The Politics of Equal Opportunities in Education

Partisan Governments and School Choice Reform in Sweden, England, and France, 1980-2010

Charlotte M. Haberstroh

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

Florence, 14 June 2016

European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

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I Charlotte Marie Haberstoh certify that I am the author of the work The Politics of Equal Opportunities in Education: Partisan Governments and School Choice Reform in Sweden, England, and France, 1980-2010 I have presented for examination for the Ph.D. at the European University Institute. I also certify that this is solely my own original work, other than where I have clearly indicated, in this declaration and in the thesis, that it is the work of others.

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Abstract

In this thesis, I ask about the political determinants of educational inequalities, and posit that as school quality differs, the competition for school places poses a problem to the social right of equal educational opportunities at the compulsory education level. What are the policy options to equalise access to quality education? When are these reformed? These questions motivated the design of a typology of Student Sorting Institutions with which we can meaningfully compare formal institutional arrangements that interfere in the competition for quality school places. A critical review of sociology of stratification and economics of education literature suggests classifying Student Sorting Institutions along two dimensions: whether they grant school choice to parents, and whether the allocation process permits academic selection. Building on recent insights of the field of political economy of education, the thesis explains institutional reform with an interest-based approach. Policymakers encounter a trilemma between high choice, low selection and enhancing school quality in disadvantaged neighbourhoods: the high choice/low selection option of regulating school choice particularly benefits students that want to opt out of disadvantaged neighbourhood schools, hence risking increasing segregation of such schools. The winners of each institutional arrangement vary according to income and education. How the trilemma is solved depends on parties in government who cater to their electorates' interests. These then change with educational expansion. The high political cost and uncertain benefit structure of such institutions favour the status quo. With the use of new insights in the methodology of process tracing, I show that the theory empirically accounts for variation of reform trajectories in France, Sweden, and the UK (England for school policy) from the 1980s to the 2000s. In contrast, I argue that my findings shed doubt on the explanatory role of neoliberal ideas and path-dependent feedback effects to account for these reform trajectories.

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This dissertation is about the politics behind the persisting impact of social origin on educational outcomes. It asks about a set of policy options to improve equality of opportunity in education, and discusses the political trade-offs when choosing between these options. My interest to contribute to this field in political science emerged while studying for the Master degree in European Affairs at Sciences Po Paris in the summer 2010.

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"What a wise parent would desire for his own children,
that a nation, in so far as it is wise,
must desire for all children."

(Tawney 1964, 146)

Chapter 1: Introduction

The year 2000 marks a turning point in the history of education within the OECD member states. Throughout the 20th century, OECD members experienced a massive expansion of schooling and made educational participation at post-elementary level mandatory for all children. Since the year 2000, the OECD PISA study[1] provides a means to compare these compulsory education systems. We can now ask to what extent they produce quality education for all. PISA provides a poignant example of a major dilemma for the politics of education:

To improve systems' average performance, the OECD recommends reforms that make education for worst performers a priority. Its reports emphasise that this means improving the schools that children of low-income families attend (OECD 2013, 3, 104; OECD 2014, 253). But PISA ties governments' hands in the politics of redistribution that are necessary to achieve this goal: its international rankings communicate to middle class families that their system does not live up to the standards the global knowledge-based economy requires. Individuals usually rely on personal experience to assess their government's performance in the delivery of education (Kumlin 2004).[2] They are rarely provided with an objective means of measuring the quality of education. Therefore, media coverage of the average performance that defines a country's place in international rankings provides them with important information on the quality of the education system. Yet, austerity politics and low levels of growth suggest that governments are unable to improve education 'for all'. Improving education for socio-economically disadvantaged at the expense of their advantaged peers is difficult: it could affect middle class parents' political support. This may especially be the case since education is a private and positional good (Busemeyer and Iversen 2014; Gingrich

[1] Programme for International Student Assessment, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris.

[2] Kumlin differentiates between ego-tropic and socio-tropic assessment of quality of welfare services. As socio-tropic information is scarce compared to ego-tropic experience, the latter is more important to explain individuals' attitudes towards welfare states.

and Ansell 2014).

This dilemma leads to a political-economic question: what is the relationship between social inequalities, redistributive education policy choices and equality of opportunity in education? I provide answers to these questions in this thesis as I study the origins of formal rules that define which children get access to good schools. Student Sorting Institutions – as I call these rules – are indicators of the social right of equality of opportunity because the quality of education is unequally distributed. I seek to learn and teach about the political determinants of inequality of opportunity in education. This has special relevance in a context where increased spending is not only absent from the table of policy options, but also an insufficient tool to provide equal opportunities in education.

This chapter introduces the reader to the core objectives of this thesis. The first section explains *what* this project is about: a problem of social rights, a problem of distribution of quality education, and a redistributive problem. This is also where I introduce the core concepts defining the research object: school quality, unequal educational opportunities, lower secondary schooling, and Student Sorting Institutions. The second section exposes *why* these problems call for our attention as political economists and welfare state scholars. There, I show two empirical puzzles: while starting off with a similar reform trajectory during post-war welfare state development, some countries with different welfare states and educational systems have continued on a similar path of reform for their Student Sorting Institutions from the 1980s onwards (e.g. England[3] and Sweden), while others (e.g. France) unexpectedly have not. Furthermore, it is unclear why left-wing governments in Sweden and England opted in favour of school choice reform given its shortcomings in relation to equal educational opportunities. It is also unclear why they managed to regulate this policy more than their French counterparts. This calls for an explanation. The final part of this introductory chapter presents *how* this study addresses the questions flowing from sections 1 and 2. It provides a summary of my research questions, of the main argument of the thesis and of my methodological approach.

[3] With devolution in the UK, the UK government is only responsible for school policies in England (eg. see Brock 2015). I get back to this feature of UK policy making in some more length when discussing case selection matters in Section 3 of this chapter.

1.1. Distributing Quality Education to All: A Policy Problem

In this section, I present the object of research and define its main conceptual tenets. Firstly, this thesis looks at a social policy problem stemming from the social right of equal opportunities in education, as T.H. Marshall has defined it (Marshall 1996). Secondly, it explores policy options to improve educational opportunities for the socio-economically disadvantaged. The focus is on Student Sorting Institutions. These are formal institutions that intervene in the distribution of students to schools of varying qualities. Thirdly, this thesis analyses the political origins of these institutions. I argue that partisan politics of redistribution explain change over time and cross-national differences of Student Sorting Institutions. In the following, I present these three steps, their corresponding concepts, and what we can learn from each of these elements.

1.1.1. Equality of opportunity: a social rights perspective

The advantages of providing public funding for educating all children, up to a certain age, are rarely disputed (Heidenheimer, Heclo, and Adams 1990). Even neoliberal thinkers like Milton Friedman have stressed that public funding plays an important democratic rather than economic role (Friedman 1955). According to T.H. Marshall, educating citizens is one social right connected to social citizenship rights (Marshall 1996). From the mid-19th century, states massively invested in their citizens' education as one aspect of nation-building (Ansell and Lindvall 2013; Archer 1979). By the 1950s, in the advanced economies primary education became a fundamental pre-requisite for full participation in political, social, and economic life. With subsequent technological and economic change, such educational requirements have become increasingly important for individuals' participation in society and the economy (Goldin and Katz 2008). The raising of the compulsory school age to 16 and the later move towards mass tertiary education systems across the OECD confirms the social citizenship aspect of education. This also confirms the consensus that the state has to *fund* education up to a certain 'subsistence' level for all.

Whether the state is responsible for providing *equal* education is less straightforward. This is because education is also a positional good. It provides returns on the labour market (Goldin and Katz 2008) and allows individuals to maintain or improve their social position in a stratified and capitalist society (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). Therefore, education systems

can be seen as a necessary ingredient to meritocracy. They provide individuals with equal opportunities to develop their skills in order to merit, rather than inherit, their own position in an unequal society. Hence, H. Wilensky reasons that education systems are "chiefly a contribution to equality of opportunity – enhanced mobility for those judged to be potentially able or skilled; [they are] only a peripheral contribution to absolute equality" (Wilensky 1975, 6). In his 1950 essay, T.H. Marshall also accepts that the social right connected to education is not of outcome but of opportunity (Marshall 1996, 37–39). It is "a structure of unequal status fairly apportioned to unequal abilities" of which the "aim is to eliminate hereditary privilege" (p. 38). Such a view suggests that the social right of education cannot be guaranteed with an approach of *laissez faire*. Providing funding for compulsory education is not sufficient action for equalising opportunities. Instead, "the process through which abilities are revealed, the influences to which they are subjected, the tests by which they are measured, and the rights given as a result of the tests are all *planned*" (p. 39, my emphasis). Governments thus have to ensure that such institutions do not provide more learning opportunities to some groups if they want to reach the objective of equal opportunities. This is not a modest goal.

A major hurdle stands in the way of governments when they work towards guaranteeing this social right of equal opportunities via their education systems. Marshall failed to consider that the "unequal abilities" which would define social status in a society with equal opportunities are themselves a matter of hereditary privilege. According to him equal opportunities via participation in education would allow the "poor boy to show that he is as good as the rich boy" (p. 38). In contrast to such expectations, social class differentials in educational attainment have remained significant even after secondary education expansion and well into the process of developing mass tertiary education (cf. Jackson 2013 for a detailed analysis of the literature on this subject). Inequality of Educational Opportunity (IEO) is defined as "social background inequalities in educational attainment" (Jackson 2013, 2). Generally, sociologists refer to IEO as the inequalities of social background that education systems generate at educational transitions, that is, when a decision is made about whether to drop out of education or continue education in different kinds of educational institutions (p. 3). As Michelle Jackson points out in *Determined to Succeed,* earlier findings have suggested that the class effect is fairly stable in time (e.g. Shavit and Blossfeld 1993), while more recent work has revealed a trend towards a weakening of this effect (e.g. Breen et al. 2009). However, she emphasises that, in comparison to the durability of the class effect on education, changes "in gender, ethnic, and racial inequalities" have been "far more substantial … in many countries" (Jackson, 2013, p. 2). For instance, the odds of making the transition

from compulsory to upper secondary academic education are about 7,5 times higher for children from advantaged backgrounds, compared to children from disadvantaged backgrounds in countries like Germany and France (3,5 for US and England; 4,5 for Sweden; 20 for Italy) (Jackson and Jonsson 2013, 319).

In a context of persisting IEO, Marshall's definition of the role of the state in guaranteeing the social right of equal opportunities deserves to be amended. To do so, we need to consider the micro-level mechanisms behind IEO. In short, parents' resources matter for individuals' educational performance and for the decision-making process at transition points that affect individuals' educational opportunities at the next educational stage (e.g. Boudon 1974). The education system is limited in its capacity to compensate for the link between educational achievement and family background. Also, such compensation belongs to the realm of equality of outcomes rather than to equality of opportunity. However, if the system is '*planned*' in a way which additionally provides children of advantaged families with better education than children of disadvantaged families, it does not guarantee equal opportunities. The minimal social right at the compulsory education stage is thus to render the school's input into a child's learning process as equal in quality as possible and to make sure that access to better schools is not governed and determined by institutions that favour the better off. At compulsory schooling levels, equality of opportunity in education then becomes a matter of equal distribution of quality education.

What does 'equal distribution of quality education' mean? In brief, I consider the quality of a school to be equivalent to the impact that a school has on a student's educational achievement. That impact consists of the *schooling effect* (attending a school v. not attending a school) and the *school effect* (attending one school rather than another) (Sørensen and Morgan 2000, 138). Schools vary along a set of factors and, therefore, provide individuals with different opportunities to develop their skills. Hence, they prepare them differently for further education and the labour market. These characteristics range from teacher quality, class size, and accountability structures to the socio-economic composition of the school's student body (Hanushek, Machin, and Woessmann 2010; Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain 2005).

Such variation harms equality of opportunity when the system is *'planned'* in a way to distribute better quality to schools that students from socio-economically advantaged backgrounds attend, or if the system is designed to distribute socio-economically advantaged students to better schools. This implies that the level of education spending on its own cannot establish the extent to which educational opportunities are equalised. Even if increased spending were a solution to improve the overall quality of education systems, it would not

solve the task of distributing it in a way that would not prioritise the socio-economically advantaged at the expense of the disadvantaged. In a very simple world, there are two sides to this distributive coin. Students of different socio-economic background have to be allocated to schools; and these schools have to receive quality educational resources that enhance students' learning. I have now established that institutions distributing resources to schools, and institutions that distribute students to schools, are both key components of equality of opportunity in education. In the next subsection, I explain why the study that follows focuses on the question of how to distribute students to schools. I also discuss why it concentrates on one specific education level: the secondary stage of compulsory schooling (lower secondary education).

1.1.2. Student Sorting Institutions distribute quality education

To study policy decisions that have an influence on equality of opportunity, this thesis analyses reforms of Student Sorting Institutions at the lower secondary school level. For the distribution of quality education, the two mechanisms of distributing students to schools and quality to schools go hand in hand. This project focuses particularly on the question of sorting students to schools and generally leaves aside the question of sorting resources to schools. I will now explain this decision in more detail. I start with an overview of the policy options of sorting resources to schools. I then move on to policy options for sorting students to schools and justify my more specific interest for Student Sorting Institutions at the lower secondary education level.

With respect to distributing quality education to schools, education sociologists and economists have mainly focused on the effect of teacher quality (pay and training), class size and per pupil funding, the governance of schools and curricular variation between schools, and peer effects. These are the variables that policy makers can draw upon to improve the distribution of quality education across their schools. This literature is extensively reviewed in the Handbook of the Economics of Education, Vol. 3 (Hanushek, Machin, and Woessmann 2010): It is fair to say that the economics of education literature is still relatively divided on the size of these effects. This is mainly due to methodological issues and data availability. The variable of teacher quality is fairly straightforward: the better the teacher, the better the learning. What makes a good teacher is more disputed, especially with respect to teacher pay and teacher training. In essence, however, the sorting of good teachers to schools is an

outcome of the organisation of the teacher labour market (Podgursky 2010). Per pupil funding affects the quality of a school if class sizes are reduced, because this allows for individualised learning. It is essential to point out that how the funding is used affects the input more than funding levels. School governance is of paramount importance (Figlio and Loeb 2010): who decides on resource allocation and are these actors accountable? The education system may also provide different contents of teaching for different schools, either through organising the system along different tracks or by granting schools autonomy over the content of the teaching (Van de Werfhorst and Mijs 2010). In sum, this literature suggests that it is possible to improve school quality and act on the variation of quality between schools with institutional reforms. Except for the peer effect, all variables presented here relate to how the state organises the production of the public service: how does it distribute teachers and organise the content and process of learning until it reaches the pupil? These institutions regulate producer behaviour within the system.

If quality of schools is unequally distributed, it becomes important to understand who gets access to what school. Where a student lives most immediately affects the quality of the school they will attend; and the quality of the school they will attend determines where their parents choose to live (e.g. Gordon and Monastiriotis 2007). This link between residential segregation and school quality gives education the potential to become a club good distributed by the housing market (Gingrich and Ansell 2014). Solving this problem requires much more than that which exists in the toolbox of education policy-makers and is also rather part of the equality of outcomes realm, and not clearlya matter of equality of opportunity. Still, the government as educational provider has one essential responsibility in this allocation process: Once families are residentially sorted, who attends what school? This is where institutions of student sorting come into play.

Institutions intervening in the process of allocating students to school are comprised of informal practices and formal rules. The actors involved in the process are the families, the local administrations and the schools. Findings from sociology of education research have shown that parents of different social classes develop different strategies and practices to ensure their child gets access to the best school available to them (Ball and Vincent 1998; Barrault 2013; Kallstenius 2010). These informal practices take place in a formal institutional environment. Since the state has the responsibility of ensuring that each child has a school place and considering that who gets access to what school is a contentious matter, it is quite natural that formal rules exist to define who has the right to access what school. These formal rules then frame the strategies individuals can use in the competition for quality schools.

Unlike the rules that distribute quality education to schools, these institutions regulate consumer behaviour.

Institutions that distribute quality to schools regulate the behaviour *of teachers and education providers*. Institutions that distribute students to schools regulate the behaviour of *families*. For this thesis, I have opted to focus on the regulation of student sorting because of the special role that families play as both a producer and a consumer of quality education. Regulating the behaviour of families as consumers is also a means to provide a better service to all. Indeed, peer effects make the question of student sorting a particularly intriguing policy problem. Peer effects are a special variable in this context as they contribute to school quality but are not concerned with distributing quality to schools, but distributing students to schools. The effect that a peer has on the learning outcome of a student is part of the school's input on that student's achievement. Many researchers now consider "that peer composition is as important a determinant of student outcomes as other widely cited inputs including teacher quality, class size, and parental involvement" (Sacerdote 2010, 250). Peer effects can be defined narrowly to include only the externalities that peer behaviour and educational achievement add to a student's learning process but they can also mean to include the effect of student composition on the quality of teaching and indeed teacher sorting (cf. Allen 2008, 14; C. K. Jackson 2009). The latter effect is what interests us more here: teachers do not have an incentive to work in schools with a highly segregated intake where they expect disruptions and higher stress, and have to provide more input in order to gain the same educational output than in more mixed or socially advantaged schools (cf. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin 2004). The socio-economic characteristics of a school's intake then also feed into its quality. By understanding how families negotiate their way into the best schools, we can also understand how quality resources are distributed to schools. As a consequence, families are simultaneously producers and consumers of education.

To further specify, this study is concerned with the *formal rules* of student sorting. As we know from Historical Institutionalism, the politics of changing formal rules are different from the politics of informal institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). In the following, I will only refer to formal rules when using the concept of Student Sorting Institutions. As I will show in the second chapter of this thesis, we can use findings from sociology of stratification and sociology of education to assess which rules provide equal opportunities, and which rules lead to unequal opportunities. I focus on formal rules of student sorting for three reasons: first, these rules are in the toolbox of education policy makers who have the task of distributing opportunities with the education system. Second,

these rules also give policy-makers leverage to affect the quality of schools, because peer effects turn education-consumers into education-producers. Third, in the planning of the education system, policy-makers are first and foremost responsible for the outcomes of formal rules on equality of opportunity. Two limits of this approach have to be borne in mind. This project does not test or measure the effect of these institutions on access to quality schooling for children of different social origins. Further, if schools had equal quality and the capacity to compensate for peer effects, these formal institutions would not matter. One can expect that they have varying impact in different societies. Yet the focus on these formal rules comes with the advantage of studying their complex redistributive dynamics in depth. This in-depth understanding can help to theorise the politics of distribution of education more broadly. Furthermore, this focus allows us to solve an intriguing empirical puzzle that I will present in Section 2 of this chapter.

Finally, the novelty of this research is to study equal opportunities at the compulsory school level. At that level, everyone is provided with access to full-time education but the quality of education differs, thus impacting future education opportunities at the post-compulsory level. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) defines lower secondary education as the second stage of basic education after primary education, where basic skills are fully implemented and where more specialised subject teaching is introduced to students. It generally ends nine to ten years after a student starts primary education or, roughly, between the ages of 14-16. As Schneider and Kogan remark, this corresponds with the end of compulsory education (S. L. Schneider and Kogan 2008). Hence, at the lower secondary stage, talents are more revealed than at the primary stage, and success at this level defines access to the more competitive programmes at upper secondary and tertiary level. This makes this education level particularly interesting for studying the politics of equal opportunities. Yet, the political economy of education literature has so far focused on explaining institutions of primary education (Ansell and Lindvall 2013), upper secondary education and vocational training (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012; Busemeyer 2014; Culpepper 2003; Thelen 2004; Thelen 2014), and tertiary education (Ansell 2010; Garritzmann 2015). This study, therefore, also aims to provide new insights into a forgotten but relevant education level in the study of the comparative political economy of education.

1.1.3. The redistributive politics of student sorting

Distributing quality education with Student Sorting Institutions to promote equal

opportunities is a redistributive task. It requires shaping the institutions that intervene in the competition for access to quality schools. This means taking away access to quality schools for some and giving it to others. Studying Student Sorting Institutions from this perspective adds to our understanding of political economy of education. Political economy of education and redistribution has focused mainly on the level of education spending at different education levels. Such studies have used a primarily interest-based account, where institutions only pay a secondary explanatory role. They follow the logic that redistributive outcomes are a matter of redistributive politics, that is, parties with constituents of different socio-economic background make different decisions when it comes to education spending (Ansell 2010; Boix 1998; Busemeyer 2009; Busemeyer and Iversen 2014). I add to this literature by asking whether such logic also applies to decisions that do not directly involve spending but require institutional change and affect redistributive outcomes: Student Sorting Institutions at the lower secondary level.

Existing studies on education politics confirm that governments hold and pursue the goal of equal opportunities when planning their education systems. Indeed, two contrasting theories of welfare state development, the power resource theory and welfare production regimes theory show that their protagonists (left wing parties on the one hand, and employers and unions in the skill formation process on the other hand) have taken and pursued the principle of publicly provided education for all very seriously (Iversen and Stephens 2008). Left-wing parties invest more in education than the right. This is because they attempt to increase the human capital of their constituents (the lower part of the income distribution) (Boix 1998). There is a caveat here for left-wing parties when it comes to tertiary education spending, which is regressive in nature as long as the lower income groups do not get access to it (Ansell 2010). Employers in turn have been protagonists in the development of vocational training systems, thus providing skill formation for those who were unwilling or unable to continue education in academic tracks (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012; Culpepper 2003; Thelen 2004). High quality education serves employers' interests: it guarantees that their employees have the required skill level. In parallel, the economy benefits from equality of opportunity provided that it reveals "hidden equalities – to enable the poor boy to show that he is as good as the rich boy" (Marshall 1996, 120). A society with equal educational opportunities does not 'waste' the talent of the 'poor boy' but stretches it to improve the skill base of the economy. I will show that this consensus for equal opportunities does not translate into consensual politics of Student Sorting Institutions.

My contribution echoes the work on educational spending, i.e. that government

partisanship matters for equality of opportunity. To underpin this argument, I develop a theory on the material interests of different socio-economic groups regarding Student Sorting Institutions. Further, building on the cited political economy of education literature, I show how parties respond to these interests and the extent to which these affect their Student Sorting Institution policies when in government. Beyond the theoretical relevance of further testing the significance of partisan governments for education policy, this perspective also adds to our understanding of the politics of school-based education at the lower secondary level and redistributive policy-making via reforming distributive institutions.

The idea that different education systems lead to different redistributive outcomes is, of course, not new. Different typologies already exist (Gingrich 2011; Hall and Soskice 2001). However, such typologies have been designed to capture broader phenomena like marketisation of welfare services or levels of coordination between the state and the economy. One main contribution of this thesis is to show that the distributive institutions of a social service redistribute via several dimensions. In the case of education it is especially relevant to capture these fine-grained redistributive implications: the more a school system fails to equalise opportunities at a low level, the more it contributes to social stratification with its higher levels (Ansell 2010; Busemeyer 2009; Jensen 2011).

In this section, I have presented my object of research: the political economy of equal opportunities in education, particularly via the formal rules that sort students to schools at the lower secondary schooling level. In the next section, I show that this topic is not only theoretical but predominantly empirical since cross-national variation of Student Sorting Institutions and their reforms provide two empirical puzzles.

1.2. Distributing Quality Education to All: Two Empirical Puzzles

When one looks at Student Sorting Institutions in Western Europe and at their institutional development after lower secondary education became compulsory, two empirical puzzles appear. Major institutional change occurred in welfare states as diverse as France, Sweden, and England in the 1960s and 1970s. They abandoned their tracked schooling system and opted for comprehensive education instead. In a tracked schooling system, students were allocated to different types of schools according to their previous performance. In a comprehensive system, children with different abilities would attend the same schools. Policy-makers thought this would equalise educational opportunities (Heidenheimer, Heclo,

and Adams 1990). After this move into a common direction, these systems organised student sorting to comprehensive schools differently. The pattern of variation of this second reform is puzzling in light of the common trend of the first reform. It does not correspond to variation in terms of welfare state institutions, past politics of education reform, political institutions, or economic institutions in which education is embedded. As I will show in this section, existing theories on public policy and political economy of education cannot explain these differences. The first puzzle is about school choice, and the difference between France on the one hand and Sweden and England on the other hand. Why did centre-left governments in England and Sweden embrace school choice, a policy that was not in tune with their objective of equalising opportunities? The second puzzle concerns regulating school choice to make it more inclusive: why are the admissions procedures to publicly funded private schools less regulated in France than they are in Sweden and England?

1.2.1. Puzzle 1: from comprehensive schooling to school choice

France, England, and Sweden are three countries where governments of the centre-right similarly gave in to the left's call for comprehensive education and abandoned their commitments to the tracked lower secondary schooling system in the 1960s and 1970s respectively (Duclaud-Williams 1983; Heidenheimer, Heclo, and Adams 1990). Subsequently, these countries took a different policy stance on how students should be allocated to those new comprehensive schools. Thatcher's 1988 Education Reform Act made it possible for parents to opt out of their local public school. The Swedish centre-right government of 1991-1994 introduced similar reforms. In both these countries, the centre-left also became a proponent of school choice and thus upheld these institutions created by the centre-right (Gingrich 2011; Hicks 2015; Klitgaard 2007; Klitgaard 2008). Yet, in France children continued to be allocated to the school closest to their neighbourhood, as the right only incrementally softened the neighbourhood principle in the late 1980s and mid-2000s. If political or economic institutions are the answer to variation in education policy (Busemeyer and Nikolai 2010; Heidenheimer, Heclo, and Adams 1990; Klitgaard 2008), it is difficult to understand the convergence of the three systems in the first place, and divergence in the second place.

One can first examine this puzzle in light of the similarity between Sweden and England. In both cases, centre-left governments opened up educational opportunities at the lower secondary level by introducing comprehensive education in 1960s. Postponing

educational selection to higher levels did not suffice for the purposes of reducing persisting inequalities, according to the analysis provided by experts and policy-makers in the 1980s (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). In this context of persisting inequalities, centre-right governments in England (1988) and Sweden (1992) gave families the right to choose a school. When the Left came back to government, uncertainty remained: school choice could increase social segregation between schools, imposing new barriers to opportunities of socio-economically disadvantaged children. An alternative view was that inequalities would remain stable, because school choice would promote the opportunities of those that opted out of low income neighbourhood schools. In spite of such uncertainty, subsequent *left-wing* governments in *both* countries fully embraced this development and strengthened the right to choose schools. Why?

The non-partisan explanations for education policy do not resolve the puzzle. They expect the English and Swedish policies to vary. The production regime theory expects to find more education investment in Coordinated Market Economies (CMEs) than in Liberal Market Economies (LMEs) in the deindustrialisation context, as CMEs' specific skills require re-skilling (Jensen 2011, 418). This perspective expects that Swedish policy-makers are more attentive to the education of the least endowed, because these are most exposed to the risk of lacking skills or skills redundancy in a service economy. Combining this approach with welfare regime variables (as proposed by Iversen and Stephens 2008; Busemeyer 2014) leads to a similar expectation. We would have thought the British Left would have difficulties with countering policies that liberalise public services, but much less so the Swedish Social Democrats. Promising answers to this repeatedly raised puzzle (e.g. Klitgaard 2008) point out that school choice is not inconsistent with the interests of left-wing governments as they have to bind cross-class coalitions (Gingrich 2011). Moreover, the regressive effects of school choice are tuned down in equal societies (Hicks, 2015). From these studies it follows that school choice is good for binding cross-class coalitions and appeal to middle class voters in the context of welfare state retrenchments. Why then was this policy not pursued in France?

The two available answers are not completely satisfying. The first answer is that school choice existed in France in a different form: when comprehensive education was introduced in France, parents had the choice of opting out of their local schools by opting into the publicly funded catholic schools. This could have limited the interest for more choice, hence curtailing both the right and the left's endeavour to pursue school choice. However, publicly funded faith schools also existed in England. Still, Margaret Thatcher's government expanded the possibility of choice to public schools. The second answer is that France differs

from England with respect to political institutions – especially the high degree of centralisation of education administration (Dobbins and Martens 2012) and its particular educational corporatism (Dobbins 2014). Yet, Margaret Thatcher's government actually increased central government control over education in the same set of reforms that also expanded parental choice. Parental choice and centralisation are not incompatible (Gingrich 2011). Why French families have yet to experience greater choice over the enrolment of their children to schools is an intriguing empirical question.

1.2.2. Puzzle 2: regulating admissions in a choice system

The second puzzle appears when comparing how governments – especially the left – have attempted to solve the problems of equality of opportunity linked with school choice: when schools decide on admissions, they are incentivised to select high performers. As I will explain in depth in Chapter 2, regulating admissions and giving schools less leeway in the process of student admissions makes choice more inclusive. The problem of schools selecting students is especially acute when privately managed schools are maintained by public funds, as is the case for faith schools and other grant-maintained schools in the three countries. On the one hand it is understandable that private owners want a say in who gets access to their schools. On the other hand, the schools are part of the publicly funded system, and therefore the government has a particular responsibility to ensure access to these schools does not harm the principle of equal opportunities. With this issue in mind, one would then expect governments – especially the left – to make admissions more inclusive and regulate school choice. What is more, one would not expect that cross-national variation of this regulation puts Sweden and England in the more regulated and France in the less regulated camp.

In Sweden, the Social Democrats regulated school choice and defined the criteria according to which new publicly funded private schools were allowed to select students in the event they were oversubscribed. They did so during the first term of office after the centre-right had introduced school choice and public funding for private schools. In England, it took Labour three terms to come to a similar arrangement. In 2006, the Admissions Code made it statutory that schools were not allowed to select students according to their abilities or use some of the admissions practices that allowed them to prioritise better students (such as interviewing parents). In France, however, neither centre-left nor centre-right governments regulated admissions practices of the publicly funded private schools. Such schools can look at students' previous achievements and interview parents during the admission process.

Hence, selection according to academic ability still exists in the French publicly funded lower secondary schooling sector. This low regulation of school choice stands at odds with the institutional nature of the highly regulated and centrally administered French public education system. Why would a government headed by Tony Blair lead to more regulation and more welfare-oriented policies than his French counterparts? Why have the British and the Swedes regulated their school choice system whilst the French have not? This is the second puzzle of this thesis.

One possible answer to this puzzle relates to the different nature of French publicly funded private schools – an overwhelming majority are catholic faith schools – and Swedish and English publicly funded private schools. The role of religious institutions in the development of the education system is well acknowledged (Ansell and Lindvall 2013; Archer 1979; Busemeyer and Nikolai 2010). France, England, and Sweden vary on this measure: Sweden and England have a state church, England has a catholic minority that also has its own schools, and France is secular and has historically had little religious diversity. This variation could explain why French policy makers have not regulated admissions to the publicly funded private schools, as one could expect catholic institutions to oppose such regulation.

This approach sounds reasonable, but remains inconclusive without more thorough theorising and empirical work. From such a perspective, France is different because the past conflicts on which its system rests have shaped its institutions and reform capacity. However, historically France has not been consistently different from both Sweden and England regarding regulation of faith school subsidisation. France and Sweden were historically similar in this respect: they developed mass education systems without subsidising church schools, in contrast to England (Ansell and Lindvall 2013). England and France then became similar cases when France started to subsidise its private schools in 1959. France was thus first similar to Sweden, then to England, and then different from both Sweden and England. The extent to which the French catholic school system within a secular state explains this variation therefore constitutes both a theoretical and empirical question.

In this thesis, I propose to solve these puzzles. The aim is then to understand why the Conservative governments in England shifted from promoting tracked schooling to comprehensive schooling with school choice; why Labour accepted this move towards school choice and took some time to regulate choice and make it more inclusive; why institutional change in Sweden made its system more similar to the English system; and why the English trajectory has diverged from the French trajectory but, at the same time, has converged with

the Swedish trajectory since the late 1980s and early 1990s.

1.3. Research Questions, Argument in Brief, and Research Design

In this last section, I introduce *how* I intend to answer the questions that have so far been raised. I, firstly, specify the research questions and summarise my core argument. I then present and justify my research design.

1.3.1. Research questions and argument in brief

The policy problem of sorting students to schools and the corresponding empirical puzzles on variation of policy-change between Sweden, France, and England set the stage for my research questions:

1. How do formal institutions that sort students to different schools compare when it comes to promoting the social right of equal opportunities in education?
2. What explains institutional reforms of such rules at the lower secondary schooling level in Western Europe?

Answering these research questions contributes to our understanding of how social inequalities affect education politics and the conditions under which governments meet their pledge of equalising opportunities and guaranteeing access to quality education for all.

The answer to question one and dependent variable of question two takes the form of a typology with the overarching concept (cf. Collier et al. 2008) of *Student Sorting Institutions* (SSIs). I define these as the formal institutions that intervene in the allocation process of pupils to schools. From another perspective, they are the body of legislation and administrative acts and procedures that allocate school places to pupils, and contribute to the socio-economic characteristics of a school's population. The core answer to the first research question is that we can best compare these institutions along two dimensions. The *choice* dimension relates to the effect of social origin on access to quality schooling via families' direct involvement in the decision of enrolment to a particular school. The *selection* dimension accounts for the effect of social origin to quality schooling via childrens' performance. Variation on these two dimensions creates *four types of Student Sorting Institutions* with different implications for equal opportunities in education. Keeping choice

constant, more selection means bad news for equality of opportunity. Keeping selection constant, more choice improves opportunities for some relatively disadvantaged social groups but simultaneously deteriorates them for others. Chapter 2 presents the rationale and concepts associated with this typology in depth.

The answer to the second question hinges on the following argument. The redistributive nature of Student Sorting Institutions drives the politics of school choice reform. Partisan governments matter. However, whether or not parties' constituents benefit from certain SSIs is not immediately apparent because these institutions do not divide constituents only according to their income. Rather, constituents' (=parents') educational achievements give them additional advantages in the competition for access to quality schooling for their children. Therefore, we have to open the black box of united left-wing or right-wing partisan governments and look more deeply into divisions within low-and-middle or high-and-middle income coalitions. Moreover, the respective education levels of income groups vary between societies (cross-sectionally and over time). This explains why similar parties have different preferences. If partisan governments matter for institutional reform, this means that they are able to effectively represent their constituents' material interests in spite of complex redistributive outcomes. It also means that who is in government affects equality of opportunity. As I will show in Chapter 3, looking at these trade-offs through the lens of a trilemma helps to disentangle partisan interests. The argument also speaks to recent advances in the comparative political economy of the service economy (Iversen and Wren 1998; Ansell and Gingrich 2013; B. Ansell 2010). I add that the complexity of winners and losers in the long run make partisan governments wary of short-term political costs. For that reason, they are status quo oriented. They prefer stability of Student Sorting Institutions that are at odds with their redistributive preferences to a reform that would put the institutions in line with their preferences, unless the political context changes their cost assessment. With this status quo orientation, *timing* enters the explanatory framework. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework, hypotheses, and operationalisation of this approach.

This approach solves the puzzle in the following way: The centre-right in all three countries preferred to abandon tracked schooling and to initiate school choice reform because the population had become more educated. The competition for admission to the higher academic track became fiercer and led to a conflict between constituents of the centre-right. To solve this conflict, these parties could bind new coalitions with Exclusive Choice (high choice, high selection). At the same time, the Left in all three countries started to debate the merits of Community Schooling (low choice, low selection) and Inclusive Choice (high

choice, low selection) options. The Inclusive Choice option became more popular within government circles as the centre-left constituents became more educated. In England and Sweden, those who would benefit from Inclusive Choice outnumbered those who would benefit from a Community Schooling system by the mid-1990s. In France, the socio-economic constituencies of the centre-left remained more divided: there was no incentive for left-wing governments to initiate reforms.

There are good theoretical and empirical reasons to argue that ideas-based accounts (especially the role of neoliberalism) and institutions-based accounts (especially path-dependent feedback effects) provide valuable alternative explanations. However, the empirical chapters show that the trade-offs related to redistributing opportunities were present in policy-makers minds at each step and in all three countries. They had a clear idea of the interests of their constituents, and of the political costs related to policy shifts. Findings also suggest that the presence of neoliberal ideas was neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the reforms to happen. Furthermore, the institutionalist argument of positive and negative path-dependent feedback effects as drivers of institutional stability and change does not seem to provide a necessary or sufficient condition for change or stability in the three cases, either. In contrast, the partisan approach offers a sufficient (but not necessary) condition. One aim of this thesis is to better understand the causal mechanism that links individual preferences for redistribution to policy outcomes of Student Sorting Institutions in particular. Another aspiration is that this mechanism might apply to other cases of redistributive policy-making, especially in contexts where redistribution happens as users get allocated to services of different quality. This project provides a possible mechanism and shows that its observable implications apply to three different contexts.

Where families within an income group have similar education levels, their interests are united. Otherwise, they are divided. This reflects on divisions within parties: the more similar the education level of their constituents, the easier it is to represent their interests. Henceforth, the structure of social inequalities informs the politics of education. These divisions within social classes, income or education groups considerably limit the capacity of governments to meet the goal of equal education for all – and thus respond to PISA recommendations on how to manage education for a knowledge-based economy. Rather, they have to take away opportunities from some to give them to others. The question, therefore, is whose opportunities to prioritise. Furthermore, the characteristics of Student Sorting Institutions push reform opportunity to the bottom of the agenda. Change is possible but depends on whether it is seen as opportune in the particular political context, which adds an

element of contingency to the question.

1.3.2. Research design – Comparative Historical Analysis

The research design is based on the Comparative Historical Analysis approach (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). The following paragraphs thus present the particular use I make of small-N comparison, case selection, and process tracing to make sure that my theory, ontology, and methodology is aligned as I seek to develop and test a theory (Hall 2003).

I have opted for a Comparative Historical Analysis for three reasons. First, this approach is particularly useful to develop concepts for cross-national comparison. One principal aim of this project was to develop the concept of SSIs. Its corresponding typology is a tool to allow comparability of education systems and enable me to then analyse the politics behind cross-national variation of these redistributive institutions. As Mahoney and Rueschemeyer point out, Comparative Historical Analysis permits "a higher level of conceptual and measurement validity than is often possible when a large number of cases are selected" (2003, 13).

Second, this historically oriented small-N method takes a view of complex causality and is interested in causes-of-effects rather than effects-of-causes (Mahoney and Goertz 2006). The aim here is to explore whether the partisan theory of redistribution in education can be adapted to explain decisions of institutional change that affect who gets access to what kind of education – a redistributive question at its core. The primary aim is thus not generalisability across contexts, but to understand whether policy-makers reform these institutions with redistributive goals in mind and whether they react to socio-economic change. This thesis is about establishing this relationship and defining its scope conditions. This is also a pragmatic decision as intensive case-level work would be required to collect the data necessary for a larger-N analysis. With the relationship more firmly established by this project, it might be fruitful to subsequently collect data on Student Sorting Institutions in a larger set of cases to run a medium- or large-N analysis and see to what extent the relationship can be generalised.

Third, I assume that there are "multiple causal paths to the same outcome" (Mahoney and Goertz 2006, 236): the theory formulated thus takes equifinality seriously and component elements of the theory are INUS conditions: insufficient but necessary parts of a sufficient but not necessary condition for each of the Student Sorting types. Alternative explanations can

produce similar INUS conditions. The task will then be to draw a judgment "based on a three-cornered comparison" between my theory, the alternative explanations, and "sets of observations" (Hall 2003, 392). I will show that, in the three cases I analyse, the observations better compare to my interest-based explanation than to its principal rivals.

1.3.3. Approach to case selection and process tracing

I selected the three cases of France, England, and Sweden from 1980 to 2010 for the historical and cross-national comparison. Given this theory's frailty[4], I confront it with a permissive empirical environment of most-likely cases. The comparison between England and Sweden has been instrumental to the evaluation of partisan influence on education spending (Ansell 2010; Busemeyer 2014) and on marketisation of the school system (Gingrich 2011; Hicks 2015). Each of these studies have shown that the left and the right have pursued policies based on the interests of their constituents. Further, both Gingrich and Hicks point out that trade unions and political institutions did not matter for marketisation. Finally, Busemeyer and Iversen (2014, 318) display that Sweden and England are close to the regression line when it comes to the relationship between parties in government and education spending patterns. If our theory failed in these cases, then this would strongly point to its inadequacy for most other cases.

France, in contrast, is a least-likely case for the theory because of its political and historical institutions that existing scholarship thinks are paramount to explaining French education policy and reform capacity. France is also the 'negative' case of this study, as it neither generalises school choice nor regulates it to make it an Inclusive Choice system. This decision also follows the recommendation to include positive and negative cases in a small-N design (Gerring 2007; Mahoney and Goertz 2004). If the theory works well in the French case, the confidence that it might work beyond the sample strongly increases. Such an outcome could justify conducting a large-N follow-up study to examine the theory's external validity.

Finally, case selection in a Comparative Historical Analysis asks for striking a balance between two aims. Cases have to be similar enough to ensure events in different contexts are comparable and one does not compare Apples with Oranges (cf. Locke and Thelen 1995). Cases should also provide significantly different environments, which allow the researcher to

[4] I judge this theory as frail because of the high number of assumptions associated to it.

show that the mechanism applies to a wider range of contexts. Each of the country cases can be subdivided into a set of historical sequences during which reform events unfold. This allows for "systematic and contextualized comparisons". Such comparisons have limited leverage for generalising the theory but have been of value throughout the research process. The iterations between theory and empirics, between concepts and classifications (cf Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, p. 13) allowed me to specify the puzzle, and develop the typology of Student Sorting Institutions with its corresponding equality of opportunity trilemma.

The selected cases are similar to some extent, ensuring comparability across them. They all turned their back on the tracked school system that other Western European countries have continued to embrace (e.g. Switzerland, Austria, Netherlands, Germany). Moreover, the central government is largely responsible for the decision on formal institutions of student sorting in the selected cases (the UK government for England). Education at lower secondary level is almost universally publicly funded (England, with a rate of seven percent, has the highest rate of independently financed private schools of the sample). However, they vary in significant ways when it comes to social policy making, as they are part of different worlds of welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990) and different types of democracies (Lijphart 2012); have different education regimes (Busemeyer and Nikolai 2010), and have different histories of the church-state cleavage. I will get back to how the cases vary on the independent variables after having fully specified the theory in Chapter 3.

The English case requires further specification. Education is a devolved policy in the UK. The education systems of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland developed separately and were all decentralised to the local level. Hence, when centralisation of education started in the 20th century, each of the four nations had their own education system (Brock 2015). As England does not have its own government, the UK government is responsible for the English education system. Therefore, the politics of education in the UK government lead to legislation only for the English education system. For some of the period analysed here the UK government could also legislate on the Welsh and Northern Irish education systems. Yet, they did so in separate legislation. Hence, when it comes to classifying the education system, I speak of England rather than the UK. When it comes to the political institutions that govern the education system, I speak of the UK.

The theory is tested in three within-case analyses, each of which comprises several policy-making episodes where the decision-making process can be traced. I use the method of process tracing to solve the three-cornered comparison between theory, its alternatives and

empirics. Multiple approaches to process tracing have been developed in recent years. The approach I have used has its roots in Peter Hall's *Systematic Process Analysis* (Hall 2003). I follow the more recent concrete advice on process tracing as an analytical tool of Bennett and Checkel's edited volume (2015). This decision goes with accepting the Bayesian logics underlying process tracing.[5] We update our confidence in a theory after having considered the evidence available to confirm or disconfirm that theory.

In concrete terms, this required formulating evidentiary tasks and empirical tests for the theory and its alternatives and to evaluate the extent to which the collected causal process observations provided evidence that passed or failed these tests (Jacobs 2015). Practically, I analysed these observations at least twice during the process. In this context, it is worth mentioning that process tracing as a theory-testing tool is not necessarily compatible with the iterative approach that provides the strength of Comparative Historical Analysis. To provide a reliable 'test', the former relies on ensuring that theories' observable implications are deduced from the theory rather than informed by observations in the field. This tension requires particular attention to confirmation bias and to making the research process transparent.

