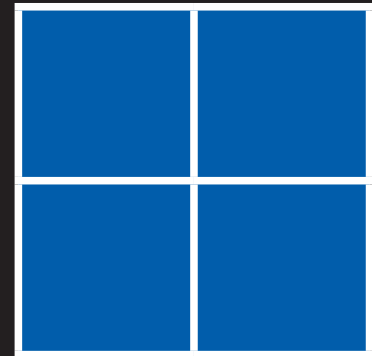


Do Private Schools Increase Social Class Segregation in Basic Education Schools in Norway?

Jon Lauglo

LLAKES Research Paper 6



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ISSN 2042-5929

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Do Private Schools Increase Social Class Segregation in Basic Education Schools in Norway?

Jon Lauglo¹

Do private schools receiving public financing subject to strict capping of the fees the schools are allowed to charge, have socio-economic biases in their recruitment of students? The paper examines the question in the light of relevant international research literature and analyses data from national administrative data regarding enrolments in basic education in Norway -- a country which has a policy of generous public financing of eligible private schools but at the same time a sharply restrictive policy on eligibility for public financing. In most types of such largely publicly financed private schools, there is some overrepresentation of children whose parents have higher education but no recruitment bias that favours families with higher incomes; and children of immigrants are not underrepresented in this small private education sub-system.

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Introduction

Should government encourage or discourage private education? This is a contentious issue in the politics of education in Norway, as in many other countries. Advocates of private education argue that private schools extend the choice families have, that private schools are of better educational quality, and that by providing competition for public schools², they stimulate the latter to improve. Opponents say that private schools detract from the goal of a common school for all children and youth regardless of family background, and that private education generally exacerbates social segregation in the education system between the ‘advantaged’ and the ‘disadvantaged’.

This study addresses the question of whether private schools disproportionately recruit students from families that are economically better off and in which the parents are highly educated. Are they in fact the preserve of children of the privileged? If private schools give an advantage, do children of immigrants get their fair share of access? Do private schools serve as a conduit of flight from public schools in urban neighbourhoods with a high concentration of immigrant families and high rates of socio-economic deprivation?

The analysis is based on a large database prepared by Statistics Norway, containing data on more than 619 000 children who were in primary and lower secondary education in 2003-2004. These stages enrol 6-16-year olds and comprise the age range of compulsory education in Norway. The file is based on data from national administrative registers.

It will be shown that, on the whole, private schools that are faith-based stand out by having a relatively egalitarian recruitment as to students’ socio-economic family background, and that there are generally few signs of socio-economic bias in the recruitment of pupils to the kind of private schools which in Norway receive substantial financing by government.

² In this paper “public school” refers to a school that in Norway is known as “*offentlig skole*”— public in the sense of not only being in principle “accessible to the public” (e.g., British “public schools”) but they are also owned and operated by government. They are not in Norway thought of as “state schools” because they are owned by local government, not by the nationally constituted “state”.

Variation in Characteristics of Private Schools

Countries differ greatly in the share which private schools have of total enrolments, and in the extent to which the government encourages such schooling with subsidies. Relevant figures on enrolment shares are shown by Haahrs (2007, p. 144) for 24 countries participating in the OECD's 2003 PISA study of 15-year-olds. The average across these 24 OECD countries was 13 per cent in (government-funded) private schools. At the low end among these countries are Iceland and Norway. At the high end is the Netherlands with 75 per cent of enrolments in private institutions, a country whose educational history also shows that compromises reached historically in the politics of religious pluralism can lead to private schooling on a mass scale.

Internationally, there is no clear tendency for private schools to outperform public ones in terms of 'academic quality', once account is taken of the students' family background. Analysis of the PISA data in Mathematics showed that in most countries the difference was not statistically significant after such controls. Haahr (2005, pp. 145-146) found that 'positive' effects of private education within certain countries disappeared entirely if one additionally controls at the school level for the effect of the socio-economic profile of the school's student intake, though Fuchs & Wössmann (2004) had previously detected an overall tendency for government-funded private schools to do better than public ones, in the combined sample for the 2000 PISA study. In my view private education is so strongly characterised by institutional variation that one needs to study how performance in different *types* of private schools compares with performance in public schools, in particular countries.

Internationally, there is much variation in how far private schools exacerbate reproduction of socio-economic inequality from generation to generation. When private schools serve as conduits to adult elite positions, socially-biased recruitment to such schools does pose equity problems. However, there is no international ironclad rule which says that 'private' always spells privilege and exacerbates social segregation in schooling. Nor are private schools *always* more costly for the poor, since public schools in some countries also charge tuition fees. In the slums of Nairobi in the late 1990s, the fees charged by nonformal private schools were lower than in (the much less accessible) state primary schools (Lauglo, 2004). The history of education in economically advanced countries shows examples of private schools meeting needs in places which are underserved by the state. In Norway, most public

secondary schools existing in the first half of the 20th century, outside of the bigger towns, had started as private schools, sometimes as private-public partnerships.³ Sometimes the private initiative was associated with particular cultural or religious values, but part of the attraction of private schools was simply that they provided the one secondary school that was locally available. In general, to a religious or cultural community within the larger society, running its own school can also have a wider function than merely the socialization of children to identities valued by that community. Schools can be looked at as a mean of perpetuating their organized community life (e.g., recruiting members, volunteers, and officials/clergy). A well known example is the Roman Catholic Church which has developed a large scale system of education in many countries, with or without government subsidies. Languages which lack standing in government schools, have also sometimes been promoted by private schools (e.g., private Finnish medium schools in 19th century Finland).

In general, private education is characterized by much diversity and this is an argument for disaggregating such schools into different types — as will be done in the present Norwegian study. Public schools are of course also diverse in some respects, but they share the characteristics of being owned and operated by local government and do not differ as to any declared pedagogic or philosophical orientation.

Social Segregation

It is hard to justify government financing of private schools if such schools clearly perpetuate socio-economic advantage from one generation to the next (although some economists might still justify this in terms of allocative efficiency). The extent of bias in recruitment to private schools in terms of socio-economic family background is therefore of special interest to policy makers concerned with social justice.

