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School choice, parental preferences and  
segregation- in the case of independent schools  
in Malmö

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## Abstract

This master thesis examines if the policy of school choice, which was implemented in the early 1990s, may trigger segregation of different social groups in independent schools in the city of Malmö. The major actors for school choice are the parents, due to their responsibility to choose schools for their children. For the purpose of my research, the major focus lays on the factors that parents consider important when searching for independent schools and how those factors differ among the parents. The theoretical framework of the thesis primarily discusses the quality of education in regard to segregation and the role of parents. Two hypotheses, based on the theoretical framework are stated and guided the discussion within the analytical section. The method utilized in the paper is semi-structured interview. Ten principals of different independent schools in Malmö took part in the interviews. The questions targeted examining the role of parents, factors they consider essential and if they are well-informed about the schools and their programs. The analyzed interview results, combined with the theoretical discussions, indicate that Swedish parents have better chance to choose the best schools compared to parents from different ethnical background. However, neither Swedish parents, nor parents with different ethnical belonging are considered to be well-informed actors who choose independent schools in an informed way.

*Keywords:* school choice, parents, factors, independent school, segregation, quality of education

*Words:* 15632

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# 1. Introduction

During the 1990s, the Swedish government decided to undergo a dramatic reform in the educational sector. Some of the most noticeable characteristics of this reform were the allowance of parents to choose schools for their children and establishment of independent schools (friskolor). After the reforms, there has been rise of concerns how allowing parents to choose schools will influence segregation of different social groups.

My initial idea was that the establishment of independent schools and the freedom for parents to choose schools is a relatively new phenomenon in Sweden and there is limited research that investigates the relationship between parents and independent schools. Through reading the different research done on school choice I noticed that different scholars have different stances where some support school choice by being beneficial for the educational system and some rejecting the school choice as a tool to boost the educational system, resulting in more issues such as segregation, lack of equity, low student performance etc. One way to get an in-depth understanding of the issues related with school choice is to look at the parents because they are the one who choose schools for their children. Thus, I have decided that the purpose of this study will be to identify what are the factors that parents consider important when choosing an independent school. Once again, the reason why I focus particularly on parents and their choice is because they are vital piece in the puzzle, a piece that cannot be discarded when researching the topic of school segregation.

For the case of my study I have chosen the Swedish city of Malmö. Malmö is the third largest city in Sweden with a population of over 300 000 inhabitants and it is assumed to be quite international. According to statistics, more than 170 different nationalities constitute the population of the city<sup>1</sup>. The main reason why I have chosen that particular city is because of its multiculturalism. My expectations are that if there is segregation going on in Sweden, the most visible case for observing segregation will be the city of Malmö.

The paper will be structured in the following order. First I will state a research question that will guide me through the paper, followed by a section aiming the discussion of previous literature and theory. Moreover, in another section I will state two hypotheses in relation to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.malmo.se/english> obtained 25/04/2013

the theoretical discussion that will be reviewed later on in the analysis. The next section will have the purpose to discuss the qualitative method that I will incorporate in the research, which is semi-structured interview. The penultimate section of my research will focus on the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews. The thesis will be completed with concluding remarks.

## **2. Research question**

In order to conduct research on how school choice influences segregation in independent schools in Malmö, I have decided to pose the following research question:

- According to principal and vice-principals of independent schools in Malmö, what are the factors that parents consider important when choosing independent schools for their children?

The purpose of answering this research question is to gain an in-depth understanding whether particular groups of parents care about certain factors and whether those factors differ from the preferences of other groups of parents. Finding out that, based on a number of other assumptions, which will be discussed later in the text, will allow me to reveal whether school choice may lead to segregation.

## **3. Theoretical framework**

### **3.1 Defining social segregation in schools**

Scholars are usually defining segregation as separation of certain groups of people from other groups. The separation could be discussed in terms of residence, workplace and in the context of schools, as the separation of different social groups of students (Lindbom & Almgren: 623). Regardless of being so similar, other scholars in regard to segregation in schools define

it in terms of whether social environments are homogenous<sup>2</sup> or heterogeneous<sup>3</sup>. They suggest that if it is possible to detect homogenization of ethnicity of pupils, parental socioeconomic status and students' performance, we, therefore are noting segregation (Report nr 230 of the Swedish National Agency for Education/Skolverket). However, in my project I will be focusing on one another aspect of school segregation. Gabriel Sahlgren argues that school segregation may be understood as when more motivated parents for various reasons and preferences understand the school system better and thus place their children in the most desirable schools, whereas parents who are not that much motivated and their preferences differ from the inclinations of the first type of parents, subscribe their children into less desirable schools. Thus, the author argues that particular schools might be attended predominantly by students whose parents share similar preferences and background and consequently the quality of education in those schools may differ from other schools (Sahlgren, 2003: 6-7). Furthermore, another report from the Swedish National Agency for Education confirms that schools differ in academic results which can be explained by the difference in providing dissimilar quality of education. According to the report, the reason why certain schools provide better quality of education than others is due to their student composition and intake. The report continues that students and their parents who are more motivated to obtain high academic results and who are looking for quality of education take more advantage of the school choice reform and tend to choose schools where the majority of students are also driven by the same goal. Once again, the students of more motivated parents might end up sorted by their achieved academic results and motivation into better and more desirable schools (Report 374).

### 3.2 Swedish education system

The decision to allow for school choice in Sweden was debated for a long time before the reforms actually took place in early 1990s. After the election of a non-socialist government in 1976 the public sector became a target for abundant criticism for being unable to deliver

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<sup>2</sup> Homogenous society or group is consisting of people who share are alike and share common culture, ethnicity, values etc. <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/homogeneous> Obtained on 28/07/2013

<sup>3</sup> Diverse in character or content  
<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/heterogeneous?q=heterogeneous> Obtained on 28/07/2013

efficient services and being too expensive. The education was one of the primary topics for discussions. Arguments that the centralized education system fails to deliver the expected goals were increasing with rather fast pace. The need for reform in the education sector was mainly supported by business organizations and center-right political parties (Sahlgren, 2011; 2).

The full transformation of the education system in Sweden cannot be described by only one event but by a sequence of events. This paragraph has the purpose of discussing the events that contributed to the transition of one of most centralized education systems into the education sector of the present which can be described by words such as “*decentralization, goal steering, accountability, parental choice and competition*”(Björklund, 2004; 10). The initiation of the decentralization of the Swedish education system began with the transfer of authority from the state to the municipalities in 1990. This reform allowed municipalities to be fully responsible for the financing of the primary and secondary education. Although in the beginning, municipality powers were limited as financial control remained with the state by means of distribution of subsidies between rich and poor areas until 1993. This period could be marked as a transit or probation period. Another decentralization tool was the teachers’ pay determination. Before the decentralization, teachers were entitled to standardized salary, after 1990 the school managers were allowed to individualize each salary according to the teacher’s skills or profile. This led to increased wages for teachers which can be assumed as the price the state had to pay to the teacher’s unions to accept the decentralization from the state to the municipalities (Ibid: 10-11).

The second event that followed during the reform process was the allowance of children to choose between all public schools in the municipality. The rule of students attending only schools in the neighborhood (*närhetsprincipen*) was no longer completely valid (Böhlmark, 2007: 6). I am using the phrase no longer completely valid because students living in the local area were still prioritized over children from other areas that were applying to the same school. Additionally, children having their siblings in a certain school were further prioritized over the rest. After the reform process this regulation, according to the School Act, applies not only to public but also to private schools (Ahlin, 2003; 5).

Apart from the reform where students could choose between private or public schools which took place in 1992, the same year it was decided that private schools in Sweden will be subsidized by the local government. Although there were private schools before 1992 they



accounted only for less than one percent. Few of them were subsidized only partially by the central government and they were usually charging additional fees (Böhlmark: 5-6). The reform increased the number of private schools in many municipalities. According to statistics the percentage of private schools in 2000/1 increased to 8.4 and nowadays there are private schools in more than 50% of all municipalities (Ahlin: 4). The subsidizing of private schools was held in a way of school vouchers provided by the municipality. According to the voucher system each school, regardless of being private or public, is entitled to public funding in the form of subsidies dependent on the number of students the school has. In the beginning of the experiment with decentralizing education and increased educational choice, the private schools were granted only 85% of the amount a public school was granted. The private school at that time was allowed to charge additional fees if necessary. Later the public funding of private schools was reduced to 75% though later in 1994 it was decided that private schools will be granted exactly the same amount of subsidies as the public ones (Klitgaard, 2008: 490).

As I discussed before if independent schools or in regard to the Swedish case, free schools (friskolor) get approval for establishment, they receive public funding. Until 2008, the National Agency for Education (Skolverket) was the accountable body which received applications and certified the establishment of independent schools. Later the new established authority called Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen) succeeded the functions of Skolverket (Arreman, 2011: 228). The new body was responsible to monitor whether the school in the certain municipality comply with the regulations. When applying for a school establishment, the municipality, where the school is about to be situated also plays a role. If the new independent school will have a negative effect on the public schools in that area (for instance if the supply of schools exceeds the demand, then the schools capacity will not be filled with students, then the municipality school might need to close), the municipality may contact the Inspectorate which can deny access to the independent school. However, the municipality does not have the right to veto. Thus, it is claimed that municipalities do not have great influence in practice (Ahlin: 5-6).

To sum up, the Swedish education system after the reforms in early 1990s can be described as one of the most decentralized, competition-oriented and allowing school choice system in the world. Scholars argue constantly whether school choice and competition have positive or negative effects on the welfare state. Some of the positive effects might be that schools will increase their quality in order to compete and students' level of education might increase. On

the other hand, the school choice and competition might lead to segregating social groups by their socioeconomic status, ethnical background etc. My next sections, will however discuss those issues in a detailed way.

### 3.3 The relationship between quality of education and segregation

This section of my theoretical framework will have the purpose to discuss the reasons why school choice has the capability to decrease segregation in the educational sector. I have decided to structure this section in the following order: firstly I will use different scholars' arguments why increased school choice should be assumed to have positive contributions to the quality of education and secondly I will use a few quantitative researches to back up the latter arguments. Moreover, I will argue that higher quality of education in fact can be related to integration of different social groupings.

To begin with, I have found one really beneficial hypothesis that supports the advantage of having increased school choice and voucher system. According to Caroline Hoxby, if independent schools lose students, they lose at the same time money, which are in the form of subsidies from the state or municipality the school is situated in. In this regard, if independent school raises its productivity and the overall student achievement, they will consequently attract more students. The process of attracting students in one particular school will lead to reduction in students in other schools. Those schools will, in that case, have two possible options-either to increase its productivity so they can respectively attract students, being able to compete and continue its existence, or to fail in the competition and liquidate. Both cases provide us with the perception that only the middle-class and best schools will be left on the market (Hoxby, 2003: 14-15).

In the article called "*Can parents choose the best schools for their children?*", Joseph Bast and Herbert Walberg argue that students are performing better in education if their parents have exercised their right to choose a school. This result, they furthermore explain can be due to two reasons. The first one is that either parents are choosing wisely which school their child should attend or that the increased school choice produced competition between the schools, regardless of being private, charter, independent (as the friskolor in Sweden) etc. They stress the importance of the second reason by claiming that school competition has forced schools to increase their performance in regard to provide better quality of education so they can attract

more students. Furthermore, the competition due to increased school choice produces better schools. This is due to that fact that they are nowadays held responsible to better inform parents about their programs, staff and way of teaching. Consequently, the parents are encouraged to take an active part in the child's education which subsequently leads to better educational achievements for their children (Bast, 2003: 436).

There are several researches that analyze the outcome from the reform of early 1990s and find positive outcomes. One of the most discussed and prominent is the one of F. Bergström and F.M. Sandström. The scholars analyzed the influence of independent schools on the quality of the municipal schools in Sweden. Their empirical research was aimed by a database of more than 28000 ninth-graders from 288 municipalities during the academic year 1997/1998 (Sandström&Bergström, 2002: 5). The academic achievements of the students were a combination of national-test results and final marks. After testing different variables, the researchers confirm that greater competition which was due to increased school choice improves the standards of public schools (Ibid: 33).

The findings of the latter scholars attracted great attention within the scientific academia. Thus, another scholar decided to re-analyze their material. Åsa Ahlin, for instance, used the same data, but she also had access to students' sixth-year results. Furthermore, Ahlin's study was claimed to be free from some of the methodological doubts which have been expressed towards Bergström and Sandström's work. The outcome of her study is that increase in proportion of students in independent schools by 10% improves the results in mathematics by 0.19 standard deviation in their research. In other words, she does not only prove that their finding is valid but she stresses even more the importance of increase school choice and school competition (Lindbom & Almgren, 2010: 619).

