

# A LOOK AT SCHOOL CHOICE IN SPAIN

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**Abstract** – *This paper looks at how school choice policies implemented by the Spanish government have functioned in practice. These changes, introduced in the educational system during the eighties, included the introduction of a right to enrol in any school funded by the public sector (public and private agreement schools) and the establishment of a system of finance where user choice directs government funds. The empirical research, focused on the Catalan community, shows how providing public subsidies to private schools in order to ensure choice has mostly benefited the middle classes. Payments for complementary and extra-curricular activities, foundation contributions and uneven access to information among different social groups have minimised the shift of pupils from the public to the private agreement sector.*

## Introduction

**T**he eighties brought the introduction of school choice policies to numerous developed countries. With these policies, governments have attempted to extend the opportunities for school choice to a wider section of the population. They have also sought to increase the range of choices available, and thus to encourage diversity and educational pluralism. Governments have also attempted to increase parental participation in education and to create a new discipline in schools that improves the quality of the services by allowing the better schools to attract more customers and, therefore more resources.

The implementation of such policies has entailed the incorporation of market logic in the delivery of educational services. In that sense, numerous governments have aimed to enhance competition among schools, responsiveness to user preferences, and efficiency in the process of educational delivery.

Often, policies designed for increasing school choice possibilities have gone hand in hand with changes in processes for distributing pupils. Automatic allocation to public schools closer at hand has been replaced by the freedom of individuals to choose. Only in cases of oversubscribed schools do there still exist criteria for allocating pupils across schools; the most widespread of which is the closeness-to-home criterion. The implementation of these policies has also involved the diffusion of information between parents and pupils. With this measure, on the one hand, governments have pursued avoidance of benefits

accruing to more privileged families – those with easiest access to information – and, on the other hand, they have tried to encourage the use of academic criteria in decision-making processes.

The level of effectiveness of these policies, like the way in which they have been established, differs from one country to another. To a large extent most of the evaluations of these policies come from the United Kingdom and are based on the reforms introduced in the eighties in England and Wales.<sup>1</sup> The UK experience and that of other countries (basically the Netherlands and the United States)<sup>2</sup> indicate that in spite of the establishment of policies aimed to expand school choice possibilities, most parents tend to choose the nearest school. Transport, children's desire to be with their friends, the cost of private schools where they are not subsidised, and a bare minimum of ambitious expectations are determining factors involved in choosing the closest school. Only in cases where there are specific reasons not to go to the school nearest home (such as the lack of confidence in a particular school or the preference for a special school), or in cases in which transport is made available or governments finance private schools, have these policies made it easy to choose an alternative school – at least for certain groups of users.

Measures to improve parents' and pupils' choice of school have also been implemented in Spain. In the middle of the eighties the Spanish government started to implement a range of measures aimed at making the freedom of school choice effective. The aim of this article, then, is to look at the implementation of such policies in Spain and the level of attainment of their objectives in practice. We begin by describing the rules delimiting the freedom to choose a school in Spain. The results of a qualitative analysis which will allow us to assess the extent to which public funding for private schools in Spain has provided effective choice for all users will then be presented. Finally, we consider the lessons that can be drawn from this analysis, and their potential relevance for other communities.

## **Measures applied by the Spanish government to widen school choice opportunities**

The public-private choice is significant in Spain because around 30% of primary and secondary pupils attend private schools, and because approximately 90% of these pupils attend private schools receiving government funds.

The size of the Spanish private sector and its capacity to influence policies such as those related to subsidising private education can only be understood by considering the historical specificities of the Spanish education system. Thus, one of the most significant features of the Spanish education has been the configuration of a dual education system, which before the arrival of democracy

in the mid-seventies was the main basis for the inequality of educational opportunities and results. While private schools (mostly religious) were able to provide a good quality of education for more privileged families that could afford school fees, children from poorer backgrounds attended low quality public schools. When democracy arrived, the simultaneous process of economic crisis and development of mass schooling in Spain forced successive governments to take the private sector into account in defining educational policies.<sup>3</sup>

Article 27 of the 1978 Constitution establishes the main goals for the development of a democratic education system. This article was the result of difficult negotiation between left-wing and conservative political parties. While left-wing parties had to assume a significant presence of publicly financed private education, parents' right to choose religious education for their children, and a margin of parental choice of schools, the conservatives accepted some type of control over the subsidised private sector, the non-compulsory character of religion, teacher's academic freedom and the participation of the educational community in school decision-making (Bonal, 2000: 204).

