The determinants and dynamics of school choice

Agnès van Zanten

Contrasting Dynamics in Education Politics of Extremes

School Choice in Chile and Finland

Piia Seppänen, Alejandro Carrasco, Mira Kalalahti, Risto Rinne and Hannu Simola (Eds.)

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Contrasting Dynamics in Education Politics of Extremes

School Choice in Chile and Finland

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to enhance understanding of *school choice* as a supranational travelling policy, explored in two very different societies: Latin American Chile and North European Finland. Chile was among the first countries to implement school choice as a policy, which it did comprehensively in the early 1980s through the creation of a market environment. Finland introduced parental choice of a school on a very moderate scale and without the market elements in the mid-1990s. The book is based on the research project *Parents and School Choice. Family Strategies, Segregation and School Policies in Chilean and Finnish Basic Schooling* (*PASC*, 2010-2013), funded by the *Academy of Finland* and the *Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica de Chile* (CONICYT). Capitalising on the concept of *dynamics* (Kauko 2011, 2013; Kauko et al. 2012; Simola 2015), we examine how a globally travelling education policy such as school choice has materialised in two apparently dissimilar, and in some respects even contrary societies and their localities. We explore how the policy is displayed and used for very different purposes in the two countries with their histories, politics and cultures. Via methodological triangulation with quantitative and qualitative data the authors contributing to this book show how families view and act on school choice in these two extreme contexts.

We view *school choice,* or *parental choice,* not solely as an action or a process – namely choosing – in which parents might engage, but also as *a policy for pupil allocation* to schools and thus as a fundamental aspect of the education system in each country. The length of compulsory schooling imposed by legislation – in Chile covering 5-17-year-old children, divided into eight grades in the primary level[1] and in Finland lasting nine years and catering for children between the ages of 7 and 16 – varies by country as well as in the form of its provision and selection practices, and thus eventually in allocation to the labour market. The idea behind school choice is seemingly simple: parents know best what school their child should attend so why not let them decide, and why not support the extent of choice with tax funds (Friedman 1955). The 'freedom to choose' as a concept originated in the widely held belief in the need to solve the problem of social segregation and discipline in schools, as well as to improve the position of disadvantaged families via market mechanisms as Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman (1980) argue in their bestseller *Free to choose*. The book was published in the wake of neoliberal school reforms around the globe.

Because school choice also has rhetorical and political aspects, and is used for very different purposes in different countries, there is a clear need for critical

analysis of Friedman's original assumptions in different policy contexts. Friedman and Friedman (1980) demanded free school choice across social classes based on their portrayal at that time of the atmosphere in problematic public, inner-city schools in poor neighbourhoods of the US as "more like that of a prison than of a place of learning" (p. 158), and contrasting this to private, selected fee-paying schools in which "the atmosphere is quiet and serene" (p. 159). As a policy solution to social and ethnic segregation in urban areas they suggest in particular that specialisation, namely in the arts, science and foreign languages, would promote societal integration as pupils would work together in their special fields and schools would take in pupils from wider residential areas (pp. 166-167). These ideas of parental choice and school specialisation have coexisted within various market-led policies in different state-led education systems. Above all, education policies and the discourses attached to them tend to travel globally (e.g. Dehli 1996; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry 1997, pp. 60-61; Rizvi & Lingard 2010). School choice, being among a wider range of neoliberal reforms that have, as Graham Slater (2014, p. 4) states, "spawned from a violent experiment in Chile … was exported from its Latin American testing grounds to the global economic 'centers' of the US and Britain". More recently, scholars in the US and England have observed how neoliberal education politics have increased the power of various private actors and corporate reformers in education policy, and have thereby weakened the role of democracy in the control of education in societies (e.g. Hursh, 2014; Scott 2013; Power & Taylor 2013; Ravitch 2013).

A wide range of sociologists of education have contributed chapters to this book, which consequently offers novel analyses of and perspectives on the operation of school-choice policies in its trailblazer country Chile and in Finland, the 'European PISA leader', which is stubbornly keeping education under public[2] control. Through our empirical comparison of these two extreme cases we shed light on the dynamics of school choice, in other words the relationships between the political context, political possibilities and the actors' actions. The book illustrates how the meaning and implementation of school choice are highly context related, but also reveals similarities in how some schools and families use such a policy as a tool to gain advantage over others.

The book is divided into three parts. The aim in the first part (Chapters 1-3) is to conceptualise school choice and to establish the historical and political contexts within which Chile and Finland are compared. The second part (Chapters 4-6) examines the contrasting family perspectives on school-choice policies in the two countries. Part three (Chapters 7-11) offers further in-depth analysis of parental views and actions related to school choice in local contexts. Focusing on the specifics in both countries rather than on a comparison between them, these chapters in Part three reveal the local and societal variation in school choice within each one.

From the family perspective we understand school choice as a relational social practice, meaning that families' actions, desires and potential influence related to where their children receive their basic education depend on the various assets or types of capital they possess – more widely connected to the class structure of the

society – as well as on local policies and education provision (Ball 2003; Ball & Maroy 2009; Raveaud & van Zanten 2007; Taylor 2002, pp. 7-14). To set the scene, Angès van Zanten (Chapter 1) offers an extensive literature review analysing the complex issue of school choice as a major dimension of *social reproduction*. Following Pierre Bourdieu (1979) she discusses the vertical ordering as well as the horizontal segmentation of social groups in relation to their school choice as well as their connections to ethnicity.

Opening the discussion on contrasting school-choice policies in Chile and Finland, Jaakko Kauko, Javier Corvalán, Hannu Simola and Alejandro Carrasco offer a tool for outlining the historical development of political dynamics in Chilean and Finnish basic education (Chapter 2). The authors focus on three dimensions in their analysis: first, the *political situation* in terms of what is opportune in a specific socio-historical situation; second, *political possibilities* in terms of what is politicised in the discourses as a possibility for action and what is not; and third, *politicking* in terms of how the relevant actors, particularly parents, capitalise on existing situations and possibilities. We discuss these three dimensions in the conclusion of this book, reflecting on the findings reported in the various chapters.

To enhance understanding of contemporary policies that affect the Chilean and Finnish education systems and the respective societies Alejandro Carrasco, Piia Seppänen, Risto Rinne and Alejandra Falabella describe the social structures in Chile and Finland in Chapter 3, and develop a framework for comparing education policies attached to school choice. Education politics in the two countries are contrasted by means of a *typology of accountability schemes*, which refers to the relationships among the state, schools and civil society in terms of mutual expectations and obligations. The authors analyse three types of accountability schemes (professional-public, performance and market accountability) in relation to four key policy areas: (i) school provision and funding, (ii) pupil allocation (parental choice and pupil selection), (iii) teacher professionalism and (iv) school development (curriculum and assessment).

The chapters comprising the second part of the book compare views on school choice and the actions of urban families in Chile and Finland, based on empirical data gathered in both countries. In Chapter 4 Risto Rinne, Alejandro Carrasco and Carolina Flores report on a survey conducted among Chilean and Finnish urban families exploring the relationship between parental views on choice and segregation, with particular emphasis on parental tolerance and dispositions towards choice and the social and cultural mix in schools. Alejandra Falabella, Piia Seppänen and Dagmar Raczynski, in Chapter 5, describe the extent to which pupil selection is practised in the two policy contexts, Chile and Finland, and its connection to social segregation in schools. Their analysis of parental views on and understanding of pupil selection is based on qualitative data gathered in interviews with parents in the Finnish case and ethnographic data in the Chilean case, combined with survey data. Sonja Kosunen, Alejandro Carrasco and Manuel Tironi, the authors of Chapter 6, compare the ways in which parents take the different sources of information – 'hot' and 'cold' knowledge – into consideration

in their choice of schools in the two local contexts (Espoo in Finland and Santiago in Chile).

The third part of the book offers insights into parental views on and actions concerning school choice in the two national contexts, in both quantitative (Chapters 7-9) and qualitative (Chapters 10-11) settings. The focus in Chapter 7, written by Janne Varjo, Mira Kalalahti and Heikki Silvennoinen, is on international treaties covering the right to education and freedom of education, and their implementation in Finnish legislation. Having conceptualised and operationalized these principles the authors examine their connections with a new cleavage – between social and cultural specialists and technocrats – identified within the middle class. The data derive from a family survey conducted in Finland. The focus turns to Chile in Chapter 8, in which Carolina Flores, Manuel Alcaíno and Alejandro Carrasco analyse parents' relative willingness and aversion in terms of commuting to school, and the value they assign to spatial propinquity relative to other important dimensions such as academic performance, monetary cost and socioeconomic composition. Chapter 9, authored by Mira Kalalahti, Heikki Silvennoinen, Janne Varjo and Risto Rinne, reports on a survey conducted among Finnish urban families. The aim of the analysis was to investigate the role of the family's socio-economic position in explaining differences in parental attitudes towards uniformity and selectivity in the comprehensive-school system, and the extent to which parental attitudes and socio-economic position as well as the school achievement of the child explain school choice. The analysis in Chapter 10 is based on interviews with mothers in two Finnish local contexts. Jaana Poikolainen and Sari Silmäri-Salo examine these parents' subjective positions on choosing, and the related discourses and educational values, as well as any connections to how they use their cultural and social resources. The authors of Chapter 11, Alejandro Carrasco, Alejandra Falabella and Manuela Mendoza, give an in-depth description of how families face the process of school choice in a country like Chile, with a set of policy mechanisms that incorporate aspects of social identity, socioeconomic risk and moral ambivalence.

Finally, in the concluding chapter the editors of the book with Dagmar Raczynski contrast the dynamics in education politics with regard to school choice in Chile and Finland, from a three-dimensional perspective. We ask, first, what was opportune in a specific socio-historical situation for the school-choice policy to emerge *(the political situation)*; second, what was politicised as a possibility for action and what was not (*political possibilities*); and third, how the relevant actors capitalised on existing situations and possibilities of 'choice' (*politicking*). Our aim in this presentation is to shed light on the mystery of how a travelling policy such as school choice can have similar social and political effects in these two contrasting cases, even though the effects are different in degree, efficiency and effectiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

[1] The General Law of Education (LGE 2009) passed in Chile in 2009 changed the structure of formation cycles on the primary and secondary level to six years. The implementation of this policy is expected to be gradual: from 2017 primary education will be from Year 1 to Year 6 and secondary education from Year 7 to Year 12. As a result, secondary education will begin earlier, at the age of 10, and will be extended from four to six years.

[2] Throughout the book the writers use the term '*public schools*' to refer to municipality-run tax-funded schools, as attended by 97 per cent of pupils under the age of 16 in basic education in Finland (Ministry of Education 2008, p. 31) and 38 per cent of under 13-year-olds in Chile;, see more in Carrasco et al. in Chapter 3 of this book (Ministry of Education 2013, p. 63). The ownership and governance of these schools are under the control of non-private institutions. This differs from the situation in England, where the archaic term 'public school' refers to the oldest, exclusive fee-paying private and traditionally boys' boarding schools for the ruling social classes, such as Eaton College.

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PART I

Conceptualising school choice and historical approach to local educational contexts

AGNÈS VAN ZANTEN

1. THE DETERMINANTS AND DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL CHOICE

A comparative review

INTRODUCTION

Strategies related to parental school choice play a central role in the creation and reproduction of local educational markets in many national education systems. In order to understand these strategies it is necessary to take into account two dimensions of choice. The first is related to its determinants, in other words the objective factors and subjective representations that either encourage parents to choose, to consider specific types of schools and to turn to specific strategies, or discourage them from doing so. The second dimension concerns the choice process, or more specifically the information and advice on which parents base their selection, evaluation and comparison of schools. Also included in this dimension are interactions within both family and local networks, as well as with the education professionals that influence the decisions.

THE DETERMINANTS OF CHOICE

Any investigation into choice from a sociological perspective should take into account the ways in which individual characteristics related to individuals' location in the social structure influence their aims, values and perspectives. The following discussion examines choice through the lens of social class. The focus is on the cultural relationships between social groups (classes as status groups characterised by symbolic references and distinct cultural resources), without neglecting economic relationships (classes as groups unequally situated in the production system and unequally endowed with economic resources), and political relationships (classes as groups acting collectively to defend their own interests). Reference is made to Pierre Bourdieu (1979) and his approach that takes into account the vertical ordering and the horizontal segmentation of social groups (van Zanten 2013b). Ethnicity, which is the focus of much of the research in the United States, is also taken into consideration.

Resources and the willingness to choose

Not all parents choose their children's schools, even in countries in which they have the freedom to do so. The most powerful impediments to school choice, apart from regulatory limits, are economic in nature in that choosing to live in a

neighbourhood and not to send one's child to the local school automatically engenders transportation and other related expenses, such as the cost of meals that cannot be eaten at home. The financial dimension comes into play particularly strongly in the case of private schools, especially when pupils do not receive grants from public authorities, scholarships or vouchers in order to gain access to them. In the United States, for example, only three per cent of pupils attending private faith schools have parents whose combined income is below the poverty line (Lacireno-Paquet & Brantley 2008). Most independent schools in England recruit pupils from high-income families. The only pupils from low-income families who have access to these schools are those with institutional scholarships, or 'deserving cases' at state schools granted the right to opt for them through the Assisted Places Scheme during the conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major (Edwards, Fitz, & Whitty 1989). Even if private schools receive state aid, as in France, there is still a higher concentration of pupils from the privileged classes and an under-representation of those on scholarships (11.4% in private versus 27.8% in public middle schools): the parents of children attending these schools must pay both school fees and lunch money, as well as many ancillary costs (such as for school supplies, and field and class trips).

