

MARKET FORCES IN EDUCATION, A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

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SYNOPSIS

This article analyses whether the concerns about increased inequality between secondary schools are justified, in the light of the numerous changes in legislation aiming at market forces and choice. From panel study interviews among respondents in England and Scotland, it becomes clear that such concerns are justified, especially in England. The main reasons for the increase in inequality between schools is the lack of educational diversity and the fact that schools are only responsive towards certain groups of students.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade the British educational systems have undergone a large number of changes in legislation. Many of these changes imply an increased 'marketisation' of education. For example, Whitty and Power (1997) review the whole package of reforms introduced by the British government and are concerned about increased inequality in education provision because of the commitment to market forces. This article analyses the consequences of market forces in terms of school choice in England and Scotland and investigates whether such concerns are justified.

When investigating educational systems in terms of market forces, school organisation is discussed within its broader environment. For the purpose of describing the relationship between organisation and environment, two mechanisms which are most applicable in education are used (Ouchi, 1980). The first is the market approach. In a market, the consumers, in this case the student or his/her parent, is the major actor. Governmental control will be discussed only in so far as it stops short of interference. The government does not prevent producers from responding to consumers and from competing with one another.

The second approach is the institutional approach. Institutionalism discusses relationships between organisations and their environment, with the emphasis on the organisations' institutional environment including the central and local government. As Van Wieringen (1989) explains, some schools are so thoroughly interrelated with their environment that they are hard to recognise as separate organisations.

Choice and market forces by themselves do not lead to educational improvements. On the contrary, if emphasis is laid upon hierarchical and social differences between schools, such differences will only increase if choice is increasingly available. Choice can only be beneficial under certain conditions. These conditions will be discussed first, under both the market as well as the institutional approach. We then move on to compare the educational systems.

Within the market approach, choice will only be beneficial if the producers of education are able to respond to consumer choice. The consumer (in theory) is sovereign. However, consumers can only enjoy 'monarchical' rights if producers are able and willing to provide the goods or services they want (Woods, 1994). One would also expect an increased presence of other market elements. School choice emphasises the presence of both sides of the market: a supply and demand side. It provides mutual protection from interference by both sides of the market and it increases competition between suppliers.

In terms of the institutional approach, schools can only be responsive if they are given scope for decision-making, in other words, autonomy. School choice can only be beneficial if the schools' scope for decision-making enables responsiveness to the consumers' wishes. Schools should expect rewards if they show responsiveness, in terms of increased student numbers and funds. To benefit from school choice, schools should not only be responsive, but also respond in a certain way. Parents should be able to choose a certain school on the basis of specific aspects of the curriculum or teaching methods. Only if schools provide a certain amount of diversity and if this diversity is allowed by the institutional context of the school, can every child attend the most suitable school (Tenbusch & Garet, 1993). Schools should be encouraged to provide a certain amount of educational as well as institutional diversity. Educational diversity refers to differences between schools in terms of their educational programmes and teaching. Institutional diversity means the availability of different administrative types of schools. For school choice to be beneficial, the regulatory structure of choice should at least involve a shift from input or process to output control, in such a way that schools are less determined by external legitimation (legislation). Schools should be less buffered from their environment and more open towards their individual environment.

In this article the market mechanism in education is examined in an international comparative perspective. Such a perspective is chosen because comparison provides a basis for statements to be made about empirical regularities and allows cases to be evaluated and interpreted in relation to substantive and theoretical criteria (Ragin, 1987). In addition, comparative research can have a 'chastening' (discovering limitations and possibilities for reform) as well as a 'humanising' effect (there are similar problems everywhere) (Altbach, Arnove & Kelly, 1982). More pragmatic reasons can be derived from the increased awareness of the global economy among policy-makers and the public, with education as an element in the globalisation process (Altbach, 1991). Making comparisons can be very helpful, as it releases from static structures and provides prospects of alternative solutions.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the aim was to research school organisation in its institutional and market environment. When researching a dynamic process in its natural environment, case studies are the most obvious method. For each country the data collection of the case study involved a panel study consisting of semi-structured interviews with 15 respondents: 5 researchers, 5 policymakers at the national and local level and 5 school principals. The interviews were performed with help of a brief topic list and lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. The respondents were used as informants, to provide information about the phenomenon to be researched. They were selected in such a way that different political, ideological and religious views were represented. The school principals represented different types of schools: independent, City Technology Colleges (CTC), Local Education Authority (LEA), Grant Maintained (GM) and Denominational (Roman Catholic).