Despite the constitutional consensus, article 27 left a significant margin for interpretation in subsequent legislative developments. So, at first, the centrist government interpreted article 27 in favour of private schools. Nevertheless, in 1985, as part of the 1985 *Education Rights Act (Ley Orgánica del Derecho a la Educación)*, the first socialist government replaced the previous policy of indiscriminate public subsidies for private schools by a new system of agreements (*conciertos*) between the public sector and private schools. In contrast to the previous system, the new one currently in force consists in an agreement between the two parties which sets up reciprocal rights and responsibilities relating to economic requisites, length of time, deferment and extinction of the agreement.

Concerning the establishing of reciprocal rights and responsibilities between the public sector and private schools, the public sector contributes to the funding of private schools, applying the amount of money fixed for every classroom in the public budget. This amount is annually determined in line with the level of the running costs of the school to guarantee that education is imparted without charge. The responsibilities of the schools include the following: they must provide free education in the school level agreed, they must impart the courses specified in the agreement, they must supply people with information about the economic status of the school (if it is a private agreement school or not), they must respect all rules established in matters of community participation in educational affairs, and they must also people with optional, non-discriminatory and free complementary activities<sup>4</sup> and services.<sup>5</sup>

Through this system of agreements between the public sector and private schools – agreements which presently finances around 75% of all private schools

at the primary and secondary level – the Spanish government sought to widen the possibilities of school choice for all parents. In recent years, the Spanish government has continued implementing measures to guarantee parents and pupils the possibility of choosing schools outside the public sector. Among the measures implemented, the following appear to us to be of special interest:

- The extension of the areas served by the schools financed by public funds (public and private agreement schools). With this measure, introduced in 1997, the Spanish government intended to increase educational supply and, therefore the opportunities for parents and pupils to choose a school. This implies a certain flexibility in the interpretation of the closeness-to-home criterion and would allow parents and pupils to choose from among more than one school.
- The indiscriminate use of the family residence or the work place of either parent in order to apply closeness-to-home criteria to allocate pupils in case of oversubscribed schools. This measure, introduced for the first time in 1989, represents the Spanish government’s attempt to introduce greater flexibility into the school-to-home proximity criterion and to facilitate the schooling of children.
- The possibility of primary education students applying to more than one secondary school.
- The dissemination of information among users. The effectiveness of measures designed to extend the range of choices available to parents will depend on the information parents and pupils receive regarding the way school operates. To this end, schools are obliged to inform parents and pupils about the contents of their educational project, their policies, and their pedagogical characteristics. The public sector is obliged to publish a list of those schools financed by public funds (public and private agreement schools) located in each area. The list must include the educational levels and services each school supplies. The public sector is also obliged to ensure that information about schools is objective and free of references to the cultural and socio-economic level of families with children attending the school.

However, at present, the Spanish legislation contains some limiting factors of school choice possibilities. Like the greater part of countries that have implemented these kinds of policies, the main restriction on choice appears in situations of excess demand. In these circumstances, two criteria determine pupils’ admission in Spain: priority and complementary criteria. Priority criteria

are closeness-to-home, family income and sibling enrolment in the same school. After a period of comparison of the family income criterion to the closeness-to-home criterion, new regulations currently in force prioritise proximity of the school to the pupil's home and the fact that a sibling attends the same school.

The priority given to the closeness-to-home criterion, which has been criticised in other countries, has also been questioned in the Spanish context. In that respect, some criticisms focus on the perverse effects of these measures in limiting choice to the nearest school. Others emphasise the fact that quality differs from area to area and depends on factors intrinsic to the school rather than on the amount of resources coming from the public sector. Finally, some other criticisms cite the reduction in emphasis given to criteria of equity, especially of those related to family income.

The Spanish system of admission also includes other elements that tend to restrict the right of parents and pupils to enrol in any school. For example, schools can determine complementary criteria. Besides the public sector,<sup>6</sup> schools can determine complementary criteria. Although these criteria should correspond to objective, non-discriminatory, and outstanding circumstances, their application restricts the freedom to choose, since it is up to the school to define these circumstances, which in turn determine admission.<sup>7</sup>

## **Approach to school choice opportunities in a system of publicly funded private education**

This section presents a qualitative analysis,<sup>8</sup> based on the views of a group of school inspectors regarding the possibilities of school choice among the users of compulsory education. The analysis is of an exploratory character and will be of use in beginning to evaluate the level of effectiveness of the measures introduced by the Spanish government to widen school choice possibilities. The importance of this analysis lies, on the one hand, in the opportunity of having the views of a group of experts and, on the other hand, in its potential for illuminating an area in which the empirical evidence is limited. The principal restriction of the analysis arises from the fact that it is not a representative sample and, hence its results cannot be generalised to apply to all of Spain, where the differences in powers transferred to the autonomous regions and the idiosyncrasy of each region have led to differences in the implementation of the system of agreements within the private sector.<sup>9</sup>

The results of the qualitative analysis, which is presented below, have been systematised in thematic blocks.