Other obstacles are cultural in nature and, as I will show in more detail below, are tied to the fact that changing schools requires the necessary cognitive and cultural skills to retrieve and analyse information, make sound judgments and interact with school professionals (Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe 1995; Broccolichi & van Zanten 2000; Devine 2004). Thus, as many studies show, when policymakers do not specifically target disadvantaged parents in school-choice systems the choosers tend to be parents with high educational qualifications. In the case of concrete choices, however, it is possible to establish further distinctions depending on the parents' cultural skills. Stephen Ball, Richard Bowe and Sharon Gewirtz (1996) identified three categories on this basis: privileged/skilled choosers, semi-skilled choosers and disconnected choosers.

The high cultural capital of parents in the first group allows them to discriminate carefully between the policies and practices of different schools, to have relevant conversations with school principals and teachers, to present their child's case favourably, and to appeal when they are not offered their first choice. On the other hand, the more modest cultural capital of semi-skilled choosers leads them to identify the 'right' school in a more abstract way, and to rely more heavily on the opinions of professionals and other parents. As for 'disconnected' parents, they have less choice than those in the other two categories because their low cultural capital does not allow them to differentiate between schools, and because they do not want their children to leave the local school.

The case of 'disconnected' parents raises the question of the interaction between low cultural capital and the willingness to choose. The authors of one of the first studies on school choice in Scotland, who make a distinction between 'inert' and 'alert' parents (Echols & Willms 1992), suggest that the behaviour of the former group equates with apathy (Bajoit 1988) or resignation. However, as I will show below, this behaviour may also reflect the loyalty (Hirschman 1970) that some

categories of parents feel vis-à-vis the local community, the public school system and the values they represent.

Many studies indeed show that 'choosers' tend to be more actively involved in their children's schooling than other parents. A high percentage of parents who choose schools within the public system in France, for example, are also members of parent associations (Héran 1996). In the United States, too, parents who are actively involved in school choice are also strongly involved in their children's schooling, on both an individual and a group level (Witte 1996; Bifulco & Ladd 2006). However, the association of implication and choice does not necessarily mean that there is an axiological link between these two behaviours around the idea of parental responsibility, as those promoting systems of choice tend to state. One could also argue, using Albert Hirschman's (1970) categories of 'exit' and 'voice', that choice (exit) and implication (voice) are two major alternatives for expressing dissatisfaction that often work in interaction with each other. Moreover, if implication and choice often go hand in hand, it may reflect the fact that involvement in the school is one of the most effective ways for parents to gain access to knowledge and advice that will inform their choices.

The importance of instrumental goals

It is also necessary to take subjective representations into account in order to understand the determinants of choice. The motives stated by parents in questionnaires appear to support the beliefs of those who emphasise the utilitarian rationality of school choice in that the most frequently cited criteria are related to the instrumental qualities of schools, in particular their effectiveness with regard to test results. It is true that the idea of education as an investment that will produce future benefits, notably in terms of access to certain types of jobs, is commonly accepted, alongside a definition of parental responsibility that makes the idea synonymous with helping one's children get the best school qualifications (Jordan, Redley, & James 1994). However, the propensity to choose schools on the basis of their instrumental quality varies across countries depending on how strong the link between the initial diploma and employment is, as well as on the basis of the degree of confidence that parents have in the overall quality of the school system and in the homogeneity of school provision. Thus, in Finland, although there is increasing school choice in cities (Seppänen 2003), it still remains rather limited because a high proportion of parents have a positive image of the Finnish educational system and think that most schools are 'good enough' throughout the country (Poikolainen 2012; Poikolainen & Silmäri-Salo Chapter 10 in this book).

The importance attached to instrumental goals also varies from one social class to another. At first glance such goals appear less dominant among working-class parents. When they make their choices they opt for average or less demanding schools, sometimes with vocational education tracks that will allow their children to follow secondary and higher education paths leading to a swift transition to employment (Ballion 1991; Palheta 2012). Such choices may also be based on the parents' realistic calculation of the costs and risks associated with ambitious

instrumental choices (Boudon 1973), the risks in this case being associated with the likelihood that their children will achieve mediocre academic results, which considerably reduces their chances of success in demanding schools. Furthermore, these decisions tend to be more constrained or 'reactive' than thoroughly thought out, and are often made in order to prevent children from dropping out of or being excluded from school, or going down the wrong path (Millet & Thin 2005; Ben Ayed 2011).

The negative effect of the local community tends to magnify the negative effect of social class on educational aspirations among working-class groups. Douglas Lauen (2009) found that, given the differences in quality across neighbourhoods, the school choices of pupils living in poor neighbourhoods in Chicago were less profitable in terms of improving their educational trajectory than those made by pupils living in richer neighbourhoods, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Some studies on immigrant students have also shown that their educational trajectories are linked to their place of residence. In the French context, Emmanuelle Santelli (2001) found in her study of 100 adults of Algerian descent who had achieved social mobility that 25 per cent of them had circumvented existing rules of allocation to local schools to attend more highly renowned upper-secondary schools and therefore avoid being held back or being channelled into lower-status tracks. These strategies were facilitated by the fact that the pupils concerned did not live in public housing, and could therefore benefit from the existence of schools with a good academic reputation not far from home.

French research on families from stable and upwardly mobile segments of the working class, as well as from the lower-middle classes, has shown that such families are looking for a 'school that is good enough', an 'average' school where children can acquire knowledge and skills in a good environment (Cartier et al. 2008). The parents therefore pay attention to factors such as staff stability and minimal disruption. Certain practical (such as location and access to transportation) and cultural conditions must be met before these families would consider choosing another public school or moving to the private sector, which they tend to perceive as better in terms of pupil supervision (Ben Ayed 2000). In most cases they adjust their ambitions to suit the schools' supposed expectations, only risking a non-local school if their children have a good academic record (Broccolichi 1998). Even then, they tend avoid the most elite schools for fear of failure, but also in order to limit the pressure on their children (Cartier et al. 2008).

The greatest proportion of parents seeking to maximise their children's academic results belong to the upper classes, and are more likely to have the necessary economic, cultural and social resources. In the French context, however, Agnes van Zanten (2009b) found significant differences between 'technocrats' and 'intellectuals', two categories roughly similar to those of 'managers' on the one hand, and 'human and social specialists' (Brint 1984) or 'welfare/voluntary sector professionals' (Ball & Vincent 2007) in the US and the UK on the other. 'Technocrats' tend to see education as an investment that will enhance their child's future employability (Poupeau & François 2008), and schools as arenas for competition and ranking. Many of these parents work in the private sector, and

tend to apply to schools the same productivity standards they are subject to at work (Power & Whitty 2002; Power et al. 2003). 'Intellectuals', on the other hand, tend to equate education with intellectual development, and thus show more interest in the breadth and depth of the school curriculum, as well as in teachers' qualifications and skills.

Tensions between instrumental and expressive goals

Researchers focusing on choice have also highlighted the significance of expressive considerations. Many parents spontaneously state that two of the most important aims with regard to their children's educational experiences are their personal development and happiness (Coldron & Boulton 1991). This expressive vision of schools is tied to the spread of hedonistic tendencies, the growing cult of personality and the perception of 'enchanted' childhood, which have been emerging in post-industrial societies since the 1960s (Beck 2001). It is also one consequence of another trend that started in the 1980s, when investment in the private sphere served to give space for withdrawal, counterbalance and compensation in the midst of the harsh economic competition and political disenchantment that predominated in the public sphere (Hirschman 1982). As I discuss in more detail below, the strong presence of expressive considerations in school choice is also linked to the fact that it is mostly women who engage in delicate negotiations with their children concerning these decisions, which are in fact embedded in their daily emotional investment in their socialisation (Reay 1998, 2000; Vincent & Ball 2001; Stefansen & Aarseth 2011).

The weight given to expressive *versus* instrumental considerations varies according to the education system. In France, for example, educational credentials are seen as necessary tools for gaining access to employment. The emphasis is also squarely placed on the intellectual nature of training, so much so that many parents put wellbeing and happiness in second place, and connect these emotional states strongly to mastery of knowledge and educational success. German and English parents, in contrast, place much more emphasis on the role that school plays in the development of 'well-rounded' individuals, and assign great importance to children's social experiences at school (Flitner 2004; Raveaud & van Zanten 2007). Parents in Spain, where greater emphasis than in France is placed on the role of school in fostering personal development and social cohesion (Dubet, Duru-Bellat, & Véretout 2010), are also more likely to mention good relationships with teachers and peers as strong motives for their school choice (Olmedo 2008).

These expressive goals may nevertheless be in conflict with parents' instrumental objectives. One major source of tension arises when a distant public or private school is chosen because it is deemed to be of higher instrumental quality than the local school. From the parents' points of view, distance has several potential negative consequences related to both wellbeing (tiredness and growing feelings of insecurity linked to longer journeys by public transport) and happiness (painful separation from friends and peers attending local schools). Another major source of tension stems from the fact that, although the vast majority of parents

want their children to enjoy enriching learning experiences, they may be prepared to compromise this desire in the case of 'good schools' because of the pressure to achieve good results. Many parents would also like their children to develop skills in a variety of areas (such as social life, culture and sports), but these goals are often thwarted in schools in which the focus is on a unilateral instrumental model of success (Ball & Maroy 2008).

Members of different social-class groups understand and resolve these tensions differently. Upper-class 'managers' may well be able to harmoniously combine their instrumental and expressive goals by resorting to residential choice or the choice of a private school. However, when there is conflict between the instrumental and the expressive dimensions these generally 'positional' parents (Bernstein 1971, 1996) systematically tend to favour instrumental objectives, and encourage their children to give priority to future gains over present pleasures (Gombert & van Zanten 2004; Gombert 2008). They also push their children to submit to pressure by emphasising the intended benefits while providing a 'safety net' to help them to cope with school requirements (Ball 2003; Johnson 2006). Specifically, they use their economic capital to pay for private lessons and other services such as school coaching (Oller 2012).

'Intellectuals', whose family organisation corresponds more closely to Basil Bernstein's (1971, 1996) ideal typical 'personal' mode, are more likely to avoid the tension that distance could create between their instrumental and expressive goals by resorting to the 'gentrification' of heterogeneous neighbourhoods and schools (Butler & Robson 2003). These families value proximity because it allows them both to maintain closer relationships with their children and to gently 'mould' their cultural habits over time (Reay 2000, 2005; van Zanten 2009c). In that case, and also if they choose other than local schools because of their instrumental goals, these families also tend to provide their children with a variety of social, cultural and athletic activities that are designed, as part of their strategy of 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau 2011), to be both immediately rewarding on the expressive dimension, and helpful in terms of complementing and anticipating ambitious academic trajectories.

Among middle-class parents, in particular those who work in the educational, social and health sectors, as well as among lower-middle-class and working-class parents, the expressive dimensions usually gain the upper hand. Members of these social groups are very attentive to their children's physical and psychological wellbeing, and place great importance on friendly relationships. Middle-class parents also rely on the daily contact they have with other parents and with teachers in order to monitor their children's educational and social experiences, whereas lower-middle-class and working-class parents rely more heavily on proximity to monitor their children's school work and friendships. All of the above factors lead members of these social categories to send their children to local schools. Furthermore, local schools are often deemed 'acceptable' if not excellent, especially when parents think, rightly or wrongly, that their children's school results are not good enough for them to apply for a place in more demanding schools. A substantial proportion of these parents also want to avoid putting too

much pressure on their children so that they could have some fun before having to face harsh competition and the risk of unemployment on the job market.

Social status and the fear of social mix

In a significant number of cases, expressive discourses might hide desires and fears that are more social in nature, or combine both dimensions. Thus, although many parents justify avoiding local schools because of the bad conditions, poor discipline, safety concerns and problems with violence, early studies on school choice reported that these terms were most frequently used in the context of schools with high concentrations of working-class and immigrant pupils (Bagley 1996). It is nonetheless difficult to distinguish between elements in the parents' comments that correspond to an objective assessment of school dynamics that are likely to stop their children benefiting from a peaceful and enriching experience from elements that stem from a desire for social, ethnic and racial separatism (Lucey & Reay 2003; Reay et al. 2007). Although these educational contexts are more likely to foster a whole variety of disturbances for a variety of reasons (van Zanten 2001; Broccolichi, Ben-Ayed, & Trancart 2010), research has also shown that middle-class and upper-class families tend to 'pathologise' and 'demonise' the pupils who attend them as well as their families (Reay 2007, 2008; van Zanten 2007, 2009a).

In fact, various dimensions are simultaneously involved in this process as these families tend to use pupils' social and ethno-racial characteristics as rough indicators of the school's instrumental, expressive and social qualities (Ball 2003; Reay 2007; van Zanten 2009b). The reasons for this could be attributed to the limited amount and type of information that parents generally have for evaluating the educational services offered by schools, which is discussed below, and also to the specific relational nature of educational processes: the effectiveness of school learning and socialisation depends not only on the teachers' pedagogical qualities but also on the motivation, involvement and abilities of individual learners and of pupils as a group.

