could be a first step toward reducing teachers’ turnover intentions.

5.2.7 Physical conditions

All the interviewees declared themselves satisfied by the schools’ conditions. As mentioned in the previous sections, the only small exception is constituted by R1 and R2, which indicated the problems that stem from working within temporary facilities. However, they stated that they would have been supposed to move into the new school in two weeks since the interviews have been conducted; therefore, it can be argued that the schools’ physical conditions represent an element worth investigating further.
5.2.8 Workload

Teachers from all three schools complained about the amount of work (administrative work in particular) they have to carry out. However, this paragraph is meant to analyze the element of workload related to each school, as it offers different perspectives worth reflecting upon.

*Kungsgårdsskolan* (preschool) respondents recognized to have a big issue with their workload. As previously explained, R2 feels forced to bring the work home and often conducts her planning and administrative tasks overnight, while not being paid for such extra hours. Conversely, R1 is aware that the workload would require her to work overtime but she refuses to do it because the school would not pay her for that.

R1 and R2 adopt two different approaches to the issue. However, it cannot be taken for granted that the other teachers employed at *Kungsgårdsskolan* have the same determination of R1 in recognizing what is unfair and acting accordingly, or the same patience of R2 in enduring her condition. In other words, it cannot be excluded that the other teachers employed there are not already harbouring turnover intentions due to this issue.

These assumptions call for a quick resolution, thus *Kungsgårdsskolan* should take the problem as seriously as possible, prioritizing its resolution. Solutions may include offer IT tools that help teacher carry out tasks quicker, pay teachers for the extra hours worked or hiring an assistant that can help teachers with administrative tasks.

For what concerns *Klockarskolan* (high school), seems worth noticing a few elements. The only teacher that would harbour *organizational* turnover intentions in relation with a further amount of administrative workload is R5. The number of students in the classroom highly affects such workload: more students mean more administrative documents to produce and this requires teachers to fulfil more administrative tasks.

From that perspective, it is interesting to observe that although R5 did not complain directly about her class size, not only her classroom is the most crowded among the *Klockarskolan* teachers interviewed (25 students against 20 of R4 and R6), but she is also the least experienced teacher (four years experience against R4’s fifteen and R6’s fourteen).
It could be argued that dealing more efficiently with work tasks comes with experience. If this assumption is true, probably Klockarskolan should consider putting little experienced teachers into little crowded classrooms and more experienced teachers in more crowded ones, in order to make novice teachers gradually deal with increasing class sizes (and workloads). As some interviewed teachers pointed out, 5 students more or 5 students less can make the difference between an overcrowded classroom and one comfortable teaching to.

Moreover, for the same reasons explained in the paragraph related to the administrative support and due to the tight connection between support and workload, Klockarskolan should implement all the aforementioned measures to make its IT platform familiar to all teachers.

Analyzing the matter in relation with Enbacka skola leads to similar conclusions. R8 and R9 are the least experienced teachers, both having an 8 years career. While they teach a classroom of 22 and 23, respectively, R3 has a 19 years experience and teaches a class of 17 students.

Since all the interviewees felt dissatisfied with the amount of administrative workload they are expected to carry out, it could be useful to adopt the measures explained for Klockarskolan. Small class sizes to novice teachers and bigger class sizes for experienced ones. Moreover, given the strict relationship between workload and administrative support, just one Enbacka skola teacher cited the school IT platform when talking about the support offered. Thus, it may help organizing meetings to make all teachers aware of such tool in order to make them deal more effectively with administrative tasks.

Almost half of the teachers interviewed declared that they could harbour organizational turnover intentions in case of a further increase of the workload. However, since they are already dissatisfied about it, it cannot be excluded that the persistence of the situation could lead them to harbour turnover intentions in the future. Therefore, the three schools should take such eventuality very seriously and adopt measures meant to prevent it.
5.2.9 Collaboration

Globally, it seems that the three schools are able to successfully deal with their teachers’ collaboration needs by providing dedicated spaces for that. Nevertheless, schools should consider incrementing the frequency of teachers’ collaboration encounters. Two teachers (R1 and R7) stated that they would harbour organizational turnover intentions should they start experiencing collaboration issues with their peers. It can be argued that such issues can be divided in two categories: those that stem from schools’ faults (e.g. not providing teachers enough time and space to collaborate) and those who originate from people not getting along well enough (from a work perspective) to collaborate profitably. While the schools are directly responsible of avoiding the former, it can be particularly tricky to counter the latter, which are very personal because they are based on individual criteria. The three schools object of this study seem already successful in dealing with the first category of potential issues, with the exception that they should provide teachers more collaborating time, as previously stated. What schools can do about the second category of problems is to focus on hiring people qualified and with a collaborative personality. This could minimize the risk of teachers harbouring turnover intentions due to an unsatisfying collaboration with their colleagues.

5.2.10 Orderly environment

All the respondents affirmed that they are satisfied with how the rules are obeyed in their school. Thus, it seems not worth to further develop this point.
5.2.11 Parental interference

Differently than all the other elements discussed, it can be considered useless identifying different patterns for each one of the schools involved in this study. The interviews showed that parental interference is a constant for all three schools; trying to counter it appears complicated because, conversely than all the other elements discussed so far, it lies outside the direct sphere of influence of each school.