Last but not least, Björklund et al. (2003) re-analyzed the data of Bergström as well. Instead of school year 1997/8 they used the database from 1998-2001 which enabled them to control for undetected alterations between the municipalities that might twist the results, for instance when independent schools are established in municipalities where the public schools are not providing satisfactory results in regard to students performance. Their study supports previous results that the establishment of independents schools has a positive influence on the results achieved by municipality schools and that school choice affecting the quality of education positively through school competition. The standard deviation was 0.14 when the proportion of students in independent schools increased by 10%. Furthermore, the study showed that

weak students do not gain as much as the strong students, but at least the former are not negatively influenced by establishment of more independent schools (Ibid: 619-620).

There is a reason why I have focused considerably on the competition between the schools due to increased school choice. In the article “*School Choice to Achieve Desegregation*”, Goodwin Liu and William L. Taylor argue that schools that have high expectations for their students usually have higher achievement rates. The question for pupils in such schools is not whether they will continue their education but where they will continue it. Such schools attract better teaching staff, more financial resources in the form of governmental subsidies etc. The scholars furthermore argue that if disadvantaged students, being disadvantaged either due to their ethnicity, scholastic achievement or socioeconomic status, will benefit greatly and learn how to “*negotiate the system*” if placed in better quality schools. Generally, such schools are of smaller classes and good teachers (Liu; Taylor, 2005: 798). As I discussed before that school choice leads to competitiveness between schools, which consequently results in an increase in educational quality not only in independent schools but also in public schools. In addition, the educational market is expected to be predominantly consisting of well-performing schools. Based on the scholars’ argument that disadvantaged students will be better off in well-performing schools can be interpreted that school choice contributes to decreasing the segregation, by allowing students and parents to choose schools and giving them the chance to succeed in life.

To sum up this section, arguments why segregation will be decreased due to increased school choice were provided. The main focus here was that if independent schools increase their quality of education, different social groups will benefit and will learn how to “negotiate” the educational system.

### 3.4 Reasons to believe that school choice causes segregation

Just as the many proponents of increased school choices who claim that it leads to quality productivity both for the independent schools and the public ones, there are opponents who argue that the increased choice leads to worse quality for some social groups by increasing segregation.

It has been found out that differences in students' scholastic achievement between independent and public schools are due to the ability of parents to choose schools. If parents differ in their ability to choose, the intake of students in the both types of school will be different. Students in independent schools, which are subsidized either by the state or the municipality, are usually considered to be the one with better achievements in reading compared to students from public schools. This assumption is assumed to be universal, meaning that it can be applied to more or less all countries (Dronkers, 2009: 3).

Additionally, many scholars claim that because of increased school choice the students in independent versus public schools differ systematically in terms of parental education, income, educational resources available at home, parental involvement in the students' education etc. They furthermore claim that if there is availability of parents to choose school and education for their children there will always be selection which additionally will contribute to increased segregation between the pupils and schools. Presumably, well informed and educated parents will always choose the "best" school for their children. The term "best" is used in an individual way, that for some parents one school can be classified as best and for the others not (Ibid:3-4)

Jaap Dronkers and S. Avram argue, after analyzing data from PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), that the majority of the parents when applying for educational programs with specific directions such as innovative career-oriented subjects, seek for education provided by the public supplier. However, in countries like Belgium, the Netherlands, Argentina, Chile and in this case Sweden, parents are focusing mainly on independent suppliers such as independent schools that are subsidized by the municipality. This implies that the majority of students who have or apply for specific educational direction end up being a separate homogeneous group either in independent or public schools (Ibid: 7-8).

It is interesting to note here that the latter scholars find that there is a correlation between choosing independent or public schools and nationality of the parents. According to them, native parents choose public schools for their children, whereas the majority of foreign parent chose the independent ones. Furthermore, they discovered that the occupational status of both parents is positively related with the choice of independent schools subsidized by municipality they are situated in. In other words, children whose parents are employed are more likely to be subscribed to independent schools. To sum up this paragraph it is argued that in countries like Austria, Denmark, Germany and Sweden independent schools are

targeted mainly by students with more cultural possessions at home, lower educated mothers and by parents with higher occupational status (Ibid: 8). This clearly speaks about separation of social groups by the latter variables which are a prerequisite to believe that the increased school choice leads to segregation.

Another argument that increased school choice leads to segregation is provided by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket; report 230). In their report, which is the third of a kind produced by the agency with aim to evaluate the school choice in Sweden, it is argued that the school choice reforms in early 1990s are mostly exploited by highly educated parents. This consequently affects the homogeneity in the schools. Furthermore, in the report, after analyzing data gathered by questioning senior school administrators in large and small municipalities across Sweden, the scholars note that the majority of the administrators consider that increased school choice has the effect of separating different social groups from each other, especially in regard to their ethnic identity.

Moreover, what is interesting in the report is the correlation between ethnicity composition and students performance. Two schools were examined, namely S:t Ilians in Vesterås and Tureberg in Sollentuna. The two schools have a relatively high percentage of students from foreign background. After observation of the schools in a period of four years, the researchers noticed that because of the school choice reforms, both schools increased their share for foreign students, from 24% to 42% in S:t Ilians and from 42% to 50% in Tureberg. During the schools increase in the percentage of foreign students, their student achievement ratio decreased by a few percent. The two cases investigated indicate that school choice strengthens segregation by ethnicity and reduces students' performance (Ibid).

In other studies, such as the study of Lindbom and Almgren (2007), where the two scholars use a combination of data on where the students reside and on what school the same students attend has the purpose to isolate the effects of increased school choice and the residential segregation effects. They found out that the effects of freedom of choice on school segregation are rather limited. However, it appears that the residential area plays a much bigger role when discussing the topic of segregation in schools. According to them, when researching segregation in schools, the primary "culprit" must be the residential area where the students are situated. Nevertheless, the scholars do not claim that there is a segregation effect due to increased school choice. They have decided not to highlight a great importance

of school choice on the segregation in school only because the residential areas' effect appeared to be more significant in their observation (Lindbom & Almgren: 624-626).

To sum up this section, the sources that I have reviewed are relevant to the topic of segregation in schools, do not exclude increased school choice as a factor for separating different social groups. However, some of the researches focus on the increased school choice as the main factor, whereas in others it appears to be with less significance.

### 3.5 The role of parents

This section of the theoretical framework will focus the discussion on which parents chose schools, are they well-informed, what is their attitude towards school choice, why are they assumed to choose the “best” school for their children and what are the criteria the parents are looking for. The reason why I will discuss the latter topics is because some of them are directly related to the level of segregation.

#### 3.5.1 Is school choice popular?

This sub-section has the purpose to discuss whether school choice is popular in major cities in Sweden. The reason why I will discuss that topic is because of its relevance to the level of segregation. The level of segregation, I argue, might be influence if parents know about their right to exercise choice. If they are not familiar with the possibility to choose between independent and municipal schools and their programs, then one might ask the question-what is the point of allowing people to choose. Consequently, if they do not exercise a choice, but instead rely on the state to subscribe their children into the nearest schools, then the level of residential segregation in particular areas will increase.

In the report from the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket report 230), the researchers conducted a survey about the authorities interviewing parents and then divided them into two groups. “Choice Authorities” is the first group which consists of cities such as Stockholm, Uppsala, Helsingborg, Botkyrka, Sodertälje and Vesterås, meaning that they take those regions assuming that there is increased variety of school choice. The second is called “Other Authorities”, which is assumed to be the overall result in Sweden. According to the

report 67% of the parents from “Choice Authorities” claimed that they exercised the school choice actively. However, parents from “Other Authorities” were accounted to 34% who exercised school choice actively, which consequently could be interpreted as the school choice not yet being so popular in Sweden. Nevertheless that could be explained that in the second group many suburb areas and countryside were included, where the share of schools is relatively small. Furthermore, to a large extent, the parents who exercised their choice in the first group had higher education while in the second group the majority was parents with only 9-years of education. It is interesting that in the report, the scholars found that if school choice was exercised in a less populated area and the choice was in preference of independent school, the parents were most likely to have higher education.

It is important to discuss what parents are looking for when searching for a school. If there are differences between the parents in regard to their socio-economic status and whether they are natives or foreigners, there is a great chance that the incentives of the parents might differ substantially. The reason why it is important to know about the incentives is because a correlation between the parents’ choices and segregation can be established. According to Jenny Kallstenius<sup>4</sup>, it became much more important for well-educated parents who appear to be more well-informed to exploit the school choice, because of their desire to find the “better” school for their children. This represents a threat to the not so well-educated parents and their children because the chance for those children to be left in less performing schools is increasing (Gustafson, 2006). The question here is what will happen if all well-educated parents focus on one type of particular schools and the rest of the students are left behind. That can be assumed as precondition for segregation on the basis of students’ performance and ambition. Furthermore, the weak students, who are left behind in the educational system will have hard time to compete with students from the “better” schools.

### 3.5.2 What are parents looking for?

The motivation behind the following discussion is to reveal whether parents are looking for quality of education. If the majority of parents consider quality of education as essential factor when searching for independent schools, then the result should be the following: school will

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.svensktnaringsliv.se/skola/fritt-skolval-satt-att-kringga-segregation\\_73695.html?csref=newsletter\\_nfskola\\_2009-03-12](http://www.svensktnaringsliv.se/skola/fritt-skolval-satt-att-kringga-segregation_73695.html?csref=newsletter_nfskola_2009-03-12) Obtained on 07/04/2013



strive to provide more quality, the overall level of quality in the schools will raise and all social groups regardless of their socioeconomic status, ethnicity etc. will benefit.

According to economic theorizing, parents choose schools based on their incentives (if there are costs and benefits from particular schools), the available information on the market and the presence of opportunities (which means the availability of choices). Parents who choose the “best” school for their children benefit in several ways. First of all, they make the effort to transfer all the values and norms they think are appropriate into the child with the hope that the child later on will be exposed/apt to more happiness, better behavior, less complaining etc. Furthermore, economic theory proponents argue that a well-educated child is more likely to become financially independent and content adult. It is rational to believe that consequently, the financially independent adults are more likely to provide financial aid to the parents at late age. In other words, after a sequence of actions, starting from choosing the school and educational program that fits best to an individual child, to providing financial and moral aid to the parents, speaks about the notion that parents should more often make the right choices in regard to their child’s education (Bast,: 432).

In regard to parents’ informed choices and decisions, Joseph Bast and Herbert Walberg argue that parents should be acknowledged as best decision makers in regard to their child’s education because they are not ill-information equipped. After all, we are living in an epoch where communication and advertising is relatively advanced. Thus, the parents after contact with media, which is advertising different schools, discussing its advantages and disadvantages, contact with friends and relatives who recommend particular schools and so on, should be able to make a reasonable decision in which school they should place their child or children (Ibid: 433). This makes me reflect that particular independent schools, which are usually having more well-educated and wealthy parents, might do better on the market because of advertising due to their resources. Consequently this might result in having some independent schools where the majority is of well-educated and wealthy parents, and some schools where the concentration is of poor and low-educated parents. Of course, this argument should not be taken for granted in the case of Sweden because the independent schools are subsidized by the municipality they are situated in and they are not allowed to charge the parents additional fees.

It is important to discuss what are the main concerns of the parents in regard their child’s education. According to statistics, 80% of the Swedish parents are concerned about

interaction between the schools and parents, provision of good teachers, good premises and good teaching equipment. Furthermore, relatively small percentage of parents considers the distance between home and the school to be vital. The presence of friends or relatives to the child is also of a small concern (Skolverket report, 230). In other words, parents care most about the quality of education and it seems that the mechanism of increased school choice to produce competition between the schools to be functioning. To support my statement, according to Bale and Walberg, if parents choose schools on the basis of distance and extracurricular activities such as sport, they are not focusing on the child's best interests. Moreover, the parents' main concern should be their child's educational performance and achievement. This presumption, according to the authors, has guided most of the investigations and interpretations on this subject (Bale: 435).

### 3.5.3 Are parents informed?

The level of parental awareness is related to the level of segregation. If parents are not well-informed about the independent schools and their programs they are not supposed to be able to make an informed choice. If particular groups of parents are well-informed and others are not, this may cause that school choice leads to segregation. Thus, it is vital for me to examine the level of awareness among the parents who search for independent schools.

