

Diversity, segregation and school choice in Sweden

Nihad Bunar

Professor

Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden

nihad.bunar@bu.su.se

4 & 5 juin 2015



Sweden – diversity and education

- Sweden has become an ethnically diverse society due to immigration and globalization (16% foreign born).
- 20% of all students in elementary schools and 20% of children in preschools have another mother tongue than Swedish.
- 146 languages are spoken in Swedish schools.



Major challenges

- Housing segregation
- Achievement gap
- Newly arrived refugee and asylum-seeking students
- General lack of knowledge among teachers about how to work with language development
- Relations with parents
- Selective use of school choice policy



Major policy initiatives

- Additional resources allocated to schools according to social and ethnic composition of their students.
- More education and training for teachers.
- All students, irrespective of their migration status, are entitled to education.
- Various and pretty affluent integration and urban development projects set up over the last decade in the most deprived areas.
- Mother tongue teaching, instruction in students' native language and Swedish as a second language as a part of school curriculum.
- Cooperation with universities and university student unions in order to provide students in immigrant dominated schools with additional assistance (home-work, language learning, positive role-models).
- Extra teaching hours in Swedish as a second language and summer schools.



School choice policy – a part of the solution or a part of the problem or both?

- Ideological expectations that the policy will entail more integration and equality.
- Public schools (run by local municipalities) and Independent (free) schools (run by private or corporate interests).
- Attendance zone principle and right to choose.
- The principles of fairness and non-discrimination for admittance to independent schools.
- Competition between public and between public and independent schools.
- Universal vouchers; independent schools cannot charge any admission or top-up fees.
- Public debate: Segregation, profit, achievement and equality.



School choice policy and its outcomes

- Social and ethnic diversity
- Segregation
- The overall contribution of independent schools to better performances and lower costs?
- The legitimacy of independent schools
- Reversing to catchment area only-policy?



Conclusion – In order to achieve and support diversity at schools we need to work with following areas

- All schools involved – not just schools in urban suburbs
- Integration – creating meeting places
- Inclusion in school's social and pedagogical arenas
- De-stigmatization of certain neighborhoods, schools, ethnic and religious groups
- Pedagogical efforts to promote acquisition of knowledge and language and to increase achievement among the most disadvantaged students
- School choice policy should be reformed in order to minimize its negative effects and maximize its positive outcomes