As just noted, however, private education can also reinforce cultural particularism which does not necessarily correlate strongly with a hierarchy of socio-economic statuses, for example, certain religious denominations, or groups based on language and other bases of ethnic identity. The views that observers have of private schools serving such sectional cultural communities, would likely depend on their ideology and extent of affinity with the concerned cultural community.

³ John Craig of the University of Chicago is conducting research into the evolution of these schools.

On the one hand, there is the statist and nation-building argument that the role public schools should serve as meeting grounds for young people of diverse cultural backgrounds, and that private schools serving particular cultural segments or religious ‘flocks’ might harm the achievement of a sense of common citizenship. Further, under any regime which has an agenda of far-reaching social transformation, public schools will be seen as tools for shaping future generations on the regime’s own transformative terms. A school is then an agent of the state, not an extension of the family. More traditional nation-building concerns can also fuel scepticism of sectional private education, not only in an early period of nation-building but also if a country has a substantial influx of immigrants who might wish to establish their own schools to preserve their own identity. Should such schools not only be tolerated and regulated by government but even actively supported by financial measures?

The broad political current which historically has been most hospitable to private schools, regardless of their particular cultural orientation, is Liberalism. A liberal perspective values diversity, competition, and the right of parents to educate their children in keeping with their own faith and culture. The state is not ‘society’. In that perspective, society consists of individual citizens and their families, the associations which they voluntarily join, and the local government units that are near the citizens. The state has a limited and mainly facilitating role. The school in that view is primarily an extension of the family and of the local and civil society, not of the state. ‘Choice’ is favoured because it derives from the main value of freedom from restraint. Schools run by voluntary associations are encouraged, and if ‘public’, they should be run by bodies as close as possible to the citizens and families directly concerned.

Apart from ideologically derived positions, judgements about such private schools will be conditioned by whether social cohesion is perceived to be at serious risk or not. It may be quite unproblematic to give wide play to diversity in private education, in a relatively homogeneous society with a well-established legitimacy. However, in a sharply divided society, with different cultural communities pitted against each other, views on ‘sectional’ private education may depend on how far one is committed to the legitimacy of the state.

Acceptance of segregated private systems serving different communities may also rest upon judgements about politically necessary compromises, rather than on ideology.

The concept of 'segregation' generally carries negative connotations. 'Community', on the other hand, has positive connotations. Yet the two are positively linked in Coleman's (1988) theorizing about private schools and social capital for education. He stressed the value of socially *closed* communities for effective socialization of the young, and he postulated (but never tested) that children in faith-based private schools benefit academically from family, church and school acting in concert with each other to keep the young on the right track during their transition to adult roles. It would seem that Coleman's theory implies that rather than being a problem associated with private schools, their identification with a socially segregated 'community' is a precondition for their success in terms of academic achievement. This is however a hypotheses which scarcely has been subject to any systematic testing across country contexts.

Norway, in the past, has often been perceived as one of the more culturally homogeneous countries in Europe, whose cohesion definitely was not at risk. One aspect of cultural particularism that has received some attention in Norway is the result of immigration. Questions of judgement can be raised about private education and immigrant children. Are integration imperatives so important that there is reason to be especially concerned that children of immigrants attend public schools? Should private Muslim schools catering to immigrant groups as a matter of course be eligible for State support in line with Christian schools?

In the present study we cannot address empirically the many interesting issues connected with private schools and the pros and cons of cultural segregation. Socio-economic segregation is clearly but a small part of the larger theme of private education and social segregation. We shall however address two much more limited questions: Do immigrant children have their fair share of access to private schools? Do private schools serve as a means of flight from their local public school for a significant portion of families living in neighbourhoods with a very high proportion of immigrant children?

International Research on the Effects of ‘Choice’

Arguments about the pros and cons of support for private schooling are part of the larger debate about the consequences of encouraging widened choice of schools for families and students. Some national systems have a longer record of school choice policies, either choice among public schools, or by additional measures that establish a ‘level playing field’ in terms of capitation grants from government to both public and private provisions. In either case, schools receive a capitation grant which is tantamount to a voucher system, whereby resources ‘follow the student’. Other countries have introduced support for private schools on a more limited scale. What are the social segregation effects of such policies?

The countries discussed below are chosen simply on the grounds that the author has been able to locate research on effects of choice that refers to these countries, and because at least some of them have had a certain prominence in international policy debate about such effects.

Effects of School Choice in New Zealand and Chile

Since 1989 New Zealand has given extensive self government to schools through a charter extended by the state to each school. Schools are given a capitation grant, with extra resources for schools depending on their proportion of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, and on the proportion ethnic minorities. Schools need state approval for their admissions criteria. Research on the New Zealand model has pointed to declining enrolments and middle class flight from schools in socio-economically deprived inner city areas (Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Lauder *et al.*, 1999).

Chile is another example of introducing choice of school combined with financing vouchers. Private schools were, in this case, also allowed to compete ‘on a level playing field’ with public schools for students. Change in this direction started in the 1980s and led to declining enrolment in public schools and flight of middle class families to private schools. Trends in learning outcomes showed no improvement during this period of increased competition among schools (Schiefelbein and Schiefelbein, 2001; Carnoy, 1988). Thus, the radical ‘choice’ policies tried out in these countries have a cost in terms of increased social segregation with adverse effects for the schools from which ‘flight’ has occurred.

Exit from Districts with Schools of Low Reputation — an Example from France

In countries with no choice of school, families can move to districts with local schools that they perceive to be better. As a result, fixed catchment areas for public schools and lack of access to private education will possibly reinforce residential socio-economic segregation — or so it is argued in advocacy for ‘choice’: parents who care strongly about their children’s education migrate from neighbourhoods with public schools of low reputation to areas with better schools, thus possibly depriving socially deprived areas of especially valuable community members. On the other hand, under conditions of choice of school or if affordable private schools were within reach, such parents might stay in their original neighbourhood. So goes a well-known chain of reasoning that is invoked in support of ‘choice’.