Therefore, in examining the social mix in schools in order to evaluate their effectiveness, parents would seem to act rationally. This is only partly true, however, as anxious parents in their quests tend to overestimate the impact of pupil composition with respect to that of teachers. In addition, their views are frequently less than comprehensive because of the incomplete, and often selective, nature of the data under consideration, the most visible elements playing a major role. Pupils' skin colour, in particular, is easily used not only as an indicator of ethnicity but also as a proxy for academic results. Parents' views are also unrounded in an axiological sense: they are not objective because parents are not researchers aiming at the objective reporting of reality, but interested parties trying to avoid risks and exploit opportunities (van Zanten 2002, 2009a).

An interesting study conducted by Mark Schneider and Jack Buckley (2002) on parents who had sought to benefit from very thorough information on a website about schools in Washington, D.C., where there is a wide variety of school choice,

documents the mix of instrumental and social considerations that leads upper- and middle-class parents to attach great importance to the school's social and ethnic composition. The parents who used the website, most of whom had higher-education degrees, seemed to focus on the composition of the pupils as a body, as well as on other educational variables, the aim being to rule out at the first stage of their search all under-achieving schools. They then continued to use the social and ethnic mix to help them decide between schools with comparable academic results.

Parents' views on the social and ethnic mix are also, unsurprisingly, strongly dependent on their own social and cultural backgrounds. Those belonging to upper-class fractions with high economic capital are the most sensitive to the potential negative effects on their social status of mixing with 'undesirable' others in school contexts (Sikkink & Emerson 2008; van Zanten 2003, 2009a). In opting for radical socially and culturally self-segregated communities and schools that allow their children to 'grow up among peers' (Felouzis & Perroton 2009), these parents seek not only to limit the effects of the social and ethnic mix on their children's learning and well-being but also to encourage the reproduction of their belief systems, culture and lifestyles. They indeed believe that the social order depends on society's being divided into well-defined groups characterised both by income level and their specific culture. Thus, they justify these self-segregated communities on the pretext of harmoniously integrating their children into 'their own group' and thus denying them the possibility of any real exchange with others. These 'others' from lower-class and minority groups are represented, at best, as being too different to interact with and at worst as inferior and thus unworthy of being taken into consideration (van Zanten 2006, 2009a).

Parents from the intellectual fractions of the upper class, especially those who work in the public sector, are more likely to send their children to schools in which they will mix with children from working-class backgrounds and various ethno-racial groups. This choice is driven by economic and practical constraints, but also by ethical and political convictions concerning the value of diversity, fraternity and equality (Oria et al. 2007; Raveaud & van Zanten 2007; Reay, Crozier, & James 2011). These parents tend to support a model of society that is based on the intermingling of individuals from different social and ethno-racial groups out of respect for the equal human dignity of all citizens. Some, however, also promote the instrumental advantages of 'cosmopolitanism', and present the ability to interact with those who are 'different' from them as an interpersonal asset in global firms and economies as well as in mixed and multi-ethnic urban contexts (Brantlinger, Majd-Jabbari, & Guskin 1996; van Zanten 2009b; Reay, Crozier, & James 2011).

These as well as some middle-class families, who seem to go against the flow by sacrificing their personal interests for their values, nevertheless use a variety of strategies to avoid the risks they associate with coming into close contact with people exhibiting undesirable traits. In particular, they seek to convince families 'like them' to send their children to local schools and to become involved in order to piece together a 'nice mix of children' (Ball & Vincent 2004), and to create school contexts that, through their sheer numbers and active presence, they can

control for the benefit of their offspring (Brantlinger 2003). Families such as these, who also tend to make subtle distinctions between pupils based on their behaviour and academic results (Vowden 2012), may put pressure on heterogeneous schools to create 'tracks' or 'sets' reserved for well-behaved and advanced pupils. They may also put pressure on teachers to secure educational funding for activities that are useful and attractive to their children, and for giving special attention to them (Lareau & McCrory Calarco 2012). At the same time, they try to limit the impact outside school of the 'open sociability' that their children enjoy within it by carefully selecting peers and friends to be invited to birthday parties and other activities at home. They are also quick to pull their children out of local schools at the first sign that they are becoming susceptible to their classmates' 'bad influence' or being subjected to forms of ostracism or stigmatisation on account of their academic or social profile (van Zanten 2009b).

What about lower-middle-class and working-class families? Most of them send their children to local schools while adopting a variety of attitudes ranging from relativizing the negative external image of these schools to feeling victimised by the actions of the dominant social groups (Reay 2007). A significant proportion of them, especially deep-rooted working-class families but also young people from ethno-racial minorities (Bunar 2010), may nevertheless remain sincerely attached to local schools and communities, which they perceive as a set of 'strong ties' (Granovetter 1985) promoting feelings of safety, mutual assistance and friendship, as well as positive self-images of local identity and citizenship.

These conclusions tie in with those from research conducted in the Netherlands and the United States consistently indicting that black people and ethnic minorities generally tend to choose schools where their ethno-racial group is either the majority or strongly represented, even if the school of choice is considered academically weak or failing (Denessen, Driessen, & Sleegers 2005; Henig 1996). However, more in-depth research reveals the presence of different positions within racial and ethnic groups. Amy Wells (1996), for instance, pointed out the existence of three different attitudes regarding choice in St. Louis, where black pupils had the opportunity to leave the totally segregated schools in their neighbourhood in favour of more distant schools characterised by a strong presence of white pupils: 1) among those who refused this option, the dominant feelings were neighbourhood attachment coupled with a fear of being subordinated in interactions with white pupils; 2) among those who accepted this option, the prevalent discourse focused on the possibility of developing interracial contacts likely to help them find employment in the future, but was coupled with a resigned acceptance of prejudice and discrimination on the part of some of their white classmates; 3) among those who initially chose to be transferred to 'white' schools but later opted to return to their local school, the most common explanation for their behaviour was their inability to cope with demands in terms of discipline and work, but they also felt deeply rejected by white teachers and pupils.

Other research has revealed the ambivalence that middle- and upper-class black families face. Their educational practices seem, at least in the United States, to imitate those of the middle classes as a whole (Lareau 2011). However, their

children are more systematically confronted either with discrimination when they are in the minority at school, or with the negative effects of segregation when they are enrolled with other black children from under-privileged backgrounds: it is known that, at least in the United States, these families are more likely than white families of the same socio-economic level to live in ethno-racially separated neighbourhoods.

Carol Vincent et al. (2012) found in a study conducted in London that many black middle-class parents, just like their white counterparts, were seeking a 'good mix' of children, but they defined the mix differently. They underscored the importance of a significant presence of children from families that valued education – in other words predominantly from the middle and upper classes – as well as wide ethnic diversity and a good proportion of black children. Access to this type of context, which they considered more favourable to good academic progress and identity development in their children, nevertheless tended only to be available to a small minority of families. All others had to sacrifice one of their desired goals: either they prioritised the instrumental quality of education and sent their children to private school, or they favoured social and ethnic diversity as a form of social learning. In the former case they would risk being branded racists and as having 'betrayed their race', as well as seeing their children stigmatised by white teachers and classmates, whereas in the latter case they would face the risk that their children would not benefit from a path leading to academic excellence in secondary school and higher education.

CONSTRUCTING AND IMPLEMENTING CHOICE

This second section concerns the process of school choice and focuses on two dimensions. First, even if the choices seem to stem from simple, individual decisions they are, in fact, formulated in different contexts of interaction, typically within the family, in exchanges with school representatives and within local networks. Second, parents who face the complex task of matching the characteristics and desires of their children with available schools turn to different sources in order to guide their judgment and increase their chances of success.

Family negotiations

It tends to be nuclear family members who are involved in making school-choice decisions in North America and Europe, whereas according to current research on South America (see Falabella et al. Chapter 5; Kosunen et al. Chapter 6 and Carrasco et al. Chapter 11 in this book), grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins may also play a significant role. With regard to nuclear family members, it is interesting to point out how different forms of family organisation, unequally distributed among social classes and class fractions, affect choice decisions. Borrowing the typology of Jean Kellerhals, Pierre-Yves Troutot and Emmanuel Lazega's (1984), I observed differences between 'closed' families and 'open'

families, and, within the former group, between 'bastion' and 'parallel' families (van Zanten 2009b).

Spousal social homogeneity reinforces the formation of a cohesive and stable 'us' in 'bastion' families, which are often found in the upper-middle classes. These families also have financial resources that give them easy access to desirable academic environments, and to them school choice appears as 'enchanted' reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron 1970): it is consensual and does not require much thought or data collection. On the other hand, among 'parallel' families, which are more numerous in the middle and lower-middle-classes and in families working in the private sector, each spouse develops more independently. However, the perspectives of both generally overlap enough and the predominant decision-making tends to favour the mother's choice. Although the school-choice decision is typically taken within the family in both of these cases, the choice is more frequently 'embedded' in local networks of acquaintances and friends in 'open' families, which are more numerous in the intellectual segments of the upper-middle classes and in middle-class families working in human and social services, the health sector and the public and government sectors. These networks inform, structure and facilitate the implementation of choice, as I show in the last section of this chapter.

In most families nonetheless, school choice implies some form of negotiation between parents on goals, values and perspectives. According to the results of research on how the educational background of each parent affects school choice, identical reproduction (children going to the same school their parents went to, especially in secondary education) is more the exception than the rule, given the major structural changes in the organisation of educational systems and individual geographical mobility. Conflict frequently arises among parents with very different school trajectories, such as if one of them attended a selective private school and the other a local public school (Devine 2004). Other studies also report an impact of gender roles on parental goals: fathers seem to be more inclined to espouse instrumental perspectives and to have ambitious educational goals for their children, whereas mothers place more importance on expressive and social goals, paying more attention to schooling conditions and the mix of pupils (van Zanten 2009b).

The division of household labour also affects school choice. Although the father's role in final decisions varies across families from different social groups, in all groups mothers usually do most of the practical work involved in the choice process, which as discussed below involves gathering information and eliciting opinions from the available documents as well as talking to other parents and professionals working at the schools (David, West, & Ribbens 1994; Reay 1998; Reay & Ball 1998). However, it is not easy to determine whether this happens because the father withdraws from the role or because the mother adopts or even monopolises it.

Parents frequently mention that children actively participate in the choice process. As a result of the evolution of power relations in post-industrial societies, most parents are reluctant to impose their educational views on their children.

Perceiving socialisation as a bi-directional process (Kellerhals & Montandon 1991), they see themselves as promoting more 'horizontal' relationships within the family and thus as negotiating school choices with their children. However, the idea of negotiation refers to practices that vary according to the social class and class fraction to which the parents belong, and reflect the tension between two contradictory goals: securing good academic paths for their children through the school choices they make as parents who are able to weigh the pros and cons of each option on the one hand, and promoting the development and expression of their children's autonomy on the other.

This tension is particularly strong among members of the upper-middle class. Giving priority to the first goal without totally sacrificing the second – or rather without giving their children the impression of doing so – parents are driven to finding subtle ways of controlling their children's choices. They achieve this control, which they justify in the name of a new educational role, in other words allowing children to discover themselves (de Singly 1996), by means of different practices in the case of 'managers' and 'intellectuals'. Mothers in the former group are more likely to use a 'hovering' strategy: very early on they control their children's life spheres (home, day-care, school, extracurricular activities, friends) in order to foster their integration into groups that are self-segregated in terms of class. Their children therefore tend to make school choices that are very similar to those made by their neighbours, classmates and friends, and which strongly correspond to what their parents desire for them.

Parents in the latter group, on the other hand, use co-optation and debate: spending a lot of time engaged in activities with their children at home and elsewhere, they are frequently successful in transmitting their tastes, values and, indirectly, school preferences to them. These parents also tend to focus less in their discussions with their children on imposing certain choices, and more on convincing them of their relative merits. Because these conversations involve using rational arguments, they are also considered useful because they give the children the opportunity to build up their intellectual autonomy (Lareau 2011; van Zanten 2009c). This strategy is more risky than the one adopted by 'managers', however, as children might then skilfully argue in favour of choices that are not the ones their parents prefer.

The negotiation style of middle-class parents, especially those who work in the educational, social and health sectors, as well as the public sector, initially appears no different from that of intellectuals. However, the former is characterised by greater 'horizontality' in verbal exchanges, which goes hand in hand with the stronger promotion of early social autonomy among adolescents. Moreover, these parents place more importance on expressive goals, and more specifically on fulfilment linked to childhood and youth sociability. Thus they are more likely than upper-middle-class parents to acquiesce to their children's desire to remain at the local school. On the other hand, I observed in my study (van Zanten 2009b) some unsuccessful attempts to impose decisions authoritatively among middle-class parents working in the private sector. Giving children the choice is more common among lower-middle- and working-class parents – not so much because these

parents believe in 'horizontal' relationships with their children, but because many of them find it difficult to make sense of the school market and thus to make good choices (Reay & Ball 1997; Reay 1998).

