School Choice and Private Schooling

A comparative case- study between Greece and Sweden

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, privatization and school choice have been introduced and embodied in the vocabulary of several national education policies. Although free education has been constituted, private schooling has been steadily growing its presence over the last years in Greece and Sweden. Parents are asked to choose among different school alternatives in an attempt to find the school that ‘fits them the best’.

This study aiming to examine the phenomenon of private schooling and the factors that affect parental school choice, outlined a comprehensive framework of the national policies about private schools and school choice in both countries. Furthermore, the Human Capital, Human Rights and Capability approaches consisted the theoretical background of the study and framed the analysis of its research findings. The case study design of the research provided an in-depth exploration of the two national contexts, enriching the study with empirical data. Twenty semi-structured interviews with education professionals and parents from both countries shed light on the reasons behind the school choice towards private schools. Regarding the findings of the research, several kinds of educational inequalities and social segregation were identified because of the fact that not all parents have access to school choice under equal terms.

Keywords

School choice, private education, quality education, Greece, Sweden, Human Capital theory, Human Rights theory, Capability approach.

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List of Abbreviations

ECB	European Central Bank
EU	European Union
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GERM	Global Education Reform Movement
ICE	International and Comparative Education
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEDB	School Book Publishing Organisation
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
RQ	Research Question
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
USD	United States dollar

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Chapter One

1. Introduction

Every child in the world should have access to free, equitable and quality education, directed to the full development of human capabilities. This has been constituted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and actively supported and promoted by the United Nations (UN). UN discourse stands for universal education around the globe by setting development goals since 2002, aiming to inspire people from around the world to take action. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 in the current global development agenda, encourages all countries to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” (UN, 2015).

Education is a prerequisite for democracy and therefore its provision is the primary responsibility of the state which should ensure free access, equity and equality in schools (Dewey, 2006). It could also be stated that schools are the central social institutions and civil mechanisms that cultivate the ethos of upcoming citizens. Nevertheless, the state is often not wholly able to fund or provide education based only on its public-sector capacity, and subsequently, the private sector complements the state’s inadequacy in several ways, such as running private schools. This situation is associated with the notion of privatization of education and makes the boundaries between the public and the private sectors less distinct.

Sweden and Greece provide free access to education across all education levels, starting from early childhood to tertiary education. Although free education has been constituted, private schooling has been steadily growing its presence over the last years in both countries. Parents opt for private schools’ alternatives existed, aiming to provide the best education possible to their children. These alternatives often include attractive programs, additional resources, and extra facilities, which often public schools are not able to afford. Therefore, school choice is firmly applied and supported in both countries leading to the establishment of various kind of schools run by the state or individuals and companies.

Privatization of education and school choice have caused a broad political and philosophical debate over the last years. The privatization of education challenges the notion of education as a human right and public good, due to the diversity in ways of schooling, while school choice as an option allows parents to choose and have a voice on what ‘fits them best’. This phenomenon often leads to the implementation of market-like policies, which are opposed to the concept of education regarding equality and accessibility.

In this research study, the concept of private schooling will be presented and critically examined, by using the theoretical lenses of the human capital, human rights and capability approaches applied in the Swedish and Greek contexts. What attracted the interest of the researcher to examine these two countries is the fact that there is an increasing number of parents who opt for private primary schools in Sweden, while at the same time a steady preference for private schools in Greece is noticed, despite the

country's economic severe restraints. Equality, accessibility, and equity in education constitute the three pillars of the research analysis, which examines how these are realized in each country. Another focus point of the study is to describe the concept of school choice and how education professionals and parents perceive this.

The primary aims of this study are to examine the phenomenon of private schooling and investigate the factors that affect school choice in favor of private schools. Some of the questions which triggered the study are: Are all parents able to choose? What are the reasons for preferring a private school instead of a public one? What are the 'extras' that private schools offer? It could be argued that the private sector complement public sector's inadequacies, but which are they? What are the similarities and the differences in private schooling in these two countries? The results of the study would contribute to shed light on the privatization of education and school choice and inspire future educational planning.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The main aims of the study are to examine the phenomenon of private schooling and explore the factors that affect school choice towards private schools, in primary education level. The whole study will refer to the Greek and Swedish educational contexts and will focus on the 'extras' that private schools provide to their students compared to the public ones. The study will be exploratory, aiming to gain a deep understanding of the reasons why private schools seem to attract more and more students with the passage of time. More specifically, these aims may be reached through the following objectives:

- to create a comprehensive framework of the national policies about private schools and school choice in both countries;
- to conduct interviews with various education stakeholders in both countries in order to explore their perceptions of private schooling;
- to analyze the findings and compare the two national contexts.

The research questions formulating the study have been set in order to describe the reasons behind the school choice towards to private schools and to discover the similarities and differences in private schooling between the two countries.

- What are the socio-political factors behind the increased participation in private schools throughout the years?
- What are the reasons behind the school choice towards private schooling?
- What are the main similarities and differences in private schooling between the two countries?

1.2 Significance and Relevance to International and Comparative Education

Focusing on the numerous education reforms that have taken place during the last years worldwide, a significant expansion of private education has been observed. In addition, OECD (2014) has reported an overall drop of 5% of students who prefer to attend public schools in OECD countries. This phenomenon has caused a heated political and philosophical global debate in academia, around the advantages and disadvantages of the privatization of education and has introduced school choice in education realities.

This study aims to shed light on the factors which influence this phenomenon and to inspire various educational stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers to examine this research topic further. Furthermore, by exploring the determinants which drive school choice towards private schools, this research could benefit educational planners and governments to design educational reforms, aiming to enhance the quality of public schools.

School choice is always contextually defined, reflecting the social needs of a population (Farazouli, 2017b). These social needs are not always set in a collectively endorsed framework since individuals make choices according to their needs. These individual choices in society could hinder the notion of society's cohesion and become socially destructive (Henig, 1994, p. 197). Needs could be transformed into social demands if there is a social framework protecting and equally informing a state's population. This thesis will contribute to explore and express some of the social demands in Sweden and Greece, by examining factors which influence school choice.

In last, this research is significant as “we are social beings who are members of social systems”, “we live in a world made up of social engagements” and “our nations cannot act in isolation from other nations, making global cooperation necessary” (Hellstén, 2016). Hence, ICE research is significant since the same social phenomena are examined in similar but not same contexts, resulting in the creation of a more holistic framework around these social phenomena.

1.3 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This research is being conducted as a master thesis for the master programme International and Comparative Education (ICE) at the Department of Education in Stockholm University, and as a consequence, several limitations took place regarding the duration and the extent of the research. As a master thesis, it should be acknowledged that the analysis of the results would not be exhaustive but methodologically analyzed through a selected theoretical framework by the author. This framework also derived from the content of the ICE literature and should be restricted to specific limits for the sake of the study's feasibility.

Concerning the study's qualitative nature, several limitations are applied to the research analysis and findings. One limitation regards its replications, due to the fact that it would be complicated to repeat the study due to its sample selection. This limitation,

according to Bryman (2012), is defined as limited ‘external reliability’ which is a challenging criterion to meet in qualitative research, since it is impossible to “freeze” a social setting (p. 390). Education professionals could be transferred to other schools and parents may choose another school for their children. In order to address that, the researcher tried to provide a transparent methodology description and at the same time to focus more on the themes which were created from the interviews’ content and were not based on the interviewers’ personal profiles. In that way, similar studies could be designed in the same or even in different schools, by using similar themes, in order to address the same research topic.

In addition, due to the case-study approach of the thesis, its findings could not be generalized to a larger scale, but could further contribute to the theoretical discussion around private schooling and school choice. The sample was not meant to be representative of the Swedish and the Greek contexts but was used as a means to further understand and question the reasons behind private school choice. Furthermore, the author's interpretation of reality, in combination with the selection of specific theoretical approaches used for the topic's critical examination, could set boundaries to the analysis provided. As Bryman (2016) states, qualitative research accepts critics due to issues related to subjectivity, replication, transparency, and generalization.

Another limitation regards the anonymity of the participants and the name of the schools. According to Bryman (2016), absolute anonymity is hard to be achieved since codes of the participants could always reveal parts of their identity. In this research, where various education professionals were interviewed, there is a distinction in the selected codes between teachers and principals. As an attempt of the author to ensure anonymity, the name and the district of the schools were not mentioned, in order to avoid any identification.

Furthermore, the focus on primary schools could also be considered as a limitation. Since much research on privatization and school choice has been conducted concerning tertiary and upper-secondary education (Farazouli, 2018) while there is less extensive research regarding compulsory education, the author decided to narrow the analysis of the topic down to primary education.

Finally, regarding the conduction of the interviews, there is a limitation which concerns the language used in the interviews. Although the interviews in Greece were conducted in the native language of the interviewees, those in Sweden were conducted in English. Since this could limit the depth of the participants’ answers or lead to misunderstandings, the researcher used the Swedish terminology for the key terms used in the interview and also conducted pre-interview discussions with the participants, in order to examine, if the interviewees were able enough to express their thoughts in English. It also has to be mentioned that four of the Swedish interviewees were bilingual and native English speakers.

1.4 Key terms

1.4.1 Private Schooling

In this study, private schooling is a central term and therefore should be further developed. The privatization of education refers to the growing proportion of non-state actors which involve the funding, operation, and provision of education. This process occurs more frequently in the form of private schools which are created and run by individuals or companies. However, even the term of the private school should be better defined, since there is a variety of private schools' types. Referring to the chart (see *Figure 1*) of the recent publication of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) it could be argued that there are four general types of schools:

- Private funded – private run; these include schools that are created, funded and run only by the private sector such as religious schools, NGO schools, learning centers and homeschooling;
- Private funded – public run; these include public schools that charge fees and receive private sponsorships;
- Public funded – private run; these include private schools which are funded by the states, usually through vouchers and are run by private companies;
- Public funded-public run; these include schools which are totally run and funded by the state without fees (GCE, 2017).

	Private provision	Public provision
Private finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private schools, ranging from elite and highly expensive schools to so-called "low fee" private schools • Home schooling • Non-subsidised community schools, religious schools, or NGO schools/learning centres • Non-subsidised after school coaching/ tuition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-run public schools that charge fees • Individual or corporate philanthropy to public support schools • Private sponsorship of public schools
Public finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private schools funded through government vouchers, subsidies, or scholarships • Education service contracts • Public schools managed and operated by private companies (sometimes called 'charter' or 'free' schools) • State-subsidised community schools, religious schools or NGO schools/learning centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-run public schools without fees

Figure 1: Forms of public and private education provision. Source: GCE, 2017, p.6

It is also important to mention that there is a variety of private education providers, since for-profit and not-for-profit actors may be involved. Moreover, the

range of state's involvement could vary in terms of the curriculum; academic schedule and calendar and general education guidelines.

The types of private schools selected to be studied in this thesis are, in the case of Sweden, the public funded-private run schools, called 'friskolor', and in the case of Greece, the private funded-private schools, called 'idiotika scholia'. In both countries, there are also other forms of schools where public funded-public run schools include the majority of students' population. Friskolor are independent schools 'fristående skolor' and entirely funded by the state through a voucher system, follow the general education guidelines set by the government, but curriculum, school schedule, and academic calendar could vary. Idiotika scholia are funded exclusively by parents, follow the education guidelines and curriculum set by the government, but school schedule and academic calendar could vary. From now on and for the sake of the study, the author will refer to friskolor and idiotika scholia as private schools.

1.4.2 School Choice

In this study, school choice refers to the option of parents and students to choose between a variety of schools. In the history of education provision, students were usually entitled to enroll in the closest school to their residence, without the ability to choose. With the development of education systems and the introduction of more recent education reforms, parents and students could research and choose the school that they prefer the best. Focusing on the selected countries, parents and students can select either public or private schools in Sweden, while in Greece school selection applies only to private schools. More specifically, children in Greece are automatically enrolled in their nearest public school and in the event that parents wish to, they can cancel the enrollment from the public school and select only among private schools.

1.5 Background of the Study and Previous Research

In this section, the study facilitates a brief overview of the background of the study, including a historical framework of the introduction and the impact of private schooling and school choice policy. Furthermore, several previous researches, regarding privatization of education and school choice, are provided in order to define the research point of departure of this study. Lastly, the section ends by framing the international perspective on the study's topic focusing on recent reports published by the OECD and UNESCO.

Over the past three decades, privatization and school choice have been introduced and embodied in the vocabulary of several national education policies. More specifically, governments, often supported by several inter-governmental organizations, have adopted market-like models for education provision, in order to respond to the needs of the state. The rise in demand for education along with the commitment of governments to ensure the provision of universal and quality education for all has made the option for the

existence of an entirely publicly funded and operated education system unrealistic (Rizvi, 2016). States are often not completely able to fund or provide education based only on its public-sector capacity, and subsequently, the private sector complements the state's inadequacy in several ways, such as running private schools. This situation is associated with the notion of privatization of education and makes the boundaries between the public and the private sectors less distinct.

Having the option to choose among providers in services, such as education, is a policy implemented in many welfare states in Europe and around the globe. This policy has been the subject of continuous debate due to its contradictory implications and meanings. On the one hand, providing the option of choice defends citizens' right to participate in society actively and empowers them to test central welfare services while on the other hand in many cases the choice is connected to market-oriented approaches directed to increased efficiency and is based on market competition.

Public funding for education is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of education since the private sector, including families, religious institutions, and philanthropic organizations, has always been involved in the provision of education. The establishment of the notion of welfare states was followed by the principle of making the provision of education a primary responsibility of theirs, while Keynesian discourse legislated education as a public good (Rizvi, 2016). Thereafter, Friedman (1962) and Drucker (1969) rhetoric re-suggested privatization policies for higher efficiency and effectiveness in public services, influencing the UK and the US in the 1980s. The gradual introduction of privatization along with the unsustainable increase of public expenditure further developed the theory of New Public Management, which pointed out the use of market and business-like strategies derived from the private sector, to the management of public services.

Now, in the era of globalization, education policies seem to be increasingly uniform worldwide, while education reforms tend to spread like global trends (Daun, 2002; Farazouli, 2017). Marketization and privatization are identified as the most commonly spread trends in education policies (Levin, 2007; Daun, 2002) which Pasi Sahlberg (2016) names as Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). These trends derive from Neoliberalism, according to which "citizens are rendered as investors and consumers, and not as members of a polity who share certain common traditions, spaces and experiences" (Rizvi, 2016, p.4). In this perspective, education is perceived as human capital and financial investment by individuals, a fact which comes in conflict with its social benefits (Rizvi, 2016).

A large number of research has been conducted in Europe and the US regarding school choice and its sociological interpretations. A lot of studies have recognized school choice as a strategy of the middle and upper social classes to increase the advantages and opportunities of their children through education in order to ensure their future positions in the social structure (Ball, 2003, Van Zanten, 2007). As Orellana, Caviedes, Bellei and Contreras (2018) observed, school choice social effects are closely associated to Bourdieu's (1997) theory of reproduction in education since only the parents with higher cultural capital, social networks and high levels of familiarity of the educational system can take advantage of this policy and benefit of it. Based on this conclusion, many scholars and international policy influencers report that school choice could lead to social segregation regarding the student population (Orellana et al., 2018). In addition, Erickson (2017) has stated that society could be harmed by the school choice policy since "parents'

incentives are not aligned with their children's or society's needs". According to Erickson's research, the school choice system allows parents to select their own educational paths, which could lead to underestimation of the education's societal goals (Erickson, 2017; Gutmann, 2003).