First, I analysed my observations with a view towards *understanding* the case. In that process, the aim was to gather as many and as diverse observations I needed to get a rich description/narrative of the chain of events leading to particular policy decisions. I collected and analysed three main types of observations. I conducted interviews with policy makers and stakeholders that have been involved as directly as possible in the decision-making process of interest (between 15 and 20 per case, in 2013 and 2014).[6] I assembled archival documents such as policy documents (broadly defined) and ranging from press reports, stakeholders' policy papers, expert reports and studies (making reference to above mentioned socio-economic trends), and (auto-)biographical work, to concrete reform projects, legislation, parliament debates, and party conference proceedings. The study also relied on a large corpus of secondary literature from historians, sociologists, and educationalist experts of each case. After having gained more confidence in the interest-based account through this procedure, I specified the theory deductively. I then designed the corresponding empirical tests. These tests can be formulated by assessing what kind of evidence fulfils the evidentiary task for each of the theories. Subsequently, I compiled descriptive statistics about how the education level of the three income groups and of voters changed over time in France, Sweden, and

[5] Although I use some terms connected with Bayesian process tracing, I do not formally test hypotheses by explicitly assigning probabilities and priors to the hypotheses and evidence.
[6] A list of interviewees is reproduced in Appendix 1.

England, using the Luxembourg Income Study and the main electoral studies of each country. Subsequently I re-analysed the collected sources and collected and analysed the additional sources needed to assess whether the observations meet the process tracing tests.

Conclusion

I have now introduced the cornerstones of my thesis's argument and research approach. This chapter started with an overview of the object of research (*'what' is this thesis about?*): the aim of this book is to offer a novel explanation of the political economic determinants of unequal opportunities in education and, more specifically, regarding the task of distributing quality education to all at the compulsory lower secondary school level. I study the particular policy problem of Student Sorting Institutions where reformers change the level of parental choice and student selection in the system. Such changes are relevant, as they provide more educational opportunities for some socio-economic groups and take away opportunities for others.

Next, I have justified the relevance of this research project (*'why' is an explanation of these policies due?*) by showing two empirical puzzles emerging from cross-national comparisons of Student Sorting Institutions along the dimensions of choice and selection. Why has the centre-left in Sweden and the UK embraced school choice as the mode of allocation of students to school in the 1990s? Why has there been no regulation of such choice in France, thus allowing government maintained private schools to select their students?

Finally, I have explained my theoretical and methodological approach (*'how' have I tackled and studied these questions?*). My typology of Student Sorting Institutions and the corresponding policy trilemma constitute the heart of the theoretical argument. As the cross-class coalitions that support political parties become more educated, partisan actors adjust their policy preferences for SSIs to better represent their changed constituencies. The particular characteristics of these policies and their redistributive nature lead to a bias towards the status quo. A comparative historical analysis of France, Sweden, and England from the late 1970s to the late 2000s with the use of process tracing is the most suitable tool to assess the extent to which this argument offers a more satisfying solution to the puzzles than its competing theories.

The next two chapters are foremost of conceptual and theoretical nature. Chapter 2 presents the typology of Student Sorting Institutions and thus offers a comprehensive

theoretical and empirical account of the dependent variable. Chapter 3 deals with the explanation of variation: I present the theory of socio-economic coalitions, the corresponding reform trilemma and status quo bias, and the alternative accounts of 'old politics' and 'new politics' of the welfare state. I specify the causal chains implied in each of these theories and the process tracer's evidentiary tasks. Chapters 4 to 6 spell out the process tracing evidence in historical narratives for Sweden, England, and France respectively. Chapter 7 concludes with a critical comparison of the three accounts and the extent to which the empirical test was successful; it elaborates on the project's future research agenda, and discusses implications for the politics of (educational) inequalities.

Chapter 2: A Typology of Student Sorting Institutions

How do formal institutions that sort students to different schools compare when it comes to promoting the social right of equal opportunities in education? This is the first question of this study. My main concern in this chapter is to answer this question with a typology of the institutions that interfere in the distribution of students to schools. This typology helps comparing these institutions with respect to the outcome of equal opportunities.

The typology of Student Sorting Institutions (SSIs) flows from a conceptual problem that I have identified from reviewing sociology of education and stratification and economics of education literature. In short, and without giving too much away, the dichotomy of 'tracked' and 'comprehensive' schools entrenched in the sociology of stratification literature crucially misses variation within the 'comprehensive' schools category although this variation is significant for the social stratification outcomes the dichotomy attempts to capture in the first place. Instead, it is useful to split the dichotomy into two relevant dimensions: first, can providers select students according to their performance at school? Second, can families choose their preferred schools? In order to substantiate the value of this typology, I explicitly take the reader along my operationalisation of the new, categorical, SSIs variable and provide a descriptive comparative historical account in which I classify SSIs of France, England, and Sweden since their moved away from a tracked school system in the 1960s-1970s. In other words, this chapter explains the theoretical origins of the study's dependent variable and specifies the conceptual underpinnings of measuring its variation across time and space.

This chapter is organised in three sections: I start with an analysis of the sociology and economics research strands that deal with the question of distributing quality education to all and (in)equality of opportunity in education from the viewpoint of allocation of students to schools. This first section ends with a presentation of the Student Sorting Institutions typology. I dedicate section two to the operationalisation of the new SSI variable. In section three, I map the trajectories of the French, English, and Swedish education systems onto the typology.

2.1. Comparing Student Sorting Institutions – A New Approach

This section builds the typology of SSIs based on what sociology of stratification and education, and economics of education have taught us on the effects of different institutions on equality of opportunity. I argue that this literature offers us enough ground to take Student Sorting Institutions as a tool to equalise opportunities seriously. Further, I show that it is useful to draw the findings of these different sub-disciplines together, but that this communication leads to a conceptual problem. Finally, I provide a solution to that problem as I consider Student Sorting Institutions an overarching concept for a two-dimensional typology.

2.1.1. Social origins and individual educational achievement

In this first subsection, I show where Student Sorting Institutions fit in to achieve the outcome of equal opportunities in education. To do so, it is useful to clarify how the school, the state, and the family affect the individual educational achievement. Figure 2.1. depicts this relationship, as conceptualised by the sociology of education literature (e.g. Sørensen and Morgan 2000, 148).

Figure 2.1: SSIs and the effect of social origins on educational achievements

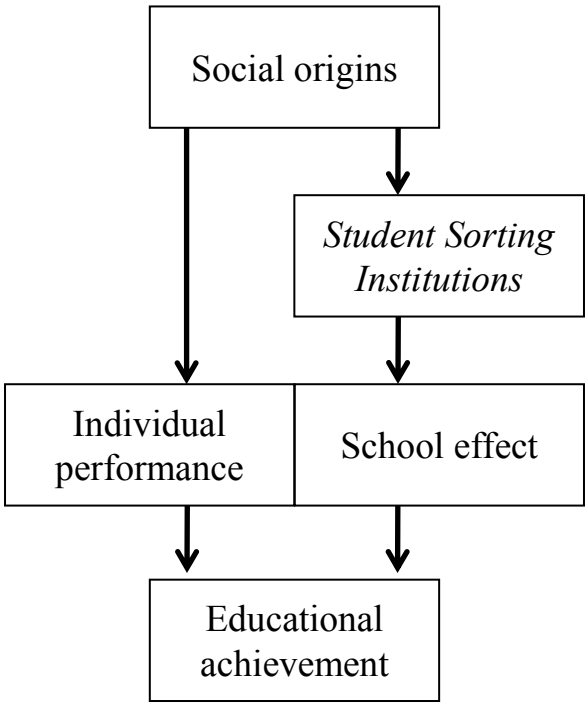


Figure 2.1. breaks down individuals' educational achievement into their individual ability on the one hand, and the school effect on learning on the other hand. As Sørensen and Morgan put it:

> "There are two components to the educational process in schools: what students are taught and how much they learn of what they are taught. Schools, classrooms, and other instructional groups differ in what and how much is taught. Students will differ, by ability and effort, in how much they learn. Student ability and effort can change over time as a result of learning and as a result of motivational processes associated with the social systems to which they belong. Schools can influence how much a student will learn by how much they try to teach and by changing student effort." (p. 148)

The concept of equal opportunities calls for accepting a difference in individual ability and learning behaviour. It less accepts that schools' teaching efforts differ. A real problem for the concept arises when children's social origins define what school they can access. This is where the family enters the equation. As Figure 2.1. illustrates, families matter for both the individual and the school element of the stylised individual performance function. In the following, I will review the state of the social stratification literature on the family effect on individual ability on the one hand, and on access to schools on the other hand. The core message is that to measure equality of opportunity in education at the lower secondary schooling level, we need to take into account the institutions that shape the extent to which families matter for individuals' access to schools of different quality.

The effect of social origins on individual performance firstly operates independently from the school a child attends (cf. Figure 2.1.). This relationship has been termed the *primary effect* of family background on individual achievement. The theory around this link emerged from studies on individuals' educational transitions that sought to explain why students from poorer backgrounds drop out of education earlier than their better-off peers (e.g. Boudon 1974). As Erikson and Jonsson (1996, 9) enumerate, these "differences in academic ability and educational performance between the offspring of different classes" can be decomposed into factors like the effect of class on IQ, the differences in home environments (Lareau 1989), and factors like sipship size and health that vary with social status (Erikson and

Jonsson 1996, 10–12). In general, sociologists still agree on the importance of this type of social class effect on individuals' educational opportunities (cf. Jackson 2013). They may disagree on the mechanisms with which such factors are transmitted (cf. Lucas 2001). Such effects are formed very early in an individual's life course, in pre-school years. They persist throughout an educational career as students from better-off families improve more easily than their worse-off peers: there is a compensatory class effect (Bernardi 2012; Bernardi and Grätz 2015; Grätz 2015).

Tackling the primary effect on individual ability is not a necessary condition for providing equal opportunity in lower secondary education. The role of the state is not to equalise the educational opportunities provided by the family, but by the educational system it runs. The primary effect cannot be tackled by education policy, but is about tackling social inequalities that lead to the ability advantage it confers to the better off. Indeed, as Jackson (2013, 14) argues, early childhood policies seem to be the only response with noticeable success (for a review of the literature on primary effects, cf. Jackson (2013, 12–14)). However, policy makers need to acknowledge the existence of this effect in their institutional designs to make sure that it does not intervene in the process that regulates students' access to quality education. In that case disadvantaged students not only perform worse on average, but they also get access to worse education to improve their own potential.

The right-hand arrow leaving the *Social Origins* box of Figure 2.1. depicts another social origin effect that requires intervention in order to achieve equal opportunities. Besides their effect on individuals' abilities, families also affect educational decisions. This is the so-called *secondary effect* of socio-economic background on educational achievement. Social stratification literature uses the concept of secondary effects especially when it comes to individuals' propensity to continue education at any given transition point. It is especially useful to understand why with a similar grade point average students of higher social origins are more likely to attend an academic track than students from lower social origins. The concept of secondary effects has been coined by Boudon, and then been used mostly in the literature that takes a rational choice perspective on educational achievement. The family background "alters the decision calculus surrounding educational transitions because children's educational and career aspirations will be influenced by their parents' socioeconomic position" (M. V. Jackson 2013, 15). Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) thus argue that individuals will make decisions at educational transitions that allow them to reach at least the same socio-economic position as the one of their parents and are risk averse in this process. Hence, and this is counterintuitive, individuals from disadvantaged families have less

incentives to continue education at a given transition than their peers from higher social classes. Lower secondary education prepares the first school-to-work transition, as it provides a school-leaving diploma with which individuals can then either continue education on an upper secondary academic or vocational track. When families decide to improve this preparation by competing for the best school places social origin matters via the secondary effect.

As social origin matters for who wins in the competition for access to quality schools the public provider has a duty to intervene in that competition to comply with the social right of equal opportunities in education. To go back to Figure 2.1., we see that this is where institutions come into play to channel the extent to which the social origins of the child affects what school they will attend. In this subsection, we have seen that social origins not only matter for individual ability, but also for the learning opportunities of children via the school effect. I have argued that the state is responsible for equalising access to these learning opportunities. The literature of social stratification, especially the concepts of the primary and secondary effects of social origin on educational achievement has helped me to show that competition to accessing quality school places has to be regulated in view of guaranteeing the social right of equal opportunities. Such regulation can take the form of formal institutions. How do these institutions intervene in the student sorting process and how do they channel the social origin effect on access to quality schooling? I argue in the following that we can distinguish between four types of Student Sorting Institutions (SSIs).

2.1.2. Institutions and the social origins effect

In this subsection, I present and assess the extent to which we can build on findings from sociology of stratification, and sociology and economics of education to capture variation of institutions that intervene in the competition for access to quality schools. Sociology of stratification has coined the difference between comprehensive and tracked schooling. Sociology and economics of education have been more interested in the implications of school choice within comprehensive systems. Conceptual communication between these strands has been neglected but is necessary for this study's purposes.

The first strand of the literature investigates how educational institutions interfere in social stratification and inequalities over the life course. It analyses how education systems affect individuals' social mobility (Allmendinger 1989; Erikson and Jonsson 1996; Jackson 2013; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993; Shavit and Müller 1998). At the lower secondary school

level, the level of *stratification* of the school system interests such authors:

> "The stratification of an educational system describes its vertical differentiation at a given school grade. A highly stratified system consists of clearly demarcated tracks or schools of very different quality or status. Placement in, or choice of, tracks and schools is likely to lead to very different outcomes in terms of access to higher education and in terms of the chances of getting a good job. All educational systems are more or less differentiated at their higher levels, but some systems embrace early stratification too; highly stratified systems are those in which students are already filtered into different tracks during compulsory schooling. Thus, highly stratified systems also entail early tracking, such that at around age 10 or 11, students are assigned to different tracks and schools." (Jackson and Jonsson 2013, 308)

On this basis, we can distinguish between tracked and non-tracked systems at the compulsory school level (Allmendinger 1989). The prototype of a tracked system is the German one, where different school types exist at the lower secondary school age (varying across the German Länder). Its opposite is the American High School (for a classification see Jackson and Jonsson (2013, 310)). Other countries, like the ones of interest here – France, England and Sweden – postponed tracking to upper secondary levels in the post-war development of the welfare state. These are commonly referred to as *comprehensive* school systems. In such systems, all students aim for the same diploma at the end of lower secondary schooling and have the same curriculum (even if this depends on the standardisation of the curriculum across schools, Allmendinger (1989)). In tracked systems, both the primary and the secondary effect of family background affect allocation to a school, and the educational opportunities it provides. It is understood as a system harmful for equality of opportunity in education (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993, 22).

However, stratification researchers have shown astonishingly little interest in understanding variation between schools within comprehensive school systems although the question clearly remains whether different comprehensive schools *de facto* provide students with similar educational opportunities. Some scholars in that field have referred to the level of standardisation between schools within an education system as a second dimension to be considered (Allmendinger 1989; Van de Werfhorst and Mijs 2010). They have acknowledged that within a system of low stratification, schools can vary. Despite this insight, they have not asked the question of institutions that allocate students within the comprehensive schooling

model or how such institutions might relate to the level of stratification of the education system.

The question of student sorting within a comprehensive school model has been a matter of fierce debate within the fields of economics of education and sociology of education. Both traditions draw a broad distinction between two models, for example as defined by Gibbons et al. (2008, 914): "(1) the *community-school* model, in which only pupils living nearby the school are admitted; and (2) the *parental-choice* model, in which schools admit pupils regardless of where they live, and parental preference is the deciding factor." These strands are less interested in the effect of education systems on social mobility. Their outcome of interest is school performance and individual educational achievement. One core question then is how the education system affects the socio-economic characteristics of schools' student intake. As Rebecca Allen (2008, 38–40) argues, the post-structuralist sociology of education tradition of French and British sociologists and rational choice economists of education share the insight that different policies of student allocation produce different outcomes. Both these research traditions argue that social background affects who wins the competition for access to quality schools. They disagree within and across disciplines on how policies mediate the social background effect on access to the better school.

The debate boils down to explaining social segregation between schools and estimating the competition between the effect of residential segregation and the effect of class in parents' school choice behaviour. In the community-school model social segregation between schools is a matter of residential segregation. As Allen argues, this mechanism has informed some economists' models pointing at the social advantages of parental choice over community schooling (Hoxby 2003). In the parental-choice model social segregation is a matter of class effect on choice behaviour. This insight has in particular built on Bourdieu's conception of economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1989). Scholars around Stephen Ball for the English case or Agnes Van Zanten for the French case have used these concepts to show that parents from different social class behave differently when it comes to choosing their children's schools (Felouzis, Van Zanten, and Maroy 2013; Raveaud and Zanten 2007; Van Zanten 2013).

These insights stem from different research traditions but can be fruitfully combined. A community schooling system clearly reproduces the residential segregation patterns in its schools. Such residential sorting amounts to the creation of 'club goods' (Gingrich and Ansell 2014) as house prices and school quality operate in a relationship of reversed causality (Fack and Grenet 2010; Gordon and Monastiriotis 2007). In a choice system instead children can

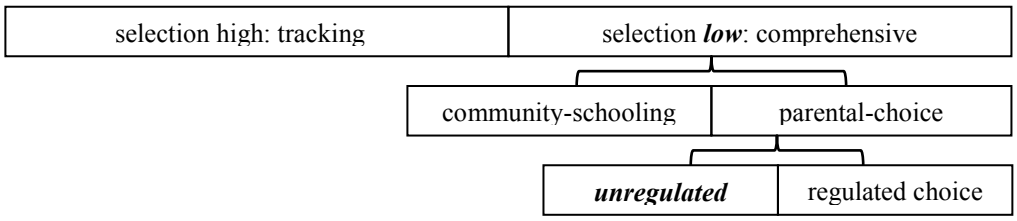
exit segregated local schools of disadvantaged areas. As Visier and Zoia (2008) have pointed out with empirical evidence from the city of Montpellier, this can lead to mixed social intakes in the 'middle class' schools, while increasing segregation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods as those who could use some social or cultural capital to opt out have done so, depriving those schools from these resources. Kallstenius has shown a similar effect in Stockholm and its surrounding areas (2010). Combining both these approaches gives a more differentiated perspective on the question of equality of opportunity. The child that has opted out of the local school in a parental-choice system has better opportunities while the child remaining in the segregated school is worse off than in the community schooling system. The difference between both systems is thus important but one system does not equalise opportunities more than the other.

To better estimate the effect of parental choice on social segregation in schools, the choice literature then disentangles the effect of social class expressing a preference for a school and the effect of social class on getting admitted to that school (Allen 2008; Allen, Coldron, and West 2012; Delvaux and Van Zanten 2006; Mons 2007). As these papers point out, the mechanism for that latter effect is that schools have an incentive to select their students according to their ability or their social background in order to achieve a higher performance. The extent to which schools can do so can be regulated. The English school choice literature concentrates on different admissions criteria and their effects on social segregation. The French-speaking literature – mainly focusing on the cases of France and Belgium – distinguishes between systems of "unlimited choice" and systems of "regulated choice" (Mons 2007; Delvaux and Van Zanten 2006). In comparison with the unlimited choice category, the effect of social background on a school's social composition is smaller in the regulated choice category.

Reviewing these different strands side by side shows that a conceptual problem appears if one wishes to rank institutions according to their effect on equal opportunities. Figure 2.2. depicts how the literature compares different institutions. There is a clear distinction between tracked schooling and comprehensive schooling. Both the primary and the secondary effect of social origin are at work in the tracked schooling model. In comparison, comprehensive schooling systems equalise opportunities. These systems have in common that the ability (primary effect) does not matter for what school one attends. Both community schooling and parental choice allow the secondary effect of social origin to work on access to schools as parents' decisions vis-à-vis their children's educational pathways structure who gets access to what school. Community schooling sorts students residentially – thus according

to income and the value parents give to their child's education when making residential choices. Parental-choice loosens the association with income but gives a stronger role to the class bias on choice behaviour. It is problematic though that different types of parental choice models coexist within the comprehensive schooling category. If schools can select their students according to their ability, then both the primary and the secondary effect are allowed to matter within a comprehensive schooling system. However this is contrary to the definition of comprehensive education. This is a conceptual problem related to multidimensionality.

Figure 2.2: Conceptual problem with unregulated choice in the low selection set



As the comprehensive education category falls apart into three different systems, how do the different systems within that category relate to one another on the value of equality of opportunity, and how do they relate to tracked schooling? The simplest way to organise them would be on one ordinal scale from the least equal to the most equal access to quality schooling. This makes it difficult to differentiate between the effects of community schooling and regulated choice. Although we know that unregulated choice and tracked schooling provide less equal opportunity than the alternatives, we cannot straightforwardly rank one of them as equalising opportunities more than the other. Rather, the difference is a matter of which effect of social origin on opportunities is more dominant. For tracked schooling, the primary effect is dominant as the student's ability defines which type of school could be accessed and then parents intervene. For unregulated choice, the parents first choose a school and then the school might operate a selection on the basis of students' ability or of a close proxy thereof.

Instead, we can compare these four institutions on two dimensions. First, there is the level of selection that the system allows – hence whether or not the primary effect of social origin is allowed to matter. This ranks community schooling and the regulated choice category in the low selection field while tracked schooling and the non-regulated choice category are in the high selection field. On this basis, I rename the two choice categories as

the category of *Inclusive Choice* for regulated choice that does not allow schools to select students according to ability and *Exclusive Choice* for choice systems that allow for this selective mechanism.

The second dimension measures the extent to which parents can directly intervene in the allocation process by choosing a school. This is a different regulatory tool as it does not regard how the system selects students but the extent to which the system allows parents' choice behaviour to affect children's educational opportunities. In a low choice system, the administration allocates children to schools according to certain criteria. These criteria are only of secondary importance in a choice system, as priority in the allocation process is given to parents' choice behaviour. Hence, the effect of social class on choice behaviour is the main problem for equal opportunities in a high choice system. At the same time, that effect can mitigate negative effects of the administrative criteria in the low choice systems (residential choices for Community Schooling and the extent to which students' ability matters for Tracked Schooling). Low choice and high choice systems do not vary on the extent to which they equalise opportunities within the system, but are about making the system more inclusive for some groups while continuing to exclude others. In the following, I call this the choice dimension.

Table 2.1: A typology of Student Sorting Institutions

	low selection	**high selection**
high choice	***Inclusive Choice***	***Exclusive Choice***
low choice	***Community Schooling***	***Tracked Schooling***

In Table 2.1., I summarise the nature of the variation between Tracked Schooling, Community Schooling, Inclusive Choice, and Exclusive Choice. When moving on the selection dimension, political actors change the extent to which the system provides equal educational opportunities. When moving on the choice dimension, they change the relative weight of different characteristics of social background in the competition for access to quality school places. We have learned that guaranteeing equal opportunities goes beyond the differentiation between Tracked Schooling and Comprehensive Schooling. By introducing

school choice and different variants thereof, political actors not necessarily improve equality of opportunity, they improve the opportunities of some more targeted groups.

2.2. Operationalisation of the SSI typology

This section operationalises the main concepts of the typology. For this task, I followed the methodological guidance on typologies by Collier et al. (2008) and on measurement validity by Adcock and Collier (2001). I derived operational definitions of the overarching concept (SSIs), of the column and row variables (selection and choice), and of each of the four types. The operational definition (i.e. indicator) of the overarching concept conditions the indicators of the row and column variables that in turn condition the definitions of the types. Each of these operational definitions needs to systematically flow from the background concept (equal opportunities as a social right). Therefore, definitions need to stay as closely related as possible to the definitions used in the scholarship that has allowed me to construct the typology in the first place. In the following, I start with the SSI concept and how it can capture the level of selection and choice. I then move on to the operational definitions of each of the four categories. I close with proposing solutions for operationalisation problems of the four categories. These problems stem from how I have conceptualised SSIs: how to deal with within-country variation of SSIs, and to what extent variation of the role of publicly financed private schools represent a third dimension of the typology. For both these problems, my solution is to live with within-type variation rather than render the typology more complex.

2.2.1. Operational definition of SSIs

The concept of Student Sorting Institutions (SSI) seeks to capture the formal institutions that intervene in the process of allocating students to schools within the publicly financed system. This definition has three elements: formal institutions; student allocation process; publicly financed education. These three elements ensure that the concept is rooted in the background concept of equality of opportunity in education.

First, these institutions are about one specific aspect of a public education system: the task of allocating students to schools. This is one institutional element amongst others that affects education systems' outcomes, but it is directly related to the question of how the system distributes educational opportunities. The concept of SSI acts as a "data container"

(Collier, Seawright, and Laporte 2008) for the institutions that organise the allocation process.

Second, I follow the historical institutional definition of institutions, as discussed in Steinmo and colleagues' introduction to historical institutionalism (1992, 2). Citing the work of Peter Hall and Douglass North amongst others, these authors agree that institutions include "both formal organizations and informal rules and procedures that structure conduct" and cite Hall's definition that they are "formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of the polity and economy" (Hall 1986, 19). The importance of distinguishing between formal rules and informal rules has further become apparent with Thelen and Mahoney's work (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Mahoney and Thelen 2015). I exclude informal institutions and practices from my definition of SSIs. To be sure, the effects of these institutions and the logics of their variation are a matter of actors' practices: schools' incentives to select students, parents' choice behaviour, etc. Informal institutions and practices are therefore not excluded from the analysis but from my conception of SSIs as useful 'data containers' to capture equality of opportunity as a social right. I do not seek to classify systems according to both formal and informal institutions, but only according to formal institutions. This is because regulators are most immediately responsible for formal institutions. These formal institutions then "structure conduct" and "the relationship between individuals" (here parents, schools, and local administrations) and also structure the more informal processes and practices that happen on the ground, although these can vary within the same formal institutional setting. Political actors are most readily able to act on formal institutions rather than influencing the more informal institutional aspects of the allocation process.

Third, SSIs as 'data containers' include formal institutions that structure the process of allocation within the *publicly funded* school system. This excludes privately funded education and does therefore not capture the level of privatisation of an education system. It includes rules of allocation for privately managed but substantially publicly funded schools. The level and extent of privately funded schooling is overtly a problem for equality of opportunity. What I seek to look into is the extent to which opportunities are distributed within the publicly funded system that promises equal opportunities. Here, the concept of redistribution also comes in most clearly: once public funds are allocated to lower secondary education, how are they distributed? Distributing resources to schools is one side of the redistributive coin, distributing students to schools the other.

This concept then calls for assessing the level of choice and selection of a system by analysing the legislation and asking how it structures the behaviour of actors involved in the

allocation process (families, schools, and local administrations) as long as they stay in the publicly funded school system. The overarching concept's operational definition then informs the operational definition of the row and column variables – the level of choice and the level of selection. The extent to which the local administrations and schools are allowed to select students according to their ability is the key question to assess the level of selection. The extent to which local administrations can constrain parents to send their child to a particular school defines the level of choice. Both these types of formal rules in turn affect the extent to which particular characteristics of children's social origins matter in the competition for access to quality schools.

2.2.2. Operational definition of the four types

For the operational definition of the four SSI types, I seek to remain faithful to both the SSI concept and to the conceptual work of the literature that has allowed me to classify the types according to their implication for equality of opportunity. The main task is therefore to carefully translate the concepts used in the sociology of education and stratification and economics of education literature into the formal institutional language.

Defining Tracked Schooling is straightforward. Sociology of stratification also takes an institutional definition when defining the level of tracking in a school system (Van de Werfhorst and Mijs 2010, 408). I therefore draw the operational definition of Tracked Schooling directly from that literature. National regulations on the organisation of schooling can allow for different school types to exist. These school types are also called 'tracks'. Different school types usually have a different curriculum and lead to different qualifications (Allmendinger 1989). In such systems "students are channelled into different educational tracks according to their performance in examinations or cognitive tests" (Jackson 2013, 21). As Jackson argues, the extent to which this selective mechanism matters in the allocation process can vary across systems in theory, but in practice, the existence of tracks and selectivity in the allocation process to tracks are associated. When a lower secondary education system provides different types of schools and the local administration channels students into these different tracks based on information on their performance, then the system has Tracked Schooling SSIs. This commonly accepted operational definition also stands in line with Tracked Schooling as a low choice category. The low choice characteristic stems from the clear hierarchy between different school types. Even if parents are granted the right to choose the track, this hierarchy between tracks diminishes the prospects of the less able

student to succeed in that school. Thus, students' abilities are a core component of the choice of track and starkly constrain choice. Moreover, even if a tracked system allows parents to choose between schools within a track, that system ranks low on the choice dimension. If the student population of a given area is divided into several tracks, there is a significantly smaller number of schools of each track to choose from than would be the case in a non-tracked system. Finally, I define Tracked Systems only in terms of tracking *between* schools. The existence or level of tracking/streaming/setting *within* schools also affects learning, but is very difficult to measure, to regulate, and bound to happen in most education systems (Van de Werfhorst and Mijs 2010, 408).

The three other systems are all non-tracked systems: the institutions defining the Tracked Schooling category are absent in each of these settings. To operationalise the distinction between these three systems, I start by defining the rules that indicate the level of choice in these non-tracked categories. Combined with the Tracked Schooling definition the definition for high versus low choice defines the Community Schooling category. Considering the disciplinary eclecticism of the school choice literature, it is less straightforward to boil down the level of choice into one institutionalist definition. The poststructuralist tradition of sociology of education and the economics of education tradition do not necessarily or explicitly share our understanding of formal institutions to the same extent as the literature on Tracked Schooling.

Rebecca Allen's definition of school choice provides a useful starting point, as she systematically discusses both the poststructuralist educationalist literature and the economics of education literature. For her, "choice is a process whereby parents are first asked to express a preference for … schools, then school admissions criteria and practices determine how places … are allocated" (Allen 2008, 11). This is different from a system where admissions criteria first allocate places and then parents ask for opting out. The question is not whether or not choice happens in the allocation process, but *when* it happens. The level of choice is not defined by the extent to which parents include schooling into their residential choices. It is defined as part of the process of allocating school places that happens between schools, parents, and the local administration. If this allocation process starts with parental preferences, then we can speak of a high choice system. If it ends with parental preferences, it is a low choice system. This timing is so important because it defines where the responsibility for student sorting lies – with the families, the schools, or the local administration? It cannot lie only with the families as each school has a limited amount of places. Therefore, if the local administration only intervenes in case there is more demand than supply in a school and

refuse parental wishes only on that basis, then we can speak of a high choice system. In all other cases, we have to speak of a low choice system. The rules that regulate the local administration's extent and moment of intervention in the allocation process are a necessary element to define the level of choice. But they are not sufficient.

This definition has for now left aside the question of public and private schooling that I contend is central to the definition of SSIs. Private schools are a way to opt out of the public system and hence of any administrative decision concerning student sorting. If private schools are publicly funded, then the state effectively pays for parents to opt out of the administrative allocation process. Following the definition of UNESCO/OECD/Eurostat (UOE 2013, 39) "a government-dependent private institution is one that either receives 50 per cent or more of its core funding from government agencies or one whose teaching personnel are paid by a government agency". Public funds for private schooling reduce the importance of fees and hence this kind of opt out decision is available for a large part of the population. This definition also stands in line with Ansell and Lindvall's (2013, 3) definition of the level of a system's subsidisation: when "all public education spending (goes) to public schools … private schools (are) few and expensive". In other cases, private schools receive "enough public funding to make them a viable alternative to public education for significant parts of the population." In this second scenario, parents' decision to use this alternative is an externality for the composition of the student body in the publicly governed system. Van Zanten and Delvaux (2006) say that student admissions to publicly funded private and public schools are *interdependent*.

In a high choice system, regulations provide the existence of such government-dependent private institutions (as defined above) to the extent that they are a *viable alternative* for *significant parts of the population*. Two scenarios arise. Either there is a rather fixed but significant (around 10 percent or more) number of government-dependent private institutions. Or the regulations provide for private schools that comply with some set conditions to be automatically eligible for public funding. This means that the share of these schools can grow without further administrative intervention and thus easily adjust to demand for private schooling. One can remain fuzzy about what share of government-dependent private institutions in the system demarcates the line between high and low choice. For example, if 20 percent of students attend these schools, it does not mean that only one fifth of the population is concerned by these schools. All those that have taken the existence of these schools in consideration but have not applied, those that have applied but were not accepted, and those that have never considered applying are concerned. If the share is fixed at around 5 percent,

this considerably lowers the concerned population. I will get back to this matter when discussing the problems arising from my measurement decisions in the next subsection.

A Community Schooling system is then a system that does not permit the existence of government-dependent private schools to the levels defined above, and gives the administration the possibility to reject an opt-out request despite available places in the preferred school. When SSIs neither comply with the criteria set for the Community Schooling nor with those for Tracked Schooling, they are either Inclusive or Exclusive Choice SSIs.

Inclusive Choice varies from Exclusive Choice on the level of selection. The literature on student admissions looks at the practices of schools in the admissions process within a school choice system (Allen, Coldron, and West 2012; Barrault 2013; Mons 2004; Obin and van Zanten 2010; West 2014). The formal rules we are looking for regulate the behaviour of schools once parents have applied for that school. The distinction between Exclusive and Inclusive Choice thus happens at the latest stage in the allocation process. Schools have an incentive to select the best pupils (Allen, Coldron, and West 2012, 350). The key distinction between both Choice systems is the presence or absence of regulation that bans those selective practices. Still, distinguishing between "regulated" or "total" choice (Mons 2004; Mons 2007) is insufficient. Regulated choice systems might allow the problematic selective practices. The problem is that schools will select students according to their social background – via the primary effect of social origin on educational achievement – as this gives them a *proxy* of students' performance. Schools could use a multitude of factors to determine a child's social background. To stick to the definition of the selection dimension, I only include the criteria that give room for the primary effect of social origin (students' ability) to matter in the admissions process. On that basis, I posit that in an Inclusive Choice system schools are not allowed to seek and use information on a student's performance (this includes banning interviews with parents and/or students) in their admissions decision. They are allowed to do so in an Exclusive Choice system. A further criterion of distinction is that these regulations can be enforced: regulations provide that admissions criteria are monitored and schools face consequences if they do not comply with these criteria.

2.2.3. Solving classification issues

Three types of problems arise from this classification method. First, the focus on formal institutions does not permit to say much about the level of choice and selection in particular

geographical areas. The level of choice is bound to differ between densely and sparsely populated areas. The level of selection a school can operate depends on the extent to which it is oversubscribed and this varies between schools. One can think of many examples that weaken the link between the type of SSI and the effect on equality of opportunity, or that make the strength of that link vary starkly within one country. This is one limit arising from the choice to focus on formal institutions for reasons of parsimony. This limit is acceptable because such variation is bound to happen within any SSI type and education system. It is for instance unclear whether SSIs have a larger effect on unequal societies than on equal societies (Hicks (2015) argues they do). Possibly, much of the competition for school places in an unequal society happens at the residential segregation level. How society interacts on the informal institutional level (Barrault 2013) or as a result of socio-economic pressures with the formal institutional level remains an empirical question. It therefore does not weaken the analysis on how political actors attempt to reach certain levels or types of equality of opportunity with SSIs as the tools at their disposal.

A second limit stems from the simplicity of the definitions I use for each of the four 'data containers'. Variation of formal institutions within each container is a potential problem for their validity with respect to the equality of opportunities concept. Indeed, one would like to achieve maximal variation between the four types and minimal variation within them. For instance, an Inclusive Choice system includes very diverse non-selective criteria of allocation: random allocation, residential criteria, or banding[7] amongst others. These are bound to have different effects on the role of social origin in the competition for accessing quality schools. Similarly, the opportunities created within a Community Schooling system depend on what allocation mechanism the local authorities choose, who is responsible for defining catchment areas and how these are drawn. For instance, with my definition, a busing system is classified as Community Schooling.[8] Yet, it has different implications than a system based on catchment areas. The largest within-type variation comes from my definition of choice and the role of government-maintained private schools. This creates several different categories within both high choice types. For example, an Exclusive Choice system can be based on both choice

[7] Banding is a means to achieve a mixed-ability intake of a school. This includes assessing students' performance, but schools do not intend to achieve an ability level as high as possible (as they could do in an Exclusive Choice system). Rather, they seek a balanced intake of students of different abilities. Therefore in a banding system the primary effect of social origin does not limit opportunities to access a good school.

[8] A busing system is an active desegregation measure where children are allocated and transported to a school outside of their neighbourhood to create schools that are more mixed than the neighbourhoods.

amongst public schools and choice amongst private schools. There can be regulation banning selection within the public school system, but not within the private school system, or there could be no regulation for either of these systems. Alternatively, an Exclusive Choice system can be based on choice only as opt out to the government-maintained private schools where selection is not banned, but where allocation within the public school system is based on Community Schooling. One could add the government-maintained private school dimension as an independent dimension within the typology. I have decided not to do so in view of simplifying an already complex enough policy environment. Moreover, if governments allow choice and selection to exist to some extent, then that is conceptually different from not allowing any choice or banning any kind of selection. In this respect, the typology may be understood as a starting point for a more outcomes-oriented study on the effects of these different Student Sorting Institutions.

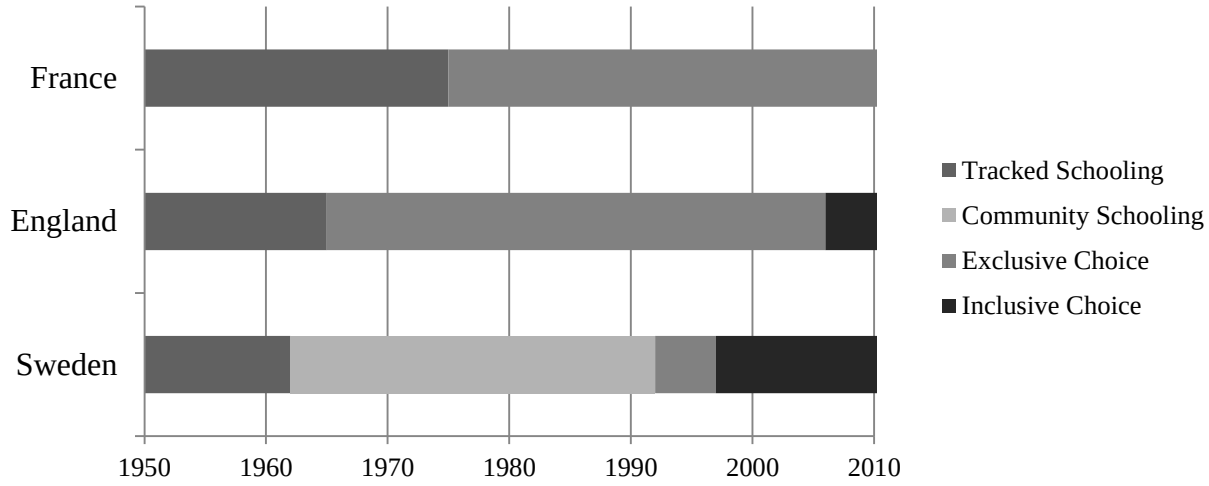
A third and last limit I wish to address here is a matter of the possible co-existence of different types within one school system. On the one hand, this might be a matter of decentralisation. On the other hand, it might be a matter of variation in the pace of transition between one system and the other across the territory. In the first scenario, local authorities are responsible for implementing the legislative framework of student sorting and therefore recur to different rules. For instance, some local authority may ban the use of selection in the allocation system, while it is permitted in the national legislation. Another example of this type concerns transition phases between systems, when some local authorities are frontrunners in the implementation of new arrangements or even allowed to start experimentation of such arrangements before it is generalised to the whole territory. Vice versa, some local authorities may lag behind in the implementation of legislation, or time for transition may be granted. Here, what matters is national legislation and the intent national policy makers have towards the *direction* the system should take. For the scoring process, one has to assess the extent to which rules are *permissive* to each of the co-existing types. The remaining caveat of this limit is that one would have to add another dimension – the extent to which rules are made on a decentralised level – in view of accounting for this type of variation.

2.3. SSIs in Sweden, England, and France 1960-2010

This section turns to the measurement of change within and variation between Sweden,

France, and England from 1960 to 2010.

Figure 2.3: SSIs in Sweden, England and France; 1950-2010



I will discuss the historical trajectory of each country in turn and summarise the comparisons we can make in the conclusion of this section. As Figure 2.3. illustrates, Sweden was the first country of this sample to abolish Tracked Schooling and the only country that moved between all four SSIs. England moved away from Tracked Schooling shortly after Sweden and ends up in an Inclusive Choice system, too, but never experienced Community Schooling. France moved last, and only changed from Tracked Schooling to Exclusive Choice. Each of the three historical accounts is structured chronologically. The account shows how legislative decisions mirror the indicators I developed to measure SSI variation.

2.3.1. Sweden: from Tracked Schooling to Inclusive Choice

The Swedish account starts with the 1962 *Enhetsskola* reform. This reform changed Swedish SSIs from Tracked Schooling to Community Schooling. The Swedish Tracked Schooling system consisted of two tracks: the *Realskola* and the elementary education track. After four to six years of primary school academically gifted students continued their compulsory education in the *Realskola* (Marklund 1980c). These schools could select their students (Marklund 1980a, 2:205). 80 percent of pupils continued in the elementary education track (Marklund 1980c). Students successful in the *Realskola* could then access the *Gymnasium* at

post-compulsory age, which gave them the necessary qualifications for entry into higher education. Husén estimates that around 50 percent of those entering the *Realskola* went on to the *Gymnasium* after completion, while the rest dropped out of education or entered more vocationally oriented schools (Husén 1965). The 1962 *Skollag* (School Law) abolished this parallel school system.

With this reform, Sweden remained a low choice system. At that time, Sweden did not have government-maintained private schools. Private schooling existed, but was not subsidised: it was a matter of a handful of elite boarding schools. Some exceptions existed, though: some international schools and faith schools received subsidies (Edmar et al. 1981). The *Skollag* regulated that social entrepreneurs that wanted to open schools had to apply for funding; the government decided whether to grant funding (art.33-35 of the 1962 Skollag). Municipalities and the decentralised state administration were in charge of allocating funding and pupils to schools (Marklund 1980c). The indicators for the SSI typology then score the post-1962 system as a Community Schooling system.

Political actors started to call the Community Schooling system in question leading to a series of reform attempts and proposals in the 1980s. In 1982 new legislation gave private schools a clearer regulatory standing, but funding remained at the government's discretion (Sveriges Regering 1982). In 1989, a major reform decentralised the Swedish education system. Municipalities were now responsible for their own student allocation and fund allocation system (Gingrich 2011; Klitgaard 2008). Municipalities could now allocate funds to private schools. For some municipalities this meant a move from low choice to high choice. But national legislation obliging municipalities to take parents' preferences into account was not in place until the 1991 Skollag reform (Sveriges Regering 1991). On the national level, the system remained a Community Schooling system.

Significant change occurred in 1992. The 1992 Skollag reform replaced the 1991 reform and SSIs in Sweden shifted to the Exclusive Choice type. Now, students were to be allocated according to parents' wishes in priority. Also, municipalities had to subsidise accredited private schools. For each student, private schools received 85 percent of the cost of a public school student within the student's municipality (Sveriges Regering 1992; Sveriges Regering 1993). These two changes shifted the responsibility for allocation from the municipality to the parents. Sweden now had a high choice system across the territory. The new legislation on private schooling did not regulate student admissions (Sveriges Riksdag 1996c). As the Skollag did not prohibit these schools to overtly select students according to their performance, this new high choice system was of exclusive rather than inclusive nature.

Schools also had the right to charge reasonable fees (Miron 1993). Sweden's SSIs moved back to the high selection corner.