There is qualitative research on how families seek to circumvent fixed catchment boundaries. France has strict rules about catchment areas for public schools. A case study by Broccolichi and van Zanten (2000) on schooling in the *banlieus* (suburbs) in metropolitan Paris with a high concentration of North African immigrant families has described how some families seek admission to private schools for their children as an escape from public schools, and how others find ways of bending the rules concerning registration of residence, in order to get their children into schools outside the ghetto. One would think that the greater the deprivation and the poorer the public safety is, and the more run down and educationally depressing the local schools are, the stronger will be the urge to ‘exit if you can’ by one means or another, leaving behind those who are trapped for lack of resources.

Effects of School Choice in England

Some studies of urban localities in the English part of the United Kingdom conclude that stronger social segregation has resulted from policy change that enabled families to seek admission to public secondary schools regardless of residence (Ball, 2003; Gerwitz *et al.*, 1995). However, a long-term national trend of increased social segregation in education during these years has been disputed. Gorard *et al.* (2002) analyzed data from all secondary schools in England regarding the first ten years (1989-1999) after the abolition of catchment areas, and found only one single school with falling enrolment and increased social disadvantage during this period. They argue that segregation trends are more strongly shaped by change in demography and in the residential distribution of different social classes than by

policies on choice of school. (See also Gorard *et al.*, 2003). More recently, Gorard and his colleagues (Taylor *et al.*, 2005) have shown that local education authorities in which schools themselves are allowed to set their admissions regulations show somewhat stronger social segregation among schools than other authorities.

The United States

As in the United Kingdom, effects of increased 'choice' are a research theme of contested findings and interpretations in the United States. In the United States, the issue of choice is strongly connected with the matter of whether public funds should be used for private education. Is support for private religious education compatible with the Constitutional separation between state and church? Opposition to public finance for private schools is also based on the fear that public schools in low income areas with a high concentration of racial/ethnic minorities will be further weakened by the siphoning off of students to private education.

On the positive side, Coleman and Hoffer (1987) have shown that Roman Catholic schools have given families in working class areas a better chance of upward social mobility for their children. Especially ethnic minority students from low-income families achieve gains in learning outcomes from attending Catholic rather than public high schools. On the negative side, multivariate analysis of national data sets confirms that private education on the whole is socio-economically exclusive in a manner which reinforces social segregation: Afro-Americans and Hispanics are greatly underrepresented, use of private education is more frequent among higher income groups, and there is a certain flight to private education among whites and Hispanics from public schools with a high proportion of Afro-American students (Fairlie and Resch, 2002).

In states which provide some financial support to 'charter schools', the socio-economic profile of student intake tends to reflect the neighbourhood where such schools are located. It is also influenced by the conditions of public support to such schools, which in turn affects the level of fees that charter schools are allowed to charge. Each school is run by its own board and has a charter issued by the state, according to which it receives support for a specified and renewable period, usually five years. On average, such schools receive state funds equivalent to about 45% of estimated cost per student in public schools. The financing

formulas are (at least in some states) skewed in favour of the lower and less costly stages of schooling, thus covering with subsidies less of the cost incurred at the higher levels. Charter schools must generally cover a considerable portion of their operating costs by means of tuition fees and voluntary contributions from their students' families. Tight finance induces them also to recruit less costly teachers than those public schools employ.

In many cases, charter schools have been established in localities where there is strong dissatisfaction with public schools, often in economically depressed inner city areas with a large proportion of minorities. Hoxby (2003, pp. 57-58) used national data from 2000-01 to compare recruitment to charter schools with recruitment to their nearest public school. She concludes that charter schools 'are disproportionately drawing students who have suffered from discrimination, not undue preference, in the public schools' (Afro-Americans, Hispanics, the poor). There is, however, considerable variation in this pattern.

Using data from the state of Michigan (which has a high frequency of charter schools), Miron and Nelson (2002, pp. 122) found signs of social segregation by race: 'The data suggest a process by which white students are migrating to charter schools, leaving an ever higher concentration of black students in district schools'. They also show how commercial Education Management Organizations (EMOs) act as umbrella organizations and initiating agents for a growing proportion of charter schools, nationally as well as in Michigan. They suggest that involving EMOs can tempt schools to give preference to applicants thought to be good prospects for positive contributions to the school's performance indicators. They say that EMO schools are inclined to steer away applicants who give an impression of weak academic potential and that 'problem students' are encouraged to leave. They note that 'students returning to the local school district [from charter schools] are often in need of special education services or have records of disciplinary problems' (p. 122). Asher and Wamba (2005) have reviewed evidence on such 'steering away' of applicants who could become costly or especially taxing on the school's human resources. They have the impression that such practices are widespread.

On the whole, social segregation tendencies in charter schools do not seem to be primarily connected with the staple indicators of 'home background' (social class, parental education, income, and ethnicity). Admission is simply discouraged if admission officers think the

applicant's educability is so weak that unusually great resources would be required — or if the school does not possess the needed expertise.

According to Scott (2005), advocates and opponents of choice both tend to gravitate towards unjustifiably categorical generalizations about effects of school choice. She argues that there is a need to recognize that effects of choice depend on the context. One would think that the level of school fees will matter for who will apply; and fees are to a large extent a function of the portion of costs covered by public subsidies to charter schools. Other factors likely to make a difference are constraints which the regulatory mechanism imposes on the school's admissions regime, the characteristics of the target group of students, and the capacity of the monitoring agency to hold schools to their charter.

Sweden

Sweden has, since the early 1990s, gradually widened the choice of school partly by subsidizing private schools and also by introducing liberalized choice among public schools. At basic school level (ages 6-16) enrolment in private education has risen to 7% or more. Arnman *et al.* (2005) reviewed relevant studies over the years on the broader issues of education and social integration in Swedish schools and elicited views by some 'key informants' regarding consequences of widened choice among schools (public schools as well as private ones). They have the view that choice legitimates social segregation in education and is thus contrary to the egalitarian tradition in Swedish education.