Furthermore, privatization policies also emphasize the individualization of education's nature. The development of such policies often contributes to the provision of different schooling alternatives to students, as opposed to the vast conventional practices which take place in public schools. Private schools often develop a different conception of curriculum, expand their academic programs and provide additional services compared to other schools. This market-driven phenomenon hinders the notion of education as a public good, and education is commodified to serve personal interests (Rizvi, 2016). Furthermore, Rizvi (2016) recognizes that "while privatization has opened up the possibility of universal participation in education, student opportunities are nonetheless unequally distributed" (p.7). Although Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) contribute to the global goals for education, equality of educational experiences and outcomes are not assured.

David Hursh (2016) has described in his study how privatization policies can hinder the democratic nature of education, by presenting the contradiction between the social character of public schools -which are run as learning communities- and the business character of private schools, which encounter students as customers and stakeholders. In accordance with view of Hursh, Rizvi (2016) despite the fact that it recognizes that "the ideology of the market necessarily produces winners and losers" (p.8), it suggests the development of reliable accountability systems and the enhancement of the cooperation between the public and the private sector, in order to ensure the development and implementation of policies designed that are consistent with the wish of the community but are delivered by the market.

OECD has recently made a publication on privatization and school choice reporting the advantages and disadvantages of such policies. According to Andreas Schleicher, the director for education and skills in OECD, "school choice will only generate the anticipated benefits when the choice is real, relevant and meaningful" (OECD, 2017, p.3). The overall thesis of the organization expresses a dilemma between the advantages and disadvantages of privatization, concluding that private schools should exist to support the provision of universal education and should distinguish themselves from each other, for the choice to be meaningful, but under strong public policies to conform to. School choice is described by OECD, as the means for innovation in education. Through market competition, schools receiving increasing autonomy thrive to diversify from each other and become more competitive. As a result, private schools create stronger incentives for innovation which highly contrast to the hierarchical and bureaucratic procedures in the public sector (OECD, 2017).

The main advantage of the privatization of education presented by OECD regards "the increasing social and cultural diversity in modern societies calls for greater diversification in the education landscape" (OECD, 2017, p.4). From this perspective, the existence of various educational alternatives could better respond to the diverse needs of the student population. However, on the other hand, OECD also refers to the main disadvantage of education privatization concerning the social and cultural segregation produced due to school choice.

In the last Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2017) which was dedicated to accountability in education, school choice has been recognized as a significant issue causing social inequalities in education, benefiting wealthier families while further marginalizing disadvantages parents and schools (p.51). In this report, the phenomenon of social reproduction as a phenomenon has been noticed since “parents generally base school choice decisions on information shortcuts, which often can negatively affect equity and diversity among schools” (p.51). Consequently, it has been observed that parents with high social and cultural capital and more privileged networks are those who more often tend to choose schools.

1.6 Structure of the study

This study is organized into six chapters in an attempt to comprehensively describe and provide a critical analysis of private schooling and school choice. **Chapter one** opens the study with a brief introduction to the topic and presents the central framework regarding the thesis’ specific aims and limitations in which the research is conducted. Furthermore, the significance of the study to ICE area of research is stated, while the background and an overview of previous research are also provided. Private schooling and school choice, as the key terms examined in the study, are briefly described. **Chapter two** entails the theoretical framework of the study, presenting the human capital, human rights-based approach and the capability approach as the angles of the research analysis, followed by **Chapter three** which outlines the research methodology framework. In the main body of the thesis, the first section of **Chapter four** which is divided in one sub-section per country provides an overview for the Swedish and the Greek contexts and presents the findings, while its second section demonstrates the analysis of the research questions. **Chapter five** critically discusses the findings by using the theoretical approaches set in **Chapter two** and performs an international comparison between Sweden and Greece. The thesis ends with **Chapter six** in which further conclusions and recommendations for further research are presented.

Chapter Two

2. Theoretical Background

In this chapter, the theoretical background of the study is presented, built on the Human Capital, Human Rights and Capability approaches. This theoretical basis will be further applied to the findings of the study in the discussion at *Chapter 5*. Brief but comprehensive presentations of the theories selected are provided, followed by short critiques.

2.1 Human Capital Approach

According to the Human Capital approach in education policy, education is perceived as human capital. Human capital theory, derived from a group of University of Chicago economists and was formulated by them during the 1960s. Theodore Schultz (1960) redefined the role of education by proposing to

treat education as an investment in man and to treat its consequences as a form of capital. Since education becomes a part of the person receiving it, I shall refer to it as human capital ... it is a form of capital if it renders a productive service of value to the economy (p.571).

In that way, investment in education is simultaneously an investment in economic growth. Also, Gary Becker (1964), complements this theory by arguing that education is the most important single determinant of economic growth (p.45), while Becker's approach was to calculate the private and social investment in human capital through mathematical models. Later, Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), published the *Nation At Risk*, posing in that way the question on: what is education for? The answer provided in this publication was that education could contribute to national prosperity and security through the development of human capital, which means the production of knowledge and skills that have productive value for both individual and social interests.

The human capital theory is an economic approach to human behavior. As Olssen, Codd and O'Neil (2004) note this "economic approach to human behavior attributes means-end calculational rationality to human agents, and it is under such a model, where rational human behavior is seen as purposeful and goal-oriented, that individuals will invest in education" (p. 144). The same scholars refer to the notion of "stock of human capital" which is the national sum of skills, talents, and knowledge embodied in its population (Olssen, Codd & O'Neil, 2004). It is apparent though that humans are active determinants of the nation's economic performance and their personal welfare. Education operates as a means to economic growth which transfers the knowledge and skills needed for economic success. Therefore, among the main propositions of human capital theory are "that education and training increase an individual's cognitive capacity; which in turn increases productivity; and an increase in productivity tends to increase an individual's

earning; which becomes a measure of human capital” (Olssen, Codd & O’Neil, 2004, p.144).

Furthermore, the production of the workforce is intimately connected to the purpose of education as well, according to this theory. The human capital, which expresses the set of knowledge and skills obtained by individuals, contributes to their productivity and their future employment. Thus, education is essential as an investment in personal labor productivity while its outcomes are measured in terms of economic results, so that economists are able to estimate education’s return on investment.

Critics of the human capital approach to defining the role of education are summarized in three main issues addressed by Robeyn (2006). The first issue regards its absolute economic positioning that “the only benefits from educations that are considered are increased productivity and a higher wage” (p.72). Though this perspective, it seems that other dimensions of life, such as social and non-material dimensions, are blocked and not recognized. As a consequence, it seems that human capital approach to education does not satisfactorily consider issues such as culture, gender, identity, emotions and overestimates economic issues. Correspondingly, the human capital theory recognizes that human beings act for economic reasons only and cannot explain why someone should spend time in schooling without any prospect of economic returns. In this theory, people who might act for other than economic reasons, such as social or moral reasons, cannot be taken into consideration

Another issue on this theory concerns the fact that it is completely instrumental, since “it values education, skills, and knowledge only in so far as they contribute (directly or indirectly) to expected economic productivity” (Robeyn, 2006, p.73). Combining these two critiques, Robeyn observes that issues on inequalities between different groups of people may be created. Not everyone has the same rate of return on education due to either internal or external restrictions. One more issue regarding human capital approach concerns its logic of comparisons between investment in education and other financial investments. As Gillis (1992) argues, one family would invest in education if it offers the highest return (p.231). Conclusively, perceiving education exclusively as human capital can restrict its inherent importance, in terms of both personal and social benefits.

2.2 Human rights- based Approach

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized and established the economic and social rights of humans globally in 1948. Eleanor Roosevelt, as the chairperson of the UN Commission of Human Rights, constituted this Declaration as the new social contract which would prevent future wars and would establish global reconciliation after the two world wars (Offenheiser & Holombe, 2003). Human rights express a set of entitlements, moral principles, and norms, which all humans are eligible to. It could also be argued that human rights describe certain standards of human life, in personal and social level. These rights have universal value, are, or should be, applied worldwide and are protected by international law, since each human is inherently entitled by these. Citing Kao (2011) human rights are:

The set of entitlements and justified claims that every human being has simply by virtue of being human, independent of anything else that might follow as a result

of national citizenship, social status or differentiation, individual accomplishments or lack thereof, or specific speech acts and transactions with others. So understood, we should regard human rights as a special class of moral rights that would ideally be recognized in, and protected by, the law and other institutions. Like other kinds of rights, we should also conceive of human rights as having prima facie priority over social goals or collectivist ends (p.9).

The human rights framework is strongly supported by international organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF. According to this framework, education is primarily perceived as a human right which every human being is entitled to. Furthermore, while the previous development goals of UN (MDGs) were aiming to achieve universal access to education, the current development goals (SDGs) are also focusing on the quality of universal education. At this point, it has to be mentioned that every child holds the right to quality education, without considering the returns of education in human capital terms, since according to this approach, other benefits of education, than the economic ones, are emphasized. As Katarina Tomasevski (2003) states “education should prepare learners for parenthood and political participation, it should enhance social cohesion and, more than anything, it should teach the young that all human beings – themselves included – have rights” (p.33).

The rights-based approach to education clearly prioritizes its intrinsic importance. Quality education should be provided to every child regardless of its family’s available funds for education, and therefore governments should be responsible for offering free and quality education to their citizens. States have the role of the ‘guarantors’ of rights, while they should also ensure that all citizens are equally able to exercise these rights. Although education is recognized as a human right and a public good, ensured by the state, the rights-based approach focuses on the systemic obstacles that keep people away from exercising their rights in order to improve their lives. More specifically, Offenheiser and Holombe (2003) note that the explicit focus of the approach is “on structural barriers that impede communities from exercising rights, building capabilities, and having the capacity to choose” (p.271).

Another dimension of this approach that Offenheiser and Holombe have presented regards its purposes. First, scholars argue that human rights paradigm opposes the neoliberal discourse, which leads to the creation of economic and social inequalities due to free-market practices. Second, human rights discourse being protected under a legal framework forces non-state actors, who seem to be more accountable for sustaining inequalities, to comply with (Offenheiser & Holombe, 2003, p.274). In this line, Jochnick (1999) also shows that human rights framework provides the tools needed for identifying the structures that sustain social inequity and injustice.

Furthermore, Gabel points out one more fundamental aspect of rights-based approach regarding the social and political activation of citizens. Human rights posit that all persons can participate in societal decision making, especially when those persons are affected by these decisions. Hence, the respect of human rights, such as “equality of each individual as a human being, the inherent dignity of each person and the rights to self-determination (and education)” (Gabel, 2016, p. x), should enable people to seek to establish certain standards of life by themselves.

Some critiques of this approach concern its theoretical rather than practical orientation. Even though the rhetorical of human rights is universally accepted, it seems

that it is very broad and without practical suggestions for implementation. As Robeyns (2008) also argues: “most grand declarations on education are formulated in terms of rights or overall outcome targets, without precisely specifying who carries which duty to make sure that these targets are met, or that these rights are effectively granted” (p. 76). For example, although all children are entitled to free and quality education, it is challenging to define and ensure quality globally.

2.3 Capability Approach

The economist and philosopher Amartya Sen articulated the Capability Approach in 1984, through his work *Commodities and Capabilities*. In this study, Sen inspired by Aristotle’s understanding of human flourishing (eudaimonia), defined human capabilities as a set of ‘functionings’ that a person is able to attain. These functionings, as someone’s ‘beings and doings’, compose and define his or her capability of living a good life, as for instance being healthy, educated and having a family. As Robeyns (2006) notes, this approach “is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society” (p. 78).

The role of education is greatly emphasized in this approach, for both inherent and instrumental reasons (Drèze & Sen, 2002; Unterhalter, 2003; Robeyns, 2006). Education seems to be the vehicle that allows a person to flourish, and having access to it, is a fundamental capability, while being well-educated can also support the expansion of other capabilities as well (Alkire, 2002, p.255–71; Nussbaum, 2003; Robeyns, 2003, p. 79–80; Sen, 1999; Unterhalter, 2003, Robeyns, 2006, p.78). Hence, according to Sen, a good and just society should expand people’s capabilities, but not lead them to particular functionings. The capability approach greatly supports compulsory education, since it serves the purpose of flourishing people. Nevertheless, according to Nussbaum (2003), this compulsory education should be of high quality in order to fulfill the aim of full human being development.

One central characteristic of this approach is its broad scope and interdisciplinary character. The capability perspective should be used holistically when evaluating social arrangements or policies, considering all possible aspects which could affect human capabilities. Furthermore, this approach takes into account all sources of inequalities in people’s opportunity sets, since a capability analysis always strives to consider all significant effects (Robeyns, 2006, p.79).

It can be argued that the capability approach is much similar to the rights-based approach. The capability approach not only supports human rights’ discourse but goes further than this, as it suggests ensuring not only people’s rights but also their capabilities and functionings. Regarding education, Unterhalter and Walker (2007) also note that “not only is the right to equal opportunities for students in education important, but also the capability to function as participants in equal-opportunity educational processes and outcomes” (p. 240). One example for this regards the fact that even though people with disabilities have the right to higher education, their access, participation and academic

success should be further examined in terms of university and society realities in a particular context.

Furthermore, Nussbaum (2000), makes a clear distinction between human rights and human capabilities by emphasizing, that rights are constitutional commitments, while capabilities compel the implementation and evaluation of such rights. Sen develops an analytic separation between two aspects of rights: “(the) substantive opportunities that are best understood as capabilities and process freedoms that are intrinsic to a notion of rights and a theory of justice, but does not play the same central role in conceptualizing capabilities” (Sen 2005, p. 156).

It should be also mentioned that the capability approach argues “for each and every person having the prospect of a good life, that they have reason to value, by enabling each person to make genuine choices among alternatives of similar worth, and to be able to act on those choices” (Unterhalter & Walker, 2007, p.251). This approach also encompasses plurality, since it does not prescribe one specific version of ‘good life’. Regarding education, the capability approach evaluates aspects of education and social justice in diverse social contexts through a freedom-focused and equality-oriented perspective.

Critical literature to this approach refers to the lack of operationalization (Robeyns, 2006). Despite the fact that the approach focuses on the evaluation of social arrangements and people’s well-being and freedom, additional social theories are needed to supplement its analytical framework.

Lastly, the author has created a table in an attempt to outline a summary of the three theoretical approaches including on each theory’s general goals and motivations, actors of accountability, implementation processes and emphasis regarding education (see *Table 1*).

Table 1: Human Capital, Human Rights-based, and Capability approaches

	Human Capital Approach	Human Rights-based Approach	Capability Approach
Goals	Economic expansion/success	Realization of human rights	Human flourishing
Motivation	Economic investment logic	Legal obligation to entitlement	Inherent human capabilities
Accountability	Governments and individuals	Governments and international organizations	Social and political settings and individuals
Process	Focus on state's building capacity and individual attempts for economic development	Focus on the participatory process in which individuals and groups are empowered to claim their rights	Focus on building the framework which each individual needs to expand his or her capabilities
Emphasis	Income development through education as an investment	Universal provision of quality education	Capabilities expansion and development of just social arrangements

(Author's creation, 2018)

Chapter Three

3. Methodology

In the following chapter, the methodological framework of the study is presented. First, the research strategy employed in the thesis is outlined, while the design and the methods used in the study are further elaborated. In addition, data collection methods are thoroughly described along with the analytical framework applied to the study's findings. The chapter also provides a presentation of the quality issues of the study, such as epistemological and ontological considerations, and concludes with the ethical considerations of the research.

