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## THE MARKET ORIENTATION AND INNOVATION PRACTICES IN THE FINNISH SCHOOL CONTEXT

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of my ethnographic study is to understand the phenomenon of market orientation in Finnish school context. Based on the literature the market orientation has become one part of school policy and school action in many western countries since 1990's, however, it is still unknown what does the market orientation mean in school practice level, or in school changing process. Therefore, I studied the current phenomenon in four different schools. I perceived that these schools endeavoured to improve their teaching service and school implementation focusing on their customers. Furthermore, they tried to develop their school more distinguishable from other schools by emphasizing some subjects, arranging a whole school day in a new way, and marketing their school, or trying to acquire more and better resources for the school, for example. Hence, the schools had adopted and created different kinds of market orientation forms that guided school actions and changed the school practice in many ways in these schools.

Keywords: Market orientation, practice, ethnography, Innovation practices, Finnish school policy

### **Introduction**

In recent years the Finnish school system has succeeded very well in Pisa surveys and acquired an excellent worldwide reputation. It has been presented the success of the Finnish school system has inter alia been founded on social justice, and equality, and national core curriculum; furthermore, a role of teachers has been pointed out (Alasuutari et al. 2009). However, since 1990s many global, and political changes have occurred in school environment arising from social, and economic crisis in Western countries, and these changes also have found their ways into the Finnish school system. In the literature have been particularly discussed neo-liberalism and market orientation in school policy. (Grek et al. 2009; Dougherty 2009; Rinne 2001 & 2003; Seppänen 2006; Oplatka 2005; Oravakangas 2005.) Furthermore, many researchers have argued that school policy and education have become one of the most important competitive issue in many Western and Asian countries (Arnesen A-L & Lundahl. 2006; Francis 2006; Ka-ho Mok 2002; Ornelas 2004; Reid 2006). Moreover, some scholars have even presented that these changes that stress competition, and parent's choice possibilities, and custom-based school services, have inevitably impacted on school implementation, and have increased differences between schools In Finland, and are thus

threatening to dissolve welfare society, and a parity between schools and pupils in Finland (Seppänen 2006; Seppänen et al. 2012; Rinne 2001 & 2003; Oravakangas 2005). In addition in a social perspective scholars (Gewirtz 2005; Lupton 2005; Thrupp & Lupton 2006) have highlighted the importance of school context, social capital, and social justice in school improvement.

Based on former it is obvious that the concept of market orientation has widely used in different researches, and the phenomena includes many kinds of dimensions and perspectives in the school context, however, only a few researches have focused on the market orientation from multidisciplinary perspective. Furthermore, I argue that the concept is generally misunderstood and unknown in the school policy and practice. One reason for this is that concepts such as market economy, marketing, and customer are mixed and misunderstood, or fogbound in school discussion, too.

I paid attention to changes that were similar to marketing activities during my twenty years record as a teacher in different kinds of schools; therefore, I became interested in to study the market orientation phenomenon in Finnish school context. Although a few researches concerning marketing and the market orientation in the school policy have been done in Finland, and several in other countries, however, we have little knowledge about that how school practice, that is what practitioners really do (Orlikowski 2010) in different schools, is embodying the market orientation. Therefore, the purpose of my ethnographic research is to pay attention to this gap increasing the knowledge of this current phenomenon in the school context. As a result of my study I, in this paper, describe and highlight novel solutions, and innovative and strategic changes that schools have created in their context in times of turbulence. I do this through four practice-based narrative descriptions. Moreover, based on the literature of management and my empiric data, I am developing a school context-based model that could benefit to manage practice and innovation practices in future.

In this study I had two main questions. First, I was interested in *what does market orientation mean in different schools*. And second, because I noticed that these schools had created different forms of market orientation, I was interested in the question *how different forms of market orientation change practice in these schools*. Despite the fact that the Finnish school system is based on the national core curriculum, I found out that the schools, and classes, even at the same school, differed many ways in my research. Also, my data revealed differences between leadership styles of the headmasters. In addition, the schools have planned different kinds of strategies trying to survive and be more attractive in the middle of pressures and disharmonious expectations that have been created them by governance and parents. For example, they emphasized pedagogical thoughts, or subjects,

or learning methods, or school implementation as a whole. Furthermore, teachers apply individual teaching and pedagogical methods to practical problems. Moreover, the schools have used marketing methods acquiring more pupils or endeavouring to make better their market position, but this is mainly a distress of the headmaster. Finally, every school had a developmental process of their own that was closely linked up with their context.

The paper at hand is organized as follows. First, I introduce background theories and former researches. Second, I introduce the data and used methods. Third, I describe the research schools and their actions in practice from the market orientation point of view. I do this through four narratives that are based on my data. Fourth, I discuss my findings concerning different forms of market orientation and how these forms have changed school practice in these schools. Finally, I introduce four different kinds forms of market orientation in a model I am improving. I have named that *the context-based model of innovation management*.