After four years of Exclusive Choice a new reform of the Skollag shifted the system back to the low selection end and created an Inclusive Choice system. The 1996 legislation provided for a ban of school fees and added the obligation for schools to be open to all students (Sveriges Riksdag 1996c). According to the new provision in the Skollag (Paragraph 2, Chapter 9), the government had to make further regulation to ensure this obligation was met. This regulation ruled out that schools would be able to select students (Sveriges Regering 1996). It matches the conditions for an Inclusive Choice system. The reform package included the banning of fees and an obligation for municipalities to raise subsidies for government-maintained schools in return. Per student expenditure for government-maintained schools now had to match the mean cost of a student enrolled in municipal schools. The Inclusive Choice system remained in place throughout the 2000s. Within the national SSI framework municipalities have flexibility to implement their own system of school choice. Government-maintained schools can choose between a set of non-selective admissions criteria such as queuing, place of residence, and whether siblings are already enrolled in that school (Skolverket 2013b).

Swedish SSIs changed three times in 35 years. Each of these changes had implications for the social right of equal opportunities. First, the level of selection decreased within a low choice system. This move implied that the effect of social origin on access to quality schools decreased: as students' performance ceased to be the criterion of allocation, social origin could not matter via the primary effect on opportunities any longer. Social origin could matter via parents' decision-making – namely via residential choices. Subsequently, the move to Exclusive Choice reintroduced the primary effect into the institutional mediation of the role of social origin in the competition for access to quality schools. The role of selection was different than in the pre-1962 Tracked Schooling system: it only happened after parents' decisions to opt out of the local school. The high choice element thus increased the role of the secondary effect of social origin – parents' decision-making and their class-bias came into play beyond their residential choices. Eventually, with the Inclusive Choice reform the selective dimension of unequal opportunities ceased to play a role. The secondary effect of social origin via parents' choice behaviour continued to work beyond families' residential options and decisions.

2.3.2. England: from Tracked Schooling to Inclusive Choice

In England, the 1965 government Circular 10/65 ended Tracked Schooling and replaced it with Exclusive Choice. Tracked Schooling was based on recommendations for Local Authorities contained in the 1944 Education Act. The Act requested authorities to provide schools in sufficient "number, character, and equipment to afford for all pupils opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities, and aptitudes." Under the Act, the Department for Education was responsible for reviewing Local Authorities plans in view of attaining that goal. The implementation phase strongly favoured a dual model where grammar schools coexisted with secondary modern schools (HM Government 1944, sec. 8). Circular 10/65 then requested local authorities to reorganise their education systems "on comprehensive lines", giving them the possibility to choose between six different formats of such a comprehensive system (Benn and Simon 1972, 56–60)

In the decentralised English school system, Circular 10/65 was a limited regulatory tool and thus did not guarantee an immediate transition away from Tracked Schooling over the territory. At the beginning of the 1970s, educationalists claimed that the system was only "half way there" (Benn and Simon 1972). My justification to set the transition point with the publication date of Circular 10/65 is that the government explicitly preferred a more malleable institutional tool, allowing for local variation of the measures. Yet the government estimated that tool was sufficient for local authorities to comply with ending Tracked Schooling: When the House of Lords as the highest court challenged the government on having rejected reorganisation plans that allowed for Tracked Schooling in Thameside Council in 1977, the government reacted by making the reorganisation requirement statutory (Feintuck 2013, 31–32). When Margaret Thatcher overruled this statute in 1980, there were only a handful of local councils left where Tracked Schooling continued to exist. Subsequent governments did not undertake any steps in favour of redeploying Tracked Schooling.

The end of Tracked Schooling did not signify the end of selection. Instead of moving on the selection dimension, England's SSIs moved on the choice dimension. The new comprehensive system did not restrain local authority responsibility in the allocation process, but it allowed choice via the (local) government-maintained private schools. The 1944 Education Act's provisions on school choice were not changed before the 1980 Education Act, to which I will return in a few paragraphs. The 1944 Education Act did not give parents the right to choose any school, but the right to opt into a grant-maintained school (Feintuck

2013, 24). The act changed funding conditions for religious schools and created the first national integrated framework guaranteeing access to secondary education for all. It thus changed the status of both Church of England and Catholic schools to *Voluntary Controlled* and *Voluntary Aided* schools. According to Harris (2007), they represented a third of the public system. They participated in the delivery of education for all to a significant extent. This put individual families' decision to opt out to them and their admissions criteria into a relationship of interdependence and thus affected the whole student sorting system. These schools were their own admission authorities but were part of the local school system. Hence they were also reorganised into comprehensive schools, but their admissions were not regulated: they could interview parents and students before admission. In the late 1970s, a bill was drafted to ban selective practices of all schools in reception of significant levels of public funding (Chitty 1989, 157–158). This bill never left the stage of government proposal, and faith schools could thus continue to operate their own admission arrangements.

Two reforms in the 1980s gradually expanded this Exclusive Choice system. First, the 1980 Education Act enshrined the right of parents to express a preference for a school. This however did not amount to a high choice system in the public school sector, as there were no clear rules that would constrain local authorities' reaction to such a request (Feintuck 2013, 24). This changed with the 1988 Education Reform Act: maintained schools (governed by LEAs) now had to admit students as long as they had physical capacity to do so, in order to comply with parental preferences (HM Government 1988). At the same time, schools were allowed to opt out of LEA control, creating a new type of schools within the English system: Grant Maintained Schools. These schools were not allowed to become grammar schools and thus revert to Tracked Schooling, but they were their own admission authority and therefore did not have to comply with LEA regulation on student admissions. The system therefore moved within the Exclusive Choice category.

In 2006, an Inclusive Choice reform replaced the Exclusive Choice institutions as the 2006 Education and Inspections Act changed the legal value of the School Admissions Code. This code banned the use of selection according to ability and did not allow schools to interview families before the admissions decision. The code was introduced in 1998 as part of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act. This Act made a limited statement against selection – it enshrined the practice of no new grammar school into national legislation but at the same time introduced regulation that limited Local Authorities' power to close down existing grammar schools. However the Act did not limit selection as part of the school choice system. As more and more schools had become independent from Local Authorities, they

could define their own admissions. The Admission Code was a guidance document on how to avoid selective practices. Schools had to "have regard" to that code, they did not have the obligation to comply with it. This changed with the 2006 regulation comprised in the Education and Inspections Act (Gillie 2006).

To conclude, English SSIs changed twice in 40 years. Both changes had relevance for the social right of equal opportunities. First, the level of choice increased within the high selection category – a move from Tracked Schooling to Exclusive Choice. With this change, the primary effect of social origin on access to quality schooling continued to form part of the SSIs, but it mattered only once parents had expressed their preference to opt out of their local school. With increasing the level of choice though, the secondary effect of social origin (how parents make educational decisions) became more important. Students' performance was thus still relevant, but less so than in the Tracked Schooling system. Generalising Exclusive Choice with the 1988 reform further strengthened the formal institutions upholding this effect. Next, the Inclusive Choice reform led to SSIs that ceased to tolerate the selective dimension of unequal opportunities but continued to tolerate inequalities created by the choice dimension.

2.3.3. France: from Tracked Schooling to Exclusive Choice

In France, the loi Haby of 1975 replaced Tracked Schooling with Exclusive Choice. Before 1975, three co-existing school types supplied lower secondary education. Before 1959, lower secondary education per se did not exist: after the fifth school year children either entered a preparatory school for academic secondary education or stayed in primary school until they reached school-leaving age. In 1959, these two options became school types of their own. The 1975 loi Haby abolished these types and integrated them into one *collège unique* (La Documentation Française 2001), the French version of the Swedish *enhetsskola*, and the English comprehensive school. Admission to schools was regulated by the *carte scolaire*, a catchment area system in place to govern admissions to schools introduced in 1963 (Barrault 2013). The French transition away from Tracked Schooling resembled the English case and differed from the Swedish case. As for Sweden and England, parents were not granted any right to choose between public schools. But in difference to Sweden, the French school system included grant-maintained private schools – the vast majority of which were of catholic denomination.

The French government-maintained sector had its historical roots in the catholic

provision of schooling. These schools had been denied public funds until 1959 (Poucet 2009). The 1959 loi Debré granted these schools public funding that covered their teaching expenditure. They could therefore significantly reduce their fees. Schools were allowed to charge reasonable fees from families, but had to admit all students that qualified for entrance in their schools – they could not select by faith or by other background characteristics. In 1959-1960, 18 percent of students were enrolled in the government-maintained private sector (21 percent of secondary school students in 1981-82) (Ballion 1974; Ballion 1991). At that time, selection by performance was still the main Student Sorting Institution as public schools were organised in tracks. The loi Haby of 1975 did oblige these schools to abolish their tracks (République Française 1975 art. 21) but it did not integrate them into the system that allocated students to public schools, the *carte scolaire*. Hence, selective practices were allowed (asking for transcripts of previous schooling, interviewing families before admission) and fees continued to remain unregulated (Barrault 2013). The end of Tracked Schooling left parents in a similar environment in France and England: a comprehensive schooling system with possibility to opt out to publicly funded church schools.

Similarly to England and Sweden, reform attempts in the 1980s could have led to changes in SSIs. The first reform attempt consisted in 'integrating' the government-maintained schools fully into one general public education service. Policy-makers considered different policy alternatives. One option would have led to Community Schooling. At its core, this option meant to either reduce the level of public funding or nationalise private schools. Another option was to regulate government-maintained schooling within a broader education reform ultimately leading to Inclusive Choice. This option included changes to the governance of private education, namely relating to staff status and funding, and an extension of parental choice within the public system. In such a system, local authorities had the task to regulate school admissions to public and government-maintained schools (Savary 1985). This project failed, and France remained an Exclusive Choice system.

When it comes to choice in the public system, French policy-makers made similar moves to the Swedish and English in the 1980s. Yet, they did not change the regulatory framework to the same extent as Sweden with its 1992 reform and England with its 1988 reform. Three reforms have shaped the regulation of school choice in France. First, a 1980 circular introduced the concept of *dérogation* (opt-out/exemption). Parents could now ask the local administration to opt out of the local school (Barrault 2013). Yet, similarly to England and Sweden at that time this did not constrain the administration in its allocation decisions, and administrations could reject these requests. In 1984, the government conducted an

experiment in several local areas to test the effects of school choice. This experiment introduced a school choice system in the selected areas, concerning about 150 schools in total: parents expressed a preference for a school and a local committee allocated the children in a transparent procedure. This experiment was launched a second time in 1987 (Ballion 1991; Barrault 2013).

In 2007, the government produced a circular with which it gave parents the right to express a preference for a school. Now, administrations were given a list of criteria they should take into consideration in priority when ranking these applications. However, this system did not constrain them to comply with parental preferences (Obin and Peyroux 2007). The 2007 reform was similar to the changes that happened in England in 1980 and in Sweden in 1991 but differed from the changes in the right to choose a school contained in the 1988 reform in England and the 1992 reform in Sweden. The French system has thus remained a system of limited Exclusive Choice, as it gets its high choice element solely from the importance of the government-maintained private sector. It did not introduce any regulation that would limit selective practices within this school choice system. This classification of mine thus differs from conventional classification of the French school system in international comparison, where it is most often categorised as a system of low choice (e.g. Mons 2007; EACEA 2012).

The French system only experienced one change of SSI type since making lower secondary education compulsory. Its SSIs' level of choice increased, but the level of selection remained stable, unlike the Swedish and English experiences. A student's social origin is allowed to matter twice. First via its secondary effect on opportunities: the effect of social class on choice behaviour. Second, once parents have made their choices, students from a more privileged social origins have higher chances to getting the school place they applied for via the primary effect of social origins on educational achievement. France thus started off in a very similar position to England – from Tracked Schooling to Exclusive Choice – while Sweden differed as very few grant-maintained private schools existed. In the early 1990s, the Swedish and English SSIs converged while formal institutions in France remained stable. Between 1992 and 1997 all three systems experienced Exclusive Choice, but France in a more limited way than Sweden and England. Both Sweden and England then moved on to a system of Inclusive Choice. The task for the rest of the thesis is to theorise why we can observe these similarities and differences in all three cases, and to then test these theories by tracing the decision-making process of all reform projects after the end of Tracked Schooling.

Conclusion

This chapter's aim was to respond to my first research question. *How do formal institutions that sort students to different schools compare when it comes to promoting the social right of equal opportunities in education?* Existing research has allowed me to show that access to quality education matters for individuals' educational achievement, and that competition for quality school places in absence of regulation has a clear loser: equality of opportunity. To rectify this, institutional arrangements have to be made in order to allow students from low income families to access better schools (in absence of perfectly equal quality of education in all schools). What are these institutional options, and what does each of them imply for equality of opportunity? The reviewed literature's answer was limited: we know that selection according to performance matters, and that parental choice is bound to play some role in the distribution of students to schools. But how do these institutions compare? My analysis has led to a two-dimensional typology of Student Sorting Institutions, leading to three alternatives to the classical 'tracking'. This typology is useful as we can reduce classification to a small set of indicators. These indicators made scoring of cases straightforward and revealed cross-national variation and institutional change within the three countries.

The focus on formal institutions comes with important trade-offs that I discussed in Section 2. Importantly though, they are one of the chief tools that policy makers can use in their quest for fair access to education. Classifying cases along the lines of this typology tells us a lot about the intent of policy makers and their commitment towards the goal of equality of opportunity in education. When do they allow selective – thus regressive – options to persist? When do they allow parents to choose a school for their child and how inclusive is this opt-out possibility? In the next chapters, I develop and test a theory about the political economic determinants of formal institutions of student sorting.

Chapter 3: The Partisan Politics of School Choice

When do governments reform the level of choice and the level of selection of SSIs? This chapter develops a theory of partisan politics of school choice. This theory explains party positions on school choice and reform behaviour. It accounts for the patterns of institutional change within the three countries and the variation between them. I suggest that the partisanship account is the most suitable interest-based account for the variation. Yet, suitable institution-based and ideas-based accounts have to be taken seriously as alternative explanations. The comparative method is one way of dealing with them, but we gain more leverage with process tracing: developing hypotheses' observable implications and assessing the extent to which they are reflected in the empirical account. Therefore, this chapter also takes these alternatives seriously and develops their observable implications alongside those of the interest-based account.

In short, the argument I make in this chapter is that parties in government adjust their preferences for SSIs in light of the interests of the cross-class coalition that legitimates their redistributive agenda. I use the income group coalition approach of redistribution – the middle and lower income groups inform the position of the left. The middle and high income groups inform the position of the right. When political actors trade between the three comprehensive schooling systems – Inclusive Choice, Exclusive Choice, and Community Schooling – they encounter a trilemma. This trilemma divides their constituents (in the parent generation) rather than uniting them, so parties are internally divided. They have to trade the opportunities of some groups for the opportunities of others. Winners and losers of different SSIs can be differentiated by their level of educational achievement, leading to different interests for SSIs within each income group. As society becomes more educated and depending on the relationship between education and income, the educational composition of income groups changes altering the coalitions on which parties can build their preference. In addition, I show that SSIs' characteristics make for uncertain and long-term benefits. Incentive for reform only disrupts a government's status quo bias when it expects political costs to the status quo to be high.

In the first section, I derive this theory from existing accounts of partisan preferences in the complex redistributive environment of education and present the corresponding hypotheses of my interest-based account. In the second section, I present alternative accounts,

namely the ideas-based account of choice as an outcome of market-based reform following the neoliberal paradigm of public sector reform. The institutions-based alternative mainly deals with path dependence stemming from the political and educational institutional environment in which SSI reforms take place. In the third section, I develop the inferential tests on which I will base my empirical chapters' 'three-cornered' assessment of the empirics, my theory, and its alternatives (Hall 2003).

3.1. The SSI Trilemma of Redistribution and Parties' Cross-Class Coalitions

The cross-class class coalition argument represents my contribution to the comparative political economy of redistribution in general and of education in particular. I start this section with contending that this literature – especially the argument about partisan governments and redistributive preferences – offers a productive theoretical framework to answer my research question. I then present how the trade-off between the three post-Tracked Schooling policy options (Exclusive Choice, Inclusive Choice, and Community Schooling) follows the logics of a trilemma and pits constituents of different education levels against one another within a given income group. I continue with an argument about the limits of existing partisan accounts that generally state that parties are constrained by institutions and interest groups. Instead, I propose that there are situations when partisan government might refrain from reform despite it being in their constituents' best interest. As a result of these considerations, the section closes with the hypotheses I want to test in the empirical chapters.

3.1.1. Theoretical Framework: Education, Redistribution, and Partisan Politics

The political economy of education literature has produced the almost unanimous verdict that partisan politics – conditioned by a variety of factors – are the core drivers of variation between education systems in Europe's post-WWII economies and democracies. I thus take this recent branch of comparative political economy as a starting point for explaining variation within the SSI typology. Developing a partisan theory of SSI change also permits me to assess the extent to which partisan governments can shape the social right of equal opportunities via SSIs. Partisan theory on education and redistribution is a helpful starting point as SSIs also redistribute, as I have argued in the introductory chapter. This new 'consensus' of comparative political economy of education has developed from three strands

(for a more complete literature review cf. Busemeyer and Nikolai (2010), Busemeyer and Trampusch (2011)). The first strand has seen systems of human capital formation as a case of economic institutions defining the Varieties of Capitalism of an economy. The level of coordination between economic and political actors on skill formation system is the relevant factor driving variation of education systems in this scenario (Busemeyer 2014; Culpepper 2003; Estevez-Abe, Iversen, and Soskice 2001; Thelen 2004; Thelen 2014). The second strand has analysed education policy as one amongst many public policies and has been more interested in the extent to which corporate actors (teacher unions) or political institutions come in to structure reform dynamics within education systems (e.g. Martens et al. 2010; Dobbins 2014; Klitgaard 2008). The third strand has argued that political parties are the main driver: they pursue different redistributive goals which results in different levels of spending (Ansell 2010; 2008; Boix 1997; 1998; Busemeyer 2009; Busemeyer, Franzmann, and Garritzmann 2013; Busemeyer and Iversen 2014). While the first two strands have focused more on institutions as the outcome variable, the third strand has focused on redistribution and spending. As my outcome is primarily a matter of trading between different redistributive trade-offs, I choose to base my theory on the third strand, giving economic and political institutions a secondary role in the theory. The spending literature has used quantitative methods to assess the relationship between partisan governments and levels of public spending. With my qualitative approach, I add to this literature by assessing whether we see the redistributive trade-offs reflected directly in the decision-making process leading to reforms.

The partisan branch of the CPE of education literature has agreed that whilst redistributive outcomes of education policy are not straightforward, they are still relevant and therefore parties' positions differ. Boix (1997; 1998) showed that left-wing governments spend more on education in comparison to right-wing governments. He argued that this is because the left wants to invest into the skill-base of its electorate thus raising their productivity and compressing the income distribution. Building on this argument, Busemeyer (2009) showed that the partisan effect on government spending on education holds for different levels of education, including tertiary education. Although left-wing constituents benefit less from tertiary education they expect that increased spending will improve access to higher levels of education in the future. Ansell (2010; 2008) argued that higher education spending is more complex as enrolment can also be expanded by private investment in education. Lower income groups then prefer low spending on higher education until enrolment has expanded to the point to which their probability of accessing it has

considerably improved. Busemeyer and Iversen (2014) built on these findings to explain the level of public vs. private spending on education. The extent to which the middle income group prefers public education over private education depends on whether it is better off by paying taxes or by paying their children's tuition fees. This depends on whether it is in coalition with the higher or lower income group – hence whether the centre-left or centre-right generally governs – and is a function of the electoral system (cf. Iversen and Soskice (2006)). The bottom-line of this set of studies is that parties matter, but we should not expect the left to systematically spend more than the right.

The complexity of these redistributive preferences, especially for the lower and middle income groups, has led to a critique and/or open acknowledgement to the limits of the partisan account. First, the partisan account has been rejected on theoretical grounds. Jensen (2011) has argued that education spending is inherently regressive and therefore it is not the partisan effect that explains cross-national variation in spending but the extent to which deindustrialisation has affected the skill-base of left-wing voters which he sees particularly at risk in coordinated market economies that produce specific rather than general skills. Garritzmann and Seng (2015) have pointed out that the partisan effects of the literature cited above are too sensitive to methodological choices and call for caution when interpreting the results. In general, it is now agreed that parties matter but only in combination with electoral institutions (Ansell 2010; Busemeyer and Iversen 2014), welfare state institutions (Busemeyer and Nikolai 2010; Iversen and Stephens 2008), and skill formation regimes (Busemeyer 2014). Further, the question is now less whether parties matter, but when they matter (Garritzmann 2015). The literature explaining marketisation in education has adopted a similar stance: parties matter but in combination with socio-economic and political institutions (Gingrich 2011; Hicks 2015; Klitgaard 2008). These institutions had been considered core to variation in education and welfare systems before the partisan argument gained predominance (Heidenheimer, Heclo, and Adams 1990). The insight that the partisan argument suits a high salience environment where change happens on the formal institutional level (Culpepper 2011) best might explain this turn to partisanship as the primary explanatory variable for education policy.

The roots of such partisan arguments, and the mechanisms underlying the correlation between government partisanship and education spending, can be found in theories related to Power Resources Theory (PRT). This theory's main contribution is that "welfare state development is likely to reflect class-related distributive conflict and partisan politics" (Korpi 2006). In short, workers organise in trade unions and political parties so as to advance their

interests, which are in conflict with employers. The power resource approach has been very influential in showing that left parties in government increase redistribution (Korpi 1983, Esping-Andersen 1990, Stephens 1979). Accordingly, the more power the working class has, the more redistributive a country's policies are. The microfoundations of this argument see individuals of different socioeconomic class positions organising to improve their class position in society, or mitigate the risks that their particular position comes with. Yet, as Iversen and Soskice (2006), and Iversen and Stephens (2008) have argued, one drawback of this choice of microfoundations is that they are rooted in the cleavage between labour and capital, rather than in the cleavage between individuals who get taxed and individuals who receive transfers. In this scenario, individuals do not organise, but vote for parties who represent their redistributive interests best. Parties in turn represent these voters' interests for redistribution when in government. Iversen and Soskice model this approach by using three income groups, the Lower, Middle, and Higher terciles of the income distribution. This mechanism of interest representation is mediated by the electoral system.

When attempting to theorise redistributive interest-representation for school-level reform, it seems useful to adopt the latter approach: parties make policies in line with their constituents' redistributive interests, these are not defined by the labour-capital cleavage, but by individuals' position in the income distribution, and this leads to differences between left-wing and right-wing governments' policies. The main justification for choosing this framework is that one would expect that the redistributive interest representation of parties goes beyond the question of taxation and spending, but is also concerned with making sure that resources are distributed in a way to meet constituents' interests. Also, the defining political conflict here is hardly about the capital-labour cleavage in society. Rather, it is about families trying to secure the best school place for their children. Families' different socio-economic endowment give them more or less advantage when attempting to reach this goal, and SSIs mediate this socio-economic effect on access to quality schooling. Instead of theorising how these different groups of families could organise to reach the best outcome for their offspring, I theorise how parties attempt to approximate their income-group constituents' redistributive interests when it comes to SSIs. Following Iversen and Soskice's model, centre-left governments represent a 'cross-class coalition' of the lower and middle income groups, while centre-right governments represents a 'cross-class coalition' of the middle and higher income groups. Each of the income groups has redistributive interests that are partially aligned with the other groups, and partially different, so compromises have to be struck. Once in power, the centre-left will thus try to represent the redistributive interests of the lower and

middle income group coalition, and the centre-right the redistributive interests of the upper and middle income group coalition. The conflict is about the rich wanting most of their tax spending on education to get back to them via the education system and the poor wanting to get access to good quality education in order to equalise their opportunities on the labour market. Redistributing educational opportunities can thus be conceived of a part of the 'redistributive package' of representing middle and low income groups. As parties represent these constituents, they also care about promoting institutions that allow for redistribution to be effective. This implies that parties and partisan governments will puzzle over which institution is the best for the redistributive interests of their constituents. This redistributive concern should primarily be of importance for parents with children of school age. However, everyone should have the same interest for having cost-effective SSIs, as this means less spending or more resources for other redistributive policies. Hence, I do not attempt to theorise how individuals organise into coalitions for SSIs that feed into the policy-making process. Rather, I seek to formulate an argument whereby parties, once elected, make policies of SSIs that fit their constituents' redistributive interests. In the following subsections, I will present a way to define such interests. Before proceeding, it is important to speak to a core element of the Iversen and Soskice model: the importance of electoral institutions.

According to Iversen and Soskice, and also to Ansell's application of the argument to higher education spending (2010), electoral systems have an effect on redistribution, as they define the interest of the middle income group to enter a coalition with H or with L on the one hand, and the capacity of parties to commit to their constituents' redistributive interests when in government on the other hand. A proportional representation (PR) system allows parties to commit to their constituents' interests better than does a majoritarian system, leading to a higher interest for M to enter a coalition with L in a PR system, compared to a majoritarian system. Hence, PR systems are associated with more redistribution. The voting interest implication is less important for explaining SSIs, because the theory only applies to partisan reform action once in government. However, the implication that the electoral system affects how representative a partisan government is seems of importance. Accordingly, party decision making is more representative in a PR system than in a majoritarian system, where the leadership position matters most, making it difficult for the party to commit to the electoral platform. This bears implications for explaining SSI policy movement and cross-national variation. One would expect governments in majoritarian systems to deviate more from their constituents' interests than is the case for proportional representation systems. Also, party-internal divisions should play out differently in the two different systems.

Different pieces of scholarship converge towards the view that electoral systems matter for the redistributive politics of education (Iversen and Stephens 2008, Ansell 2010, Busemeyer and Iversen 2014, Busemeyer 2014). Yet, this thesis is not the place to further test the electoral system argument. This does not mean that I claim that electoral systems do not matter. However, I have chosen to leave the electoral system question an open one with the obvious limits that this choice implies. This choice can be justified as it seems more important to theorise and test the element of the framework which claims that parties use SSIs to redistribute, and that they make SSI reforms in line with their constituents' interests. This seems an argument that is better to be addressed with a comparative-historical analysis approach than the question of the average effect that an electoral system has on partisan capacity of redistributing. Yet, it means that I do not fully test whether variation across cases is due to differences in electoral systems. As Sweden and England have a similar outcome, but different electoral systems, and England and France have different outcomes, but a more similar electoral system, the association does not seem straightforward. However, as Manow and Palier (2009) have argued, the French electoral system has been of high importance to the development of the welfare state. Hence, I will comment on it as a possible cause for the deviant French outcome when analysing the French case and turn back to that question in the conclusion.

In the following two subsections, I explain how one can derive redistributive interests of different income group coalitions for SSIs from the social stratification literature that I have used to develop the SSI typology.

3.1.2. The Trilemma of SSIs

Until now I have conceptualised SSIs with reference to the social right of equality of opportunity. In the previous chapter, we have seen that children's social origins affect what school they attend, and that the level of choice and selection influences the scope and nature of this effect. In the following paragraphs, I will show that we can think of the variation between Inclusive Choice (IC), Exclusive Choice (EC), and Community Schooling (CS) as a redistributive trade-off which takes the form of a trilemma.

The easiest way to capture redistributive politics of the trade-off between IC, CS, and EC, and with the theoretical framework presented above, would be the following: the three systems rank from the most redistributive to the least redistributive on one dimension, with CS being the best for the lower income group, IC the best for the middle income group, and

EC for the high income group. One would then need an additional factor to explain the conditions under which partisan governments switch policy preferences and change an institution that they previously supported. However, in the following paragraphs, I first show that it seems more accurate to conceptualise variation between the three options along more than one dimension. Second, I argue that the social stratification framework that has allowed me to conceptualise the different policy options in the first place calls for another socio-economic characteristic than income to understand the redistributive conflicts of SSIs. This leads to the central argument that the *education level* of income group coalitions informs partisan governments about the policy option that best represents their constituents' interests, and that parties are notoriously divided on the issue.

Per definition, CS varies from both EC and IC on the level of choice. EC varies from both CS and IC on the level of selection in the student sorting system. As I have discussed in chapter 2, the education stratification literature seems to agree that choice behaviour is affected by social origins, meaning that children of lower social origins fare better in a CS system than in a choice system. Also, the capacity to use a selective system is affected by social origins, meaning that children of higher social origins fare better in an EC system than in an IC system. This depiction speaks in favour of a one-dimensional ranking of the three options, with CS best for those of disadvantaged social origins, IC best for the middle, and EC best for those of advantaged social origins. Yet, such a ranking also implies that the more disadvantaged fare better in an IC system than in an EC system. However, this is not necessarily the case: the very reason for the premise that the more disadvantaged fare better in a CS system than in an IC system hinges on a mechanism by which the most disadvantaged use the possibility of opting out of their local school less than their more socio-economically advantaged neighbours do. As the more advantaged neighbours opt out of the local school, the disadvantaged lose out: the school becomes more socially segregated, in turn making it less accountable, because the most motivated parents have chosen exit over voice. The implication of these social stratification theories is that an IC system facilitates exit especially for those groups of families that cannot compete with more advantaged families in an EC system. In other words, an EC system is less permissive of them exiting the local school than an IC system is. One also needs to consider that in a CS system, the rich are more likely to attend other schools than the poor do, as residential patterns are important for defining the pool of schools to exit to. Hence, there is less crowding out of the most disadvantaged schools to be expected from a shift from CS to EC than from a shift from CS to IC. It follows that an IC system should increase social segregation of the most disadvantaged schools more than an EC

system. With this in mind, it becomes clearer that the redistributive conflicts are not one-dimensional: IC is not the ideal compromise option that one would hope for.

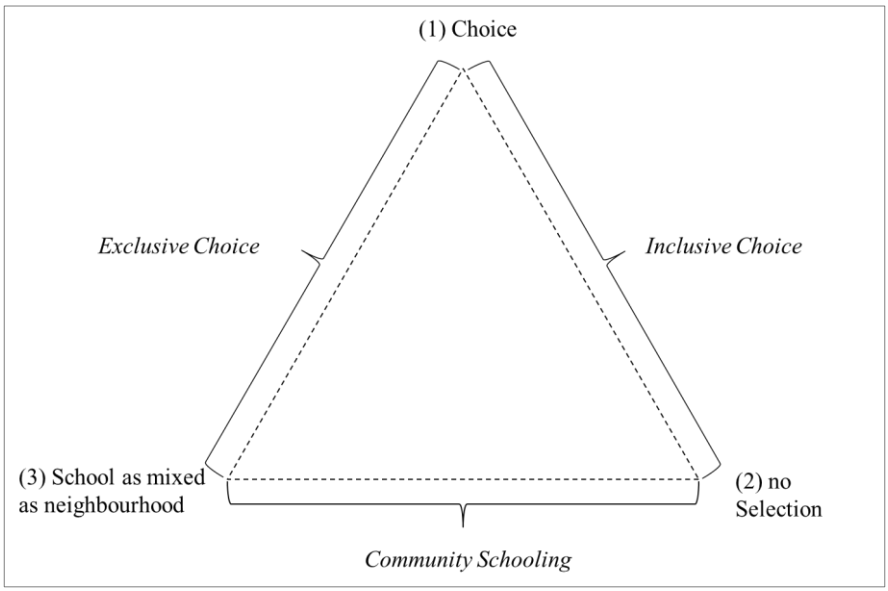
Rather, the trade-off between the three options resembles a trilemma, where governments can reach two redistributive goals out of three. They might want to increase choice to allow families living in disadvantaged areas to get access to better schools. To do so, they can also make sure that the schools are not allowed to select students, making choice as inclusive as possible. Yet, they have to compromise on a mixed social intake in the schools that such families are exiting from: segregation is likely to increase there. Alternatively, governments can limit the risk of increased social segregation by choosing the Exclusive Choice alternative. However, this means making choice more exclusive via the effect of schools that are able – and have an incentive – to select the best students.

Each of the three systems thus complies with two goals out of three. CS allows school segregation to remain within the boundaries of residential segregation – avoiding increasing school segregation of the most disadvantaged schools. It also scores low on the selection dimension as I have defined it. It does not permit children to opt out of their local school, confining them to the residential constraints of their family. IC tackles this latter goal and gives children a wider range of schools to choose from, while also not selecting according to performance. However, it does not comply with the goal of better schools for the most disadvantaged, who remain in schools that are now more likely to fail. EC fails with respect to low selection – it allows children of higher abilities to choose between a wider range of schools than their peers. It also allows families to opt out of the local school and thus complies with the high choice goal. However, this combination of choice and selection means that better off families have higher chances of exiting the local school than their peers. The implication of this is that EC complies with the goal of maintaining segregation in most disadvantaged schools at its minimum: children attending such schools have fewer opportunities to exit it and enter an alternative school in a selective system than is the case in a non-selective system.

Figure 3.1. illustrates this trade-off between three goals. Each edge represents one of the goals: (1) high choice (possibility to opt out from residential segregation), (2) low selection (inclusiveness of who gets to opt out), and (3) schools at least as socially mixed as neighbourhoods. The lines of the triangle indicate the SSIs that pursue each of these goals: CS for (2) and (3), EC for (1) and (3), and IC for (1) and (2). This allows us to clarify the trade-offs policy-makers have to consider when making redistributive decisions on SSIs. I use the concept of redistribution quite flexibly here: it is not about spending or the extent to which

students receive resources via education. It is about the extent to which institutions channel the impact of social origin on whether or not a student attends a high quality school. This ultimately defines the extent to which education is progressive as it affects the odds for students to perform well and thus attend upper secondary and tertiary education or drop out and do not benefit from public spending at higher education levels.

Figure 3.1: The Trilemma of Student Sorting Institutions



Next, the question is how to define winners and losers of the different SSIs. For the sake of redistributive politics theories, the simplest way forward would be to derive the political conflicts and possible coalitions between income groups. Yet, this is not an optimal choice for three reasons. First of all, the concepts chosen to differentiate between SSI categories – the primary and secondary effect of social origins on educational attainment – have not been measured with income indicators as measures for the social origins concept. Rather, social class (using EGP classification) and parental educational attainment have been used. Therefore, using income as a measurement here would imply making more untested assumptions about winners and losers than using another indicator of social origins. Second, we can indeed conceive of income as an important factor for defining winners and losers of this trilemma, because of the importance of residential sorting that precedes any action of student sorting. One would expect that income and residential choice are linked, income predicting to some extent what pool of schools would be available to choose from in any of

the choice systems, and the social composition of schools in a CS system. The caveat here is that families belonging to similar income groups would compete for access to school places. This predicts conflict within income groups, and not between them. It would follow that parties would not be able to use SSI policies to redistribute. Third, of course, income could theoretically matter on top of this residential effect: income can be the mechanism at work that provides advantage in educational performance to more affluent students (primary effect), as parents can invest in early-years education, private tuition, etc. It could also affect the secondary effect, that is, the socio-economic advantage in making decisions within the education system that improve access to education. For example, the argument that the poor do not use choice relies on the mechanism that parents have other primary concerns than the choice of school. Income could affect what level of priority parents give to the school children attend. Furthermore, the relative risk aversion argument also works with income: the secondary effect relies on the mechanism that education decisions rely on a principle of relative risk aversion, the prime motivation being avoiding downward mobility. Hence, families of lower social classes care less for decisions that advance their offspring's education because they cannot be downwardly mobile. The same could apply to income: the more one invests in the education of a child, the more risk averse one becomes, the more important is the possibility to opt out of a school. Despite these considerations, the social stratification literature has largely dismissed income as a variable to be considered apart from the social class variable. Accordingly, the advantages that economic resources provide are a function of social class, which not only captures individuals' income levels, but also income security, income stability, and income prospects (Bukodi and Goldthorpe 2012, 2).

Instead, one gets clearer results that can hold across societies when defining constituents' interests with their education level. When estimating social policy effects or corresponding individual preferences, comparative political economy generally divides groups according to the socio-economic characteristic through which the policy impacts their life: new social risks (e.g. Häusermann 2010; Gingrich and Ansell 2012), skill types (Estevez-Abe, Iversen, and Soskice 2001), employment protection (Rueda 2007), and so on. To estimate the right characteristic for the present context, I return to the social stratification literature that has allowed me to construct the typology of SSIs. Until now, I have not unpacked the 'social origins' concept and avoided to use the concept of social class. In the context of educational inequalities, the social origins concept is not reducible to social class, as defined by the sociology of stratification literature following the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero scheme (Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Portocarero 1979). As recent work by Bukodi

and Goldthorpe stresses (2012), one does not need to follow Bourdieu's approach of different forms of capital to find theoretical grounds for differentiating between the effect of parental social status, parental education, or class (in occupational terms) on children's educational attainment. In their words (p.3), "where the dependent variable is educational attainment, the practice of including parental education as a further component of social origins is obviously appropriate. However, if parental status is also included in the analysis along with parental class, we would then wish to interpret parental education in a more specific way". The gist is that one can pick up on different kinds of effects by measuring social origins in different ways. Generally, the literature uses both measures of parental class and education attainment to estimate the effect of social origin on individuals' attainment, and has consistently found effects with both variables. While Bukodi and Goldthorpe conclude that outcomes are sensitive to the measure used, Jackson and Jonsson (2013, 314) show that they are interchangeable measures to account for the social origin mechanisms of primary and secondary effects on attainment.

The matter boils down to a choice between using parental education or class, or a combination of those to derive interests, coalitions, and conflicts. One could now use either parental class or education level to define winners and losers of SSIs. It is not possible to use both because of the high number of groups this creates (income, class, *and* education). I choose education rather than class because it matches better with the dependent variable. In the previous chapter, I have defined SSIs with respect to their effect on student's educational attainment as they attend different quality schools. I have not commented on social mobility. I therefore follow Bukodi and Goldthorpe's advise to use parental education in a model that uses educational attainment as dependent variable. This choice is not only consistent from such an intergenerational perspective. It is also consistent with the relation between social class, income, and education at the parental generation level for which I derive the interests for SSIs. Education drives both an individual's income (educational returns) and social class (social mobility). One reduces problems of endogeneity by choosing education and income rather than income and social class. In the next subsection, I show that one can map winners and losers of EC, IC, and CS on education groups and then derive parties' preferences for each of these systems.

3.1.3. Defining partisan preferences for SSIs

How do partisan governments take decisions in this trilemma, which are amenable to best

possibly represent the interests of their income group coalitions? The theoretical framework I have presented above makes us assume that they reflect upon and know their constituents' material interests. A centre-left government would thus choose the option that best fits the material interests of the middle and low income groups. A centre-right government would choose the option in line with interests of the middle and high income groups. Note that this approach does not require us to develop and test a model of revealed preferences for SSIs at the micro-level. Also, there can be a gap between individual opinion on school choice and socio-economically derived material interests for SSIs. As developed in the previous paragraph, these material interests can be conceptualised as stemming from individuals' education level, rather than their place in the income distribution. On the aggregate level, partisan actors change their policy preference when the education level of the income group coalition they represent changes. Logically, the educational composition of income groups depends on strength of the correlation between education and income, the shape of the income distribution, and the level of educational expansion within the parent generation. Hence, the structure of society that affects partisan governments' policy preferences is defined by a set of structual factors that are amongst others defined by a historically grown institutional framework of labour market institutions, class structure, welfare state institutions, and educational institutions. The roots for change and variation can thus be considered of historical institutional origin. However, these factors are mainly exogenous from existing SSIs. Therefore, it is possible to limit this particular explanatory exercise to addressing whether the education level across income groups is a necessary element of a sufficient cause to explain SSI reform. This of course comes with the limit of leaving the roots of this social structure unexplained.

The next step is to define a measure of income groups' educational composition and discuss how partisan positions on SSIs are formed. Regarding the measure of educational composition, it is important to find the best measure possible to account for the individual characteristics that confer families' advantages or disadvantages in the different SSIs. In that context, one problem is that the school choice literature uses a rather loosely defined concept of class. In contrast, the social stratification literature has a quite precise measure of educational achievement and social class. Jackson et al. (2013) use a concept of three education groups to account for the primary and secondary effect of parental education on individuals' educational attainment. As I have built the SSI typology largely on this conceptual work, it is best to stick with the education measure of that group of scholars. Thus, risk of conceptual stretching is reduced, and we can be more sure that we are not comparing

apples with oranges. On this basis, we can distinguish three educational levels: those with basic education (*B*) have a low educational attainment – they have maximally attained the end of compulsory education. Those with intermediate education (*I*) have attained upper-secondary and post-secondary degrees but do not have tertiary credentials. The highest education category thus defines those individuals that have achieved tertiary education (*T*).[10] Measuring the education level of different income groups by using these categories is helpful to estimate what kind of society policy-makers are addressing. Naturally, it is important to comment further on how to operationalise these concepts in view of getting as close as possible to the structure of the population. Also, care is required in acknowledging the gap between how policy makers think society looks like and what it looks like according to macro-level data. I will further comment on these in the methods and operationalisation section of this chapter (section 3.3.)

The next step is to discuss how education levels of income groups can define their material interests for SSIs that form the basis for partisan policy preferences. When presenting the trilemma of SSIs, I have referred to the effect of these different institutions on individuals with different social origins: the most disadvantaged use the choice system with a lower likelihood, and the most advantaged outcompete everyone in an EC system. Contributors to Jackson's edited volume (2013) have shown that parental education is a good measure of the social origin effect on educational inequalities. Also, they have fruitfully distinguished between three education categories, showing that belonging to the highest category improves the odds of continuing education at higher levels more than membership of the intermediate category improves these odds in comparison to membership of the lowest category. In general, the social origins characteristics that school choice scholars have explored when assessing whether social class affects behaviour in a choice system are very similar to those that the social stratification literature uses to underpin the occurrence of the secondary effect of social origins on educational attainment (individual decisions within the education system). Therefore, despite these categories being crude, it is possible to deduce that families with basic education parental background (B) correspond to the 'disadvantaged' that exercise choice in a choice system with lower likelihood than their more advantaged peers (with I and T education levels). They are thus most advantaged in a CS system, according to the mechanisms described above when presenting the trilemma. Families belonging to the T

[10] This corresponds to: ISCED 0-2 for basic education (lower secondary and below), ISCED 3-4 for intermediate education (upper secondary), and ISCED 5-6 (degree level and above) for tertiary education.

category of education have higher odds of getting their children into their preferred schools in an EC system, as they are likely to outcompete those with lower educational credentials in a selective system, where primary effects of social origin matter on top of secondary effects. Finally, for those in the middle, with intermediate education credentials, an IC system promises best outcomes: they can more easily opt out of the local school than peers with basic educational origins, and are not outcompeted in such a choice system by peers with tertiary education origins. This perspective allows us to start commenting on preferred partisan policies: if each income group perfectly represents one education level (i.e. the lower income group is educated to a basic level, and so forth), then we would expect parties representing the lower income group with basic education (LB) to prefer a CS system; those representing the M income group with I education (MI) to prefer an IC system; and those representing the H income group with T education (HT) to prefer an EC system. This leads to two conclusions: first, in such a scenario, there is a conflict between income groups, and we have to define how the three options rank for each in order to be able to understand policies promoted by centre-right governments representing both M and H and centre-left governments representing both M and L. Second, it is unlikely that income groups have such homogeneous education levels, they are more likely to be heterogeneous to some extent. In both cases, parties representing each of these groups are likely to be divided.