Using school rankings

Parents, and in particular mothers, are also engaged in gathering different types of data and advice in order to compare possible schools and to see if they suit their children. Informal parental investigations do not aim at judging how good all the schools are but rather consider and evaluate a small number of them on the basis of specific criteria, including proximity. Parents, especially those in the upper-middle class, are looking not for just any 'good school' but for a 'tailored school' that matches each of their children's needs (Lareau 1989; Ball 2003), even if the degree of customisation expected varies across national and local education systems. Given the uncertainty surrounding the quality and social status of schools, this involves collecting both quantitative data and qualitative information and advice from different sources, termed here, following Lucien Karpik (2007), 'judgment devices'.

Such devices may be personal or impersonal depending on the degree of standardisation or, conversely, adaptation to each consumer, as well as whether or not they are based on human interactions. The different impersonal information sources used in choosing schools include websites and brochures created and published by local education authorities and schools, information and advice found in guides published by commercial entities and, especially, performance indicators published as rankings. However, it must be noted that this last device, which only exists in certain education systems, was not created only or mainly for the informational purposes of parents: it was also intended to help schools improve their effectiveness and to assist local and/or national authorities in implementing outcome-based strategies. This is one of the reasons why many parents find them difficult to use (see Kosunen et al. Chapter 6 and Carrasco et al. Chapter 11 in this book).

Three questions arise regarding the role of rankings in school choice: how they are publicised; whether or not parents are able to interpret their content; and how relevant they are in relation to parental perspectives (Karsten, Visscher, & de Jong 2001). The first of these is very important. Just because rankings are available does not mean that parents know that they exist. Javier Corvalán and Marcela Román (2013), for instance, found that although a system of school performance indicators has existed in Chile since the 1980s, and is accessible via the websites of the Chilean Ministry of Education and on each school, a high proportion of the 1,113 parents they asked to complete a questionnaire and whose children were enrolled in low-achieving schools were unaware of their child's school ranking or did not take it into account. A large majority (74.4%) thought that the school was good or even very good, but only 2.5 per cent of them had chosen it after consulting the performance indicators. However, according to the results of studies conducted in England, parental familiarity with this device could evolve over time as the media,

local education authorities and schools increasingly publicise ranking results (Woods, Bagley, & Glatter 1998; West, Pennell, & Noden 1998).

There is nevertheless a major difference between consulting and effectively using rankings. Other researchers have tried to measure the importance of rankings in parental choice more precisely by observing the effects just after their introduction, or by focusing on the immediate impact on schools depending on their ranked position. In the political context of *No Child Left Behind*, a policy supporting standards-based educational reform on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education, Justine Hastings and Jeffrey Weinstein (2008) evaluated how rankings affected the choices of parents with children enrolled in low-achieving schools in North Carolina (USA). When the parents were given precise information on the school's performance and on alternative choices, the researchers found that between five and seven per cent more parents chose to leave the local school for other schools listed higher in the rankings, a proportion that is relatively high given the fact that the low SES parents had little propensity to choose. Research conducted in the Netherlands by Pierre Koning and Karen van der Wiel (2012) also produced significant results regarding the use of rankings. In the year after schools received negative results published in the regional and local press, the number of pupils choosing them dropped and, conversely, positive results caused enrolment to go up, particularly among college-bound pupils.

The significant impact of rankings on college-bound pupils may be attributable to their − and their parents' − higher educational ambitions, and also to their high cultural capital. Like other similar studies, this research shows that inequalities exist in the parental ability to use rankings, which combine multiple variables without always providing enough cues for readers to interpret their validity and reliability (Wilson 2004). The above-mentioned study carried out by Anne West and her colleagues (1998) shows, for instance, that of the mothers who indicated that they had consulted the English league tables, 45 per cent said that they had difficulty understanding them, and this difficulty was dependent on their level of education: 67 per cent of the mothers who had finished secondary school and had obtained 'A-levels' said they understood the results and the reasoning behind them versus 31 per cent of those with a lower level of education.

However, even parents who are the most comfortable with this type of device only use it sparingly, for several reasons. First, rankings only focus on academic results whereas, as noted in the previous section, parents take into account a variety of dimensions when making school choices. In an attempt to explain why upper-middle-class parents in England use league tables as one device among others, Philip Woods, Carl Bagley and Ron Glatter (1998) cite the importance that members of these categories, and especially mothers, place on the use of student-centred teaching and other methods of personalising their children's school experience, in other words expressive dimensions beyond the rankings. Lower-middle-class and working-class parents, who find it difficult to understand the reasoning behind the rankings, also place more importance on criteria other than

results, such as discipline, in their choices, as Corvalán and Román (2013) show in their Chilean study.

The limited parental use of rankings may also be attributable to their intrinsic characteristics, which nevertheless vary from one ranking to another. It is possible, for instance, to distinguish between rankings that rely only on 'raw' data from those that add contextual data, such as social and ethnic mix. Some rankings only compare performance levels, whereas others evaluate the gains or 'added value' for a cohort of pupils by measuring their level of knowledge acquisition before entering and after having left each school. Yet others, or sometimes the same ones, include historical information on changes over time, in other words educational improvement or decline among successive cohorts of students (Kane & Staiger 2002).

However, despite the increasing sophistication of ranking measures in countries such as England, it is unclear how relevant they are to parents. Technical problems due to the small number of schools, thus requiring caution in interpreting the results, do not prevent the grouping into 'packets' of schools ('good', 'average' and 'weak'), but make it difficult to know where to place each individual school in the ranking, and to compare two or a small number of them (Wilson & Piebalga 2008). Another problem, which is even more relevant from the parental perspective, is the fact that results are often presented in terms of averages, ignoring differences in pupils' initial educational profiles that might affect the extent to which they might benefit from the same school experience (Thomas, Peng, & Gray 2007).

From this perspective it is true that introducing added-value indicators that take into account not only the pupils' social characteristics but also their initial level represents progress. For one thing, given the relative scattering of results among pupils from the same social origin, rankings tend to assign similar expected 'success levels' to schools that in fact have pupils with different academic profiles. Added to this is a systematic bias tied to the school's reputation: because they are not attractive, working-class schools with low success levels experience brain drain and only keep the weakest pupils. In other words, the academic profiles of pupils in these schools are lower than predicted when social mix is used as an indicator. On the other hand, attractive schools with expected high success levels attract even more high-achieving students than expected according to the social-mix indicator. Thus, the former schools appear to be under-achieving and the latter over-achieving, which both supports and reinforces their contrasting reputations (Felouzis 2005). Although taking the pupils' initial levels into account alleviates this problem, such information is not generally used to compare individual trajectories within similar schools, which is valuable information for strategic parents seeking to fine-tune their children's academic profile to suit the school's academic provision.

The role of local parent networks

For parents, especially those in the most-well-off categories, choosing schools is a complex and subtle process involving both rational matching and a more intuitive search for correspondence between their children and the school (van Zanten 2013a). Rational matching means evaluating children's academic potential and weaknesses, their desire to succeed and their willingness to work hard at school, in addition to factors such as maturity, tastes and sociability. In assessing these factors as laypeople and not as experts, parents combine strategies and criteria that, from a strictly scientific standpoint, appear disparate. In other words they rely on personal observations and opinions about the child elicited from family members and friends, or teachers and other professionals, as well as projections of parental desires or social stereotypes, especially gender stereotypes.

Rational matching also involves interpreting how certain school characteristics might interact with the children's characteristics. It is a question not only of school results but also of how these results are produced through variations in teachers' expectations, pedagogical methods, modes of evaluation and class organisation, as well as the degree of emphasis on discipline and the presence (or not) of extracurricular activities. Parents also incorporate into their evaluations their impressions of the degree to which a school matches their social goals, their culture and their values (Gewirtz et al. 1995).

Even if rankings and other impersonal assessment methods provide information and advice aimed at taking consumer differences into account, they cannot give answers to all of these questions. This is one of the main reasons why parents turn to other parents within their local networks, whose opinions of the schools they see as relevant in that they share the same 'interested' perspective. Furthermore, parents with older children have had concrete experience of the schools under consideration and can therefore pass on 'hot knowledge' about them (Ball & Vincent 1998), meaning knowledge about experiences that other devices do not reveal, or hide.

However, the most strategically oriented parents do not value all parents equally as good sources of opinion. They, and especially the ones who place great importance on instrumental goals, specifically seek local informants with children who are similar in terms of academic profile to their own, and who have a good understanding of how schools function. Ideally such informants are very involved in school activities and are members of parents' associations. The parents are also looking for informants they can trust in conversations on delicate subjects, such as the degree of social and ethno-racial mix and its effect on the school atmosphere. For these reasons, they frequently turn to parents from the same social group, who share their value systems and lifestyles (van Zanten 2009a).

Exchanges of this kind contribute to the creation or reinforcement of networks defined by the social or ethno-racial background of their members, and therefore to microforms of segregation within urban spaces. They also influence social inequalities with respect to school choice. Although consulting a variety of sources may increase rather than decrease the uncertainty of upper-middle-class parents to

some extent, in the end it helps them to make choices based on subtle distinctions that minimise risks and increase benefits (Ball et al. 1996; van Zanten 2013a), thus strengthening their social advantage vis-à-vis parents from other social milieus.

These networks also sometimes play a practical role in allowing members of the upper-middle and middle classes to deploy more complex and effective strategies. For instance, parents in countries such as France, where access to sought-after schools depends primarily on one's place of residence, may 'lend' their address to their friends for enrolment purposes. Friends might also facilitate access to private schools that require recommendations. Some parents even seek to convince the parents of their child's best friend to make the same decisions as they have made so that they can carpool together, share information and help each other out with issues stemming from having chosen a new school out of the local area.

Networks such as these may also constitute the basis for collective mobilisation efforts. As noted in the first section of this chapter, upper-middle-class parents, and especially 'intellectuals', who send their children to local schools are very sensitive to the effects of social and ethno-racial mix on the school's results, climate and status (Vowden 2012). Their concern pushes them, in the time immediately preceding the choice making, to carefully calculate the percentage of similar parents who will opt for local schools, and encourages some who see themselves as 'entrepreneurs of the local school' to convince other parents to stay as well (van Zanten 2009b). This mobilisation also takes place within the school, the goal being to enrol their children on tracks and in classes that are attractive because of the curriculum as well as the academic and social profiles of other children. A further aim is to exert group pressure on teachers and schools on a daily basis and at meetings (Brantlinger 2003). Parents' associations, which largely comprise parents from these social categories, also play an important role in the mobilisation.

Members of the middle, lower-middle and working classes are not immediately excluded from these networks, and neither are members of ethnic minorities. However, their presence depends both on their place of residence, which gives them greater or lesser spatial capital (Monfroy & Barthon 2010), and their ability to become accepted, which in itself is tied to their ambitions, their involvement in schools and their children's results. Consequently, only a minority of the above-mentioned parental types become part of the networks, frequently those who have atypical profiles.

Because they are concentrated in neighbourhoods and schools that are both socially and ethno-racially segregated, most of these parents are confronted with two mutually reinforcing problems. The first concerns their 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1985) with upper-class parents, which if stronger would bring benefits in terms of shared views and the joint creation of effective strategies. The second problem relates to the great difficulty they have, even when mobilised as a group, in changing the image and functioning of the schools to which they have access because of their 'ghettoization'. Their poor access to other opinion sources and their limited understanding of local educational dynamics, as well as the importance they place on discipline, make these parents very sensitive to the

rumours that circulate about the schools and thereby contribute to maintaining and strengthening their bad reputation (Ball et al. 1996; Felouzis & Perroton 2007).

Middle-class and upper-class parents are less sensitive to local stories because of their cultural and social capital, but they are susceptible to other forms of normative network influence, especially in neighbourhoods with strong social self-segregation.[1] The pressure to conform to certain types of behaviour such as opting for private schooling (Gombert 2008; Gombert & van Zanten 2004) is very strong in these residential spaces, both because of the social homogeneity and because the high social status is maintained through continuous association among the residents with high-status schools. Pressures aimed at ensuring conformity with local norms are also present in gentrified and mixed neighbourhoods (Butler & Robson 2003; Oberti 2007). However, in these contexts parents frequently hear opposing messages: although some acquaintances and neighbours might encourage them to avoid local schools, others might encourage them to stay and get involved (van Zanten 2009b).

Interactions with education professionals and schools

Making school choices also involves interacting with education professionals and educational institutions. The professionals fall into two categories: teachers and head teachers. The former are generally seen as informants who are likely to make sound judgments regarding children and schools, but parents from different social classes and different class fractions have varying opinions about them. Working-class and lower-middle-class parents tend to see teachers as institutional experts with higher levels of knowledge and skills than they have, and thus give much credence to their advice. Thus, those looking to avoid the local school tend to do so only if the teachers encourage them by praising the academic profile and potential of their children, providing information about other schools and the necessary procedures for gaining access to them as well as, in certain cases, helping them fill in application forms or making contact with the school to arrange an interview. In addition, these parents tend to see the school choice of teachers who have children themselves as an example of what to do or not do (Broccholichi 1998; van Zanten 2001).