This does not mean that the schools should passively cope with this problem. When asked about the matter, R1 and R5 related it also to a lack of support from their principals that are, according to them, too concerned about losing money in the eventuality the parents move their children to other schools. Should this be true, the principals would be making a huge mistake: evaluating the potential cost of losing students while ignoring the potential price of losing teachers.

Due to the different perspectives of the subjects involved, countering this issue is all but simple; it requires a combined effort between teachers and principals. There are several possible approaches that may reveal useful to reduce parental interference. The teachers of each school should act jointly, organizing meetings with their principals to discuss the problem together in order to make them aware about its relevance. It will be the responsibility of the principal then to find the right balance between supporting teachers and considering the parents’ requests.

Teachers’ good interpersonal skills play an important role in determining a productive teacher-parents communication. This means that they should be required to master verbal and non-verbal communicating skills: conveying empathy and a genuine care for people, as well as using a simple language and a non-threatening tone promote an effective conversation with parents (Graham-Clay, 2005). To this matter, principals should investigate whether the parental inference perceived by teachers is worsened by an unsuccessful teachers-parents communication. Should it be found true, it might be useful for principals to consider investing in order to set up seminars where teachers and communication experts can deal together with the issue.
The administrative documentation that teachers are expected to produce is considerably increased by parents’ requests: according to some interviewees (R5, R6, R8), parents use to demand all types of unnecessary information that teachers are required to compile in a written form. Such administrative documentation is regulated by several policies, and to this regard each municipality has a certain extent of freedom on determining which documentation has to be mandatorily produced.

To this regard, the principals of all three schools should consider referring the problem to the school department of Säter’s municipality. The aim would be to encourage a review of their policies in terms of mandatory documentation that teachers are required to produce. Streamlining teachers’ administrative workload would have beneficial effects from several perspectives: as it was previously explained, elements such as administrative support and workload are interconnected. Making teachers able to compile fewer documents would lead them to need less administrative support and feel less overworked.

The findings of this study showed that parental interference strongly emerged as an alarming issue, as its connection with the potential turnover intentions of many respondents was evidenced by the interviews. Schools cannot afford to wait any longer: most of the teachers that complained about parental interference declared that a further parental meddling would make them harbour turnover intentions. Given the fact that such interfering trend has continued to increase up to this day, nothing indicates that it will stop in the future. However, even if it remains at the same level, it cannot be excluded that at some point teachers would feel to have had enough of it. Therefore, the most probable effect of the schools’ inactivity toward this matter would be the turnover of teachers, which may leave trying to find a school context where parents are less oppressive. Thus, schools should deal with the issue as soon as possible and consider putting the resolution of the problem high on their priority list.

The next page provides a schematisation of the result and analysis sections. The asterisk means that the related element has been found to be relevantly related to turnover intentions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kungsgårdsstalan (1)</th>
<th>Enbacka skola (2)</th>
<th>Klockarskolan (3)</th>
<th>Related to turnover intentions?</th>
<th>What schools should consider doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1 dissatisfied about her salary compared to the hours worked. R1 and R2 are required to work overtime without pay</td>
<td>R3 and R8 are dissatisfied for reasons the school is not responsible about</td>
<td>Respondents are satisfied about the salary and its development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hire internally motivated teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salary</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>Implemented in all three schools since September 2014</td>
<td>Not related</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td>All teachers considerably satisfied</td>
<td>Not related</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative support</strong></td>
<td>Due to its lack, R1 and R2 are overworked teachers that need to bring the work home</td>
<td>All teachers are dissatisfied, except for R8 which is the only one that talks about the IT platform</td>
<td>R5 is dissatisfied and claims that the IT platform is useless. R6 is overworked and clueless about how school could provide support</td>
<td>Yes. Teachers (R1, R4, R7) would harbour organizational turnover intentions due to a lack in case of R7 a further decrease of administrative support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class size</strong></td>
<td>R2 is dissatisfied. She thinks the kids groups are overcrowded and school is understaffed</td>
<td>All teachers considerably satisfied</td>
<td>Yes. R2 would harbour organizational and professional turnover intentions if class size increases</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical conditions</strong></td>
<td>All teachers considerably satisfied</td>
<td>Not related</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>(2)(3) Organize technicians-teachers meetings to present IT platform, ask for feedbacks, host troubleshooting sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workload</strong></td>
<td>The increased workload forces R1 and R2 to bring the work home. The lack of administrative support worsens the issue</td>
<td>All teachers complained about the amount of workload, novices required to handle big classrooms</td>
<td>R5 is the youngest, has most crowded classroom, complains about the amount of administrative workload. R6 is dissatisfied, thinks workload has increased</td>
<td>Yes. R2, R3, R5 and R9 would harbour organizational turnover intentions should the workload increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration</strong></td>
<td>All teachers satisfied, but would need more collaborating time</td>
<td>R5 not satisfied, considers her peers as incompetent. Other teachers satisfied but would need more collaborating time</td>
<td>Yes. R1 and R7 would harbour organizational turnover intentions should they have troubles collaborating with peers</td>
<td>(3) Focus on hiring qualified, collaborative people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orderly environment</strong></td>
<td>All teachers satisfied</td>
<td>Not related</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parental interference</strong></td>
<td>Vast majority of teachers irritated and dissatisfied. Interference worsened in the last years. Parents perceive to be in a position of power and teachers perceive lack of support from the principals</td>
<td>Yes. R1, R3, R5 and R8 would harbour organizational turnover intentions should parental interference increase</td>
<td>(1)(2)(3) Organizing principals-teachers and communication experts-teachers meetings to discuss the issue. Ask municipality to review policies on mandatory documents</td>
<td>Table 8: schematisation of both the result and analysis. Source: interviews with the respondents R1-R9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Conclusions