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

In order to describe and analyse changes in the educational systems of England and Scotland in terms of the market forces in education, three categories are distinguished: the demand side, the supply side and the regulatory structure. For each of these categories, the current educational developments are discussed in a comparative perspective.

Demand side

This category comprises the encouragement of choice in terms of opportunities for school choice for parents and students, such as availability of transport and

information, and whether choice is actually promoted or encouraged. This category includes the rationality of school choice in terms of deliberateness of choice.

For the opportunities for choice, in England and Scotland, the LEA provides transport to the allocated school beyond a certain distance, particularly in the rural areas of Scotland where the population density is very low. If Scottish parents opt for another school, they have to provide their own transport. Home-to-school transport is the responsibility of the English LEA, also for students attending Grant-maintained (GM) schools (DFE, 1994).

In England, the local authority provides information about schools where school brochures can be consulted usually through public libraries. In Scotland, schools are not allowed to send their brochures to other than their own associated primary schools, unless deliberately requested by the parents. Nevertheless, Scottish schools are obliged to produce a school handbook. The contents of these handbooks are standardised. The local authority provides information about the procedure for applying for a place. English schools are obliged to produce 'output' information.

When discussing rationality of choice, it should be noted that a distinction between choosers and non-choosers exists in both countries. In England, Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1995) identify three types of choosers:

The privileged/skilled choosers, who have both the inclination and the capacity to choose;

The semi-skilled choosers, who have the inclination, but only a limited capacity to choose and

The disconnected choosers, for whom choice is a necessity.

Inevitably, this typology is strongly class-related. The different groups of choosers are connected to different circuits of schooling. David, West and Ribbens (1994) studied the reasons for choice of preferred secondary schools. They found an almost infinite variety of reasons for school choice, which are hard to summarise. An important aspect of the transfer from primary to secondary school is nevertheless a social process (siblings, friends).

In Scotland, generally, choosers chose schools with higher mean Social Economic Status (SES), often former grammar schools, though when SES was controlled for, these schools were found to be no more effective than others (Willms & Echols, 1992; Echols et al., 1990). Echols & Willms (1995) suggest that the most important factor for choosing a non-designated school may not be academic quality, but the avoidance of an undesirable school. As parents do not consider a wide range of schools and do not choose on the basis of academic quality, 'those who envisage an educational market place that parallels the free-market model may be disappointed' (Echols & Willms, 1995, p. 154). Nearly 90% of Scottish parents, however, did not request a specific school for their child. In general, in England and Scotland, social reasons are more important than academic reasons when choosing a school.

Supply side

This second category describes the encouragement of choice in terms of supply side characteristics. The supply side of choice includes the formal possibilities for choice; existing diversity in educational provision between schools; and the admission criteria for students in order to enter a school.

The differences between the general characteristics of the education systems in England and Scotland meant that there were different starting points when school choice legislation was introduced. Compared to England, where the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) was receiving over 1,000 appeals a year and getting involved in disputes between parents and a number of authorities, the Scottish education authorities were operating their allocation and transfer policies

in a reasonably flexible manner. Although the Scottish Office was under pressure to confront one or two 'inflexible' authorities, this pressure was local rather than national. 'There was no very audible clamour for legislation in Scotland.' (Adler & Raab, 1988, p. 157). In England the Conservative party strenuously lobbied the introduction of parental choice as part of the 1979 Conservative election manifesto. When the English Conservative government returned to power in 1979, parental choice was eventually introduced to offer a mechanism for closing schools and saving public expenditure, without involving central government too closely in local issues (Stillman & Maychell, 1986). The balance between selective and comprehensive education has long caused a lot of political tension. Other arguments for the introduction of parental choice were the abolition of rigid zoning of secondary-school catchment areas, and more fundamentally, increased parental involvement in children's education. One of the main arguments at the level of the school system was that: 'the market mechanism of parental choice would lead to the closure or reorganisation of unpopular schools' (Echols et al., 1990, p. 208).