For each education level, it is possible to theorise the ranking between the two SSI options in which they are not advantaged. If those with B education are better off in a CS system then that is because their likelihood of choosing to opt out is lower than for other groups. In absence of opting out, it is best for them to also keep students of higher socio-economic origins in the school. Hence, institutions that make opt-out harder are better for them than institutions that make opt out easier. If Inclusive Choice does not help them to opt out, then it is better for them that their peers who would be enabled to opt out in an IC system stay in the same school. This avoids decreasing quality of school via increased social segregation. Also, it permits those who would exert choice to hold the school accountable to stay but use voice instead, potentially improving the accountability of the school. Hence, Exclusive Choice is the better option than Inclusive Choice for children coming from least educated families. If those with I education are better off in an IC system, then this is because it allows them to use their advantage over those with lower credentials by using choice to get into the school they prefer for their children. They could not use this possibility in a CS system. They could use it in an EC system, as the level of selectiveness of schools depends on the level of demand for school places in schools that use selective mechanisms in their

admission process. However, choice is more difficult for them in an EC system than in an IC system. But because choice is still an option, EC gives them more opportunities of getting access to the best school than CS does. Finally, if those with T education are better off in an EC system, this is because that system allows them to use their social origins advantage in the selection process after they have made their choice of school. The other choice option is less optimal as they enter into competition with the I group over access to schools. However, this is still better than not being able to exert choice at all. Hence, for T, IC is better than CS. Yet, families' education level might interact with the income level (as specified under 3.1.2.). The more economic resources a family has, the less stress there might be on choice, as it is easier to use residential choices to influence the pool of schools that is available for children, and making education a 'club good' by outcompeting other families on the housing market. That also means that there could be an inversion of IC and CS as the second-best options as income progresses. However, as CS makes choice much more difficult than EC or IC, one would need quite a high level of economic resources to ensure that using residential choices in a CS system allow better access to the preferred schools than IC for those with high education, and than EC for those with intermediate education. This should thus only be relevant for a part of the population of the high income group, and hence for centre-right governments. However, as this group also depends least on SSIs to get access to the school of their choice, it does not seem politically relevant enough to further develop this possible interaction in the framework of the present theory-building and testing exercise. Table 3.1. summarises these rankings for the three education groups without taking into account this possible interaction with income for very high income families.

Table 3.1: Winners and losers of SSIs by education level

	Winning outcome	**Second-best outcome**	**Losing outcome**
Basic Education	Community Schooling	Exclusive Choice	Inclusive Choice
Intermediate Education	Inclusive Choice	Exclusive Choice	Community Schooling
Tertiary Education	Exclusive Choice	Inclusive Choice	Community Schooling

With this ranking, we can move to formulate expectations for partisan governments' preferences for SSIs. First of all, the more the income groups a partisan government represents are educationally homogeneous, the more straightforward its preference should be: with a great (more than absolute) majority of families with basic education in its income group coalition, to represent redistributive interests, a government should prefer Community Schooling. Inclusive Choice is expected to be the preferred policy when a great (more than absolute) majority of families of that income group coalition holds intermediate education credentials. Exclusive Choice is expected to be the preferred policy in all other cases. This is because there is no potential for compromising between the interests of B and I against the interests of T: the best option for I is the worst for B and vice versa. When less than half the income group coalition is composed by families with I education, there can be a compromise to represent the majority (B+T) with an EC system, which is the best solution for T and a better solution than the IC alternative for B. The implication is that centre-left and centre-right governments could hold each of the three possible positions. Which one they hold is expected to depend on the educational level of the different income groups they represent at the time of governing. Another implication is that we should observe mostly divided rather than united parties on this issue. But, once they have defined their policy preference, when do governments reform? In the next subsection, I show how the divisive character of SSIs creates high political costs of reform. Based on such high costs, maintaining the status quo might put the government into a better position than changing the status quo.

3.1.4. Status quo bias

The partisan approach to education spending does not help in understanding when *institutional reform* happens once redistributive preferences are established. For this, one can fruitfully turn to the New Politics of Welfare State literature that has attempted to explain stability and change within welfare states rather than accounting for cross-national variation of welfare state institutions. Paul Pierson's argument about positive feedbacks and path dependence on the one hand (1994; 2004), and Ellen Immergut's (1992) account of veto players on the other hand provide core concepts for such historical institutionalist analyses. They attempted to explain mainly stability – or permissiveness of reform – once a new political position had been established. As welfare state reform continued to happen despite these mitigating factors and variation of reform capacity happened within stable institutional

environments, the historical institutionalist moved on to show more precisely when and how historical institutions shape policy preferences (Häusermann 2010).

I add to this literature by showing that the institutional characteristics of SSIs are the main culprit for a status quo bias that results in institutional stability despite partisan preference change. Partisan governments matter, but only at certain points in time. I will develop this argument in two steps. First, I show that the characteristics of SSIs lead to high political costs of reform. In that step, I also show how this argument differs from more traditional feedback-effects accounts. Second, I show that the political context can change and creates a window of opportunity for reform as the political cost for non-reform increases.

An assessment of political costs always comes with the question of the benefits of reform. Generally, costs of reform come from those who benefit from existing institutions, while costs of non-reform come from the corresponding losers. Sometimes, however, benefits are expected in the long term, while political costs have to be borne instantly (Jacobs 2008; 2011). This corresponds to the case of SSIs for two reasons. First, the economic benefits of attending a school of high quality are harvested in the future considering that educational achievement is then translated into the possibility to attend further education and reap the economic returns to education. Second, sociologists have debated the capacity of institutional change to promote educational equality because of the idea that whatever the system, better-off families find a way to maintain educational inequality (Lucas 2001). Thus, on top of dividing the society not only according to income level but also according to education level, and running divisions within parties as much as across parties, the benefits are quite uncertain. Costs remain high though because those who anticipate to lose out from the new system also have to adapt their behaviour in the competition for access to quality schooling. This keeps political costs of reform at a high level despite possible (exogenous) increase of the groups that benefit from reform in the long term.

It is then useful to distinguish between short-term political costs for governments and long-term costs for the losers of the reform (Jacobs 2008). The literature on institutional change sees short-term political costs or constraints to reform in form of veto players. However, as pointed out above, veto players do not suffice to account for variation within stable institutional environments. The concepts of positive and negative feedback in the framework of path dependence are more helpful to account for changes in the political cost of reforms. Jane Gingrich proposes that formal institutional change happens as political costs of change decrease. For her, "political costs are likely to fall where a program either loses public support or organized interests lose resources. … these shifts can emerge exogenously or

endogenously." (2015, 46) Jacobs and Weaver (2014) change perspective and focus on the mechanisms with which negative feedback allows for change. They state that the feedback effect informs governments' positions, but is not sufficient to understand whether and when reform happens. They add that windows of opportunity are fundamental to understand when negative feedback gets transformed into reform.

For the case of SSIs reform, I sustain, the tension between short-term costs and long-term benefits sustains the status quo. Reform happens as the short-term costs of reform are outweighed by short-term costs of non-reform. These costs can stem from both the political context and a change in political power from the losers of the status quo. This is different from a path-dependence account as it does not imply that policy options are locked in. It implies that for change to happen, some exogenous or endogenous political costs must push the government towards reform. This political context can originate from a host of factors. Instead of testing a particular historical institutionalist explanation, I propose that it is useful to understand better how governments interpret their own capacity of action when they assess whether the political cost for non-reform is higher or lower than the political cost of reform in a specific political (rather than specifically institutional) context. My aim is thus not to test a full-fledged theory, but to show that political and historical institutions may matter in the cost-benefit analysis in some instances, but not in all, whereas in all cases I analyse, I see political actors assessing the short term costs of reform against the short term costs of the status quo. This theory bears some resemblance with prospect theory (e.g. McDermott (2004) for its application to political science), as it gives room for actors basing their decisions on their assessment of expected gains and losses from status quo and reform. At this stage of this approach, prospect theory adds a useful metaphor of the decision-maker assessing their expected gains and losses. Its added theoretical leverage is not enough to justify a leap away from the historical institutionalist approach.

3.1.5. Hypotheses

To conclude this section, it is time to link the partisan preference theory with the account on status quo bias and present my theory's hypotheses. It is important to note here the time scope of the project that limits itself to explaining outcomes after 1980, that is, after the three systems abolished Tracked Schooling and landed either in the CS corner (Sweden) or the EC corner (France and England). I will show in a second step that the hypotheses I am testing here have implications for explaining the move away from Tracked Schooling. Hypotheses

are composed of two necessary elements together forming an INUS condition.

H1: A Community Schooling reform can occur when the Lower and Middle income group coalition in a Left government or the Middle and Higher income group coalition in a Right government are for their great majority composed of families with basic education credentials. In addition, reform happens if the short-term political costs of the status quo are considered high.

H2: An Inclusive Choice reform can occur when the Lower and Middle income group coalition in a Left government or the Middle and Higher income group coalition in a Right government are for their great majority composed of families with intermediate education credentials. In addition, reform happens if the short-term political costs of the status quo are considered high.

H3: An Exclusive Choice reform can occur when the Lower and Middle income group coalition in a Left government or the Middle and Higher income group coalition in a Right government are not for their great majority composed of families with either basic or intermediate education credentials. In addition, reform happens if the short-term political costs of the status quo are considered high.

The trilemma does not help to solve the question of why countries chose turn their back away from Tracked Schooling. However, its theoretical underpinnings and the status quo bias element point to a clear explanation. The move away from Tracked Schooling can be explained by a coalition between the Right and the Left against this system. However, the Right favours to move on the choice dimension, keeping selection high, while the Left favours moving on the selection dimension, keeping choice low. H1 explains the stance of the Left. H4 will explain the stance of the Right. To recall, the difference between Tracked Schooling and Exclusive Choice is the ordering of the primary and secondary effect of social origin within the allocation process. The Right favours Tracked Schooling unless that system divides its constituents between the most educated as winners and the less educated as losers. The more individuals in the Tertiary education group and a growth of the Intermediate education group spur a conflict between these groups. The conflict can be solved with Exclusive Choice as a coalition option. The most educated families still win, but the relative loss of the other groups is diminished as they can opt out of the local school and differentiate

from the other losing groups. If the political context catalyses political costs from this status quo, a centre-right government changes its policy from Tracked Schooling to Exclusive Choice.

H4: The centre-right changes its policy from supporting Tracked Schooling to backing Exclusive Choice following an increased heterogeneity of educational achievement within its constituency of middle and higher income groups. In addition, reform happens if the short-term political costs of the status quo are considered high.

Tracked Schooling is maintained when the Centre-Right does not align with the Centre-Left to support comprehensive schooling via the Exclusive Choice option. The next section concentrates on alternative explanations. Then, I show how to operationalise the mechanisms implied in the hypotheses and the values of the different variables in the last section of this chapter.

3.2. The Church and the Market: Alternative Explanations

This section presents alternative explanations to the observed variation. One can explain both the SSI change within countries and the variation across countries by using an institutional and ideational approach. If this alternative perspective passes the empirical test while my interest-based theory fails, this means that political actors are much less able to be redistributive and to care for the social right of equal opportunities than if the empirical test leads to the opposite outcome. The method of process tracing requires to "cast the net widely for alternative explanations", and to "be equally tough" on them (Bennett and Checkel 2015, fig. 1.1.). The process tracer faces an important trade-off between breadth and precision. One can cast the net widely in order to best possibly avoid missing the 'true' explanation for the policy decisions at each stage. At the same time, one needs to offer a precise account of the alternative explanations to be equally tough in the comparison between causal process observations and theoretical expectations. I choose to focus on two alternative accounts. These alternatives cast the net as broadly as possible *within* the discipline of comparative political economy: ideas, institutions, and interests (Hall 1997)– get a 'fair' and equally tough consideration.

I have selected my alternative account based on alternative interpretations of what

SSIs are an instance of. Rule change between the high choice and low choice categories is not only an instance of redistributive choices. It also can be considered a move on the dimension of marketisation and/or privatisation of education. Moreover, the existence of government maintained private schools can take the form of subsidisation of confessional education. I take these alternative conceptualisations seriously and draw my alternative explanations from existing explanations of the dependent variable if conceptualised differently. This section starts with presenting SSIs as instances of marketisation/privatisation on the one hand and outcomes of the state-church conflict on the other hand. The second subsection addresses the argument of marketisation in education, and presents variation of our outcomes as a function of neoliberal ideas as a paradigm shift in welfare state policy making (cf. Hall 1993) on which both the Left and the Right build their policies while they are constrained by institutional factors like veto players or the distributive outcomes of existing institutions. This is the 'new politics' approach. Third, I contrast 'new politics' with 'old politics' that sees present variation and change an outcome of past political battles. Each of these approaches can stand on its own feet to some extent, but both can be fruitfully combined to construct one alternative account to the interest-based explanation of SSIs.

3.2.1. Two roads to school choice – the market and the church

The alternative accounts primarily flow from different conceptualisations of how change happens on the school choice dimension of SSIs. To move from low choice to high choice, as my indicators require, the system has to take away decision-making power from the local administration that plans school places – the producer – and grant more power to the demand of parents – the consumer. One could then see this move as an instance of marketisation of education. Alternatively or on top of that, the move happens as government-maintained private schools enter the education system. These schools can be state subsidised church schools or schools run by private companies or other non-profit organisations. This move can be understood as an instance of privatisation or acceptance of public funding for church schools. Several studies in political economy of education have conceptualised the variation of school choice along these lines. In the following two paragraphs I briefly review these authors' conceptualisation of variation on the dimension of school choice.

The market approach to school choice focuses on the explanation of changes in the organisation of public services, amongst which education. According to Gingrich (2011, 8), markets "use competitive mechanisms to allocate scarce resources to producers and users",

and this distinguishes them from other forms of organisation. School choice makes schools compete for pupils and consumers compete for school places. Markets can differ in their distributive outcomes, as the institutional set-up of such competitive mechanisms differs. Examples of market reforms that include school choice are school vouchers, which change the distribution mechanism of funding to schools. Funding there follows the pupil, which means that schools have financial incentives to provide a high quality service in order to avoid consumer exit. This also means that private providers can enter the system without charging fees, as the public pays education in private schools via the school voucher. This changes the accountability link between the consumer and the provider. In a market system, the consumer holds the school accountable with the choice mechanism (Mattei 2009). In a non-market system, the consumer cannot directly hold the provider accountable, but only indirectly via the control-and-command bureaucracy. When such a market mechanism gets introduced to the extent that the administration cannot impede opt out unless a school is oversubscribed, shift from a Community Schooling system to a choice system occurs. How the market distributes resources internally is a matter of regulation differences that can either lead to Inclusive or Exclusive Choice. This approach does not suffice to explain outcomes in terms of SSIs. France – a non-market system – has an Exclusive Choice system.

School choice can also occur in absence of introducing market mechanisms in the governance of education. Government-maintained schools that provide an opt-out possibility from the local public school can also take the form of faith schools with historical roots. France and England did not change from Tracked Schooling to Community Schooling like Sweden did, but shifted directly to Exclusive Choice because of the importance of state funded faith schools that were their own admissions authorities. Public authorities make contracts with private providers, who trade part of their freedom of teaching for public funding. For the present purpose, such regulation is not substantially different from the market approach, where private providers are also allowed to enter and get funding via the funding follows pupils – or voucher – mechanism. In both cases, families get an opt out possibility from their local school. However, politically, the funding of church schools – and thus also the possibility of reforming an Exclusive Choice system based on such schools – can be expected to differ from the explanation for school choice via marketisation. Politically, the existence and subsidisation of church schools can be traced back to the church-state cleavage (as conceptualised by Lipset and Rokkan (1967)). This conflict – according to Lijphart (Lijphart 1968) (as cited in Ansell and Lindvall (2013)) – takes two dimensions: first, it played out between the state and the church as institutions; second, it played out between

different confessions within a state.

Table 3.2: Classification of SSIs: marketisation and church-schools dimensions

	market	**church**
choice (inclusive)	Sweden (3), England (3)	
choice (exclusive)	Sweden (2), England (2)	France England (1)
no choice	Sweden (1)	

Sweden (1): before 1992
Sweden (2): 1992-1996
Sweden (3): 1996-

England (1): before 1988
England (2): 1988-2006
England (3): 2006-

France: no change

In Table 3.2., I cross-tabulate the choice-via-market approach with the choice-via-church approach and classify the historical trajectory of Sweden, England and France. Horizontally, systems vary according to the existence of church school subsidies. Vertically, they vary according to their degree of marketisation. France went straight from Tracked Schooling (France (1)) to Exclusive Choice (France (2)) because when tracking was abolished, parents could continue to opt out from the public school by opting into state funded church schools. Sweden did not have faith schools subsidies when abolishing Tracked Schooling and also had not introduced a market in education, thus shifting to Community Schooling (Sweden (1)). Sweden adopted Exclusive Choice (Sweden (2)) as a consequence of marketisation reforms which were then regulated to form Inclusive Choice (Sweden (3)). England experienced a combination of those two stories. It went directly from Tracked Schooling to Exclusive Choice as a consequence of church school subsidisation (England (1)). It then shifted to a market system on top of that (England (2)), which was later regulated to form Inclusive Choice (England (3)).

My alternative explanation is thus an account that explains variation in terms of marketisation and/or the historical legacy of the church-school conflict constraining present political actors to a smaller set of options. The next subsection deals with explaining variation on the dimension of marketisation. The following subsection looks into variation as a

consequence of the church-state conflict.

3.2.2. "New Politics": Explaining SSIs from a marketisation perspective

Both Left and Right governments introduce markets into the school system. However, they can do so while remaining faithful to their welfare goals. This is the unanimous verdict of otherwise differing studies on marketisation in education. Klitgaard (2008) expects that political institutions matter, but Gingrich (2011) and Hicks (2015) both show that markets get introduced across political systems. They show that opponents to markets – usually producer groups like teacher unions or local administrations – have not had a say in the scope of marketisation. The Left can use markets to improve service delivery for middle class households while keeping their support for redistribution to the poor. Hicks theorises that this endeavour is easier in an equal society as markets create less inequalities there. Gingrich takes a more institutional tack to a similar observation: for universal benefits like education, parties choose different types of markets if the education systems they reform have a uniform v. fragmented benefit structure. Neither Hicks's nor Gingrich's approach explains why France did not introduce a market in education but Sweden and England have done so. France is somewhere in between Sweden and England when it comes to social inequality, and it starts off with a similarly fragmented benefit structure as England.

The education policy literature does offer a possible explanation. First of all, French policy-makers might not want to introduce markets in education for ideational reasons. The studies cited above do not explicitly tell us why policy-makers start using the option of the market in the first place. One view is that consumer choice is an opinion pleaser (Hicks 2015). In France, public opinion is also favourable to school choice (Ben Ayed 2015). France might be different because of its policy-makers' scepticism towards neoliberal ideas according to which market mechanisms improve service delivery. Dobbins and Martens (2012) make such an argument when analysing the extent to which France complied with OECD and other international recommendations of educational reform. They state that French policy-makers have "principled beliefs" that differ from those of their neighbouring countries, namely the one of equality in education, more pronounced in France than elsewhere. A strong link between neoliberal ideas and school choice exists. Milton Friedman is not only known for his monetarist approach to economic policies, but has also published on the benefits of school choice within a liberalised education market (Friedman 1955). He explicitly sees the defects of school choice – the "exacerbating of class distinctions" – as a justified drawback of a reduced public influence on distribution of education (p. 131). The argument of French

defiance of such ideas that threaten equality in education needs to be considered, although it remains open why Sweden differs from France.

Dobbins's (2014) account of variation between France and Sweden can account for this to some extent. He states that France and Sweden have different types of educational corporatism. The French educational corporatism allows teacher unions to participate in the policy process at the national level, especially blocking decentralisation of budgetary decisions to the school level. Swedish education bureaucracy being more fragmented pre-decentralisation, teacher unions had less power to block such decentralisation. This argument is helpful, as it does not pit teacher unions against governments as accounts on marketisation do, but sees them as two faces of the education administration coin. Theoretically, this argument suffers from the weakness that French education bureaucracy has also become much more fragmented since the 1980s, and the differences between pre-decentralisation Sweden and modern France are not as bold as they used to be. Furthermore, Dobbins's account focuses on decentralisation of teachers' employment. This is not necessarily tied to school choice.

Considering that the dependent variables of these studies vary from my conceptualisation of school choice, the institutional role of teacher unions and ideational role of neoliberalism for the French outcome remain an empirical question. The hypothesis to be tested consists of two tenets. First, Sweden and England both have policy makers with neoliberal ideas that introduce school choice as an element of the education market, while in France, these ideas are missing or more vulnerable to veto players entering the decision-making process. Second, the left and the right pursue different types of student sorting - Exclusive Choice v. Tracked Schooling for the Right and Inclusive Choice or Community Schooling for the Left. By fragmenting access to quality education more, the Right sets the institutions on a path that reduces the options for subsequent Left governments to Inclusive Choice.

H$_{markets}$*: Exclusive Choice or Inclusive Choice reforms happen when policy-makers hold neoliberal beliefs on education if the political and institutional context is permissive. This permissiveness depends on the existence and relevance of veto players and on positive/negative feedback effects of the status quo SSI.*

3.2.3. "Old Politics": Explaining SSIs from a path dependence perspective

The extent to which publicly financed faith schools exist and are regulated defines the SSI type of a school system. These schools are generally the outcome of conflicts of the past, when education became a universal public service, and church and state competed for who could educate and control the nation's future. Such conflicts resulted in variation on the level of public subsidisation of church schools. As Ansell and Lindvall (Ansell and Lindvall 2013, 16–17) point out: "variation was in large part a product of the political and religious cleavages that existed at the end of the nineteenth century, but it continues to structure education today. Modern primary education systems—like cross-national patterns of redistribution (Iversen and Soskice (2009)) and systems of corporate governance (Martin and Swank (2011)) – remain shrouded in the shadows of the nineteenth century". Margaret Archer (1979) has also pointed out that who was in charge of education in the 19th century starkly set the stage for the institutions that govern education today.

Ansell and Lindvall's (2013) outcome variable – subsidisation of church schools – comes very close to the outcome of interest here. They hypothesise that whether or not the state would fund church schools would depend on the extent to which different religious groups were competing for resources: the more confessionally homogeneous the faith school landscape, the higher the likelihood for state subsidies. In the timeframe these authors analyse, France counts as a 'no subsidies' case, as catholic schools became government-maintained only in 1959. Their argument is clearly historically bound. However, these conflicts of the past provide variation across our cases: Sweden did not allow substantial subsidies to faith schools before 1992 with the market reform, France did allow them since 1959 but 95 percent of recipient schools are catholic. In England, Church of England and catholic schools were important providers of secondary education throughout the 20th century. Their analysis to some extent confirms Castle's (1994) and Wolf's (2009) arguments about the effect of religious heritage on public spending for education. Different Christian denominations (types of Protestantism and Catholicism) did not only shape ideology on public spending but also exerted political power in spending conflicts (Busemeyer and Nikolai 2010).

Historical conflicts matter because they create institutions that themselves shape the political conflicts around them in the future. This has a path-dependence and a broader political institutional implication. Following the most recent conceptualisations of the path

dependence argument: as institutions grow older, they create lock-in effects reducing the set of available policy alternatives. This is because new groups come to adapt to that institution, increasing the winners of the status quo. These groups can either be organised interests or welfare recipients (Béland 2010). With time, institutions thus alter the nature of the conflict that led to their creation. Furthermore, the political winners of old conflicts might not have been in an institutionally strong position before winning that conflict, but emerge as important players in future conflicts around the same institutional question.

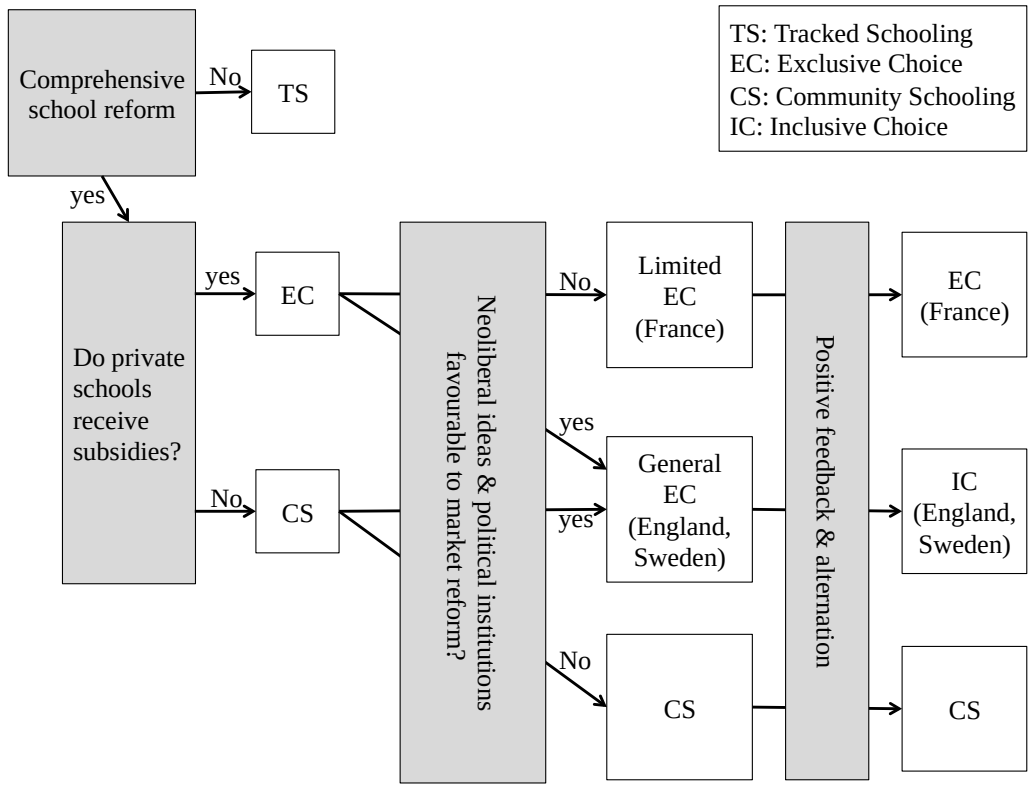
It is then possible that France did not move to Inclusive Choice because of such path dependence effects and the institutional role of church school providers. One would then have to understand better why this was a problem for France, but not for England where Inclusive Choice happened despite the historical role of church schools. The difference between France and England is that England moved to a generalised school choice system in 1988. In France, choice remained limited to mostly catholic providers. Alternatively, the later development of state subsidies in France might have an impact on difficulty to regulate – the 'old conflict' not being completely over yet. Last but not least, England and France could vary because of different opportunities for church school providers to participate in education politics. This would be a similar argument to Dobbins's (2014) educational corporatism argument.

H_{church}: The reform from Exclusive Choice to Inclusive Choice depends on the historical existence and extent of public subsidies for church schools, the outcome of H_{market}, and the institutional capacity of subsidised private providers to act as veto players.

To conclude this subsection, one can look at Figure 3.2. which shows each case's trajectory according to the market and church explanations if we combined them. The French system became an Exclusive Choice system with the end of Tracked Schooling. This happened as the loi Haby of 1975 did not change the status or regulation of church schools. France did not move from that position. First, it did not become a generalised Exclusive Choice system. This could be the outcome of the "new politics" account combining ideas and teacher unions. Second, it did not turn to the more inclusive version of school choice. This could be the effect of path dependence limiting the policy options when it comes to regulating church schools. The English system started off like France but generalised school choice within its Exclusive Choice system of the 1980s. This could be due to a more prominent influence of neoliberal ideas of the market and low influence of teacher unions. The Left then stayed on the choice path – according to this theory because of feedback effects that made it difficult to reverse

that path. Yet, they deviated towards a more socially friendly Inclusive Choice to continue satisfying their constituents; or as negative feedback of the selective mechanism kicked in – more people than in France were affected as choice was generalised. The Swedish policy trajectory is explained by the same factors as England, the only difference being that Sweden started off with Community Schooling as no government-funded private system existed in 1963 when Tracked Schooling ended.

Figure 3.2. 'Old Politics' and 'New Politics' paths to school choice reform



3.3. Testing the Theories with Process Tracing

In this section, I present how I employ process tracing to test the hypotheses. First, I explain how I develop evidentiary tasks and empirical tests, and how they fit on an 'event-history map' linking cause to outcome (Jacobs 2015; Waldner 2015). Then, I expose the evidentiary tasks and tests I developed for each of the hypotheses. One could also call this step the *operationalisation* of the 'independent variables' or of the different elements of the causal mechanisms' INUS conditions.

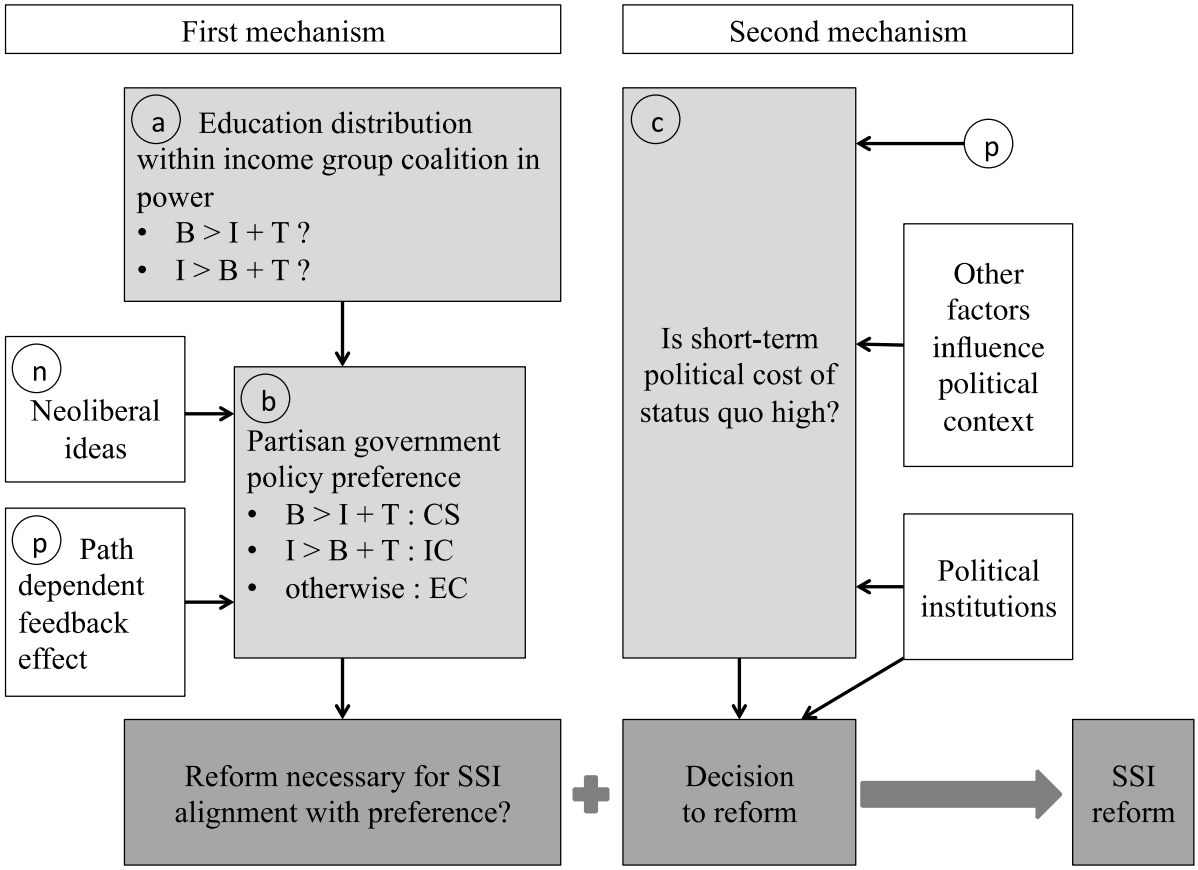
3.3.1. Process tracing approach for hypothesis testing

Alan Jacobs distinguishes between three evidentiary tasks to test a theory with process tracing (2015, 48): "measuring the independent variable"; "establishing the exogeneity of the independent variable", and "finding evidence of a causal mechanism". To deliver these tasks, one has to develop empirical tests asking what traces a causal mechanism – that (one hypothesises) has occurred – has left behind in the form of "observational clues". I expect the independent variables of each theory to come in at different moments in the policy-making process. Following Waldner (2015, 128), process tracing implies deploying the theory and its alternatives in a causal graph of which the "individual nodes" "are jointly sufficient for the outcome". The observations on the empirical process at these nodes have particular probative value: they are the observations that one uses for the empirical tests by asking to what extent one would find this observation if each of the competing theories were true: this requires deducing empirical tests from the hypotheses for each evidentiary task. One then draws 'event-history maps' to link the events of an empirical sequence and identifies the nodes of the causal graph within these 'maps'. The final task is to assess the extent to which observations collected on the policy processes of these sequences provide the observational clues for competing causal mechanisms.

I present the causal graph for hypotheses 1-4 in the next paragraphs. I show we can split it into the mechanism of party preference formation, the mechanism of governments' decisions to reform, and at which nodes the variables from the alternative explanations intervene. The next subsection presents the empirical tests and evidentiary tasks for the competing theories of the first mechanism (partisan position formation). Then, I show how I use process tracing to evaluate whether the second mechanism occurred (political cost assessment).

The causal graph is depicted in Figure 3.3. It starts with step *a* – the macro-level independent variable, namely the educational composition of the income group coalitions of the Left and of the Right. These are hypothesised to define whether parties prefer Inclusive Choice, Exclusive Choice, or Community Schooling. Party preferences are the dependent variable of this first part of the process (*b*). The alternative explanations stipulate that neoliberal ideas on the one hand and path dependent feedback effects on the other hand define parties' positions. To reflect Figure 3.3.: did *a* lead to *b*, or was *b* the result of processes independent from *a*?

Figure 3.3: Causal graph of competing explanations and their nodes



On its own, the condition that a partisan government's position is in conflict with the status quo is not sufficient for reform. It is a necessary element of a sufficient condition. The second necessary element regards the assessment of political costs of reform if compared to political costs of non-reform. After having defined whether the status quo is in line with the party preference, and if the party is in government, policy-makers assess the cost of reform (*c*). The causal graph hypothesises that *c* is not a direct and systematic consequence of the alternative explanations, that is, political or historical institutions.

3.3.2. Empirical tests for the causes of partisan governments' reform positions

The evidentiary tasks for the first element of the hypothesis' INUS condition are first to measure the independent variable, that is, *a* for the process of *a* → *b*. Then, one needs to measure the independent variables for the alternative hypotheses at that stage: *n* for neoliberal ideas and *p* for path dependent feedback effect. Subsequently, are there traces of the causal

mechanism linking *a/n/p* to *b*? Finally, is the value of *a/n/p* exogenous from its competitors? For each of these steps I identify empirical tests, that is, the kind of observations the theory expects present if the hypothesis is true/the alternatives are true. In this section, I only define hoop tests: evidence necessary to be found if the hypothesis is true. Whether the observations of the case studies are of 'hoop test' material depends on clues' individual probative value. I therefore discuss potential straw-in-the-wind tests and smoking-gun tests individually within the empirical chapters.

With equifinality in mind, the main empirical task of this study is to assess which of the three (sets of) hypotheses provides a better explanation for each of the individual cases. Therefore, the task is to simultaneously learn from evidence for our confidence in each of the sets of hypotheses. As Humphreys and Jacobs have shown, the amount of learning that occurs depends on our prior beliefs in the probability of each of the hypotheses to be true. As these authors have demonstrated, for evidence we expect to find with middling probability, failure to find that evidence strongly reduces our confidence in a theory when our prior for that theory is also middling. In contrast, successfully finding that evidence does increase our confidence in a theory, albeit by a smaller degree (Humphreys and Jacobs 2015, 55). For example, if our prior confidence in H1-H4 is slightly lower to the confidence in Hmarket and Hchurch together, and we neither have middle to high confidence in the latter and middle to low confidence in the former, then a failed hoop test of Hmarket and Hchurch reduces our confidence in them remarkably. A successful hoop test of H1-H4 increases our confidence in H1-H4 to a smaller extent. If alternatives' hoop tests (HTs) fail and H1-H4 HTs are successful, the ranking of confidence between the competing theories is inverted and we have more confidence in the partisan explanation than its alternatives. The hoop tests I develop below are then summarised at the end of this section in Table 3.3.

The first independent variable, *a*, is the educational composition of the parent generation, by income group. I use the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) to define the educational compositions of the low, middle, and high income groups at different points in time in my three countries of interest. The advantage of LIS is good comparable individual-level disposable income data covering my period of analysis – from the mid-1980s to 2010. It allows making snapshots of the societies at five-years intervals and thus producing a 'film' of the development of educational characteristics of the income group coalitions. Also, it is data collected explicitly for the purpose of defining the socio-economic characteristics of a society, and the size and procedure of the samples permits me to be rather confident that the data best possibly describes the actual parameters in society. Unfortunately, LIS does not have

education-level data in the household-level databases, but only in the individual-level databases. I therefore use the individual-level databases. To account best for the belonging to an income group (in terms of the family rather than the individual) I decided to exclude female observations and only look at male observations. I also chose to limit the age range to 30 to 60 year-olds. I then created an income-group variable by computing the income terciles, using a measure of income that includes the total income pre-tax and transfers.[12] For most datasets, the LIS recoded original education-level (highest level of educational achievement) along the ISCED1997 classification. The ISCED classification conceptually corresponds to my three education groups – basic (ISCED levels 0-2), intermediate (3-4), tertiary (>5). For some datasets, I had to recode the education-level category as it was not defined according to ISCED. In the end I cross-tabulated income groups and income group coalitions with age groups and education groups. This gives us an overview of educational majorities and minorities within the income group coalitions. We can then define whether a partisan government at time t (five-year periods) is expected to prefer Inclusive Choice, Exclusive Choice, or Community Schooling.

In addition, I attempt to measure the extent to which partisan governments can be expected to cater to the particular education-group coalitions stemming from the income group data. For each of the three country cases, I cross-check the results from the LIS data with electoral results of national electoral studies (as cited in the empirical chapters). These measures are deliberately crude and include the whole sample (not truncated by age or gender). This gives us a sense about the match between income-group representation – the constituencies who political parties target for redistributive policies – and the composition of the electorate that has legitimised a partisan government in a particular election.

In the causal mechanism, this variable *a* is expected to have an effect on *b* (partisan government policy position). To examine whether $a \rightarrow b$, we need a measure of *b* and assess whether it corresponds to the expected value given *a*. Partisan positions can be measured at different stages and involve a range of actors. Parties' treatment of the question of educational inequalities and the extent to which they are critical to the existing SSIs in the process of drafting electoral manifestos and in electoral campaign announcement provides information on this question. I also look at members of parliaments' declarations on the matter in the

[12] This measurement choice reflects the conceptual underpinning of the theoretical framework by which parties represent income groups to redistribute, hence tax individuals and provide benefits. On this basis, it seems more accurate to measure these groups by using pre-tax and transfer income measures than post-tax and transfer (i.e. disposable income)

relevant education committees, and other parliamentary activity like votes on a decision that concerns SSIs directly or more indirectly where appropriate, and drawing on reports on the school system. Within the party leadership, the positions of the parties' education spokesperson and their communications are relevant. Depending on the electoral system and the context, these can be coalition partners or parties that usually govern on their own. The question is the extent to which the government (cabinet, education minister, education advisers/top level civil servants in the cabinet and department of education) actively identifies SSIs as a policy problem and search for legislative/regulatory solutions in case the party's position is in conflict with the status quo. In case the party's position is unclear or divided, one can also look whether a clearer position exists amongst government officials. The value of *b* can be a clear position in favour of one of the four SSIs, no clear position, or a debate of positions between different identifiable factions within the party.

A restrictive definition of neoliberal ideas allows capturing their hypothesised role in the process. Jacobs's cognitive approach to the influence of ideas is relevant here. He conceptualises an "ideational theory (or explanation of an outcome) as a causal theory (or explanation) in which the content of a *cognitive structure* influences actors' responses to a choice situation, and in which that cognitive structure is not wholly endogenous to objective, material features of the choice situation being explained" (2015, 43 my emphasis). Further, "ideas shape decision making by structuring and constraining actors' *causal reasoning* and information processing" (2009, 253 my emphasis).

Neoliberal ideas in economic policy are about streamlining the role of the state in view of obtaining an economically more efficient output, based on the assumptions of microeconomic theory as developed by Milton Friedman and followers. This is connected with the paradigm shift in economic policy-making following monetarist economic theory (cf Hall 1993). This paradigm shift, for social services, signified a move to criticise producer capture, which led to shifting the paradigm and thus the institutions that governed the public services from command-and-control systems to markets. Beyond this administrative reform to improve value for money, neoliberalism also promotes the belief that increasing competition between providers by making consumers choose improves the quality of the education service (e.g. Hoxby 2002). Policy-makers then are shaped by neoliberal ideas in this policy context when *they believe that producer capture is a problem and can be resolved by the market; and that competition between schools via the choice behaviour of parents improves the delivery of education as a public service.*

According to Jacobs (2015) the process tracer's task is then to ask whether the

hypothesised ideas were present or absent during the decision-making process, or if actors held strong beliefs opposed to these statements. An ideational theory usually involves ideas carriers, that is, experts or research outputs that carry the idea to the decision-makers to help them make sense of their policy problem. Therefore, in addition to analysing the documents that trace the communication between partisan actors and governmental actors in the position-forming process, I analyse whether or not such ideas carriers were present and actively involved in the decision-making.

The way *p* may explain party positions takes four forms. According to Béland's (2010) review of the path-dependent feedback effect concept, the concept designates "factors that shape the environment in which political actors struggle to shape policy outcomes" (p.576). Existing public policies shape interest group politics; they affect their capabilities (p.572). Additionally, path-dependent feedback effects create political costs via institutions' effects on individuals who then either have a preference for changing (negative feedback) or for maintaining (positive feedback) the status quo. The first form of *p* as a cause of *b* is *public producer groups' negative positions towards school choice and their advocacy against it.* This would explain why a system does not move to the high choice category within the publicly managed school system. The second form is *private producer groups' negative position towards regulating school choice.* This would explain why a system does not move from EC to IC, if EC is based on government-maintained private schools. The third form of path-dependence regards the move towards high choice, but from the individual-level perspective. *A CS system has decreasing returns, increasing the pressure to change to a school choice system.* Fourth, this negative feedback can transform into either positive feedback for school choice once a choice system is in place, or negative feedback against its selective mechanism from an EC system. *A school choice system has increasing returns, but its selective element has decreasing returns.* This can explain the trajectory from CS to EC to IC in the publicly governed system. The empirical observations one can make of increasing/decreasing returns are hard to distinguish from the observations of the income group approach. One could make these observations on the individual level, but expressed in the social reality they come with similar implications (dissatisfaction with existing institutions, increased use of opt-out options). The value of *p* on the first two forms of path-dependent feedback effects can be assessed: *what interest groups exist and what organisational capacity do they have? What role do they have in the policy process in similar policies? Does their influence vary with time and is there variation between different stakeholders?* For the latter two effects, it is more fruitful to assess their input into the

outcome by looking whether there are indications of the causal mechanism's occurrence. The path-dependent causal mechanism differs from the material interests mechanism.

The causal mechanism for $a \rightarrow b$ can be broken down in the identification of a policy problem and the finding of a solution to that problem (Kingdon 2003; Palier 2010). A policy problem occurs when decision-makers assess that the status quo is not in line with their constituents' interests as the characteristics of their constituents have changed with educational expansion. Hence, those who define current SSIs as policy problem also provide an analysis about the socio-economic character of society in general, and of their constituents in particular. They then seek for a policy solution. They encounter challenges when defining the solution as they think about the trade-offs involved and the problem of taking away opportunities from some to give them to others. The solution is not accepted by significant parts of the political party, on the grounds that it leads to more inequalities/less opportunities for the losers of the proposed solution. The opponent group organises to reject the solution, and the success of this organisation leads to the rejection of the proposed solution. Alternatively, it is adopted. For the theory to hold, one has to find evidence of each step of this process. Hence, these are all individually hoop tests. For these observations, I have used the interviews I conducted with policy-makers involved in the decision-making process and triangulated the observations with secondary accounts of the policy process, existing written traces of the process like reports, policy papers, parliamentary debates, (auto)biographies, and news sources.

One also has to show that the alternative accounts' causal mechanisms have not taken place, and hence that they have failed a set of their hoop tests. The neoliberal ideas account expects ideas to come in at the definition of the policy problem and at the policy solution stage. This is perhaps where the 'ideas' literature agrees most upon (Blyth 2001; Hall 1993; Jacobs 2009; Culpepper 2008). Ideas can either define problems, or solutions, or both. The path dependence account should also come in at the policy problem and solution stage (i.e. to what extent is a new policy feasible? To what extent do interest groups participate in the formulation of a solution?).