3.1 Research Strategy and Design

This study aims to describe the concepts of private schooling and school choice focusing on the cases of Swedish and Greek educational realities. These contextually defined concepts are going to be examined through a thorough investigation of both countries' educational contexts, followed by empirical data extracted from individuals involved in education. Therefore, the appropriate methodological orientation to the conduct of this research is qualitative, since qualitative research tends to put more emphasis on words and descriptions, rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012, p.380).

Regarding the use of theory in the research, the author selects specific theoretical lenses to approach her research findings, while no hypothesis is tested. Human Capital, Human Rights and Capability approaches have been selected by the author to frame the analysis of the findings. The researcher, aiming to understand the phenomenon of private schooling, first grounds a theoretical description of the two countries' contexts, and then she enriches the study with empirical data by the use of the interviews. This way of reasoning is identified as abductive since participants' worldviews will play an important role in the direction of understanding the factors that affect school choice towards private schools (Bryman, 2012, p.401).

The author adopts an interpretative epistemology in accordance with Weber's 'Verstehen', expressing the attempt of science to interpret the subjective social action (as cited in Bryman, 2012, p.29-30; Farazouli, 2017). Concerning the ontology of the research, it could be stated that it is constructivist since the researcher conceives the society in an ever-going revision and believes that "the social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (Bryman, 2012, p.33).

Manzon (2007) states that the relationships between education and society can be better understood through international comparisons. Accordingly, since the whole study refers to the Swedish and Greek contexts, aiming to compare the reasons towards private schooling, in order to better understand this phenomenon, the research design is mainly comparative. This comparison sheds light upon the factors that influence school choice

in an international level, aiming “to gain a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of social reality in different national contexts” (Bryman, 2012, p. 72). Furthermore, the empirical part of the study details the comparison of two school- cases, providing an in-depth understanding and an intensive examination of the national settings of each case. This comparative case study design allows the research to provide a more holistic and in-depth exploration of the aspects of society that influence school choice.

3.2 Research Methods and Data collection

Since this thesis is comparative research, the units of comparison and the sampling of contexts should be further analyzed. In the case of comparative research, identification of parameters of comparability has to be done in order to explain the causal relevance between the units of comparison (Manzon, 2007). Furthermore, as Morris (1996) and Hoppers (1998) have pointed out, the units of comparison should have “a shared foundation to make meaningful sense of the resultant differences in the educational phenomena being compared” (cited in Manzon, 2007). On this ground, the ICE researcher should firstly focus on the similarities of the units of comparison selected in order to examine a social phenomenon further. According to Ragin (1987), there are three basic steps in a case-oriented research strategy:

- “A search is undertaken for underlying similarities among the units for comparison displaying a common outcome;
- The similarities identified are shown to be causally relevant to the phenomenon of interest; and
- On the basis of similarities identified, a general explanation is formulated.” (pp. 47-48).

In this study, the countries of Sweden and Greece, have been the units of analysis on the geographical level. The notion of the ‘country’ in this thesis is in accordance with Getis’ (2002) description of countries as synonyms of the territorial and political ‘state’, which is “an independent political unit occupying a defined, permanently populated territory and having full sovereign control over its internal and foreign affairs” (pp. 314-315). Both countries apply the same international policy frameworks under the influence of the UN, the European Union (EU) and OECD, and therefore their education systems have fundamental similarities such as the years of compulsory education and the provision of free access to schools for everyone. In addition, focusing on the topic of this research, private schools exist in both countries. At this point, it is important to mention that the fact that different forms of private schools from each country are selected to be examined in this study, derives from the fact that *friskola* and *idiotika scholia* as private schools’ forms, come first in popularity in each country. This is a key element that is examined in the research as the Swedish private schools are with no extra fees while Greek private schools’ fees are covered entirely by the families.

Regarding the sampling of the cases selected in each country, the researcher chose one private school situated in the center of each capital as an attempt to identify critical cases. A critical case, according to Bryman (2012), “is chosen on the grounds that it will

allow a better understanding of the circumstances in which the hypothesis will and will not hold” (p.70). Although the researcher has not accumulated a hypothesis driving this study, this type of cases permitted her to pose her research questions. These schools, allowed the research to reach a deeper understanding of private schooling in both countries and further enriched the knowledge of the researcher regarding the variables that influence school choice.

The researcher conducted and audio-recorded 20 semi-structured interviews, 10 in each country, in order to develop awareness regarding the reasons that affect school choice towards private education. The semi-structured interviews, supported by the interview guide (see *Appendix A*), gave the flexibility to the discussion with participants needed, so as not to limit the interviewees’ will to further elaborate on the questions asked and just to frame the interview according to the research aims. The content of the Interview Guide was the same between the two countries in order to ensure cross-case comparability (Bryman, 2012, p. 469), while a few alterations were made between the questions towards education professionals and parents. The interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes and were conducted in public areas of Athens and Stockholm. Furthermore, the fact that the interviewer audio-recorded and then transcribed the interviews while she has also kept some field notes during the interviews, allowed her to analyze and code in detail their contexts.

The sampling of the participants was purposive and strategically since the goal of the researcher was to interview people who were relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2012, p.418). More specifically and according to Patton (1990) and Palys (2008) the type of the purposive sampling was ‘criterion’ sampling, since the education professionals should work in primary school and the parents should have children at the same education level, and ‘snowball’ sampling since each participant led to the next, covering in that way a significant variety of people involved in the study (cited in Bryman, 2012, p.419). Furthermore, the researcher had decided to interview teachers, program coordinators, school directors and parents in order to achieve a high level of the different stakeholders’ understandings of school choice and the role of private schools.

3.3 Analytical Framework

3.3.1 Bray and Thomas Cube

Bray and Thomas have pointed out that “comparative research requires multilevel analysis to achieve multifaceted and holistic analyses of educational phenomena” (Bray, Adamson, & Mason, 2007, pp. 8-9). Hence, this study was designed under the ICE analytical framework of Bray and Thomas (1995) cube (see *Figure 2*).

Figure 2: Bray and Thomas Cube: A Framework for Comparative Education Analyses. Source: Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007, p.9

According to Bray and Thomas, the cube provides three dimensions of comparative research which express the decisions that the researcher should make before conducting the research. These dimensions are the geographical levels, the non-local demographic groups and the aspects of education and society. In this study, the author decided that the geographical level will be countries (Sweden and Greece), the non-local demographic groups will be children age-defined groups (parents of children aged 7-12 and education professionals in primary school) and the aspect of education and society selected regards policy change (privatization of education and introduction of school choice).

3.3.2 Bereday's Analytical Model

Bereday's (1964) model of undertaking comparative studies (see *Figure 3*), is consisted of four steps which are recommended to be followed: description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison. Firstly, a description has to take place for each country separately; then these descriptions should be further enriched by each country's context, followed by a juxtaposition process according to the research questions. Finally, the comparison of the variables needs to occur, in order to answer the research questions (cited in Manzoni, 2007, p.86).

Figure 3: Bereday's Model for Undertaking Comparative Research. Source: Bereday, 1964, p.28

Considering the complexity of understanding social phenomena, the researcher inspired by this model, used two stages in her study in order to provide more comprehensive and holistic answers to her research questions (see *Figure 4*). The first stage of the study refers to the contextual frameworks of education in both countries, where policy documents and recent research are used, in order to outline a clear image of the Swedish and Greek education systems and the ways how private schooling is instituted. Furthermore, in the second stage of the study, one private school from each country's capital was selected as a case, in order to enrich and extend the findings of the study.

Bereday's steps

Figure 4: Model of Methodology (Adapted from Bereday, 1964).

Regarding the analytical procedure followed by the author in order to interpret and analyze her interviews' data, thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012) was used. More specifically, the researcher, after having thoroughly reviewed the interviews' transcriptions, created a large collection of themes. These themes were based on several codes which appeared repeatedly in the transcriptions. At this point, it is essential to mention that since the character of the study is exploratory, the interviews aimed to help the researcher to extend her understanding of private schooling and school choice in both countries. Therefore, thematic analysis occurred separately in each country's transcriptions of interviews. This resulted in the creation of several different codes and themes for each case. The author decided to follow this analytic strategy in an attempt to not limit the analysis of both national contexts to the exact same themes which could lead to data fragmentations. In contrary, after having thematically analyzed each case study separately, the comparison occurred by focusing on the common and different themes that appeared in both cases.

3.4 Quality Issues

3.4.1 Reliability

The term of reliability concerns “whether the results of the study are repeatable [...] (and) whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences are consistent” (Bryman, 2012, p.46). In this research, the reliability is medium since on the one hand the content of semi-structured interviews consists of personal opinions and perceptions, which could fluctuate over the course of the time and therefore the results of the study are not stable in time, a fact which lowers its reliability. On the other hand, since the research focus is on discovering the factors that influence school choice, the conduction of interviews with these stakeholders is consistent, and this fact raises its reliability.

3.4.2 Validity

Regarding internal validity, Bryman (2012) writes that “the internal validity is concerned with the question of whether a conclusion that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables holds water” (p.47). In these terms, the thesis’ internal validity is low since it aims to produce associations between the variables examined rather than casualties. Moreover, as stated by the same author “external validity is concerned with the question of, whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context” (Bryman, 2012, p. 47). Accordingly, since the findings of the research cannot be generalized because they are context dependent, it can be argued that the external validity is low. The author does not aim to generalize her findings on a bigger scale, but study results could be further used in investigating the role of private schooling in other contexts as well.

3.4.3 Credibility

The credibility of the research refers to the criterion for trustworthiness in qualitative research regarding the way that social phenomena are perceived and described by the author. In this thesis, the technique used to ensure the study’ credibility is triangulation. Triangulation, according to Bryman (2012), “entails more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena” (p.392), and therefore both analysis of secondary research and findings of the selected countries’ contexts and case studies with interviews conducted, are used in order to ensure a holistic description of private schooling and school choice.

3.4.4 Transferability

The researcher attempts to provide a ‘thick description’ of the findings in order to make clear that although the findings are “oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of social world selected” (Bryman, 2012, p.392), the reader is able to judge if the results of the study are transferable to another milieu.

3.4.5 Dependability

The criterion of dependability was addressed by the author who provides a detailed description of her methodological decisions and records of research. Furthermore, the Department of Education at Stockholm University provided an academic supervisor, who supported the thesis’ author with feedback on the design and analysis of the study, ensuring the confirmability and objectivity of this research.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are of great importance in research, and this is why some ethical considerations should be taken into account when designing a study. Diener and Crandall (1978) have set four main areas of ethical principles that researchers should follow so as that the imminent research will be in consistent with, these are:

- Whether there is a harm to participants;
- Whether there is a lack of informed consent;
- Whether there is an invasion of privacy;
- Whether deception is involved (cited in Bryman, 2012, p.135).

The researcher ensured that no participant will be harmed since all the data collected from the interviews, the identities of participants and the names of the schools will remain confidential and secured. Regarding the informed consent and the deception avoidance, the researcher gave the participants a description of the study and the terms of the interview (see *Appendix B*). Each participant received as much information needed before the interview and a detailed consent form (see *Appendix D*) in order to be able to take an informed decision, while the researcher did not use any covert methods and totally respected the rights of the participants. In addition, code names are carefully used in the study in the presentation and analysis of the findings, when referring to specific participants in the research report.

Chapter Four

4. Analysis and Findings

This chapter is divided in two main sections where the first one includes one sub-section per country providing the presentation of the Greek and the Swedish cases. These two sub-sections introduce an overview of the Swedish and the Greek educational contexts and present the analysis of the findings. Furthermore, the second section of the chapter demonstrates the study results addressing the research questions.

4.1 The Greek case

4.1.1 Historical and Theoretical Context of the Greek Education System

Greece, or officially Hellenic Republic (Elliniki Dimokratia), located in the Balkan Peninsula, has a population of approximately eleven million people and consists the most ancient state in Europe. Greece is a parliamentary constitutional republic, headed by the Prime Minister and consisted by a multi-party system. Athens, the capital of the country, is the most populated city in Greece and has a population of 3,75 million, which represents almost one-third of the country's total population (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2017).

According to the Greek Constitution, the government is required to offer mandatory education to all children between the ages of five to fifteen, including one year of pre-school (nipiagogio), six years of primary school (dimotiko scholio) and three years of lower-secondary school (gymnasio). Upper- secondary school is divided into General Unified Lyceum (Geniko Eniaio Lykeio) which is more academically oriented and leads to university and in Technical Vocational Educational Schools (Techniko Epaggelmatiko Ekpaideftirio). The subjects taught in primary school are modern Greek, mathematics, environmental studies, arts, music, theatre, physical education, English, and ICT. After the third grade, more subjects are added such as religion, history while in the last two grades geography, civics, physics and one foreign language are also included. The primary school schedule starts at 8:10, ends at 13:15 and consists of six academic hours (Hellenic Republic, 2016).

According to Article 16 of the Constitution, education is the primary mission of the State, and all its citizens are entitled to free education at all levels of public educational institutions (Law 683: 16). The Greek education system is totally centralized, since the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs (MoE thereafter) directly supervises all educational activities, has the overall responsibility for course development and approval, recruits the staff and controls funding (Eurydice, 2017b). The Pedagogical

Institute has an advisory role on curriculum development and synthesis of textbooks. Greek schools use books published by the School Book Publishing Organization (OEDB) which is the public publisher of academic books of MoE.

Among the highlights of the most recent report from the European Commission (2017) on Greek education, it has also been stated that new policy measures on promoting greater autonomy and efficiency in schools' level have appeared insufficient, affecting the quality of public education. Concerning PISA rankings, Greece was above the average in the European Union, in science, mathematics, and reading in 2015. It has also been noticed that 'high-achievers' were students with migrant background while European Commission (2017) notes that gender and socioeconomic background strongly affect student performance (p.4).

Regarding the economic situation of the Greek state, as of 2010, Greece has been confronted with a deep economic crisis due to internal and external economic factors, a fact which has resulted to the request of financial aid from the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. In May 2010, the Greek government signed its first Memorandum of Understanding with the IMF, the EU, and the ECB so as to be granted financial assistance, in order to deal with its fiscal problems and cope with the Greek government-debt crisis. Furthermore, unemployment rates progressively continue to rise for all levels of educational attainment, especially for young adults, fluctuating between 20-30% during the last six years and approaching 30% of the total population in 2014 (Eurostat, 2018). Due to the overall adverse economic situation, education in Greece has also been significantly influenced across all levels such as the provision of funding, institutions and organizations, structure, teaching practices, and attitudes. In 2016, educational personnel payroll expenses and school operational expenses for primary education in Greece were at 1,4 billion euros (Eurydice, 2017).

Due to the economic crisis it faces and the general lack of resources, the Greek state has been unable to prevent immigrants from entering its borders, mainly via the islands neighboring the Turkish coast or through Greece's northern borders with Turkey. In 2016, more than 170000 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece via sea, according to the International Organization for Migration. As a result, Greece has become one of the leading gateways into the EU for thousands of refugees (mainly from Syria and other war-torn countries) a fact which causes further significant problems to its economy and growth. The Greek state is responsible for providing education to the pupils that reside within its borders, be that locals of foreigners/ immigrants. In order to address the plethora of pupils' groups with diverse characteristics in terms of language, religion, and culture (repatriates, Roma, Thrace Muslims) and fight against the incidence of school drop-out, a cross-cultural education framework has been constituted by the state, in which it intervenes with educational reforms and actions. Although Greek society was always multicultural with a significant number of foreign citizens, mainly Albanians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Pakistanis and Georgians (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2017), the integration of refugee children into mainstream education remains an unresolved issue despite the significant efforts taken by the Greek state.