## **Theoretical framework and former researches**

### ***Theoretical Perspective of Market Orientation***

Several researchers have studied market orientation theoretically. In this paper I highlight the importance of market orientation for organizations both in public sector and in non-profit organizations. Kohli and Jaworski (1990, 3) present that the concept of market orientation includes three commonly accepted core themes or “pillars”: customer focus, coordinate marketing and profitability. The most obvious of these core themes is customer focus. This central element of the market orientation involves obtaining information from customers about their needs and preferences. Obtaining information organizations need actions of market intelligence, not on verbalized customers opinions alone. They understand (Kohli & Jaworski 1990) market intelligence as a broader concept that includes, first, consideration of exogenous market factors that affects customer needs and preferences, and second, current as well as future needs of customers.

Second element of the market orientation is coordinated marketing (Kohli & Jaworski 1990, 3). This element emphasizes an idea that the market orientation is not only the responsibility of a marketing department. Furthermore, this point of view stresses the importance of concerted actions by various department of an organization, and it is critical for a variety of departments to be cognizant of customer needs and to be responsive to those needs. They also highlight (Kohli &

Jaworski 1990, 15-16) senior managers role in market orientation process:

*Senior managers must themselves be convinced of the value of a market orientation and communicate their commitment to junior employees, and senior managers might alter to foster a market orientation pertains to organization wide systems.*

Helfert et al.(2002, 1120) argues based on the former researches (Kohli & Jaworski 1990 and 1993; Narver & Slater 1990; Becker & Homburg 1999) that traditionally three perspectives can be distinguished from a conceptual point of view on the market orientation; first, behavioural perspective means organization-wide generation of market intelligence, second, cultural perspective includes an idea that market orientation is the organization culture and climate that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviours for the creation superior value for buyers (or customers), and third, in system based perspective they lean on Becker and Homburg (1999) who conceptualize market-oriented management in terms of the degree to which management systems are designed in such a way as to promote organization's orientation towards its customer and competitors. In this approach the management system is divided into five subsystems: organization, information, planning, controlling, and human resource system.

Researchers in marketing suggest that market orientation is a set of specific behaviours and activities (Kohli and Jaworski 1990), a resource, a basis for decision-making, or an aspect of organizational culture (Day 2000; Despondé, Farley, and Webster 1993; Slater and Narver 1995). Slater and Narver (1995) clearly assert that market orientation (1) is an aspect of organization culture, (2) is inherently a learning orientation, and (3) requires more research to understand the norms and values that enhance both the market orientation and organizational learning. According to Slater and Narver (1995, 63), such research enhances effectiveness by explaining the "process of learning, behaviour change and performance improvement." (Hurley & Hult 1998, 42.)

Although they (Hurley & Hult 1998) point out the market orientation is inherently a learning orientation, and a shift from market orientation to learning orientation is a valuable contribution, however, they perceive a contradiction between ideas that market orientation and learning orientation are inherent separately, and also a learning orientation mediates the market orientation-performance linkage. They argue that apparent contradiction can be resolved by incorporating constructs related to innovation into these models, furthermore, quoting them models of market orientation should focus on innovation (implementation of new ideas, products, or processes) rather than learning (development of knowledge and insights) as the primary mechanism for responding to

markets. Moreover, they claim that market and learning orientation both are separate antecedents of an innovative culture. Thus, organizations whose cultures emphasize innovation when resources are available tend to implement more innovations and develop competitive advantage.

In addition former scholars Jaworski and Kohli (1993, 56) have highlighted innovative behaviour suggesting that, because “a market orientation essentially involves doing something new or different in response to market conditions, it may be viewed as a form of innovative behaviour.” However, Hurley and Hult (1998, 43) criticize them arguing that Jaworski and Kohli do not recognize that innovativeness can be an aspect of a group’s culture, just as a market orientation can be manifest in culture.

As results of their study Hurley and Hult (1998, 51) found the innovativeness of a group’s culture has a significant and positive effect on innovative capacity, and when the group’s culture is characterized by more receptivity to new ideas and innovation, it is associated with higher levels of innovation. Furthermore, they found innovative capacity as a clear measure of the group’s success at change and adaptation. Therefore, they highlight that organizational culture and innovation are important construct, hence, these constructs should be addressed more fully in research on market and learning orientation, in which primary focus is understanding the process of organizational adaptation, responsiveness, and performance.