An earlier review by the National Swedish Education Agency (Skolverket, 2003, p. 12) refers to studies on samples of parents and school administrators and concludes that it is primarily the well-educated parents in the larger urban areas who are interested in widened choice of school (both access to private schools and choice among accessible public schools). There is also a research base showing that parents with children in private schools disproportionately often have higher education. The report also refers to some case studies of individual schools which fit the thesis that choice of school has led to increased segregation among schools with regard to students' ethnicity and level of performance. A recent update from the National Education Agency (Skolverket, 2005) shows that in upper secondary education, there is more 'value added' in terms of grade point average in private schools than in municipal ones, as far as the general education tracks are concerned, when account is taken of the grade point

average which students received in lower secondary education, but that this does not apply to vocational tracks.

Comment

The findings referred to above indicate a tendency for children with university-educated parents to be overrepresented in such schools. One would expect a similar finding in Norway. Otherwise the literature point to the vulnerability of public schools in inner city socially deprived areas to ‘middle class flight’ when policies widen families’ choice of school. The experience of New Zealand indicates that once a process of flight has started, it becomes difficult to turn such schools around simply by mobilizing extra funding for them (Fiske and Ladd, 2000).

The Norwegian Context

Norway has a tradition of public schools run by municipal local government, under strong state regulation. In nearly all municipalities, schools at the basic education stage (ages 6-16) serve geographically defined catchment areas. Since 1971⁴ there has been a legislative basis for subsidizing private schools so generously that one could impose upon these schools a distinctly low ceiling for the tuition fees they are allowed to charge. The other side of policy has been very tight restrictions on the kind of private schools that would be eligible for subsidy. According to the 1985 Private Schools Act, to be eligible, a school would either need to make its case for subsidy on its special orientation as to ‘view of life’ (in effect religion), or it would need to practice an ‘alternative pedagogy’ as compared to public schools.⁵ There were more standard requirements as well, which were also applied to public schools, as to staff, curriculum, facilities, and admission of students.

Religious minorities play a major role within the distinctly small Norwegian sector of private schools (cf. table 1). Various denominations and lay groups which are not part of the Norwegian Lutheran state church run more than 50 faith-based school units at basic education level. Lay organisations affiliated with the Lutheran state church have not sought to establish

⁴Previously support was given to private schools directly by Parliament on an ad hoc basis.

⁵ At the post-compulsory upper secondary level (post age 16), there was the additional provision that private schools could qualify if they offer vocational courses not covered by public provisions in the area concerned.

their own schools at basic level, but have rather concentrated at upper secondary level (ages 6-19). The few schools which these organizations run in basic education are in effect lower-secondary departments of schools which are mainly post-compulsory.

While support for faith-based private education has been identified with parties on the centre-right of Norwegian politics, support for private schools projecting child-centred forms of 'alternative pedagogy' has been identified with middle class 'progressives' on the left wing of Norwegian politics. Support for 'alternative pedagogy' has then been justified as a means of trying out and institutionalizing within private education, methods which would be of value as a source of inspiration for the public school system. The main types of education which are recognized by the Ministry of Education as such legitimate 'alternatives' are Maria Montessori pedagogy and Rudolf Steiner pedagogy (in some countries known also as Waldorf schools).

The workings of the 1985 Act on private schools resulted in two variants of the Montessori school, larger schools in urban areas serving mainly families with a clear preference for this pedagogy (often well-educated middle class families), and on the other hand distinctly small schools in rural communities. The latter serve families for whom the Montessori-affiliation originally was sought in order to get government funding so that their local school could be kept going as a private school when the municipality wanted to close it. This model, which is an unintended result of Norwegian conditionalities for support to private schools, is quite different to other models of private schooling discussed above.

To ensure that private schools would not become a preserve of well to do families, the schools were given a capitation grant equivalent to 85 per cent of the estimated per pupil expenditure in public schools. Account was taken of higher unit costs in smaller schools and in the higher stages of schooling. Schools were subjected to fee capping: they were allowed to charge fees corresponding to at most the remaining 15 per cent of estimated unit cost in the public schools. For a primary school (grades 1 through 7) with 40-200 pupils, the ceiling for allowed fees in 2003-2004 would have been about NOK 7000 annually (about €875). This amounts to only 1.5 per cent of the estimated median family income, after tax, for parents with children in basic education in Norway during 2003-2004 — this means a very low cost to the great majority of families with children of school age.

In 2003 and 2004, legislation by a centre-right government widened eligibility for government subsidies dramatically. Any private school would be eligible regardless of any special philosophical or religious orientation, or of any particular style of pedagogy, so long as it met the standard requirements which public schools have as to curriculum, facilities, staffing, admission, etc. The government also reinforced the duty of local governments to make the same level of extra resources available for private schools as for public ones, in the case of pupils diagnosed with special educational needs (e.g., immigrant children in need of special tutoring in Norwegian). However, a centre-left government took power in 2005 and reversed the changes of its predecessor, and more or less reinstated the regulatory framework which had been in force before 2003. Before this reversal, base-line studies were conducted on two main policy concerns: effects of private schools on learning outcomes, and effects on social segregation. The present paper shows the main findings on social segregation with regard to basic education. These findings have been published in greater detail in Norwegian (Helland and Lauglo, 2005, 2007). A similar analysis with broadly similar findings has also been carried out of upper secondary education (ages 16-19) (Helland and Lauglo, 2006).

Data and Methods

Through Statistics Norway, a large data set from national administrative registers was made available, with safeguards for privacy of information. It included all children in Norway who during the school year 2003-2004 were of basic-school age; and it provided information about *inter alia*, gender, private school registration by type of school (if applicable), place of residence as to public school catchment area, parents' income, education, occupation, place of birth and family status.

The complete file of 619,412 observations embraces the total population of 'basic-school aged' children in Norway during 2003-2004. Basic school in Norway includes the full range of compulsory education, both primary and lower secondary schooling. Information was supplied for well above 95 per cent of this population, on such traits as parental income, education, family status, and immigrant background. The rate of missing information was decidedly higher regarding parental occupation and labour market status.⁶ On the whole, the

⁶Information was missing for 41 per cent about their mothers' occupation (32 per cent of their fathers'). For 23 per cent of the students information was missing about the duration of their mother's work week (for students' fathers it was 16 per cent).

research team at the Institute NIFU STEP carrying out the analysis of social segregation tendencies had the good fortune of working with unusually large and complete national data.