## *1. Reasons for choosing a school*

As in other countries that have implemented school choice policies, in a context of competition for students, the behaviour of a school depends, to a great extent, on the criteria used by parents to decide which school their children will attend.

With the purpose of ascertaining the criteria that the Catalan community apply in choosing a school, the questionnaire contained a set of questions addressed to the choice of parents and pupils. The majority of school inspectors agreed that the main criteria for decision-making are situational (i.e. outside the school's control) as, for example, the proximity of the school to the home, or the desire to go to the same school as one's neighbours and friends. In addition to these factors, school inspectors pointed out that parents usually choose schools taking into account the physical aspects of the school or the fact that access to it is difficult. Thus, if it is difficult to obtain access, parents conclude that it is a 'good' school. In relation to the image and reputation of schools, inspectors pointed out that the determining factor is more the opinion of people living in the area than the image the centre itself attempts to promote.

As to underlying reasons for the decision for choosing a private agreement school, numerous school inspectors mentioned the importance of 'environmental' factors, such as discipline and safety inside the school, the extent of the timetable (including extra-curricular activities), familiar treatment, continuity in the educational itinerary (i.e. the possibility of attending the same school at both primary and secondary levels), the school's atmosphere, certain social or ideological (religious) differentiation, the socio-economic status of other pupils attending the school, social expectations, family tradition, and the prestige involved in paying a certain amount of money.

Social expectations and the socio-economic status of pupils are reasons that influence the choice of private agreement schools, for both high and low income groups. Low income groups usually believe that enrolling their children in schools in the private agreement sector (something that very frequently involves the payment of certain sums of money) offers guarantees that are absent in public schools. In that sense, families with higher incomes in poor areas prefer to enrol their children in private agreement schools because that gives them an opportunity to leave the area and also to protect their children from 'bad influences'.

Interviewees also stated the limited interest of parents in the school project, in curricular subjects, in pedagogical techniques applied by the school, or in other kinds of considerations related to the performance of the school. The most immediate consequence, then, is that parents and children rarely choose schools on the basis of well-informed comparisons of educational quality. The limited importance of educational criteria in the decision of which school to send their

children to corroborates the conclusions of studies undertaken in other countries regarding the reasons which usually determine school choice.<sup>10</sup>

## *2. The impact of public funding of private education on the school choice possibilities of parents and pupils*

With the aim of finding out if the system of agreements, established in 1985, has increased school choice possibilities of all users of compulsory education or whether, on the contrary, it has benefited the most privileged, the questionnaire included a set of questions about the effects of this system in practice.

Almost all school inspectors agreed that the system of subsidies to private schools has mostly benefited the middle classes.<sup>11</sup> This is due to the fact that higher income groups would have continued enrolling their children in private schools, irrespective of whether private schools were financed by the public sector, and lower income groups in most cases continue to be unable to enrol their children in these schools, despite the fact that they are subsidised. In that sense, it is possible to conclude that the processes of choice are to some extent related to social class.

There are other studies in Spain which point in the same direction. This is the case of the analysis undertaken by Molina & Jaen (1993), Calero & Bonal (1999), or Villarroya (2000) about the distributive incidence of public expenditure in private schools. From quantitative approaches, they reach the same conclusion: subsidies channelled to private schools have mostly benefited the better off.

The system of agreements with the private sector, then, has not removed all barriers to the access to private schools and, therefore low income groups have continued, in most cases, limiting their choices to the public sector. The payment for complementary and extra-curricular activities, foundation contributions or the easiest access to information of higher income groups make entry to private agreement schools specially difficult for lower income groups. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that the system of agreements with the private sector has not involved an important shift from pupils enrolled in the public sector to the private.