### ***Former researches in global and national school context and in non-profit organization***

In my study I am focusing on market orientation in four different public schools in Finland. The schools are non-profit organizations and acquire funding for their implementation and activities from municipal based mostly on number of their pupils and teaching groups. Strictly speaking it is a responsibility of municipality to arrange teaching for 6-17 age children in Finland, and the state pays state subsidy for teaching costs to municipalities depending on their number of school age children, and finally, local governance decides how resources are shared between schools.

In Finland children start the school in a year of their seventh birthday, normally. It is mostly recommended that they go to a school that are the nearest school to their home. However, they and their parents have possibilities to choose some other school if they have special needs or want to take part to some emphasizing subjects, for example. It is quiet common children choose between different options before third grade and before seventh grade during their compulsory education. Their compulsory education begins at the age seven and takes ten years or to that day when they

have passed through comprehensive school. It takes normally nine years. Based on Finnish Basic Education Act children have rights to public school education that include books, other learning materials, meals and school transport if the distance between her/his home and the nearest school is more than five kilometres.

Since 1990s marketing and market orientation has become the part of school activities in global context. Oplatka (2007) argues the concept of market orientation is a key element in marketing the school. Leaning on him it includes three related components of market orientation. These are customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination. Oplatka (2007, 293) understand the market orientation is a set of beliefs that puts customers' interest first, but at the same time pays attention to competitors and raises the school's awareness of the need to obtain information about them and establish cross-departmental activities to satisfy customers' needs. It is obvious that Oplatka bases his thought on business research, and so this perspective is understandable and correct, but I will present some critical point of views concerning the market orientation in school context later in this paper.

There are researchers who connect market orientation, innovativeness and culture together. For example, Hurley & Hult claim quoting Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster (1993);

*Organizational innovativeness is important for understanding market orientation and organizational learning, and these relationships should be explored in the context of culture.*

Based on their study, and empirical findings, and theoretical arguments (Hurley & Hult 1998, 51) they argue that innovation is a mechanism for organizations to adapt in dynamic environments, and when members of a group are encouraged to learn and develop and able to influence group decisions, the group has more innovativeness, hence, the development of people and the innovativeness of the culture has a strong connections.

Concerning relationship between market orientation and innovation in non-profit organizations Hurley & Hult present (1998, 52); the market orientation is a source of new idea and motivation to respond to the environment. In this case, people in a market-oriented organization think about, talk about, and act in ways that respond to the external environment. Thus, similar to learning and development and participate decision-making, market orientation promotes a receptivity to innovation in a group's culture. Moreover, market orientation and learning are antecedents to innovativeness.

Furthermore, they highlight that framing the market and learning orientation paradigm in terms of innovation facilitates the inclusion of non-profit organizations in this line of research, and although the definition of markets must be tailored to reflect the complexity of external relationship in organizations such as hospitals, universities, government agencies, understanding the mechanism by which these organizations respond to their environments is vitally important. Therefore, they (1998, 53) see that more work must be done that pertains to market and learning orientation among non-profit organizations. Quoting them (1998, 53),

*Many non-profit organizations (e.g. government agencies, universities, hospitals) are under tremendous pressure to change. More research is needed to determine how these bureaucratic organizations can become more market oriented.*

The market orientation is multidimensional concept, and if possible, it is more complicated in school context. Oplatka and other scholars are united on customer focus in the market orientation; therefore, it has to be so in the school context, too, and I am agree with this thought. However, it is not clear who are schools' customers. Oplatka suppose these are pupils and parents, but it is possible to find more customers, or customer groups in the school context. I argue that society, other schools, firms and employers are customers, too. I lean on Laitila (1999, 179-180) who use term 'primary customers' meaning pupils and parents. He also present four 'ideal types' that are guiding schooling, these are: primary customers, political-governance, business and economic life and teaching profession. In my opinion this classification also manifest customers group in education and education policy. Therefore, thinking who are schools' customers guides me to rethink whose are customers in school context and 'identity question' what is the main task of public schooling.

### **The data, method and research theories and perspectives**

#### *The Practice Theory and The Concept of Practice*

In my study I start from practice and practitioners. I understand that the practice is what the practitioners, such as teachers, headmasters and other people, really are doing in schools. I am interested in how they do their work (practice) and what kind of novel solutions or innovation activities (innovation practices) they have created in their sociomaterial world.

I interested in practice through changes that appeared in schooling in the beginning of my record as a teacher. I worked at a school that started to emphasize dance, and concerned to teach immigrants, and began marketing the school, and aspire to compete for pupils between neighbour schools. I took apart this process and at the same time I wondered what was occurring in the school life. Hence, I began to pay attention to other schools if they had created same kinds of strategic solutions than the school where I worked. I discussed with other colleagues, and read newspapers, and literature, watched the news on television, and soon it was quiet clear for me that some schools had developed this new kind of action in their implementation. After that I interested in to research the current phenomenon. I chose four different schools for my ethnographic study trying to understand the phenomenon in practice. Based on the foregoing, I understand that my research approach is near the logic of practice rationality (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2011). Many of scholars in social science have presented the idea of practice turn, too (i.a. Schatzki et al. 2001; Reckwitz 2002; Whittington 2006). Thus, I spent a year in these schools and gathered my data for my study.