According to some critics, low income and not so well-educated parents lack enough information to make informed school choices. However, most of the parents claim that they are informed enough to make a "good" choice in regard which school suits best to their children's needs. Furthermore, the parents with low income and education do not feel that there is a lack of information. On the contrary, they state that they are able to make an informed decision which school their children should attend due to the information provided by school officials. On the other hand, well-educated parents have the concern that the provided information was not sufficient enough. The latter argument can be related to the notion that well-educated parents spent more time and energy in finding reasons which school their children should attend. The consequence is that those parents are usually better informed which results in choosing the "better" school. Of course, this should not be applied universally to each individual case and country (Teske et. Al; 2007: 31-33).

In the case of Swedish independent schools, the information that is provided about their quality of education is either insufficient or it is completely missing. Thus, Peter Fredriksson and Jonas Vlachos argue that parents generally cannot make informative decisions, which can lead to some arguments that parents have small or no contribution to the school competition since they are choosing schools randomly (Fredriksson and Vlachos, 2011; 44). However, in the report from Skolverket it appears that 50% of all investigated parents have sufficient information to choose school for their child/children. Furthermore, a great share of well-educated parents happens to feel well-informed when exercising their school choice. Parents with no more than upper secondary school education claimed that they did not receive any information about the availability of schools and programs. In regard to independent schools, 16% of the parents from Choice Authority and 25% of Other Authorities did not know of the existence of independent schools in their area (Skolverket report 230). This particular information is rather essential in regard to school competition. If parents are better informed about school choice they will be able to more frequently exercise school choice and transfer their children from one school to another with the hope that the new school offers better education. This supposedly should increase the competition between schools and consequently the quality of education will rise accordingly. On the other hand, if the better informed parents choose one group of particular schools to enroll their children in, what happens to the other students? They might become separated in other schools which consequently speak about creating homogeneous society.

#### 3.5.4 Level of parental satisfaction

To begin with, the parental satisfaction should be regarded as inseparable component when researching parental school choice in relation to the level of segregation. My intention here is that if parents are not satisfied with the quality of education in independent schools, the latter will be expected to make more effort in providing better quality so they can stay on the educational market. However, if parents are relatively content with the independent schools and their provision of quality, then, rational to believe is, that the schools will either not increase their quality of education or the pace of increasing quality will slow down. In regard to segregation, as I argued before the quality of education is directly connected.

According to statistics in Sweden, the majority of parents are satisfied with the education and the school that is provided for their children. Most of the expectations by the parents are met. Furthermore, more than 90% of the parents are content with the fact that they have the opportunity to choose between schools and programs, which allows them for wider variation. More than half of the parents in both Choice and Other Authorities believe that school competition has a positive influence on educational quality, thus claiming that more competition results in better quality. Unsurprisingly from those 50%, the majority that believes that competition is related to quality is the group of well-educated parents. However, a trend is noticed during the years, that the percentage of parents who have an opinion on whether the competition is good for quality of education has declined. In addition to that, large proportion to of parents believe that increased school choice will lead to differences of quality between the schools (Ibid).

The information about the level of parental satisfaction in regard to the choice they made and the school their children attend is rather relevant because of the connection with segregation. According to Paul Teske et. Al, the majority of satisfied parents are usually consisting of parents with low or medium socioeconomic status. The reason why this argument might be correct is that, high-educated parents feel less well-informed compared to low educated parents. Furthermore, the scholars argue that levels of satisfaction are highly related with being well-informed. Since well-educated parents are the one who frequently claim that there is not enough information related to the schools, they regard themselves as more unsatisfied compared to the rest (Teske et.al, 36-38). In addition, rational to argue is that, if high-educated parents are less satisfied with the education their children receive compared to parents with low socioeconomic status, they are the ones with a higher tendency to change their choice until they become satisfied and find their “best” school. This consequently might precondition a transfer of students with better achievements to particular schools, while the children of satisfied and not low-educated parents will stay at the same school (separation of social groups in regard to quality of education and students’ achievement). Unquestionable, this argument should not be applied universally to each case.

## **4. Theoretical expectations**

This paragraph will provide two hypothesis or statements that are based on the theoretical discussions in the previous section. Furthermore, the hypotheses will be verified later on in my analysis:

1. If Swedish parents are concerned mostly about educational quality, whereas parents from different ethnical background are concerned about other factors, then the Swedish parents will choose the best schools for their children.
2. If Swedish parents are better informed in general compared to parents from different ethnical background, they will have a better chance of knowing which schools are the best.

## **5. Methodology**

Below I discuss the method I have chosen for my research, the reason why I have chosen it, ethical consideration and possible limitations to my method.

### **5.1 Choice of method- interviews**

For my research I will utilize a qualitative method such as interviews. According to Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath, interview as a method is able to provide detailed and often specialized information to the researcher in regard to the topic he or she is discussing. This method generally involves individual or small group of individuals which are directly or indirectly related to the researched topic. The purpose of interviews is not always to make generalizations, but as well to gain valid in-depth knowledge of how the interviewee reflects on a certain issue. It is argued that interviews prioritize validity, which allows the researcher to go deeper into the issue and to gain thorough understanding why certain events occur. (Halperin; Heath, 2012: 253-254). Since I am interested into gaining information what are the factors the parents are considering essential, I argue that interview as a method will be most appropriate and beneficial to my research.

## 5.2 Type of interview

Two types of interviews will be utilized in my thesis. Predominantly I will use face-to-face interviews and one email interview. The reason why I have decided to employ an email interview will be discussed later on. The following chapter will have the purpose to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both types of interviews which will aim answering my research questions.

Face-to-face interview according to Halperin and Heath is the best data-collection tool that aims at in-depth investigation of opinions. The interviewer during the interview has the possibility to test or ask follow-up questions. Another advantage of applying such type of interview is that if the respondent to the questions provides unclear answers, the interviewer is able to ask additional question to the issue for clarification. Important characteristics such as interviewees' body language and vocal cues might be as well noted by the interviewer and further related to issue and discussed. In other words, anything can be interpreted in the name of in-depth understanding of the subject. Conducting a face-to-face interview requires certain guide steps to be followed so that the chance of obtaining useful data is increased. The steps are: recording the interview, steering the interview, probing and ending the interview (ibid: 254, 268-270). All those steps I carefully followed. However, a more detailed discussion how I proceeded with implementing the interviews will be provided in the next sections of my methodology framework.

The other type of interview that I will utilize is the email version. There are many people that prefer to be interviewed by email generally due to time limitation. Another reason why people may prefer the email form is because the topic is too sensitive and face-to-face interview may put the interviewee in an uncomfortable environment. Interviewing by email is considered to be rather convenient especially for the interviewer because he or she does not need to provide transcribing machines, travel or to spend great amount of time. However, the email interviews are requiring simple questions and any deviation, probing and testing new questions is reduced. Another issue with email interviews might be that the respondents will not be able to express themselves in a detailed way and the information which exchanged between the interviewer and interviewee is somehow reduced. Furthermore, since answering the questions may be time-consuming, the interviewee is expected to have less incentive to be engaged in the interview. In other words, this type of interview is not able to obtain as much information as the face-to-face interview (Ibid: 270-271).

### 5.3 Form of the interview

I have decided to use a combination of structured questions and as well during the interview to ask different question that might open the discussion even further. In order to obtain useful information that will aim answering my research question I find utilizing semi-structured interview as most appropriate and suitable method. As Halperin and Heath argue that the best way to conduct such type of interview is by following a sequence of questions but at the same time to ask new questions that will allow the interviewee to go even deeper into the topic. By doing this, the interviewer will be able to obtain in-depth understanding of the researched issue (Ibid: 258). In my case I hope for thorough knowledge about the factor that the parents consider important when applying for independent schools in Malmö. Although the scholars argue that semi-structured form is most suitable for individual face-to-face interviews, I have decided to use it in my mail interview because my questions are rather complex and I hope for the interviewee to be more engaged and to elaborate in detail on the answers (Ibid: 258-259). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are assumed to allow interviewees to speak more on their own terms compared to standardized interviews, but still the results from the interviews are comparable. The only disadvantage with this form of interview is that the degree of answering the questions might vary between the interviewees and the comparison might be complicated. However there is a solution to this issue, if the interviewer is enough familiar with the topic he or she is researching and if steering the interview goes as planned then this issue might be eliminated or at least reduced (May, 2011: 134-136).

### 5.4 Questions for the interview

The questions for the interview can be found in the index at the end of the paper. They are structured in a way that will allow me to get in-depth knowledge about the factors that parents consider important, parental awareness in regard to independent schools, their level of satisfaction etc. Due to my interest of research, I have also structured questions that target directly the notion of segregation.

## 5.5 Interviewees

In order to discover the factors that parents consider essential when searching for independent schools in Malmö, I have decided that the most useful way to obtain such information is to interview principals and vice-principals of independent schools in the city of Malmö. The reason why my targeted group is exactly those school officials is because they have the initial contact with parents and they are the one who sign the paper that allows a student to participate in the educational activities in a certain school. Furthermore, I target them for my interviews because I find capable to generalize about the parental' requirements, wish list, incentives when it comes to subscribe their child into an independent school. If the principals and vice-principals are able to generalize I will be able to obtain a broader picture of the issue. Certainly I am hoping that the interviewees will be competent enough to discuss different exceptions from the broad perspective so that my analysis will reach higher level of reliability and objectivity.

## 5.6 Why not interviewing parents and principals and vice-principals of municipal schools?

One might ask but why am I interviewing principals and vice-principals of independent schools in Malmö although my target group is the parents. Well, there are several reasons why.

Since I am researching the factors that are important for parents, I have considered the option to interview different parents and ask them about their opinion but after consideration I find the topics of ethnicity, socioeconomic status and level of education rather sensitive. It is rational to assume if the topics of a sensitive character the participants in the interview might not be that honest which consequently will result in my thesis being less credible and reliable. Another reason why I have not chosen parents for my interviews is because it is difficult to obtain their contacts since most of the schools do not wish to provide a contact list of the parents. Last but not least, the third reason is that my time for conducting this research was limited to just a few months. Bearing in mind the focus of my research, the number of independent elementary and upper secondary schools is rather high- approximately 15 upper



secondary independent schools<sup>5</sup> and 13 elementary<sup>6</sup>, it would be nearly impossible to get in a contact with parents from all the schools. In addition to that it would have been necessary to obtain access to interview with more than one representative from each school, otherwise the credibility and reliability of my project would have been in stake. Thus, due to the time constrain, I have decided that the option of interviewing parents is out of the question. If my research had a form of a case study with extended time limitation, it would have been doable to interview parents and to get in-depth knowledge about their interests, level of education and socioeconomic status and to perceive how the latter are related to the level of segregation.

Why did I discard the municipal schools from my case selection? Although the municipal schools in Sweden do not differ considerably from the independent school. Both types of schools are competing for the same students and both are following the national curriculum. The first reason why I decided not to interview principals and vice-principals of municipal schools is because there are substantially more municipal than independent schools. That would have consumed much more time to contact them and to conduct interviews. The time constrain of my thesis hindered me from choosing also municipal schools for my case selection. In addition to that, municipal schools are usually larger compared to independent schools which led to assume that if the former are attended by larger number of students, the school officials will be busier and not willing to participate in interviews.

## 5.7 Case selection

For the purpose of my study I interview nine schools using face-to-face interview and one more is conducted by email, due to principal's convenience. In overall I have ten interviews out of 28 elementary and upper secondary schools. Although there are preschools that are independent I have decided not to interview because some of my questions focus on the grades of the students and since in Sweden grades are put on sixth graders or above I found it irrelevant to interview also principals from preschools. The initial contact with principals was

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<sup>5</sup>

<http://www.friskola.se/Templates/Wide.aspx?DXNI=180481&R=True&T=Sk%C3%A5ne%20l%C3%A4n&M=209982&SF=230461&FA=-&P=-> Obtained on 15/07/2013

<sup>6</sup>

<http://www.friskola.se/Templates/Wide.aspx?DXNI=180481&R=True&T=Sk%C3%A5ne%20l%C3%A4n&M=209982&SF=230459&FA=-&P=-> Obtained on 15/07/2013

established via emails. I sent emails to all elementary and high schools in the district of Malmö asking them for interview permission. After sending emails to all independent schools, I contacted them by phone and asking them once again for permission to interview. This time there result was more positive. We set a date with each principal and the interview process took between seventeen and thirty minutes. However one interview was exceptional because it lasted for more than fifty minutes. Interviews were recorded which enabled me to focus on the discussion and to ask follow-up question. At some points I was furthermore taking notes whenever I felt that there is something that is really essential and will benefit my analysis.