In Scotland, transfer from primary school to secondary school was, at least in urban areas, initially based on the principle of selection. However, with the implementation of comprehensive reorganisation, selection was replaced, either by a system of associated primary schools or through the use of catchment areas analogous to those used for primary schools (Adler & Raab, 1988). In a formal sense, from school choice legislation, one can see that Scottish parents actually have more rights than their English counterparts, even though parental choice legislation came from England. In Scotland, only the conditions of the required school can be taken into account, not those of the assigned school. Scottish parents have a more elaborate right of appeal (Adler & Raab, 1988).

In England and Scotland parents could always choose to pay for private education, but it is only recently that parents have been able to request a school other than their allocated school without paying for it. In England, school options have increased considerably, especially because of the increased diversity between schools. Nevertheless, catchment areas still exist. In Scotland, there is the choice between state, non-denominational and denominational schools, particularly in urban areas. If opting for a different school from the allocated school, parents have to make a formal request. School choice is possible, therefore, but not particularly encouraged.

In England, in addition to the LEA-schools, Catholic and Protestant schools have obtained (partial) public financing, and the introduction of a limited number of CTCs has led to increased diversity between schools. GM schools are another type of school made possible by the introduction of legislation allowing schools to opt out of local authority control. The diversity these schools represent does not have an educational basis, but provides institutional diversity, which does not necessarily have consequences for the consumers of education. The introduction of CTCs, GM schools and the Assisted Places Scheme (APS) has broken up the LEA monopoly (OECD, 1994). Schools are obliged to consider opting out every year. Although parents have to vote for a school to opt out, future parents are often not aware of these differences. In addition, there is diversity among local authority schools in some areas, particularly in terms of selectiveness. In the south of England, in particular, state grammar schools still exist. Due to its highly selective character (academic as well as social) the independent sector contains a very diverse range of schools. Single-sex and co-educational schools are present in the state as well as in the private sector. The institutional diversity among English state schools is increasingly due to new entrants, which has strengthened the availability of choice in education. Since the 1993 Education Act existing independent schools or new schools have the right, under certain conditions, to opt in to the GM sector. However, so far very few schools have been successful in obtaining public finance (Walford,

1997). The APS scheme has been abolished by the Education (Schools) Act 1997. From the school year 1997-1998 onwards the APS will be phased out.

The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act implies the renaming of the LEA-maintained, voluntary-aided and Grant-maintained schools into “community”, “aided” and “foundation” schools. This means that GM schools will disappear from September 1999 onwards. However, it remains likely that the existing status hierarchy between current LEA and GM schools will be maintained after the introduction of the School Standards and Framework Act. The term “foundation” will assist such schools to emphasise their traditional image, even when the current GM advantages in terms of funding and admission control are removed (Whitty, 1998).

Scotland adopted a more uniform and universal system of comprehensive education than England and Wales (McPherson & Willms, 1987; McPherson & Raab, 1988). Therefore, Scottish state education is less diversified than in England, due to the historical uniformity of the system, early reorganisation to a completely comprehensive system and the fact that there are no CTCs and only a few self-governing schools. Roman Catholic denominational schools are fully integrated into the state system. Another relevant factor is the low population density and rural character of Scotland. Except in the four major cities, there is often no more than one school within a reasonable distance.