Furthermore, I was interested in what teachers, headmasters, and other practitioners really are doing in the schools. So, I studied the practice, and the current phenomenon through practitioners. As Orlikowski (2010) argues the practice is something that practitioners really are doing in practice. This approach means in my research that I focus on real life, actions, and especially on those routines that really emerge at schoolwork.

Moreover my study concerns the sociomaterial world where the practice, the practitioners, and the things are entwined together. I see my study as a cross-section of the real world. In this cross-section I have first looked at the core of the phenomenon researched in my study. From the logic of practice point of view it is essential part of my method that I initiated from practice without any idea about the concept of market orientation. The starting point for my study was a curiosity, and my interest in what was occurring in the school life at that moment. During my ethnographic field study, also, I read literature concerned school implementation and school policy, hence, my knowledge of the phenomenon accumulated and I understood that the market orientation was the befitting concept for my research. Based on the foregoing, I understand, for example, that teacher in doing his/her work is inseparable part of the sociamaterial world (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2011). Thus, in teaching process teacher is never separated but always already entwined with others and things in specific sociomaterial practice worlds (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2011, 243).

In my research I am searching for this entwinement in the Finnish school context in times of turbulence when traditional school implementation is changing and threatened. Leaning on



Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011, 345) this strategy implies that researcher focus on how practitioners are ordinarily involved in the relational whole within which they carry out their tasks. They present that entwinement strategy (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2011, 346):

*First, is taking sociomaterial practice as the point of departure that is, focusing on the entwinement of practitioners and tools in sociomaterial practices. Second, as a result, the focus is not on people alone but on what people actually do that is to say, the activities they are involved in to achieve particular purposes. Focusing on activities reveals patterns of sociality, tool use, and empowerment (Nicolini, 2009a: 125).*

From this perspective, I mainly focus on what people actually do, and on the activities they are involved in to achieve particular purposes.

Through ethnographic methods, I believe, it is possible to reach for the knowledge, and grasp lived experiences, and accumulate the holistic understanding of the phenomenon of market orientation in the Finnish school context. Despite I study school action and activities, and the Finnish school policy from the market orientation perspective, I understand the market orientation concept as an open ended especially in the school context.

### ***Ethnographic method and research framework in my study***

Because the purpose of my research has all along been to increase holistic understanding of the current phenomenon in the multivoiced world (Denzin 1997), I chose ethnographic method for my research. I lean on Hakala (et al. 2007,211) who points out that ethnography challenges an impression of perfect understanding and harmony between researchers, furthermore, s/he challenges thoughts that the total truth is possible to reveal. At last the jumble of multivoiced field, and the randomness of encounters get the ethnography noticing it is impossible to tell and write the one and only truth or story. Thus, the ethnography constructs knowledge together with participants involved in his/her study. (Hakala et al. 2007, 211.)

The truth arises in interaction between novel and old. And, if we understand the reality is moving ensemble, therefore, we need to search for the model of truth that is inter alia narrative and deeply ethical, and open-ended, and disharmonious, and presentational, and political, and historical (Denzin 1997, 265).

I also understand that we are, as human beings, never separated but always entwined with others and things in specific sociomaterial practice worlds (Sandberg & Tsoukas 2011). Hence, I started from practice, and worked a year in the field gathering the data by several methods (Table 1.).

TABLE 1. The Data

Four Schools	Visits and observations	Interviews			Other Material
		teachers	headmasters	Pupils In Groups	
The market-oriented village school	8 days 2008–2009	5	2	3	The qualitative questionnaire for parents (246 answered papers, percentage of answers 58%),  Other materials produced by schools, as  Web pages, curriculums, photos, free discussions, observations and notes,  School secretaries interviews
The market-oriented comprehensive school	8 days 2009	5	2	3	
Top-rated school	8 days 2009	5	2	3	
Unpopular suburban school	8 days 2009	5	2	3	

I interviewed headmasters and teachers, and secretaries, and pupils during my visits to schools. I visited eight times each school during my field study in 2009. Furthermore, I studied curriculums and other materials that had been produced by the schools. In addition to above-mentioned methods, I observed school actions and made notes of my observation, and took photographs at the schools and in their environment.

My research questions are:

1) What does market orientation mean in different school? This question guided me to study, for example, how the schools are acting and what kinds of innovative solutions schools have created in their context in trying to take care of their customers' needs and expectations, furthermore, it was interest how these schools behaved in the relationship with other schools.