This paper will use simple cross tabulations. However, the findings to be shown also found consistent support in multivariate logistic regression (Helland and Lauglo 2005, 2006, 2007).

Types of Private Schools in Basic Education

Table 1 shows number of schools and enrolment for the types of government-supported private schools which were operational in Norway at the level of basic education (ages six to 16) during the 2003-04 school year.

All in all, there were 113 government-supported private schools with a total enrolment of nearly 12,000 children. These constituted only 1.9 per cent of all enrolments nationally in basic education. Thus, we are looking at a national system with a distinctly low rate of enrolment in private basic education.

The two large categories of schools are Steiner-schools and schools run by various Protestant denominations outside of the Lutheran state church. Together they account for more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the enrolments in private schools.

Table 1: Private School Enrolments in Norwegian Basic Education 2003-2004

School type	Number of schools	Enrolment	% of private school enrolment	% of enrolment in all schools (public and private)
Muslim school	1	112	0.9	0.0
Protestant schools, outside state church	53	4,171	35.2	0.7
Catholic schools	3	976	8.2	0.2
Schools within the Lutheran state church	4	892	7.5	0.1
Rudolf Steiner schools	29	4,385	37.0	0.7
Maria Montessori schools	21	1,138	9.6	0.2
International schools	2	162	1.4	0.0
All private schools	113	11,836	100.-	1.9

There were also 21 schools run according to Montessori pedagogy (and which typically cover only the primary stage). Thirteen of these were located in small rural communities. When these communities were confronted with the prospect of losing their school due to municipal school-consolidation, going private and shifting to Montessori pedagogy enabled them to retain a local school, since they became eligible for state funding under the Private Schools Act.⁷

At the basic level of education there are few private schools run by voluntary organizations affiliated with the Lutheran state church, because these organizations, as a matter of policy, have decided not to compete with public schools at the basic education stage. In fact, three of the four schools included here are lower-secondary departments of larger school units which are mainly upper secondary institutions. For religious schools run by organizations **outside** the Lutheran state church, one would expect to find close relations between the school and a local congregation of the minority denomination concerned.

⁷In one case, the reason for the transfer to Montessori was community opposition to their school being included under a curriculum variant designed for the core geographical areas of Sami population.

Selection Biases in Recruitment to Private Schools?

Table 2 shows the proportion of children with different characteristics (most pertain to their 'home background') who are enrolled in the different types of school.⁸ The table shows greater variation *among* different types of private schools than *between* private schools in the aggregate and public schools — with respect to indicators of home background.

The table starts by showing statistics on the categories that constitute opposite extremes on the rural – urban dimension, as to municipalities in which pupils live (the middle range of municipalities are omitted). Pupils in private schools are considerably overrepresented in the larger urban areas, and underrepresented in the rural peripheries — as compared to pupils in public schools. But there is an exception: one sees a strong representation of Montessori schools in the sparsely-populated municipalities. As mentioned, a Montessori-affiliation may serve to keep the local school alive, for parents who have striven to prevent the closure of their local school. Otherwise, the only other schools that have a reach into the rural periphery are run by Protestant groups that are unaffiliated with the state church.

Are private schools the preserve of the rich? The income measure used is deliberately chosen so as to bring out the market strength of the parents, rather than merely their consumption resources. It picks up income from employment or business prior to taxes, and it excludes welfare transfers.⁹ Still, there is no overall tendency for students in private schools to come from economically better-off families. The trend is in the opposite direction, especially with regard to mothers' income. The two largest categories of pupils, those at Steiner schools and those at protestant schools outside the state church, have parental earnings which are lower than those of pupils in public schools. In particular, the income of the mothers of pupils in the protestant schools outside the state church is very far below the national average, probably because many choose the traditional role of foregoing gainful employment in order to devote more time to their children's upbringing.

⁸ Statistics on gender are not reported since there was hardly any difference among the types of school shown here, as regards the gender ratio. Schools are mixed-sex throughout.

⁹ The provided data would not be well suited for estimating total family income, because in those cases where a pupil's parents do not live in the same household (more than 35% of the pupils), the income of other earners than the parent, in the same household, is not available. Also we do not in such cases have data on the magnitude of child support paid by the absent parent.

Two groups stand out by having distinctly richer fathers: students in the lower secondary departments of the schools run by voluntary associations which *are* affiliated with the state church, and students at the two international schools. In the latter case, however, the mothers' income is decidedly below the national average, possibly suggesting a higher proportion of housewives among the international families which may be especially attracted to these two international basic education schools that secured government support on the grounds of pedagogic innovativeness.

Parental education is a quite different matter. For all but one type of school, there is a clear tendency for students at private schools to have better educated parents. The one exception is again interesting: the fairly large group of students at schools run by protestant denominations outside the Lutheran state church deviate very little from students at public schools, probably reflecting the 'popular' character of independent protestant revivalism in Norway, as in some other countries.

The table shows sharp differences among types of school as to the family circumstances in the pupils' home. For this generation of children, 6/10 grow up in what may be described as traditional family structures: their parents are living together and married to each other. There is also much variation. Among faith-based protestant schools, 8/10 of the pupils have such families — as contrasted to 5/10 of the students at Rudolf Steiner schools. Interestingly, at the three Catholic schools, the percentage of pupils in traditional families is much the same as in the general population of students — in spite of the strict policy of the Roman Catholic Church on cohabitation and divorce. On the other hand, the findings would fit Catholic schools recruiting students far beyond their own religious flock and frequently from secularized backgrounds.