Middle- and upper-class parents, on the other hand, tend to talk to teachers as equals (Lareau 2011). They, too, sometimes ask for advice on their children's potential, but they demand that the advice be qualified according to the educational goals they have for their children. This advice is also weighed against that of other professionals and parents. The same goes for opinions solicited from teachers or given freely by them regarding the schools under consideration. In these cases, teachers' opinions, although not necessarily deemed the most relevant, are appreciated because they are likely to incorporate bits of information they picked up on the job that are either unknown or poorly understood by parents. Moreover, teachers are more likely to pass such information on to parents from these particular social groups, not only because of 'class connivance' but also because, given the often intense involvement of these parents in the school, they know them

well and have a privileged relationship with them (Cucchiara & Horvat McNamara 2009).

The opinions of head teachers, on the other hand, are frequently taken with a grain of salt, even by many working-class parents. Parents worry that head teachers are marketing their schools instead of giving them good information and advice. This mistrust is particularly strong in the case of local schools with a bad reputation in that the head teachers may be suspected of wanting to conceal the school's disciplinary and academic problems (van Zanten 2001). When it comes to highly attractive public and private schools, although parents might still distrust the head teacher's promotional discourse, they are more keen on decoding institutional expectations and messages so as to develop successful 'impression management' strategies during interviews and contact with staff members (Gewirtz et al. 1995).

The more ambitious their choices, the more parents have to deal with opaque and subtle selection practices and admission rules that tend to distinctly favour those with the 'right' cultural capital. In the United States, for instance, many school-choice programmes require a good understanding of the criteria that define the beneficiaries and the conditions of participation. Consequently, as John Witte (1996) observed, even in the case of programmes intended to offer educational alternatives to underprivileged families, such as the one he studied, parents with high qualifications were overly represented. Similarly, children were selected differently among the different types of preschools studied by Annette Lareau and Jessica McCrory Calarco (2012): by test, the qualitative evaluation of their cognitive and social skills, application date or a lottery system. Given the different methods, parents really had to draw on their cultural and social capital in order to understand the process and obtain a satisfactory result.

Parents in France have to submit an exemption request if they wish to choose a public school other than their local school. This requirement handicaps parents who have neither the cultural capital nor the inside knowledge of the school they need in order to write letters that correspond in substance and form to the expectations of local education authorities. Lorenzo Barrault (2009) found in his research on exemption requests to primary schools written to a municipal board that when the granting of the request depends primarily on the number of places available, poorly substantiated requests that indicate poor knowledge of cultural and institutional codes have a much lower chance of being granted than those sent by parents with a high level of cultural capital who are familiar with public institutions, provide administratively admissible reasons for the exemption and whose letters are substantiated with practical and political arguments. Other studies concerning the choice of secondary schools also reveal social-class differences among parents concerning their capacity to provide evidence such as medical certificates or city maps and travel routes to support their requests (Laforgue 2009; Barrault 2011; van Zanten & Da Costa 2013).

CONCLUSION

As the analysis presented in this chapter shows, school choice is a complex process for parents for several reasons. First, such choices are heavily engaging for adults and children, as well as for schools, as they cannot be made very often. Second, the choices are made with a view to attaining different and sometimes contradictory individual and social goals, thus creating axiological tensions. The complexity involved is also attributable to the fact that school effectiveness depends on adjustments between children and schools on a whole set of features that are difficult to understand and challenging to meld, and that a wide variety of constraints or opportunities (geographical, institutional, financial) must be taken into account in the making of relevant and successful decisions.

This analysis also reveals significant social inequalities with regard to school choice. Parents from the upper middle class, who have high volumes of economic, cultural and social capital, are better equipped to choose and be granted their school of choice than middle-class parents, who in turn are better equipped than those in the working classes. Indeed, school choice has become a major dimension of social reproduction in that the strategies tend to reinforce dominant positions rather than provide opportunities for the dominated to advance (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz 1996; van Zanten 2009b).

NOTE

[1] The term 'segregation' is used throughout this chapter to designate the frequently involuntary concentration of low SES or minority children and families in schools and neighbourhoods associated with negative effects such as stigmatisation and exclusion. The concept of 'self-segregation' is used to designate the voluntary association of dominant groups, which might bring positive outcomes for them but is frequently harmful to other groups and, more generally, to social integration.

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2. THE HISTORICAL DYNAMICS IN CHILEAN AND FINNISH BASIC EDUCATION POLITICS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the historical development of political dynamics in Chilean and Finnish basic education politics, summing up earlier research on education policy and forming a background narrative for the rest of the book. Both countries, independently, have had to react to fairly similar educational and societal reform pressures, at least since the 1970s and 1980s. Whereas Chile has developed one of the most neo-liberal educational systems in the world, Finnish egalitarian comprehensive school stood the test of time. Our empirical task in this chapter is to provide a historical analysis of these developments. We analyse how two polarised solutions for managing relations among the main actors in education have been constructed in the larger societal framework through the founding of institutions, in the changing discourses, and through political action.

In order to get a theoretical grip on this phenomenon we build our analysis on the epistemological ideas of complexity theory, according to which history is made up of endless branching paths, none of which is determined beforehand and is only more or less probable (see Capano 2009). We develop our argument that action happening inside complex settings can be grasped through the notion of dynamics. This helps us to narrow our focus down to three dimensions – the political situation, political possibilities and politicking – on which we based the following research questions. What is opportune in a specific socio-historical situation? What is politicised in the discourses as a possibility for action and what is not? How do the relevant actors capitalise on the existing situations and possibilities?

In addressing these questions we claim here that the changes have stemmed not from conscious decisions, discursive power or socio-historical trajectories, but from a combination of all these things. Moreover, we aim to develop a theoretical understanding of this with the help of concepts such as dynamics, complexity and contingency. Our core argument is that it is not, in fact, as important to concentrate on the different properties of the two systems as to understand how the interaction within them has changed and how these patterns compare.

The focus of our analysis is on the historical emergence of some essential bifurcations in basic-education policy-making in Chile and Finland.[1] The purpose is to arrive at a comparative analysis of the basic dynamics in both contexts. However, we acknowledge that this is only the first step towards more profound historical comparative work. We also realise that if we are to arrive at deeper and more coherent picture of dynamics in basic education politics in Chile and Finland,

we need to progress further in at least three more research areas: dynamics in the governance of basic education and in educational family strategies, both of which are addressed in the rest of this volume, and dynamics in classroom cultures, which is left for further research (Kauko, Varjo, Kalalahti, Sahlström, & Simola 2012).

OUR THEORETICAL APPROACH TO COMPARISON IN THE FIELD OF DYNAMICS

As we see it, a comparative analysis has to be based on an understanding of history (e.g., Kazamias 2009; Cowen, 2009). Then again, any historical analysis relies on an understanding of the context in which choices are made, such as in education policy. We argue that, given these two demands, complexity theory and the idea of *bifurcation* make a major contribution in terms of understanding political dynamics. Bifurcation is an essential concept in terms of understanding the changes that created history, as we know it (Kauko 2014). In the context of history it means a branching path, a choice of options, leaving other possibilities aside. However, we do not claim that these choices are always conscious or predictable: they are rather restricted by the socio-historical reality, the prevailing discourses and previous choices. Given these uncertainties, it could well be said that a path can only be identified afterwards, once it becomes visible (Biesta 2010, p. 12; Prigogine 1997). Hence, a branch in a path is always in a state of becoming, it is always based on probability rather than certainty, which is why the result is always contingent. The choice is part of the moulding process as opposed to taking a ready-made path, and for this reason the outcome is not predetermined (cf. sensemaking, Weick et al. 2005). Moreover, the choices made are always "contingent for they could have been otherwise" (Medd 2002, p. 79). When an education system is changed at certain moments in history, the outcome is not predetermined in that the basic building blocks of these moments as well as the choices made are contingent. Given that the concept of bifurcation is rather unfocused as such, we introduce three dimensions of dynamics for the purpose of clarification. As we understand it, contingency is a condition in a complex world, and dynamics represent the patterns of action inside this contingent setting.

All three dimensions of dynamics are manifestations of how contingency is arranged, in other words of what is possible at a certain moment of history for certain actors (Table 1). *Politics as a situation* connotes the idea of an opportune moment when politics and policies can be changed and when a historical rupture is visible. The course of history can be changed and a bifurcation can occur at politically opportune moments. The most prominent changes are those that affect organisations and institutions and consequently have a strong role in creating path dependence (Kauko 2013, 2014).

Political possibilities concern how actors use, find and create the different alternatives for acting and acting 'otherwise' in contingent settings. If the political situation is a structural dimension of political change, such political possibilities could be seen as a discursive perspective on the *problématiques*. This dimension helps to tease out what has been politicised at different historical moments. Kauko (2014) concludes that politicisation and bifurcation share some similar aspects:

they both open up new avenues, usually rather irreversibly, and shape the debate and thus also the context in which choices are made.

A room for action, *Spielraum*, is created within the framework of the political situation and the political possibilities. This is where the third element of dynamics, namely *politicking*, comes into play. It refers to the potential of actors to 'play with contingency', and to capitalise on existing situations and possibilities in the complexities. Just like political possibilities in the process of politicisation, politicking is creative action that allows an innovative actor to find new avenues for 'doing politics' (Kauko 2013, 2014).

The interplay between the three dimensions, which may vary considerably across spatial and temporal contexts, is the basis on which dynamics are analysed, providing the framework for orienting the empirical research. This approach emphasises the insecurity and openness of the horizon of expectations, and the relative freedom of actors (Table 1).

Table 1. A framework for analysing dynamics in politics (adapted from Kauko 2013, 2014; Kauko, Simola, Varjo & Kalalahti 2012; Simola 2011; Palonen 2006)

Dimension	Questions	Key focus of the analysis
(1) The political situation	What is opportune in a specific socio-historical situation?	Policy threads in history and their bifurcations
(2) Political possibilities	What is politicised, and what is not?	Politicisations and their discursive formation
(3) Politicking (the political Spielraum)	How do the relevant actors capitalise on the existing situations and possibilities?	Political action and its ramifications

On the practical level this chapter concentrates on three dimensions of dynamics. Our research material is an aggregation of insights from our previous projects and new insights from the empirical work done in the context of the PASC project. In the following we first consider the policy threads in both cases and observe how the political-educational changes created major bifurcations in the course of history. We use the concept of policy thread to refer to a certain recurring political question, such as school choice. We claim that the bifurcations created path-dependences that were embedded in the creation and absence of institutions, and this later narrowed the opportunities for change inside the whole system. Second, we focus on the discursive changes and how they relate to the history of each context, and how they have facilitated and restricted interaction. Third and combined with this, we analyse the room of political manoeuvre, or politicking, using individual actors relevant to the course of events as examples. Finally, we conclude by analysing and comparing these historical dynamics in education politics of Chile and Finland.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION: BIFURCATIONS IN THE 1970S AND 1990S

We have identified two opportune periods for change in the histories of the two nations under study, both of which happen to overlap: the 1970s-1980s and the 1990s. In the Chilean case there was a radical shift towards marketised education in the former period, and an attempt to reverse this in the latter. With a little oversimplification it could be said that the opposite was true in Finland. Whereas the foundation stone for egalitarian education provision was laid in the 1970s, the tendency in the 1990s was towards market liberalism, which nevertheless did not take hold. In order to understand these changes we have to dig deeper into history in line with our theoretical understanding. In fact, in this section we point out how the changes resonate in the bifurcations occurring earlier in the 20th century in both cases: the rapid change from an agrarian state society into a modern industrial welfare state in Finland; and the increasing political polarisation in Chile after the relatively stable parliamentary era in 1881-1925 as well as the unfinished welfare-state-building consensus until the early 1970s.

Chile: The eventual triumph of market liberalism

The Chilean case represents a conservative society, economically and socially, historically shaped by Spanish colonisation and a cultural mix. Chile became an independent country in 1818. The oligarchical foundations of political and economic power in terms of land and mining ownership were maintained without major changes until the beginning of the twentieth century. Education assumed political significance only after independence in the process of civilising the working class and also creating an erudite elite that could manage and guide the new country (Serrano, Ponce de León, & Rengifo 2012; Corvalán 2013). Thus, formal teaching in the 19th century is identified with the building of the nation, relying on public schools but also acknowledging the important role of private schools, most of which were Catholic (Corvalán, Elacqua, & Salazar 2010). One of the main early building blocks of education policy was the fierce political struggle during the 19th century between the liberals and the conservatives, which is interpreted as a major programme of secularisation on the part of the liberals and an educational system led by the Catholic Church from the conservatives.

This liberal-conservative struggle was expressed and partly resolved in the Primary Instruction Law enacted in 1860, which on the one hand gave prominence to the state within the educational arena, and on the other generated a large societal gap and also confirmed the government's subsidy for private education. Amanda Labarca (1886-1975), an influential Chilean historian of education, referred many years ago to a topic that would be at the centre of the debate on private education and school choice: the principle of freedom of education (*Libertad de enseñanza*)[2] (Labarca 1939, p. 131). This idea became one of the main politicisations affecting the course of education, and is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The debate on compulsory primary schooling once again divided the liberals (partly in favour) and the conservatives (against) at the beginning of the 20th

century. It became embedded in the institutional structure, creating a deep bifurcation established between Chilean private schooling and publicly funded education. The 'Teaching State' (*Estado docente*) was gradually built during the second half of 19th century and was consolidated through the 1920 law that gave the state primacy over private education (Serrano, Ponce de León, & Rengifo 2012; Corvalán 2013). The main reason for doing this was to ensure that pupils would be officially evaluated, and to set a curriculum. Despite this consolidation of the state educational system, restriction on private schools was never suggested, neither was their state financing, and as a consequence parental choice in terms of school types was never limited. Hence, the education system in Chile was repeatedly constituted as a standoff in the political conflict between the liberals and the conservatives in an attempt to achieve a balance between public and private education. On the political level, as a result, the principle of school choice started to constitute the basis of the Chilean educational system, as opposed to providing public financing for legitimised private schools, whether they were confessional or not.