## 5.8 Ethical consideration

This paragraph will have the purpose to discuss the matter of confidentiality. According to P.Gill et al. before each interview, the interviewer should assure the respondents that full anonymity and confidentiality will be provided. This process is particularly important if the research is discussing sensitive topics. Informing the participants in the interview *“increases the likelihood of honest and is also a fundamental aspect of the informed consent process”* (Gill et al; 2008: 292). In regard to my research, I have informed via the initial email sent to the interviewees that full confidentiality and anonymity can be assured. Furthermore, when I met them for conducting face-to-face interview I once again pointed out that no names will be mentioned. I mentioned the notion of anonymity twice just to be sure that the answers to my questions will be as truthful as possible.

## 5.9 Possible limitations and implications

The first limitation that I find essential to discuss is that the majority of the schools denied an access due to lack of time, busy schedule because it was as they said *“very bad timing, we are currently busy forming the curriculum”*. Two schools refused the request because the principal and vice principal were at conferences outside of Sweden. In the beginning I thought that I might find a connection between the schools that denied an access and their composition of student, size of school or any other features. However, the schools did not have anything in

common; they varied in school sizes, composition, profile etc. In other words, they were very diverse and thus I deem that any explanation between the structure of the school and the denied access to interview would be irrelevant.

Another limitation can be that in my case selection I have selected also high school principals to interview. High schools differ in their admission criteria compared to elementary schools. In high schools students apply through their scores in national exam and grades during the years, whereas in elementary school the children are put in a queue and they need to wait for a certain period of time. Although these two types of schools differ in regard to admission criteria, I do not think that difference will impede me from obtaining data, due to the fact that I am interested in the factors, parents consider important when searching for independent schools in Malmö.

Last but not least, in elementary schools, the parents are the main actors, they are the one who subscribe their children to the school, whereas in high school, the students play either equal or bigger role than the parents. In other words, in Sweden, the students are the one who choose high schools, not the parents. In this regard, I might be hindered from obtaining useful data in relation to the parental preferences. However, the role of parents cannot be disregarded in the case of high schools. During the interviews many principals, claimed that the students take the initiative to apply to high schools, but parents are co-deciding with them (See interview transcripts). Thus, although this might be a limitation to obtaining data and further analyzing it, I assume that in regard to high schools, parents are also playing if not the major role, an essential role.

## 5.10 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability refer to whether the results/data from the interview are measuring what they are supposed to measure and whether the data can be trusted (Halperin: 224). Since I have clearly stated research questions that are guiding me I was able to formulate questions for my interviews that allow me to acquire the necessary information. In addition to that, after I had made clear twice to the participants in the interview that confidentiality is assured, I assume that the data will be trustworthy.

## 6. Results and analysis

This section has the purpose to discuss and analyze the results obtained through the interviews. The results will be furthermore related to the theories and previous research that I have already discussed. I have decided to divide this section into three sub-sections, namely factors that parents consider important, who are more well-informed and school competition. The two hypothesis that I have mentioned will be further verified and discussed.

**Table 1: Independent schools, ethnic background of the parents and the factor parents have chosen.**

School/Factor	Educational quality	Safe environment	Other factor	Ethnic background of the parents
School 1		√		Foreign background
School 2	√			Swedish background
School 3	√	√		Foreign background
School 4	√			Swedish background
School 5	√			Mixed background
School 6	√			Swedish background
School 7		√		Mixed background
School 8			√	Mixed background
School 9	√			Swedish background
School 10			√	Swedish background

**Notes:** School principal number 3 believes that parents are looking for both educational quality and safe environment.

**Source:** Interviews with principals of independent schools in Malmö

## 6.1 Factors that parents consider important

This sub-section will have the purpose to discuss the results from the interviews in regard to the factors that parents consider important. The results from the interview will be referred to the theoretical discussion and then I will be able to verify my first hypothesis.

The results from the interviews with principals and vice-principals of independent schools indicate that one of the most important factors that parents consider when choosing independent schools is the quality of education. The quality of education may include in its notion the presence of qualified teachers, high results in the national examination (nationella prov), grades that the students receive during the academic year, size of the classes and the percentage of students going to university after graduating from high school. Furthermore, according to the theory that I have already discussed even schools with smaller sized classes are assumed to be more quality oriented (Liu; Taylor: 798). The results from the interview are that the majority of parents consider the factor of educational quality as the most important. Six school principals out of ten claim that during the initial contact with parents they are asked mostly about the quality of education the school is able to provide for their child (See table 1). According to the principals,

*“The most common question we get at the open house day (this is a day when the parents can meet the school principal and staff and ask different questions) is whether the students will be able to continue their education further in university (See transcripts of the interview)*

After observing the results from the interviews a correlation between the factor of educational quality and ethnical identity can be established. In four out of those six schools where the main concern is the quality of education, the majority of parents are of Swedish origin. This of course does not mean that those schools can be classified as completely Swedish. In those schools there are also parents from different ethnical background. The majority of parents in the other two schools are of foreign and mixed background. Based on the latter correlation it can be argued that Swedish parents are more likely to look for educational quality than parents with foreign background. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education, around 80% of the Swedish parents consider the factor of educational quality such as the provision of good teachers, good interaction between the school staff and parent etc. as the most important (Skolverket report, 230).

In the theoretical framework I have discussed the importance of the class size. Just as a reminder, according to the theory schools which provide better quality of education are usually schools with smaller classes (Liu; Taylor: 798).

According to the interview results and comparing the school and class sizes, three out of the five schools, where the factor of educational quality is assumed to be most important are consisting of relatively small classes. By relatively small classes I denote classes of less than ten students. At one school:

*When the parents contact me for the first time they ask about the class size, do we have competent teachers although they can see it in our web site. (See interview transcripts)*

Although the theory argues that usually schools with small sized classes are assumed to be better-quality schools, this does not necessarily mean that parents looking for smaller sized classes are solely considering quality of education. Based on my results from the interviews the class size should in some cases be related to the factor of safety. This discussion, however, will continue later in this sub-section.

The second biggest factor that the parents consider important when searching for independent schools is safe and calm environment. Out of the ten school principals that I have interviewed, three principals claim that parents are concerned with whether the school that their child is going to attend is calm and safe (See table 1). The definition of safe environment and calm atmosphere the parents apparently relate to small-sized classes where the chance of getting a conflict is less compared to big schools and classes. At one school the principal responded:

*The parents are interested whether there is social atmosphere and whether there are fights between the children. It is often where children are moving not from worse schools but from big schools to small sized schools. The parents do not prefer big sized classes- big sized classes ... more conflicts. (See interview transcripts)*

In the theoretical framework I discussed that usually schools with smaller classes are regarded as quality oriented schools, where disadvantaged students due to their ethnicity, scholastic achievement or socioeconomic status will benefit greatly and will learn how to negotiate the system if placed in such schools (Liu; Taylor: 798). In other words, schools with smaller classes are chosen due to the fact that they are quality-oriented. However, the results from the interviews indicate otherwise. The size of the class should be regarded to the factor of safety,

not only to the factor of educational quality. Nevertheless, I do not exclude the possibility that such schools could provide simultaneously safe environment and quality of education.

After analyzing the results from the three schools where safe and calm environment is the major factor that parents consider significant, a correlation between them can be established. In all of the three schools the majority of parents are of foreign background. In one of the schools there were only three students out of sixty whose parents were both of Swedish origin. The rest had at least one parent with foreign background. This school has a profile of a school where there is a focus on the Swedish language. According to the principal, the school plays a role of a trampoline for most of the students to get to better schools later on (See interview transcripts).

Last but not least, apart from the factors of quality of education, safety and calm environment, the results from the interviews with principals of independent schools indicate that there are parents who are concerned if the independent school can provide accommodation for its students:

*The most common question is whether we can offer accommodation to students coming far from Malmö (See interview transcripts).*

The school where this factor is important is regarded as “astetisk” high school where there are three profiles that are focusing on the creativity of the students. Although the parents are considering the accommodation for their children as vital, it can be argued that this school can be also situated in the section where parents consider the quality of education as essential. I base my argument on the Skolverket report 230, where the scholars argue that parents, who are not considering the school in the neighborhood just because of its location but instead are looking for schools that will fit best the needs of their children, are apt to look for quality of education that is on the market. In the case of this particular school, parents are prepared to send their children away from home in order to obtain the desired education. Another reason to believe that in this school parents are also interested in the quality of education is because the parents ask the following question:

*Many parents have questions regarding admissions scores and how our students at the school are performing in the various core subjects (See interview transcripts)*

However, the reason why I have decided not to situate this discussion in the section of educational quality as a factor is because of the way the principal responded to my first

question. This interview was through e-mail. If it was face-to-face like the rest of the interview I might have obtained different data due to the possibility to ask follow-up questions. But in this case I was not able to ask questions which hindered in-depth clarification.

The results from the interview with the other independent school principal indicate that parents are interested in whether the school is able to provide special education for students with different diagnoses.

*The most asked questions are if we have student health body, whether the school provides special pedagogues and student counselor. They ask also if the school provides assistance for children with different diagnoses such as dyslexia. As well if we have special education within a certain educational area. (See interview transcripts)*

In regard to the ethnical background of the majority of parents, any generalization will be difficult because in one of the schools, according to the principal the majority of parents are of Swedish background and in the other one there are both Swedish parents and parents from different ethnical background. Due to the small sample, I cannot generalize as I did in the previous paragraphs where the important factors that parents consider important are quality of education and safe environment.

To sum up this sub-section, after analyzing the result from the interviews with principals and vice-principals of independent schools in Malmö, it can be concluded that the main two factors that parents consider important are quality of education and safe environment. In four out of six schools where the factor of educational quality is essential, the majority of parents are of Swedish origin and in all of the three schools where safe and calm environment is a preference, the majority of parents are of different ethnical background. The results in a combination with the theoretical stances that I have already discussed, it can be argued that Swedish parents look for educational quality when they are searching for independent schools in Malmö, whereas parents from different ethnical background search for other factors such as small-sized classes, less confrontation between the students etc. which is related to the factor of safe and calm environment. In regard to my first hypothesis which states that, if Swedish parents are concerned mostly about educational quality, whereas parents from different ethnical background are concerned about other factors, then the Swedish parents will choose the best schools for their children and the rest are expected to end up in worse schools, appears to be valid. Thus, it might be argued that school choice can lead to segregation.



## 6.2 Who are more well-informed?

To begin with, this sub-section of the analysis will have the purpose to discuss whether the parents can be considered as well-informed and if they are able to make an informed choice. The results from the interviews with principals and vice-principals will be analyzed with the focus to establish a correlation between the ethnical background of parents and their knowledge about independent schools. In regard to the structure of the sub-section, I have decided to discuss whether the parents in the schools where the most important factor is quality of education. As I mentioned before in four out of six schools, where the major factor is quality of education, the majority of parents are of Swedish background. Thus, I have decided to regard them as “Swedish” schools. Certainly, those schools are attended also by students whose parents have different ethnical background. However, for my ease, I have decided to put them into one group and regard them as Swedish schools. The second group will be the group of schools where the most essential factor is considered by the parents to be safe and calm environment. Those schools are predominantly by children of parents with foreign background. The findings from the interviews for both groups will be then compared and an answer in regard to my second hypothesis will be provided: If Swedish parents are better informed in general compared to parents from different ethnical background, they will have a better chance of knowing which schools are the best. The sub-section will, then, end with discussion whether the parents, who consider different factors than quality of education and safe environment, can be regarded as well-informed and are able to make an informed choice.

What is important here to note is that the results from the interviews show that according to the principals in four schools out of the six schools where the main factor is considered to be the quality of education claim that the parents are not well-informed. The reasons why they believe the parents are not well-informed differ. For instance some claim that there are basically too many schools and programs and it is simply impossible for the parents to comprehend all that information and other parents do not check the available information.

*It is really difficult to be informed. There are around thirty high schools in Malmö. It's a jungle. When you have your first child it's a jungle. (See interview transcripts);*

*No I don't think so. I think it is difficult. There are too many schools and programs so it is difficult to comprehend the information. (See interview transcripts)*

Moreover, according to the results from the interviews the most common way parents obtain their information about the schools and programs is through rumors, friends, acquaintances and relatives.