4.1.2 Private Schools in Greece

Education in Greece can be distinguished in public and private. Private schooling option has a significant share in education, allowing parents to choose between the schools that prefer for their children from the very early stages of education. Private schools are recognized by the Greek Constitution, which sets the terms and conditions for granting their license for formation and operation, while the national law specifies the supervision and the professional status of their academic and teaching staff (The Constitution of Greece, 8). The Greek state recognizes private education as a person's individual right and as a manifestation of economic freedom and private initiative. However, the very nature of education provision also bears the character of a social mission or operation which is associated with the public benefit. The state is entitled to restrain its citizens' individuals' liberty limiting the space of economic freedom in the name of public benefit. Nevertheless, its intervention cannot violate the right to institute and operate private schools.

Although all Greek schools should follow the same national curriculum, use the same books and operate under the same regulations, according to the Law 682/1977, there are public and private school units of all levels and types of education, which also include special orientation schools, such as athletic, music and ecclesiastical schools, and experimental schools that are under the supervision of Universities applying experimental methods of teaching (Papazoglou, 2010). However, any extracurricular activities are previously validated by the MoE. These activities include teaching additional foreign languages, increasing the teaching hours in the school timetable, adding more academic subjects and providing athletic, artistic and social activities (Hellenic Parliament).

One important aspect regarding the costs of private schooling is that the families who choose these schools totally cover them. It also has to be mentioned that these costs are significantly high (see *Table 2*), with an average cost of USD 5831 (General Secretariat for Trade and Consumer Protection, 2018) per year in private schools in Athens, with the average income per capita being USD 17002 (OECD, 2018)

Table 2: Costs of private schools in Athens

Source of data: General Secretariat for Trade and Consumer Protection, 2018.

Despite the fact that households face significant financial constraints due to the national financial crisis, it seems that school choice towards private schools remains steady. As is

illustrated in the *Figure 5*, the number of students attending private schools has faced a slight decline over the years, which is in accordance with the overall fall of the number of students in public schools (Centre for the Development of Educational Policy, 2017).

Figure 5: Number of Students in primary schools 2001-2014. Source: Centre for the Development of Educational Policy, 2017.

4.1.3 Empirical Findings

4.1.3.1 Overview of the school

The school selected for this study is one of the oldest schools in Athens and is part of a group of co-educational independent private schools in Greece. This school complex was established in the nineteenth century and has 9000 students in total. The specific school unit selected for the study is located in the center of Athens and includes all school levels from pre-school up to upper-secondary education. Students around the Attica region attend this school which also provides buses for their transfer.

The school complex encompasses modern infrastructure in the green area of a former aristocratic neighborhood with current high-land value. The school also includes spacious athletic sports facilities, one library for younger children and one library for older children including quiet study places, IT and physics labs, theater, pool and music room. The daily schedule of the primary school is extended, starting at 8:10 and ending at 15:00. Additional activities and extra hours for studying support are offered from 15:00 to 16:20.

It could be argued that this school combines tradition and innovation since, despite the fact that it has a long tradition in education and teaching methods, modern approaches to teaching and learning are also incorporated. One interesting aspect of the school is that even though teachers should follow and use OEDB books, the school is additionally publishing its own books and supporting material for its students, which are updated in a

frequent matter. This material could be characterized as of high quality since important and accredited academics contribute to it.

There are plenty of additional acts that the school carries out during the year. Teaching English as a second language is included in the extra-curricular activities which the school provides during the daily schedule, beginning from the first grade while teaching French or German as a third language is taught from the third grade. Some of the extracurricular activities included in the overall facilities of the school which take place after the daily school schedule are chess, various musical instruments, arts, dance, rhetoric, theatre, cinema, STEM, robotics, English, French and emotional development.

The school also organizes a variety of conferences for both children and parents, realizes various visits to museums and historical places and publishes the school's newspaper written by students and teachers. During the weekends there are cultural and entertainment programmes that the school sets up in order to establish connections between parents, school, and society. Another 'extra' of this school is its summer schools in several thematic areas, such as sports, arts, English, ICT, and robotics. It should be mentioned that any activities out of the daily schedule (8.10-15:00), as well as school buses, are charged extra on top of the schooling fees.

4.1.3.2 Participants' Background

In this section, a description of the ten participants from Greece is presented through the codes used. The fact that all respondents represent the sample from Greece is described through the first letter from their code-name as 'G'. Furthermore, since the sample contains both education professionals and parents, the letters 'Ed' and 'P' stand accordingly for educators and parents, complementing their codes. In addition, the letter 'p' in education professionals' code is added in case the participant is the principal of the school. The numbers supplementing the code-name are randomly used just in order to distinguish the participants from each other. For example, GEd9 could represent a Greek teacher and GP8 could stand for a Greek parent.

Some of the first questions of the interview guide were designed in order to introduce the participants to the main topic of the interview and at the same time to extract some information regarding their profile. The information needed to outline the education professionals' profiles was about their experience within education which could play a significant role in the credibility of their answers. This information included the years of experience in education and their knowledge about public schools as well. Furthermore, some introductory questions on school choice were asked in order to map the responsiveness of the interviewees on this topic and their opinion regarding the option of school choice. More specifically, the researcher asked the interviewees to rate how positive or negative they are towards the option of school choice, by using a scale from 1, meaning negative, to 5, meaning positive.

In the same respect, corresponding questions were posed to parents in order to frame their profiles. Hence, the interviewer selected information about the number of the children they have attending this school and their previous personal experience of public schools. This information is summarized below in *Table 3* for education professionals and in *Table 4* for parents.

Table 3: Education Professionals' Background codes

Code-names	Profession	Years of experience	Previous experience of public schools Y(yes)/N(no)	Familiar with school choice as a term Y(yes)/N(no)	School choice preference (1-5)
GE _d -p	School's Principal	36	N	Y	5
GE _d 1	School's Vice-Principal	32	N	Y	5
GE _d 2	Second-grade teacher	11	N	Y	5
GE _d 3	Third-grade teacher	15	Y	N	5
GE _d 4	Fifth-grade teacher	32	Y	N	5

Table 4: Parents' Background codes

Code - names	Number of children in school	Years of enrollment in this school	Previous experience of public schooling Y(yes)/N(no)	Familiar with school choice as a term Y(yes)/N(no)	School choice preference (1-5)
GP1	2	6	Y	N	5
GP2	2	10	Y	Y	5
GP3	1	4	N	N	5
GP4	1	7	Y	N	5
GP5	1	5	N	N	4

4.1.3.3. Interview Findings and Analysis

In this section the interview findings are presented divided in four axial themes which were derived from the interviews' coding. These themes are: Participants' views on educational reality; Personal beliefs on school choice and behavioral patterns; Background behind school choice; and Factors that affected school choice towards private schools. Each axial theme includes several subthemes which are outlined in the *Figure 6*.

Figure 6: Thematic Analysis – Greece

Participants' views on educational reality

Dissatisfaction from national educational policies

Furthermore, another characteristic noticed is that, on national educational policy, all participants expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the reforms that the government had implemented, stating that there is no stability in the education system since constant contradicting to each other reforms are taking place, affecting the structure of education sporadically.

GEd1: “The state does not seem to take the issue of education seriously. [...] Reforms without coherence and logic. [...] A contradictory, confused policy that confuses students and educators. [...] There is no plan, no study of the educational system, they are just acts of impressing.”

GP3: “obviously my state has not taken the part of education in general seriously, because unfortunately during the recent years it has been proved that any moves are in the context of spasmodic movements, without a general design and are subject to constant changes that do not leave the education system to mature and to bear fruit finally. What matters to politicians is either to make promises to go to the elections or to implement reforms only as a sign of power and publicity and to satisfy their vanity. In that way, a system cannot work properly.”

This is because there is no stable country policy on education and this depends on the conflicting interests of the governments involved. Spasmodic actions take place, and opportunistic decisions are made which in no way have a long-term plan. Moreover, **GEd3** also mentioned that private schools could also work as a lever for exerting pressure for the overall improvement of the quality of education. In addition, the fact that the Greek education system is totally centralized makes it inflexible, and any attempt for improvement seems to get realized very slowly, while, at the same time, private schools have the wider freedom to modernize their programs and innovate.

GP3: “On the one hand, our system is totally centralized and inelastic to radical changes but, on the other hand, it is also vulnerable to smaller ones that apply to ALL schools. The impact of each reform is very large.”

Education as a means to a successful career path

Another theme that appeared through the analysis of the findings regards Greek tradition in education. Almost all of the participants argued that there is a firm belief that the Greek society has always been investing in education since Greeks perceive education as the most important aspect of humans' capacity. ‘Paideia’, which is the translation of the wider meaning of education, is largely cultivated within schools, and this is the reason why parents try to find schools with high credibility. The promotion of Greek tradition, the enhancement of Greek language and the cultivation of strong values, are the main characteristics of this private school. School's principal, teaching staff, and parents agreed that these were the major reasons that attract students at a fixed rate every year.

Ged2: “the Greek society seems to get loose, and private school with its rigidity and structure can limit children and benefit them.”

GP1: “the Greek family has always been given priority in education and private schools also contribute to this. Parents prefer to invest financially in their children's cognitive future rather than in goods.”

GEd-p: “It is a school of principles. We do not have the best facilities, but we sell that we are school based on certain values. We work a lot on the basic principles, and we are betting on it. It is a traditional strict school that forms characters and also introduces innovations.”

GP3: “The fury of parents with university being the only successful option, is a social phenomenon.”

GE1: “the Greek parent requires his child to enter the university. This is the Greek dream.”

Additionally, education seems to be the means to a successful career path. Teachers working in private education tend to recognize that education could work as an investment for students’ future career paths. In that way, investing in education is reasonable, since private schooling is presented to be more secure and stable than public schooling.

GE-p: “despite the crisis, parents seek the best for their children’s education. In Greece, education is an investment that will allow children to join the university and to claim a better future.”

GE2: “Of course I believe that education is an economic investment that will help children succeed professionally and financially.”

Personal beliefs on school choice and behavioral patterns

When referring to the option of school choice, educators and parents automatically associate it with private education. As a consequence, school choice seems to express the option of parents to select a private school for their children, instead of a public one. It can be argued that dualism between private and public school is realized when parents opt to choose schools. In the interview question “What are the first words that come to your mind when you consider “school choice”?”, **GE-p** and most of the participants answered: “choosing between private and public school.”

School choice and the criteria setting

All the participants answered that they are totally favorable to the option of school choice since, in that way, they have the opportunity to claim a better-quality education that is in accordance with their beliefs and values. Furthermore, they also mentioned that this option expresses one of their human rights, which the state should respect.

GE2: “A parent must be able to choose between several alternatives, in order to be able to claim the best for his child and not be preassigned to a specific school by the state, opposed to his will.”

GE4: “Parents have the right to choose the kind of education they want for their child!”

GP2: “The fact that I have the choice is something positive. I cannot find anything negative about the exercise of this right”.

Criteria setting is one of the primary requirements of parents who want to choose between private schools. As it has been mentioned during the interviews by the participants, having the ability to choose is like being able to set personal criteria depending on what a parent believes that it better for his/her child.

GP1: “if someone has the financial capacity, he will probably choose a private school to offer something better to his child. It also has the opportunity to set its own criteria.”

This seems to be a very positive aspect of school choice for both teachers and parents

School choice and competition

One more positive aspect of school choice that it was mentioned during the interviews regards the competition between schools. The participants argued that though the school choice policy the education providers should compete to each other in order to improve their ‘marketing image’ and attract more parents. At this point, it should be also stated that the participants often referred to the parents as ‘clients’ and to the education system as ‘education market’.

GEd3: “when someone has the option of choice there is always competition for something better, which is a fact that improves the quality of services offered.”

School choice and enhanced engagement

It has also been noticed that when parents choose and pay for a private school, they get more involved in education, and accordingly, they aim to engage their children. It seems that a stronger bond or commitment between the family and school is created when parents opt for a private school.

GEd1: “A parent is also more active when he has to choose. It is healthy to choose a school. [...] In addition, with private education, just because the parent pays, something like a commitment is made both to the child and to the whole family in terms of education.”

Background behind the school choice

Previous experience of education system (public-private)

The educators working in this private school have never worked in a public school, while the only experience they have from public education regards either their own education or less than one year of working as a teacher in a public school. Additionally, they would choose or have already chosen a private school for their children. This is apparent from the what **GEd-p** stated

“I chose a private school because I wanted to invest in the quality of education provided to my children. [...] They were always going to private schools, and if I had the choice I would prefer that they study even in tertiary education in a private institution”.

However, the parents interviewed had attended a public school, which was of high quality, as per their belief. In contrary, although they believe that nowadays public schools have significantly lowered their quality, they admit that they do not know precisely how the situation in public education actually is.

GP4: “Personally, the choice of private school was done without evaluating the quality of the public school nearby, but perhaps due to the prejudice that public schools are not as good as private schools; wanting to provide the best to my child, I chose the private school.”

School choice requirements

Some characteristics, regarding the profile of the parents who opt for private schools, have also been observed throughout the interviews. First, regarding the required knowledge that a parent must have in order to use the option of choosing between schools, some of the participants brought up that parents should have a certain level of education and knowledge in order to be able to be critical and choose schools.

GE1: “education, logic, and maturity are prerequisites. I must also have a cognitive background, a social culture and such a basis that allows me to make the right choices. Otherwise, how can one set and evaluate selection criteria?”

Factors that affected school choice towards private schooling

Increase of immigrant children in schools

Several factors why parents end to choose private school have been observed. One factor that was mentioned by the participants concerned the increase of refugee and immigrant children in public schools. This increase was presented as a drawback of education since there are no proper education plans and activities for these children. As a consequence, it seems that these children’s low level of the Greek language also lowers the overall level and “learning speed” of the whole classroom, a fact that seems to discourage parent to opt for public schools.

GE3: “Due to the financial crisis and the refugee crisis in Greece, many other elements have been included in public schools which lower the level of class to the cognitive level. [...] These children maintain a low level throughout the class because they are not placed in special classes.”

GP2: “The school children who are economic migrants themselves and the population profile is such, that it forces the teacher to go slower as the majority of children are from other countries. Therefore, my own child will have to go slower and it will necessarily push me into choosing a private school where things are more controlled.”

Public schools’ inadequacies

Another factor that influences school choice towards private schooling is public-schools’ instability and quality. As the interviewees argued, public schools do not have the required teaching staff to operate, and as a consequence, students miss classes very frequently, while the quality of teaching is also questioned.

GE-p: “(in private schools there is) ensured environment from external but also internal factors. Here, parents know when the school year starts and ends.”

GP1: “I would choose a public school if students never missed a lesson if they did a substantial job at school; if there were good teaching staff and more flexibility in teaching lessons. Schools and lessons are obsolete, and teachers have no incentive to try for something better.”

GP2: “the collapse of the public system in Greece, is the result of the economic crisis and the political choices that led education to a dead end; the Ministry of Education is no longer able to hire new teachers which result to each school year starting with terrible losses in teaching staff and significantly poor-quality standards”

Although students may miss classes during the year, which may not be replaced, all students from all over Greece are required to learn the same curriculum during the school year. Therefore, parents in many cases have to fill this gap by having private tutors in the home or choosing a private supplementary to school institution called ‘frontistirio’ after school.