Modernisation and other reforms democratised the coverage of education in the country during the 1960s, which climbed up to 80 per cent in primary education and 60 per cent at secondary schools, with a predominance of state schools. Nevertheless, the principle of freedom of education and an open and unquestioned school choice supported private education in terms of allowing space for and subsidising it (PIIE 1984). A strong turn in a conservative direction followed this more liberal reform, a bifurcation that has determined the constitution of Chilean society to this day. All this occurred at the beginning of the 1980s: under a dictatorial socio-political regime, the Chilean educational system was reformed within the project of neo-liberal transformation in Chilean society. Basically, this new educational legislation entailed the decentralisation of publicly funded education, the transferring of responsibility for state schools to the corresponding local councils (*municipalidades*), and encouraging the development and creation of new state-subsidised private schools (Corvalán 2013). In order to carry this through the financing system was modified to create competition between schools, taking into account the attendance level at both public and private schools. Given the focus of our analysis this transformation in Chile is significant in that it was based on a tradition of school choice for families and the legitimacy of private education. The new competitive regulations also produced a glut of non-religious, private subsidised schools, which for the first time in Chilean history were likened to profit-oriented entities, according to the education legislation imposed during the 1980s.

It is noteworthy that the privatisation elements and the consistent school choice made by families had long been on the Chilean education agenda and later became a key aspect in a new conceptualisation of educational dynamics, fostering regulation in response to the families' demands. The spreading of the testing regime through SIMCE (*Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación*), which was proposed as guidance for educational policy and for families in choosing from among institutions, assumed a key role within the educational market. The relationship between state and private subsidised schools, and the

respective school-choice processes, constituted a new element in the discussion on educational efficiency that has been going on since the 1990s (Carrasco 2013; Corvalán 2013). School choice began to constitute a reference point within the educational market in the new discussions on quality, thereby also giving an indication of the efficiency in schools. The historical development outlined above shows how, despite Chile's long tradition of state education, at an opportune moment the military dictatorship initiated the transformation towards a neo-liberal system, and especially towards an educational market in which private providers are strongly represented. It is a question, in particular, of emerging phenomena and how political possibilities become concrete historical bifurcation: the underlying conservative and liberal discourses co-existed until the shift in a market direction during the dictatorship.

The legal-ideological basis on which the market was created was freedom of education (Labarca 1939). However, this was politicised differently in the new political situation: it was interpreted as freedom of educational entrepreneurship within a competitive school market. This discourse formally empowered families, giving them vouchers or subsidies so they could choose from among different education providers. In addition, new educational institutions were created to enhance competition through choice in provision. This was possible under the legal changes introduced by the dictatorship at the beginning of the 1980s, which allowed the existence of profit-oriented private schools that were eligible for state subsidies, and put few obstacles in their way (Elacqua 2009). The consequence was that at the end of the 2000s two out of three private schools in receipt of a subsidy were non-religious and profit-oriented. In accordance with our theoretical framework, the dictatorship created a situation in which change was possible, and the old discourse of freedom of education was used to buttress the competitive structures in creating new educational institutions and re-defining the relationships between state and society in terms of educational choice.

The educational market was further consolidated after the introduction of school choice when democracy began to re-emerge. A shared financing mechanism was created in 1993, allowing private subsidised schools to ask families for a monthly payment and extending the right to public education on the secondary level. Statistics show that this produced an explosive increase in such schools, which were in the majority after a few years in terms of school enrolment compared to public education (Corvalán & Joiko 2011). The institutional structure was thus drastically changed, and the political consequences were huge. Interestingly, the history of Chilean education clearly shows how the dictatorship adopted and rephrased the debate between the public and private sectors in order to extend the educational market, and that the democratic governments after the 1990s were not only unable to reverse the changes, but even took them further.

The bifurcation of socio-political change during the 1980s imposed by the dictatorship also determined the scope of change in the 1990s.[3] It is significant that the continuity of the market policies implemented by the dictatorship, which are still in place, is the direct consequence of the so-called 'Tied Law' (*Leyes de Amarre*) included in Pinochet's New 1980 Constitution and passed during the last

three months of his dictatorship. Basically, the 1980 Constitution comprises an inseparable corpus of laws covering the electoral system, legislative quorums and political supervision, which has made it impossible to change its constitutive neo-liberal and conservative leanings. Thus, democratic governments since the beginning of the 1990s have ruled under this constitutional scenario without the political capacity to transform any set of issues, even those that contradict their political programmes. The main argument and hypothesis from the Chilean side is that the historical events in the mid-1970s were related to the defeat of a democratic-egalitarian societal project following a military coup that reshaped the relationship between state and society. The role and significance of the Chilean state has been entirely re-configured in two clearly overlapping ways. First, the *declining state* was one of the major civic-military-dictatorship projects to give space to market forces in vast areas of social life and welfare provision, thereby reducing the previously predominant role of the state. Second, the *pseudo-empowered state* emerged during the 1990s in an attempt to stem neo-liberal polices: the state was given back some power, but only for the purpose of market regulation. Coinciding with this latter shift, a strong societal discourse in favour of private enterprise in social life remained. The post-dictatorial centre-left coalition in power was restricted by the structures created during the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship. Although they had strongly advocated a democratic-egalitarian society, they came back to power in a new world seeking a balance between market and state. In, particular, they had to contend with previously entrenched and strong neo-liberal views on this relationship. Whereas neo-liberal policies were implemented under exceptional and anti-democratic conditions, the new coalition had to navigate by means of democratic negotiation. Under this new framework, this coalition gave a bigger, although still subsidiary, role to the state, the key function of which was to regulate and support the working of market forces. Thus, although the new coalition re-established the importance of the state it was, in regulatory terms, pseudo-empowered.

In sum, the continuing dynamics in Chilean education are visible in the shift from a 'civic-authoritarian neo-liberal regime' (1973-1989) to 'social-democrat neo-liberal post-dictatorial rule' (1990-2010). Whereas the former supported the conformation of a declining state, the latter acted on the creation of a pseudo-empowered state. Certain socio-historical contingencies might help to explain the specific sources of inspiration in both political scenarios. There were also transnational influences at play with regard to the new political direction. In particular, the civic-authoritarian neo-liberal regime is the consequence of a demand emerging from the military regime for a socioeconomic and historical project to give political power to their dream of restoration from the previous democratic-egalitarian project. The Chicago School of Economics had a powerful influence in the total transformation of the state and the economy in Chile. We will come back to this later.

Finland: The locking-in of the comprehensive school

Finland was under the Swedish Crown until 1809 when it became an autonomous part of the Russian Empire, and has been an independent nation only since 1917. Immediately after independence the country faced Civil War (1918), two decades later when WW2 broke out it fought against the Soviet Union (in 1939-40 and 1941-44), and after that against its former ally Germany in 1944-45. The processes of industrialisation and urbanisation were quite sluggish until WWII, compared with Western Europe and the other Nordic countries. The comparative lateness of industrialisation and the simultaneous growth of the service sector brought exceptionally rapid structural change to society. The transition first from an agricultural to an industrial society and then to a post-industrial society took place within such a short period of time that one could almost say the two currently coexist in a very special way. Furthermore, the emergence of an institutionalised welfare policy was more recent in Finland than in the other Nordic countries: according to some scholars it has been possible to speak of Finland as a welfare society only since the 1960s (Simola, Rinne, & Kivirauma 1999). These features have had a strong effect on the development of education in Finland.

The historical proximity of the agrarian tradition meant that, in terms of development, Finland had a lot to catch up on compared to its European peers. It was among the last countries in Europe to establish compulsory education, for example. Six-year elementary schooling was made compulsory by law only in 1921, the same year as in Thailand, whereas the relevant legislation was in force in Denmark by 1814, in Sweden by 1842 and in Norway by 1848. Primary-school expansion was slow even after the law came into force, and on the eve of WWII compulsory education was still not fully functional in that it did not cover children across the whole country and among all social groups (Rinne & Salmi 1998, p. 27; Ramirez & Boli-Bennett 1982; Rinne 1984). All this is indicative of the fact that the Finnish success story in education is historically very recent: whereas almost 70 per cent of the younger generation nowadays aspire to a higher education, among their grandparents about the same proportion obtained the full elementary-school certificate.[4]

A major turning point in this development was when the comprehensive school project managed, with the help of various committees, to combine the interests of the main parties: the left-wing groups were aiming at a similar education for everyone and supporting societal planning, while the Agrarian Party succeeded in extending schooling to smaller population centres and thereby supporting regional development. This mainstream group made a compromise with the minority right-wing parties and others supporting the 'bipartite education' by creating a streaming system (*tasokurssi*) for different levels of achievement in maths and language studies. The system remained in use until 1984 (Kettunen, Jalava, Simola, & Varjo 2012).

Looking in more detail, this political compromise in the difficult situation of a growing demand for schooling for a recently industrialised society constitutes one of the main bifurcations in the history of Finnish schooling. Namely, compulsory

education has remained structurally rather unchanged since the foundation of the comprehensive school in the 1960s after a heated political debate, and its implementation in the 1970s. It is for this reason that contemporary Finnish education policy still reflects the state-planned and equality-oriented thinking of the 1960s-1970s (see Simola, Rinne, Varjo, & Kauko 2013). Comprehensivation was strongly connected to the idea of societal planning and the expansion of education to accommodate the baby-boom generation. The change from the earlier system of primary schools, or translated literally 'folk schools' (*kansakoulu*), and 'grammar schools' (*oppikoulu*) marked a gradual change to a relatively unitary system of education (Varjo 2007, pp. 51-56). The main Finnish parties responsible for the changes were the Agrarian Party and the Social Democrats, which constituted the backbone of post-war governments until the 1980s. It was within this framework that the Comprehensive School (*peruskoulu*), the central institutional structure sustaining the egalitarian ethos, was finally established in the 1970s, more than a decade later than in the other Nordic countries.

Today, the basic structure of the Finnish regular education system is rather monolithic and simple. Nine years of comprehensive schooling for all children aged between seven and 16 years is followed by post-compulsory education in upper-secondary schools or vocational institutions. On the tertiary level are the universities and the more recent institutes of higher education, called *ammattikorkeakoulu* (polytechnics) that were established in 1996. There is also a multiform and extensive adult-education sector.

In terms of basic education the private sector has never been strong in Finland. As is typical of a Lutheran Nordic country, the Church has not had much influence over basic education since the 1860s when ownership of the established primary school (*kansakoulu*) was assigned, although after a fierce debate, to the state and the municipalities (Nikander 2011).[5] Indeed, unlike the basic set-up in Chile, the private-school system has become marginal in the Finnish system, and even the term 'private school' is somewhat misleading in that the schools nowadays charge no fees, are funded by the state or the municipality and are run by non-profit organisations. The old private schools were integrated into the comprehensive system, although some retained their private status. The new legislation in the 1990s made it possible to establish new private schools on ideological grounds such as educational philosophy (e.g., religion) or pedagogical method (e.g., Waldorf/Steiner pedagogy), but this is strictly regulated – special permission is required from the government (Kauko & Varjo 2008; Varjo 2007).

As Finland became more open and relaxed after the end of the cold war and the subsequent and rapid association with the European Union, market-liberal ideas began to emerge especially from the industry lobby (Simola, Rinne, Varjo, Kauko, & Pitkänen 2009, p. 172). In addition, a radical opportunity for societal change presented itself during the deep economic recession of the 1990s. However, the end result was the strengthening of the earlier fluxes of egalitarianism to an extent that would ensure the survival of the comprehensive ideal. Sirkka Ahonen (2003), for instance, argues that the recession changed the political atmosphere in favour of market liberalism back to traditional Nordic welfare values, thereby defending

common comprehensive schooling. Ahonen's argument is plausible in the light of national plans at the time to restructure the education system. The recession revealed the value of the safety nets, even to the middle classes. No political actors in the late 1990s were willing to question the rhetoric of the equality-in-education discourse (Grek et al. 2009, p. 12; see also Rinne, Kivirauma, & Simola 2002; Kallo & Rinne 2006). Similarly, no political actors in the turn of the 2000s were willing to accept neo-liberalism as an emblematic concept for Finnish policy-making (Rinne et al. 2002; Simola et al. 2002).

However, the new millennium brought new ways in which schools could differentiate their profiles from those of other comprehensive schools. The Finnish Basic Education Act (The Basic Education Act 628/1998, 1998) gives parents the right to choose a school for their children, but the municipalities may restrict this. Indeed, parents have increasingly been able to apply for their children to join classes with a special emphasis in different subjects, and this has become the main avenue for choice based on other grounds (Simola 2013). The variation in school choice among the municipalities is very high also on account of the differences in demography, size and location.