The turnover of teachers constitutes a topic that has been widely researched by scholars. Since teachers’ turnover in Sweden represents an aspect that is becoming more and more concerning for schools, the purpose of this study has been to dig expressly into its precursors. A specific contextual approach was adopted, seeking to explore the causes of teachers’ turnover intentions in three Swedish schools.

The findings of this research indicated that several elements were consistent with previous studies while others were not. A new contextual element was discovered: parental interference represented one of the most relevant aspects of this thesis, and the relationship with teachers’ turnover intentions that emerges in this study seem to have been neglected by scholars up to now.

Factors such as workload, administrative support and parental interference itself were found to be considerably related with the turnover intentions of the respondents. From this perspective, the school appeared powerless, as the interviewed teachers exposed its inability to deal productively with their needs related to such elements.

The reasons behind such inability are various, and one of them is perhaps the most meaningful. It emerged during the interview with the deputy of Säter’s school department that the municipality does not have a formal plan to foster the retaining of teachers. Surveys were specifically tailored for schools several years ago, but not anymore.

The result is that the municipality is unable to collect data regarding the perspective of teachers and therefore ineffectively adopts its own view toward the matter, with poor results. Given the elements emerged from the interviews with the teachers, this approach from the school department appears very risky. Through taking into consideration just its own perspective, the department is not able to provide useful measures to support the teachers’ needs. Several teachers evidenced their dissatisfaction toward the various elements discussed, and often stated that a further worsening of the situation would make them harbour turnover intentions.
However, it cannot be excluded that even if the situation remains stationary, continuing to experience such dissatisfaction would lead teachers to become intolerant and to consider leaving their job position. Moreover, all the elements most relevantly related with their turnover intentions have been subjected to an increasing trend in the last years.

Therefore, the schools together with the school department of Säter should prioritize a quick resolution of the issues. They both should consider to quickly adopt a united direct channel of communication (e.g. meetings where to discuss the problems) in order to promote an effective and synergic approach meant to minimize the risks of teachers harbouring turnover intentions.

7 Research limitations

This research is subjected to numerous limitations. The main limitation is related to the fact that the research has been conducted in one small municipality in Sweden. To this regard, it seems difficult to determine how and whether the particularity of the context influenced the findings, an aspect that limits the generalisability of this thesis.

Another relevant limitation is that the template analysis has been conducted on the translated transcripts. One of the authors proceeded to translate and transcribe the findings from Swedish to English since he was the only one fluent in Swedish. Therefore, although the process has been repeated two times and carried out with precision, some imprecision might have happened.

The choice of the template analysis as the method of data analysis is not immune from limitations too, as the researchers’ subjectivity could have influenced the process.
References


Sätters Historia [ Sätters history] (2016) Retrieved April 09, 2016, from [http://www.sater.se/omkommunen/fakta/historia.4.3900d83e109e2e5031c800014505.html](http://www.sater.se/omkommunen/fakta/historia.4.3900d83e109e2e5031c800014505.html)


Appendix 1 – Interview guideline for respondents R1 – R9

How long have you been a teacher?

Where do you teach? When did you start teaching there?

What kind of subject?

How old are your students?

Why did you enrol into teaching?

When you started teaching, did the school provide you any mentoring?

Does the school provide you any support for the administrative tasks you are required to fulfil? If you have any issue related to them, does the school assist you?

Does the school provide you enough autonomy?

What do you think about the number of students you have in the classroom?

What do you think about the physical conditions of the school?

What do you think about your workload?

How is the collaboration between you and your colleagues?

Within the school, are the rules respected by everyone? Principal, teachers, students?

How is the relationship with the students’ parents?

What do you think about your salary?

Among all the elements discussed [all the teachers were provided a list of the elements discussed that they could observe when asked this question], are there some that would make you consider leaving your actual job position?
Appendix 2 – Interview guide with Säter school department

What is your position?

What are your responsibilities?

What is the actual trend in the field of teachers within the region of Dalarna?

How does the Säter school department work strategically to make the teachers willing to stick to their job position?

What aspects do you think are more important to retain teachers?

As the school department, do you have any formal plan specifically tailored to improve the retention of teachers?

Do you think teachers in Säter are satisfied about their job?

What do you do as a department to capture the teachers’ voice?