An interesting fact is that according to the principals of the six schools where the factor of quality of education is the most important, parents are not well-informed at all. Four out of the six principals claimed that they do not believe that the parents are well-informed. The other two school principals were convinced that the parents reach and process all the information about schools and programs. One of the school where the principal sees parents as well-informed is “estetisk skola” (it is a school that focuses on child’s artistic creativity, such as painting, singing, playing an instrument etc.). The principal there said that this is the only elementary school that has such focus and parents who have children with artistic focus do not have a choice in a way so I suppose that could be one of the reasons why the principal considers parents as well-informed. There are different reasons why parents are not considered as having enough knowledge about the schools and programs. One of them is:

*No, it feels like that many parents do not check enough and they are not aware. The choice right now is enormous so they stumble upon the choices. It feels that they don't know really what is going on. (See interview transcripts)*

As I look at the results from the interviews, one might consider the educational market being oversaturated with schools and programs which hinders the parents from choosing the school for their children in an informed way. Principals of the latter schools when being asked whether the parents exercise informed or random choice answered in a relatively contradictory way. Two principals claim that half of the parents are able to exercise their school choice in an informed way, however, the other half choose randomly. Three school principals believe that parents choose in an informed way and whereas one of those principals claimed that parents are not well-informed. It is difficult to explain why this principal answered on similar questions differently. One might suppose that since the topic is of a sensitive character, the principal was not willing to provide a truthful answer. Another explanation could be that the principal misinterpreted my questions. However, only one school principal from the selected six schools where the educational quality is the most important factor for parents believes that parents cannot make informed choices. That was the only one school where the answers were not in contradiction. He believed that parents are not well-informed and their choices should be regarded as random.

To sum up, the majority of parents in the first group, where the factor of quality of education is considered to be of a great importance, according to the principals, are not able to obtain the necessary information about the schools and their programs when searching for independent schools in the city of Malmö. In addition, as I already discussed, according to Peter Fredriksson and Jonas Vlachos it is rather impossible for parents to make informed choices due to the lack of information about independent schools and thus they argue that parents do not have sufficient contribution to the school competition since they are choosing in a random manner (Fredriksson and Vlachos; 44). The latter theory, in a combination with the results from the interviews strengthens my argument that parents do not choose certain independent schools and programs in an informed way.

Just as I proceeded with the first group of parents where the major factor is the educational quality, I have decided to discuss the results from the interviews whether the parents in the three schools, where the majority of parents are of foreign background and consider the factor of safe and calm environment as most important, are well informed and whether their choice of independent can be regarded as informed or random. Firstly, I will start discussing whether the parents in those schools are well-informed. According to the results from the three schools, two principals believe that parents are not well-informed. At one of the school principal was really convinced that there is not chance for the parents to be familiar with the information about independent schools and their programs.

*No they are not well informed. They even asked whether our school is for free. That speaks for itself. They have friends, acquaintances where they get their information. (See interview transcripts)*

What the principal intended to clarify is that parents are not well-informed to such an extent so they need to ask whether independent schools charge fees, which is not allowed since the educational reforms in early 1990s. The other principal was not that convincing compared to the first one. However, he claimed that the parents are not well-informed and they gain mostly their information through friends, relatives etc. After analyzing the principal's response it is likely to suggest that the information acquired via the latter sources cannot or should not be regarded as valid, trustworthy and objective (See interview transcripts). Last but not least, the principal at the third school where the essential factor for parents is safety and calm environment is convinced that parents have access to information about schools and they processes it as expected. Thus, he believed that the parents are relatively informed. In contrary

to the previous principal this one regarded the information gained through friends, relatives etc. as valid and objective.

*The parents are relatively informed. They often come and look at the environment. The parents get their information via their children who have contacts with friends and relatives who attend our school. (See interview transcripts)*

When I asked the principals of the three schools whether the parents exercise informed or random choice, the results were more or less following one direction- that parents are not able to conduct informed choice. One school principal was relatively sure that parents are not well-informed and thus not able to choose schools and programs in a knowledgeable way. Another school principal who claimed that the parents are comparatively well-informed believes that parents are capable of performing their school choice based on the information they have. In other words he rejected the option that random choice is the predominant case. However, I had difficulty to analyze the third principal's interview results. He claimed that parents are not well-informed but are able to choose in an informed way. This hindered me to be certain about his statement. What aimed my judgment here was that he claimed that:

*I don't think the available information is always helpful and adaptive. We have for example a really good web site but I would like to see it in at least three other languages. The data for schools is only in Swedish. We in our school have 65% children where their mother tongue is other than Swedish. So in order for the parents to be informed we need to create that availability. But we will think about that for the next semester. (See interview transcripts).*

Due to the fact that most of the parents in this school cannot comprehend the available information about school and its programs, how is it possible for them to make informed choice? Thus, I regard that parents in this particular school are choosing randomly although the principal believed that parents have the power to choose in an informed approach.

To summarize the latter discussion, according to the principals of the three schools where the majority of parents are of foreign background and consider safe and calm environment as most important factor when searching for schools, the parents cannot be regarded as well-informed and thus are not able to make an informed choice.

The following paragraphs will have the purpose to discuss whether the parents who consider other factors in the last two schools are well-informed and whether they are able to exercise an informed school choice. At the first school where providing student accommodation is

important factor for the parents when searching for independent schools in Malmö, the principal is convinced that parents are able to obtain the necessary information about schools and their educational programs. The most common way the parents obtain the information is through the webpage of the school, school reputation that is spread through students or parents of students that are already engaged with the school activities and the availability for parents to visit the “open house meetings”. In other words the principal is convinced that parents are prompt to be equipped with knowledge about schools and their programs. However, when the principal was asked whether the parents are capable to choose in informed way, the response was that there are some parents that are choosing based on their information gained but there are also others that do not have the necessary knowledge so they choose randomly (See interview transcripts). In regard to how well-informed parents are at the other school, the school principal is convinced that the majority of parents lack sufficient amount of knowledge about the school and programs the school is offering.

*It differs. The ones that call in usually have an idea and have read about us. But those are not many. (See interview transcripts)*

When the principal was asked whether the parents exercise informed or random choice the respond was:

*It is not exactly the parents who choose the school but the students. But of course they discuss the education at home with the parents. However, when the parents make the decision or co-decide with the child about the choice, then they tend to ask more questions. They are the one who are well-informed. (See interview transcripts)*

Bearing in mind what the principal responded to whether the parents are well-informed, the only possible suggestion here is that the majority of parents are not able to exercise informed choice. They do, however, have information, but apparently that information is not sufficient enough for the assumption that parents are capable of choosing independent schools in an informed way.

To sum up this sub-section, according to the principals and vice-principals of the first group of schools where the majority of parents are of Swedish background and consider the factor of educational quality as most important, four out of six believe that the parents are not able to exercise and informed choice and are not considered as well-informed. In regard to the second group where the majority of parents are of different ethnical background and consider the

factor of calm and safe environment as most essential, two out of three school principals believe that the parents lack sufficient information, which results in being not well-informed and exercising random choice. For the third group, once again, the results from the interviews confirm the notion that the majority of parents lack the ability to choose in an informed way. Being aware of the results from the interviews, hypothesis number two cannot be confirmed. I could not find any evidence that the Swedish parents are more well-informed in comparison with parents from different ethnical background, thus it cannot be claimed that the Swedish parents will choose the best schools for their children. This is due to the fact that neither the Swedish parents, nor the foreign parents can choose schools in a knowledgeable way.

### 6.3 School competition

The purpose of this sub-section of the analysis is to discuss the results from the responses of the principals of independent schools in Malmö, in particular to the question what are the consequences of competition between independent schools. I find the results for this question rather important, due to the fact that they can be related to the theoretical framework and assumptions in regard to the quality of education and why parent are not considered to be well informed can be drawn.

To begin with five school principals believe that school competition improves students' performance and increases the quality of education not only in independent but also in public schools. Furthermore, they claim that since the reform, the educational quality has increased and nowadays the schools perform better. Just as an example:

*We have lost some students to municipal schools during the last years. And of course the municipal schools/activities became much better than before. (See interview transcripts)*

*It's really good to have competition. If the reform didn't happen so the municipality schools would have the same quality. But because of this reform now the schools have increased their quality and level of education. (See interview transcripts)*

The results from the interviews with those five principals confirm the results that I have discussed in the theoretical framework. Sandström (2002) and Lindbom (2010) in their quantitative research came to the conclusion that after the reforms in early 1990s, the schools

have increased their quality of education and the performance of students has also amplified. In their research, the authors claim that the reason why schools have increased their quality of education is due to the fact that increased school choice led to school competition where all schools, regardless of being independent or municipal compete for the same students. Therefore, it can be claimed that the principals' reaction in regard to the question that I posed to them, can be assumed that it re-confirms the theory to some extent. By saying to some extent I mean that not all of the ten principals discussed how the quality of education is influenced by the school competition. Furthermore, Caroline Hoxby states a hypothesis where she argues that schools, due school competition which is a consequence of allowing parents to choose schools, have two alternatives: either to increase their quality of education and attract more students or to fail in the competition and liquidate (Hoxby, 2003: 14-15). Hoxby's hypothesis in connection with the statements of the five principals leads me to assume that the educational market should be predominantly of only good schools that are able to provide high quality of education.

The second important result that I got through the interviews with the principals by asking the question about the school competition is that four principals believe that there are too many schools on the market. They were convinced that the market is oversaturated with schools that sometimes provide unnecessary programs and subjects:

*I think it's good that now students and parents can choose between schools but at the same time the choice can be overwhelming with the too many schools. The variety is gigantic. (See interview transcripts)*

*The disadvantage of having school competition is that is survival of the fittest. Meaning that the schools that don't have the quality and the volume of students they just close down. As well there is too much choice available and less birthrate. (See interview transcripts)*

*But basically in order to compete we need to have great quality. Since there are 1.7 places for one student the schools have to perform better than the rest of the school in order to keep their students. It is difficult but the quality of education rises. (See interview transcripts)*

I regard the results from those interviews particularly important because they can be regarded as one explanation why the majority of parents are not considered as well-informed actors and their choice is assumed by the principals to be random. The presence of so many schools, regardless of being independent or municipal hinders the parents to obtain information about

each school. The information is simply too overwhelming. Certainly the parents do not need to gain knowledge about each school to make the right choice for their children, but the existence of such a variety of schools unquestionably hinders the parents to be assumed as informed actors. The validity of my assumption can be also confirmed by another principal's statement:

*I have seen parents putting all the catalogues from the high schools in a height order. Well, it is that long like ten telephone catalogues (gula sidor). From those school catalogues they chose after reading through to go check maybe five. They go to those open house meetings and then maybe chose one of them. I think their choice is rather random because the schools are too many and the choice is too much. It is really difficult to obtain an image on the schools. (See interview transcripts)*

If that is the case for most of the parents, then I recognize why the principals do not consider the majority of parents as informed actors who are able to obtain and process all of the information. As I already discussed in the second sub-section of the analysis, neither the Swedish parents, nor the parents with different ethnical background are considered by the principals to be well-informed. Certainly, one explanation can be that the information available about schools and their programs takes an enormous amount of time to process. Thus, parents are unable to familiarize themselves to such an extent with the information so they can be considered as well-informed.

To conclude, this sub-section of the analysis discusses the responses of the principals and vice-principals in regard to the question: what are the consequences of competition between independent schools. Half of the principals believe that the competition increases the quality of education and students performance. This result in a combination with the theoretical framework confirms to some extent that the educational market should be predominantly of schools which are able to provide good quality of education and be competitive. Another result was that many principals believe that there are too many schools and therefore this can be considered as one explanation why parents are not able to be well-informed and to choose independent schools in an informed way.



## 7. Conclusion

The thesis aims a discussion based on the policy of school choice which was implemented via the educational reforms in early 1990s in Sweden. The focus thus falls upon the theory's influence towards segregation in independent schools in the city of Malmö. The educational reforms were embraced by sequence of events that transformed the educational system. The state allowed the establishment of independent schools all over the country. They are subsidized by the municipality and they are not allowed to charge any fees. Parents were able to choose either independent or municipality schools or programs. The principle that children should be attending the nearest to their home school was abolished. The parents are nowadays allowed to choose distant school if they consider that the school will best fit their child's educational needs. For the purpose to examine if the policy of school choice leads segregation, investigating the factors that parents consider important when searching for independent schools is of a great importance. Thus, I have chosen a particular theoretical framework that will aim the discussion about the role of parents, their preferences and whether school choice may lead to segregation. My methodological approach also has the purpose for better understanding of the issue. However, I have decided to discuss my theoretical framework and methodological approach in my next sub-sections.

### 7.1 Reflections on theory

For the purpose to examine if school choice may lead segregation in independent schools in Malmö, I have decided to utilize various pieces of theoretical stance of different scholars. The reason why I have not focused on only one specific theoretical approach is because segregation is not simple phenomenon where only one theory can be applied. Due to that fact that it is rather complex my intention was to discuss different theoretical stances and refer to them later in the section of analysis. For the purpose of my study, the theoretical framework discusses topics such as the relationship between quality of education and school choice, what and how parents choose schools and programs, are parents well-informed and are they able to make an informed choice. The theoretical discussion follows with argumentation about what might be the consequence if parents consider certain factors when searching for independent schools and what is the parental level of satisfaction. All the theoretical discussions I find to

be relevant to my topic, which allowed me to compose two hypotheses which I have verified and referred later in the analysis.