Within the Swedish and, to some extent, the Russian bureaucratic tradition social reforms were, and still are, carried out via centralised authority, planned by state authorities and the clergy and strictly controlled through state legislation. Thus far this bureaucratic model has proved to work. Perhaps this 'state rationality' is deeply incorporated into the whole national mentality, which is the basic reason why the welfare state has still been seen, even in the era of economic depression in the 1990s, as the legitimate representative of people and of the common good, while the state as an apparatus of power is often ignored.

There have also been attempts to challenge this prevailing consensus. Finland used to do relatively well in traditional school-performance assessments such as the IEA studies, but never emerged as a top performer. It was symptomatic but also ironic that just a few weeks before the publication of the first PISA results in December 2001, the Education Committee of the Confederation of Finnish Industries and Employers (CIE) organised an autumn seminar in which Finnish comprehensive school was strongly criticised. It is self-evident that this success has weakened the pressure for change in municipal and school autonomy on the one hand, and has buffered market-liberalist innovations in Finnish comprehensive schooling on the other: 'leave well enough alone'.

In sum, we recognise the political debate related to market-liberalist and egalitarian schooling solutions in both contexts. In the Chilean case there were accumulating bifurcations leading the country in a neo-liberal direction: the underlying conservative society, the results of disputes between liberal and conservative groups, and most importantly the decisions made during the dictatorial regime. In a way, the main bifurcation took place after the military coup, when the time for radical change was most opportune. This change to neo-liberal policies, and especially the liberation of school choice, was embedded so deeply that no attempt to dismantle it was plausible. In the Finnish case the bifurcation happened during the period of deliberation about comprehensive schooling. In this

political situation the consensual and egalitarian undertones and the more recent planning ideals made it possible to compromise. The bifurcation was then buttressed by the economic depression in the 1990s at the zenith of market liberalism, and later by favourable PISA results.

The focus of our analysis in this section was on the first dimension of dynamics and the main bifurcations in both contexts. We refer only superficially to market-liberal and egalitarian educational solutions. In the next section we look more closely at how these two discursive formations have been built up. To this end we analyse the dimension of political possibilities, with a specific focus on how they have affected institutional change.

POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES: THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL EGALITARIANISM

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, in both cases we have noted two conflicting discursive formations, the market-liberal approach supporting the individual right to education, and educational egalitarianism favouring universal education. Accordingly the challenging discourse, which differed in the two cases, was unable to change the course set following the bifurcations in history. In both cases, too, the discursive formations relate to the provision of schooling in terms of the market or a more egalitarian and even distribution. These formations form the basis of our analysis of political possibilities as they limit the scope of the discussion in terms of what is a conceivable option in policy-making.

The bifurcations of the elite training system and the conservative foundations of politics and the economy in Chile, analysed more closely in the previous section, supported educational politicisation based on the idea of 'meritocratic educational opportunity' in which all citizens potentially have the opportunity to advance in society via education. The key strategy was to create an educational system that gave better opportunities to the more able pupils and to families who were ready to pay for their children's education. In contrast, the earlier notion of a 'public-egalitarian education' was demonised as going against both the freedom of the family to give opportunities to their offspring, and the principle of non-state intervention among groups wanting to provide education of good quality and to make some profit from it. As a result, educational policies did not intervene in this competitive scheme during the 1990s, which resulted in the expansion of school segregation and educational gaps by social class (Valenzuela et al. 2013). Nevertheless, the educational system is still seen as offering freedom, opportunities and diversity of provision, which are considered key policy drivers under social-democrat rule and within neo-liberal post-dictatorial historical structures.

The neo-liberal authoritarian period witnessed a set of key reforms including the voucher system, school devolution, decentralisation, mixed provision, for-profit schools allowance, lowering the barriers to become a school provider and school choice. During the period of democratic rule that followed, in 1993, a key reform was passed that increased the incentives for private participation in education: the co-payment mechanism allowed schools to charge families fees. As a consequence,

school choice was also related to the economic capital of families. The two sectors began to compete for students as private subsidised schools were still allowed to obtain funding from the state at the same time as some of them were charging families. State schools were not allowed to charge families for primary education.

Paradoxically, in the wake of the strong and disorganised student movement and the long period of demonstrations in 2006, the political answer of the Chilean elite, in other words political parties across the whole spectrum, Congress, governments, scholars and universities, was to create new educational institutions to tackle the educational crisis. Students demanded state, free, non-profit and egalitarian education, and the political system passed a constitutional law creating two significant state agencies: Educational Superintendence and the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (Bellei & Cabalin 2013, pp. 112-118; see Bellei, Cabalin, & Orellana 2014). However, the market-driven mechanisms remained untouchable. Nevertheless, as Bellei and Cabalin (2013) note, student movements became more influential, helping to shape the agenda and focus of institutional political debate and media discussion. They constituted a decisive voice during the presidential campaign in 2013. It could be said that the student movement was crystallised in twofold strategies. As new student leaders emerged and continued with street demonstrations, dialogue and negotiation, former student leaders won seats in parliament in the November 2013 elections, institutionalising their national leadership as political actors articulating and pushing the discursive claims of the student movements.[6]

Both institutions are operational nowadays, reflecting the functioning of a pseudo-empowered state. Although it is given more power than before, it is only the power to control market and educational actors: it does not cover educational provision, which is mainly in private hands. The Superintendence takes care of the legal aspects of the system, and can also impose sanctions on schools. The rationale was that the education market was essentially working on a *laissez-faire* basis. The State was reminded of its function to allow markets to work on the basis of efficiency, competitiveness and symmetry. Schools as actors in markets are accountable because they receive public funding. This institution – in contradiction of the students' claims – came to reinforce its market legitimacy in terms of regulating its healthy operation.

The Agency for Quality Assurance, again, is responsible for accountability. Significantly, the key policy driver is to support, influence and agree on further action in schools that do not meet the standardised goals set by the Ministry of Education. The Agency assesses school performance via census/standardised national testing, classifies schools, offers support and intervenes, and is allowed to close schools. The accepted policy discourse is that the educational problems in Chilean society are attributable in part to the fact that schools have been unseen in terms of their practices and outcomes.

The implementation of both policies, paradoxically, was a consequence of the institutionalisation of the market-liberal discursive formations of the pseudo-empowered state, which constituted the political response of the elite to one of the biggest social movements since the return of democracy. Both institutions

complied with transnational policy discourses about the role of supra-national agencies in improving education. Chile developed suitable conditions for introducing these policy mechanisms during the 1990s. A notable example is the wide implementation of a standardised learning-measurement system (SIMCE) from the early 1990s used by democratic social-democrat neo-liberal post-dictatorial governments. The key policy objective was to offer 'public information' to families enabling them to choose a school. Nowadays Chile is at the forefront in terms of testing educational systems. Thus, the Agency will work on the basis of previous discursive practices. Testing is not new, and was gradually introduced in schools – with performative effects ('teaching for the test'). This discursive and practical policy achievement facilitated the introduction of a quality-assurance classification system. Accordingly, as Flores et al. (in this volume) found, Chilean families strongly support the right to choose schools. To some extent, the increasing use and public dissemination of information on schools' performance is functional to the working of a highly legitimised and heavily backed school-choice system that offers clear and distinct advantages to the emergent and consolidated middle classes.

The dynamics on the policy-making level in Finland operate between the discursive formations of the social-democratic–agrarian tradition of *equality* and market-liberalist *equity* that grew up in the late 1980s (Simola et al. 2002, 2011; Simola 2012; Simola & Rinne 2011). As noted in the previous section, the former was manifested in the comprehensive-school project and the latter in the proposed market reforms of the 1990s.

The former discourse emphasises the similarity of pupils and everybody's right to receive decent schooling, and is based on the belief that it is possible to run schooling that is good enough for everybody. Here it is an absolute value to have common compulsory schooling for the offspring of people from every socio-cultural stratum. As mentioned in the previous section, this egalitarian belief has been strongly embedded in the political struggle over substituting the parallel school system with the comprehensive school (*peruskoulu*) that has been going on since the 1970s. For this reason it would be beneficial to understand the development of these discourses in more detail. The success of comprehensive schooling was attributable to the alliance between the leftist parties (the Social Democratic Party and the Peoples Democratic Alliance, later the Left Alliance) and the agrarian party (the Agrarian Union, later the Centre Party) that lasted two decades from the late 1960s until the late 1980s. Early references to this type of idea stem from 1903 and the constitutive meeting of the Finnish Social Democratic Party, which supported free education for every child in primary level, and education based on ability after that (*Forssan ohjelma 1903*). Arguably, the idea was that the only way to give working-class children a decent education was to get them to the same schools as bourgeois children attended.

The latter tradition emphasises the differences among pupils and everybody's right to receive schooling that fits his/her capacities, needs and individuality. It is no longer assumed that one and the same school is good for everybody. This discursive formation dates back to the pre-comprehensive era when the

distinguishing of parallel schools was based on the same idea. After having been muffled by the comprehensive-school project it was reintroduced and revitalised in 1987 when, for the first time since WWII, the right-wing conservative Coalition Party held the post of Prime Minister and its two decades in opposition were over. To mark the beginning of the new era, Prime Minister Harri Holkeri gave an epoch-making address in which he redefined the basic concept of Finnish education policy thus far: people were different in terms of capacity, and equality meant the right of every pupil to receive education that corresponded to his/her prerequisites and expectations rather than the delivery of universal *Bildung* for everybody regardless of socio-cultural background.[7] It is clear that this definition refers to equity rather than equality. It is symptomatic of the symbolic power of equality in Finnish educational discourse that there is no analogous concept for equity, even though it would be easy to find one (*oikeus, oikeudenmukaisuus*). The concept of equality is used in two contrasting ways, which were curiously connected in a major document published by the Educational Evaluation Council (FEEC 2004, p. 15; parentheses added):

> The economic and social welfare of Finnish society is based on an egalitarian public system of schooling. Its mission is to guarantee for every citizen both educational opportunities of good quality regardless of his/her sex, dwelling place, age, mother tongue and economic position [i.e. equality] and the right to tuition accordant with his/her capabilities and special needs and his/her self-development [i.e. equity].

Three special Finnish features in this discursive formation of the relationship between equality and equity should be taken into account if one is to understand the sustainability of egalitarianism in Finnish basic education. First, the expansion of popular education through comprehensive school created a strong collective experience of causality between progress in formal education and simultaneous social advancement (Antikainen 1990), and this lies behind the exceptionally strong Finnish belief in schooling as the very vehicle for social ascension. Second, the late but rapid withdrawal from the agricultural society may explain the exceptional strength of the social-democratic-agrarian-egalitarianism discourse. It is a plausible assumption, however, that this egalitarianism would not have withstood the challenge of market liberalism if two contingent events had not provided a buffer: the revival of trust in an egalitarian comprehensive school among the middle classes due to the deep recession of 1991-1993, and the PISA success since 2001 that no Finnish educationalists predicted. One could claim that the deep recession broke the market-liberalist hegemony in the late 1990s during the parliamentary debates on the new educational legislation that emphasised the right of every child to attend the local school over free parental school choice.

In the Finnish case there have been few institutional changes and little questioning of publicly run and funded schooling since the comprehensive reform. One probable reason for the lack of discussion about private education is that the question of quality never really emerged in the basic-education policy field. Even when the market-liberalist idea of parental school choice and evaluation systems

based on New Public Management thinking were suggested, arguments based on the principles of free choice, multiplicity and governance prevailed. According to Hannu Räty, who launched a survey-based research project in 1995 on parents' attitudes towards comprehensive school (Räty et al. 1995), the great majority of Finnish parents simply trusted the quality of the schooling. Symptomatically, the respondents were most satisfied with the teaching (86%). Even on the subject of individuality, where attitudes were most negative, more parents were satisfied (48%) than dissatisfied (28%). This conclusion was supported in a Nordic comparative study of a decade ago (*Nordisk skolbarometer* 2001). Respondents comprising a sample of the overall population and of parents with school pupils in the Nordic countries were asked what they thought about contemporary schooling. The Finns were clearly the most satisfied with their schools, especially with how they had been able to provide their offspring with knowledge and skills in different school subjects. They were not in agreement with their Nordic neighbours that the knowledge requirements were too low, for example. It was also shown (Räty et al. 1995) that Finnish parents felt strongly about equality, and did not support the tenets of market-oriented schooling or the ideology of competition and giftedness. On the contrary, they were worried about the inequality of educational opportunities. It is symptomatic and significant, however, that parents from the upper-level employee strata were more apt to criticise the school system for overlooking differences in giftedness, whereas the attitudes of working-class parents were generally more favourable. Kalalahti et al., in Chapter 9 of this book, similarly conclude that comprehensive school enjoys strong legitimisation among Finnish parents.

Another factor restricting the challenging discourses was the municipal autonomy that, from the perspective of the Finnish National Board of Education, resulted in a lack of control over municipal education policy due to the radical decentralisation of local governance. The pouring in of market-liberalist reforms was supported through making the national institutions more receptive to influences. However, these influences were subject to consensus, meaning that the officials used sceptical-practical selection criteria in the best interests of the nation (Kauko 2013). The idea of equity was evident only in the quality-assurance policy, which started increasingly to emphasise the need to make distinctions rather than treating the whole education sector as one entity.