GEEd-p: “Public schools are not properly staffed. As a result, the children are losing lessons, and the parents are called to fill the gap on their own.”

Ged2: “Every year the quality of public school falls and thus necessarily a parent tries to avoid it. From time to time, we hear extreme shortcomings in public schools that discourage parents from choosing the public school and necessarily opt for a private one to protect their children.”

GP3: “There are some public schools that maintain a decent level, but most are very bad.”

As a consequence, it can be argued that public schools’ inefficiency is being supplemented by the private schools, despite the financial constraints that the Greek citizens face. It can also be argued that the Greek parents may have the impression that they don’t have the choice a public school due to its low quality.

GEEd-p: “As the crisis reduces the quality of public schools, private schools are becoming even stronger even though the income of citizens is falling.”

GEEd3: “All families are forced to turn to private education, since public education’s quality is inadequate, incomplete and perhaps inappropriate in some cases, while the state does not control it.”

GP5: “There is no choice for me in the public school. I do not trust it!”

Quality issues

Appropriate for students, school infrastructure and quality of teaching staff are also some of the concerns that Greeks have when choosing public schools. Private schools tend to have attractive buildings allowing for a variety of facilities, while public schools in some cases do not even meet the minimum of requirements for heating and safety.

GP4: “I don’t trust the building of the public school. They are unsafe and cold.”

GP1: “I am scared of public schools’ buildings, they look like prisons. Small grey boxes.”

Teachers evaluation takes place in a frequent manner, in order to ensure high quality of teaching in private schools. In addition, private schools may control to a greater extent their teaching staff, since they have to report their achievement and progress of the class.

GE1: “Teachers are committed and have a stronger sense of responsibility. This may be the biggest advantage of private schools.”

Extracting information by educators’ educational and professional background, the competition in hiring a teacher in private schools may be very extensive since all the educators interviewed had at least one post-graduate diploma.

Private schools’ ‘extras’

The extended daily school schedule also appeared to be very crucial for parents who choose private schools. According to them, it is impossible for a parent to work full time and take care in a proper way of a child attending public school.

GP3: “When the working parents finish their job at 6, how can they choose a public school that ends at 1 pm and half days of the year is closed due to strikes?”

GP5: “The extended school day program is essential. Fortunately, there are private schools that even at a cost allows parents to work.”

Despite the fact that, this year the state had to limit to some extent the curriculum in primary school due to financial constraints, private schools have the opportunity to keep the former curriculum and also to further extend it.

GE-p: “when this year, because of the crisis, the state had to curtail some of the lessons from the curriculum or even cancel it, our own school kept the old curriculum and expanded it. This is called a deviation.”

This is why private schools are allowed to extend their daily schedule by adding two more hours in compulsory attendance.

Private schools’ international orientation

Another factor that affects school choice is an increasing number of Greeks tend to leave the country in order to live, work and study abroad. Hence, parents want to provide multilingual education options to their children in case they want to immigrate abroad. Since national financial constraints limit public schools’ capacity to teach English to an advanced level and include a second foreign language in their curriculum, private schools that have this advantage tend to attract more students.

GEd2: “there are many parents who, due to the crisis, are thinking of immigrating abroad, so by choosing a private school they can have access to better teaching of English and other languages from very early on and also have access to international programs if they want to. In that way, private schools may give wider flexibility and a range of choices to the parents, which cannot be met in public schools.”

Furthermore, it seems that schools should have a more international profile in teaching foreign languages and referring to international curricula, due to the international connectivity that globalization of culture has nowadays induced.

GP2: “Previously, there was the possibility for primary school children to be taught in 2 foreign languages; now, due to the lack of funds, public schools have been limited in teaching only one foreign language, and as we belong to a multilingual Europe, this knowledge is particularly useful, especially for our country and for children’s professional future.”

Location as a determinant in school choice

One more important aspect of schools seems to affect parents’ school choice but not to a great extent. Location may play a significant role when choosing a school, depending on where the family’s house or workplace is located. However, in cases that parents don’t find a school in a location, they prefer to pay more for school buses rather than sending their child to the local school.

GP1: “The location is important but not a strong determinant of school choice.”

GP2: “one of the main reasons I have regretted little about the choice of my children's school is the location. Although every day my children spend much time traveling, distance is not a serious obstacle considering the great qualification of the quality of education provided in another but the local school.”

Nevertheless, the location may determine the school choice towards a private school when a family resides in a non-wealthy neighborhood since parents do not trust the quality of the local school.

GP2: “The public education system suffers anyway, but of course the quality of the school depends on its geographical location. A school in a rich region may statistically be much better than a school located in a degraded area.”

GP3: “surely the fact that foreigners accumulate in some areas makes residents of these areas unwilling to send their children to their local school. This is very common in the center of Athens because in the public-school Greeks will be the minority.”

GP4: “It depends on where every child lives if he stayed in a good area, he might have gone to a public school that might be very good.”

GP5: “I would not choose the public school. I have heard so many things about this school, for example, that there are gangs that hit some shops, and the number of children coming from Albania has been on the rise; these facts obstruct our children’s proper education. If my child attended this school, it would not have similar progress, compared to Greek students in private schools.”

4.2 The Swedish case

4.2.1 Historical and Theoretical Context of the Swedish Education System

Sweden, or officially the Kingdom of Sweden (Konungariket Sverige), is a Scandinavian country located in Northern Europe. Sweden has a population of approximately ten million people with low inhabitants' density of inhabitants (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2018b). Most of its citizens live in the cities founded in the southern part of the country, such as Stockholm, Uppsala, Goteborg, Malmö, while eighty-five percent of its total population inhabits 1,3 percent of Sweden's surface (Sverige & Statistiska centralbyrån, 2012, p. 20). Stockholm, the capital of the country, located in central Sweden, is the most populated city in the country, with roughly 2,3 million people (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2017). The political regime of the country is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, headed by the King (Carl XVI Gustaf) and constituted by the Parliament Speaker (Urban Ahlin) and the Prime Minister (Stefan Löfven).

Focusing on education, the free-education-to-all policy applies in Sweden, since all levels of education are provided to its citizens without fees. From the age of one, children can be admitted to preschool (förskola) which lasts until the year of six. Förskole-Klass is between preschool and primary school for children aged 6 to 7, while compulsory schooling lasts nine years, starting from the age of 7 in primary school (Grundskola) and includes nine grades. Upper-secondary education (Gymnasieskola) is consisted of three grades for students aged 16 to 19 years old and is divided into secondary General and Vocational education. Each student attending Grundskola should study sixteen subjects from which English, Swedish, and Mathematics are compulsory in all grades. The rest elective subjects taught in all grades in primary school are: mother tongue language, music, religion, civics, technology, Swedish as a second language, handicraft, chemistry, physical education, history, home economics, geography, physics, biology and knowledge of images and image communication; while dance, sign language, and modern languages are added after the fourth grade. The school day in Sweden starts at 8:10 and depending on the daily schedule usually ends at 15:10. Furthermore, all students can remain at school for several education activities provided by the school's leisure-time center (Fritidshem) from 6:30 to 18:30, in case their parents work.

The Swedish education system is decentralized since the municipalities are in charge of organizing and running schools while the state has the overall responsibility of setting the general goals and learning outcomes, which are outlined in the Education Act (Skollag 2010:800) (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2010). The parliament determines the laws, and the MoE determines regulations for schools while two more state authorities consist the organization of the Swedish education system (Eurydice, 2017a). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen) is a state authority that supervises and assesses the quality of independent schools across Sweden while it also monitors the Education Act application (Skolinspektionen, 2018). Furthermore, the National Agency for Education (Skolverket) is the central authority that organizes all the levels of the public-school system. Skolverket ensures that all students have access to high-quality education in

secure environments and is the accountant for the knowledge requirements settings, regulations, general recommendations and national tests preparation (Skolverket, 2018).

Despite the fact that education is a national priority for the country, Sweden has noticed the sharpest decline in PISA results during 2000 and 2012. This decline fuelled a national debate on the quality of Swedish schooling, leading to several educational reforms. One of the issues addressed by OECD regards the low-status of teachers, their heavy workload and relatively low salaries, which make the teaching profession unattractive resulting in a lack of teachers. Furthermore, the lack of capacity and clarity, regarding the roles and the responsibilities at various levels of the education administration have caused a conflicting environment between local - municipalities- and the central -government- actors (OECD, 2015). For this reason, in 2015 the OECD suggested to Sweden to strengthen the steering of its policy and accountability in 2015.

Another focus area of OECD was about equity and quality in schools. Although Sweden invests highly in education, according to PISA results, its system is struggling to deliver high-quality education by increasing the number of low performers and decreasing the number of high achievers. This phenomenon is explained by OECD as the result of low expectations for student performance in many schools, funding conditions, and school choice arrangements, referring to the disadvantaged families who do not have access to information about schools (OECD, 2015).

Regarding the funding of education, since the education system is a decentralized one, the Swedish municipalities steering the local schools are funded by the state through several agreements. The public expenditure in education is among the highest in Europe while the major part of school funding derives from tax revenues that each municipality sets. It has to be mentioned that funding of schools is dependent on their number of students and influenced by school choice (OECD & European Commission, 2017).

Sweden has faced a demographic change during the past fifteen years in term of increasing numbers of immigrants and foreign citizens. More specifically, by the turn of the twenty-first century, Sweden has noticed a dramatically increasing trend in immigration rates. This phenomenon could be explained due to the increasing number of people who seek asylum from war oppressed countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Poland, and Somalia. Furthermore, there is also a significant number of European citizens who move to Sweden as labor immigrants and of foreign students who also have affected this increase (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2018a). As a result, in 2017 24% of the total population in Sweden has a foreign background, which means that these persons are either foreign-born or born in Sweden by foreign-born parents (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2018b). These numbers prove that Sweden has recently transformed to a broadly multicultural country and therefore numerous regulations have been designed so that the country becomes able to not only accommodate all its citizens but also to create an inclusive and equal society. Education has a vital role in the integration of immigrant children by providing opportunities to them to acquire the skills needed to become part of Swedish society. Additional hours for teaching Swedish along with lessons in the native language of students are provided by the schools as an attempt to support these children.

4.2.2 Private Schools in Sweden

During the mid-1980s and early 1990s, the Swedish government introduced several decentralization policies regarding education as an attempt to improve the quality of schooling and widen its accessibility, emphasizing ‘freedom of choice’ practices (Telhaug, 1994 cited in Forsberg & Lundgren, 2010). This movement towards decentralization from a centralized, top-down model of steering to a deregulated one where local authorities are responsible for providing and controlling public services, such as education, was characterized by OECD as a turn from ‘uniformity’ to ‘pluralism’ (OECD, 1995; Farazouli, 2017).

Following this policy shift, a wave of reforms took place during the 1990s when the Swedish voucher system was founded. The Education Act of 1991 changed the ways of allocation of funds for education in each municipality, which was from then depending on the number of students enrolled in each school. Since then, this Act liberated the establishment of ‘friskolor’ which are the Swedish independent schools, publicly funded and operated by companies or individual providers (OECD, 2015). In 1992, when a school reform was implemented, considerable changes in terms of independent school creation and conditions of their operation occurred, while in 1996 Skolverket approved the implementation of 80-90% of applications for new friskolor (Skolinspektionen, 2013 as cited in Hinnerich & Vlachos, 2017). Since then, parents have the option of choosing the school they want for their children either this is a municipal or an independent one. Friskolor are funded entirely by municipal and grants by the state and are not allowed to charge fees. These facts led to a great expansion of the number of students attending such schools which has been monitoring a steady growth until now. In 2016, one out of four schools is a friskola, and as shown in the graph, 17% of the total number of students attending compulsory education has chosen an independent school (Friskolornas riksförbund, 2018; Skolverket, 2017).

Figure 7: Share of students in independent schools. Source: Skolverket, 2017

This form of private schools in Sweden is under the supervision of Skolverket, which approves their creation while Skolinspektionen is responsible for ensuring their right operation by checking if they comply with the current regulations. Friskolor should fulfill the general goals of the compulsory school set by the state, have minimum twenty students and be free of charge, in order to receive the approval for their operation. Furthermore, independent schools should be accessible to all students and be obliged to provide their municipality with frequent reports about the school's activities (Eurydice, 2018). Even though these schools have to conform to the same government regulations as the municipal schools, they are more autonomous regarding their operation, management, and allocation of resources. Independent schools may have a special profile such as implementing various pedagogical approaches, having another than Swedish linguistic orientation, being denominational or focusing on specific subjects like sports, music, and dance. Furthermore, the Independent Schools National Association (Friskolornas riksförbund) notes that only eight providers, representing 1% of the total number of providers, run 30% of schools where 40% of total student attend to (Friskolornas riksförbund, 2018). This can be explained by the fact that these eight friskolor providers are big business companies which own schools across the country.

4.2.3 Empirical Findings

4.2.3.1 Overview of the school

The school selected for this study is part of a group of independent private-run schools in Stockholm and the greater Stockholm area, with more than 3000 students. The specific school unit selected is located in the center of Stockholm and provides all the education levels from preschool class to upper-secondary education. Students from around the Stockholm county area attend this school, mostly being transferred there by their parents. The school complex is located in a wealthy neighborhood, having the highest housing prices in Sweden, providing in that way easy access via public or private transport. The school building provides a small yard for children for their free time and breaks, while all the necessary facilities are hosted in it.

During the schooling year, systematic quality work is ensured through frequent follow-ups with the school's principals regarding the operation and analysis of its results in relation to the national goals. It can be argued that the school has an overall international orientation by providing classes for teaching various foreign languages while it also promotes a global citizenship concept to a wide extent. The plurality of cultures and nationalities in this school is widely apparent since both teaching staff and students come from a wide variety of countries creating a multinational environment in terms of cultural activities.

The school follows the same calendar and schedule as the rest of the schools in Sweden, according to the regulations of Skolverket. Regarding the applications for new students' enrolment, the school accepts all students who apply for enrolment depending on the waiting list, throughout the school year. Usually, students have to wait in the queue for more than three years before they can get admitted to the school.

Principals and school teaching staff contribute to providing a friendly school environment to students while communication with their families via written feedback on the daily class' activities is given to parents on a weekly basis. Furthermore, the school provides Health services and support to all of its students promoting good health and healthy lifestyles to support students' development to achieve their educational goals. The Health Services team includes special pedagogues, learning support teachers, psychologists, counselors, school nurses and school physicians, who work collaboratively, ensuring students' psychosocial and physical development and offering regular health surveys, vaccinations and special intervention when needed.

4.2.3.2 Participants' Background

In this section, a description of the ten participants from Sweden is presented through the codes used. The fact that all respondents represent the sample from Sweden is described through the first letter from their code-name as 'S'. Furthermore, since the sample contains both education professionals and parents, the letters 'Ed' and 'P' stand accordingly for educators and parents, complementing their codes. In addition, the letter 'p' in education professionals' code is added in case the participant is the principal of the school. The numbers supplementing the code-name are randomly used in order just to distinguish the participants. For example, SEd9 could represent a Swedish teacher and SP8 could stand for a Swedish parent.