2) How different forms of market orientation change school practice? The second question guided me to find out, for example, what are those innovative changes and activities that embody the market orientation in these schools in practice level, and how these changes shape practitioners', such as teachers and headmasters work in the school level in my research schools.

Finally, my lived experiences in different kinds of schools, and studying former researches directed me to an idea to improve the school context-based model. In the model I endeavour to describe those elements that are entwined in school management process and are in the relationship with each other. I have improved the model leaning on several authors and my knowledge and experiences in different schools (i.e. Markkanen 1999; Balmer 2001; Thrupp & Luptn 2006). One of my research schools (The market-oriented village school) is described in the model (Figure 1.) with 'The market-oriented village school' –narrative, and others in the appendix (Figures 2-4).

#### **Four School Stories in times of Turbulence**

In this part of my paper I create general description of four schools in my study, and I describe these school's activities and actions from the market orientation point of view answering to my research questions: What does market orientation mean in different schools, and how different forms of market orientation change school practice. In the narratives I try to highlight innovations of the schools, organization learning and adaptation in their context from the customer, and competitor and system-based perspectives. These narratives are based on my interviews and my observations at the schools. After all narratives I shortly present my observations of the each school in the conclusion chapter.

#### **THE MARKET-ORIENTED VILLAGE SCHOOL AND ACTION CENTRE**

*The school is situated in a small village near one of the largest town in eastern Finland. The school is re-built as the result of the consolidation of municipalities at the beginning of 2000s. From the very beginning of the school's history it has served as an elementary school for children up to twelve years, but after the consolidation it has changed, and now it is a comprehensive school that serves pupils from the preschool to the ninth grade. One reason for the change was that the establishment of the comprehensive school was an essential precondition to acquire public funding of the state for the building process. There was not secondary school in the village, before. Thus, the municipality had to arrange bus transportation for pupils of lower secondary school until this change. The second reason for the change was an idea of the school headmaster who describes the situation before the new school that he saw one possibility in the changing process. He before didn't know anything about that kind of comprehensive school than their school is now, but he*

*understood they had to concentrate everything from a preschool to secondary school at the same building. Furthermore, it was important, he says, that the library of the village had to move to the new school building, too. Thus, the headmaster continues, they started to improve the school one kind of action centre of the village.*

*After the building project the school now has good facilities for 270 school age children, and the municipal is not needed to arrange bus transportation to secondary schools in a city centre, anymore. One teacher, who lives in the village also, highlights this system offers at least two hours more free time for secondary school's pupils, and furthermore, the solution gives more time for families to spend time and practise leisure-time activities together. However, the headmaster and teacher describe, the implementation needed much more than a mere idea, when they started to improve a new pedagogical implementation connecting two schools and two school cultures together. Many decision-makers went against the idea in the municipal and inside the school at that time. Finally, there was only one voice that resolved the decision in municipal council. And a person who gave the resolved voice voted against the opinion of the party of his own. Moreover, they used many days starting to construct new school culture and trying to make the acquaintance of each other.*

*The school has constructed relationships with other associations, which are acting in the village. The school together with these associations are now organizing different kinds of activities after school days that end different times depending on pupils and days. The school's secretary uses a part of her working time instructing first and second grade pupils and helping them with their homework after the school day. Moreover, the school arrange activities for children who have to come to the school before lessons in the morning; thus, pupils don't need to wait for their lessons alone or without any control. Many of the pupils have to wait their school bus after the school day because they live far a way from the village in the countryside. The headmaster argues they are offering some kind of total service for villagers.*