For ideas to matter, the first step is that actors hold the beliefs as explained above. Then, it is important that these actors also use these beliefs to frame the policy problem and the policy solution. Therefore, one can assess the extent to which ideas mattered with cross-unit covariation over time and cross-sectional variation within cases (Jacobs 2015, 53). The task is to state whether actors that hold neoliberal beliefs (as defined above) push for school choice more than those who do not hold these beliefs. Also, one has to state whether an increased

influence of these ideas (e.g. as applied to a larger set of policies) leads to a more aggressive policy towards school choice. This can be found both at the policy problem definition stage and the policy solution stage.

Similarly to the materialist account, the path dependence account can be divided into the definition of a policy problem and a solution. A problem with the existing Student Sorting Institutions or the existing partisan position triggers a reform process/a change of partisan position. Such a problem can stem from positive feedback of existing institutions: positive feedback has an effect on the availability of policy options to change the status quo (the lock-in effect). We then expect governments for whom the status quo may be a policy problem to estimate that all alternative options are unfeasible/off the agenda. This implies that alternative options that were feasible in the past are seen as obsolete in the present. One solution to the problem is to adapt the institutions marginally to make them as similar as possible to the preferred – but unavailable – policy. Alternatively, negative feedback of the status quo can trigger policy change. According to Jacobs and Weaver (2014) one mechanism for negative feedback is that the status quo emerged from short-sighted policy makers that did not foresee potential losses for important social groups when developing their policy designs. This theory expects policy-makers to assess new dissatisfaction with the status quo by pointing at the problems of design of this policy. The policy solution is then to work on ways to improve the conditions of social groups in loss in the short-term and start working on a new policy design. The task for the process tracer is then to assess within-unit variation over time of governments' positions, gather and assess evidence of the communication between policy-makers on the policy problem, and evaluate whether the policy-makers' reaction is suitable to reduce the political costs of this negative feedback and improves service delivery for those groups that have initiated the negative feedback process in the first place.

To conclude, the confidence in the materialist theory is increased if the essential hoop tests for the measurement of the independent variable and of the causal mechanism for $a \rightarrow b$ are passed and some essential hoop tests for $n/p \rightarrow b$ fail. How much the confidence in one theory increases in comparison to others depends on the probative value of the evidence found in particular cases (Humphreys and Jacobs 2015; Mahoney 2012).

Table 3.3: Summary of theoretically derived empirical process tracing tests

	measure IV	**mechanism: policy problem**	**mechanism: policy solution**
a → b *- Failure of HT in either of three columns → loss of confidence in theory;* *- Failure of HT in neither of three columns: difficult HT → increase confidence in theory; superior to other theories* if *they* fail *HTs*	*LIS data*: share of *B,I,T* in each income group and income group coalition: L,M,H; LM, MH. B>I+T ; I>B+T *'coalition in power':* government party/parties centre and left-of-centre: LM; centre and right-of-centre: MH	- leadership defines policy problem: - SSIs / present party position at odds with present coalition interests. - division on existence and nature of that problem.	- leadership puzzles on policy solution: - trade-offs involved between CS, IC, and EC. - division on whether or not to accept losses of that group - proposed solution rejected if opponent group successful.
n → b *- failure of HTs of column 1 sufficient for loss of confidence in theory.* *- if HTs of column 1 passed, then failure of* both *columns 2 and 3 necessary for loss of confidence in theory.*	- leadership frames producer capture as problem; market as solution - choice = competition between schools = better education - ideas carriers present	- actors that hold neoliberal beliefs problematise SSIs more than others - increased influence of ideas in political context correlates with urgency of SSIs as policy problem.	- actors that hold neoliberal beliefs push for school choice more than others - presence of bold ideas correlates with degree of insistence on choice as solution.
p → b *- failure of producer groups' HTs in column 1 or in column 3 sufficient for loss of confidence in lock-in effect via producer groups.* *- failure of user groups' HTs in columns 1 and 2 or 1 and 3 sufficient for loss of confidence in negative or positive feedback effects via user groups.*	- public producer groups advocate against school choice - private producer groups advocate against changing existing choice system. - producer groups' organisational capacity = political cost for government. - political costs from users: - if CS/EC system fails. - if position changes to CS in an EC/IC system. - if position changes to EC in an IC system.	- negative feedback from CS or EC system: - when policy-makers assess new dissatisfaction with the status quo they point at the problems of design of this policy.	- positive feedback: lock-in: - alternative options that were feasible in the past are seen as obsolete in the present. - solution with highest political costs is off the table, solution with lowest political costs is on the table.
exogeneity of a, n, p *- Endogeneity problem: values of* a *should not be the direct effect of values of* n *or* p. *- policy problems and solutions of* a *should not be the consequence of values of* n *or* p.	are *a* and *n* exogenous? - education level *or* electorate's values change → neoliberal ideas? are *a* and *p* exogenous? - education level *or* pressure on system → policy feedback? *n* and *p* can be effect of *a*. *a cannot be effect of value of* n *or* p.	found evidence of *a* and *n* policy problems/solutions or of *a* and *p (producer groups)* solutions? → examine co-variation across time and cross-sectional variation of alternative variables. found evidence of *a* and *p (user groups)* policy problems or solutions? → focus on finding evidence of availability of the policy solution. Was alternative officially discarded? political costs expected: what is their origin? → discuss case by case, compare across cases.	

3.3.3. Empirical tests for the causes of successful reform

The process tracing exercise to account for the second part of the explanation (the decision to reform) differs from my use of process tracing for the first part of the explanation. In this second part of the process, according to my theory, governments prefer not to reform because of the expected costs of reform given the complexity of the winners-losers-constellation. In absence of clear indication that non-reform has higher political costs than reform, they do not reform. Alternative explanations have imputed this variation in the reform propensity to variables like veto players or path dependence. My aim is not to show that these do not matter at any time, but that they do not matter systematically, whereas in every situation under investigation here, policy-makers assess the cost of reform. Hence, this part of the process tracing exercise differs slightly from the use of the method for the first part of the argument. I do not test theories against one another, but aim to show that the mechanism of cost assessment was present in every episode leading to stability or to change. I aim to show that it is insufficient and not necessary to impute non-reform in France to its political institutions, as the reasons for non-reform vary across time and also vary within the cases that have experienced reform towards Inclusive Choice. In the following, I first discuss how I use process tracing to assess the presence of the cost-assessment mechanism and the insufficiency and non-necessity of path dependence and political institutions to explain reform behaviour.

How do we know that the mechanism of cost-assessment took place and explains the decision of reform? Once a government has agreed there is a need for reform and possibly started working on a project, one has to observe reluctance for reform on the grounds that benefits are uncertain and long term. In addition, reform would not solve problems of divisiveness of SSIs and create a new coalition, but rather forge new divisions that may lead to political costs. Further, one expects to observe traces of policy-makers' discussion of possible costs following a decision not to reform. These costs are framed as constraining policy-makers' options: they feel constrained to reform, rather than being constrained to the status quo. When these costs are present, one expects policy-makers to decide to follow through with an SSI reform. When they are absent, one expects them to decide to stop a reform project or drop an existing proposal or partisan policy position from the agenda. The observations for this mechanism are to be found by situating the moment of the reform decision and analysing communication with a relevant small circle of actors in government. Also, one can observe within-unit variation within cases: did governments change their attitude towards reform as the political context changed? And was this changed political

context mentioned in the decision to reform?

Second, one needs to assert that these political costs are exogenous from alternative explanation. This means assessing that the preference for the status quo is not endogenous to the role of veto players, and that the impression that political costs of non-reform are high are not endogenous to feedback effects. This requires a case-by-case discussion of the probative value of the evidence found, and the extent to which it is possible to make that exogeneity statement. At the same time, it is useful to reflect on the case-by-case origins of these political costs. This is a more inductive aspect of process tracing which does not allow creating evidentiary tests beforehand, but permits a richer understanding of the case and policy episode, and some reflection on possible new theories that could guide this understanding for a larger set of cases. It is in line with my theory that political institutions or path dependent feedback effects are the cause for the political costs in some cases, but this should not be the case systematically. To show that they are neither necessary nor sufficient to the explanation, I use cross-case comparison. I compare policy episodes within the country-cases and across these cases. Stability of these conditions but variation of the outcome shows that they are not necessary to explain the outcome. Showing that the cost assessment takes place in each of the policy episodes and that its outcome varies independently of political institutions or the importance of path dependent feedback effects leads to the conclusion that they are not sufficient to explain the outcome.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a theoretical explanation of the research question that asks for causes of Student Sorting Institutions reforms and of cross-national variation thereof. The theory I have developed from the partisan politics of educational redistribution rests on a trade-off that policy makers have to address when they move from Tracked Schooling and are confronted with three options: moving towards choice while maintaining selection constant (Exclusive Choice), moving towards less selection while maintaining non-choice constant (Community Schooling), or changing both on the choice and on the selection dimension (Inclusive Choice). I have argued that trading between these options resembles a trilemma, as policy makers cannot at the same time decrease selection, increase choice, without contributing to the failing of schools in residentially poor areas. Different socio-economic coalitions support different outcomes, indicating policy preferences of parties, which on top

prefer the status quo to change as part of strategic reasoning about costs and benefits of reform. The competing explanations we need to take seriously are based on the role ideas and institutions play in the policy-making process.

With this chapter, the first – theoretical – part of the dissertation ends. Its second – empirical – part analyses policy processes in Sweden, England, and France after these countries abandoned their Tracked Schooling system. The three chapters follow a similar structure. They start with changes in the educational composition of the low, middle, and high income groups and assess what SSI position we expect centre-left and centre-right governments from 1980-2010 to hold in that context. Then, the chapters present the narratives for SSI policy-making of the Left and the Right when in government.

Chapter 4: Sweden

Sweden experienced an important drop in the 2012 PISA rankings (OECD 2014). Their education system had gotten international appraisal in the first rounds of the PISA study. The Swedish schools were seen as a public service to mimic as PISA results showed a system promising high skills for a broad set of the population. Not only did the Swedes previously rank fairly highly on the average results, but they were one of the top countries when it came to the small spread of competences and the weaker correlation between socio-economic background and educational achievement. Ten years after the Germans had experienced their 'PISA shock', it was for the Swedish policy makers to explain to the public why their system's ranks fell so dramatically on the measures of average achievement and inequality. However, the results were less of a shock in Sweden, as policy makers had been worried about dwindling results for some time and expert analyses as well as public criticism on potential policy failures were firmly established by 2013. This chapter deals with one of the main suspects the policy discourse has pointed out as a culprit for the seeming failure of the Swedish system: the reform process since the mid 1980s where education got decentralised, publicly funded private competitors to public schools introduced, and school choice became the main means of allocation of pupils to different schools.

Why have Swedish reformers of the early 1990s turned their back to the Community Schooling system their predecessors had established in the 1960s, leading after a short episode of Exclusive Choice, to an Inclusive Choice system since 1996? Even if these reforms are now twenty years old, they have projected a long shadow on the recent evaluations of what went wrong with Sweden's schools. This chapter builds on existing explanations to this puzzling reform trajectory that retained political scientists' attention because of the Swedish social democrats' subscription to what we think of as a neoliberal right-wing project: "why are they doing it?" Michael Klitgaard (2008) asked in his attempt to explain the cross-national mismatch between liberal values and market instruments in education. One answer is that although one would not expect left wing governments to engage into market reform, least so the Swedish, they do have good ideological and electoral reasons to engage into specific types of markets (Gingrich 2011). One possible reason is that low inequality in Sweden leads to a low negative effect of school choice on inequality while it has a positive effect on public opinion on quality of education leading the Social Democrats to favour the latter goal over the

former (Hicks 2015).

This chapter agrees with such studies on the prominent role given to partisan politics for school choice outcomes. We thus get additional evidence that school choice with its distributive implications for quality education and the long shadow it threw on Swedish education politics *is* a matter of party politics. Parties in government *can* reform education systems according to redistributive goals and the difficulty to reform is not institutionally entrenched. It further explores what present theories have left unexplained. First, the *timing* of the school choice reform has been implicitly understood as a consequence of the right-wing neoliberal turn and/or welfare state retrenchment to which left wing parties had to respond – but why answer with school choice? Second, the *variation* of school choice with different redistributive implications is left unexplained, and the existing understanding of this case of school choice reform has a deterministic taste – has school choice become the only game in town? Third, I shed a new light on the trade-off that policy-makers faced at that point in time and argue it was more difficult than the question of "market against red tape" or "quality against equality".

In this chapter, I show that school choice in Sweden is an outcome of a changed electorate following a massive educational expansion. As first the right-wing, then the left-wing electorate became more educated, a middle class school choice coalition emerged that informed partisan preferences. However, policy-makers perceived a divided society on the question of school choice. This slowed down the reform agenda, leading the bourgeois coalition to one united position in favour of school choice only by the late 1980s, when the agrarian Centre Party shifted its position. By that time and well after the introduction of school choice, social democrats had to fight not only internal divisions on the question of student sorting, but also antagonisms with the parties closest to them on the political spectrum: the Green Party and the Centre Party. If existing explanations point at harmony of social democratic governments seeing choice as the best solution to their problems, my account points at divisions within and across parties reflecting the more complex distributive implications of changing Student Sorting Institutions along the dimensions of choice and selection. Further, I show that reform did not happen automatically after distributive preferences of the incumbent government had been found to differ from the equilibrium in place. Rather, governments understood reforms as constraints, fearing consequences of non-reform. In absence of such a concern, reform does not take place.

I present the evidence to corroborate this argument in four steps. The first section is devoted to showing the emergence of a divided middle class in Sweden and how this division

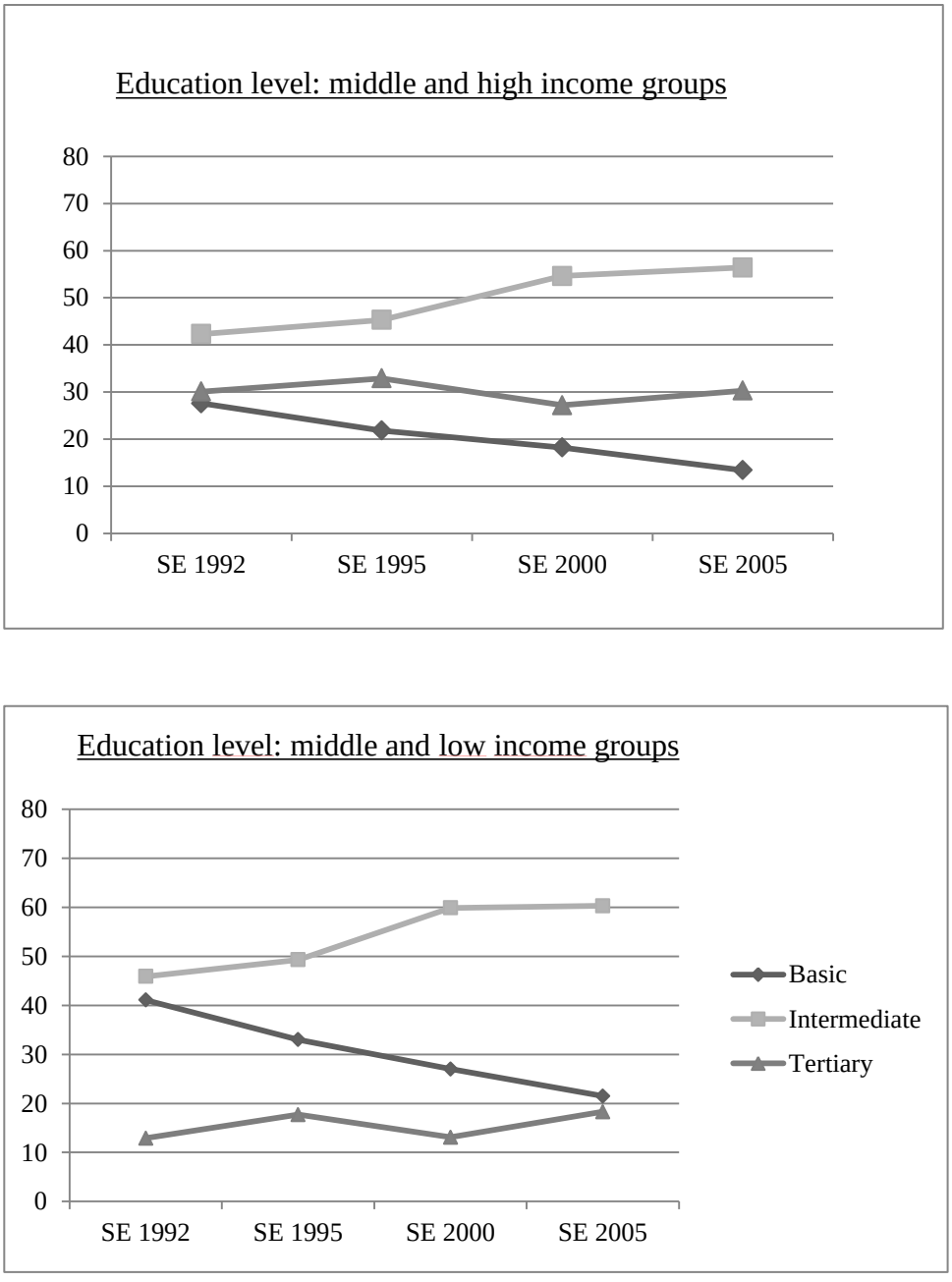
can be mapped on electoral support for the Swedish government parties from the mid 1970s to the late 2010s. This is based on descriptive statistics. The following sections present the decision-making process leading first from Community Schooling to Exclusive Choice (section 2), then from Exclusive to Inclusive Choice (section 3), and the stability of that system post 2006 (section 4). I there use the process tracing tests developed in the previous chapter to show the extent to which the causal mechanisms of my interest-based theory finds empirical reflection. I confront this evidence with the evidence found in support of the alternative explanations of neoliberal ideas and path dependence. The final section concludes with a comparison of the findings in the three reform sequences.

4.1. Educational Expansion and SSI Coalitions

In this section, I show that patterns of educational expansion within the three income groups have led to changes in possible coalitions for different SSI arrangements in Sweden. Partisan governments at different points in time thus faced different education coalitions, as Figure 4.1. illustrates with Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) data. In the early 1990s, when the conservative Moderates Party led a government coalition with the agrarian Centre Party, the Liberals, and the Christian Democrats, the middle and high income group had an Exclusive Choice coalition. They also enacted an Exclusive Choice reform. At that time, the Social Democratic party changed policy position from supporting Community Schooling to supporting school choice, although the party remained rather split. When it came back to government in 1994, the Social Democratic party did not come with plans to change SSIs. At that time, an Exclusive Choice coalition underpinned the lower and middle income group. This changed throughout the decade, as a higher share of both L and M individuals reached intermediate education levels. By the end of the 1990s, an Inclusive Choice coalition emerged in that income group coalition. This corresponds to a reform from Exclusive Choice to Inclusive Choice. When the Moderates came back to power in 2006, again in coalition with other parties, the middle and higher income group had also reached an Inclusive Choice coalition with a high share of individuals educated to an intermediate level. The Moderates did not initiate a new change in SSIs. In the following paragraphs, I show this correspondence in greater detail. First, I show how the middle and high income group coalition changes from a coalition with an interest in Exclusive Choice to a coalition underpinning Inclusive Choice. Then, I show how the middle and low income group coalition shifted from winning from

Community Schooling to winning from Inclusive Choice. The LIS data on which this analysis rests are represented in Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1. These timelines are then enriched with an understanding of the relative power of the parties representing these coalitions at different stages, and the extent to which their voters' education levels correspond to the income group measure.

Figure 4.1: Income groups and educational expansion in Sweden 1990-2005



Source: Luxembourg Income Study. Own calculations.

Table 4.1: Income groups and educational expansion in Sweden 1990-2005

1992 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	M and L coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	43	39	16	41	28	33
Intermediate education	45	47	38	46	42	43
Tertiary education	11	14	46	13	30	24
Total	99	100	100	100	100	100

1995 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	36	31	13	33	22	26
Intermediate education	48	51	40	49	45	46
Tertiary education	17	19	47	18	33	28
Total	101	101	100	100	100	100

2000 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	28	26	11	27	18	22
Intermediate education	60	60	49	60	55	56
Tertiary education	12	14	40	13	27	22
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

2005 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	25	18	9	22	13	17
Intermediate education	57	63	49	60	56	57
Tertiary education	18	19	42	18	30	26
Total	100	100	100	100	99	100

Note: Appendix 2.1 provides an overview of how these numbers compare to the UK and French case; Appendix 2.2 provides additional comparative data on educational expansion from the Barro and Lee dataset (2013).

4.1.1. Income group coalitions and education levels 1990-2005

Swedish Luxembourg Income Study data on education start with the 1990 wave (Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) 2015). In the early 1990s, 40 percent of the M+H coalition had attained intermediate education levels, 30 percent basic education, and 30 percent tertiary education. The high income group was different from the middle income group. M had a similar share of individuals with basic and intermediate education, at 40 and 45 percent respectively. Those with tertiary education were a small minority of 15 percent. In contrast, the largest education group of H were those with tertiary education: they made up almost half of the high income group. Those with basic education were a clear minority. H then clearly points to an Exclusive Choice coalition: there was no majority for either *I* or *B* that would have an interest in either IC or CS. M also has an Exclusive Choice coalition. *I* had a simple majority within M, but this simple majority is not enough for an Inclusive Choice coalition. *B* still made up a large share of that group. In such a situation, we expect that group to keep its second-best option of Exclusive Choice over the worst option of Inclusive Choice. Hence, those with tertiary education win in the presence of such a split.

The second LIS data-set gives similar results for the mid-1990s. Some interesting change happened within the middle income group. Now, 50 percent of that group held intermediate education credentials. The basic education group shrank: only a third of the middle income group had stopped education at a very low level. This means that within M, an Inclusive Choice coalition was more probable in such conditions. However, H did not change and maintained its simple majority of those with tertiary education. In such a situation, there risks to be more conflict between the income groups, although their combined education levels point towards a coalition for Exclusive Choice.

At the beginning of the 2000s, over fifty percent of the M+H coalition had intermediate education credentials. The high income group now had more individuals with intermediate education than with tertiary education. As 60 percent of the middle income group had also reached intermediate education, this points to Inclusive Choice as the best policy option for the M+H coalition. In comparison with the 1990s, then, with the smaller basic education group and correspondingly larger intermediate education group of the 2000s, one expects a different SSI policy from the centre-right. This exemplifies that it is useful to look into the more fine-grained patterns of the distribution of education in society to capture the interests of income groups and thus parties when it comes to SSIs.

The middle and low income group coalition similarly moved towards a coalition in

favour of Inclusive Choice, but it did so earlier in time. Indeed, in the early 1990s, the middle and low income groups had a very similar distribution of educational achievement. Around 40 percent had basic education, 45 percent intermediate education, and the remaining 15 percent held tertiary education credentials. This does not look like a coalition in favour of Community Schooling as that would require over half of the middle and low income groups to belong to the basic education category. Interestingly, though, this also does not point at a conflict between the low and middle income groups, as they had similar education levels. Rather, the conflict ran across them. There was an equal share of those families benefiting from Inclusive Choice and losing out from Community Schooling as of those families for which the opposite held. We therefore expect the position finding to be rather conflict-laden in a party legitimised by an M+L coalition.

The mid-1990s present a similar picture. The middle and low income groups had similar patterns of educational achievement. In both groups, those with intermediate education now reached fifty percent while those with basic education were around a third of each of these groups. Although this still seems a very unstable coalition in favour of Inclusive Choice, it became the policy option suiting the interests of the majority of those with low and middle income. By the end of the 1990s this majority reached 60 percent of the M+L income group coalition. The coalition in favour of Inclusive Choice had stabilised, while the case for Community Schooling was weak: it would serve only a fourth of individuals within that group. At the same time, this group would lose a second time: first by not having reached higher education credentials themselves, second by facing a coalition that would make it more difficult for their children to access good schools.

By the 2000s, then, the two income group coalitions converged towards a high share of individuals with intermediate education, pointing at a policy of Inclusive Choice. Such a policy would improve educational opportunities for a large part of the population, but at the same time represented the worst outcome for the most disadvantaged group that was certainly shrinking, but hence also more marginalised.

4.1.2. Income group coalitions in power: governments and parties 1980-2010

The government that introduced Exclusive Choice in 1993 had been elected in 1991. This centre-right coalition government was composed of four parties: the Moderates, the Liberal Party on the ‘bourgeois’ side, and the centre party and Christian Democratic party at the political centre. Together, these formed a minority government with 170 seats in the Riksdag,

the Swedish Parliament (out of 175 required for an absolute majority) (Statistics Sweden 2015)[13]. With 80 seats, the Moderates were the clear leaders of that coalition (the rest of the seats being equally split between the three remaining parties). In the 1991-1994 Riksdag, a new populist party was represented with 25 seats (Nya Demokraterna). This party was not aligned with any political 'bloc'. On the left, the Social Democrats had lost their capacity to form a minority government: they had 138 seats and the 16 seats of the left party were not sufficient to block a bourgeois coalition of the centre-right. The Social Democrats had governed as such a minority government for the previous decade. In 1982, they had replaced the bourgeois bloc by a very small majority. At that time, however, the bourgeois bloc looked quite different, as the Moderates were in a much more precarious leadership position. The Centre Party had been the leader of the 1976-1979 bourgeois coalition, with 86 seats. In 1979, the Moderates led the coalition, but had only little more seats than the Centre Party (73 vs. 64). In 1991, the bourgeois bloc was able to initiate reforms, but had to be united and exploit the division between the opposition parties to do so. Given the divisiveness of the Student Sorting Institutions (SSIs) issue and the potential for division between the middle income group and high income group on the matter, as detailed above, the Exclusive Choice reform could only happen with a clear alignment of the four parties in favour of the policy.

The bourgeois government lasted only until the subsequent general election in 1994, when the Social Democrats were again able to form a minority government with 161 seats in parliament. At that time, they formed an informal coalition with the Centre Party (with its 27 seats) on economic government. For such a government to reform SSIs, it needed to be able to exploit a split opposition on the matter. In 1994, the Nya Demokraterna were not represented any longer, but the Green Party emerged as a new important player amongst the small parties, with its 18 seats. This situation was repeated in 1998 and 2002. The Social Democrats started to rely more on the Green Party, while the bourgeois bloc completed its transformation with the Moderates becoming increasingly important while its small coalition partners continuously lost votes and seats. This reduced the potential of a split opposition a minority government needs to be able to reform. In that period, the M+L coalition represented by the social democratic government can support a move from Exclusive to Inclusive Choice, but again, this situation expects a rather divided party and informal coalition upholding the social democrats in government. With this in mind, one has already achieved part of the explanation for the Swedish puzzle of the continuity of school choice despite a decade of social

[13] All information on electoral results and seats in parliament of the subsequent three paragraphs draw from this publication.

democratic government after the Exclusive Choice reform of the three-year bourgeois government of 1991-94. The relative power of different parties and the divisiveness of the issue if thought of in redistributive terms shows that reform back to Community Schooling is quite improbable, but change to Inclusive Choice seems to imply a tough decision. The Social Democrats reformed SSIs from Exclusive Choice to Inclusive Choice in autumn 1996.

In 2006, the Moderates-with-coalition took over again. This time, they had a majority government backed by 178 seats in parliament. This gave them a much larger capacity to reform than it held when introducing school choice in the early 1990s. However, no reform on the question of SSI happened in the 2006-2010 government period. Given the state of the M+H coalition at that time one expects this government to hold a position in line with the status quo (Inclusive Choice). So the interest-based theory does not expect a reform from that government. Rather, it expects a convergence of positions around Inclusive Choice as the preferred SSI across the two blocs.

To complete the overview of education coalitions in power and expected reform positions, the following paragraphs show that our expectations hold if one measures the education coalitions with electoral survey data (Swedish National Election Studies (1982; 1988; 1991; 1998; 2002); own calculations; Tables in Appendix 2.3). This is a different measure to the income group approach, it accounts for the education level of voters of different parties and coalitions.

When the bourgeois bloc was in government in the early 1980s, over half of its voters had taken part in education beyond the basic level. This is the case if we look at the voters of the Centre Party, Liberals, and Moderates taken together. Looking at them separately, one sees a big difference between the Liberals and Moderates on the one hand, and the Centre Party on the other hand. Indeed, 60 percent of the Centre Party voters had only achieved basic education levels. The interest-based theory therefore strongly expects them to disagree on SSIs with its coalition partners.

The Social Democratic Party's electorate looked really similar to the Centre Party's: over two thirds had only received basic education. This corresponds to the social democratic government's stance towards stability of the existing Community Schooling system. By the end of the 1980s, these patterns remained broadly in place but for the Centre Party whose electorate had changed. Now, less than half of its voters had received only basic education while the share of voters belonging to the intermediate education category had grown to represent 40 percent of its electorate. This leads to the expectation that the Centre Party changes position throughout the 1980s and shifts from a Community Schooling preference to

an Exclusive Choice preference.

In the early 1990s, when the bourgeois bloc reformed the Community Schooling system to its Exclusive Choice alternative, over fifty percent of all its coalition parties' voters had reached higher education levels than basic education. Most voters would thus benefit from a school choice system. None of the coalition parties had over fifty percent of their voters in the intermediate education category. This fits with the description of the M+H income group coalition from the LIS data: we expect the reform towards Exclusive Choice that happened in 1993. As stated above, the bourgeois government was a minority government of some seats, which meant that all parties had to be aligned for reform to be possible. This was indeed the case, whereas the opposition, the Social Democrats, still had less than half of their voters with educational credentials superior to basic education. They would lose from the Exclusive Choice reform.

The Social Democratic Party's electorate of the late 1990s looks different than its electorate in the early 1990s. Then, more than half its voters had achieved higher than basic education. As the Social Democratic government was in a minority position, we need to look at its supporting parties' electorate too. The Centre Party electorate looked quite similar to that of the Social Democratic Party, they were thus both aligned towards a position in favour of school choice. The Green Party also became an important player from 1994 onwards. In 1998, a majority of Green Party voters had been educated to tertiary levels, with only 20 percent belonging to the basic education category. Together, the 'coalition' of Social Democrats, Centre Party, and Green Party had 40 percent of voters in the basic education category, another 40 percent in the intermediate category, and 20 percent in the tertiary category. This makes going back to Community Schooling difficult. But it does not clearly point into the direction of Inclusive Choice either.

When the centre-right returned to government in 2006, 50 percent of their voters were educated to the tertiary level and only 15 percent had reached basic education. The M+H coalition data presented above point towards an Inclusive Choice coalition. Looking at the electorate of the centre-right this is less straightforward. With around half their voters belonging to the tertiary education group, one could expect a new coalition in favour of Exclusive Choice. It is however certain that an overwhelming majority of their constituents – whether considered as income group coalitions or voters – were winners of the 1990s shift away from Community Schooling.

Table 4.2. Education group coalitions and SSI reform in Sweden 1990-2010

	1992	**1996**	**2006**
coalition 'in power'	Centre-right	Centre-left	Centre-right
education level (income group)	B < I+T I < B+T	B = I+T I < B+T	I > B+T
education level (voters)	B < I+T I < B+T	B < I+T I < B+T B=I; B>T	T = B+I
expected position	Exclusive Choice	Divided EC/IC	Inclusive Choice
occurred reform	Exclusive Choice	Inclusive Choice	no reform

To sum up, the electoral data paint a very similar picture to the income group coalition data on the reform possibilities and preferences of governments in the 1990s. Table 4.2 summarises the education level of income group coalitions in power, the expected outcome and the observed outcome. They clearly point towards an Exclusive Choice reform in the early 1990s under a centre-right coalition. They both less clearly point towards the Inclusive Choice reform in the later 1990s. Taken together, we expect different reforms from different parties had they been in government at the same time. It is not straightforward that the Moderates could push their Exclusive Choice reform in the early 1990s. Some years earlier, the data suggests a split between parties in that coalition. Seen in this light, it is relevant to look into the divisions within parties and within coalitions and the extent to which these divisions shaped the school choice reforms in Sweden.

In conclusion, the values of the independent variable – income group coalitions' education levels – predict centre right governments in the early 1990s to enact Exclusive Choice. They also predict centre left governments in the late 1990s to stick with a school choice system, with a potential for either Inclusive Choice or Exclusive Choice. They predict a commitment to Inclusive Choice in the 2000s. In the following, I will show that the SSI reform behaviour from 1980 to 2010 can be traced back to partisan actors puzzling over their constituents' conflicting interests as a consequence of educational expansion. This regards the Exclusive Choice reform by the bourgeois coalition of 1993, the Inclusive Choice reform by the social democratic minority government of 1996 and the stability of the Inclusive Choice system by left and rightwing governments in the 2000s.

4.2. From Community Schooling to Exclusive Choice (1980-1993)

In this section, I show how the position to transform the Swedish Community Schooling system into an Exclusive Choice system emerged within centre-right parties as a response to new demands from a changing electorate. The Moderates were in favour of school choice since the late 1970s, but could not convince their coalition partners of that time. A decade later, their coalition partners were aligned on the issue of school choice. In the following paragraphs, I explain how the positions of the different parties involved – especially of the Moderates and of the Centre Party – can be traced back to their redistributive interests. The Moderates wanted their constituents to be able to opt out of the local schools without having to pay private school fees. The Centre Party faced increasingly divided constituents and had to pick the side of the more educated because of the new political context in which it was competing for votes. I will also discuss the extent to which the necessary observations for the alternative explanations for the reform – neoliberal ideas and path dependent feedback effects – could be found.

4.2.1. The Moderates' initial lone call for school choice

When the Moderates and their coalition partners came back into government in 1991, it was clear that they would initiate a school choice reform. Their position was not new. It had become a core aspect of the education debate since the late 1970s, when the Moderates took part in a coalition government with the Liberal Party and the Centre Party (Hwang 2002). Then, the Moderates started to actively criticise the Community Schooling system as a policy problem (Mogård 1974). They had agreed to dismiss Tracked Schooling in the 1950s and supported the Community Schooling reform of 1963. The unanimity of that reform was a common view against Tracked Schooling (Marklund 1980b). However, the Social Democratic government had refused at that stage to engage in the debate about public financing of private schooling, although the issue had been raised (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 1981). The possibility of school choice within a non-tracked system had thus remained an open question and became an important part of the criticism towards Community Schooling of the late 1970s.

Moderate Party policy makers like Britt Mogård raised the possibility of school choice as a solution to the problem of lack of differentiation possibility between students at the lower

secondary school age (Mogård 1974). In this view, students of different abilities or interests should be educated in different groups in view of catering to these individual needs. The Community Schooling system was portrayed a system that would demotivate all students: the more able ones because they were held back, and the least able ones because they were uninterested or ill-suited to academic subjects. In particular, this criticism targeted the organisation of the more senior years of lower secondary schooling (Marklund 1980b). In these years, students could choose from a range of subjects. These choices were deemed insufficient for the purpose of differentiation. This was the case as the number and type of subjects were imposed by administrative constraints (Rothstein 1986, 195). Moreover, the demand for the few private schools started to grow (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 1981). As a consequence, the government initiated an inquiry into the state of existing private schools, their funding needs, and the government's role in private education (Schüllerqvist 1996).

Pursuing the policy option of school choice was then a policy solution to the problem of lack of differentiation in the existing system. It is very relevant to ask whether school choice was not also or alternatively the consequence of another policy-making process that happened roughly simultaneously – the integration of neoliberal ideas into economic policy making via the increased role of the Swedish Employer Association and their think tanks SNS and Timbro (Blyth 2001, 16–20). School choice proponents were certainly in contact with these ideas (Schüllerqvist 1996). These ideas may have influenced the details of the Moderates' proposals with respect to school choice. However, the neoliberal ideas around school choice have a strong connotation of improving the system's efficiency via consumer choice. At that stage, the proponents of school choice were predominantly interested in ways of creating opt out possibilities from the local school (Eiken (interview)[14], Eiken (2011)). They did not justify the policy choice with a pressing need for a wholesale reform of the school system because of its poor results. Rather, they stated that the lack of differentiation possibilities created suboptimal outcomes.

Another possible explanation for this renewed interest for school choice could be that its proponents were reacting to negative feedback from the Community Schooling system. From such a perspective, problems inherent to the school system increased criticism towards its institutions and thus created the policy problem. This is different from the argument that the Moderates reacted to a more educated electorate, as that argument presupposes the policy problem to be created exogenously from the existing institutions. The inherent problems to

[14] A list of interviewees is reproduced in Appendix 1.

how education was organised may well have triggered discontent predominantly amongst voters on the political right (Marklund 1980b; Rothstein 1996). But the exogenous change in Moderate voters' educational characteristics is important: the education level of the Swedish society (over 25 year-olds) had drastically changed between the introduction of Community Schooling in 1963 and its criticism in the late 1970s: in 1960, 70 percent of over 25 year olds had not gone beyond basic education; in 1980, this number had decreased to 43 percent (Barro and Lee 2013). The increased heterogeneity of the educational background of children fits with the party's demand for more differentiation and hence school choice. I show in the following that the way in which parties within the coalition vary in their position is congruent with the expectations of the educational expansion theory but not congruent with the path dependence theory: the parties vary in their position and justification according to the education level of their electorate. Their general position about how the school system should be improved in view of creating better outcomes and addressing some dissatisfaction does not differ.

While the Moderates were pushing for school choice especially within the context of the policy review on private schools, policy-makers from the Centre Party and Liberal Party remained opposed to this policy during the 1979-1982 government (Hwang 2002; Schüllerqvist 1996). Both these parties had been involved in the decision to review the private schools policy in 1978: the enquiry had started under the liberal government of 1978 and finalised in form of a government bill in 1982, with a Centre Party Prime Minister and Education Minister. Following the inquiry and with its report in hand, the government decided to make some changes to the funding of private schools, but the government proposition explicitly stated that government funding would have to remain restricted in view of guaranteeing equal provision of education (Hwang 2002; Fälldin 1982; Schüllerqvist 1996). However, all these parties agreed in their 1982 election manifestos that the school system had to be reformed – including creating smaller class sizes – to improve the quality of education it delivered.

The main reason for opposing school choice was the threat it posed to the principle of equality (Fälldin 1982): Choice would create a tiered education system, and this could damage opportunities for those who would not opt out from the local school. While the Moderates were proponents of choice to pursue more differentiation within the system – especially to the advantage of those who would opt out of the local school – the Centre Party was concerned with those who would remain in the local schools (Hwang 2002; Schüllerqvist 1996). From the start of that debate in the early 1980s, Centre Party MPs in the Riksdag kept

their education policy separate from that of the Moderates (Sveriges Riksdag 1985). They were happy to support funding for some local private schools, but not to change the whole system. The main argument against school choice was that it would lead to inefficient education provision in the rural setting, taking important resources away from municipal schools that were already being threatened to close down (Sveriges Riksdag and Göthberg 1985). We thus observe that the Centre Party was not opposed to adjusting the system in a targeted way. It was thus ready to respond to concrete negative feedback. It was not ready to change the system in a way that would harm its less educated electorate in the rural areas by increasing the possibilities of differentiation within the system.

To sum up this set of observations: the Moderates were those pushing for examining the school choice option first. They could do so as part of the government from 1976 onwards. Their rationale for exploring this policy option was to find a solution to the need of more differentiation within the system. The pressure for differentiation becomes apparent with the increased heterogeneity of educational background of children within schools due to previous waves of educational expansion. One of its coalition partners, the Centre Party, disagreed with this policy, thus leading to a rift on the matter within the coalition. They were worried about their rural constituents' educational opportunities within a choice system. In the following I show that the Centre Party changed its position with a changed electorate and a changed political context in which it competed for votes. The coalition – once back in government in 1991 – could thus eventually introduce the school choice reform which the Moderates had been proposing for over a decade.

4.2.2. The coalition unites around school choice before 1991

In 1980, the policy solution of school choice was present, but was not a unanimous position of the centre-right government. In 1991, the new centre-right coalition government was aligned on the preference for school choice (Miron 1993). The Liberal Party and the Centre party had now explicitly turned towards advocating school choice (Schüllerqvist 1996). The Centre Party adhered to increasing choice within public schools and expanding the possibilities for public funding of private schools in its 1990 party programme (Centerpartiet 1990). From that shift, it was clear that a new centre-right government would put this issue into the top ranks of its education reform agenda. By the start of the new centre-right government of 1991 the Exclusive Choice reform was a prepared policy which did not need much discussion or investigation, but only clarification of regulatory details (Miron 1993). In the previous

subsection, I showed that the Moderates held this position for some time, and the reasons for them adhering to school choice. I will now repeat this exercise with the Centre party, whose lack of support of school choice had been decisive for the impossibility to reform in 1980.

First of all, one does not find evidence congruent with the hypothesis that an ideational shift made the Centre Party adhere to school choice. Despite the change of policy position, Centre Party MPs in the Riksdag education committee continued to show preoccupation about the economic costs of a school choice reform especially in rural municipalities (Eiken (interview), Björkman (interview), Sveriges Riksdag (1991). They were active in scrutinising the Social Democratic government's actions in that regard, as it was considering to add some element of school choice to the Community Schooling system from 1988 onwards as part of their decentralisation reform (Sveriges Riksdag 1991). They continued to voice these concerns as part of the 1991-1994 government coalition (Sveriges Riksdag 1992b). In short – they did adhere to the position that school choice was preferable to Community Schooling, but they did not buy into the paradigm that school choice would improve the school system. Instead, they expressed the position that Community Schooling was the superior option for efficient administration of education. Why then did Community Schooling become a policy problem for the Centre Party?

The second explanation views a change of position as a consequence of negative feedback of the Community Schooling system reaching the Centre Party electorate. The Community Schooling system became repeatedly challenged in the 1980s. Lack of funding meant the closing down of many rural services, amongst them schools (Blomqvist 2004, 144). The Community Schooling system then meant that children had to commute long distances to their new schools. Local movements resisted this trend and sought to open and run their own schools with the support of public funding (Eiken, Johansson, Björkman, Pertoft (interviews); Sjöström and Öberg (2005)). The Centre Party reacted to these movements differently on the local level, sometimes bringing the parents' requests before parliament, sometimes rejecting them (e.g. Sveriges Riksdag 1985). In the first half of the 1980s, they kept these instances of negative feedback under control without challenging their overall stance towards school choice.

The feedback effect and the educational expansion effect have the same mechanism: policy-makers change their policy as a response to their constituents. What differs is whether the constituents' preferences change because of institutional failure (feedback effect) or whether the party responds to different constituents (structural change). Some institutional failure was present here, to which constituents reacted. However, there was also an important

change in the electorate of the Centre Party. This was the case not only because of educational expansion, but also because the Party itself was undergoing a transformation.

With the increase of urbanisation in Sweden and of the agrarian sector, the Centre Party had to seek new voters to stay the key player of Swedish politics that it had traditionally been. With the big nuclear dispute of the early 1980s, it became the first Swedish 'green' party. Not only did they lose this dispute, but they also lost credibility on the issue. This gave space to a new Green Party that became a credible competitor at the centre (Vedung 1989). The Centre Party was now competing for more educated voters that were not necessarily living in rural areas any longer (Rosén Sunström and Sundström 2010). These new voting groups were very different from its traditional voters whose disadvantage became more apparent: they were catering at the same time to a constituency of new 'winners' of structural changes and a constituency of 'losers'. They tried different strategies throughout the 1980s, including merging with the Christian Democrats from 1985-1988. The unclear position on school choice resulted from a party that had to find its new identity and decide what kind of voters to represent. As I argue in the following, the path dependence mechanism comes in later in the policy process – it explains why the Centre Party eventually chose to change the position in favour of school choice.