Some of the first questions of the interview guide were designed in order to introduce the participants to the main topic of the interview and at the same time to extract some information regarding their profile. The information needed to outline the education professionals' profiles regarded their experience within education which could play a significant role in the credibility of their answers. This information included the years of experience in education and their knowledge about public schools as well. Furthermore, some introductory questions on school choice were asked in order to map the responsiveness of the interviewees on this topic and their opinion regarding school choice as an option. More specifically, the researcher asked the interviewees to rate how positive or negative they are towards the option of school choice, by using a scale from 1, meaning negative, to 5, meaning positive.

In the same respect, similar questions were asked to the parents in order to frame their profiles. Hence, the interviewer selected information about the number of the children they have attending this school and their previous personal experience of public schools. This information is summarized below in *Table 5* for education professionals and in *Table 6* for parents.

Table 5: Education Professionals' Background codes

Code- names	Profession	Years of experience	Previous experience of public schools Y(yes)/N(no)	Familiar with school choice as a term Y(yes)/N(no)	School choice preference (1-5)
SEd-p	School's Principal	30	Y	Y	5
SEd1	School's Vice- Principal	10	Y	Y	3 or 4
SEd2	Second-grade teacher	7	Y	Y	5
SEd3	Third grade teacher	12	N	Y	3,5
SEd4	Fifth-grade teacher	20	Y	Y	3

Table 6: Parents' Background codes

Code - names	Number of children in school	Years of enrollment in this school	Previous experience of public schooling Y(yes)/N(no)	Familiar with school choice as a term Y(yes)/N(no)	School choice preference (1-5)
SP1	3	4	N	Y	5
SP2	1	1	Y	Y	3
SP3	2	3	Y	Y	3-4
SP4	2	6	Y	Y	3
SP5	1	8	Y	Y	4

4.2.3.3 Interview Findings and Analysis

In this section the interview findings are presented divided in same four axial themes which were presented for the Greek case in 4.1.3.3. These themes are: Participants' views on educational reality; Personal beliefs on school choice and behavioral patterns; Background behind school choice; and Factors that affected school choice towards private schools. Each axial theme includes several subthemes which are outlined in the *Figure 8*.

Figure 8: Thematic Analysis: Sweden

Participants' views on educational reality

Dissatisfaction from national educational policies

Furthermore, educators and parents also pointed out that they prefer if the state was more involved on what is taking place inside public and private schools, and not only municipalities being those who have the overall control of the schools. In addition, stricter regulations on what private schools should provide to their children also mentioned as a desirable educational change. Except for regulations, more services should be incorporated into private schools in order to provide high-quality educational environments.

SEd-p: “I would ask for more mandate of what the schools have to provide. And I know that the government has done that very loosely, but I think that private schools should provide certain things because they are getting government funding so they should provide access to career counsellor, or school health care services, access to library, they should have qualified teacher and they should have facilities for their purpose at school.”

SEd2: “I believe that the state should be more involved than it’s now. Now it’s a lot more engaged the communes than the state.”

SEd4: “I think that I would make mandate what private schools have to offer because I know that a lot of private schools don’t follow all the regulations. So, I think that there should be much stricter regulations about how a private school should be and what should provide in order to get the state’s funding.”

SEd5: “Government should say to individuals and companies that ok, you can have your school but we should make sure that all the students are treated in equal conditions for education, and then we have to follow it in the public schools as well.”

One of the “codes” created to describe the findings of the study and mentioned from all the participants was about the public schools’ loosen policy. It has been argued that public schools tend to be looser in terms of academic expectations, class management, and behavioral regulations. As a result, parents want to turn to private school from which they expect to be stricter and more traditional.

SEd-p: “They want a professional organization, they want teachers and students having mutual respect, maybe a little bit more formally than in public schools.”

SEd1: “most of the private schools have a totally different idea of pedagogy and didactics, they are pretty traditional, pretty strict. They focus more on discipline and on children be quite in the classroom, no noise, no chaos and follow the orders. They also ask for students to be polite to each other, be polite to the teacher, and if the students are not there are a lot of consequences.”

SEd2: “. From what I’ve heard from parents is that the consequence system can be something, like the approach to the behavior of students. Private schools are considered to be stricter than the public ones, and that can be a reason for popularity among some parents.”

SP1: “What was missing from public schools and made parents to choose a private school is discipline. I think that the Swedish education system has relaxed too much, and parents want their children to have a goal and evaluation criteria.”

SP3: “I believe that the part of discipline is essential in a school and is so poorly overlooked in public schools. And that's something I'm constantly listening to. And this is the main reason that many Swedes choose this private school, discipline.”

SP4: “In private schools, there are specific evaluation criteria regarding students’ educational achievements. [...] In relation to public schools, I am constantly hearing that in our school as in other private schools, our children are judged by much stricter criteria, which is something good.”

SP5: “The school in Sweden has relaxed a lot. He has become the teacher to be prey to the student.”

SEd3: “the Swedish curriculum, is very easy, is very simple, is not up to the world standards [...] Education in Sweden is in a very low level at the moment, and I can talk about the subject that I am teaching. There are many knowledge gaps. And these knowledge gaps usually are at the basics of the subject. [...] Another thing that misses from schools is discipline.”

Focus on academic results

Regarding the reasons that seem to attract the interest of parents in choosing a private school is its **annual academic results**. A school having a significant share of students who own high grades is more attractable to parents since they correlate academic success with professional success. As a consequence, private schools tend to advertise their results annually.

SEd-p: “if you look at the results, the academic results you can see that private schools manage to produce good results very well, and I think that is also a part of the picture.”

SP4: “The academic results of children in a school are quite decisive in selecting a parent school. The level of education is very important.”

Personal beliefs on school choice and behavioral patterns

School choice and enhanced engagement

Education professionals mentioned that they are positive towards school choice because it enables parents to get more involved and engaged in their children education. Having the opportunity to choose among public and private schools seems to force parents to do their own research on schools and choose the school that they think fits them the best.

SEd-p: “I think that it is good for parents to be involved in the choices of the school [...] I think that whatever choice someone makes if he or she make an active choice it is something positive. They are more interested and engaged in the school. So, even parent chose the local school, if they have visited the school and investigated it, is something very good. I think that by making an active choice, parents improve the relationship and the attitude towards that school.”

Six out of ten participants referred to the option of choosing schools as a human right expressing their personal freedom.

SEd1: “I think that the idea of freedom, of freedom to choose, is important. It is important as a political value from a philosophical perspective.”

Concerns about school choice

One of the main reasons mentioned why the participants have doubts about the benefits of school choice regards the difficulties they face to make a choice, while parents also pointed out that it is an unfair situation for those who do not have access to proper information or do not have the time to do their research.

SP3: “It is very difficult to choose a school, and you must do it since very early in order to get a spot.”

SP4: “It is not easy to choose a school. It takes time and research skills to make the right choice.”

Parents feel that even though school choice allows them to select the school they like the most, it also implies that there are good and bad schools. This could mean that quality education is not ensured in all Swedish school in equal terms.

SP2: “Now it is unavoidable to choose. But I don’t like it. I liked it how it was before because it was fairer. The system with school choice is very unfair, and there are some areas where anyone don’t choose the schools there, so they lack quality.”

SP5: “I don’t think that the state is very active with education. Me personally when I feel that I am forced to choose a school it seems to me that the state avoids its responsibility to provide me a good school anyway.”

School choice and marketization of education

Another observation concerning the interviews was made in regard to the business-like profile of private schools about their market-like mechanisms in order to gain profits. The interviewees referred that private schools in Sweden can be run by business companies and their ultimate target is to extend their earnings, by using marketing strategies and advertising their achievements in order to attract students. This was presented as offending education’s public good character.

SEd-p: “Often the private schools in order to earn more money, they are very good at marketing themselves and to well positioning themselves in the market. So, they are a little bit more business shady I think that the communal schools. They are aware of the grants they are aware of how to find students and they know that the more students they get, the more money they gain, the more they can develop their school. So, I think that private schools are very good at positioning themselves in the market and advertising themselves in many ways like by putting posters in the metro, in the newspapers, in the buses, or organizing events, and they also use very actively the social media to advertise themselves”

SEd1: “There are companies which own school, and in parallel, they also own other companies, such as clothing brands. So, a school owner could make clothes and be a seller. One can run a school and sell clothes at the same time..... that’s a bit strange I think. To me, commercial and more capitalist.”

SEd2: “. I think that the example of X school is very interesting because they have like 50000 children in a queue. For the queue! So, it’s crazy, and everyone wants to go to one of the X school. And the company opens school after school after school, and they are hugely popular and successful, and they are all private schools. So they make a lot of money. It reminds me how the market works.”

SP5: “People should not be able to make money out of schools. Education is a public good.”

Advertisement plays a significant role for private schools in order to attract parent to choose them, but as it has been concluded by thee interviews, advertisements may have misleading content.

SEd3: “it’s very misleading sometimes. Choosing is all about advertising, how well the school has been advertised. It’s all about advertisement. How well a school has been advertised, how much it has been written on it on the internet. So, it all depends on that.”

The participants were referring to the introduction of school choice and the opening of the state of allowing the creation and operation of private schools run by companies, as the formation of a new “market arena”. One of the characteristics of this arena was about the introduction of competition among both private and public schools, which was mentioned from some participants as something positive leading to better and diverse schools and from others as something negative, undermining the nature of education as a common good.

SEd1: “also the schools have to compete. So, if you run a really bad school, no one would choose it and would close”

SEd2: “if you can choose then there are possibilities for different kind of schools. Otherwise, all the schools had to be the same. So now we have more multitude to choose a school, and I think that is such a positive thing.”

When the researcher asked the interviewees about the changes that they would like to make and the drawbacks of the current education system several “codes” appeared. One of them was regarding the profit that private schools make. Education professionals mentioned that private schools work like companies that in some cases put aside the quality of education in the name of gaining the expected profit.

SEd-p: “Companies are running schools only for profit, and sometimes they do not care about the quality.”

SEd2: “I understand that a company who runs a school they just need to make profits.”

SEd3: “Sweden has opened the education sector for companies and then, of course, they do understand that they can make a lot of money. And this is why they open schools. There were schools opening very quickly, and sometimes with illegal procedures. They just opened, made much money and then they didn’t make it, so they had to close down or so.”

Additionally, it was also mentioned during the interviews that private schools should not receive public funding through taxes, and only parents who choose private schools should pay for their operation. Three of the interviewees also argued that they believe that it is unfair for taxpayers to pay private companies’ services and not public services.

SEd-p: “I think that private schools would be fine if the parents who choose these schools paying a fee and not everyone paying taxes. It is a bit weird taxpayers’ money going to for-profit companies and not to the state. And this is not very good.”

Background behind school choice

Information about school choice

Despite the fact that most of the interviewees agreed that they are positive towards school choice, they also mentioned that for someone to make a decision he or she has first to get informed, otherwise it would be a random choice based on word-of-mouth from other parents. It was argued that information about schools in Sweden is very accessible from those who are Swedish language speakers but not for others.

SEd-p: “So I think that it is easy to find. Then, understanding is a different thing and looking what the statistics are.”

SEd3: “Most of the poor immigrant children in the suburbs do not have access to private schools. But they may have. They can choose as well. But they don’t choose because there is lack of information.”

SP1: “Surely a parent needs to do research to choose a school. [...] Of course, one has to know the language, because most of them are in Swedish, all the information is in Swedish and a little in English.”

SP5: “A lot of families with a foreign background [...] are not allowed to play to this game of school choice. They are not able to know the rules of this game.”

Getting informed depends on the availability of information about schools but also on the availability of parents to do their own research. As **SEd2**, **SEd3**, and **SP2** revealed, they did not have time to look for a ‘good’ school so they could not use the option of choosing a school. As a consequence, many parents tend to trust and base their decisions regarding school choice, on what other parents have to say about the reputation of a school.

SEd1: “of course, when you have a system where you can choose a school, where you should choose, then you also have to be able to get informed, or there must be information of course available.”

SEd2: “I have a daughter who is now in grade 0, but we didn’t choose, I didn’t look into other schools. We just go to the school that was nearby.”

SEd3: “I chose a private school because I heard from other friends and parents that the school is good.”

SP2: “I chose this school based on what people from our environment suggested to us according to their experience. [...] Furthermore, it was not that easy for me to find the information that I needed in English, as I am not a Swedish speaker yet.”

Parents’ social status

It has also been argued that social status of parents may affect their choices on schooling. Both teachers and parents mentioned that there is a correlation between social capital and engagement to education.

SEd-p: “..from families that have a very high education level, very high social status and lifestyle may investigate a school for their child more than families struggling to make it out with the day-work.”

SP5: “I think that school choice serves rich parents selfish needs to feel that they offer to their child the best education.”

Factors that affected school choice towards private schooling

Increase of immigrant children in schools

One of the reasons that interviewees brought up for the sharp increase in the number of students attending private schools is the rise of immigrants in Sweden.

SEd1: “I believe that this increase is the result of Sweden opening its migration policies.”

Although the participants agreed on this rise has affected school choice towards private schools, a dipole in interviewees’ opinion was observed. On the one hand, some of the participants mentioned that it is easier for immigrant children to attend an international private school rather than a Swedish one.

SEd3: “One of the biggest reasons why private schools are facing an increase these years is that the immigrants who are coming in, most of them are about to choose a private school.”

In contrary, on the other hand, some other participants mentioned that the rise noticed in private schools was affected by parents who choose private schools in order to avoid immigrants.

SP4: “I believe that the increase of foreigners in Sweden has led to decrease in quality of public schools. Parents also feel safer when choosing a private school.”

SP5: “I know from friends who live in areas with many immigrants, that they try to avoid the local schools because of that. Sometimes in a class, there are only a few Swedish speaking children, and even the teachers don’t have a very good level of Swedish.”

Private schools' 'extras'

The existence of private schools along with the option of parents to choose schools, allow diversification among the schools. More specifically, it was observed that private schools tend to diversify their programs or structure and have particular orientations, such as special schools characterized as international, sports or music schools. In that way, through school choice, the parents may also select general cultural orientations or specific career paths for their children.

SEd-p: “there are many schools offering many diverse programs. Small schools, very specialist schools, some that they are towards a specific career.”

SEd1: “I think that it allows for diversity within the schools. So not every school needs to have everything and parents with students can choose a school that they think suits them or suits to their educational ideology.”

In addition, private schools usually having a special style of teaching and their own educational signature, captivate the interest of parents for such schools. In the case of the school selected, the international profile and the wider emphasis in English given are appeared to be as the main reasons why parents prefer this school.

SEd-p: “from what I hear from parents choosing our school, they like the international orientation that we provide in our programs, our international philosophy. They believe that in our school children can learn good Swedish and English as well.”

SEd1: “we have staff from all over the world, like from India, China, Malaysia, the US, South America and it is very different from the public school that I was working before, where there were just Swedish teachers.”

SEd2: “They like to have international mindsets, and they like the international style of the school and the option also for becoming very advanced English speakers.”

SEd3: “Because many of our students have parents who come from other countries than Sweden. And it’s not only about English, but parents know that we have French teachers, Greek teachers or the US, so they know that there is a mix of languages, cultures, and many parents found this as an advantage in the modern world. International profile and provision of other languages.”

SP1: “the main reason I chose this school was because it provides the opportunity for more intense contact with English and other foreign languages.”

Furthermore, even though private schools have to follow Skolverket’s guidelines, they can add subjects or diversify the teaching methods, as an attempt to differentiate from the public schools. In that way, it seems that private schools stand as a schooling alternative from the general direction of public schools.