Table 2: Home Background of Pupils in Basic Education, by Type of School, School Year 2003-2004

Indicators of pupils' background	Type of private school							Public schools	All Schools
	Protestant, outside the state church	Roman Catholic	Lay org. within Lutheran state church	Steiner	Montessor	Inter-national	All private schools		
Location									
% in "remote" municipalities	4.7	0.2	0.8	2.2	21.8	0.0	4.6	17.7	17.0
% in larger urban area	55.0	88.5	86.7	68.5	50.0	4.9	64.3	47.1	47.4
Median income before taxes & transfers 2002 (NOK '000s)									
Father	322	340	421	324	341	406	331	336	336
Mother	114	217	226	180	195	111	159	191	190
Parents have higher education?									
% of fathers	33.4	56.9	56.5	54.3	48.9	48.7	46.3	27.9	28.3
% of mothers	34.2	60.4	59.8	60.1	56.5	53.2	50.2	31.8	32.2
Pupil's parents have basic education or less?									
% of fathers	7.7	5.5	3.9	5.7	7.3	5.2	6.5	10.2	10.1
% of mothers	7.7	5.6	2.9	4.1	4.2	7.2	5.6	8.9	8.8
% with parents married & living together	82.1	62.1	81.5	50.1	64.5	64.6	66.4	60.9	61.0
% with both parents immigrants	7.1	31.3	2.2	4.5	3.2	11.7	8.2	6.9	6.9
% with both parents from non-western country	5.6	23.3	1.8	1.1	1.1	5.9	5.4	5.0	5.0
Number of cases	4171	976	892	4389	1138	162	11,836	607,576	619,412

All variables shown had less than 5% missing information.

Do private schools under-recruit of children of immigrant families? The two bottom rows of percentage series in the table show that immigrant children in general, and within this larger group also children of immigrants from non-Western countries, are generally overrepresented in private schools in Norway. But there is much variation regarding the type of private school. Immigrant families very rarely choose schools that are supported by the government on account of progressive alternative pedagogy — Rudolf Steiner schools, and Montessori schools. Rather, their overall strong representation is due to extremely strong presence in the three Catholic schools, and to their strong showing in the large group of schools run by other religious denominations outside the state church.

Analysis on 2150 children living in school catchment areas in which private education absorbs at least 10 per cent of locally resident children, did not alter the overall impression of surprisingly egalitarian recruitment conveyed by table 2 (Helland and Lauglo 2005, pp. 44-45). Overall, table 2 shows that private schools in Norway are hardly a preserve of socio-economic privilege. There is no income effect, but then the fees are, by government intervention, kept at a very affordable level. The strongest pointer towards socially exclusive selection is the effect of parental education — especially parents having higher education. However, this effect is negligible in the relatively large number of schools run by protestant congregations outside the state church.

‘Flight’ to Private Schools from Neighbourhoods with Low Income and High Immigrant Presence?

Do private schools in Norway facilitate flight of better-off and better-educated families from those urban schools in which very large proportions of children come from immigrant homes?

There are two urban areas in Norway with strikingly strong representation in the school catchment areas of children whose parents are immigrants from non-Western countries — the east end of Oslo and certain neighbourhoods in the close-by town of Drammen. Overall, the percent of school-age children with such a background was 24 per cent in Oslo and 17 per cent in Drammen in 2003-04 (as compared to a national average of 5 per cent – cf. Table 2). A great many nationality groups are represented among the immigrants, and the largest one is Pakistani.

About 4/9 of children of school age in Oslo live in school catchment areas in which 1/3 or more of the children's parents have a non-Western immigrant background. Thus, neighbourhoods with a high immigrant presence are now very common, at the same time the city has become ethnically and socio-economically stratified. Both in Oslo and in Drammen, such neighbourhoods are characterised by sharply lower income levels and lower education levels than what is the case for those residential areas which are strongly dominated by native Norwegians (Helland and Lauglo 2005, Table 4, p. 52). Does such ethnic and socio-economic stratification lead to flight from local public schools over to private schools — similarly to what Fiske and Ladd (2000) found in certain urban low income areas with a strong minority presence in New Zealand, after the country abolished school catchment areas?

The indicators in Table 3 are similar to those in Table 2, but in Table 3 the data are from Oslo and Drammen only. Because of fewer observations, a smaller number of categories is appropriate for denoting types of private schools. The schools are grouped according to the two rationales recognized by the Private Schools Act of 1985: 'view of life based' (faith based in practice) or 'alternative pedagogy'. The former will include all kinds of religious schools, and the latter combines mainly Steiner and Montessori schools. Altogether 744 students in these urban locations attended 22 private schools. Of these, 604 students were in 10 faith-based schools, and 40 students were in 12 'alternative pedagogy' schools. Though the private schools concerned were accessible to students from these neighbourhoods, they were not necessarily located *in* these neighbourhoods.

Education Effects

In these 'high immigrant' and low-income locations, we again find effects of parental education. The percentage of parents having higher education is greater in private schools than in public schools: a difference of 19 percentage points for fathers, and 24 points for mothers. However, with regard to fathers, the magnitude of *this gap* is the same as it was in Table 2 for Norway as a whole (18 percentage points). With regard to the mothers, the gap appears to be slightly greater than in Table 2, where it was 19 percentage points.

Table 3: Who Goes to Private Schools in those Neighbourhoods in Oslo and Drammen where more than 1/3 of School Children’s Parents Are Born in Non-Western Countries?

	Private schools			Public schools	All schools
	Faith-based school ('view of life' rationale)	School based on 'alternative pedagogy'	All private schools		
Number of schools	10	12	22	*	*
Number of students	604	140	744	21,036	21,780
% students by type of school	2.8	0.6	3.4	96.6	100.-
Family background characteristics					
Median income in 2002 before taxes and transfers					
Father (NOK '000)	295.0	272.8	291.3	267.3	268.6
Mother (NOK '000)	178.1	153.8	175.5	135.3	137.2
% with higher education					
Father	40.7	42.6	41.1	23.6	24.2
Mother	44.1	55.8	46.5	22.2	22.9
% with basic education or less					
Father	12.1	10.1	11.7	21.1	20.8
Mother	10.3	5.8	9.4	25.1	24.5
% parents living together	64.9	45.7	61.4	62.6	62.6
% parents living together and married	62.7	30.0	56.6	56.6	56.6
% Both parents are immigrants	51.2	7.1	42.9	51.6	51.3
% Both parents immigrants from a non-western country	45.8	3.6	37.9	46.9	46.6
% Both parents from non-western country and student born abroad	6.3	0	5.1	10.8	10.6

*Number of schools 'large' but not tabulated.