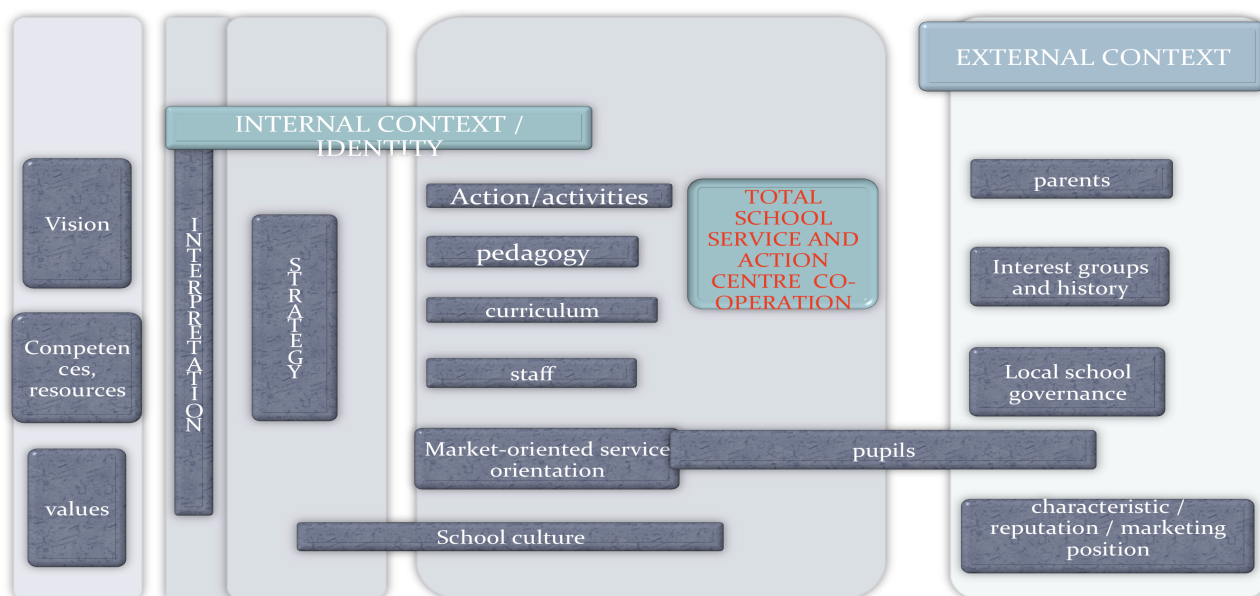
*Although there is different education and proficiency requirements for professional teachers in elementary and secondary schools in Finland, many teachers teach both in lower and upper level of the comprehensive school in this school. This is possible because these teachers have dual qualification involved in their education. This is important, because that arrangement enables this kind of system in small comprehensive schools. Therefore, the municipal and the school have supported teacher's studying alongside their teaching. Today having dual qualification is one of the main preconditions for teacher who would like to take up an appointment as a teacher at the school.*

One of these class teachers says that she loves her work and teaching both 'in elementary and secondary school', and tells that maybe without schools changing process she would never have taught in secondary school. Furthermore, she tells that some teachers have left the school, because they didn't adapt to the changes or new school system. Moreover, she describes the school is both action and spiritual centre of the village, hence very important to the village. This is so because, for example, they don't have a town hall in the village, anymore, for the reason that it has situated in a larger city after the consolidation of municipalities. Another teacher, who also teach both in elementary and in secondary school, says she came back to her home after her education and teaching period in capital. She tells that this school is different, and pupils of the school are totally different than in her school in Helsinki.

After ten years as a comprehensive school the school has a vision to be one in the front line among comprehensive schools in Finland. As the headmaster says one reason for this is that they need to have good position among these schools, so they have good possibilities to take part in different kinds of development processes in order to acquire resources for the school. During my field study the school took part in two different development projects.

Figure 1. The model of The school context-based management

## The school context-based management (The Market-oriented village school)



### *THE MARKET-ORIENTED MULTICULTURAL COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL*

*This comprehensive school is situated in eastern part of Helsinki. The school was established 1992 and served as an elementary school (classes 1-6) during nine years, but, since 2001 it has served as the comprehensive school where, at the moment, is studying 530 pupils from the first grade to the ninth grade. Furthermore, about 30 percent of the pupils are immigrants or children of immigrants. Moreover, the school is acting in environment where exist many kind of social and economic problems that manifest in school life. The school, or rather the headmaster, has invented a vision for the school as one member of the marketing teams said. The vision is: the school should be the most attractive school in the area in 2012.*

*Trying to reach their purpose and vision the school has emphasized science since the year 2009, and the emphasizing is possible for pupils from the third grade. However, everyone does not have this possibility, because the emphasized learning is possible those who will pass aptitude test. The school has started emphasizing science, because it tries, on the one hand, to attract more pupils to the school, and on the other hand, offer more choices for the pupils who already are studying at the school. As the headmaster tells one of the biggest problems in their school is that they have many excellent pupils, but also, a lot of those who have difficulties in their lives and studies, and need special education, hence, there are few average students in that school. Furthermore, some pupils are at a risk to dropout their studying or miss out their compulsory education, which means they will not have eligibility for further studies. Giving a hand to those pupils they have created 'an individual path of learning', so, they could fulfil their compulsory education.*

*The school is situated in the area where, the headmaster tells, are five schools, which are competing with each other in the area. He continues that they would like to emphasize sports or music, but local governance does not allow that. So they were forced to emphasize some subject that was free for emphasizing in 2009. For those pupils who study languages in the secondary level the school tries to offer a school trip to a country where the pupils have possibilities to use the language. The headmaster stressed these are that kinds of things children discuss with others, and thus, improve the image of the school.*

*Furthermore, the school has established a marketing team, which purpose is to arrange marketing activities, for example, the team has planned theme days and school booklet that is published once a month.*

*The school, or rather municipality offers activities for the first and the second grade pupils in the school premises after their school days. A Pentecostal church arranges the action.*