SEd-p: “Often private schools are trying to sell themselves as becoming different from communal schools and not replicating but creating something different, with a different energy, different infrastructure, different image, a different profile. So, they don’t try to be like communal schools, but they try to offer something different.”

SEd2: “I think that private schools provide many different options in Sweden, different kinds of schools. The alternative curriculum could be a reason for a parent to choose a private school because many schools don’t use Ig11, the Swedish curriculum.”

SEd3: “I think that there are more and more private schools in Sweden that offer something different which is something interesting. And this is the reason of existing of private schools. They exist because they offer something alternative compared to the public ones. So, there are as I said different activities, different ways of working.”

Location as a determinant in school choice

Most of the interviewees were positive regarding school choice mentioning that through the school choice all the parents are able to choose the school they like and not go automatically to the closest one. This is positive according to participants because in some areas, especially cities’ suburbs the quality of schools is not that high as within the cities.

SEd1: “Before you couldn’t choose at all, so then there was the problem with when you live in the suburbs, or in a poor community, you couldn’t go to a good

school. You had to be in the school of your community. And that wasn't so good. But you hadn't a choice. But today anyone can choose. That's the good side of it!"

SEd3: “. I think that school choice is very good because the system here works like that the nearest school to you will be the first choice. If you have a weakness there, if the school is weak there, you would be given a chance to choose another school.”

Hence, location appeared to be one of the major factors affecting school choice since, in certain areas, parents argued that the schools are of bad quality and they have to avoid them.

SP3: “The region plays an important role. Previously, when I was living in a degraded area, I did not want to send my child to local schools, and so I chose to be private in another area.”

Consequently, **long-distance travels** by students also presented as a phenomenon caused by parent choice for private schools and were mentioned by both education professionals and parents. Since when the parents have the opportunity to choose schools, it seems to be a common phenomenon that students have to travel more than an hour every day to reach school.

SEd1: “now we have students going to schools who have to travel big distances every day in order to get to the school that the parent has chosen. So, here we have students from other communes very far away from here. They make long trips every day from the year of 7. So, yes, that's the situation: long travels.”

4.3 Analysis of RQs

In this section, a further analysis of the findings related with the research questions of the study is presented.

RQ1: What are the socio-political factors behind the increased participation in private schools throughout the years?

The examination of the education context in both countries, along with the analysis of the interviews, initiated three significant factors that led to the increased participation in private schools throughout the years, which are: the dissatisfaction from the national educational policies, the rise of migration and the social stratification of neighborhoods. Each factor is determined by several variables and applies in both countries. Furthermore, some additional factors, which concern the Greek case, and did not apply to the Swedish context are indicated. These are the Greek tradition of education and the increasing intention of Greeks to migrate to other countries due to the economic crisis.

Firstly, the high levels of dissatisfaction caused by the national educational policies seems to affect parents who opt for choosing private schools. As private schools appear to be more independent and flexible than public schools, they are allowed to go further than of the governments' compulsory regulations. In that way, private schools following their own educational agendas, are not affected by national education reforms to the same extent as public schools. This was mentioned as a positive aspect of private schooling for students, as parents can choose a private school in order to avoid public schools' inefficiency. As a consequence, loss of trust to the public sector has been observed by parents who prefer private schooling for their children.

According to the findings of the Greek case, there are several reasons which led to parents' private school preference. Political instability and continuous education reforms seem to negatively affect the quality of education. Education professionals and parents argued that there is no uniform government plan for education while politicians make institutional changes for canvassing reasons and as signs of power. Erratic actions and short-term planning take place with regards to national education policy. Furthermore, national economic restrains having an impact on the national budget for education, have resulted in lack of adequate teaching staff in public schools and provoked several demonstrations throughout the school year. Hence, it is a common phenomenon that students miss classes in public schools which are not replaced. In addition, aging teaching staff caused by the state's financial inability to hire new teachers, along with the lack of efficient teachers' evaluation decrease the quality of teaching in public schools.

The findings from the Swedish context regard parents' expectations from the school concerning the set of high academic expectations for their children and behavioral issues in the classroom. Interviewees referred to the 'loosen' policy of public schools as a disadvantage regarding academic expectations and student's behavior. More specifically, participants mentioned that private schools tend to set higher targets for students' achievement than public schools which often have a looser teaching rhythm. Additionally, students' disrespect for their educators has been noticed in public school

classes resulting in a chaotic classroom environment. Consequently, it seems that parents who choose private schools tend to focus further on discipline and the establishment of educational goals for students.

Secondly, the rise of immigrants in both countries has been observed as one of the most significant factors that affect parents' choice for private schools. This finding seems to be out of special research interest since this rise affected parents' choice in contradicting ways. One of this phenomenon's aspects is expressed through parents' belief that students with a foreign background lower the quality of education while another aspect of the same phenomenon is that parents with a foreign background tend to prefer private schools, as they think that they are more comprehensive than public schools. This contradiction could be further explained as the cause of the national gaps in immigrants' integration to public education and society, in both national contexts.

On the one hand, it was argued that immigrant students are not efficiently integrated into Greek and Swedish classrooms, and that caused a rise of local students' participation in private schools. Children with immigrant background tend to need more time to achieve a high level of understanding the local language causing either learning gaps or adopting a slower learning rhythm than the other children. As a result, parents are negatively biased towards public schools, having the impression that their children will receive a lower quality of education. On the other hand, in the case of Sweden, foreigners also tend to choose private schools, and that resulted in a rise of immigrant students' participation in private schools. Parents with a foreign background prefer private schools with an international orientation, as they believe that this would be a more comprehensive way for their children to integrate into the local education system.

Thirdly, another factor noticed that influences parents' decisions for schooling regards their residential areas. Various regions in the capitals of both countries seem to be socially and culturally stratified, while foreign populations tend to get concentrated in specific regions. This phenomenon results in social segregation and polarization nurturing in that way the creation of a dysfunctional social reality, where locals try to avoid the newcomers. While public schools in wealthy municipalities may seem to be of decent quality, public schools in degraded areas or in areas where mainly immigrant people have accommodation seem to be of inferior quality in terms of infrastructure and teaching staff. Furthermore, in such areas, safety tends to become an issue that concerns parents reporting cases of delinquent behavior.

Some additional factors appeared to have an impact on parents who opt for private schools, only in the Greek context. Almost all of the participants referred to the Greek long tradition in education. Education professionals and parents reported that education for Greek culture is one of the highest priorities for Greek citizens, who try to ensure that their children receive high-quality education.

Parents tend to feel reassured that they provide the best they can to their children by choosing a private school and paying for their schooling fees. In that way, they hope that their children will experience a calm and fruitful school life since private schools provide school environments to their students which are usually protected from the external sociopolitical factors that may affect public schools. Furthermore, the participants reported the high interest of Greek citizens who intend to migrate from the country for financial reasons, and therefore they choose private schools which focus on English and other foreign languages.

RQ2: What are the reasons behind school choice towards private schooling?

Assessing the findings of the study, various reasons behind school choice for private schools became apparent. One of the most important reasons, which appeared in every interview conducted, was about parents' belief that a private school outweighs a public school in terms of the quality of education. Furthermore, some of the special characteristic of private schools also seemed to attract student population such as their structure and organization, the attention given to educational results of the students, the extension of the national curriculum by including additional subjects and activities, the professional status of the teaching staff and the international orientation that most of the private schools have adopted. Additionally, in the case of Greece, more arguments from the participants were reported regarding parents' preference to private schools. These arguments concern Greeks' mentality of perceiving education as the means for a successful upcoming career, the public schools' disadvantages and the extended daily school schedule.

Both education professionals and parents argued that private schools tend to be better structured and organized. The interviewed parents reported that these schools provide a safe and controlled educational environment for their children, and this is one of the main reasons why they prefer them. The smaller size of a private school along with the adequate school staff are the fundamental factors that create this setting. In addition, private schools run by private companies can act in a more independent way than public schools. This fact makes them more flexible for creating their own structures of administration and operation.

Intensive focus on education outcomes was also referred as the advantage of private schools, since the participants mentioned that they appreciate the fact that private schools pay more attention to monitoring students' educational outcomes. Private schools tend to annually advertise their students' academic results which are used as the proof of their success. Parents also tend to prefer private schools since they are stricter than the public schools, in terms of behavioral codes and social ethics. It can be argued that private schools have their own in-school behavioral regulations according to each school's principles and values, which enhance the social role of the school in cultivating characters and social attitudes.

Another reason why parents choose private schools is the opportunity they have to set their own education criteria and choose between several educational alternatives. Although in both countries all schools are centrally supervised, private schools are affected by education reforms to a more limited extent than public schools, since they are free enough to have their own additional educational plans. National educational guidelines should be followed by all schools, but each private school can have its own educational signature in terms of educational style and teaching methods. Curriculum extension is a common tactic of private schools which include more teaching subjects and extracurricular activities in their daily schedule.

International orientation is another aspect of private schools, that seems to magnetize parents' choice. Focus on teaching English and other foreign languages along with the overall intercultural profile that private schools usually have, are the attractive primary features that were mentioned in the interviews. Parents seem to consider these

characteristics as crucial since they highlighted the necessity that schools should include global citizenship values.

Furthermore, parents mentioned that one of the reasons why they chose a private school for their children regards the teaching staff which seems to abide high quality standards. Private schools hire teachers according to a selection process through interviews, followed by frequent evaluations throughout the school year. As a consequence, teachers working in private schools tend to have strong academic and professional background. In addition, since teachers have to report their educational goals and students' achievements periodically, schools' administration and parents can easily monitor students' progress.

Some additional reasons have been concluded regarding the Greek context only. The vast majority of the interviewees expressed that there is connection between education and professional career. Success in education could possibly set the ground for a successful career path, and this is one of the main reasons why Greek parents choose private schools, who perceive private schooling as an investment for the employment future of their children. Furthermore, public schools' infrastructure may be inappropriate in some cases, reporting no-heated classes in the winter and very old buildings, and therefore parents choose private schools in order to avoid this kind of cases. Finally, the extended daily school schedule was reported as a significant determinant for parental school choice, since private schools give the opportunity to children to stay longer at school, benefiting in that way their working parents.

RQ3: What are the main similarities and differences in private schooling between the two countries?

Through the comparison of the two countries, by using the descriptions of their national contexts and the findings from the interviews, several similarities and differences were shown about the participants' perception of the concept of school choice. Starting from the similarities, in both countries interviewees mentioned that they understand school choice as one of their human rights. Education professionals and parents expressed that having the option to choose schools for their children is part of their freedoms as human beings.

Another similarity between the two countries was found in participants' opinions about competition among schools. Since school choice was introduced in both national contexts, private schools are financially dependent on parents' preference. Low participation in a private school could threaten its operation, and therefore they should compete with other schools to attract more customers. As interviewees argued, the notion of competition, initiated through the creation of private schools, seem to be a positive aspect of school choice, leading to better and more diverse schools, since it forces them to improve their facilities.

Furthermore, the analysis of the interviews has shown that parents who choose private schools seem to get engaged with their children education to a vast extent. Parents have to do their own research before choosing a school, and as a consequence, they get more involved regarding the quality of education provided to their children. In addition, in the case of Greece where parents have to pay certain fees for private schools, they

admitted that they tend to be more responsible and engaged regarding the teaching material, while they also claim to have a closer communication with the teachers. It has been observed that parents who opt for private schools are significantly focused on academic outcomes, which also act as a criterion for them in choosing between schools.

Similarly, parents from both Greece and Sweden mentioned that in some cases they do not feel that they actually have the option of choosing. This argument derived from parents stating that the quality of local schools is of inferior standards, so they do not even consider enrolling their children to these schools. Furthermore, parents' availability of time and access to information, are crucial determinants regarding their ability to choose schools. Parents with limited available time are excluded from school choice, since, as some of the parents stated, they did not have enough time to do their research. Critical thinking and a certain level of education were mentioned as the prerequisites a parent should have in order to be able to choose between schools. In addition, access to information seemed to be the most critical factor that determines the ability of parents to make a choice, since limited language and research skills could exclude parents from taking an informed school choice.

Moving to the differences, several observations and conclusions were drawn regarding each country. One of the main contrasting characteristics between Greece and Sweden regards participants' opinion on private schooling and school choice introduction as a policy. In the case of the Greek participants, all of them stated that they are totally positive towards private schooling and the option that parents have in choosing the school they want according to their preferences. In contrast, the Swedish participants mentioned several concerns regarding school choice and the way how private schools work. According to the interviewees from Sweden, private schools are run by private companies while their only target is to maximise their profits. For this reason, both education professionals and parents questioned the quality of education provided in such schools, while they also referred to the use of private schools' advertisements which could be often misleading.

Chapter Five

5. Discussion

In this chapter, a further exploration and discussion will take place, regarding the analysis of the findings presented in the previous chapters, by taking into account the three theoretical approaches which consist the theoretical background of the study. The human capital theory along with the human rights and capability approaches to education will conceptually frame the findings of the study. This chapter aims to discuss further some critical observations that emerged through the analysis of the findings. Lastly, the chapter ends with some policy recommendations regarding school choice and private schooling.

Children's education seems to occur as the means for a successful career path, according to the participants' views. One of the main reasons why parents tend to prefer to choose among different kinds of schools, supporting in that way private schooling, is because they want to provide the best they can to their children, in order to get well prepared for their academic or professional future. Hence, parents face education as a means to an end while their choice for a private school is purposeful and goal oriented (Olssen, Codd & O'Neil, 2004). It could be argued, that this parents' point of view of seeing education as an investment for the future, is in accordance with the Human Capital Theory, which expresses an economic approach to human behavior.

The extension of the curriculum and the international focus that private schools may offer, appear to be significant determinants of the rise in the number of enrollments in private schools, since they aim to increase children's knowledge capacity. Additional school subjects, further focus on foreign languages' instruction and high levels of in-school discipline have been presented by the interviewees as the critical characteristics of defining the quality of a school, since they consist essential tools for an upcoming successful career. Especially in the case of Greece, where parents should pay certain schooling fees to private schools, education is compared to other kinds of financial investments (Gillis, 1992), and as a result, it seems that parents perceive schooling as an investment with the prospect of return.

Considering the reasons why Greek and Swedish parents tend to choose private schools, another finding of the study regards the creation of social segregation between schools, which is associated with the 'reputation' of private schools. The academic results' history of schools appeared to be a crucial determinant in parental school choice. Private schools tend to advertise the high academic achievements of their students in order to attract more customers. As a consequence, this phenomenon leads to further segregation, since the private schools which already include high achievers, tend to attract more high achievers.

Moreover, one of the most critical topics for further discussion, which was raised through the analysis of the findings, regards the creation of several inequality issues due to private schooling and school choice policy implementation in both Greece and Sweden. Although human rights discourse posits that all persons should participate in societal decision making, primarily when they are affected by these decisions (Gabel, 2016), this is not the reality in both Greece and Sweden. Firstly, not all parents are able to choose

between schools, resulting in the exclusion of a share of children from private schools. As it was argued through the interviews, not everyone has access to private education due to parents' limited financial capacity in the case of Greece, and to the restricted access to information about schools in the case of Sweden. Since the Greek private schools do not receive any financial support from the state and they charge parents for schooling fees, a significant share of Greek parents is unable to pay this kind of fees, and as a consequence, they are totally excluded from choosing private education.