As one would expect, there is an opposite pattern for parents having only 'basic education'. More pupils in public schools than in the private ones have parents with such a background. The chance of such families making use of private education is greater in these areas than it was for Norway as a whole, as was shown in Table 2.

Family Status

There is no difference overall regarding family status indicators between children in private schools and children in public schools. Like the pattern in Table 2, there is a higher proportion of children growing up in traditional families in the faith-based private schools than in other types of schools.

Immigration Status of Family

How far do private schools in these locations function as facilitators of flight from public schools? If it occurs, such a flight would not necessarily be a sign of racism. Parents can simply look for an escape from classes in which many children have a weak grasp of Norwegian, and it could attract not only ethnic Norwegian families but immigrant families as well. However, if any such flight occurs, it is not strong enough to affect the ethnic composition of the public schools in these neighbourhoods, since the percentage of immigrant children in all schools is the same as the proportion in public schools. The percentage from these neighbourhoods in private schools is 3.4 per cent which is lower than in the towns in which these neighbourhoods are located. This suggests that the main drive behind children going to private schools from these neighbourhoods is not the unusually high immigrant presence in the public schools in these locations (although it is not possible to assess whether families relocated or not in this cross-sectional analysis).

Immigrant families from these neighbourhoods are underrepresented in private schools (the two bottom rows in Table 3); in spite of the overall strong representation nationally of immigrant families in private schools (Table 2). As in the national figures, immigrant families are strikingly underrepresented in alternative pedagogy schools, and well represented in faith-based schools. Among the immigrant population from non-Western countries in these towns, a substantial proportion comes from predominantly Muslim countries. About 2/3 have an Asian background, by far the largest group consisting of immigrants from Pakistan. There are also substantial numbers in the Oslo and Drammen areas from Turkey and North African countries. Yet, the opportunity to send children to a Muslim school hardly existed. At the time, there was only one Muslim school in Oslo, with 112 pupils, and none in Drammen. The overall strong representation of children from non-Western backgrounds in the faith-based schools is, therefore, especially striking.

It is known from other data sets that the children of immigrants in Oslo engage constructively with school, have high educational ambitions, and they work harder than others (Lauglo, 2000). It appears that the schools which are looked to for such mobility purposes by immigrant parents are those with a reputation of more traditional methods, not private schools identified by the government as being of special interest because of child-centred teaching methods.

Is there Self Selection to Private Schools of Families with Higher Income?

In these urban locations with relatively low-income, parental income has an effect on children's propensity to attend a private school. The median gross earnings of fathers of children attending private schools was NOK 291,000 in these neighbourhoods. This is substantially lower than the median noted in Table 2 for the country as a whole for such fathers (NOK 331,000), yet it is higher than the earnings of fathers of children attending public school in these same neighbourhoods (NOK 267,000). We see a similar pattern for the mothers' earnings. Thus, the *earning capacity* of families sending children to private schools in these urban locations is higher than the capacity of those using local public schools. In that sense there is some self selection to private schools from the economically more successful families, unlike the pattern found for the country as a whole.

However, *earnings* are only a portion of income. The proportion of parents receiving welfare benefits is much higher in these locations than in other areas of the same towns: about 20 per cent as compared to about eight per cent. The proportion is especially high (about 30 per cent) among parents who are immigrants from non-Western countries (Helland and Lauglo, 2005 p. 36). The parents' income *after taxes, inclusive of welfare transfers*, is a better measure of the economic resources which parents have at their disposal—as distinct from their own market power. Table 4 shows results for income after taxes and transfers. Only in the faith-based private schools is fathers' median income higher than in public schools. The median is actually *lower* for the 140 students who are in the schools with alternative pedagogy, than among fathers with children in the local public schools. For mothers' income, the order is reversed between the two broad categories of private school. *The difference in the disposable income between users of private schools, and those using public schools in these locations is quite modest.* An annual gap of NOK 10,000 amounts to EURO 1276 at the current exchange rate.

Overall, the effects of income on the probability of sending a child to a private school, from these low income neighbourhoods, seem low and inconsistent. The act of applying to private schools signifies agency to pursue a rarely chosen option, not only a preference for such schools. It is then interesting to note that in so far as there are income effects on the choice of private education, these primarily reflect the successful agency in the market (earnings before

taxes and transfers), rather than merely a family's spending power (income after taxes and transfers).

Table 4: Median Income after Tax in 2002 of Students' Parents, by Types of School, in Catchment Areas in Oslo and Drammen in which at least 1/3 of the Students' Parents are Immigrants from Non-Western Countries

	Students in faith based private schools	Students in private schools with alternative pedagogy	All students in private schools	Students in public schools	All students
Father's after-tax income (NOK '000s)	230.6	195.3	225.2	219.1	219.2

Could this finding suggest that private education drains away from the public schools in these neighbourhoods, children from more resourceful families in terms of *other* characteristics than their economic resources or education level? Parents who are an educational asset to their children and to the schools attended by their children, are not confined to those in certain educational or social strata.¹⁰ We had no data to assess this issue, but the scale of use of private schools in these neighbourhoods was so low that any such effect on local public schools must have been minimal.

Does Private Education Yield Better Learning Outcomes?