### *TOP-RATED SCHOOL IN A BIG CITY IN EASTERN FINLAND*

*This school is situated in a city that is among the ten largest cities in Finland. The school has emphasized music all a long its history. At those days in the 1970s music was the only subject that was impossible to emphasize in schools in Finland. But, local governance toughly controlled the emphasizing and decided which schools were allowed to emphasize music. Pupils could start to study music in third grade. Before that they were needed to take part in a test. After that those who passed the test continued their schoolwork in a 'music class'. It was common these pupils had to play in a school orchestra, too. In the city were three music classes at those days.*

*In 2000s the school has emphasized English. The school is situated near University of Eastern Finland, and the headmaster of the university has advocated the emphasizing English in an active way. Since emphasizing English the school has cooperated with English kindergarten, and almost everyone child in the kindergarten move to this school in the beginning of their school path. It can be said the school is the top-rated school because about 30% of 430 pupils in the school come to the school outside the 'official' school area and even from neighbour municipalities. The headmaster says that they are not needed to marketing their school at all.*

*The headmaster has appointed all teachers to their post during his record in that school as he mentioned in an interview. It seems the school is living in a harmony, however, one teacher said that some teachers feel that classes are grouped into three groups; first, into two emphasizing groups, English and music, and second, into the 'third' group as called normal class. Somehow this is felt the problem inside the school by teachers of 'third' groups, because these 'normal' classes in different grades are the largest ones. In addition, in these groups are studying those who need more special education, have more behaviour and learning difficulties than pupils in emphasizing classes.*

*It is obvious teachers of musical classes have more work than teachers who teach in normal classes. One teacher of musical class told and described he has a lot of work at the moment because they will travel to Britain with the orchestra that he conducts as a part of his work. Players of this orchestra are studying or studied in this school. Furthermore, he needs to do more work than in a normal class. He collects material for the orchestras, arranges different concerts and happenings together with parents, and scores composition for different kinds of musical groups. Nevertheless, the work is rewarding to him by reason of music. He is not able to compare the work in a normal class or in a music class because he has never taught in normal class in his 20-year record. He,*

*also, described the school market in the city. He doesn't like the changes that have happened recent years. For example, children who will go to musical classes don't get free transportation anymore. Second, schools try to keep roughly pupils of their own in that school and doesn't want let them to go to other schools. He argues he knows that someone has even lied to pupils saying that you can get the same music studies in this school; you don't need to change the school. Third, resources are going down all the time, and schools want to keep their pupils in their school. It might depend on one pupil how many teaching groups the school will have in the third grade.*

*Many teachers in the musical classes have come to this school from other school, although they have already taught in musical classes there. They prefer this school to the former. It seems that this school is top-rated among parents, teachers and children, although the headmaster argue they do not market the school at all.*

#### *UNPOPULAR SUBURBAN SCHOOL IN EASTERN PART OF THE CAPITAL*

*This school is acting in multicultural area where socioeconomic differences between households are very large. The school has received some awards concerning their communal pedagogy and a nongradedness approach to education. A small unit of this school is situated in the area that has very high socioeconomic status. In this unit pupils study their first and second school year. After that they have to change school building. Many of them change their school at that moment, too. For example, during my study only eight of forty of those pupils that had to go to third grade chose this school next year. They preferred choose other schools that emphasize languages or other school subjects, or schools that were more attractive than this school for some reasons.*

*Some persons who have worked a long time in this school described the school had lived different kinds of periods during last two decades. The school has implemented different pedagogical activities than normally has implemented in Finnish schools. Teachers have applied the nongradedness approach to education. As some staff members pointed out the school has lived disordered times sometimes, and the role of headmaster has been very pivotal. Headmasters have changed often. Furthermore, some of the headmasters have allowed very free teaching styles and thus, the way of the school has been, as they said, very wild during these periods. During the study the school was living quite peaceful period inside the school, although they lived in times of turbulence for the reason that many challenges appeared outside the school.*



*The headmaster and teachers have highlighted social aspects in their pedagogy and in the actions of the school. They do so because they are acting in a very challenging area from the social point of view. They pointed out they have succeeded in and reached their aims quite well from the social point of view. For example, one teacher mentioned it is not possible to reach every aim in his class. He said he often has to apply his teaching and teaching materials for his pupils, because many of his pupils are not able to concentrate on learning. He, actually, can be very satisfied if they come to the school every day. He also described that his work is hard in emotional perspective, because he knows what kinds of backgrounds his pupils have, thus he is able to understand their lives and problems. One can easily understand the pupils need a lot of caring and acceptance. Nevertheless, teaching staff often needs to admit they cannot do everything. In one case the headmaster had to take care of a second grade boy who has lost his patience and had behaved in an aggressive way in his classroom. The headmaster smoothed his ruffled feathers, and sent the boy home by taxi. The headmaster said he had to send the boy home, although he couldn't know what kind of situation he has at home. It might be so that boy's parents are drunk.*