In both of the cases under discussion, the political possibilities followed historical trajectories, and the creation of new institutions was based on existing discursive constructs. In Chile, the new institutions of the 1990s were restricted by the dominance of the pseudo-empowered state, in which the market liberalisation of schooling introduced in the 1980s radically limited the viable possibilities of restructuring the institutional frame. On the other hand, the comprehensive school as an institution, with its further support from contingent events, was strong enough to uphold the embedded egalitarianism in Finland, and thus buffered against the short-term push for merit-based education in the market-liberalist equity discourse of the late 1980s.

POLITICKING: EMPOWERED AND RESTRICTED BY THE SPIELRAUM

The analysis in this section concerns the limits and frameworks of individual and groups of actors created by political situations (bifurcations) and political possibilities (discursive formations and institutions). We should point out that these large-scale changes did not happen in a political vacuum. Neither did they happen without political action, in other words politicking, and taking advantage of the political situation and possibilities. There has been little debate in Finland since the decision on comprehensive education, and various attempts at politicking have not gathered momentum. In the Chilean case there is evidence that key politicking contributed heavily to the bifurcation of the 1980s.

A few years after the coup in Chile, once the political shock had subsided, a major political project was needed to give continuity and meaning to the new military regime. At the same time, an influential and united group of economists trained and located at the Catholic University's School of Economics were due to begin their PhD studies at the Chicago School of Economics in the US (Huneeus 2000). This group took the opportunity to offer a fully transformative socioeconomic project for Chilean society that would support the military group in their restoration project. At that time, economic discourse began to dominate social life in terms of how to structure society, the economy and culture. This has been called the 'performativity effect of economics on social practices' (Ariztia 2012; Garate 2012). Major neo-liberal reforms were implemented in sectors such as health, energy, pensions and education. This resulted in the formation of a civic-military association with the political power to take control of society, implemented without any public deliberation on major national reforms. It was a testing ground in which to implement deeply neo-liberal policies that had never been internationally tested. Proponents of neo-liberalism from the developed world saw in Chile an experimental scenario in which to try out abstract policy ideas. The main consequence was the detrimental *decline of the nation state*, in particular regarding its regulative political capacity to control its reliance on market forces to organise the educational system. This lack of regulative capacity has had a major impact on the Chilean educational system in terms of the high level of educational segregation. (Huneeus 2000; Garate 2012).

In the Finnish case it seems that the room for individual actors in practising politics has been restricted by the lack of historical opportunities, the institutional structures and the discursive formations. For instance, even though Finnish educationalists have been very open to pedagogical influences, especially from the Anglo-American world, there is still ample evidence of a stubborn sense of national exclusivity, especially in the context of egalitarianism. The comprehensive school in itself has many original features that distinguish it from its Nordic sister institutes. For example, in the 1980s the NBE launched unique non-proportionate pupil assessment based on individual objectives (Simola 1995). On the university level the radical abolishment of the Bachelor's degree, the ideology of polytechnicism and the narrowly missed realisation of one-man-one-vote in the 1970s were exceptional internationally (Jalava 2012). One could also say that *peruskoulu*, the comprehensive school, benefited from self-confident and visionary

but sustainable leadership from the 1960s until the early 2000s (Aho, Pitkänen, & Sahlberg 2006; Sahlberg 2011; Simola 2012). Until now, embedded egalitarianism has had the edge over travelling market-liberalism, largely due to its contingent buffering not least from the PISA success. More than a decade without sustainable leadership is corroding its buoyancy, however.

In the Finnish context there has been little room for politicking on issues such as private schools due to the changes during the formation of comprehensive school and the non-existence of a relevant discourse. Although of little consequence in primary schooling, the private sector was strong on the secondary level. Up until the early 1900s, two thirds of the secondary schools were private, and still in the 1960s less than a third were state schools (Strömberg 2012, p. 130; Kaarninen 2012, p. 412). The implementation of comprehensive school gave the municipalities the right to amalgamate their former private lower-secondary schools into the municipal Comprehensive School system by 'municipalising' them or allowing them to continue as private, but substituting for the state school. The latter alternative also meant losing their independent position and therefore only a few private schools survived, mainly in Helsinki.[8] This was in spite of the fierce resistance of the thus-far mighty Alliance of Private Secondary Schools (*Yksityisoppikoulujen liitto*). The notion of a private and non-public sector in basic education has remained marginal in the Finnish debate, and leaves little room for politicking. One example of this is from 1993, when a humble proposal for Swedish-type, voucher-based 'free schools' was presented in a memorandum from the Ministry of Education, headed at that time by the Coalition Party (Opetusministeriö 1993). The proposal was immediately knocked on the head by the leading newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (1993), and never returned to the Finnish discourse on education policy.

In sum, contingency was hardly apparent in the Finnish system after the advent of comprehensive school, whereas the Chilean military coup gave much room for manoeuvre. This *Spielraum* in Chile was consciously used to create a market-liberal system. However, as noted above, the change was also supported by the older societal structure and the freedom-of-education discourse, which was now politicked for the purposes of the reform.

DYNAMICS IN CHILEAN AND FINNISH BASIC EDUCATION

The dynamics in Chilean and Finnish schooling can be compared through three dimensions: the political situation, political possibilities and politicking. In the Finnish case with regard to the political situation they reflect the late urbanisation of an agrarian nation when equality was institutionalised within the schooling system through the creation of the comprehensive school. Its status was further enhanced, paradoxically, during the waves of NPM-motivated radical deregulation of municipal power in the midst of economic depression in the 1990s. This institutionalisation in the political situation created a *buffering* effect against the travelling policies (Ozga & Jones 2006) of market liberalism. In terms of the discursive formations, the dynamics of political possibilities on the policy-making

level span *the social-democratic-agrarian tradition of equality* and the *market-liberalist equity* that emerged in the late 1980s. The institutionalised equality tradition has blocked efforts to introduce standardised tests and give public rankings. (Simola et al. 2002, 2011; Simola & Rinne 2011; Simola, Varjo, & Rinne 2011; Kauko & Varjo 2008; Hannus et al. 2010) In sum, the Finnish constitutive dynamics in policy-making *buffer embedded egalitarianism*. It is noteworthy that this characterisation of Finnish policy-making dynamics is *doubly attributed*: first with the adjectival *embedded* particularising the specific property, and second with the verb *buffer*, referring to the main effect of the specific dynamics. The politicking dimension has had to operate in an area restricted by the other two, and have generally supported this trajectory. In this regard, an interesting and ultimately unanswerable question is whether strong leadership and politicking in a market-liberal direction would have resulted in another outcome, although it is difficult to see how such discourse could have gained more support.

The Chilean basic dynamics are historically rooted in the oligarchic foundations of political power and economics, and the long-lasting division of liberal and conservative forces during the 19th century. With regard to the political situation the most significant bifurcation in the Chilean case occurred in 1973 following the Pinochet military coup. The 1960s education-modernisation project was cut short when the dictatorial regime started to implement radical reforms at the beginning of the 1980s. The Pinochet regime was searching for a reform programme that would create political possibilities and leave room for politicking. This created a totally new political climate enabling a shift towards a more market-liberal education policy. The political hegemony made it possible to initiate an extremely neo-liberal reform programme that irreversibly changed the relationship between state and society: privatisation and the introduction of vouchers comprehensively marketised education. Even the continuing efforts of social democrats throughout the re-democratisation process to curb neo-liberal thinking only resulted in the pseudo-empowerment of the state. In the case of educational freedom (*Libertad de enseñanza*), political possibilities were re-interpreted in the light of more topical issues: freedom of education has been used as a powerful discursive tool to support and advance the working of a privatised and marketised educational system. In particular, this principle supports the freedom of policy drivers to: (i) run private schools and allow the private sector to offer education in the name of social and cultural diversity; (ii) run for-profit schools; and (iii) use selective policy admission in order to exclude pupils who do not conform or are difficult to teach (Carrasco et al. submitted).

The constitutive dynamics in the Chilean case comprise the *recurring competition* currently functioning within this *pseudo-empowered state* among the elite and in private education. The political situation shaped by existing institutions could be described as the juxtaposition of four coherent modes of regulation: privatisation, standardisation, testing and accountability (Carrasco 2013). In particular, privatisation has been consolidated through the creation of the Superintendence of Education, which as well as regulating private actors is reinforcing market-driven mechanisms in the organisation of educational provision.

In addition, recent initiatives have resulted in an increase in state funding, but also in the consolidation of the voucher and other competitive schemes to fund public and semi-private education. Overall, teachers, pupils, parents and schools should compete to survive and succeed. This is the overarching general policy driver of the Chilean educational system. The improvement in the practices of professional teachers is related to examination: school improvement reflects the ability to attract funding and therefore to survive; families have to compete for places; pupils are examined annually. In the end, all actors have to compete and work under pressure to improve individual performance. This has clear consequences in terms of motivation, educational production, the building of a new moral environment, and the re-signification of pedagogy and education itself. Thus, the state has become a stronger omniscient actor, but this time empowered to regulate and punish distant and local actors. It is the result of an interweaving of historical forces, discursive developments, and concrete practical endeavours by educational actors on governmental and local levels.

There are some basic historical similarities in Finland and Chile: mass schooling, for example, is a considered extremely important, and as Meyer (1986) puts it is the 'religious' base of modern societies. The expansion of education started in both countries only after WWII. However, dynamics as a theoretical tool gave us also the opportunity to tease out similar patterns in the two contexts. Both cases speak paradoxically for both strong path dependency and strong contingency. Path dependency is visible in the permanence of the basic principles of society, such as equality and competition. The continuity of the Finnish comprehensive school is a good example of this. Contingency is evident in both external and internal factors. In the Finnish case the unexpected economic depression of the 1990s and governance decentralisation locked many of the centrally planned ideas into the local level, whereas in Chile the internal turmoil that ended up in a military coup created an opportune moment for a bifurcation towards text-book neo-liberalism.

The overarching question is why market liberalism triumphed in the Chilean but not in the Finnish context. In Chile, it was possible in this dictatorial space to introduce radical new regulations in the field of education. It was also apparent in this free space for interpreting the politicising according to market-liberal thinking how the historical idea of the freedom of education became a vehicle for organising education as a free market. In sum, an extreme, radical application of privatisation and the voucher system was launched in Chile, which would not have been possible had the opportune political situation not coincided with the regime's search for reform. Market liberalism happened to resolve this national problem. In the Finnish case the political situation has functioned according to embedded egalitarian practices. Such practices stemmed from collective historical experiences of social advancement through schooling, trust in comprehensive school and the PISA success, all pointing towards the benefits of equal schools. Market-liberal ideas could still reformulate the political possibilities in the Finnish field, where the ideas of equality and equity have become mixed up. Nevertheless, in most cases

historical developments have rendered most attempts to change the discursive space futile.

NOTES

[1] 'Basic education' in Chile corresponds to primary-level provision to 5-13-year-old children. In Finland, comprehensive school encompasses teaching for 7-16-year-olds.

[2] "[T]he creators of the Teaching State [Estado docente], specially Montt and Varas, left a broad freedom. Even more, they fostered the coming of a new teaching nature to Chile. They believed that at all time the State would have them under its leadership and would not dispute the hegemony of its pedagogical tuition" (Labarca 1939, p. 131).

[3] It should be noted that, even if it goes without saying, the dictatorship abolished the National Congress, political parties, elections, and most political rights for a period of 17 years. This meant that there was no public deliberation (see Huneeus 2000).

[4] The late development of the educational system at the secondary level in Finland, and the low percentage of participation in secondary education compared to the other Nordic countries are clearly visible in statistics (OECD 2002, p. 37, 2007, p. 37). In 2001 only about half of 55–65-year-olds had a certificate of secondary education (51%) compared to 65-72 per cent in the other Nordic countries. The differences were still remarkable – well over ten per cent – in 2005. Because of the late historical formation and the broadening of the educational system, the gaps in educational level between older and younger generations are among the widest in Europe (see Simola & Rinne 2011).

[5] There were private preparatory schools in the cities for those aiming at secondary education (*Oppikoulu* and *Lyseo* from the age of 12) without going to Primary school (*kansakoulu*), but they were closed in the 1950s when *Kansakoulu* became the dominant provider of secondary education (Kivinen 1988, p. 201). Some private language schools still remained on the primary level, but the private sector continued to operate mainly on the secondary level.

[6] Camila Vallejo, Carol Cariola, Giorgio Jackson, and Gabriel Boric are current MPs in the Chilean Congress. They were all Presidents of Student Federations in the Catholic University of Chile, the University of Chile, and the University of Concepcion, the leading and oldest Chilean Universities.

[7] "Todellinen koulutuksellinen tasa-arvo ilmenee siinä, miten yksilöllä on mahdollisuus saada lahjojaan vastaavaa koulutusta" (Helsingin Sanomat 1987, A11).

[8] Sirkka Ahonen (2012, p. 153) refers not only to major cities such as Helsinki and Tampere, and the medium-sized city of Lahti and the town of Ylitornio, but also to the town of Nurmijärvi, which kept its Finnish private secondary school alive, and the small Swedish private schools in Kotka, Pori and Oulu. In the whole country, only a few per cent of pupils are privately educated on the comprehensive school level.

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