4.2.3. The political cost of Drevdagen

The Centre Party was in an uncertain political situation. It is therefore relevant to look into the political costs for reform and the political costs of the status quo. The status quo would maintain uncertain future benefits to a waning proportion of the electorate. Yet, maintaining the status quo represented high political costs within the context of partisan competition with two other centrist parties that were in favour of school choice. These political costs were amplified by the repercussions of the social movements for parents and cooperatives to set up their own school. After ongoing local battles, these received increased media attention and became central to the school choice debate, and discussed in plenary sessions in parliament (Sveriges Riksdag 1988). Amongst a set of cases, the central issue was the closing down of a school in Drevdagen, a small town near the Norwegian border in the North. The debate of closing down the school had been going on for long, including a phase when parents refused to send their children to the allocated school in the next town, kilometres away (Sjöström and Öberg 2005). The local Centre Party had been involved in the attempt to solve the problem. As the debate got national coverage, the Centre Party got blamed in parliament for its failure

to solve the problem (Sveriges Riksdag 1988). When in 1989, Drevdagen was granted the right to its own school, this school came to be known as the first 'free school' (Sjöström and Öberg 2005; Svanborg-Sjövall 2013), and this despite the existence of a number of government-maintained private schools by that time.

Moderates and Social Democrats who negotiated with Centre Party representatives on the school choice issue at the time observed this tension between adherence to the principle of economic efficiency and the new political context (Eiken (interview), Björkman (interview), Johansson (interview)). Without changing its position, the party could have given the impression that it was unable to address the problems of their rural constituents. Seen in this light, maintaining an unclear position was not an option. The Centre Party shifted its position to support the school choice agenda while continuing to work for a policy solution that would minimise the costs it associated with school choice in small rural municipalities. With this new position, the centre-right was now aligned on the necessity to introduce school choice.

From this perspective, the Exclusive Choice reform happened under the condition of an aligned centre-right coalition: its previous divisions had impeded the reform. The division happened as the Moderates favoured more differentiation in the school system which its coalition partners initially rejected on the grounds of promoting equal opportunities. The alignment in turn was made possible as the main opponent to the reform changed its policy preference in the light of a new socio-economic and political context: a new electorate whose interests were opposed to the old electorate and a constraint to react to the Drevdagen events in view of showcasing its credibility (the capacity to form a position on a salient problem for rural Sweden).

There are no traces of the coalition disagreeing on the exclusive nature of the choice system they introduced. In the justification of the bill introducing the Exclusive Choice system, the Moderates affirmed that free schools were important to address children's differing educational needs (Sveriges Regering 1992). They did not address the Social Democrats' calls for a more inclusive version of choice (Miron 1993). School fees were allowed to continue to exist if they were 'reasonable'. This school fee regulation was to avoid the problem of paying twice (via taxes and via fees) for the same service (Eiken (interview), (2011)) (rather than the problem of not being able to afford such fees). The Centre Party did not address the issue of selectiveness in its amendments to the reform, but predominantly cared for the problem of inefficiencies of free schools with respect to economies of scale (Sveriges Riksdag 1992b).

In conclusion, three points merit attention: first of all, neoliberal ideas were present in

the process, but they are neither necessary nor sufficient to explaining its outcome. They are not necessary to the explanation: they did shape the form of the market ideas surrounding school choice, but they did not define the policy problem or were a necessary input to find the solution for the Moderates in the 1970s. More importantly, they are not sufficient to explain the Swedish outcome as they cannot account for the important shift of the Centre Party position.

Second, the role of path dependent feedback effects is less straightforward: the extent to which the Drevdagen incident was an outcome of general discontent with the Swedish welfare system remains open. On the question of definition of a policy problem, the policy feedback mechanism competes with the structural mechanism of a changed (more educated and heterogeneous) electorate. Both presuppose parties to react to more discontent, but disagree on the sources of this discontent. As there is some trace of both sources of discontent potentially linked to the decision of advocating school choice, one can assess whether they are causally independent from one another and if not, which is causally prior. It is less likely that the 'negative feedback' discontent is causally prior to the structural changes than that structural changes explain both the occurrence of more dissatisfaction with the education system and parties' changed interests.

Third, the core argument here was about a split coalition consisting of different parties. From this individual case, one could argue that the importance of the Centre Party is due to the political institutions and that in this case, the Centre Party acted as a veto player which it could not do in another political system. In that regard, the counterfactual would be that the Moderates as a one-party government would have been able to introduce Exclusive Choice in the early 1980s, or that the change of position of the Centre Party would not have been necessary for the 1992 reform to happen. From this single case, not much can contradict such an argument. As I will show in the following for other cases, the divisions that played out here between parties that represented different socio-economic groups play out within parties in single-party governments. These divisions also have to be solved for policy change to happen. It is important to note that the Centre Party was a powerful member of the coalition in the early 1980s. In the counterfactual situation of a single party government in the early 1980s (and to a more limited extent in 1992) one would not expect the Moderates to be united in favour of school choice.

4.3. From Exclusive Choice to Inclusive Choice (1994-1997)

The shift from Exclusive Choice to Inclusive Choice provides the second policy episode of the Swedish case. With causal process observations of the 1996 Inclusive Choice reform, one can again analyse the policy process as it occurred through the lens of the causal map of parties updating their policy preferences in light of a changed electorate – this time focusing on the centre-left. In this case, the narrative goes as follows: the Social Democrats were split on the question of school choice before the 1992 Exclusive Choice reform and before entering into government in 1994. The leadership recognised its electorate had changed and required choice-based SSIs, but the party basis was worried about the consequences for equal opportunities. Other parties of the centre-left whose support would have been necessary for reforming SSIs were aligned and in favour of school choice. In the light of such divisions, there was neither willingness nor possibility to initiate a Community Schooling reform. Partisan actors in the 1994-1998 government puzzled through the policy problem of each of the options and considered Inclusive Choice to be the best alternative for their constituents. Despite internal divisions, they were constrained to initiate a reform process in 1995 in order to solve local conflicts around private school funding. The narrative also makes apparent that there are good reasons to examine the potential effect of neoliberal ideas and path dependent feedback processes at different steps of the mechanism. But a closer look permits us to question whether the outcome was conditional on these factors.

4.3.1. Community Schooling and school choice as policy problems for the Left

The road to Inclusive Choice did not start with the centre-left 1994 government merely reacting to the centre-right's Exclusive Choice reform. It started with the centre-left identification of Community Schooling as a policy problem in the late 1980s coupled with an internal struggle on how to respond to this problem. The 1985-1991 Social Democratic government had put welfare state reform at the centre of its agenda, and reforming the education system was part of this (Blomqvist and Rothstein 2008; Rothstein 1996). As a consequence, they enacted a major reform in the organisation of schooling by decentralising school funding and governance to the municipal level and replacing the education bureaucracy with a government agency (e.g. Gingrich 2011; Klitgaard 2007). One aspect of this reform was also to adapt schools to the needs of the local population and give parents as

consumers more voice in the running of their children's schools. In some way, this already responded to the general impression of 1980s parties that parents 'want' more choice and that the education system's institutions did not fit this demand (Hwang 2002; Schüllerqvist 1996). Community Schooling was then identified as one part of that problem and the government enacted some legislation allowing for more choice but staying within the Community Schooling category (cf. section 2.3.1.).

Having identified this policy problem does not mean that they were automatically in favour of a full-fledged school choice reform. Indeed, the party remained wedded to the principles underpinning Community Schooling – that children should attend the closest school to their home and had a right to do so (Sveriges Riksdag 1992a; Sveriges Riksdag 1992b; Sveriges Riksdag 1992d). But this was not much of a constraint for the government: in the context of the decentralisation reform, it had made radical changes, unhampered by internal disagreement (Andersson 2010). Still, they did not embrace radical reform with respect to school choice (Schüllerqvist 1996). This indicates that even radical reformers in government had reservations – or were indeed constrained – when it came to abolishing the *närhetsprincip*: the principle of attending the closest school to home. It is quite natural that the Social Democrats would criticise the 1992 school choice reform in their capacity of opposition party. But their identification of school choice as a policy problem because of the anticipated effects on inequality of opportunity was more than the expected opposition to the centre-right (Miron 1993; Sveriges Riksdag 1992c; Schüllerqvist 1996). From the Social Democratic leadership perspective, the reforms they had enacted were sufficient to respond to the call for more choice as this demand could now find its response at the local level if local policymakers deemed it efficient for their local systems (Sveriges Riksdag 1992a). In those cases, problems of inequality could be justified. However, making a school choice system compulsory for municipalities could lead to the creation of both inequality and inefficiency in the school system. Despite varying with the party basis on the question of Community Schooling, the leadership was negatively inclined towards the Exclusive Choice reform.

In the electoral campaign following the Exclusive Choice reform, the Social Democrats did not clearly state what policy they would be pursuing, except that the problem of social segregation between schools had to be addressed (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti 1994). The 1994 elections led to a Social Democratic minority government that could only represent the middle and low income groups with the support of the Centre and/or

Green Parties.[15] These parties were now clearly in favour of school choice. I have discussed the reasons for the Centre Party position above, and shown how its position was linked to the Green Party. The Green Party was particularly wedded to school choice as it drew its support from the movement of parents who wanted to create their own schools and subscribed to alternative pedagogies like the Waldorf schools and Montessori schools (Pertoft, Olsson, Johansson, Björkman, Rendling (interviews)). The centre-left then held three positions simultaneously: on the left of the Social Democrats, Community Schooling was still considered the best option; the leadership was struggling to find a solution to both the policy problems of Community Schooling and school choice; at the leadership's right, the centrist parties that had to agree to any reform proposal for it to succeed were wedded to school choice. The left-right dimension of this variation of policy preferences corresponds to the theory's expectations considering that the middle and low income electorate was fairly evenly split between families with basic and with intermediate education (cf. section 4.1.). This can be considered a battle between families that had not won from educational expansion and would be the expected losers from school choice and those families that had won from the expansion in terms of education but not income, needing their children to get the best possible education if they wanted to achieve social mobility. The identification of the policy problem and variation thereof within the centre-left then corresponds to the hypothesised process linking the educational characteristics of the electorate to the centre-left's position on school choice.

4.3.2. Why Inclusive Choice?

This explanation for the policy change competes with two alternative accounts. The first account sees policy change as a direct consequence of the centre-right's Exclusive Choice reform. In that reading, this institutional reform reduced the number of options for the Social Democratic government, making the alternative of Community Schooling impossible. From that perspective Inclusive Choice was the best possible compromise for a centre-left government in light of a missing alternative. Instead, I contend that all three options were present and feasible after the Exclusive Choice reform. Shifting to Community Schooling would not necessarily mean to turn 'back' to the old system, but would have entailed two

[15] The Social Democrats were elected with the support of the Left Party. However, they did not want to engage into systemic reform with the support of that party only (Johansson (interview)).

simple steps. First, it would require introducing a clause in the legislation on school choice within municipal schools that would give local administrations the possibility to reject a request to opt out. Second, it would entail controlling market entry of private schools, stopping the automatic funding of such schools once they were approved by the education agency *Skolverket*. Technically this was not a costly task: only two school years stood between the introduction of Exclusive Choice and the new centre-left government. It also would not have entailed taking away a firmly acquired right to choose a school.

Notwithstanding, there might have been positive feedback from the debate on the right to choose a school – *valfrihet* – which made it politically costly to give the impression that a right would be taken away. This debate had been going on since at least the mid-1980s (cf. above). The impression given to the public that this debate had been won with the Exclusive Choice reform may have framed any move restricting school choice as an affront to the freshly acquired right – thus effectively limiting policy options (Sveriges Regering 1993). This argument stands somewhat at odds with the Social Democratic and Centre parties' first move on the matter. They reduced private schools' public funding from 85 percent to 75 percent of per pupil funding in public schools (Sveriges Regering 1995b). They thus re-created some barriers to entry for private schools. Moreover, the 1996 Inclusive Choice reform did prohibit schools to charge fees and thus top up per-pupil funding and cover other costs (Sveriges Riksdag 1996c). All these moves could have been equally politically toxic and reinterpreted as the attempt of the Social Democrats to curtail the new *valfrihet.*[16] Nevertheless, the government enacted these changes. Furthermore as part of the Inclusive Choice reform, the government required municipalities to commit more funding to private schools. This is also a potentially politically costly move. In short, it is unclear why the changes required to enact a Community Schooling model were not feasible while the changes to go towards Inclusive Choice were feasible.

If path dependence does not explain why Community Schooling ceased to be an option what role did the influence of neoliberal ideas play – did they come in to portray school choice as the policy solution and Community Schooling as the problem? The shift to Inclusive Choice can be seen as the social service marketisation option suiting Social Democrats' interests best (Gingrich 2011; Hicks 2015; Klitgaard 2008). Marketisation policies had gained currency in the 1980s, not only within Moderates and Liberals circles, but also within the Social Democratic party that had to self-critique its own institutions that

[16] I comment on this backlash below (4.3.3.)

coined 20th century Sweden. The idea that the welfare state – including education – had to be restructured in view of creating better value for money was certainly present (e.g. Andersson 2010; Rothstein 1996). As a consequence, the party operated an ideological shift, becoming more concerned with the quality of education than with equality of its provision (Forsberg and Lundgren 2004). For example, the policy process leading to the decentralisation reform happened predominantly amongst economists (Lundgren (interview)). But decentralisation was also a means to adapt the curriculum to individualised learning, giving the teachers and the schools more responsibility in creating and selecting the content of their teaching. This nicely corresponded with the economic rationale of shifting the burdensome budget of education down to municipal budgets (Ringborg (interview)). However, they did not commit the necessary amount of money or capacity for the new education agency to train teachers and schools to implement changes (Lundgren (interview); Lewin (2014, 111)). This episode exemplifies that reforms were thought through theoretically and from an economic perspective but failed to take into account unequal capacities and knowledge on the ground that would create variation of quality between schools and municipalities.

Yet, as I discussed above, competition between providers via school choice was not part of the decentralisation policy of the late 1980s. For the ideas-account to explain variation of position before 1991 and after 1994, one needs to find the corresponding variation of how these ideas permeated the policy process at these different stages. The idea that freedom of choice was an aim to be pursued but not the vector of increased value for money had been firmly established in leadership circles since the mid-1980s (Andersson 2006, 131–132). The party leadership had not changed since the last Carlsson government, and the Education Minister in charge of the decentralisation reform in the late 1980s – Göran Persson – was now promoted to Minister of Finance. Education was not a high priority for him. The new Minister for Schools, Ylva Johansson, prioritised pressing for education investment for her life-long learning skill-development programme *Kunskapslyftet* over rethinking the organisation of the school system (Johansson (interview), Björkman (interview), SvD (2004)). In Johansson's words, "some people think that the system with free choice will act like a market and the market forces will ensure that the best schools will benefit everybody. People will not choose the best schools; we know that. So I didn't think it would be better for the school system. No." From that perspective I contend one cannot explain the shift towards school choice as a consequence of changed ideas that would influence how policy makers defined policy problems and solutions.

In contrast to the path dependence and neoliberal ideas hypotheses, the redistributive

interests hypothesis satisfies some core empirical tests, especially regarding the evidentiary task of finding traces of the causal mechanism. The required evidence of policy-makers puzzling about which alternative is the best for the educational opportunities of their constituents is present. Community Schooling was seen as the better option to avoid social segregation (Sveriges Riksdag 1994). The Social Democratic group discussed education regularly and the problems of segregation related with school choice were one salient topic (Björkman (interview), (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti 1994)). Furthermore, the education agency Skolverket published the report "*Val av Skola*" (School Choice) in which it showed that more educated parents were more likely to choose to opt out of the local school and into selective schools (Skolverket 1993). This report was well known and cited in the school choice debates in parliament (Sveriges Riksdag 1994). The report stressed that the reasons for opting out of the local school were related to its quality: "Quality issues weigh much more than either proximity or 'profile'. Quality issues, referring to both the quality of education and the social climate, were stressed by almost all parents (around 95%), with geographical proximity and access to friends from the neighbourhood mentioned by around three-quarters." (as cited by OECD 2001, 185) Such serious debates put the policy problem and trade-offs to the centre, making it less an ideological rift than an empirical question – who wins and who loses from the different school choice arrangements?

One problem connected to choice regarded choice behaviour and the effect of socio-economic background on this behaviour. But the exclusive nature of the 1992 reforms were also criticised. Policy-makers were aware that the school choice reforms would lead to segregation. Allowing schools to be their own admission authority and not clearly limiting the extent to which they could charge fees meant risking social segregation of the better off (Sveriges Riksdag 1996c). There were thus two problems: how to deal with school choice to limit segregation of the poor and how to deal with it to limit segregation of the rich. The two measures that resulted from such deliberation were to give municipalities more of a say in the accreditation process of private schools – a veto possibility in case a new school was judged to risk an increased segregation or deterioration of municipal schools. Additionally, one would have to make sure the private schools were 'open to all'. With these policy proposals, the centre-left would have been able to reintroduce quasi-Community Schooling systems in some municipalities where segregation would have been a particular problem and have Inclusive Choice everywhere else.

4.3.3. The political cost of the municipalities/ free schools dispute

The government then initiated the Inclusive Choice reform in the context of several local disputes of municipalities and free schools on the correct level of funding the latter were to receive from the former (Johansson (interview), Pertoft (interview)). The dispute was mostly on the method of calculating the grant based on the minimum of 85 – later 75 – percent of funding that went to municipal school pupils. Municipalities differed in their generosity towards free schools (Lidström 1999). In this political context, the government was constrained to solve these local conflicts, although decentralisation meant that this debate could have been solved individually at the local level. Reform was requested from both sides: municipalities called for more say in the accreditation process of schools on their territory so they could ensure that new schools would not lead to financial or social problems; free schools and their supporters called for more transparency in how the grant was calculated (Johansson (interview), Pertoft (interview), Sverige Regeringen (1996c)). This small problem, which concerned only a handful of schools and municipalities[17], became a policy problem at the national level (Isling 2008). Maintaining the status quo and an unclear position on the matter could have been politically costly for the government. The political cost of reform was mainly one of having to openly address disagreement within the party and the 'coalition'. But as the share of net losers of Inclusive Choice was decreasing (*B* dropping within L and M at a higher rate than *T* was increasing) and the government was inclined to try to respond to municipalities call for more say – the political costs of reform were not very high. In view of mitigating that cost, the government called for a cross-party consensus within a parliamentary committee to sort out whether Inclusive Choice was indeed a politically feasible option (Johansson (interview), Björkman (interview), Pertoft (interview), Sveriges Regering (1995a)).

The government's task for that committee was threefold several dimensions: first of all, how to calculate the minimum level of funding for private schools; second, how to make sure that private schools could be open to all; and third, to define how much say to give to municipalities in the process. The government took the stance to propose more funding for private schools in exchange of a ban of fees (Sveriges Regering 1995a). They framed this as the 'fairest' option (Johansson (interview)). The municipalities could not reduce funding levels for such schools if they were obliged to take all kinds of pupils and be 'open to

[17] in 1994/1995, 4.4 percent of primary/lower secondary schools were free schools. 33 percent of municipalities had one or more free schools (Skolverket 1998, 14)

everyone'. In addition, free schools could not justify the need for fees if they had the same level of funding as municipal schools. Admissions criteria then had to become more transparent as well. The committee left this question to government regulation rather than legislation and individual arrangements would have to be negotiated with the education agency *Skolverket* (Sveriges Riksdag 1996c). The question of the extent to which municipalities were allowed to intervene in the process was trickier. The "headache" for the education minister was the trade-off between potential for segregation and lower quality municipal schools if free schools could be established anywhere and the potential for creating two different school systems within Sweden depending on the municipal stance on free schools (Johansson (interview)). The fear was that Social Democratic municipalities would create quasi-Community Schooling systems (as no other school was available to opt out to in many areas) while municipalities controlled by the Moderates would become free-market systems. The government was certainly not keen on giving municipalities such power, especially since this could continue to propagate the perception that the Social Democratic government was threatening the right to choose. The government tried to negotiate a solution with the Centre and Green Parties, but they were very much opposed to any measure that could threaten the existence of free schools (Pertoft (interview), Johansson (interview), Björkman (interview), Sveriges Riksdag (1996a)). Hence, the Community Schooling option was excluded at that point.

Municipalities and school choice critics were certainly the losers of the Inclusive Choice reform that followed the committee's deliberations. They lost the fight for more say on the establishment of free schools and had to increase the level of their grants. Without the clear stance against the municipal veto from the Green Party and the Centre Party, it would have been more difficult for the government to justify such a policy. They thought they could find an agreement with the Centre Party considering their earlier fight for more administrative control over school choice and their clear interest for such a control in rural (and less educated) Sweden (Björkman (interview), Johansson (interview)). At that time, the Centre Party had engaged in close cooperation with the Social Democratic government on economic policy. They were very close to being a real coalition partner with more or less formal representation within the Department of Finance. But there were new voices within that party that started to criticise this close cooperation, fearing that the party would be identified as too close to the Social Democrats (Lagercrantz 2005). This new political context might have reinforced Centre Party disagreement with Social Democrats on this issue. Indeed, the Centre Party MPs did not support the Inclusive Choice reform. It passed parliament with the help of

Green Party MPs (Sveriges Riksdag 1996b). The Green Party was in a phase of consolidation and had to ensure it would stop being perceived as a simple protest party. It was thus in its interest to support a policy that it could not oppose on any ideological or strategic grounds (Pertoft (interview)). Yet, this lenience stopped in every case in which Green Party MPs thought the Social Democrats to harm free schools' interests – especially the propagation of alternative pedagogies. An important observation in this respect is the later failure of the new School Law in 2005. This law had been in the pipelines for over five years and mainly thought to reorganise the many substantive changes to the old School Law in a more coherent and streamlined fashion (Lundgren (interview), Lindskog (interview)). One question that had to be solved in that context was the extent to which free schools could opt out of the national curriculum. Given the flexibility of that curriculum, there was not much more leeway to give to these schools (Lindskog (interview)). However, the Green Party ceased to support the Social Democratic government on the passing of that law on the basis of this small question (Hansell 2005). Eventually, the Social Democrats had to withdraw the proposal which they had been working on for years. This political context then really was the end of the Community Schooling option. The Social Democrats have remained split on that matter ever since.

To conclude this analysis of the political cost assessment leading to reform, it is important to discuss possible origins of the increased political cost of the status quo that pushed the government to reform. Certainly, the outcome of negotiations once the decision to reform had been taken is a matter of divisions between parties that can difficultly be reduced to different interests due to socio-economic characteristics of voters. The Centre Party and Green Party were both also trying to make strategic decisions of alignment due to the multi-party system and its increased complexity. However, these negotiations happened as a consequence of the necessity to react to the local disputes which showcased the division within the Social Democratic party. Then, the question is whether the nature of the school system's institutions created these local disputes. Could another institutional arrangement of the Exclusive Choice system have avoided them, or were they just the intensification of an ongoing conflict over schooling – already important in the 1980s – which got exacerbated under financial pressures? The answer may lie in the combination of school choice and decentralisation of education. While the Social Democrats had originally wished to solve the problem of schooling with decentralisation but not with privatisation and school choice, the Moderates had pursued the opposite strategy – preferring a centralised system with school choice. In each of these cases, municipalities would not have been in charge of financing

schools in competition with their own schools, but this would have been the task of the government. In the Social Democrats' version of this policy, government would decide whether free schools were allowed to establish and get government funding. In the Moderates' version, the central government or its education agency would automatically allocate funding to any entrepreneur that wanted to create a new school. Decentralisation and Exclusive Choice together created tensions that could have been solved at the local level, but instead reverberated onto the national policy debate and shed light on the divisions within the Social Democratic party.

The main lesson to draw from the centre-left Inclusive Choice reform is the importance of the division within the Social Democratic party. This division has not been dealt with in other studies on that case. Yet, there was a leadership and government stance that saw school choice as a necessary evil to pursue in the light of an increasingly educated electorate that wanted to have more influence over their children's education. This stance took into account that such a policy was problematic to pursue equal opportunities for all. On the other side of the divide, the party basis that got increasing policy responsibility as it took charge of the running of schools in municipalities catered to another part of the electorate – those who had lost from educational expansion and would further lose from school choice. They actively tried to pursue a policy in favour of Community Schooling. Both stances were not causally linked to the party's ideological change or the influence of neoliberal ideas on policy-makers. The policy stance was also not directly related to a narrowing down of policy options after institutional reform. The divide existed before and after the Exclusive Choice reform. But institutions – especially decentralisation of school policy – may form part of the explanation for why divisions became politically important and culminated in the need of an Inclusive Choice reform. These institutions did not function as veto players that made reform more difficult, but worked as catalysts that constrained the government to choose the 'reform' option instead of the 'status quo' alternative.

4.4. A Consensus for Inclusive Choice with the Centre-Right Coalition 2006-2010

After the 1996 Inclusive Choice reform, Sweden remained an Inclusive Choice system and did not reform its SSIs again, even after alternation in 2006. Is this the result of a policy trajectory that is hard to change due to path dependent feedback effects? Was the new centre-right 'alliance' of Moderates, Liberals, Centre Party, and Christian Democrats unable to shift

SSIs back to the selective end? If this was the case, the implication would be that once a path has been set, SSI reform is more unlikely and who is in government matters less. The alternative explanation to this feedback effect account is that the centre-right did not shift SSIs because Inclusive Choice was in its best interest given the socio-economic characteristics of the M+H income group coalition. More than half of constituents of the middle and high income groups had intermediate education credentials and thus had an interest in Inclusive Choice. Are these characteristics the cause for stability of SSIs under the centre-right government? In the next paragraphs, I show that the government did not see Inclusive Choice as a policy problem although it identified school quality as an important problem to solve. I then discuss whether there is evidence for positive feedback of Inclusive Choice. On the one hand this effect might have been at work via an increasingly important producer group of private schools. On the other hand, more schools and more parents choosing could mean important positive feedback for the non-selective variant of school choice impeding a government that wants to reintroduce selection to do so because of corresponding political costs. This shorter section presents evidence that backs the theory that the support of an Inclusive Choice system resulted from a changed position on the selectiveness dimension rather than non-reform being a consequence of mere status-quo preference.

In the 2006 electoral debate the main policy problem related to education from the Moderates and Liberals perspective (the most active on the question of education within the coalition) was the deteriorating quality of schools and especially the variation of quality between municipalities (Olsson 2005; Tolgfors et al. 2006). In view of making school choice 'real', there had to be an adequate supply of good quality schools. In that sense, the policy problem connected to student allocation to schools was not about SSIs but about improving the quality of schools. Jan Björklund, the education minister, took reform seriously and had been pursuing the policy goal of re-centralisation of education policy for some time before entering the government (Pertoft (interview), Lundgren (interview), Edholm (interview)). The first policy in this respect was to create an independent school inspection (Sveriges Regering 2007).

This new formulation of the policy problem is also in line with the socio-economic characteristics of the M+H income group coalition at the time. Compared to their last government of 1991-1994 the education level of M and H had increased and those with basic education were a small minority in that group (dropping from 30 percent in 1990 to 15 percent in 2005). Those with tertiary education were concentrated in the high income group,

as the middle income group had only 20 percent of individuals with tertiary education. Constituents with tertiary education could then generally use their income advantage to attend the better schools and would not have been that much better off in an Exclusive Choice system. Those in the middle income group and with intermediate education credentials were then benefitting from the status quo. But they were in competition amongst each other for access to better schools. This could not be solved with SSI reform but only by improving the quality of schools and take away pressure to opt out.

Did these new socio-economic conditions affect the policy choice to keep Inclusive Choice intact? First of all, it is helpful to check whether the preference for Inclusive Choice did not stem from the unavailability of the alternative option, Exclusive Choice. Was Exclusive Choice dismissed as an option because of private schools' new role in the policy-making process as a new important producer group of education? The share of free schools had increased since the Inclusive Choice reform of 1996, reaching around 10 percent of primary schools and 44 percent of upper secondary schools in 2008 (Skolverket 2009a; Skolverket 2009b).[18] These new producer groups had more systemic importance than in the 1990s. The Free School Association was regularly associated to the policy process like any other producer group (amongst which the teacher unions and the association of local authorities and regions). Also, free schools were not run individually, but had spread thanks to the creation of organisations that were running similar schools across the territory (e.g. West 2014). One example is the chain *Kunskapsskolan*. Such chains were now accused of generating profits from their schools by not reinvesting all the public funding into teaching resources (Dahlman 2003; Socialdemokraterna 2009). Such actors had been absent from the policy-making process in the 1990s and could also be a cause for stability by blocking change. They were not readily in favour of selection. Their success depended on their reputation which started to be tarnished by two policy problems: the profit debate of the publicly financed private welfare sector and the question of increased social segregation (Edholm (interview), Stockhaus (interview), Rendling (interview)). They were thus eager to show that they were not culprits of these problems, for instance by pointing out that they took in a high share of children of migrant family (Friskolornas Riksförbund 2014a; 2015).

Another possible path dependence effect could have come from the increased number of families choosing to opt out to a private school, positively reinforcing the option of Inclusive Choice and simultaneously increasing the political cost of departing from that path.

[18] As free schools are usually smaller than municipal schools, the share of pupils is around 6 percent for primary schools and 20 percent for upper secondary schools.

This number reaches beyond the number of children enrolled in such schools. It includes those parents who would consider to use school choice at a later stage of their child's educational pathway, for instance if the quality of their school deteriorated or the child wanted to study a particular subject available at the closest free school (Kallstenius 2010; Skolverket 2012). The increasing number of schools also led to a production of data and communication of information on individual school quality and its social composition (e.g. Bergström (interview), (Skolverket 2013a)). That could also add to this positive feedback effect – people could adjust their choice behaviour if they saw their children's school falling behind. In such a context, limiting access to those schools by making them more selective was certainly politically toxic.

The path dependence via interest groups mechanism works via the process of negotiation or inclusion in the formulation of public policy. This means that if the hypotheses were true we would expect to observe a government that deliberates about changing SSIs but then deciding that the selective option is unavailable after negotiation or exchanges with this group. In general, the government did take account of the Friskolors Riksförbund's position, but this was not determinant in any of its education policies such as the centralisation policy and the regulation of inspection via the creation of a second education agency – the school inspectorate (Sveriges Regering 2008; Sveriges Regering 2010). The free school association's stance was that less regulation was needed (Friskolornas Riksförbund 2009), but the policy trend went into the direction of regulating and centralising private and public school governance more. In short, where there was a policy problem, the interest groups were heard alongside other interest groups, but did not have more apparent influence than other groups. Solving the profit question or reopening the question of selection were simply not on the agenda. If one compares the importance of the selection question and the regulation question for private schools, we would expect them to have more interest in influencing the outcome of the latter than the former. They failed to influence the latter, so it is unlikely that they influenced the government position on the former.

The Free School Association had however quite heterogeneous interests to defend, as its members were divided between the school chains like *Kunskapsskolan* that generated profits, more loosely organised groups of schools like Waldorf, Montessori, or religious schools, and single school providers (Friskolornas Riksförbund 2014b). School chains like *Kunskapsskolan* had their own channels of policy influence (Andersson 2002; Bergman 2010). They were close to the organisations that had influenced the Moderates' policies in the 1980s via the Swedish Employers' Organisation.

The path dependence mechanism via positive feedback of Inclusive Choice can account for the priority of the policy – if people are happy with the arrangement, there is no policy problem. Yet, it is impossible to establish exogeneity of the policy feedback effect from the larger structural changes that underpin the redistributive interests hypothesis. Indeed – were there more families using Inclusive Choice via choice between public and private schools in 2006 than in the 1990s because the middle and high income voters had reached higher educational credentials and income inequality increased? Or did the institutions themselves create the increased demand, in turn leading to the expansion of the free school sector? This is a question to be solved at the individual level by analysing patterns of choice behaviour. Theoretically, it is possible that both independent variables are causally dependent: the changed socio-economic characteristics of families could have driven the expansion of the use of free schools that then affected policy choices. It is impossible that the expansion of free schools affected the socio-economic position of the families. From that perspective it is difficult to make the case that there was no policy feedback. But it is as difficult to show that this policy feedback was independent from the increased education level within the M+H coalition. Another possible feedback effect would be that deteriorating school quality reinforced the need for families to have an opt out option, in turn locking out the Exclusive Choice option. However, this deteriorating school quality – or increased attention for school quality – is not endogenous to the Inclusive Choice reform.

In contrast to the path dependence explanation, some additional evidence supports the hypothesis of Inclusive Choice being in the interest of the centre-right government because it was particularly beneficial to its intermediate-educated middle income constituents. This evidence can be found in the debate around the policy problems of school quality and of social segregation. By 2006, social segregation between schools was perceived as a central problem to the functioning of the education system (Skolverket 2006). The Social Democrats became very vocal about the relationship between school choice and social segregation. The centre-right rejected this criticism as unfair and missing the point: the problem was not the opt-out behaviour (Tolgfors et al. 2006) but the unfair distribution of quality across schools (Sveriges Regering 2007). The Social Democrats responded to this that the market and profit-making was to be blamed for that outcome (Leijonborg et al. 2013). The centre-right coalition contended it was the outcome of the decentralisation reforms (Eklundh 2014). This standpoint exemplifies that the government thought school choice had to be open for families that aspired to better education for their children in the context of varying school quality. These families were really in the middle of the education and income distribution. They would

suffer more from introducing selection into the school choice system than those higher up in the distribution could benefit from such a move.

The lesson to draw from this account is that it reduces the confidence that continuity of Inclusive Choice was a matter of path dependence that constrained the centre-right to move SSIs into the selective corner. Rather, they could have reformed if they had seen a clear majority of their constituents benefiting from such a shift. A different socio-economic composition of their electorate might also have produced negative feedback from the Inclusive Choice institutions. In addition, more powerful producer groups did not seem to affect that government's education policies substantively. In the 2000s, selection would decrease more opportunities for families in the M+H coalition than it would increase opportunities. There was then no reason to introduce such elements into the education system. By opting for Inclusive Choice continuity, hence, the centre-right government did not much else than catering to the redistributive interests of its constituents.

Conclusion

Mapping educational change of income group coalitions in power and showing how it translated into new policies in three decision-making sequences has validated the partisan explanation of SSIs for the most-likely case of Sweden. For all three sequences, partisan governments' positions were about improving educational opportunities for large sections of their constituents, but simultaneously neglected opportunities for other groups. These positions drove a wedge into parties and government coalitions. The partisan theory of school choice thus validated its hoop tests. The main alternative hypotheses also validated a set of hoop tests: this justifies that they were important competitors. Yet, in each of the sequences, some necessary evidence for these hypotheses was absent. Hence, confidence in their validity has decreased, simultaneously increasing confidence in the partisan theory. The Swedish case also provides first answers to the more inductive question of the role of political costs to change versus status quo. The *Drevdagen* incident and the quarrel between municipalities and private schools seemed relevant triggers for parties to commit to SSI reform. Both these contextual factors are linked to relations between the centre and the periphery. Also, both episodes are about small and insignificant conflicts becoming salient, prompting the necessity for clearer policy stances. I will comment further on these aspects in comparison with the findings from England and France in the conclusive chapter.

This case study's findings provide novel answers to the Swedish puzzle of school choice and the role of political parties for the structure of its education system. The perspective of SSIs has uncovered that the question of school choice in the early 1990s was not just a turn against the welfare state in the 1980s, prompting new policies to reform the social-democratic welfare coalition. Considering the divisions of the Social Democratic party while it governed from 1994-98, the outcome may well have been continuity of Exclusive Choice had there not been pressure to reform from the bottom-up. Furthermore, the 1991 victory of the centre-right was not sufficient for Exclusive Choice to happen in Sweden; they also needed to overcome previous decades' divisions on the matter. We can well imagine an alternative scenario in which the Centre Party would not have allowed Exclusive Choice to happen. In that scenario, the evidence suggests that the Social Democrats would have preferred sticking with a reformed Community Schooling system until it would no longer be in the interest of a majority of their constituents from the 2000s onwards. Such a scenario might have given space for implementation of the 1980s decentralisation reform, increasing the odds of that reform's success.

Beyond within-case inference, the Swedish case contributes to the broader explanation of the political economy of equal opportunities in education: in the introductory chapter, I have explained that it is a very likely case for partisanship to matter. Hence, it was very permissive for this theory. Had we not found the required evidence for the partisan explanation, this would have shed important doubt on the partisan theory for other cases, too. Considering previous knowledge on the case, Sweden was also a very likely case for the path-dependence account via negative feedback effects of the Community Schooling system. But this theory failed the required tests; most so in the second sequence studied here, with the Social Democratic Inclusive Choice reform. These findings suggest that path dependent effects did not drive the SSI outcome in Sweden. Then, they are also less likely to provide an explanation for SSIs in cases beyond the sample here. France is another most likely case of this sample for feedback effects. The comparison will thus give further indication on the validity of such a theory for the redistributive policy of SSIs. Given previous knowledge of the case, one could have expected neoliberal ideas to matter for the Swedish case of SSIs. But previous studies have not given them any particular attention. The French and English case come with clearer expectations in that respect. The analysis of those two cases benefits from one lesson of the Swedish findings which provide indications on the origins of the political costs calculations preceding reform: the French and English reform decisions could also be a matter of punctually salient centre-periphery tensions; but other factors of the political context

may well drive partisan governments' opportunities to reform.

Chapter 5: England

British governments did not need PISA study results to start worrying about the quality of their schools. Arguments about the insufficiency of English schools to provide the necessary skills for the knowledge-based economy abounded long before the OECD measured and ranked England's educational performance. Policy-makers identified the achievement gap between children of different socio-economic origin as one hurdle to be overcome in order to improve skills available for the whole economy. The question of how to deal with a heterogeneous student body had been core to the politics of education since the introduction of compulsory post-primary education. Public commentators have gone as far as using the term 'School Wars' to refer to the conflicts that have arisen around this question (Benn 2011). At the heart of this battle, the debate focuses on what institutions best guarantee the provision of quality education for all: tracked schooling or comprehensive schooling, and within the latter category, what level of choice and how to regulate it? As with the previous chapter on Sweden, the aim here is not to explore the effects of institutional reforms on the achievement gap. Rather, the objective is to uncover the causes of those political decisions that have opted for one institution over another.

This chapter adds to the literature that explains the English education system by painting the picture of policy conflicts and coalitions with a finer brush. The existing picture is one of policy differences between parties: the right wing generally stands for idealising the past with its grammar schools while actively pursuing a policy of increased privatisation and school choice. In contrast, the left mourns the lost opportunity of introducing a functioning comprehensive school system that would work without resorting to school choice, a policy that is understood a necessary evil rather than a worthwhile aim on its own. According to Jane Gingrich's work, partisan differences originate in the necessity to form cross-class coalitions, and school choice is a means to bind the middle class to parties' welfare aims that stand in line with their core constituents' preferences. Tim Hicks adds that the English case is more contentious than the Swedish case because of higher social inequality that exacerbates the effect of school choice on social segregation (Gingrich 2011, 137–151; Hicks 2015).

With our finer brush that distinguishes between four types of Student Sorting Institutions and a corresponding trilemma between the three different comprehensive school systems, we will see that the story is as much one of conflicts between parties as it is one of

conflicts within parties. How the pattern of educational expansion ran through cross-class coalitions backing partisan governments is essential to understand whether or not these governments had clear positions on Student Sorting Institutions, which institution they preferred, and when they were ready for reform. This allows us to explain why the Conservatives turned their back on Tracked Schooling in the 1970s and opted for an Exclusive Choice alternative, which it explicitly pursued with its 1988 Education Act. We can also account for the fact that Exclusive Choice remained intact during most of the Labour government period of 1997-2010, and why it managed to push the system into the high choice/low selection corner with the 2006 Education and Inspections Act.

The first section compares changes in Student Sorting Institutions (as described in Chapter 2, Section 3.2.), government alternation, and changed education levels of the income groups that underpin left-wing and right-wing governments respectively. The following three sections present evidence of the causal link between social change, partisan governments, and policies from tracing the policy-making process of three different episodes. Section 2 shows that we can causally link the changes in material interests flowing from more highly educated and thus more heterogeneous constituents of the Conservatives to their school choice policy in the 1980s. In Section 3, I provide further evidence that weakens existing accounts of 'old politics' and 'new politics' to explain Labour's subscription to the school choice agenda in the 1990s. The final section presents causal process observations that show how a new coalition emerged in favour of Inclusive Choice: The Intermediate education category continuously grew, while the share of those of the parent generation with Tertiary education remained stable, and a significant drop of those with Basic education occurred throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, eventually pushing Blair and his advisers to accept Inclusive Choice reform in 2006. In the conclusion, I discuss the extent to which the presented evidence allows us to decrease confidence in the role of neoliberal ideas and path dependence and increase confidence in the social coalitions account of the politics of educational inequalities for the case of school choice policy-making in England 1980-2010.

5.1. Educational Expansion and Coalitions for School Choice 1980-2010

This section fulfils the first evidentiary task for the test of the effect of social coalitions on partisan politics of school choice and their policy decisions. The task consists in showing how income group coalitions that underpin partisan governments are composed of different

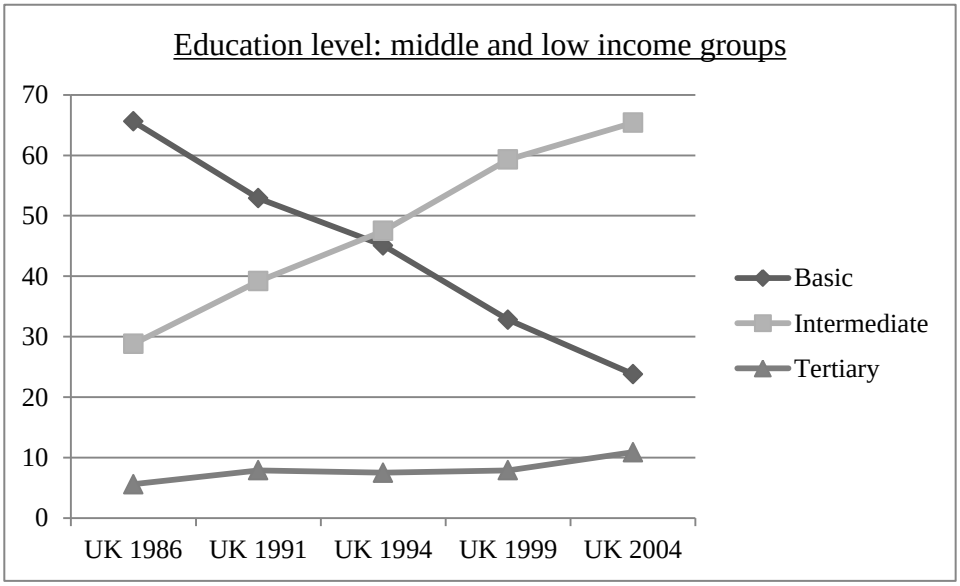
education groups. Additionally, we will see that the relative share of these groups varies over time and that when institutional change occurs, then this is in accordance with the relative educational and income coalition in power. As Figure 5.1. delineates, when the Conservatives were in government during the 1980s-1990s, the middle and high income groups experienced a growth of individuals with intermediate education achievements. These would lose from both versions of low choice Student Sorting Institutions, but win from school choice. However, they did not exceed 50 percent of the M+H coalition in this period, resulting in a coalition for Exclusive Choice rather than Inclusive Choice. When Labour won the 1997 elections, their underlying income group coalitions did not have a clear coalition for Community Schooling anymore, as just around half of those in the lower and middle income groups had basic educational credentials. But the dwindling of the share of this education group was accompanied by an increase of those with intermediate rather than tertiary education. By 2004, over half of the M+L coalition held intermediate educational credentials: only then was there a coalition in favour of Inclusive Choice. In the following paragraphs, I present the timelines of educational changes within the M+H and M+L coalitions respectively. The LIS data on which this analysis rests are reproduced in Table 5.1. Subsequently, I discuss the extent to which school choice policies of different governments at different times correspond to our expectations.