## 7.2 Reflection on methodology

The aim of my research is to gain in-depth understanding of the issue of segregation in regard of school choice. Thus, I have decided to utilize qualitative method of semi-structured interviews. According to Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath, interview allows the researcher to gain comprehensive and often specialized information in regard to the topic he or she is discussing (Halperin: 253-254). For the purpose of my study I selected ten cases of independent schools where I conducted interviews with the principals or vice-principals, due to that fact that they are the representatives of schools that have constant contact with parents. The selected cases were either high schools or elementary schools. The majority of the semi-structured interviews were conducted via face-to-face and only one via e-mail. The interviews were recorded and the questions were structured around the factors that parents consider important, their knowledge about schools and program, level of satisfaction and level of segregation. I regard the results from the interviews as trustworthy although the topic of my interest is of a rather sensitive character.

## 7.3 Reflection on results

The data from the interviews with principals and vice-principals of independent schools in Malmö in a combination with the theoretical discussion provided answer to my research questions. The majority of parents consider the factor of educational quality as a priority when searching for independent schools. Six out of ten principals claimed that the parents search for qualified teachers, higher academic goals etc. In four out of those six cases, the majority of parents are of Swedish origin and in the other two cases the majority of parents have foreign and mixed background. In three out of ten schools, the parents are looking for safe and calm environment. In those schools, the Swedish representatives of parents are the minority. In a combination with the theoretical arguments, hypothesis number one is valid, meaning that Swedish parents are concerned with the quality of education, whereas the majority of parents

from different ethnical background consider some other factor as most important and therefore Swedish parents choose the best schools. Furthermore, the analysis of the obtained data from the ten independent schools indicate that the majority of parents are not well-informed, regardless of whether the parents are of Swedish or foreign background and thus my second hypothesis that states if Swedish parents are better informed in comparison to other parents from different ethnical background and therefore have a better chance of actually knowing which schools are best, is not valid. Last but not least, the section of the analysis provides one possible explanation why parents cannot be regarded as informed actors and that competition between schools leads to improvement in students' performance and increase in quality of education not only in independent but also in municipal schools.

## **8. Executive summary**

The purpose of this study is to examine how the policy of school choice, due the dramatic educational reforms allowing establishment of independent schools and parents to choose schools and programs for their children in early 1990s, may lead to segregation in independent schools in the city of Malmö. The major components of the reforms were allowing parents to choose schools for their children and the establishment of independent schools on the territory of Sweden. The reason why I have chosen that particular topic is because of the implication that might follow due to increased school choice. There are some arguments that claim that school choice might lead to segregating different social groups, which respectively will lead to conflicts within the state. Since the parents are the major actors who has the power to decide which school their child should attend, I have decide to make a research on the factors that parents consider important when searching for independent schools in Malmö and to compare whether the factors differ among the parents by their ethnical background. Researching on the parental preferences allowed me to examine whether Swedish parents are considered as actors who choose the best schools.

For a theoretical background I used various academic arguments and stances which have the focus to discuss concepts such as quality of education, role of parents and segregation. Two hypotheses based on the theory are provided. The first one is if Swedish parents are concerned mostly about educational quality, whereas parents from different ethnical background are concerned about other factors, then the Swedish parents will choose the best schools for their children and the second is if Swedish parents are better informed in general compared to

parents from different ethnical background, they will have a better chance of knowing which schools are the best. The two hypotheses were discussed and verified in the analysis section.

The research method for this paper, furthermore, included semi-structured interviews with principals and vice-principals of ten independent schools in Malmö. The main reason why the focus of the interviews laid on principals and vice-principals is because they are the school representatives who have the initial and constant contact with parents that are willing to subscribe their child into the school. Only one interview out of ten was conducted via e-mail, the rest were face-to-face. Reasons why I did not choose to interview parents and principals in municipal schools are also discussed in the methodology section.

The analysis of my paper had the purpose to reveal what are the factors that parents consider important when searching for independent schools in Malmö. The results are that six out of ten principals claim that the most important factor is quality of education and the majority of parents, who are concerned with it, are of Swedish background. The second biggest factor is safe and calm environment. In three out of ten schools this factor is the most essential and the majority of parents who search for calm environment are of different ethnical background. Based on my first hypothesis, the Swedish parents should choose the best schools. However, when I was analyzing the results from the interviews in regard to which parents are well-informed about the schools and their programs, I reached the conclusion that neither the Swedish nor the parents from different background can be regarded as actors who exercise their choice in an informed way. In relation to my second hypothesis, the Swedish parents should not be assumed to choose the best schools. The last part of my analysis section concludes with discussion about the quality of education and that the market is supposed to be predominantly of best schools which provide good quality of education. Furthermore, the results from the interviews indicate that the market is oversaturated with schools and it is difficult for the parents to be well-informed.

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## 10. Index

### Questions for the interview

1. What is the main concern of parents in the process of communication? What are their usual questions?
2. Do you think the parents who contact you are well informed about the schools, staff and education programs?
3. Do you think it is easy for the parents to process all the information about schools?
4. Would you classify their choice as informed or random?
5. According to you, do parents usually make the right choice? Are they satisfied with the school or program they have chosen?
6. Do you get complains from the parents in relation to the quality of the education you provide? What are they mostly complaining about?
7. Do you think the distance between the school and students home plays an important role for the parents? Do you have many parents that will sign their children in your school just because it is close to their home?
8. What is the consequence of competition between independent schools? Can you name the advantages and disadvantage of having a competition?
9. What is the socioeconomic status of the parents who contact you? What is their occupational status? How would you classify the majority: high educated, medium educated or low educated parents?
10. In regard to students' ability, do Swedish parents ask what the overall students' performance is? Are parents from foreign background interested in other students' performance or this is out of their concern?
11. Have you been asked by parents, regardless of their national identity, what the socioeconomic status of the majority of other parents is? Are they interested to whether the other parents are wealthy or not?
12. Do you think Swedish parents care for whether their child/children are going to study with students from foreign background? Have you been asked such a question? What about the parents with foreign background, do they show any interest to whether their child/children are going to study with native students or foreign background students?



13. Since the abolishment of the principle that children should be situated in schools in the area where they live (närhetsprincipen), do you think increased school choice decreases or increases segregation?

## **11. Transcripts of the interviews**

**Me:** What is the main concern of parents in the process of communication? What are their usual questions?

**Principal 1** -Does it cost something? Do you follow the national curriculum? The parents are interested whether there is social atmosphere and whether there are fights between the children. It is often where children are moving not from worse schools but from big schools to small sized schools. The parents do not prefer big sized classes- big sized classes ... more conflicts.

**Me:** Are there many Swedish students:

**Principal 1:** All parents want to have a school which represents Malmö, meaning that they want students from Swedish and foreign background. The parents appreciate the fact that the children can establish a good Swedish language to further help them in their future.

**Principal 2:** We have only construction program. The most common question we get at the open day is whether the students will be able to continue their education further in university. It is actually the students that we have contact mostly with, of course there are parents that contact us and it is obvious that it is them who play great role.

**Principal 3:** Many times we talk with the parents if the environment is calm and if we achieve the academic goals. Those are the two important factors. You can find the information about the national exam and decide whether to move your child to our school or not.

**Principal 4:** When they contact me for the first time they ask about the class size, do we have competent teachers although they can see it in our web site.

**Principal 5:** They can ask about the teachers' competence, that is typical for the parents to ask the question. As well, how the school day looks like, if they study in a special way since

*we are an independent school, if there is something different. And as well the result, what are the students' results, how many achieve the goal with the final grades and go further to university. They are interested as well if we are risk-capital company that earns money or not since there is much going on right now in the media.*

**Principal 6:** *I wouldn't call it concern. The schools are promoting its programs and school of course. So it's not like the parents don't know anything. They like to know more about the program. They want to make sure that it's the right program. They ask whether it is a good school but this is not often since they know or have knowledge about it via the reputation. I think I get questions only from those parents that don't know about our reputation.*

**Principal 7:** *The most usual question is whether the students can get a job after the education and whether the environment is safe.*

**Principal 8:** *The most asked questions if we have student health body, whether the school provides special pedagogues and student counselor. They ask also if the school provides assistance for kids with different diagnoses such as dyslexia. As well if we have special education within a certain educational area.*

**Principal 9:** *We are an asterisk school. Since we are such a school where our profile is music, film etc. The usual question is do you follow the national curriculum. Do you do the national exam. Of course we do. The parents seem to be concerned that the children will learn only to paint and to sing.*

**Principal 10:** *The most common question is whether we can offer accommodation to students coming far from Malmo.*

**Me: Do you think the parents who contact you are well informed about the schools, staff and education programs?**

**Principal 1:** *No they are not well informed. They even asked whether it is for free. That speaks for itself. They have friends, acquaintances where they get their information.*

**Principal 2:** *No I don't think so. I think it is difficult. There are too many schools and programs so it is difficult to comprehend the information. They get their information mostly from rumors. We have in Malmö two schools that are always preferred among the others. According to me the rumor about a school is one of the most important for one school to be assumed good.*

**Principal 3:** *I don't think so. They get their information via contacts, neighbors, friends or relatives who have their children in our school. In that respect the children attending our school are the ambassadors, they spread the news about the school. We never have a problem getting children in our school.*

**Principal 4:** *If I have to be frank so usually the parents are well informed. They have already gone through the web site, skolverket read a lot; they get their information through acquaintances, friends and relatives.*

**Principal 5:** *No, it feels like that many parents do not check enough and they are not aware. The choice right now is enormous so they stumble upon the choices. It feels that they don't know really what is going on. Since the students don't know much how is it possible for the parents to have the knowledge. Plus the fact that nowadays is different compared to before when the parents attended schools. Everything is new, new schools, new programs etc.*

**Principal 6:** *It is really difficult to be informed. There are around 30 high schools in Malmö. It's a jungle. When you have your first child it's a jungle. When you have your second or third etc. it's easier and you know because your first child is already in high school. They know then which schools are more or less good. And we have big segregation in Malmö where for example they get the best students and they have admittance of 300-320 points so if you came to Sweden 7- 8years ago it is impossible to have such Swedish skills so you can get only A grades. In that respect there is much segregation in the high schools with their admittance requirements.*

**Principal 7:** *Relatively. They often come and look at the environment. The parents get their information via their children who have contacts with friends and relatives who attend our school.*

**Principal 8:** *It differs. The ones that call in they usually have an idea and have read about us. But those are not many.*

**Principal 9:** *They are relatively informed. They check the web site, they contact their friends etc. I believe the majority chose the school after they have done their research if I may say so. In other words they are interested in our profile.*

**Me:** How do they get their information about the school?

**Principal 9:** *They get it through other parents, web site and acquaintances.*

**Principal 10:** *If the parents are not well informed, so the students are. The source of information is the website, hearsay and “open house” meetings.*

**Me:** **Do you think it is easy for the parents to process all the information about schools?**

**Principal 1:** *No I don't think it's easy. Due to that fact that there is so much information, material etc. it is not easy to comprehend all that information especially if you want to participate actively into the process. The information on skolinspektionen and skolverket is not easy to comprehend. It is too complicated for regular people. There are many parents and students that are satisfied with the school and school system and in most cases they are the one who in a way develop the school system. They are active and take an active participation.*

**Me:** The parents who take part ... do you think they are high educated or low educated?

**Principal 1:** *According to me Malmö is relatively segregated. I don't think the situation is worse in Sweden but... Well, the second and third generation immigrants are those who know more about the Swedish system compared to the first generation. From this group the parents who have higher education are those who are mostly familiar with the information. With the first generation immigrants I can see the different whether they are Europeans or not but not to distinguish them whether they have high education or not.*

**Principal 2:** *No, I don't think so. It is difficult.*

**Principal 3:** *No, I don't think so. I don't think the available information is not always helpful and adaptive. We have for example really good web site but I would like to see it in at least three other languages. The data for schools is only in Swedish. We in our school have 65% children where their mother tongue is other than Swedish. So the parents in order to be informed we need to create that availability. But we will think about that for the next semester.*

**Principal 4:** *The parents who choose independent schools are usually really involved in the process. The last years there is a tendency that parents with different economical background know about this.*

**Principal 5:** *I don't think it is easy to process the information. What would be helpful is if the parents go to “open houses” in different schools and create their image of the school.*

**Principal 6:** *No. I have seen parents putting all the catalogues from the high schools in a height order. Well, it is that long like 10 telephone catalogues (gula sidor). From those school catalogues they chose after reading through to go check maybe 5. They go to those open house meetings and then maybe chose one of them. I think their choice is rather random because the schools are too many and the choice is too much. It is really difficult to obtain an image on the schools.*

**Principal 7:** *I don't think so. It can be difficult. I think most of the parents are not so well educated and they are looking for education that will lead to job obtainment. Their aim is that their children will get job immediately after they graduate. I think 25% continue high education after this school.*

**Principal 8:** I did not ask her that question.

**Principal 9:** *No I don't think it is easy to comprehend all the information to choose from schools. Well in our case we are the only primary school that has aesthetic profile. There are high schools with such a profile but not primary schools. So if you are looking for such a profile you don't have much choice. You will choose our school.*

**Principal 10:** No

**Me:** Would you classify their choice as informed or random?

**Principal 1:** *More or less random I would say.*

**Principal 2:** *It is difficult to say. Maybe both. Every parent wishes its best for their child and ... I cannot say they choose randomly since there are trends and they follow them. On the other hand I cannot clearly say that they are that informed so they can make an informed choice. For example here in our school we get many students from sturup and it should speak for something-that parents do not choose randomly but they look after their interest.*

**Principal 3:** *They are informed. They can find the information. Right now the information available is much more than it used to be. They have now better track.*

**Principal 4:** *I am really convinced that the parents choose in an informed way.*

**Principal 5:** *Both. Maybe 50/50. We never go so deep into a discussion with the parents but mostly they have many questions. It's not like they reason why they like certain things but they have asked questions but rarely go deep into a discussion.*

How many schools do they choose between?