Many school inspectors also pointed out the identification that low income groups usually make between private agreement schools and fee-paying schools. These groups usually have a mistaken perception of the reality of the situation because of their lack of information about the fact that education is free in private agreement schools and complementary activities and foundation contributions have a voluntary character.

Some school inspectors pointed out the fact that in some locations the decrease in birth rate has increased the real possibilities of choosing a school. These demographic changes have thus, in many cases, affected schools' behaviour as they now have to compete to attract students.

### *3. Effects of the expansion of the areas served by the schools on the school choice opportunities of parents and pupils*

One of the measures introduced by the Spanish government to increase school choice possibilities was the expansion of the areas served by the schools financed by public funds (public and private agreement schools). Through the definition of areas, which is re-examined each year by the local authorities, school inspectors and the schools themselves, the public sector plans the educational services for each area and introduces criteria to allocate pupils in case of oversubscribed schools.

There were different opinions about the effects that the expansion of the areas served by the schools can have on the school choice opportunities of parents and pupils. On the one hand, some inspectors stated that the definition of areas is a limit *per se* to the freedom of parents and pupils to choose a school, since they see their choice restricted by the area. This definition by area can also increase social segregation; cases of excess demand where choices are reduced to the nearest school reproduce the socio-economic segregation of population. On the other hand, some inspectors pointed out that the true limits of a school stem from the demand of the school, since zoning criteria apply only in cases of excess demand. The expansion of areas in these cases entails a loss of weight of the proximity-to-home criterion and, therefore a revaluation of the remaining criteria. Finally, other groups of school inspectors maintained that the expansion of areas mostly benefits those parents that can cover transport and food expenses and, hence those families with higher income levels.

### *4. Information provided by schools*

One of the principal limiting factors of the choice opportunities is that parents and pupils have no access to cheap and accurate information. Most of the interviewees stated that information about schools is insufficient and unevenly distributed among social groups. They also pointed out that information is mostly based on rumours and not on objective assessments about the quality of teaching or about the academic results of the school. In these cases, information is distributed among users through indirect channels, such as, conversations with neighbours, friends or relatives.

About the information provided by schools, many of the school inspectors interviewed indicated that for many years some private schools have frequently failed to divulge their subsidised status in order to get money from the families by charging school fees. At present, and mainly as a result of the decrease in the birth rate, the vast majority of schools inform users about their subsidised character,



given the positive effects of this for attracting pupils. However, information about the specific conditions of the agreement, such as the educational levels agreed or the approved amount of fees in the case of complementary and extra-curricular activities, continues to be inadequate.

In general, we can conclude that information supplied by schools is insufficient. Schools rarely inform families about the voluntary nature of complementary activities and foundation contributions. Such concealment allows schools to obtain monthly income from almost all families with children attending the school. Moreover, schools usually do not inform families regarding what they are paying; in general, they give parents the overall amounts, without specifying the different types of expenses. In relation to admission rules, many schools do not provide adequate publicity on extra places, which means that access is restricted to a privileged group of users.

In recent years, the public sector has conducted an active publicity campaign addressed to the schools, insisting on the obligatory nature of informing parents about the voluntary character of complementary activities and foundation contributions.

### *5. Information used by parents and pupils*

In spite of the campaigns conducted by the public sector of late, the information that parents and pupils have at their disposal is insufficient and is unevenly distributed among different social groups.

It is true that the prescriptive information – such as the period of matriculation in schools financed by public funds, or a list with all schools financed by public funds located in each area – is distributed among the entire population. However, due to their condition as a social class, not all social groups gather information in the same way. Thus, groups with a higher socio-cultural level have better access to information, an easier understanding and interpretation of that information, and are consequently better placed to take advantage of those additional choices that are, theoretically, open to all. In contrast, families with lower socio-cultural levels basically put their trust in the information provided by neighbours, friends or relatives. The majority of these families are acquainted with private agreement schools, but tend to identify them with fee-paying schools. But private agreement schools also exist in poor areas, where most of these schools are religious and where the families who most frequently send their children to these schools are among the highest income group in that area. In general, the subsidised schools in poor areas are frequently similar to the public ones, with regard to customers, facilities and the extremely low amount of payments for complementary activities.

As a general rule, the vast majority of families are unaware of the voluntary nature of complementary and foundation contributions. This ignorance spreads among all social groups, so that the identification between private agreement schools and fee-paying schools is equally common among the entire population.