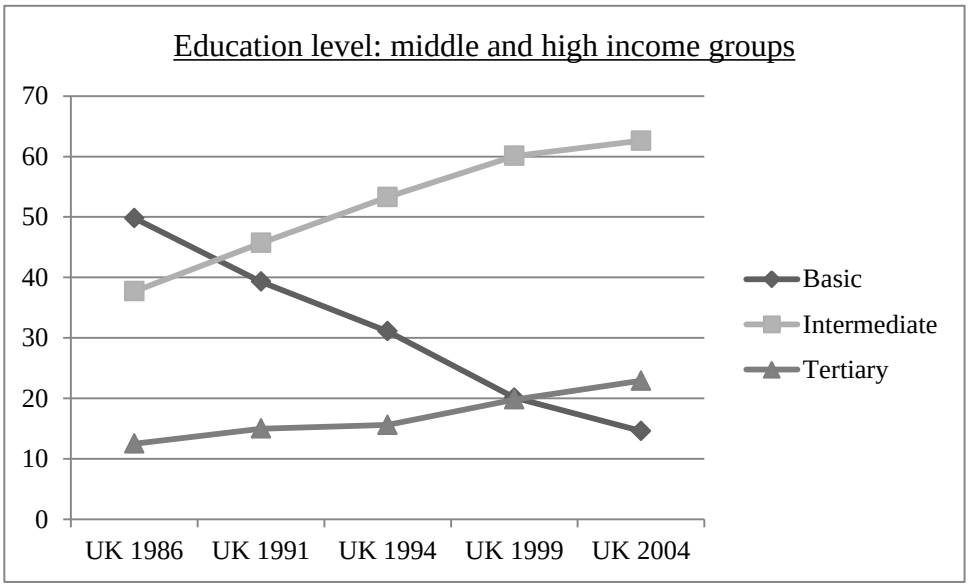
5.1.1. Income group coalitions and education levels 1980-2005

U.K. Luxembourg Income Study data on education start with the 1985 wave (Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) 2015).[19] In the mid-80s, only a quite small share of the middle and high income group had reached tertiary education credentials, while the basic and intermediate education groups were roughly on par. Two thirds of the middle income group belonged to *B* and a great majority of the remaining third was part of the *I* category, *T* being nearly non-existent here. The higher income group looked quite different in comparison: twenty percent belonged to *T*, and the share of *I* was higher than the share of *B*. Looking at M+H together, we then note that there was no clear majority of *B* or *I*. For *I*, Exclusive Choice is better than either Community Schooling or Tracked Schooling. For *B*, it is better than either Inclusive Choice or Tracked Schooling. If M+H is in power in such a situation, we expect policy-makers to pursue Exclusive Choice or Community Schooling.

[19] Cf. Appendix 2

Figure 5.1.: Income groups and educational expansion in U.K. 1985-2005





Source: Luxembourg Income Study. Own calculations.

Table 5.1: Income groups and educational expansion in U.K. 1985-2010

1986 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	66	65	35	66	50	55
Intermediate education	27	30	45	29	38	34
Tertiary education	7	5	20	6	13	11
Total	100	100	100	100	101	100

1991 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	51	55	24	53	39	43
Intermediate education	39	39	52	39	46	44
Tertiary education	10	6	24	8	15	13
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

1994 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	46	43	20	45	31	36
Intermediate education	45	51	55	48	53	51
Tertiary education	9	6	25	8	16	13
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

1999 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	38 *(53)*	28 *(36)*	13 *(14)*	33 *(44)*	20 *(25)*	26 *(34)*
Intermediate education	55 *(39)*	64 *(53)*	56 *(45)*	59 *(46)*	60 *(49)*	58 *(45)*
Tertiary education	8 *(9)*	8 *(12)*	31 *(41)*	8 *(10)*	20 *(26)*	16 *(21)*
Total	100 *(101)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(100)*

(Table 5.1 continued)

2004 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	29 *(48)*	19 *(29)*	10 *(13)*	24 *(38)*	15 *(21)*	19 *(30)*
Intermediate education	61 *(40)*	69 *(57)*	56 *(44)*	65 *(49)*	63 *(50)*	62 *(47)*
Tertiary education	10 *(12)*	12 *(15)*	34 *(43)*	11 *(13)*	23 *(29)*	19 *(23)*
Total	100 *(100)*	100 *(101)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(100)*	101 *(100)*	100 *(100)*

2007 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	24 *30*	16 *13*	7 *4*	20 *21*	11 *8*	15 *(15)*
Intermediate education	64 *57*	71 *71*	56 *50*	67 *64*	64 *61*	64 *(59)*
Tertiary education	12 *14*	13 *16*	37 *46*	13 *15*	25 *31*	21 *(26)*
Total	100 *(101)*	101 *(100)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(100)*

2010 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	18 *31*	11 *15*	5 *4*	15 *23*	8 *10*	11 *(17)*
Intermediate education	68 *55*	74 *67*	55 *48*	71 *61*	65 *58*	66 *(57)*
Tertiary education	14 *15*	15 *18*	40 *47*	15 *16*	28 *33*	23 *(27)*
Total	100 *(101)*	100 *(100)*	100 *(99)*	100 *(100)*	101 *(101)*	101 *(101)*

Comparing the coalition possibilities of the 1980s with the ones of the 1990s, the balance more clearly tilts in favour of school choice. Within the middle income group, *I* was the biggest education category in the 1990s, while the share of those with tertiary education remained largely stable. By the end of the 1990s, *I* was a bigger group than *B* and *T t*aken together. In the high income group, there were now more people with tertiary education than with basic education. No change occurred within the intermediate education category of this income group. While the middle income group points to a coalition in favour of Inclusive Choice ($I>B+T$), Exclusive Choice is the expected outcome for the high income group ($I<B+T$). In neither of these groups was there a coalition in favour of Community Schooling,

as was the case in the 1980s. In the M+H coalition, change occurred during the 1990s. Until the mid-1990s, the intermediate education group was smaller than the basic and tertiary education groups taken together, pointing to a coalition for Exclusive Choice. In the late 1990s, this shifts towards an expectation for Inclusive Choice, as *I*>*B*+*T*. As both *I* and *T* grew while *B* dwindled, the coalition in favour of choice became bolder. But in the higher income group, change was mostly favourable to a growth of *T*.

In the 2000s, the preponderance of *I* in the M+H income category was further strengthened. This holds for two different measures of the education level: age at which full time education is completed and ISCED levels (data from 1999 onwards[20]). By 2007, in the M income group, *B* had dropped below the level of *T* and each of these education groups made up between 10 and 20 percent of this income group. For M, IC was then the best policy option, as *I*>*B*+*T*. But the H income group looks quite different: here, *T* and *I* were each at levels between two fifth and half of that income group, *B* having nearly disappeared. The best policy for this income group is also dependent on the income structure of that group. Neither of these groups can be in power on its own, they would need to form a M+H coalition: in it, *I* was dominant, with around sixty percent; *T* now made up around 30 percent, while *B* amounted to just ten percent. Compared to the 1980s, *B* went from the biggest to the smallest education group within the M+H coalition. In the 2000s, we could expect the M+H coalition to shift from supporting a policy of Exclusive Choice to back a policy of Inclusive Choice. Yet, we have to note the very different dynamics happening in both income groups that make up this coalition.

Turning to the developments within the M+L coalition, we can note that this centre-left coalition experienced a similar development in the decades of 1980-2000s. Yet, this development had a different starting point, as in 1980 both M and L had a high level of individuals with basic education only. To recall, M, the better-off group in this coalition started off with a higher level of *B* than *I* and *T* taken together. In the M+H coalition, each income group had a different educational level in the 1980s. This was not the case for the M+L coalition. Two thirds of L was also part of the basic education category, and the intermediate education category made up most of the rest of this income group. Taken together, we thus have a very clear picture of a coalition underpinning a Community Schooling system: those with basic education profit from the fact that those with intermediate education that have access to similar schools given small income differentials do not have the

[20] I used Schneider (2008) to recode the education level variable into the ISCED scheme: <15 years old when finishing full-time education: *B*; > 20 y.o. *T*.

option to opt out of these schools. In the 1980s, we therefore expect different policies from the Left than from the Right: we anticipate Community Schooling in the former case and Exclusive Choice in the latter case.

In the 1990s, important changes occurred in the education level of both the M and L income groups. M+L became a clear coalition in favour of school choice, but undecided between EC or IC. In the M+H coalition, changes in M drove the coalition's shift, as *I* outnumbered the ends-against-the middle coalition of *B*+*T*. In contrast, for the M+L coalition, the same pattern of change occurred in both income groups in a parallel fashion. For L, *I* roughly equalled *B*+*T*. *B*'s Community Schooling then became the less likely option, while *I*'s or *T*'s winning options became more likely. The M+L outcome is then a close tie between *I* on the one hand and *B*+*T* on the other hand. This is the consequence of a severe drop of *B* from the late 1980s to the late 1990s that led to a trebling of *I*'s share, while *T* remained fairly stable. Two different outcomes are possible results of this shift. *B* was too small for us to expect its Community Schooling coalition to stay in place. In that situation B was also not likely to form a coalition for IC with *I*, as the *B* group would have been less likely to use choice and more likely to suffer from the segregation effects of such a policy. This tie between EC and IC also means that our expected centre-left policies are more similar to our expected centre-right policies in the 1990s than in the 1980s. It is important to stress that this anticipated push towards school choice does not depend on changes in the middle income constituency alone, but on changes within the lower income group as well. Both these groups were now split between those with intermediate and those with basic education.

By the mid-2000s, we can note a further convergence between the centre-right and centre-left coalitions, because of *I*'s more established preponderance in both coalitions. Yet, the M and L income groups' education levels drifted apart as intermediate education increased significantly within M (15 percent *B* / 70 percent *I* / 15 percent *T*), and less so in L (30 percent *B* / 55 percent *I* / 15 percent *T*). While *B*=*T* in M, *B/2*=*T* in L. On the one hand, these changes resulted in a clear coalition for Inclusive Choice, as over 60 percent of M+L had an intermediate education level. On the other hand, those that risked most to be marginalised in an Inclusive Choice system were now much more concentrated in the lower income group than in the 1990s.

In conclusion, while the income groups had a rather similar education level in the 1980s, their education levels drifted apart in the wake of massive educational expansion. In H, *B* all but disappeared in the 2000s while *T* and *I* respectively took on half the share of the group. Over two thirds of M were part of *I*, while the remaining third was equally split

between *B* and *T*. Just over half of L were part of *I*, and in the remaining half, *B* was twice as high as *T*. Those who had gotten better educational opportunities in the context of educational expansion but had not yet attained social mobility up to tertiary education could politically block educational opportunities for those who lost out and were concentrated amongst the poor.

5.1.2. Income group coalitions in power: governments and parties 1980-2010

These coalitions are only relevant for policy change if they are in power. For instance, the M+L coalition for Community Schooling in the 1980s is not relevant, because it occurred during the Conservatives government period of 1979-1995. In that period, Margaret Thatcher's and later John Major's governments could pursue their preferred policy even on issues where the party might have been split, considering their comfortable majorities in parliament. This is especially true for the period of 1983 to 1992, where the 40 percent of votes at general elections transformed into more than 50 seats above the necessary threshold for an absolute majority in parliament (McGuinness et al. 2012)[21]. They then had the power to uphold the Exclusive Choice system we expect from the M+H coalition at that time and indeed strengthen it, as was the case with the 1988 Education Reform Act (cf. Chapter 2.3).

In 1992, the Conservatives' victory resulted in a smaller seat differential between Labour and the Conservatives than in any of the previous victories in that period. The M+H coalition still pointed towards an Exclusive Choice system, and the government continued to drive forward a choice agenda that explicitly allowed for some selection. One would not expect a significantly different policy from a Labour government in that period, because in contrast to the previous decade, constituencies had converged towards a school choice preference against Community Schooling. Seen in this light, it is not surprising that Labour's landslide victory of 1997 did not transform into a policy change, despite their outstanding advantage in seats that would have allowed a divided party to legislate according to the government's policy preference. In the later 1990s, there still was a tie between Exclusive Choice and Inclusive Choice amongst the M+L income groups. In the time of opposition of the early to mid-1990s, when the Labour party reinvented itself to become New Labour, both the middle and the low income groups were more highly educated, resulting in a possible coalition in favour of school choice. The first dividing line we expect to find is a split between

[21] The election results and House of Commons seats I report in the following paragraphs are all drawn from this source.

those sticking to the Community Schooling position and those pushing for school choice as the *I* group increased its share in the early 1990s. From the late 1990s onwards, we expect a split between the coalition for Exclusive Choice, and a coalition for Inclusive Choice as the share of *I* reached half of the M and L income groups.

Labour repeated its landslide victory in the 2001 general election, leading again to more than 80 seats over the absolute majority threshold in parliament. From 2001 to 2005, the group of those with intermediate education grew further within the M+L coalition, leading to a clear majority of *I* over *B+T* around 2004. Then, we can expect a change of policy. In 2005, Labour won the elections once again, but with a tighter margin. The rise of small parties came to influence electoral results and seat distribution in parliament. Labour now had only around 30 seats more than necessary for passing legislation. This made legislating in a divided partisan environment more difficult. Yet, according to the educational level of the M+L coalition, we expect the partisan government of the mid-2000s to be more unified around Inclusive Choice if compared to earlier years. Whether or not and how this difference in majorities and relative government strength intervened into the capacity of reform is a matter of our social coalition theory's second mechanism: the political context. We here also have to take into account factors like the increasingly unfavourable public opinion towards Blair with the Iraq War, and the party's exacerbating divisions between the Gordon Brown and Tony Blair clan, as the latter's mandate got longer and longer. The extent to which we expect a shift towards IC then is a matter of the government's political cost assessment that we cannot solely reduce to educational dividing lines within the government's electorate.

Until now, I have used the income group concept to shown that changed educational coalitions and partisan government policies went hand in hand from 1980-2010. Additionally, this relationship holds when using the education level of voters at general elections rather than income groups, as reflected in data from the British Election Studies (Clarke et al. 2011; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1993; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2002; Tables in Appendix 2.3). To some extent, findings from the income group approach are expected to differ from findings from the electoral studies approach.[22] Indeed, in the elections between 1980 and 2010, the winning parties had gathered between a third and half of the votes (McGuinness et al. 2012). This is far from the two thirds of the population that the income group approach captures. However, it is important to show that the coalition approach bears considerable resemblance to the education level of those who actually voted for the party, and that the

[22] Cf. section 3.3.2. on the use of electoral data for measuring the education level of partisan governments' constituents.

parties' electorate education level differs when we expect it to differ considering the underlying differences between the M+L and M+H income groups. The education variables of both the income and the electoral data have a similar distribution for the end of the 1980s. For the end-1990 data, there is a 10 point difference between the LIS data and the BES data on the tertiary and intermediate education categories (tertiary: LIS 20 percent, BES 10 percent). For the mid-2000 data, there is a 10 point difference on the basic education and intermediate education categories (basic: LIS 30 percent, BES 20 percent). This has to be taken into consideration when comparing the education level of the electorates with the education level of the income groups.

The education composition of Conservative voters makes us expect Exclusive Choice in the late 1980s, and the education composition of Labour voters changes from pointing to Exclusive Choice in the late 1990s to Inclusive Choice in the mid-2000s. In 1987, Labour's electoral basis was predominantly educated at the basic level (54 percent).[23] The group of Labour supporters with basic education shrank to 40 percent for the 1997 election, outgrown by the group with intermediate education credentials (around 50 percent). This picture suggests a shift from a Community Schooling support coalition in the late 1980s to early 1990s with a change towards a coalition in favour of choice throughout the 1990s. Division between Exclusive and Inclusive Choice is also expected. Interestingly, the 1997 data for the Labour party look quite similar to the 1987 data for the Conservatives: both *B* and *I* at around 45 percent, and ten percent with tertiary education. In 1997, the Conservatives' electorate was more highly educated than the Labour electorate: with 60 percent of its electorate, the intermediate category was now significantly more populated than both the basic and the tertiary taken together (*B*: 30 percent; *T*: 10 percent). Finally, both parties' electorates converged in 2005, as tertiary education increased and basic education further dropped. Between 1997 and 2005, there are thus more significant changes in the level of the Labour electorate than in the Conservative electorate.

In this section, we have seen that the policy changes correspond to what the social coalition theory expects to see with the British pattern of government alternation and educational expansion. The timeline of Table 5.2 draws together the different timelines presented above. We see that parties did pursue policies that corresponded to the coalitions that were present at that time in their electorate. The massive expansion of intermediate and tertiary education changed the electorates of both the Left and the Right. But educational

[23] Own calculations with BES data (as cited above). I used Schneider (2008) and ONS (2015) to recode the education level variable into the ISCED scheme.

expansion favoured the better off, and those who are overrepresented in the electorate on the right, earlier. This diversified that electorate much more, making a shift to Exclusive Choice probable. The Left caught up to some extent, but there, the core of lower educated without basic education remained at higher levels, this first allowed a coalition in favour of school choice. When Labour came back to power a coalition in favour of Inclusive Choice was not in place. Once it was more firmly in place, they changed their policy in favour of Inclusive Choice. In the following three sections, we will look into the extent to which these parallel changes are causally linked with evidence from causal process observations on the policy processes leading to the 1988 Education Reform Act, the 1998 Schools Standards and Framework Act, and the 2006 Education and Inspections Act.

Table 5.2: Education group coalitions and SSI reform in UK 1985-2010

	1988	**1998**	**2006**
coalition 'in power'	Centre-right	Centre-left	Centre-left
education level (income group)	M+H: $B = I+T$	M+L: $I = B+T$	M+L: $I > B+T$
education level (voters)	Conservative voters 1987: $B < I+T$ $I < B+T$	Labour voters 1997: $I = B+T$	Labour voters 2005: $I > B+T$
expected position	Exclusive Choice	Exclusive Choice or Inclusive Choice	Inclusive Choice
occurred reform	Exclusive Choice	No reform (EC status quo)	Inclusive Choice

5.2. From limited Exclusive Choice to general Exclusive Choice (1979-90)

The 1988 Education Reform Act extended Exclusive Choice beyond the existing possibility of opting out to church schools. In this section, I show that the change in the cross-class coalition underpinning Conservative education policy, together with the government's assessment of potential losses, provides a sufficient explanation for this reform. The explanation starts with a division on the matter in the Conservative Party from the early 1960s, when policy-makers increasingly acknowledged the necessity to turn their backs to

Tracked Schooling. In fact, the leadership and local policy-makers understood that the public was hostile to the existing system, which rigidly administered admissions to schools of different tracks. Yet, they also deemed the Labour Party's alternative to Tracked Schooling ill-suited to the education needs of an emerging group: children from educated families without high income. In contrast, the old idea of school choice in a non-tracked system would permit satisfactory education to such families who were looking for educational opportunities for their children. From 1979, the Conservative government then worked towards institutional change that would guarantee school choice without taking selection out of the equation. Transformative reform only made it to the top of the political agenda once Margaret Thatcher deemed it politically necessary to act. Although neoliberal ideas were certainly present and influential in education policy-making throughout that period, these are not necessary or sufficient to explain the reform. Further, it is true that policy-makers estimated there was no way back to Tracked Schooling once Labour had introduced Comprehensive Schooling, but this evidence does not uniquely point to path dependence at work: the forces that prevented them to go back where the same forces that led them to abandon Tracked Schooling as the preferred option before Labour's reform.

5.2.1. Abandoning Tracked Schooling; what next?

The policy positions of the 1988 Education Reform Act were developed as early as in the 1960s. Then, influential figures of the Conservative Party started to question the Tracked Schooling system that had been in place between 1944 and 1965. Indeed, the Conservative Party leadership and parts of its local authority representatives started to hold the firm view that Tracked Schooling was no longer electorally viable. The Minister of Education in the 1957-64 government, Edward Boyle, openly criticised the '11+ exam' and supported local authorities plans of all-ability schooling (Fenwick 1976, 113). With Labour's Circular 1965/10, all local authorities were asked to submit plans of reorganising their systems into comprehensive school systems. This was not mandatory, but Conservative local authorities were generally as happy as Labour authorities to comply (Kerckhoff 2007). By 1963, the 'wider public' supported comprehensive schools and thus legitimised a questioning of existing policy principles (Fenwick 1976, 118–119). Within the party, however, abandoning the tracked system with its grammar schools was not commonly accepted at that stage: the party was split on this issue. Partisan educationalists like A. Maude were still very much in favour of rigid selection of students to different school types, contrasting with those who were

seeking a more flexible approach to selection (Knight 1990, 23).

These groups also differed in how closely they experienced parents' demands that started to become increasingly worried about the educational and thus economic future of their children. On the one hand, those nationally (e.g. the Education Minister) and locally (e.g. London councillors) in charge of the education system directly experienced these worries and the anxiety towards Tracked Schooling and accepted reorganisation to comprehensive education (Boyle 1979, 17–18; Fenwick 1976, 93,119). On the other hand, fellow educationalists in the party and a significant number of MPs that were not directly involved in policy making disagreed with this policy shift prompting the Prime Minister to seek clarification ('The National Archive of the UK PREM 11/2644' 1959). Circular 1970/10 of the 1970-74 Conservative government further documents this division (Department of Education and Science 1970). The Conservative Government did not attempt to reintroduce Tracked Schooling, but left it to local authorities to decide on their school system (Benn and Simon 1972). At the same time, Conservative local authorities continued to abolish their tracked school systems as readily as Labour authorities (Kerckhoff 2007).

Abandoning Tracked Schooling did not mean buying into non-selective education. Conservatives were thus looking for a new policy that would bridge the division within the party. This policy debate included significant knowledge on the redistributive difference between Tracked Schooling and Community Schooling. Importantly, those in favour of abandoning the former were not in favour of embracing the latter. Edward Boyle for instance agreed with the need to select students (Knight 1990). Yet the party could not afford to support Tracked Schooling in the light of the anxiety of parents in front of the rigid 11+ examination. Even the most critical voices towards the comprehensive school movement, the so-called *Black Papers*, agreed that the 11+ examination was not a viable system (Cox and Dyson 1969). The main problem of 11+ was that talents got lost. Indeed, new research had revealed that students' ability was not innate: schools could foster ability after the age of eleven and the alternative tracks to the grammar schools did not offer a good education (Kogan 1971). This meant that potentially able children were not offered the educational opportunities they deserved. At the same time, policy papers insisted that children had different learning needs and different talents. Learning in an all-ability school was then a fallacy and the aim of *equality* should not undermine the aim of *quality* education for those who deserved it (National Council for Educational Standards 1973; National Council for Education standards 1972).

The main concern was then to offer quality education to those families that were

disappointed by failing to access a grammar school but whose children would be able to attend further education if it was not for the bad quality secondary education they received outside of the grammar schools (Boyson 1969; Cox and Dyson 1969). Those who would not be able to go into further academic education should be taught differently (National Council for Education standards 1972, 18). This set of observations from the policy process shows that policy-makers were indeed interested in institutional outcomes for different groups of the population. Accordingly, there were two types of children in the group that failed access to grammar schools: those who should get access to further academic education, and those that should not. The educational opportunities of the former were not to be wasted to improve the educational opportunities of the latter. The *Black Papers* attacked Labour policy on exactly these grounds (Cox and Dyson 1969). The new policy thus had to comply with the following aims: not decreasing the quality of education for those who succeeded in entering grammar schools and for those who did not succeed but aspired to an academic education. The policy of Exclusive Choice could comply with these aims, and I argue in the following that we have sufficient empirical evidence that this policy resulted from the necessity of a new coalition rather than being the outcome of a path-dependent process or the consequence of the influence of neoliberal ideas.

5.2.2. School Choice: a matter of path dependence or neoliberal ideas?

My argument is that the break with Tracked Schooling, the need for a new policy, and the decision to propose Exclusive Choice instead were all linked to the necessity of a new coalition on education policy within a changed electorate: educational expansion had created a new group among the Conservatives' constituents who aspired to more education, did not have the income to opt out of the local school in a low choice system, and had difficulties winning the competition for access to grammar schools. In order to strengthen this argument, this section shows that alternative explanations for the Exclusive Choice policy have to be taken seriously but fail to provide sufficient explanations of this case as they fail important empirical tests.

One alternative explanation is that the Conservatives abandoned Tracked Schooling and turned to School Choice because Labour's government of 1965-70 changed the policy options on the table with Circular 1965/10. This circular effectively introduced comprehensive schooling nationwide as local authorities were asked to submit reorganisation plans to the Department for Education. When the Conservatives took over from 1970 to 1974,

did they have the policy option to turn the system back on its head and re-introduce Tracked Schooling or had the Labour decision set the system onto an irreversible path? Three sets of evidence speak in favour of this theory. First, the new Exclusive Choice policy was only fully developed after the local authorities started to comply en masse with Labour's comprehensive education Circular 65/10. Indeed, the *Black Papers* movement started as an attack to the Labour policy and organisations like the National Council for Education Standards (NCES) were set up as a counter-offensive to new teaching methods in the all-ability school (Cox and Dyson 1969; National Council for Educational Standards 1973). Second, if divisions in the party on Tracked Schooling remained until the Labour government introduced Circular 65/10, by 1970 it was clear that there was no way 'back' to Tracked Schooling (Boyson 1973). Third, the Conservatives' first policy reaction, Circular 10/70, stands in line with the expectations of a path dependence account: they signalled opposition to the existing policy and the wish to go back to Tracked Schooling without imposing such a shift. These observations suggest that Labour's reform made a counter-reform impossible which led to the necessity of a new policy to maintain the Conservatives' goals.

Neoliberal ideas provide a second plausible explanation for the Conservatives' shift from preferring Tracked Schooling to proposing Exclusive Choice. Again, the key evidence regards the influence of authors of the *Black Papers* on Conservative education policy in the early 1970s. Rhodes Boyson, one of the most fervent opponents to Community Schooling, proposed the use of school vouchers to distribute funding and pupils to schools and guarantee access to quality education for those who sought to opt out of their local school (Boyson 1969; Cox and Dyson 1969). Proponents of the school voucher made explicit reference to Milton Friedman's text on the role of the state in education (Boyson and National Educational Association 1972; Friedman 1955). The party also created new institutions and research groups in which the idea of the voucher as the solution to the education problem became institutionalised. One example is the new research institution, the CPC, and the Selsdon group to which education policy makers like Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph contributed (Knight 1990). This group held and propagated the idea of a market in education: "An open market would widen options and education would not be subject to the priorities of the D.E.S. but to the infinite range of parental preferences." (Selsdon Group 1973, sec. 7). Within this and similar groups similar references on the benefits of a market in education abounded. The education market and the school voucher in particular seemed to provide a coherent alternative to the discredited option of Tracked Schooling. From this standpoint, the neoliberal account could provide an explanation for the move to Exclusive Choice.

But neither the path dependence nor the neoliberalism account pass decisive empirical tests. A path dependence account requires us to find evidence of a range of costs to reform that are endogenous to the existing institution. The Conservatives anticipated costs from a potential shift to Tracked Schooling. However, these costs were only of political nature. As shown above, the political costs to Tracked Schooling came from families that were disappointed with the grammar school system. Internal communication and policy briefs of the Conservative Party at that time make consistent reference to parents as the relevant actor when it comes to the impossibility to go back to Tracked Schooling (Conservative Party 1976, 61; National Council for Educational Standards 1973; National Council for Education standards 1972). The other actors mentioned are local authorities and teacher unions. Comprehensive schooling did not alter the power position of these actors. Further, when the Conservatives came back to government in 1970, local authorities were still in the process of reorganising their systems (Benn and Simon 1972; Simon 1991). They did this by layering their new system onto existing schools. Technically, reversing the movement might have been less costly than continuing to implement the comprehensive schooling system. Additionally, if technical costs had been the problem, it is unclear how institutional change towards school choice would have differed from institutional change towards Tracked Schooling in the early 1970s. The impossibility to return to Tracked Schooling after the introduction of Comprehensive schooling then hinges on the political costs coming from dissatisfied parents. These political costs were feared as far back as the late 1950s and well before the introduction of comprehensive schooling. A path dependence account would have required showing that the political costs were endogenous to the new institutions and exogenous to structural changes occurring at the same time. Yet, we observe that structural changes occurring before the reform were already relevant as political costs that made policy-makers wary of further pursuing Tracked Schooling and actively seeking for an alternative.

Similarly, neoliberal ideas fail two decisive empirical tests making them certainly associated with the policy process, but without causal relevance. First, if neoliberal ideas had had a causal role in the process, we would expect to observe that proponents of school choice understand it as a market instrument in education. In short: those who propose school choice believe that it is an instrument of economic efficiency and that a market in education is the best way of organising the public service. However, Conservative Educationalists proposing school choice in the early 1970s also referred to legislation and policies that mentioned the right to choose a school before Milton Friedman's call for the voucher. The Vice-Chairman of the NCES stressed that the idea that parents should get the right to choose a school was

already mentioned in the 1944 Education Act's Section 68, that a Manual of Guidance on the matter was issued in 1952, and that Circular 2/68 of 1953 called local authorities to only use zoning if necessary (Boden 1973, 6–7). In his view, no new legislation was required for the government to ask local authorities to organise the allocation of students according to their parents' wishes. The legislative origins of school choice in English education hence were not connected to education as a market place. Furthermore, the trade-offs between 'neighbourhood schooling' (Community Schooling) and school choice were also discussed in Socialist circles in the early 1970s. The Socialist Educational Association published a leaflet that identified different groups of proponents of school choice. On the one hand, they criticised right-wingers' attitude towards education as a market place. On the other hand, they pointed out that parents groups who had been active in the fight for comprehensive schooling provided "support of quite a different kind for parental choice systems" (Socialist Educational Association 1970, 4–5). Parents not exposed to market ideas and genuinely interested in how to improve public education were thus campaigning in favour of school choice.

Second, if the presence and spreading of neoliberal ideas had been a necessary condition for the school choice policy of the Right, then we would have expected the ideas-carriers to matter at one of two stages in the decision making process. The first stage of influence could have been about undermining Tracked Schooling as the policy of the Conservatives. We have seen above, however, that those actors in charge of dismantling the Tracked Schooling policy within the Conservatives responded to public discontent with the existing system. A White Paper in 1958 for instance does not mention school choice as an alternative policy, but is chiefly about the problems related to Tracked Schooling (HM Government 1958, 4–7). The second stage of influence could have been in the period of uncertainty after Tracked Schooling had been delegitimised. Did the neoliberal think tanks and research groups of the early 1970s exogenously push the agenda of school choice? The evidence rather suggests that they were set up to further develop a policy that had already been decided as the way out of the dilemma between tracked schooling and community schooling. The director of the Conservatives Research Department A. Longden argued in an internal memorandum in 1965 that the main problem with reorganisation was that good grammar schools were closed down, but he "felt it important to adapt – and be seen to adopt a positive, not a negative, approach to the changes proposed" (Knight 1990, 32). In the same memorandum, he proposed two aims for Conservative education policy: pursuing educational excellence and increasing opportunities of parental choice (ibid. p. 33). Ideas carriers of the voucher like Rhodes Boyson came to influence the Conservative Education policy some years

later (ibid. p. 41).

5.2.3. A policy for those with middle class education and working class income

For Conservative policy-makers and education policy advisers school choice was the best option to make sure that those who supported grammar schools and the disappointed middle class would both get the high quality education they demanded. We can infer this from the writings of the National Council for Educational Standards. There, influential educationalists exchanged on the policy constraints imposed by a dissatisfied middle class, the necessity for different children to receive a different kind of education, and the importance of keeping the 'ethos' of grammar schools alive in a non-tracked school system. According to Conservative Educationalists, the necessity for reform explicitly flew from middle class parents who could not bear that their children might not access the grammar school, especially considering the bad quality of the Secondary Modern alternative. In some writings, they even portray such parents as 'betrayers' of the school system, having pushed for a reform but then avoided a true all-ability school given residential sorting patterns (National Council for Education standards 1972, 16–17). School choice allowed shifting the responsibility of accessing a good school to such dissatisfied parents. They could then decide which kind of pedagogical approach they thought fit their children's educational needs best. This was important as they were convinced that children of different abilities should be educated in different schools or with a different pedagogical approach. Moreover, they claimed that schools differed in quality and 'ethos' (National Council for Educational Standards 1973).

The new system should hence allow the able children that would have accessed the highest track in a tracked system to get access to a similar school. The only difference that the choice system should have was the shift of responsibility of allocation from the local authority to the schools and the parents. School choice was hence the key to maintain a certain level of differentiation in the system and to shift the responsibility to the politically active middle class. As far as a working class child was *able* such a child would also be able to access a better school than the school of its neighbourhood. The emphasis on the distinction between the able working class child and the unable working class child on the one hand, and the idea that success in education was linked to social class on the other hand, shows that the main concern was not about making a system that would raise standards for all, but to allow opportunities for the middle class children and the working class children that already started off with higher ability or aspiration than their peers. If we consider this repeatedly occurring

class analysis (e.g. Conservative Party 1976, 61) and the close fit that school choice provides to the original policy problem that stems from a cross-class conflict, then we can infer that we would have been likely to observe another option to be chosen if school choice had not provided the solution to the problem.

The traces we have from the decision-making process within the party itself concur with the connection that policy advisers made between school choice and solving the education problem of the middle class. The variation of manifesto statements between 1970 and 1979 shows the steps the party went through to perfect their school choice policy. In 1970, the concrete policy proposal was to give the local authorities the choice to reorganise along comprehensive lines or along tracked schooling lines taking into account parental wishes (Conservative Party 1975a). Between 1970 and 1974, policy makers observed that Circular 10/70 did not bear the expected fruits, agreed that a new policy was needed and concluded to use parental choice as the alternative policy (Knight 1990, 79). For the February 1974 elections, the manifesto hence adds that local authorities have to "allow genuine scope for parental choice" (Conservative Party 1975b). As Christopher Knight recounts, Conservative canvassers at the February 1974 election met with parents particularly worried about the educational standards of their local schools. Following the elections, and predicting that a new election was soon to follow, education policy was thoroughly reassessed and bolstered. The result of this was a much more detailed education section in the October 1974 manifesto (Conservative Party 1975c, 442):

"Many parents are deeply worried about the quality of the education which their children receive […]. These problems have accumulated over the years in an atmosphere over-charged with politics; too often, the debate over education has centred on the kind of school rather than on the quality of the education provided; and too few parents have been allowed any real say over their children's education. […] Our overriding concern is with the educational needs of the children. Our first objective will therefore be to preserve good schools of whatever kind. We are in no way against comprehensive schools: what we oppose is the ruthless imposition of these schools, regardless of local needs and in defiance of parents' wishes. […] We will expect local authorities to make their schemes of reorganisation sufficiently flexible to include grammar and direct grant schools of proven worth. This will help to meet the needs of bright and able children, especially those from disadvantaged areas. We will scrutinise zoning arrangements to ensure that they do not restrict or eliminate choice."

We see here that quality of schools was a major worry. The ambition was to "preserve" good schools, not to improve the whole system. Considering that quality is a worry, if policymakers had believed in school choice as a market instrument that actually improved the quality of the system, we would have expected them to mention that they held a solution to this genuine and important problem. Interestingly, the 1979 manifesto added little more content to what had been laid out in 1974 (Bale 2012, 236; Conservative Party 1979). In none of these manifestos did the Conservatives explicitly refer to the idea of the voucher that was already present as early as in the first Black Papers in 1969. In contrast, in all these policy documents they referred to different classes and different educational abilities of children.

With this evidence, we have gained more confidence in the coalition approach, while we have lost some confidence in the neoliberal ideas and path dependence theories. The latter two theories have failed empirical hoop tests – observations we would have expected to make with high probability if these theories were true. For the coalition approach, we could measure the independent variable with different types of evidence: internal communication, historical accounts, and variation across time. We were also able to account for the causal mechanism that tied the changed class landscape that had emerged with educational expansion to the new policy: the observation and rationalisation of a new politically active group on education policy, the policy constraints posed by this group, and the incorporation in the manifesto once this group had again voiced its concerns in 1974 and the 1970/10 Circular policy had failed. Again, different sources accounted for this evidentiary task: internal communication, and documents communicating policy positions to the wider public, and variation of these according to the actors (the educationalists being very critical to the middle class parents causing the necessity of a new policy). Finally, we could show that the coalitional approach stands on its own and exogenously from the path dependence and neoliberal accounts.

5.2.4. From policy preference to the 1988 Education Reform Act

Once in government, the Conservatives consistently pursued the Exclusive Choice agenda. However, it took Thatcher's government almost a decade to effectively generalise choice beyond the existing publicly funded private providers. I contend that Thatcher only put systemic education reform on top of the agenda in 1986 once she had understood that the dire state of the public services, and especially education, could be a liability to her government. In short, we can distinguish between three phases of this government period: first, the government enacted some reforms that clearly pointed into the Exclusive Choice direction,

they were thus truthful to the policies of the early 1970s. These reforms were easy to implement but also did not amount to generalise school choice beyond church schools and other government subsidised private schools. Second, the government thought of regulating allocation of funds and students via a voucher system, but quickly dropped this from the agenda and dropped planned education bills from the agenda. Third, the Secretary of State Keith Joseph resigned, leaving the place to Kenneth Baker, in 1986. Baker then swiftly adapted the voucher plans to a more realistic policy and prepared the 1988 Education Reform Act.

The Exclusive Choice agenda started with the 1979 Act (HM Government 1979). This Act was a response to Labour's 1976 Act under which local authorities were obliged to turn their school system into a comprehensive one (HM Government 1976). As in 1970 with Circular 1970/10, Thatcher – now Prime Minister – repealed its predecessor's reform direction, leaving it again to local authorities to decide on tracking within their school systems. A few local authorities (e.g. Kent) succeeded in rolling back their reorganisation plans submitted under the 1976 legislation. Others tried to do so, but could not withstand local protests against bringing back the grammar schools (Simon 1991, 476). The 1979 Act stands in line with the preference for a selective student sorting system. The 1980 Act came with two measures of importance here (HM Government 1980). First, it provided the legal basis for the Assisted Places Scheme. This scheme permitted government-independent private schools to select pupils whose fees would be paid by public funding. Again, this is a very explicit Exclusive Choice measure: it allows opt out of the local school for those who get selected. The second measure was to widen school choice in the public system. Parents could now appeal to a specific body if their child did not get access to the school of their preference. The local authority still had the last word in the allocation process as long as it justified the allocation on grounds of economic efficiency (Feintuck 2013; Simon 1991).

This first round of legislation had apparent limits for accomplishing the policy objectives as explained above: a lack of local authorities that did side with the tracked schooling system, a limited amount of funding for the Assisted Places Scheme, and the very little effective choice parents had in an administratively controlled allocation system (Simon 1991). One powerful idea for expanding choice further was the idea of the voucher. When Keith Joseph became Education Secretary in 1981, he was sympathetic to this idea (Stuart 2013). Two years later, the voucher was officially off the agenda (HM Government 1985). The reason was little expected immediate improvement of the system coupled with the question of how to turn the idea into a practical policy (Simon 1991). The Conservative

Policy Group on Education assessed that public opinion might turn against such a policy in the context of the years of industrial action from teachers unions that had dominated the education agenda in the early 1980s (The Policy Group on Education / Conservative Party 1983). This again shows that neoliberal ideas were not sufficient to account for the policies: first of all, policy makers were sceptical about the economic efficiency and functioning of the education market on a theoretical level. Second, public opinion was more important than potential better education in the long run. This does not mean that the power of teacher unions and local authorities was not to be reduced due to path dependent effects. The measures that were taken to increase parents' voice in the system had important implications for the power of teachers and local authorities in the steering of schools (Stuart (interview)[24], HM Government (1986 art. 79)). Rather, the expected benefits of the voucher were less immediate than the risk of public opinion turning against the government on education.

The tide turned when the state of education became a political risk. Analyses of the big loss at the Brecon and Radnor by-election in 1985 pointed at the dissatisfaction of voters with the public services (New Statesman 1985). Nick Stuart, a senior civil servant in the education department, recalled that this by-election made education policy a national policy: the cabinet held the Education Secretary Keith Joseph the education secretary responsible for this failure (Stuart (interview)). He resigned after having finished a started reform project on qualifications (Baker 1993). Kenneth Baker was appointed as a person who knew how to navigate a complex political landscape and carry out controversial reform (Sheerman (interview)). He now had the full support of Margaret Thatcher to take power away from local authorities in order to improve the quality of the system. Thatcher wanted to act quickly (Stuart 2013). With his 1988 Education Reform Act, local authorities could not anymore interfere with parental choice, as new regulation meant that schools had to accept pupils up to their physical capacity (HM Government 1988). Also, they lost control over the curriculum and school management. The curriculum was centralised to the state level and school management decentralised to the local school, where parents had now more voice in the governing boards. Parents could also turn schools into grant-maintained schools that would become financially independent of local authorities and their own admission authority (Baker 1993). This was to increase the pool of schools that could select their own pupils. Even if not explicit, it was clear that this fostered potential for more selection in the system, considering the studies that had shown the selective practices in church schools (Simon 1991).

[24] Refer to Appendix 1 for information on all interviewees cited in this chapter.

In sum, political risk of reform had turned Thatcher away from supporting Keith Joseph in his struggle to turn the voucher idea into feasible and effective policy until the mid-1980s. Political risk of non-reform was what shifted the focus on the problem of school quality under local authority control. Centralisation was key to the willingness to improve standards and thus also about sending a strong signal that the central government was caring for the problem of quality education. Parental choice of schools also gave those who might worry about quality a more potent tool to send their child to a better school. The Exclusive Choice characteristic of this policy shows that the government mostly cared for soothing the disquiet amongst those who would get selected into the school of their choice.

The Exclusive Choice system, in sum, originated in the Conservatives' need to find a new policy that would allow a coalition between the winners and losers of Tracked Schooling within its constituency. Exclusive Choice came to replace Tracked Schooling as the Conservatives' education policy as it combined the possibility for the more able and more ambitious to differentiate with a shift in responsibility for access to quality schools from the local authorities to the anxious parents themselves. While being all too aware of the relationship between socio-economic background and educational opportunities, they managed to reform the system so as to privilege their own constituents once again. The simultaneous development of market ideology did not in itself cause or contribute to the causal mechanism of this reform trajectory. Also, policy-makers were not faced with a reduced set of options because of the path that Labour had embarked on in 1965. Finally, they shied away from making full-fledged systemic reform for the political risk they associated with it until they experienced loss and interpreted this loss as a criticism towards public service – especially education – delivery.

5.3. Exclusive Choice and New Labour 1994-2002

The creation of an 'Admissions Code' in 1998 and its subsequent change of legal status from a guidance paper to a legally binding document in 2006 were the steps that bifurcated the English school system's path from Exclusive to Inclusive Choice. The code enumerated the rules to be used by 'admission authorities', i.e. Local Authorities (LAs) or publicly financed schools independent from LA control. The number of schools that remained their own admission authorities, i.e. that were responsible for deciding who got access to them in case of oversubscription, had increased with Thatcher's Education Reform Act of 1988. Alongside

church schools with their varying degree of dependency on the LA, new school types had been created: Grant-Maintained Schools and City Technology Colleges (CTCs). The Admissions Code banned the use of selection by ability, but until 2006 remained a guidance document. It did not prohibit schools to test for students' abilities during interviews and through other means.