*The parents that are really interested and will know more about the schools maybe go to 2 or 3 “open houses”. They usually check on internet which schools are available in certain districts they wish their children to be situated in and then choose.*

**Principal 6:** *Well I don't think it's the parents who choose, it's the students. When they reach the age of 16 it is the students who choose schools and the parents make sure that their child is secure and chooses correctly. It is the students who choose and the parents are assisting them. I mean that the parents are playing big role in their child's education and so. I think as well that many parents actually don't care as well because they have lost the grip. There are some parents coming and say that they don't have much to do with their child's choice. Here in Sweden students in the age of 15-16 start to be independent. This independency is more that you and I think it is.*

**Principal 7:** *Both I would say. There is a great share that they do choose school in an informed way but probably similar share chose it just because.*

**Principal 8:** *It is not exactly the parents who choose the school but the students. But of course they discuss the education at home with the parents. However, when the parents make the dissision or co-decide with the child about the choice, then they tend to ask more questions. They are the one who are well-informed.*

**Me:** Is there are connection between the involved in the process parents and their level of education?

**Principal 8:** *It is impossible to me to say whether the parents who are more involved in the childs education are high-educated or low-educated. I do not know whether they education or not.*

**Principal 9:** *I would say that the majority of parents do informed choice.*

**Principal 10:** *The students are the one who choose high school, but of course, parents have a great influence on the decision. There are parents who are very well informed and there are parents who do not have any idea of what we offer.*

**Me:** According to you, do parents usually make the right choice? Are they satisfied with the school or program they have chosen?

**Principal 1:** *No not all of them, but most of them. We are losing many children each year but we get the same amount same year. Many children come to the school and the parents realize that this school doesn't not fit them.*

**Me:** What are the most common excuses to leave the school?-

**Principal 1:** *Sometimes it is the reason that the school has bad reputation. The children that are coming to our school need more or less more structure not like in asterisk activities schools where there is freedom.*

**Principal 2:** *I think the parents are satisfied if their children are satisfied.*

**Principal 3:** *Yes, I think they choose right.*

**Principal 4:** *Well usually when parents choose independent school they make a conscious choice. If they are not satisfied they move their children to another school. In our school not so many parents move their children.*

**Principal 5:** *Yes I think so. It is often like this. If I meet parents during those "open house" meeting or whenever they come to check out our school some of them are quite critical and question everything. But at the first parental meeting I see those parents that were mostly critical and I say wow it is those parents. I don't believe it. We thought they will never choose us but here they are because they believe we are the best.*

**Principal 6:** *The first year of high school we have always the parents at the parental meeting. It is them who are involved in the process. But there are as well parents that are never coming. I guess the parents want to make sure on those meeting that they have made the right choice, or the students have made the right choice. I think it is however barely half of the parents who come to those meeting. I think as well that there are parents that consider in their turn they would have chosen another school than the one their kids have chosen.*

**Principal 7:** *Yes. Most of them do the right choice and they are satisfied.*

**Principal 8:** *Yes, I guess they are satisfied because if they are not satisfied they will resign from the school*

**Principal 9:** *The majority of parents are satisfied. But there are always those parents that are in familiarized with the program and organization, they seem to be satisfied in the beginning*

*but after they start complaining although we have explained already everything... they want our school to be more traditional.*

**Principal 10:** *The students are the one who choose the program and school, but parents have a great influence on the decision. We have very happy parents.*

**Me:** **Do you get complains in relation to the quality of the education you provide? What are they mostly complaining about?**

**Principal 1:** *Not always on the quality of the education. I have got complains of organizational structure of the education.*

**Principal 2:** *If I have to categorize here the majority I would classify them as middle-class. The most complains are that the school days are too short, not so much lectures. If for example a student start acting up, disturb the lecture so we need to contact their parents and of course since the parents try to protect their child, as it is supposed, we end up sometimes in a conflict with them.*

**Principal 3:** *We are getting to the same problem again. We have students that seek a peaceful and calm environment and we have a group of pretty intense students meaning that they require more attention and the complains are targeting that particular group. These are the complains that we have to deal with. The questions are how you are going to deal with this problem. And this is common concern whether we provide a calm environment and it will be still in hundred years.*

**Principal 4:** *We don't have complains in regard to the education we provide because we have only competent teachers. The parents can come up with ideas and suggestions, whether they are high educated or low education. In this sense it doesn't matter your status. They just come and suggest and of course we listen to them.*

**Principal 5:** *Well, it is almost always different. Before we got complains about the food but we changed our catering provider. Sometimes as well it's the conflict between the teachers and the students. The complains can be about anything. As well the assistance, what kind of assistance my son or daughter can get. Quite big critique we can get that their children didn't get the proper assistance. And when we tell them what we have done they calm down and say well our son didn't tell us that the school offers this assistance. So sometimes it's about misunderstanding.*



**Me:** Is it possible to be made the following connection that high educated parents complain more?

**Principal 5:** *Well I don't know. But if we have to generalize we can say that high educated parents show more interested in their child's education. But as well low educated parents are also active in the processes of choosing schools. But it is actually difficult to say. There are parents that come to the open house meetings and you see they are the one who are active but there are parents that don't show any interest because they are not even there on those meetings or on the parental meetings.*

**Principal 6:** *Definitely it is the well-educated parents that have higher standards and requirements. Most of their concern is about the teachers and whether the lectures are enough challenging for the students. This concerns mostly mathematics or if the teachers are qualified enough.*

**Principal 7:** *Not so many complains. We are mostly in a contact with the parents during the first year of their education but basically we do not get many complains. Well I wouldn't say that we get complains. Since it is high school we get more suggestions and questions about an issue that we can together resolve later.*

**Principal 8:** *We do not get that many complains. There are just a little share that complain. Since it is the students that choose the school I can say that they are relatively satisfied but I cannot say that much about the parents.*

**Principal 9:** *It is only some parents that complain. Usually when you have chosen a school with such profile you do not complain because you have chosen the school with a purpose.*

**Me:** Do the parents who want to sign in their kids are they high educated or low educated?

**Principal 9:** *Well there is a mixture of both classes. The majority I would classify as middle class status.*

**Principal 10:** *We get the occasional case representations from parents who have concerns of what are their children's opportunities for support. Often it's very specific students' health issues that together we sort out with the action. I don't have opinion on it is unlike the complaints by socioeconomic status.*

**Me:** Do you think the distance between the school and students home plays a great role for the parents? Do you have many parents that will sign their kids in your school just because it is close to their home?

**Principal 1:** *Well there are independent schools that are relatively good and they are better than the rest. They show great grades and all of their let's say 300 students are approved in the exam which I don't really believe. It is not possible everybody to pass and to be approved. But anyways, some of the schools are better than the rest and there some schools that are not doing great. So in other words you have perform better in order to be competitive. It is also about marketing. Many independent schools claim that they are good although they are not so ... but still they claim it.*

**Principal 2:** *No. I don't think so. In our case less than 40% of our students actually live in Malmö. The rest come from outside.*

**Principal 3:** *No, we have 230 students and only 5 are coming from this neighborhood. The rest are coming from the center or other parts of Malmö.*

**Principal 4:** *Our school is situated in two part of Malmö. Although that the parents give lifts to their children. I don't think address of the school plays a great role since the parents have done their conscious choice to sign in their children in our school. I think on first place it comes the calm environment and educational quality.*

**Principal 5:** *No I don't think so. There is so much choice even in the center of malmö there are several schools so I don't this this is the case that the distance play a role. We have many students that come from far away.*

**Principal 6:** *No I don't think so. It's the program what is important. We even have parents that let their children to travel all the way from Hässleholm to attend our school. It's quite a long time to travel. But also there are some parents that choice the school due to the convenience of the location. However, the most important concern is the program of the school.*

**Principal 7:** *No not at all. We are anyways a little bit far away from the city center so they have to get public transportation to get to the school.*

**Principal 8:** *Not at all. The distance doesnt play at all role. There are many students that travel long distance.*

**Principal 9:** *There are many that choose the school due to the fact that it is near their home but there are as well students that travel long time. Even there are some students that live outside Malmö. Those students/parents that choose the school because of interest are between 75-85%*

**Principal 10:** *No.*

**Me:** **What is the consequence of competition between independent schools? Can you name the advantages and disadvantage of having a competition?**

**Principal 1:** *Now there can be a great variety of schools that can be offered. Different types of schools. Before the reform, where you are born you go to the same school where you live. No choice at all. You are now allowed to choose the right school for you. The disadvantage is that children flee from the problems. Sometimes students that start the school drop easily the school. They do not push it to resolve the problem but escape from it.*

**Me:** Do you think that the competition increases the quality of education or the performance in schools?

**Principal 1:** *Yes I do believe that school competition increases the performance in schools.*

**Principal 2:** *In general I think the competition is negative. I experience that it has become a phony beach ball. Basically there are too many educational activities and schools that offer sometimes irrelevant programs. Most of them are mainly independent schools. Not all of course but mainly they are independent schools.*

**Me:** Why do you think they have been negative?

**Principal 2:** *For example there are 5 different schools that offer construction programs in Malmö but we are the only one that will enroll students in the fall. The other schools would be left empty. And of course it's positive for us but ... well.*

**Principal 3:** *We do not have direct competition with other schools. There is only one municipal school which is 230 meters away from us. We have lost some students to municipal schools during the last years. And of course the municipal schools/activities became much better than before. Maybe there is a competition between municipal schools and independent but I don't think there is competition between the independent schools. I think it's good that*

*now students and parents can choose between schools but at the same time the choice can be overwhelming with the too many schools. The variety is gigantic.*

**Me:** Do you think the quality increases or decreases due to the school competition?

**Principal 4:** *I think the educational quality increases since there is a competition. He was just talking something that was out of the question.*

**Principal 5:** *The good thing is that the students nowadays have the possibility to choose. They get a much better image of the schools. Compared to before nowadays is better because you can choose. The disadvantage is now that it's too easy to change schools, that students now easily give up the school if there is a problem. Instead of trying to resolve the problem they just transfer to another school. They say well this school is no longer for me I will change it. Another problem is that the competition leads to wrong school investments.*

**Principal 6:** *It's really good to have competition. If the reform didn't happen so the municipality schools would have the same quality. But because of this reform now the schools have increased their quality and level of education.*

*The disadvantage of having school competition is that is survival of the fittest. Meaning that the schools that don't have the quality and the volume of students they just close down. As well there is too much choice available and less birthrate.*

**Principal 7:** *It is good because the number of applicants has decreased; there is now place for more or less everybody.*

**Principal 8:** *It is a long discussion. But basically in order to compete we need to have great quality. Since there are 1.7 places for 1 student the schools have to perform better than the rest of the school in order to keep their students. It is difficult but the quality of education rises.*

**Principal 9:** *We do not have that much competition just because of our profile.*

**Principal 10:** *Overcrowding can lead to unhealthy quest for a few students (for all schools). This "hunt" for students can create an unnecessary need for marketing expenses. There may also be satisfaction "blackmail", then parents and students are threatening to quit if they do not get attention for issues that might not always be in the Swedish educational reform*

*interests. Schools can (I hope not) then get into a situation where they weigh the financial interests of compromising the mission of the governing documents.*