Within the same evaluation project of private education in Norway, learning outcomes were examined by Hans Bonesrønning and his colleagues at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (Bonesrønning *et al.*, 2005; Bonesrønning and Naper, 2006). As measures of educational achievement, they used the scores of students in their final year of basic education on National Achievement tests administered in the spring of 2004, in Mathematics, Norwegian and English. They also collected information on grades received in subjects in grade 10, at the end of basic education, and for students in programmes preparing for higher education in the first year of post-compulsory education. As in the study on social

¹⁰ Analysis of data from the Youth in Norway 2002 survey (a large scale survey carried out by NOVA—Norwegian Social Research), shows that children do better in school when they have families who are engaged in the public domain (Lauglo & Øia 2006), that is, when parents talk with their children about politics and social issues. This effect is quite strong after statistical controls for parental education and other measures of the family's cultural capital. Another study (on youth in Oslo) based on large scale surveys, shows that children from non-Western immigrant backgrounds, benefit educationally from the strong family bonds which characterise their families (Lauglo 2000).

segregation effects, they worked with administrative register data on entire national cohorts of students, again furnished and anonymized by Statistics Norway. They found that students in private schools had higher average scores on national achievement tests both in grade 10 and 4, with more pronounced differences in grade 10 than in 4. The difference in average scores persists (but with reduced magnitude) after controlling for *inter alia* parental income and education.

Private schools have lower student/teacher ratios than municipal schools, but higher proportions of teachers who have not completed their training in pedagogy. After correcting these differences in teaching inputs, the differences between private and public schools regarding student achievement increased. The achievement advantage of private education applies mainly to grade ten and to *faith-based* schools, not to schools run under the ‘alternative pedagogy’ rationale. It is still unclear whether these differences are due to genuine school effects, or to self-selection of pupils to private schools from families, regardless of the parents’ level of education, that bring their children up in ways which are especially supportive for educational achievement.

A stronger test of school effects is to use earlier school achievement as one of the predictor variables. Bonesrønning *et al.* were able to do this when examining differences in upper secondary education between private schools and public schools. The analysis was confined to students at the end of their first year in the university preparatory tracks in upper secondary education, using grade point average as the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis then showed no superior academic gain scores overall for students in private schools, after controlling for prior achievement (grade point average) in basic education (obtained about one year earlier). However, students in accelerated mathematics programs had higher estimated learning gains in private schools than in public ones.

On the whole, it would seem that there are programmes within private education that give better educational outcomes than public schools, and the analysis by Bonesrønning and his colleagues suggest that this pertains to faith-based schools. But superiority of academic achievement is not a general finding across programmes and types of private schools in Norway.

A Question for Research: More Social Capital for Education in Private Schools?

The findings by Bonesrønning (2005) and his colleagues as regards a tendency in faith-based schools towards better learning of academic subjects is interestingly similar to the findings of Coleman and Hoffer (1987) in the United States. Coleman (1988) famously argued that Catholic schools have superior social capital compared to public schools and compared to secular private schools, because the latter types lack an external community to which the families belong. These achievement differences persisted after comprehensive tests for the influence of socio-economic aspects of the student's family background, and they even persisted after controls for academic achievement at the earlier stage of schooling.

To account for this finding, Coleman (1988) posited superior 'social capital for the formation of human capital' in those private schools which were rooted in a community outside the school itself. He postulated close bonds among the parents of pupils who are enrolled in the school, and closer bonds between parents and school in the faith-based schools and assumed that such community-like bonds are beneficial for the education of children and youth.

However, he never put these arguments to any direct empirical test. Since his theorizing, there has hardly been any research on his assumptions, that (a) close bonds among parents of pupils in a school **and** close bonds between these parents and their children's teachers, constitute social capital which serves as an educational asset for the children, and (b) that religiously-founded schools which involve the pupil's families in a community outside the school, have more social capital than other schools. One study by Morgan and Sorensen (1999) showed findings on data from large scale US surveys, which contradicted Coleman's theorizing about pupils benefiting educationally from strong bonds among parents at their children's school. Otherwise, it seems as if Coleman's theorizing has hardly attracted any research on his assumptions, though it has inspired a great deal of other research on social capital". It would seem that his assumptions could be fertile grounds for research on different types of private schools, and on differences between private and public schools, as to how close social ties are among parents, and between parents and the school, and whether such social ties make much difference for learning outcomes of their children.

Summary and Conclusions

As of the school year of 2003-04, there was no consistent overall effect of parental income on the probability of attending private schools in Norway. The government had set very low ceilings for the level of fees which private schools are allowed to charge, as a precondition for government subsidies which are set at a high level. This policy seems to have been successful in preventing income-biased recruitment of pupils to private schools.

Parents with higher education make more use of private education for their children than other parents do. This effect varies among different types of private schools. In the largest category of religion-based schools, schools run by Protestant denominations outside the Lutheran State Church, this effect is extremely weak. Other findings than those presented in this paper, and from the same research material, have shown that the overrepresentation of the offspring of highly-educated parents is especially clear cut for students whose parents have higher education within humanities or theology (Helland and Lauglo, 2007). This is a section of the 'socio-humanistic' middle class (public sector occupations typically requiring for entry a degree in humanistic or social subjects) which is likely to have a high frequency of public sector jobs and therefore has relatively modest levels of income.

Immigrant parents with a family background from non-Western countries are as well represented in the private schools. This is all the more striking since there hardly exists any religiously-based private education catering to Muslim parents, though such parents probably constitute a fairly large share of the immigrant population.¹¹ Those students from a non-Western parental background who are in private schools are very much concentrated in Christian schools. Immigrant families have, on the other hand, a distinctly low representation in schools practising alternative pedagogy of a child-centred type (Montessori, Steiner).

The overall proportion attending private schools (1.9 per cent) is so small that the flow to private schools of children of highly educated parents does not affect the social composition of the public schools nationally. Also, in urban areas with a high proportion of immigrant families, the siphoning off to private schools of students from 'better educated homes' had no appreciable effects on the social composition of public schools.

¹¹ There was one such school in Oslo in 2003 but it has since that time closed.

In general, private schools functioned as of 2003-04 in such a way within the larger Norwegian system of basic education that any social segregation effect on the whole education system was minimal or non-existent. The internationally more general implication could be that private provisions of education which receive generous public finance but with strict eligibility criteria as to type of school for such financing, need not have socially divisive consequences. There is no iron law of social life which says that private schools necessarily must perpetuate social class inequality in the education system. Rather, it is likely that socio-economic bias in selection to private schools will depend on the societal and local context, on the financial provisions for support to such schools, and on the regulatory framework governing such support.

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