#### *6. Restrictive factors of the school choice capacity of parents and pupils*

There is a range of factors that limit the choice opportunities of parents and pupils. Most of these factors are economic and are especially likely to limit the choice of low income groups, who see a reduction in their opportunities of gaining access to private agreement schools. Some of these factors are the result of activities of doubtful legality; this includes the collection of money for reserving places, payments for matriculation, or payments for covering heating expenses or other running costs, as well as the payments for the expansion of the school or for the implementation of new programs. These practices are increasingly less frequent but they remain an indirect source of funding for the schools, and make it more difficult for certain groups to obtain access to them.

In regard to the principal economic factors, inside the legal framework, and which also limit the possibilities of choosing private agreement schools, most of the school inspectors interviewed mentioned the collection of money for complementary activities and foundation contributions. Concerning the schools that have become foundations, which are the majority, school inspectors pointed out the fact that they usually receive monthly payments from the families whose children attend them and a certain amount of money deposited when the child enters the school that may be returned when he/she leaves the school. In spite of the voluntary character of both contributions, they still remain as two of the main obstacles to lower income groups' access to these schools, since parents are ignorant of the voluntary nature of both payments.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to these practices, private agreement schools have developed another set of mechanisms which allows them to obtain income from the families and which also contributes to the identification of private agreement with fee-paying schools. Mechanisms of this sort include payments for extra-curricular activities, for complementary services or for teaching materials. Regarding this issue, most interviewees pointed out that the kind of extra-curricular activities and teaching materials differ among private agreement schools, the differentiation frequently being due to the population attending the school. Thus, the kind of activities, teaching materials or their payments differs according to the area. In well-off areas, for example, the payments for complementary or extra-curricular activities are higher than in more deprived areas. In the latter, the conditions in private agreement schools are similar to

the conditions established for public schools located in the same area. In contrast, the differences between private and public schools are usually greater in well-off areas.

There also exists another set of restrictive factors, some of which arise from the local conditions, such as when there is only one school in the locality. Others arise from the structures of the educational system, such as the fee-paying status of the pre-school education or the excess demand in certain schools.

## **Concluding comments**

This paper has looked at how school choice policies implemented by the Spanish government have functioned in practice. As in other countries, the changes introduced by the Spanish government in the educational system during the eighties included the introduction of a right to enrol in any school funded by the public sector (public and private agreement schools) and the establishment of a system of finance where user choice directs government funds.

But the Spanish education system has certain particularities. On the one hand, Spain has a long tradition of shared public and private provision of education, and this has resulted in a comparatively large number of private schools. At present, 30% of pupils at primary and secondary levels attend private schools in Spain. On the other hand, most private schools (around 65% of private agreement schools) are run by Catholic organisations, which have played a key role in the evolution of educational policy in Spain.

Both features are especially relevant in the Catalan region, where the nationalist party has clearly developed an educational policy to protect the private education system (Calero & Bonal, 1999). This protection has led to a growing flow of public resources to the private sector, which has been discussed at length from more progressive positions (see Villarroya, 2000).

The evidence, focused on the Catalan region, has clearly indicated that providing public subsidies to private schools in order to ensure choice has mostly benefited the middle classes. Payments for complementary and extra-curricular activities, foundation contributions and uneven access to information among different social groups have minimised the shift of pupils from the public to the private agreement sector. These results have also been corroborated by other studies, so analyses of the distributive incidence of public expenditure on private schools show a privileged position of the middle class respect to other groups (see Molina & Jaen, 1993; Calero & Bonal, 1999 and Villarroya, 2000).

This analysis has also pointed out how the effects of demographic changes, which have been especially notable in recent years, have caused a change in the

behaviour of schools, which in certain localities now have to compete to attract students, thus increasing the choice available to parents and pupils.

Concerning the factors that mostly determine the choices open to parents and pupils, this analysis has shown, on the one hand, the diversity of opinions about the effects of the extension of the areas served by the schools on the choice possibilities of users. There are those who consider that zoning is a limit *per se* to the freedom of users to choose a school, since they see the opportunities available to them restricted by the closeness-to-home criterion. There are also those who think that this extension implies a loss of weight in the closeness-to-home criterion and, hence a revaluation of the rest of the criteria involved. On the other hand, most school inspectors interviewed agreed that inadequate information is one of the key factors that constrains the exercise of choice. Information about schools is insufficient and unequally distributed among social groups. In general, schools do not inform families about the voluntary nature of complementary activities and foundation contributions, or about the number of extra places. In addition to the economic limits, there exists another set of restrictive factors, some of which arise from the local conditions, such as when there is only one school in the locality. Others arise from the structures of the educational system, such as the fee-paying status of the pre-school education or the excess demand in certain schools.