English and, to a lesser extent, Scottish schools use relative admission criteria: if schools are oversubscribed, they set their students in a certain order of priority, usually based on sibling attendance, primary school and geographical area. This is sometimes a complicated and bureaucratic procedure. In England, in the case of open enrolment, students living closest to the school are given priority. Although the relative admission criteria seem ‘softer’ than absolute admission criteria, in many cases of oversubscribed schools selection can be very rigid and bureaucratic. English selection is in general based more on academic criteria, Scottish selection more on non-academic criteria, such as associated primary school or geographical area. Scottish parents have less diverse schools to choose from, but more opportunities to sustain their right to choose.

The regulatory structure of choice

This category refers to the autonomy of schools within the framework of control issued by the central/local government, in relation to the availability of choice. Within this framework of control, distinctions can be made between finance, administration and curriculum. This category includes control outside the institutional hierarchy of schools, for example by parent and teacher unions.

In the state sector in England and Scotland, the main decisions in the area of education used to be taken by local authorities. In particular, they were entirely responsible for planning and allocation of places. Decision-making now tends to happen at the level of the central government and the individual school rather than at local government level. Under the legislation of 1986 and 1988, the DfEE gave the governing body responsibility for the local management of schools (LMS), thus effectively reducing the powers of LEAs and breaking down its monopoly (Whitty & Power, 1997). The self-management of schools means that parents, through their governing body can vote to opt out of local authority control, thereby becoming Grant-maintained (England and Wales) or self-governing (in Scotland).

In Scotland, the educational system is based on separate legislation, now the responsibility of the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament. The former Conservative government’s policy on school boards and on opted-out, self-governing status preceded that on devolved school management (DSM) (Hartley, 1994). In England, the introduction of LMS prepared schools for financial autonomy, which was very much appreciated by some schools. The next step, opting out of local control, was

then a relatively small change. In England, the GM legislation has had more success than in Scotland. About 1,000 schools have opted out of LEA-control.

In both systems, shifts in decision-making powers can be observed. In England, the GM schools have a lot of autonomy and also the LEA-schools have increased autonomy under LMS. With hardly any self-governing schools and a recent introduction of DSM, Scottish schools are less autonomous. The role of the Scottish school boards under DSM concentrates on advising the head teacher. So while in England, autonomy has been handed down to the governing bodies, in Scotland it is the school head teacher who has gained more decision-making powers (Macbeth et al., 1995). There is little evidence, however, that the increased autonomy for the Scottish schools is being used to create more diversity.

England introduced a national curriculum in 1988. GM schools are also obliged to operate the national curriculum. In Scotland, the Education Authorities remain responsible for the curriculum, but they are strongly encouraged to implement the 5 - 14 national guidelines. Due to the more uniform, comprehensive character of Scottish education it was not necessary to introduce a prescribed national curriculum, as it was in England. The guidelines have been introduced gradually and with extensive consultation (Macbeth et al., 1995). England has introduced a system of national testing at ages 7, 11, 14, and 16. Scotland has its own system of examinations, organised through the Scottish Qualifications Authority (the recently merged Scottish Examinations Board and SCOTVEC). The Scottish examinations are the Standard Grade at the age of 16 and the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) Higher Grade, providing admission to Higher Education. The Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) Higher Grade is generally broader and less specialised than its English equivalent. The introduction of a national curriculum and, to a lesser extent, the national guidelines means that the schools have less autonomy to make individual choices about their educational curriculum.

From the above can be concluded that in general schools in England obtained more financial and administrative autonomy, although the national curriculum involves more control. In Scotland, there is little real increase in autonomy. Table 1 provides a brief overview of the major pieces of legislation concerning the “marketisation” of education in England and Scotland.

Table 1: Relevant changes in legislation

England	Scotland
EA1980 increased autonomy of LEAs EA1986 introduced LMS Education Reform Act 1988 introduced National curriculum, LMS, GM, CTCs The Schools Act 1992 EA 1993 extending LMS, independent schools can opt in to the GM sector Education (Schools) Act 1997 Abolition of APS School Standards and Framework Act 1998, the renaming of LEA, voluntary-aided and GM schools	The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 The Education (Scotland) Act 1981 established parental choice by placing request. The Schoolboards Act 1988, forming of schoolboards The Self-Governing Schools (Scotland) Act 1989, introduced the possibility of opting out of local control Devolved School Management, guidelines for schemes 1993.