Furthermore, Swedish language skills are required from parents in order to be able to make an informed choice, and therefore most of the immigrants in Sweden are incapable of reaching information about schools and making a choice. Limited language skills are not the only barrier that immigrants face when they have to choose schools, but also the long waiting queues (Böhlmark, Holmlund & Lindahl, 2015). Private schools have students listed in their queues from the day they are born, making in that way almost impossible for immigrants or not early-informed parents to choose these schools. Also, as Böhlmark et al. (2015) have pointed out, "school choice and segregation by immigrant background is largely driven by residential sorting patterns" (p.27), meaning that large groups of immigrants live in specific residential areas, where usually there are no private schools. As a result, if an immigrant parent manages to reach information about private schools, and finds a spot in a shortlist queue of a private school, the student will have to travel on a daily basis long distances to attend school, which is costly and discouraging for parents.

As the participants stated, there are also parents who have difficulties to choose a school, and in some cases, they are not able to make a school choice. Parents' limited available time and lack of a certain level of education are often some additional structural barriers (Offenheiser & Holombe, 2003) that prevent parents from exercising their right to choose schools. Furthermore, as the interviewees mentioned, parents should have a certain socioeconomic level in order to be able to choose a school critically, while Böhlmark et al. (2015) have also found that there has also been a significant association between school choice towards private schools and parents' socioeconomic background. In accordance to what Robeyn has noticed, the author argues that several inequality issues are created regarding the education of different groups of people through the theoretical lenses of Human Capital theory since not all parents seem to invest the same in their children education and not everyone has the same rate of return.

It could also be argued that although both countries emphasize that every child has the right to education, issues of quality and equity in education vary among different schools. As stated by the interviewees, having the option to choose among different schools could mean that there are some schools of high-quality and some of lower quality. Parents, looking for a high-quality school for their children, conclude to choose private schools which often offer additional services or have a specific teaching style. In addition, private schools, as presented in this study, usually own attractive infrastructure and employ highly educated professionals. These characteristics could upgrade the quality of education provided in such schools, compared to a local public school. This fact opposes to the human rights-based approach to education according to which, quality education should be provided to all children regardless of their families' available funds or time for research on education.

Taking into account the observations mentioned above, it can be argued that the introduction of school choice in both countries has had a particularly harsh impact on

educational inequalities and social segregation among schools. As Reay (2006) has also mentioned, one consequence of choice-based education systems is that those who do not choose schools end up with the left 'choices' that the ones in private schools do not want to make. Consequently, social polarization and segregation could be created among different schools because equal opportunities are not provided to all parents. At this point, it has to be mentioned that although this school choice consequence was concluded from the analysis of the context and the interviews, the participants seemed to not realize the adverse effects of school choice, especially in the Greek case. This observation could be explained by the long tradition of the Swedish model, promoting social equality, which was started being threatened since the 1990s, while Greece always had private schools incorporated in its education system.

School choice as a policy has introduced the application of the logic and rules of market competition among schools. Private schools use various marketing tools to attract more students, which are their customers since the number of the enrolled students defines the amount of profit the school could make. This logic of creating and operating schools has raised serious concerns about the quality and the purposes of private schools' principals. According to the analysis of the findings and as Broucker et al. (2017) have argued, private schools, operating as companies primarily focus on their economic performance while they could overlook the value of providing quality education. The participants of Sweden discussed thoroughly this phenomenon of business like operating schools, noticing that it is 'strange' to make a profit out of running schools.

An equally significant aspect of private schooling and school choice analysis, which needs to be further discussed, regards the notion of education as a public good. By the introduction of school choice policy, parents claim quality education for their children's personal benefit and face education as a form of capital (Rizvi & Lingard, 2011). Parents who choose private schools are seen as individuals who want to maximize their children's social and economic advantage for a better future. In that way, the notion of education as a public good is widely threatened by the Human Capital approach to education. Evidently, education does not seem to be a public good which is equally offered to all and the states seem to share the responsibility with the parents, who are entitled to research and find a school which is of high quality. The author argues that parents' individualistic perceptions of schooling could be explained by the loss of trust to governments' policies which has been reported by several interviewees. Political instability and recent educational reforms, that have allowed market-like policies to enter the schools' borders, have significantly dissatisfied a share of parents who avoid public schools.

Given the 'extras' that the private schools may include, their students might have more opportunities to develop and expand their capabilities, while other students in public schools might not. The provision of additional educational activities and the adoption of certain pedagogical styles could benefit students to explore their inclinations and talents rather than pushing them to particular functionings. Specific educational goals are set from both countries, regarding compulsory education, focusing majorly on the development of students' knowledge skills on literacy and numeracy. Private schools being more flexible in the educational planning and use of different pedagogical approaches, may give more emphasis to other subjects outside the curriculum, such as art. Evidently, further inequalities seem to exist from the capability approach to education, since the analysis of the findings suggested that private schools' students are more

privileged than public schools' students in having the opportunity to flourish themselves through education.

Moving to the study's policy recommendations several actions should be implemented in order to eliminate the social segregation and the inequality issues caused by private schooling and school choice. As Reay (2012) suggests, diversity in society should be reflected within school classes, preparing in that way the upcoming adult citizens for a plural society. Schools should be characterized by diversity within their context and not differentiated from each other. As it has already been stated, parents trying to provide the best they can regarding their children's education, tend to choose private schools according to their preferences. In accordance with Tawney, the author argues that this practice is an act of 'social egotism'. Education should be perceived as an end itself and not as a means to employment, while governments should enhance the social role of schools as shapers of the future societies.

Both parents and education professionals mentioned that they are dissatisfied to some extent from their state's recent educational policies, including the ways of monitoring private schools and the absence of setting equal terms for all regarding school choice. More specifically, the participants mentioned that they would prefer their states to be more active in ensuring quality among all schools and creating long-term educational plans to improve the situation in education. The author argues that the more the states allow private companies and individuals to run schools, the stricter the regulations and terms of operation should be, in order to achieve equality among them. In addition, in order to ensure that parents are able to make an informed choice, states should provide them with easily-accessible information.

According to the analysis of the interviews, parents were very confident towards school choice since they believe that choosing a private school and avoiding the local public one is a necessity in some cases. However, the author of the study suggests that even though parents endorse the option to make their own decisions about their children education, school choice policy should not be applied as a general policy. To be more specific, the author suggests that the governments should make serious efforts in order to strengthen the quality of all the public schools.

Chapter Six

6.1 Concluding Remarks

Private schools are incorporated into the education realities as schooling alternatives to the public sector, in both Greece and Sweden. As it has been observed, the Greek parents continue to choose private schools despite the severe financial crisis that the state faces, while in the past years Swedish parents tend to prefer private schools increasingly. These observations inspired the author to compare these two countries, in order to understand holistically the phenomenon of private schooling and investigate the factors that affect school choice towards private schools.

As shown in the study, school choice requires from parents to be able to conduct a certain research about the school option they have in order to find the school they prefer the most. This requires a particular level of education, available time and available information about the school alternatives, while in some cases parents' financial capacity could also be a crucial determinant when choosing a school. Hence, not all parents have access to school choice towards private schools under the same terms. The study revealed that the school choice policy has led to several inequalities and social segregation among schools. Private schools, run by companies and individuals, tend to be more flexible than public schools in terms of enriching their educational programs with additional activities or adopting certain pedagogical approaches to teaching. This flexibility that private schools have, allows them to be more innovative and modernized than public schools. Furthermore, private school choice seems to be faced as an investment for the future, since parents mainly perceive education as the means for increasing their children's human capital. As a consequence, the school choice policy creates an individualistic environment, where only some parents manage to make choices, according to their criteria.

This research aimed to provide a comprehensive examination of private school choice in these two countries as an attempt to contribute and inspire further research on this area. Some of the main conclusions of the study highlight the need for both national governments to design new policies. Some policy recommendations could entail policies which would (a) enhance the democratic and social role of education, providing quality education for all, (b) upgrade the quality of public schools and (c) develop further regulations regarding private schools in order to combat social inequalities between them.

6.2 Recommendations for future research

This study has examined the phenomenon of school choice towards private schooling by focusing on the comparison of two case studies referring to the Greek and the Swedish context. A broader exploration, though, of the school choice effects regarding social equity, would mean that further research should consider more representative cases throughout the globe. Future studies with international and comparative methodologies could deepen our understandings of educational phenomena and assist policy makers, according to Noah and Eckstein (1998). Additionally, intra-national and comparative research on the same topic area could shed light on the similarities and differences across Greece or Sweden regarding the forms of private schooling and the reasons behind private school choice.

While conducting the study, the author discovered that little literature has been created regarding school choice in the Greek context. Greek private schools, attracting a significant share of the total student population could be further researched in terms of social equity and their effects in society. Furthermore, future research could implement fruitful comparisons between public and private schools in a specific national context, in order to address their differences, as an attempt to inspire the design of upcoming reforms.

The potential effects of expanding school choice policy to other countries could also be examined. This future research recommendation, regards the international discourse, through an examination of influential organizations' policy reports. Recent studies refer to the introduction of 'free' school choice in developing countries, where private schools have already been introduced and PPPs are largely promoted. In contrast, at the same time, international organizations such as OECD and UNESCO, caution national governments for the negative social effects of such policies.

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Appendix A – Interview Guides

Interview Guide Education Professionals

Department of Education

Clarification note! This study is about private schooling and from now on we shall refer to the Swedish friskolor as private schools and to the communal schools as public.

Sections	Questions
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How long have you been working within education?• How long have you worked for this school?• Have you ever worked in a public school?
School Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you familiar with the term of “school choice”?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If yes, which are the first words or phrases that come to your mind when you hear “school choice”?○ If no, school choice is the opportunity that parents and students have to choose the school that they want to attend to, no matter if it is a public or a private one. Which are the first words or phrases that come to your mind when you heard “school choice”?• In your opinion, why should someone choose a school?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Depending on his/her needs? What kind of needs?• How should someone choose a school, in your opinion?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What kind of knowledge should one have in order to make a right choice?• What is your opinion about school choice?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is it something positive or negative from your perspective, and why? ○ If you imagine a scale from 1 meaning negative to 5 meaning positive, how would you rate “school choice”?
Private schooling phenomenon / social factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the past years, a significant increase in the number of students who attend private schools in Sweden has been observed. How can you explain this phenomenon based on your experience? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What social factors do you think that led to this rise according to your understanding?
Private school choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When it comes to the school you are working at, what are reasons that students prefer to attend this school instead of attending a public one? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the benefits or extras of this school comparing to the public schools nearby? • Now I would like us to speak more hypothetically, if you are or if you were a parent, what kind of school would you prefer for your child, a private or a public school and why? • Could you please rank the reasons why you would choose a private/public school according to their importance?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Education provision is state’s main responsibility”. How do you perceive this statement? • If you were in charge of proposing an educational reform regarding private schooling, what would you propose?

Interview Guide

Parents

Department of Education

Clarification note! This study is about private schooling and from now on we shall refer to the Swedish friskolor as private schools and to the communal schools as public.

Sections	Questions
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many children do you have attending school? • Are they/ is he or she always attending a private school? • Do you have any kind of experience of a public school?
School Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you familiar with the term of “school choice”? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, which are the first words or phrases that come to your mind when you hear “school choice”? ○ If no, school choice is the opportunity that parents and students have to choose the school that they want to attend to, no matter if it is a public or a private one. Which are the first words or phrases that come to your mind when you heard “school choice”? • In your opinion, why should someone choose a school? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Depending on his/her needs? What kind of needs? • How should someone choose a school, in your opinion? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What kind of knowledge should one have in order to make a right choice? • What is your opinion about school choice? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is it something positive or negative from your perspective, and why?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you imagine a scale from 1 meaning negative to 5 meaning positive, how would you rate “school choice”?
Private schooling phenomenon / social factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the past years, a significant increase in the number of students who attend private schools in Sweden has been observed. How can you explain this phenomenon based on your experience? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What social factors do you think that led to this rise according to your understanding?
Private school choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When it comes to the school that your child/ren attend at, what are reasons that you prefer this school instead of a public one? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the benefits or extras of this school comparing to the public schools nearby? • Could you please rank the reasons why you chose a private school according to their importance? • Under what conditions would you choose a public school for your child?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Education provision is state’s main responsibility”. How do you perceive this statement? • If you were in charge of proposing an educational reform regarding private schooling, what would you propose?

Appendix B – Information Page

Information Sheet for Education Professionals

Stockholm University
Department of Education
Master's Programme in International and Comparative Education

My name is Alexandra Farazouli and I am currently enrolled in the Masters of International and Comparative Education programme at Stockholm University. I am conducting a research to gain an understanding of private schooling in two countries (Sweden and Greece) and request your participation.

The main aims of the study are to examine the phenomenon of private schooling in primary education level in grades one to six and explore the factors that affect school choice towards private schools. My questions revolve around education professionals' understanding of the reasons why private schools attract more and more students by the passage of time.

The content of the interview will be audio recorded and will last approximately twenty to thirty minutes.

The content of this interview will be used for academic research purposes only. All participants and school names will be made anonymous and any identifiable information will be altered to ensure anonymity.

If you have further questions about this study please contact me at [@gmail.com](#) and +46 , or my thesis supervisor at [@edu.su.se](#) .

Thank you for your participation.

Information Sheet for Parents

**Stockholm
University**

Stockholm University

Department of Education

Master's Programme in International and Comparative Education

My name is Alexandra Farazouli and I am currently enrolled in the Masters of International and Comparative Education programme at Stockholm University. I am conducting a research to gain an understanding of private schooling in two countries (Sweden and Greece) and request your participation.

The main aims of the study are to examine the phenomenon of private schooling in primary education level in grades one to six and explore the factors that affect school choice towards private schools. My questions revolve around parents' perceptions regarding private schooling.

The content of the interview will be audio recorded and will last approximately twenty to thirty minutes.

The content of this interview will be used for academic research purposes only. All participants and school names will be made anonymous and any identifiable information will be altered to ensure anonymity.

If you have further questions about this study please contact me at _____@gmail.com and +46 _____, or my thesis supervisor at _____.@edu.su.se.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix C – Ethical Reference

Stockholm, 2018-02-06

To Whom It May Concern,

I hereby certify that Alexandra Farazouli, ~~1998-08-01~~, is a full-time (100%) registered student in the Master's Degree Programme in International and Comparative Education at the Department of Education at Stockholm University.

She is currently enrolled in the final term of the two-year Master's Degree programme. During this term, students collect data and write their Master's thesis. Alexandra will be conducting research on private schooling in Greece and Sweden. Her interviews will be focused on the educators' perception of private schooling.

Therefore, we kindly request that you provide Alexandra with the necessary permission and access in order for her to be able to conduct this research.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions.

Kind Regards

emma west
Programme Administrator
Department of Education
Stockholm University

Department of Education

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Frescativägen 54
www.edu.su.se

Telephone: +46 8 16 20 00
Emma.west@edu.su.se

Appendix D – Consent Form

Dear participant,

My name is Alexandra Farazouli and I kindly ask you to read and confirm by your signature the following statements about your participation in my research. Please tick or cross the statements that you agree with.

- ☐ I, the undersigned, have read and understood the Study Information Sheet provided by the researcher.
- ☐ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in the study will include being interviewed and audio recorded.
- ☐ I have been given adequate time to consider my decision and I agree to take part in the study.
- ☐ I understand that my personal details, such as name and employer will not be revealed to people outside the project.
- ☐ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any question about why I no longer want to take part.

Name of participant: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Stockholms universitet/Stockholm University
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**Stockholms
universitet**