Consequently, we conclude that policies for increasing school choice in Spain have brought risks as well as opportunities. The analysis of these results, although limited to the Catalan community, shows how public controls need to be introduced in order to deal efficiently and equitably with the present system.

## Notes

1. See, among others, the following studies: Ball (1993), Gewirtz *et al.* (1995), Walford (1993, 1996, 2000, 2001), Bowe *et al.* (1994a, 1994b), Glatter & Woods (1994), Ball *et al.* (1996), Ambler (1997), West & Pennell (1997), Whitty (1997), Williams (1997), and Whitty & Edwards (1998).
2. With regard to this see, among others, the following studies: James (1991a, b), Edwards & Whitty (1992), OECD (1994), Ambler (1997), Lodewijks (1997), Louis & van Velzen (1997), Ritzen *et al.* (1997), Sturm *et al.* (1998), Karsten (1999), Vijlder (2000), Walford (2000, 2001) and Dronkers *et al.* (2001).
3. See Bonal & Rambla (1996), Calero & Bonal (1999), and Bonal (2000) for a detailed analysis of the contemporary Spanish education policy and the role played by educational interest groups.
4. According to the Spanish regulations, complementary activities have a voluntary character, have to be imparted within school hours, have to contribute to the attainment of the educational aims and the charging of any amount of money for these activities needs to be authorised by the educational authorities. Extra-curricular activities also have a voluntary character, but they have to be carried out outside school hours, have to deal with non-curricular subjects, and the amount of money involved must be made known to the educational authorities.
5. According to the Spanish regulations, complementary services are, for example, transport, food,

and medical and psychological services. The charging of money for these services has also to be authorised by the educational authorities.

6. The criteria fixed by the public sector include the following: belonging to a large family, having persons with special needs, taking care of parents, coming from a school that is about to close, etc.
7. Some of the criteria fixed by the schools are: having studied in the school or having chosen the school as a first option.
8. The principal features of the chosen methodology are the following:
  - A qualitative approach was applied. This methodology allows, among other aspects, the description and identification of especially complex social phenomena and the identification of unforeseeable consequences or weaknesses and conflicts inherent in the design and application of school choice policies.
  - The sample consisted of twenty-one school inspectors distributed in different places of the Catalan autonomous region.
  - The method employed for data collection was a specific type of interview, the elite interview (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This specialised form of interview consists in interviewing especially well-informed individuals or groups selected for their experience in areas that are relevant to the research. In this case, school inspectors have the responsibility of ensuring that regulations are fulfilled and that the members of the community are informed as to their rights and responsibilities.
  - The principal advantage of this type of interview lies in the opportunity of collecting valuable information that ensures the quality of data and the credibility of the study. Interviews were organised in thematic blocks by means of a questionnaire. The format of questions was open and the format of answers was not structured. The average period of interviews was one hour and the interviews were conducted from February to October of 1998. The first were pilot interviews, which allowed modification and removal of those questions that seemed to generate little data for the research.
  - The data-collection method applied was to take notes during the interview. The advantage of this technique is that it allows an increase in the comfort of the interviewee and the rapidity of data transcription (see Saran, 1988; Bryman & Burgess, 1994a, b; Kvale, 1996).
  - The method of analysis involved, firstly, organisation of data by means of consecutive readings; secondly, data transcription and systematisation in thematic blocks and, finally, the writing up of results and the preparation of commentary on results. In that sense, see Ritchie & Spencer (1994), and Marshall & Rossman (1995).
9. The case of the Catalan autonomous region is especially interesting since the private sector has a significant presence in education (around 40% of primary and secondary pupils attend private schools). This is a result of the conservative ideology of the nationalist government and the existence of powerful organizations defending private interest (Calero & Bonal, 1999; Bonal, 2000).
10. With regard to this see Edwards *et al.* (1989), Edwards & Whitty (1992).
11. Analyses applied to Anglo-Saxon countries tend to support the hypothesis about the privileged position of the middle classes in the operations of the welfare state (Goodin & Le Grand, 1987; Boyd-Barret, 1995).
12. These opinions have recently been corroborated by a report undertaken by the School Inspection Body on the Catalan community. From a quantitative perspective, Villarroya (2000) shows how private agreement schools still receive an important part of their funds from parents in spite of the public resources channelled to these centres.

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