CONSEQUENCES OF MARKET FORCES

After this comparison of the educational systems, the consequences of the 'marketisation' in education are analysed. These consequences are entirely based on the aggregated opinions of the respondents of the two case studies. Three types of responses can be distinguished (Teelken, 1998): 1. Interorganisational responses (educational and institutional diversity) 2. External responses (competition, collaboration, legitimation) 3. Internal responses (improvement of the educational organisation, integration of the organisational structure)

Inter-organisational responses

The introduction of new types of schools and different sorts of regulations in England leads to simply more types of schools to choose from because of the APS, CTCs, GM schools and the possibility of opting in. This leads to increased institutional diversity. Although the introduction of GM schools increased the institutional diversity between schools, there are few indications that this has resulted in greater educational diversity, because the reasons for obtaining GM status are usually political rather than educational. One English researcher explains that "GM schools certainly were not becoming more innovative or radical. What they tended to do was become more conservative."

Instead of more diversity, there are leads for increased differences between schools from several sources. The increased opportunities for choice affect the undersubscribed, unpopular schools in particular. Whereas popular schools can select their students on ability, even though it is not always formally allowed, the oversubscribed schools are less affected by the market. The undersubscribed schools lose students and consequently, financial means. Only if schools are or will be full, do students from within the catchment area get priority in entering the school. Still, many schools are under the feeder system, which involves catchment areas, although there is still the formal opportunity of choosing an alternative school. The relative admission criteria present a serious problem for students wanting to enter a popular school and impose a great limitation on the amount of choice available.

One can see that schools are increasingly obliged to publish information for parents and students, in terms of school brochures and league tables (output). Despite (or because) of this increased provision of information, the panel study argues, based on three types of arguments, that schools are increasingly chosen on social grounds, instead of academic or other more deliberate grounds. These three types of arguments refer to differing choice arguments between middle class and working class parents, narrowed choice arguments in relation to the perceived success of schools and the bureaucratic process of school choice. As an English researcher states: 'middle-class parents choose middle-class schools.' These choice arguments based on social reasons might increase social differences between schools.

According to the respondents, the increased autonomy of the individual schools in England leads to increased differences between schools. The schools rely more on parents, whereas before the LEA could protect the weaker schools. Smaller schools are particularly disadvantaged. Although GM schools are financially better-off initially, there are possible disadvantages as well: within the GM system, there is no room for supporting certain disadvantaged schools; it is easier for central government to restrict GM budgets; and there is less decision-making capacity for individual GM schools. This lack of local support for GM schools can also increase the differences.

In Scotland, there is little diversity between schools, for several reasons: the quick and complete reorganisation to a comprehensive education system, the failure of self-governing legislation and the introduction of the national guidelines. Although

the researchers acknowledge the need for more diversity, there is little evidence for any increase. "All schools are comprehensive, have a similar curriculum and subjects are almost as standardized as 'McDonalds'", one Scottish researcher explains. There are different mechanisms for student allocation, but bureaucratic allocation, based on catchment areas is most widely used. The formal availability of choice in Scotland involves simply the right to apply for a certain school through bureaucratic procedures. There is lack of enthusiasm around the increase of choice in Scotland, because of three reasons: the national identity of Scotland, the way legislation was introduced and the appreciation of the local school system. The researchers explain that "Scottish people want to keep their 'historical roots' and want to remain different from England, the market ideology goes against the Scottish tradition of equality of opportunity."

The diversity between Scottish schools is decreasing further because greater opportunities for choice sometimes lead to closure of schools, as explained by the respondents. In addition, the national guidelines stimulated an increasingly standardised curriculum and examinations. Instead of the increased diversity, as the information provided emphasises narrow criteria, the differences between schools are accentuated. In addition to the school brochures in Scotland, there is also outcome-based information in terms of league tables. The Education Authorities are obliged to inform every parent about the possibility of making placing requests. Still, few parents actively choose by means of placing requests, and if they do exercise their right, it is usually for reasons of reputation and tradition, which are not directly related to the quality of the school. The choices for social rather than educational reasons also increase the differences between schools. "Choice is based far more on emotional reasons than rational reasons", a Scottish policy-maker explains.