**Me:** **What is the socioeconomic status of the parents who contact you? What is their occupational status? How would you classify the majority: high educated, medium educated or low educated parents?**

**Principal 1:** *The majority of the parents are low-educated. Here in the case of our school I know that we have immigrant parents that are high-educated in their country but here they are working jobs such as drivers.*

**Me:** Do you think high educated parents will chose your school?

**Principal 1:** *Yeah some of them do choose our school. They come for really segregated areas from Malmö and our school is like a trampoline to the regular schools. The low educated parents usually prefer to sign in their kids in other part of Malmö so they can mix up in a way with the other social classes.*

**Principal 2:** *It is middle class.*

**Principal 3:** *Well I know where most of the parents live. But not always there can be made a connection between where you live and what is your status or occupation. I cannot say whether a parent living in Rosengård where the social life there is tough if this parent is high educated or not. We have many kids coming from that area.*

**Principal 4:** *Since the date when the school money has entered the education, any kind of parents can apply for admittance in independent schools. Thus I cannot categorize which are high educated and which are not. We have all the categories.*

**Principal 5:** *Well we use to say that Malmö is really diverse and we get students mostly from Malmö and that is why we have everything. We have everybody in one place. That is good. We have students from västra hamnen, from fusie etc. We meet the parents just occasionally so we cannot really say what is their educational level. But we can generalize that its medium educated. The parents that we meet are more or less medium or high educated. But as well there are those parents that we almost never meet. We cannot say anything about them but generally speaking we have parents from all social classes.*

**Principal 6:** *I don't want to categorize. It is the same if I say that the students are not equally worth. It is really difficult. It is going to be wild guess. I cannot say whether the parents are well-educated or not when I have meetings with them. The important thing here is the students' education.*

**Principal 7:** *The majority is I would say have low socioeconomic status. Most of the students come from Rosengård or Burlöv. We have relatively 50/50 Swedish and immigrant parents.*

**Principal 8:** *Impossible to answer that. I never ask parents what is their status. I can never guess. All parents want their children to succeed in education, to have better education, to succeed in life.*

**Principal 9:** *We do not really know what the parents are working with, what is their occupation. But if I have to generalize it should be middle class.*

**Principal 10:** *I have no information about.*

**Me:** **In regard to students' ability, do Swedish parents ask what the overall students' performance is? What about the parents with foreign background? Are they interested in other's students' performance or this is out of their concern?**

**Principal 1:** *No I cannot say that I have met such parents. It should be rational to ask such questions but they don't. But I think the reason could be that this is the first year where grades are given to 6<sup>th</sup> graders. I think they would be interested if we had this regulation from before. With immigrants it is usually that they have it really though life so they have different things to think about.*

**Principal 2:** *Yes they are interested. They just ask how is it going with the other students. Where does it go good where not. About the parents with foreign background i cannot say that they are interested in other students's performance, they have already created their image about the school.*

**Principal 3:** *Yes, Swedish parents ask such questions. When they come to visit us they ask about how is it with the national exam, whether the other kids manage. With the parents with foreign background it is a little different. Many times the kids of such parents come from hard burdensome schools and for them the most important is to be safe and calm school. Of course for them is also important the goal achievement but not that compared as with the Swedish parents.*

**Principal 4:** *Of course they are interested. Even the students are really aware of the grading system and they crave higher grades.*

**Principal 5:** *Yes there are some parents that ask such questions. About the parents with foreign background they would also like to know about this. They want their children to become doctors and such.*

**Principal 6:** *No they mostly interested in their own children performance. But however when we have these open house meeting they are interested what is the overall performance of the students. And when we say it they respond okay that is good or not. They want to be aware of the performance, yes.*

**Principal 7:** *Well they are not really interested in other students' performance. They are more concerned with their child's performance. They never ask questions about other students' grades. They are interested whether the students obtain job easy after graduation. Most of our students manage with their education.*

**Principal 8:** *Yes sometimes they ask about the average grade of the school or the average admission grade requirement. If there are 200 students applying for 100 places then the grade requirements will be higher. The question for grade requirement is much more important for the student who is applying in the school not for the parents.*

**Principal 9:** *Yeah they are interested if our students pass the national exam. It is important for them.*

*With parents from foreign background the question is not that relevant. Usually they know what they want, what they are interested in and they apply for our school.*

**Me:** Do you think it is easy for the immigrant children to adjust to the Swedish system?

**Principal 9:** *Well it is not the children who have problem in adjusting. It is their parents.*

**Principal 10:** *No difference from where the parents come. Many people have questions regarding admissions scores and how our students are performing at the school in the various core subjects.*

**Me:** Have you been asked by parents, regardless of their national identity, what socioeconomic status of the majority of other parents is? Whether the parents are wealthy or not?

**Principal 1:** *Not directly. They have asked what is the status of the students, if their parents have jobs etc. But such questions are not that common.*

**Principal 2:** *No. they never ask this question.*

**Principal 3:** *No, not at all.*

**Principal 4:** *No, such questions do not come up. They can maybe ask where the students come from, from which area from Malmö. But about the parental jobs or status, they are not interested.*

**Principal 5:** *Never.*

**Principal 6:** *No never.*

**Principal 7:** *No they do not ask such questions?*

**Principal 8:** *No not at all.*

**Principal 9:** *No, never. They never ask this question.*

**Principal 10:** *No*

**Me:** **Do you think Swedish parents care for whether their child/children are going to study with students from foreign background? Have you been asked such a question? What about the parents with foreign background, do they show any interest to whether their child/children are going to study with native students or foreign background students?**

**Principal 1:** *Yes, absolutely. They would like that the school is 50/50 Swedish and immigrants. About the immigrants they are straight since they are the minority and they would like to have more Swedish students as classmates due to the language.*

**Principal 2:** *About the Swedish parents I did not see any interested, nor, for the parents with foreign background.*

**Principal 3:** *No. This was always out of the question.*

**Principal 4:** *Now we are living in Malmö and the school is situated in Malmö. We have both Swedish and immigrants. However the majority of students is of a Swedish origin, where the mother and father are swedes. I think the Swedish parents are aware about the situation in*



*Malmö and whatever school they choose there will be children of immigrants. But of course they ask such questions such as: are there many immigrants. However, we try to get both Swedish and children with foreign background.*

*I can say it straight that it is in most cases that the immigrants that ask these questions. I would say that the parents with foreign background prefer their child to study with mostly Swedish students.*

**Me:** Why do you think it is like this?

**Principal 4:** *Well, it matters here where the parents live, in which district. If they live in a district where there only immigrants, they would prefer to have contact with Swedish. They are maybe afraid that their child is not going to master the Swedish language. We have our lectures in Swedish and doesn't matter where are you coming from.*

**Principal 5:** *Yes this question came up on several occasions. They ask whether many immigrants go to this school. We say yes we have, we are living in Malmö. And then they say well we don't think this is good so we will change the school. Yes you can change it.*

*About the parents with foreign background it is never a problem for them that their child will study with Swedish classmates.*

**Principal 6:** *The people who apply for our school they know we represent Malmö. But those parents or students who have their prejudices they don't choose our school. They choose in that regard Swedish schools. But anyways there is no longer school that are completely Swedish but since if the parents had their children before where there are not so many immigrants they say yeah it is good for Malmö to have immigrants but not definitely positive for our child. They choose other schools in Malmö, such as Petri, Provitas etc. I personally believe that it is good if the child goes to a school that represents Malmö. Probably 20% of the parents living in districts like Limmhamn etc. they look for diversity. In those districts the majority of parents earn a lot of money. The rest are looking for Swedish schools.*

*About the immigrant parents it is out of their concern what nationality are going to be their child's classmates. They are looking for quality of education.*

**Principal 7:** *It can happen that such questions appear. I have experience that some of the parents appear to be prejudiced and they are concerned that it might be troublesome if there are more immigrant students.*

*It happens also with parents with foreign background. Immigrant parents are pleased with the fact that the school has a variety of both Swedish and immigrant students.*

**Principal 8:** *Since we are living in Malmö where the diversity is huge so all of the parents are familiar with that and they do not ask such questions. Diversity is good. About the parents/students from foreign background maybe they prefer to study with Swedish students but still I cannot be sure about it.*

**Principal 9:** *I would say that the parents would like to be a mixture of Swedish students and students from foreign background. If the questions appears whether there are many kids that have foreign background and the answer is yeah 70% then they tend to get skeptical about it. Then there is a problem with the language, the language level of teaching will be low ... maybe it is not going to work etc. They wish to have some form of mixture. I think many of the parents are concerned that the school will have only Swedish students and will not represent the reality in Malmö.*

**Me:** What if the majority in the school was of students from foreign background. Would it be different?

**Principal 9:** *Maybe then yes. But once again it will be just because of the language. The Swedish parents will be maybe concerned if there are only immigrant children due to the level of language. That would be the problem. But that is just my guess I cannot really say it. Not so many parents from foreign background have asked such a question. Maybe some have asked. But if some ask I guess the only think is that they are concerned if their child is the only immigrant child in the class.*

**Principal 10:** *We have about 30% immigrant students. There has not been any question that indicates any concern.*

**Me:** **Since the abolishment of the principle that children should be situated in schools in the area where they live (närhetsprincipen), do you think increased school choice decreases or increases segregation?**

**Principal 1:** *I personally wouldn't like to put my children in school where there are only swedes, it should represent Malmö. For example the school in Rosengård has been emptied from Swedish students. I think the segregation has increased.*

**Principal 2:** *It is difficult to know. I think it increased the segregation but it is not that simple. There are many components contributing to the segregation, not just the school. For example residence segregation and school segregation go hand in hand I think. The families tend to choose not only 1 school but 2 in the process of school choice. And if you look into Skåne for example there is a specific trend for students to seek into schools in Lund. Lund takes in from all over Skåne and they barely have enough space for students living in Lund. For instance, the Cathedralskolan. It is really full and they barely can enroll more students. And due to that Lund's own applicants don't stand a chance to be enrolled in that school. This is the phenomena of the society meaning that the segregation increases in the society. So it doesn't make much of a difference if you kept the närhetsprincipen since you still transfer the smart students in one school.*

**Principal 3:** *I think this has increased the segregation. Parents with capabilities and resources can choose which school they want. Of course all parents are allowed to choose but what about the economic resources to pay for transportation. There are of course many reasons why parents didn't choose a certain school that is far away but one of them is the transportation costs, so that is why I believe we have an increased segregation. Not everything is positive with the independent schools and that there is big competition between the schools.*

**Principal 4:** *Since they introduced the school money (skolpengar) the level of segregation has decreased. The children that live in tough districts have the chance to go to another school that is not situated in the same district. Definitely I can see that the segregation has decreased. In our school we have both Swedish and students with foreign background and this is a positive thing.*

**Principal 5:** *I think it has decreased the segregation. Students are moving/changing schools more. Schools are not chosen now because they are near to where you live but you choose it because it's the best and fits you best. And if this school fits someone else so they choose it and the students study together. Now they choose school because they think they offer something good and beneficial and not because it's close by. For example when I was studying I attended a school that was close by and the percent of immigrant students was*

*really high. And you ask yourself a question why everybody should be focused in one school in one place. So thus I think the abolishment of the principle actually decreases the segregation.*

**Principal 6:** *If the question is targeting the elementary schools the question is really good and relevant. I think the reform has decreased the segregation. It is positive that the parents are able to choose freely. I will give you an example where Kroksbeksskola united with lineaskola and many parents were against it and decided to transfer their children so they would not be integrated because of the fear of their kids getting into more trouble. Of course there were parents that appreciated this unification. Those parents of course stated the reason that it is good that their children will experience the multi-cultural society like this in Malmö. After a while the pupils did not even think of the differences between each other which of course was great because they felt united.*

**Principal 7:** *I think it has increased the segregation. Well actually it both increased and decreased the segregation. If for example there was an independent school in Rosengård the segregation would be decreased since the parents living there do not have much money even for transportation so they anyway choose the communal school that is situated in Rosengård.*

**Principal 8:** *I don't think there is a difference between communal or independent schools. It is relevant for both. I can say like this if there was this regulation still it will be not beneficial for students for example living in Rosengård. The politicians should work more towards segregation due to residential area. However high schools in Sweden never had this regulation only the elementary schools. In some small cities there is only one high school so the students don't have a choice and go to this school. In that respect, independent schools have increased the available choice and variety and thus decreased the segregation.*

**Principal 9:** *I think it has decreased the segregation.*

**Principal 10:** *I think the choice for high schools has not been affected as much unlike primary schools. The school choice is not just to choose a school, but also to consider what training you want to receive. This makes the choice to high school more complex and can simultaneously create segregation and reduce it. Simply a tough question to answer if you cannot see student flows.*