*In addition to former kind challenges the school has lived under the pressure for the reason that local governance has not been able to decide what will be the future of this school. Policy-makers have disputed many years in different levels. Labour force of the school has been in the dark and uncertain about their future, too. Some parts of the school have transferred to other schools. Inter alia musical classes had been moved to a neighbour school. The headmaster told that the reason for this kind of situation has been the school building itself, as he understood the case. The school building is an object of protection, but needs renovation, also. Moreover, he suspected there might be some other reasons behind the situation.*

*Indecision among policy-makers and among municipal officials has taken many year, so many teachers have changed their school during this process. The headmaster made the same decision in the spring in 2009 and changed the school. He told that his contract of employment was renewed biannually in the last three years. That spring he expected the permanent contract, however, they offered temporary contract to him again. He could not live in that kind of limbo anymore. Leaving the school was very difficult decision to him and he cried when he described his feelings and explained the decision to me. A new headmaster started next autumn. That autumn I interviewed a person who has worked a long time in the school, and she told me that one municipal official has visited the school and explained why the former headmaster left. She wondered why the official told her different version to staff, because staff members already knew the real reason.*

*The new headmaster started her work in autumn. And one of her first idea was to attract more children to the school, especially those who live in the area. She told one of the biggest problems of the school was that so many parents avoid the school. Thus, they began to arrange more events for parents at the school and planned a puppet show for preschool age children.*

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I summarize my findings based on my interviews and observation in four different schools. Moreover, I finally try to outline the outlook of my research.

First, the market-oriented village school try to be the action centre. Based on the idea of the headmaster there are the new school building and the comprehensive school in the village. Trying to be more customer focused they offer total school service for pupils together with other associations. The school building serves the villagers better, too. The school has started to take marketing activities into account and stressed a good living and growth environment aspects in their communication.

For the reason that the school include both primary and secondary school now, some teachers have been supported to study more and acquire dual qualification. The changes at the school have changed teachers' work and some teachers have found new possibilities in their work, but some have left the school. Finally the role of the headmaster has been pivotal. He has worked as an ambassador of the school and an acquirer who tries to get resources for the school.

Second, the market-oriented multicultural school has highlighted marketing activities trying to become more attractive in the area. They have planned different ways to reach the parents and endeavouring to improve better relationship with parents. Inter alia, the school has arranged theme days for parents in a marketing point of view.

They, also, have paid more attention to children who are at risk to dropout or miss out their chance to pass their compulsory educations. Furthermore, the school offer the school trip and a possibility to go abroad for those who study languages in secondary school.

Third, the top-rated school emphasizes music and English. It also cooperates with English Kinder Garden. Because of their emphasizing subjects, mostly English, about 30 percent of the pupils come to the school outside the 'official area of the school'. The headmaster has done a long record in that school and he has appointed all teachers to the post in that school. The school is very popular

among teachers, thus many of them have just wanted to come to this school.

Some teachers feel and have noticed difficulties between teaching group because normal classes is studying more pupils, and more those who have learning problems and needs of special education. Fourth, the unpopular suburban school has implemented new pedagogical approach and emphasized social aims in their teaching. The school is acting in very difficult area, however they have received awards because of their communal pedagogy. It seemed so teachers worked very hard and with emotions in that school. Despite all the effort, they have felt the municipality officials have not supported them, and furthermore the indecision of officials complicated their work. Thus, many teachers had left the school.

In this paper I have studied market orientation in the Finnish school context. I have noticed that market orientation includes different dimensions in school life and is partly misunderstood in former literature. In my study these schools have created some kinds of novel and market oriented solutions in trying to adapt to their context and existing changes. Thus, it is obvious that the market orientation has changed the school practice in these schools. Furthermore, school have started to differ and constructed their image endeavouring to improve their market position. In addition they use resources like headmasters' and teachers' time for marketing their school.

Although, these schools have thought that the best way to improve their reputation is to pay attention to their teaching and school action, however, my study shows that developing process from the market orientation perspective is confusing school world and changed work at schools.

It seems to me that these schools are living between pressures and expectations that are complicated. The schools are acting in the market where they need to attract pupils and acquire resources for their action. They are expected to do their work well in different environments and context, although they do not have same possibilities to do that.

In future I will analyse my data more and focus on expectations and needs of parents and pupils. I do this studying the qualitative questionnaires and group interviews (Table 1.) that I already have gathered. Because the role of headmasters is so pivotal in developing process and in marketing activities in schools, I will study this more from champion theory perspective. Furthermore, I am interested in to focus on the market orientation phenomenon from system-based approach.

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