In Scotland, the responses to the increase in the availability of choice are not very obvious. There seems to be more emphasis on social differences between schools, with an acceleration of the existing divisions. Schools are eager to admit a certain type of (more-able) student. DSM also increases differences between schools, because already undersubscribed schools will suffer as a result of the allocation of extra financial resources for schools in deprived areas. As discussed in the panel study, DSM has advantages, such as more decision-making authority for the individual schools, as well as disadvantages, such as financial restrictions and increased responsibilities for the principals.

External responses

In England there is more competition between the different types of schools available, but this does not happen very openly. The changes in legislation introduced competition, because of increased opportunities for choice; schools can increasingly select students instead of the other way round. The increased provision of league table information encourages competition between schools. Schools are increasingly responsive because of choice and more aware of their position towards certain groups of students as they are more dependent on the quality and quantity of their student intake.

Besides more competition, within the feeder system there is strong co-operation between the small number of primary schools and the secondary school. The schools work together to a full continuity of education. As explained by the panel study: "transfer based on the feeder system keeps the school system cheap and safe." There is also co-operation between the different GM schools, in order to co-ordinate their intake procedures, which are no longer taken care of by the LEAs.

The English GM schools obtained an increased capacity for decision-making; this allows them to spend their money more effectively. Because of the increased opportunities for choice, schools will be more eager to increase their attractiveness

towards parents, which implies improvement of responsiveness of the school towards its environment.

Unlike the situation in England, Scottish schools are not encouraged to compete with one another; instead there is more co-operation between schools, especially between secondary and associated primary schools. There is also increased co-operation with associated primary schools, caused by the integrated 5-14 curriculum. Such a curriculum makes choice even less attractive. There is possibly more competition between schools, but for a particular type of students only. A Scottish school principal finds competition not helpful: "The time used on trying to market the school is better spent on improving education".

Internal responses

Some of the English panel study respondents pointed out that schools, changing into GM school or CTC, involved a complete reorganisation and a fundamental change for the school. The panel study responses suggest that the increased number of types of schools available for the educational system as a whole is beneficial, because an element of the market, caused by more choice opportunities, will improve decision-making and efficiency of the schools. "The more choices that are available, the more sorts of models that exist, that is going to have a healthy effect on the system as a whole", one policy-maker explains. If schools are aware that their students have the right to select an alternative, they will be encouraged to emulate the schools that appear to do better.

There are some indications for organisational improvements for English schools, because of a more autonomous regulatory structure. Schools increasingly rely on parental support, but are aware that this support is only conditional and based on the parents' own purpose. The per-student financing gives schools an incentive to offer better quality education. Schools are financially stimulated to be attractive to their students. Some schools have tried to copy the model of the traditional, conservative school, which parents often consider as attractive. There is increased decision-making capacity for the schools caused by LMS and GM legislation, although some of this capacity has been returned to the central government. The increased autonomy of schools, enables more effective spending. According to the respondents, the available funds were spent in the direct interest of the students. Schools are increasingly judged on their educational outcomes, not on the amount of money spent. LMS and GM status also have benefits in administrative terms: For example LMS allows schools to take care of their own minor improvements; schools can take care of their own personnel management and make decisions more quickly. GM legislation stimulates organisational and financial improvements, which are conditional factors for educational improvements. The national curriculum can be a stimulus for schools to improve education.

In Scotland, it is difficult to establish a relationship between the availability of choice and educational quality. Some respondents assume that the effect is probably neutral, although others argue that choice is beneficial, but how such benefits work remains unknown. The increased demand for choice in Scotland encourages the development of more elaborate school profiles, although these profiles might not reflect the functioning of a school on a day-to-day basis. In situations where schools have to fight for their market shares, there can be increased awareness of a school's internal strengths.

The Scottish respondents could find little evidence of any effect of choice on educational quality. Nevertheless, the panel study indicates that the increased scope for decision making is beneficial, as it leads to "greater awareness of the financial situation and more effective allocation of financial resources," as two researchers explain. Evidence for these benefits can be found in the fact that schools are more

welcoming towards parents and that some schools have created their own middle-management structure and guidance system. Still, one respondent argued that some schools are increasingly loosely coupled, which means that the administrative staff is more separated from the educational staff.

CONCLUSIONS

Generally, there are increased market forces in education, especially in England. This becomes obvious from the presence of certain market characteristics such as competition and an increased diversity between schools. In Scotland the presence of the market is not very clear, there is very little increase in diversity and hardly any competition between schools, although schools have obtained more autonomy. The respondents in both countries agree that schools in general can be more responsive towards their parents and students. The GM schools in particular can accommodate parental wishes for more traditional schools. However, when determining the extent to which the educational systems fulfil the conditions for choice within the market and the institutional approach, it becomes clear that fears for increased inequality between schools can be justified.

In England, there are signs of increased selectiveness between schools, rather than more educational diversity. Little information concerning the school and its educational programmes is provided and there is hardly any encouragement to increase diversity between schools. Because the choice arguments tend to be based on social reasons, increased social differences between schools are likely to develop. In other words, the reasons for school choice given by the parents and students lead to an increased hierarchy of schools, instead of horizontal (educational) diversity. Although in Scotland choices are being made more deliberately, they are mainly made for social and traditional reasons, rather than educational reasons, which can also lead to increased social differences between schools. The information supplied by the schools emphasises narrowed criteria upon which schools are judged, which accentuate the differences between schools.

In addition, it is argued that the increased competition between English schools leads to selection of students by the school, instead of the other way round. There are indications that, as a consequence of more competition, schools will only be more responsive to certain groups of students.

The attempt by the English education system to move away from a monopolistic structure has not been successful because the conditions of a complete market mechanism, in terms of freedom of supply and demand, are not completely fulfilled. Choice has only been stimulated from the demand side. No actual encouragement of educational diversity can be found, although there is much more institutional diversity between schools than in Scotland. Choice is more elaborate in England than in Scotland, but there is also more dissatisfaction with the actual consequences of choice. The Scottish schools are generally eager to admit a certain type of (more able) student and schools are more aware of being chosen.

Within the institutional approach, the following can be determined. The weaker institutional control in England is not as strong as it seems. Quite a number of factors, such as the national government involvement in the curriculum, bureaucratic barriers on the supply and the demand side, and a cosmetic increase in autonomy for the schools, involve less autonomy for certain schools and for the school system as a whole. In addition schools have lost LEA protection, as many of the LEA's functions have been taken over by the governing bodies. This makes disadvantaged schools (smaller or inner city schools) more vulnerable and may increase differences. Another cause of these increased differences comes from the student-based financing of schools, which increases financial differences between over- and undersubscribed schools. There is a danger that increased opportunities for choice in England will

exacerbate social and hierarchical differences between English schools.

Choice has been introduced in Scotland in a similar way to England, although on a smaller scale and with fewer consequences, because of the stronger links between secondary schools and associated primary schools and because the schools are much more embedded in their communities. However, Adler (1997) explains that dissatisfaction with choice in Scotland is perhaps even greater than in England, as increasing numbers of parents do not get their child into their selected school and choice certainly has not helped to reduce segregation between schools. There is much stronger support for equality of opportunity and comprehensive education. This makes fears for increased inequality between Scottish schools less directly disturbing.

However, 'since choice is here to stay' (Adler, 1997, p.297) it may be beneficial for the Scottish schools to aim for some increase in diversity. In England, one should aim for a more complete and equal market mechanism, including diversity between schools and rewards for schools, which are responsive towards students across the academic and social spectrum.

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