The two New Labour governments from 1997 to 2005 thus kept the Exclusive Choice system in place. With the Education and Inspection Bill of 2006, during Tony Blair's third term, the Admissions Code got statutory value and hence gave way to the Inclusive Choice alternative. In this section, I will look at how the Labour party came to support a school choice policy from the mid-1990s onward, and to what extent the cause for that policy shift is to be found in a changed socio-economic composition of its middle and low income group constituents. I argue that this policy move was an instance of hard political choices, sources of conflict within the party, and reflecting concerns about who should get access to better schools. Importantly, the party was split on the matter, with an important minority still opposing school choice. The leadership instead consciously traded the opportunities of the least educated and endowed families for those of the more educated and endowed families when it came to Student Sorting Institutions. When Labour first came back to government in 1997, around half the male M and L income voters had basic education only, closely followed by the intermediate educated group (Figure 5). Thus, the groups that did not benefit from Inclusive Choice, namely the basic and tertiary education group, made up a bigger share of the M+L coalition than the intermediate education groups. In 1997 Britain, there was no M+L majority that would benefit from Inclusive Choice. There was also no political coalition within the party to push for the Inclusive Choice type over the Exclusive Choice type.

5.3.1. Old policies and new aspirations

The division on the issue of school choice and its selective features within the Labour party became apparent shortly after Tony Blair became party leader 1994. It was the result of a reflection on Labour's education policy that had started with the 1992 electoral defeat. We can trace this process with analysing internal communication and public position papers before the 1992 election, after this electoral defeat, and shortly after Blair became the new party leader in 1994. The 1992 manifesto contained a pledge to end Thatcher's Exclusive Choice policy (Labour Party 1992). The corresponding policy paper was principally about the lack of funding for education (Labour Party 1994). Its authors asserted that Conservative

policy divided the country into the elite on the one hand and the rest on the other hand. This was not much different from the views the Labour Party expressed on Conservative policy in 1979, arguing that choice fostered inequality (Labour Research Department 1979). Accordingly, Labour's task was to improve state education for all those not belonging to the elite. After the election, analyses of the society's structural change were used to adapt the party's positions to the "broad mass in the middle" (Lipsey 1992, 8). Education became a central policy area in order to speak to "voters with aspirations for social mobility for themselves and their children" (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001, 11; Straw and Blunkett 1992). On the one hand, the party continued to campaign against the Grant-Maintained Schools with which Thatcher's government had strengthened the selective element of the existing Exclusive Choice system. On the other hand, their policy documents were explicit about their respect of "aspirations of parents" "who are simply making the best decision for the future of their children" (Straw and Blunkett 1992, 1;9). As a new leader, Tony Blair noticed that the policy did not speak to such aspiring parents enough (Ryan (interview)). The existing policy spoke to all 'non-elite' parents. This did not match with the specific need to speak to the 'aspiring parents' in contrast to the poor and non-aspiring families. There was a mismatch between the measures proposed in the new policy paper and the new leadership's intention to speak to those parents that had formed part of the Conservatives' choice coalition.

Summer 1994 marked the departure from Labour's policy of merely improving comprehensive schooling via funding. As early as the week of Blair's election as new party leader was it clear that he would not tolerate a simple shift of rhetoric (Meikle 1994). This shift could not happen without following through with concrete policy proposals. At the occasion of the launch of the policy document developed under the former leadership, he added school choice as one centrepiece of Labour education policy, thus disrupting the clear line against Grant-Maintained Schools (Ryan (interview)). This mismatch between Blair's interpretation of what should be in the document and what the authors wrote underlines the discrepancy between the new leadership's expectations towards education policy and the party's existing approach to education. The conflict was not settled by the Party Conference of October 1994, where again, Blair spoke about choice while former shadow Education Minister Ann Taylor spoke about the existing policy paper (Bates 1994; The Guardian 1994). At the occasion of a cabinet reshuffle in Winter 1994, Blair appointed a new education team with known reformers of local education systems like David Blunkett and Michael Barber (The Guardian 1994). The members of the team knew that Blair thought that comprehensive education as Labour had defended it in the two previous decades was inappropriate for

catering to those families who had more aspirations for their children. As M. Barber noted before he became an adviser to Blair: "(Blair) criticised the traditional idea of comprehensive schooling because 'it did not come to terms with the diversity and flexibility of provision needed to meet the diverse needs and talent of all our people.' In short, Labour must weld its traditional commitment to equality with a new recognition of diversity" (Barber 1994) Once the team had developed its new policy document, it responded – amongst other measures – with a new pledge for building upon and improving the choice system of student sorting that the Conservatives had set up (Labour Party 1995a).

5.3.2. School choice: Thatcher's legacy?

My central claim here is to challenge the existing narrative that New Labour chose to shift its policy to the choice-friendly alternative because of the Thatcherism legacy. This existing narrative can take two forms. First of all, New Labour is often used as synonym to the Third Way. Hence, its policies are the outcome of the ideological middle-ground found between 'old' social democratic ideas and neoliberalism. The second iteration of the Thatcherite legacy can be formulated as an argument of path dependence: the marketisation reforms of 1988 produced institutional feedback effects that constrained Labour to keep its policies within the market framework. First, I will show that we indeed need to take these arguments seriously as they have some solid empirical foundations. Then, however, I will expose the empirical reasons for doubting that either of these accounts played a causally significant role in Labour's policy shift.

There are good empirical reasons to make neoliberal ideas responsible for Labour's adherence to school choice. The well-known connection between New Labour, the Third Way ideology, and neoliberalism also makes Labour's turn to school choice not that much of a puzzle. It is certain that the Labour Party had to take an ideological positioning vis-à-vis Thatcherite neoliberal economic and social policy and did so with the Policy Review of 1987. In that context, the Labour Party became more market friendly, turning its "arguments *in critique of* capitalist structures into arguments *for* these structures" and shifting from "discourses of utopian alternative" to "discourses of improvement and efficiency" (Andersson 2010, 10–12). The market is then good as long as it is efficient. The work of political economists like Jane Gingrich (2011), Colin Hay (1999), and Jenny Andersson (2010) has shown that Blair's New Labour accepted the market in education as long as it was an efficient tool to improve education. That New Labour used the instrument of the market to reduce

producer power where they deemed the producers to be responsible for failure of delivery is also quite certain (Barber 2007). Michael Barber, one of the architects of the New Labour education policy notes that when Blair instructed the new education team about his goals, he believed state intervention to be useful when employed in "inverse proportion to success" (Barber 2007, 22). Blair's team adhered to the idea that the market was an instrument that could lead to more efficient public service delivery in education under certain circumstances. I therefore do not claim here that neoliberal ideas were absent from his team's minds when designing the New Labour education policy.

Another explanation for Labour's change of course is that the institutional change of 1988 set the education system on a path that limited Labour's policy options, forcing the party's position, as it were, to converge with the existing market in education. For this account, we have to look for evidence of costs to change generated by the new institutional framework itself. Two types of evidence comply with such an account. First, it is undisputed that the leadership responded to parents' anxiety that it would abolish the 1988 Act's Grant Maintained Schools after the 1992 election (Ryan (interview), The Guardian 1994). Second, the new school types that the Act had created – Grant Maintained Schools and City Technology Colleges (CTC) – had also organised as networks, becoming a new interest group closely associated with Labour's policy-making process (Senior Civil Servant (1) (interview)[25], Exley (2012)). A core member of the team, Conor Ryan noted that one of the first action David Blunkett took as a new shadow Education Secretary was to invite the headteachers of Grant Maintained Schools and to consult with them. Moreover, Cyril Taylor the adviser that Ken Baker had hired to put into place his CTC policy became an important member of the education policy team and created the influential CTC trust (later SST and SSAT) to further develop and spread differentiation between schools and the use of philanthropy to improve failing schools (Stuart (interview), Senior Civil Servant (1), Meek (interview)). Sonia Exley's work (2012) shows that Cyril Taylor and his trust were core drivers for the success of the specialist schools and Academies policies to which I will come back in the fourth section of this chapter.

To what extent, then, was the Thatcherite legacy causally linked to the new education team's policy choice? The evidence from the decision-making process strongly suggests that the path dependence account does not hold. This is chiefly the case because there were no technical costs associated with giving local authorities a bigger say in the admissions process

[25] Some interviewees preferred not to be named. I provide further information on the interviewee in Appendix 1.

of all schools, Grant-Maintained Schools included, and we cannot reduce the political costs to positive feedback effects from the 1988 Education Act. The 'quasi-market' could have been adapted easily and without costs by giving local authorities the right to intervene in the admissions process and examine opt-out requests individually. In terms of technical costs, this would simply shift the burden of administering the admissions process from schools back to the local authority. Labour introduced several measures for the state to manage the market more tightly, especially to intervene in the quality of 'failing schools' (Gingrich 2011, 141–143), thus shifting administrative tasks from the school or the local authority to the central authority. Regulating admissions could have been one of those. Moreover, we cannot reduce the political costs associated with rolling back school choice to positive feedback effect from the 'Thatcherite' institutions and therefore give this cost an institutional as opposed to interest-based origin. I will show that the interest-based account is exogenous from the path dependent account when presenting the evidence that speaks for the interest-based account.

Another path dependence mechanism focuses on interest groups which are nested in existing institutions. Here, one could ask whether the increasing importance of the CTC trust prevented change. It is quite clear though that the CTC trust became influential with respect to the specialist schools and Academies programme that would become flagship policies from 2000 onwards. However, no mention was made of specialist schools and Academies in the early formulations of the policy (Labour Party 1995a). Also, different accounts from the Labour team do not mention Cyril Taylor as an adviser at that stage while being very consistent on the role of each of the other individuals in the team and acknowledging his importance for the specialist school policy (Barber 2007; Blunkett 2006; Ryan (interview)).

Church schools are a further relevant institutional player. The question here is whether Labour actually had the option of introducing Community Schooling in a system where church schools were their own admissions authorities. This is certainly an important question. However, we need to ask whether actors who desired change were confronted with this difficult hurdle to pass, or whether they did not want to reform that system in the first place. Interestingly, we find that Jack Straw, one of the core Labour education policy-makers between 1988 and 1994, was actually inclined to expand the network of government funded religious schools to other faiths, as Michael Barber recalls (Barber 2007, 11). David Blunkett noted in his diaries that some negotiations with the Bishops took place in the run-up to the 1998 legislation but that the team had "never intended" to alter their admissions arrangements (Blunkett 2006, 48). Such pieces of evidence naturally cannot help us define whether the position depended on an idea that church schools were impossible to reform. Yet, it is helpful

to note that Labour was friendly towards church schools even in times when it planned to fundamentally call into question the existence of the independent schools sector in the early 1980s, another long-standing institution of the English school system (Labour Research Department 1979).

Similarly to the path dependence account, the neoliberal ideas account fails decisive empirical tests and thus cannot explain Labour's support of school choice. There are two problems with the assertion that Blair chose to be choice-friendly because he believed in the Third Way, a set of ideas that is definitely affine to the market logic. First, this view omits a variable that could drive both the Third Way ideology and Blair's affinity to school choice. This is the concept of the knowledge-based economy, a core tenet of the Third Way construct (Andersson 2010; Wood 2002). As Colin Hay (1999) has explained, the Third Way was mainly linked to the idea that the globalised economy required a new set of policies. One can then ask whether this was a structural reality of the time or part of the neoliberal paradigm. The concept of the knowledge-based economy is closely related to this question. Jenny Andersson (2010) has proposed that the concept of the knowledge-based economy acted as a trigger to the shift to Third Way ideology for the Labour party social policy. Again, one can debate whether policy-makers' thoughts on the knowledge-based economy were rooted in structural factors like educational expansion and deindustrialisation. In that scenario, the social-structural explanation affected both the school choice preference and the Third Way ideology. This approach weakens the theory that neoliberal ideas were the source of New Labour's preference for school choice. In contrast, it is clear that New Labour's strategists were aware of these structural factors and that investing in education was core to their economic strategy. Blair mentioned this as soon as he started to campaign for party leader and ran on education in his 1997 campaign (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2001, 11). This ambition is also reflected in his early mantra to focus on "standards, not structures" (Barber 2007, 23; Blunkett 2006, 49), also more related to the ambition of improving Britain's skill base than to neoliberal ideas of organisational reform for efficiency gains. Had Blair believed in the market qua Third Way qua neoliberalism, we would have expected him to aim at improving the market system with its multiple failures that Thatcher had put into place, hence, a focus on *structure*.

The second problem is that the Third Way approach preaches the existence of the class-less society: "it refuses to believe that society is stratified by classes, with fundamentally antagonistic interests engaged in zero-sum conflicts over the distribution of resources." (Wood 2002, 49). Stewart Wood has argued that this tenet of the Third Way produces

especially relevant tensions within this ideology when it comes to education policy. These eventually require "tough choices" (Wood 2002, 60). Blair's education team however was very well versed in inequality of educational opportunity and its dependence on class. The advisers did not believe that education was a class-less matter but were ready to face the tough choices required to reform education. Blair's core advisers heavily criticised the neoliberal principles of the education market on the basis of theoretical rather than ideological arguments of market failure and its negative effect on equality of opportunity (e.g. Miliband 1991).

5.3.3. Deep divisions on education policy

In contrast to the alternative explanations, I contend that the evidence strongly increases our confidence in the coalition-based account. I will show this in three steps. First, I discuss in more detail the observation that Blair's policy team was well informed by the redistributive trade-offs they faced with the decision of how to handle student allocation. Then, I show that this trade-off was the core of a split within the party that did not happen on the same lines as the criticism towards the general criticism to New Labour, but was chiefly about inequality of opportunity. We would expect such a split in a situation where a significant part of Labour constituents would lose more under Labour's new policy than under their old preferences. Finally, I present the importance of the question of student admissions and selectiveness in the policy decision. The conflict on this matter was within the policy team and no bigger group of those opposed to Blair's policy in the party was fighting for Inclusive Choice. As we would expect, there was no politically relevant Inclusive Choice coalition at that time and Blair then chose to stick to Exclusive Choice.

The most compelling evidence of the team's knowledge and attention towards the relationship between school choice and inequality of opportunity can be found in David Miliband's IPPR piece of 1991. This paper was highly theoretical and had benefitted from the advice of leading scholars in the field. The author, who would become part of Blair's core education team three years later, made a well-researched case for Inclusive Choice. All the elements of what would later become the Admissions Code were present in the paper's proposal.

The marrow of his argument was that "the four mechanisms through which division and inequality are fostered go to the heart of market operations, and are centred on *choice, school selection, interdependent decisions*, and the *position of 'inferior' schools*" (Miliband

1991, 13 emphasis original). Accordingly, the problem of choice is that it creates incentives for parents and for schools which have negative consequences for the opportunities of other children. To tackle school quality parents can exercise voice and exit. School choice skews parents' behaviour towards exit. The problem is that both voice and exit are exercised more readily by parents with more resources: "from the examination of potential schools to the time and resources put into travel arrangements to allow middle class children to have greater choice than their poorer counterparts" (p.14). It was thus clear to Miliband that independently of creating incentives for schools to select, the incentives for parents to exit create inequalities.

Moreover, he pointed out that "the problem…is not that parents getting their preference of school do not still do their best to improve their school: it is that parents who don't get their children into the best schools, which have chosen the 'best' children are left with a mammoth task" (p. 14) And: " 'inferior' schools and the pupils in them are left to make do with what funds and teachers are left" (p. 16) In the paper, his toughest critique is addressed to the problem of the incentives that schools have to select students: "Early selection makes it far more likely that the inequalities between children when they arrive at school will be repeated in later education and life" (p.12). Further: "The rationale behind good education and successful schools does not drive good schools to expand, but instead to select students to ration entry. ... The incentive will be for schools to try and 'cream off' the highest achieving students" (p. 14). Despite the knowledge that choice creates inequality, even if regulated, Miliband concluded the paper with advocating Inclusive Choice: "Involving parents in choosing schools can be the first step towards a more productive relationship between school and parent for the rest of the child's school career: education is, after all, a partnership – between parent and teacher, individual and state, and private and public spheres" (p. 20).

Miliband's policy papers did not go unnoticed: according to Michael Barber's (2007) account of the team's first meetings, Miliband's work at the IPPR had impressed. The main issue the team started to work on was how to improve the quality for those 'inferior schools', as Conor Ryan recalled: "there was a popular sort of sense that comprehensive schools particularly in inner London and in some of the inner cities weren't working, and weren't delivering. David Blunkett actually sought to reframe the comprehensive school debate. … But at the same time we felt we had to park the issue of grammar schools and Grant-Maintained Schools." (Ryan (interview)).

This trade-off between improving education for the least well-off and allowing

'aspirational' parents to send their children to another – better – school created a rift within the party. This division became most apparent at the 1995 Party Conference where the party leadership presented the new strategy and put it to a vote. In the process of designing the new policy, David Blunkett and his team had led negotiations with the unions, activists, and local councillors; they had consulted the heads of the Grant Maintained Schools and the local education administrations (Labour Party 1995a). Despite these internal negotiations, "at one stage it genuinely looked as if [they] were going to lose the vote" (Blunkett 2006, 4). "It was actually one of the tightest votes at the time … it was actually one of the most contentious issues, it was the most contentious issue at this particular party conference, in 1995" (Ryan (interview)). The reasons for this contentiousness were straightforward. The leadership did not want to compromise the educational opportunities of those that got a better education in a choice system. The Diversity and Excellence policy paper considered the importance of children to be educated according to their individual needs as a top priority and considered it as "inevitable that all parents wish their children to go to the school most appropriate for their needs. This is both right and understandable" (Labour Party 1995a, 10).

The opposition, in turn, was very much concerned with the inequalities created by keeping Thatcher's system in place – even in its modified version. Roy Hattersley was the leader of that group. They were concerned about the "social mix in the neighbourhood comprehensive" and wanted to change the structures that "worr[ied] about the about 20 per cent of the pupils and [...] let the other 80 per cent take what is left over afterwards" (Labour Party 1995b, 139). This language still differentiated between a 20 percent elite and an 80 percent rest of pupils that went to state schools, as in Labour's previous policy papers. Blair's team instead focused on another composition of society: in it, there were those pupils attending "failing" or "inferior" schools on the one hand, likely to be from disadvantaged social background, and attending one of the "substantial minority of schools that simply are not delivering the education our children need" (Labour Party 1995a, 4). On the other hand, there were those families who wished to educate their children according to their needs, and who had the resources to make an assessment of these needs and to find the appropriate school. The potential discontent at reducing choice of the latter should not reduce the capacity for Labour in government to improve opportunities for the former by improving school standards. In turn, opportunities of the former should not come to damage those of the latter. This debate did not simply occur for ideological differences. Roy Hattersley, the leader of the opposition to that policy, was not ideologically opposed to school choice. Hattersley had been engaged in improving individuals' experience with public services in the follow-up to

Labour's 1987 policy review. He supported the vision that policies should target the individual rather than the community (Shaw 1993). In this particular case of school choice and selectiveness, he was worried about the effects of the policy on inequality (Brown 1995; Wintour 1995). Where Blair wanted many schools for many talents, Hattersley proposed "one single unified system" (Labour Party 1995b, 139).

A third set of evidence about the knowledge of redistributive trade-offs and the willingness to make the necessary tough choices regards the question of how to deal with the relationship between school choice and selection. As Roy Hattersley pointed out at the 1995 Annual Conference, the policy was not detailed enough to understand the extent to which Labour in government would reduce the possibility of schools to select pupils (Labour Party 1995b, 139). This ambiguity became evident with Blunkett's promise of 'no selection' under Labour, which was subsequently transformed to mean 'no *more* selection', ruling out additional means of selection rather than ruling out selection altogether (Wintour 1995). On the one hand, the care the education team took to criticise the selectiveness of existing choice arrangement in their *Diversity and Excellence* policy paper shows that they acknowledged its consequences for equality of opportunity (Labour Party 1995a). On the other hand, the team took great care not to risk confusion in the public discourse between banning selective practices within the choice system and abolishing the remaining grammar schools. In his diaries David Blunkett portrayed one meeting he had with Blair, Ryan and Miliband early on in government on the question of an admissions code. Blair was asking "whether we would *have to* have a code of practice and an admissions policy that made proximity the main issue" (Blunkett 2006, 48 my emphasis). After that meeting, Blunkett reflected that "the only way of overcoming that is to bus children and have catchment areas which bear no resemblance to locality. So although Tony touches on an interesting issue, he does so from a less than egalitarian approach." Both Exclusive Choice and Inclusive Choice were on the table at that stage and uncertainty about which one to choose was high. There was no vocal enough group within the leadership or in the party that would continue to advocate for Inclusive Choice and Blair did not seem to believe that regulating admissions would contribute to his agenda in a positive way.

To summarise, we have indications that actors did believe in Third Way ideology and the market in the first place and that they had a concern of antagonising those who had won from Thatcher's reforms. We lack indications that these factors played a causal role in the process of defining the policy and that they are exogenous from the interest-based approach. In contrast, we have evidence that advisers like Miliband were in favour of developing a

choice system independently from the political reasoning of political costs to reform Thatcher's Education Act and on the basis that it improved education for a specific socio-economic group. We also have evidence that with equal ideas with respect to Third Way ideology of investing in education and putting individual rights before collective rights, actors differed on what group had to be targeted by Labour's student sorting policy. Hence, we have evidence that the interest-based account is exogenous from the path dependence and neoliberal ideas account. Moreover, the observations presented here account for the causal connection between a view of a new society to govern and the policy options chosen. This is most apparent in Blair's early decision to depart from the existing policy, in his careful selection of education and public service delivery experts who substantively drew on research to estimate the effect of their policy on inequalities. Blair thought it necessary to trade opportunities of one group against those of the other group in order to rule effectively on education and improve standards overall. One caveat is that the discussion of such different groups remains rather abstract in the evidence assembled here. Still, the failing of decisive hoop tests of the alternative account is strong evidence for comparatively increasing our confidence in the validity of the interest-based account.

5.3.4. Selection: did Blair not care?

The reason for ultimately deciding for keeping the Exclusive Choice system intact was a worry of strategic nature. The worry was that people would mix up the limiting of selection via regulation of school choice with the question of the grammar school.[26] If that question became too salient, it would overshadow the 'real' policy changes that were not of structural nature. The policy stance on choice and selection was constrained by the grammar school question as the Conservative government had been developing plans of turning Grant-Maintained Schools into grammar schools in 1996 (Crook, Power, and Whitty 1999, 18). Furthermore, personal school choices of the shadow cabinet member Harriet Harman and Tony Blair[27], and the last by-election before the general election (Wirral South, January 1997), had ignited the debate around Labour's policy towards remaining grammar schools. Wirral South had six grammar schools. Blair promised the parents that the government would

[26] 160 grammar schools 'survived' the turn to comprehensive education (Crook, Power, and Whitty 1999, 20).
[27] Harman sent her child to a grammar school, and Blair sent his children to a grant maintained school

not close these down (Crook, Power, and Whitty 1999; House of Commons 1999). Labour won with a swing of 17 percent of the votes. With this seat lost, the Conservative government did no longer hold the support of a majority in parliament (BBC 1997).

On grammar schools, the Labour leadership decided to maintain an ambiguous position but formulate a clear policy: only parents could decide on closing their local grammar schools. "We did not want the local authorities after 1997 suddenly go off and decide they would close grammar schools because then we wouldn't have been able to do anything else in education" (Ryan (interview)). Everything that remotely rhymed with 'selection' was taken off the agenda. The expected political costs for ruling out selection were higher than the costs for staying in an Exclusive Choice system in the absence of an articulate group that would have advocated for Inclusive Choice and managed to disentangle the question of Exclusive Choice from the question of the grammar school.

The choice of policies to include into the 1998 Standard and Framework Act further confirms that the question of Exclusive versus Inclusive Choice was unresolved (HM Government 1998). The act did abolish the Assisted Places Scheme, showing that it was possible to go back on Thatcher's policies. It did not abolish grammar schools but prohibited the opening of new grammar schools and took away the local authority right to decide on the structure of the education system: now, a complex system of parental ballot was in charge of the decision to abolish grammar schools. Furthermore, the act required the development of an Admissions Code, of which the guidance however was not legally binding (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2004). Finally, it provided the legal basis for bringing back some local control on the Grant-Maintained Schools, now Foundation Schools. This policy then signals an end to selection, with the Assisted Places Scheme and the proscription of new grammar schools. Yet, it did not create the formal institutions that would ban selective practices within a school choice system where the number of schools that were their own admission authorities was growing.

To conclude this second policy-making episode, government alternation, consequently, did not result in a shift to the Inclusive version of Choice. To be sure, Labour did shift its policy on school choice dramatically in opposition in the early 1990s, now advocating school choice. The new leadership was looking for a policy that would allow a new group of their constituents to win from the Student Sorting Institutions. For that group, parents who thought the schools were not good enough and eager to send their child to another school, a move from Community Schooling to one of the choice alternatives meant

more educational opportunities. This explicitly implied to not use Student Sorting Institutions to care for the least well-off whose children would stay in 'failing' schools. That decision created an enduring split within the Labour Party on education policy and the question of how to organise a truly non-selective school system. This split parallels the division in the middle and low income group coalition between those with basic education on the one hand, and those with intermediate and tertiary education credentials on the other hand. Yet, the time was not ripe to improve opt out possibilities for the intermediate education group and make choice inclusive. The leadership was undecided on the matter and feared politically costly consequences of changing the status quo with respect of selection within the school choice system.

5.4. From Exclusive to Inclusive Choice: the 2006 Education and Inspections Act

The Inclusive Choice system emerged from a set of reforms that the Labour government developed during its 2001-2005 government, culminating in the Education and Inspections Act of 2006. In his second term of government, Blair and his team continued to focus on school improvement, but shifted their attention from school standards to include more structural changes into the school system (Bangs, MacBeath, and Galton 2010, 152). The objective was to use the knowledge gained from the first term education policies that brought the system from the "bad" to the "good". Now, the task was to go from the "good" to the "great" (Meek (interview)).

The Specialist Schools programme had now started to bear its fruits. Some (albeit scarce and not conclusive) evidence had suggested that Specialist Schools Status was improving school performance (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2003, 3). These schools got extra funding to develop their own specialist subject area and could select up to 10 percent of their students according to their special aptitude in that subject. In parallel, Andrew Adonis, a close adviser in Downing Street, was implementing his Academies policy: he continued and expanded the CTCs of the 1988 Education Act (Adonis 2012). These new structures were to replace failing schools, take them off local authority administration and govern and fund them in partnership with the private sector.

It was also time for the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee to evaluate the 1997 and 2001 governments' education policies. As one of the four subjects of inquiry, the committee chose school admissions. It justified this choice with pointing at the

"epic levels of anxiety" that families endured when it came to the process of enrolling their children to a – hopefully – good school (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2004, 11). The government sought to address this anxiety by continuing to focus on school improvement reform. The idea was to improve the quality of schools so parents could choose between different schools rather than having the need of opting out of dysfunctional local schools (Former Policy Adviser (interview)). This choice discourse was not met by policies that would improve the functioning of the choice mechanism as such (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2004). In the context of a new school improvement policy, a backbench rebellion in the House of Commons put pressure on the government to ban selection from admissions procedures. The 2006 Education and Inspections Act then introduced Inclusive Choice.

5.4.1. Inclusive Choice: Labour rebelling against Blair?

In the following, I argue that this policy shift occurred as a coalition for Inclusive Choice emerged and became strong enough to impose a shift from Exclusive Choice to Inclusive Choice in 2005-2006. The creation of this coalition corresponds with an increased education level in the middle and low income groups, suggesting an Inclusive Choice policy preference of the centre-left. I contend that this shift gave strength to Inclusive Choice proponents that then managed to affect government policy. This coalition was not formed as a result of positive feedback for school choice and negative feedback for selection. It was not the result of a 'revolt' against a more radically neoliberal Labour government.

Two sets of observations of the decision-making process leading to the 2006 Education and Inspections Act provide support for the path dependence theory. First, Blair's reform was predominantly about taking away even more power from producer groups, especially from local authorities. This increased the ranks of existing interest groups that had formed as the losers of Thatcher's and then Blair's producer-unfriendly policy and market institutions. Now, teachers and local authorities were not acting in an isolated way, but became strong within government as represented by ministers like John Prescott and Gordon Brown (Blair 2010, 327; Meek (interview)). A second possible path dependence mechanism flows from the observation that the opposition to the leadership's policy was now dedicated to promoting school choice, but in its less selective form. Was this shift of strategy due to a 'lock-in effect' of the choice path that made it impossible to envisage the Community Schooling alternative? This lock-in effect could have flown from high political costs expected

from reducing the possibility to choose a school. The high levels of "anxiety" that spurred the Education and Skills Committee to evaluate the admissions policy can be one trace of institutionalisation of school choice: more parents choose and therefore anxiety about who gets access to what school increases.

Moreover, there are certainly indications about Blair's and his adviser Adonis' beliefs that increased autonomy and differentiation of schools coupled with consumer choice would improve the quality of the service (Adonis 2012). The backbench 'rebellion' could then have been a sign of ideational difference with the leadership, and the Admissions Code reform the corresponding compromise. Indeed, Blair became more frustrated about failures of the local authorities to improve school standards (Blair 2010). Education now was but one example of the public service reform with its focus on consumer choice to limit producer capture (Barber 2007). In this sense, school choice was now genuinely understood as a means to improve the quality of schools, and the reform of structures rather than standards moved up on the agenda: the secondary schooling policies of the Labour 2005 manifesto were the same as the policies developed for the education agenda of the 'Five Year Strategies' in public sector reform in 2003-2004 (HM Government and Department for Education and Skills 2004). They proposed that *every school* should become an "independent specialist school": Blair and his team were certain that making specialist schools independent from local authorities would further boost performance (Adonis 2012). A similar turn happened on the Academies policy: they had improved former 'failing schools' and the idea was that one principal cause for that success came from the 'ethos' that businessmen brought to the new schools. Now, every child should be able to benefit from such an increase in quality. The 'real' plans of Blair and Adonis were to propose a massive expansion of Academies (Bell (interview)). Instead, the 2005 manifesto presented a watered-down version of this idea: independent specialist schools, that would subsequently become Trust Schools with the 2006 Education and Inspections Act (HM Government 2006a).

The central limit to this ideas-based narrative is that the backlash against Blair's and Adonis's ideas occurred within government, while the coalition pushing for Inclusive Choice became active once the watered-down White Paper and subsequent Bill had been published. Indeed, the ideas of marketisation to improve service delivery that contributed to Blair's and Adonis's plans did not survive negotiations within number 10, between number 10 and the Department for Education, and beyond that department across government. Even those officials that generally were considered 'Blairites' were wary of the Prime Minister's new projects. "It was Blair and Adonis against the world!" (Bell (interview)). The Department for

Education then prepared a policy that was not a radical departure from New Labour education policy. The changes the bill proposed could also have been passed in a much easier way, without change to primary legislation (Ryan (interview)). There was a mismatch between the ideas Blair presented in the corresponding White Paper's introductory chapter and the policies included in the subsequent chapters (HM Government and Department for Education and Skills 2005). One then cannot portray the shift to Inclusive Choice as a reaction or compromise in order to tune down a more neoliberal policy.

In turn, the main limit of the path dependence hypothesis is a mismatch between the core content of the 2005-2006 debate and the content one would have expected to observe if the hypothesis of resistance from the producer coalition was true. The issue of unfair admissions was the core content of the debate. Indeed, it was one major aspect on which the government compromised in order to get more opponents of his reform back on board in December 2005 (Curtis and correspondent 2005; Morris et al. 2005; Wintour 2005). The path dependence account focussing on the producer coalition does not allow us to account for the fact that the change from Exclusive Choice to Inclusive Choice was one core condition for the government to be able to pass the reform without overwhelmingly relying on Conservatives' support (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2006; White and editor 2005). It is very difficult to show that the second 'path dependence channel', lock-in effects, operated exogenously from the increase in the share of the parent generation with intermediate education credentials. Both these variables produce the same effect of increased interest for choice and hence anxiety in the admissions process. It is however unlikely that an increased interest in school choice resulted from institutionally endogenous quality problems in the school system – the quality of schools had improved over the years (Bourn 2006).

5.4.2. Increased support for Inclusive Choice: a new coalition

Further observations suggest that the Inclusive Choice coalition did not emerge as a reaction to Blair and Andonis's plans. It emerged during the 2001-2005 government, as opponents to selective education gained increased support. The parliamentary party was analysing possible policy options in the light of their effects on different socio-economic groups: they knew of the redistributive trade-offs between Inclusive Choice and Exclusive Choice. They particularly focused on the unfair institutions for those who wanted to choose but lost out in this competition because of its selective element. One finds this deep knowledge and ambition to improve the understanding of the choice mechanism and its effect on equality of

opportunity in the Education and Skills Select Committee Report on Admissions in 2004 (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2004). In general, this report's evaluations of the different policy options was similar to the 1991 IPPR piece central to the formulation of Labour policy in the 1990s (Miliband 1991). The gist of the report was that schools were continuing to select their pupils as long as this was legally tolerated, that the government thus did not care enough about the inequalities this system created, and that parents wanted good schools to choose from, not just the possibility to opt out of a failing school. The key recommendation was to make some clauses of the code binding and by including the code into education legislation shifting the guidance status to make the end of selection a legal requirement. This came with the warning that choice behaviour is linked to socio-economic status. Additionally then, it was necessary to address this caveat. In 1997-8, the debate about student admissions and inequality of opportunity had happened in a small team. Now, it was a central concern to all those interested in education and equality of opportunity within the Labour Party.

Second, this argument to strengthen the legal value of the admissions code became an important policy position for a wide range of actors who managed to organise as a consequence of the lack of commitment for improving the conditions for school admissions by Blair's third government. In the process of drafting the 2005 manifesto, fair admissions played a minor role. Campaigners for comprehensive education and the Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) were continuing to focus their requests on the question of selection and school admissions. The 2005 manifesto did include a pledge to 'fair admissions'. This pledge however was underdeveloped in comparison to the pledge of improving schools via the independent specialist schools policy (Labour Party 2005). Importantly, it was not addressed in more depth in the White Paper prepared after the 2005 general election (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2006). Campaigners for a fairer admissions system had been marginal to the policy-making process before the 2005 elections (Black (interview)). As the government did not commit to fair admissions, these campaigners got much more influential platforms, publishing in outlets like Compass, the new hub for progressive think tanks (Benn and Millar 2005). Important Labour Party figures joined ranks with these campaigners as they wrote an Alternative White Paper in which the problem of admissions featured as a centrepiece (Morris et al. 2005). Two former Education Secretaries, Estelle Morris and David Blunkett, were part of this group. This was also published by Compass in December 2005. The government immediately answered that some concessions would be made on the admissions code. Labour MPs of the Education and Skills select

committee joined these groups and reiterated their recommendations regarding the admissions code in their response to the white paper in January 2006 (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2006). In its answer to this report, the government conceded to make parts of the admissions code legally enforceable (HM Government 2006b). As a consequence, the number of MPs that had planned to participate in the backbench rebellion to the bill decreased significantly (House of Commons 2006). Although the ideas and knowledge about the trade-offs involved in organising admissions in a comprehensive school systems were well known and discussed before 1997, a coalition in favour of them within the party only emerged and became politically relevant in 2005-2006.

In sum, I contend that Blair's opponents had been more attentive to the needs of the least educated that would not choose when rallying against his policies in 1995, while they were more attentive to the needs of those who wanted to choose but were faced by selective admissions in 2005. Moreover, though, one can stress that this shift of attention does not explain by itself why these opponents had the political strength to affect Blair's policy in 2006.

5.4.3. The political context: Blair's legacy and political costs to the status quo

In the last paragraphs of this section, I address how the particular political context meant that Blair and his team now feared the consequences of a backbench rebellion more than they feared a potentially explosive reaction to a changed admissions code. For Blair, the 2005 White Paper was to be a flagship policy to secure his legacy and appeal to the public. However, it was also the start of his weakest period in government. The policy should strengthen rather than further weaken his legacy. A backbench rebellion that would make him more dependent on Conservatives' votes would then cancel out the positive effect he was seeking from the education bill, in which for him, admissions played only a minor role.

There is straightforward evidence for the significance of the 2005 White Paper as a way to secure Blair's legacy. First of all, he did not stand the chance of making the sea change he wanted to make. In spite, he decided to go through with a rather minor reform project which he framed like a flagship reform, as he knew it would be his last reform in education (Senior Civil Servant (2) (interview), Sheerman (interview), Bell (interview)). Indeed, by the beginning of the 2005 government, it was clear that Blair would resign and allow Gordon Brown to become Prime Minister sooner or later (Blair 2010). The willingness to secure his legacy has also to be understood in the context of a decreased popularity of Tony Blair, not

only in the public with the Iraq War but also in the Labour Party where more and more supporters distanced themselves from the public sector reforms. Blair framed the White Paper in view of attracting attention to the fact that he still stood on the side of the consumer. The core message of the paper was to increase the level of choice via the new Trust School. However, the department of education staff preparing the White Paper had focused on methods to improve learning, proposing increased autonomy for schools as one amongst many measures (Senior Civil Servant (interview)). Many close observers and participants in this process recalled that this tension created a highly visible mismatch between the discourse spun in Downing Street and the policies designed at the Department for Education. "Blair wanted the debate" (Ryan (interview)), he wanted his policy to be visible.

A significant backbench rebellion put this strategy at risk. The White Paper was soon called 'Tory' policy, as the Conservatives pledged to support the move towards Trust Schools (Conservative MP (interview)). Blair and his team knew that the probability that they would have to rely on the Conservatives' votes was high. When preparing the bill, not only did they talk with the 'rebels', but they also made sure the Conservatives were not changing their minds (Senior Civil Servant (interview)). In such a context, it was clear that regulating the Admissions Code and thus shifting to an Inclusive Choice system was not a political cost. The political cost in contrast came from the own ranks. Especially, it depended on the extent to which the senior party figures that had expressed caution about the policy would ultimately support it (White and editor 2005). Special care was needed to mute the claims that his policy would re-introduce selection, which was the opponents' main argument. His team then explicitly responded positively to the recommendations by the Education Select Committee and the Alternative White paper when it came to student admissions (HM Government 2006b; House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2006). Indeed, the government introduced the recommendations into its first draft of the Bill. This move in turn weakened the ranks of Blair's opponents within the parliamentary party.

To close this section, the move to Inclusive Choice happened as a coalition in favour of changing the legal status of the admissions code emerged outside of government within the Labour Party, and became politically relevant in a particular context for Tony Blair. We have seen that the alternative explanations to the socio-economic change hypothesis can account for some aspects of the reform process as it unfolded, especially in the phase leading to the publishing of the White Paper. However, the path dependence and neoliberal ideas hypotheses do not predict the findings of the second phase of the policy-making process, when admissions policy became the kernel of the political game. This new coalition is in line with a

stark change in the educational credentials, as in the mid-2000s more than half of low and middle income families had reached intermediate education levels. For them, this shift was good news. We could connect the new attention of actors like the Education and Skills Committee in the House of Commons to the increased anxiety around admissions. However, we could not sufficiently discriminate between a path dependent or structural origin of this anxiety. To make sure that one of these variables is exogenous to the other, a quantitative assessment of choice behaviour and its variation across time and socio-economic groups would be necessary.

Conclusion

The Conservatives in 1988 and Labour in 1998 and 2006 reformed SSIs in view of improving educational opportunities for their respective constituents. These policy episodes bear a lot of resemblence with the Swedish cases of Exclusive Choice reform and Inclusive Choice reform: centre-right policy makers of the 1970s and 1980s saw school choice as the optimal solution to the problems of both Tracked Schooling and Community Schooling. Centre-left policy-makers in the 1990s and 2000s faced a similar trade-off of opportunities amongst their constituents: who should get access to better schools? In all three episodes, partisan governments faced similar policy problems with the status quo and their existing policy positions and reacted to similar trade-offs. As expected, outcomes differed according to the level of educational expansion within the cross-class coalitions legitimising these governments. The evidence I deployed in each of the three episodes meets the requirements of the hoop tests for the partisan explanation. Similarly to the Swedish case, a lot of evidence points towards the probable importance of neoliberal ideas and/or path dependent feedback effects. Yet these two explanations fail some core tests in each of the three episodes. Importantly, the evidence shows that the neoliberal ideas account has to be treated with much less confidence than previously assumed. In neither of the cases did the policy position shift as a direct effect of neoliberal ideas. Moreover, neither party was very eager to shift existing SSIs from one type to another. Thatcher eventually did generalise Exclusive Choice beyond church schools. But the trigger for putting the issue to the top of the agenda had its origins in increased political costs of the status quo. Like in Sweden, the specific matter was a question of local problems gaining salience at the national level. Blair's 2006 reform to Inclusive Choice also included a calculation of political costs. Here, the trigger for change was a waning political power of status quo proponents within the leadership, giving room to

proponents of change to mobilise, in turn increasing political costs of maintaining the status quo position.

From the outset, existing case studies of English education policy had indicated the importance of partisan politics. The findings of this chapter improve our knowledge on such partisan politics as we gain more clarity on the Conservatives' stance towards comprehensive education in the 1970s-1980s. It appears that they were not hostile to comprehensive education, but to Community Schooling. Exclusive Choice was the best way of extending educational opportunities within its constituents' ranks. The Conservatives could thus improve their capacity to access the expanded tertiary education sector, but maintain its regressive nature intact: with Exclusive Choice, lower education levels continued to sort students of lower income groups away from quality education. From the 1960s-1980s, the political division on SSIs was about Tracked Schooling versus comprehensive schooling and ran within Conservative ranks, Labour being aligned with comprehensive schooling proponents. In the 1990s, the political division on SSIs was about Community Schooling versus Exclusive Choice and it ran within the Labour party, the Conservatives being aligned with Exclusive Choice proponents. Having understood these divisions within the Labour party, it also becomes clear that they were decisive factors for the outcome of the 2004-2006 policy process. In absence of such divisions, Blair and Adonis could have expanded their Academies programme in 2006. But Labour did not permit this policy to happen. It then happened with alternation in 2010 and the Conservatives' Academies Act.

With this assessment, the partisan hypothesis has passed its test in the second most-likely case for the partisan explanation of the sample – England. England is also a most-likely case for neoliberal ideas' effect on school choice policies. The neoliberal ideas hypothesis has failed its test in this most-likely environment. If these ideas were not relevant for the policy outcome in England, we can be quite confident that they were not relevant for SSIs beyond the English case. Previous knowledge did neither depict England as most likely or least likely case on feedback effects. There, we learn more from Sweden and France. To this point, we have learned that the partisan hypothesis was successful two most-likely environments. These have simultaneously decreased our confidence in alternative explanations within the cases and beyond them. The next chapter on SSIs in France will give the theory its toughest test.

Chapter 6: France

The French case of Student Sorting Institutions is the negative case of this comparison: school choice is not generalised to all public schools like in England or Sweden, and choice to the publicly maintained private sector has remained of Exclusive Choice nature, as schools can select their students. As I will show in this chapter, policy makers were equally concerned with how to distribute students to schools of different quality. Indeed, French sociologists, educationalists, and policy-makers have studied and discussed the problem of student sorting and unequal opportunities since the end of the Tracked Schooling system in 1975. Year after year, the question of who gets access to what school has also turned local administration offices into a 'battlefield'. I will show that socio-economic coalitions differed from Sweden and England in France at those times when reform for Inclusive Choice could have been opportune.

This chapter sheds a new light on French education policies. Unlike existing studies, the focus on Student Sorting Institutions forces us to investigate the policies related to private schooling and those related to student allocation in the public sector jointly. Existing explanations for the French case, such as L. Barrault or A. Van Zanten and colleagues' work, has treated the public sector question separately from the private sector (Barrault 2013; Obin and van Zanten 2010). The study of the latter is to date mainly left to historians of which the work of B. Poucet stands out (Poucet 2009). As a consequence of this division of tasks, two different stories of the French student sorting system have been told: first, France is seen as different from other states because of its institutions (a particular type of corporatism resulting from strong teacher unions and one central administration) and its ideas (rejecting neoliberal principles in education) (Cole 2001; Dobbins 2014; Dobbins and Martens 2012; Duclaud-Williams 1983). This is why it did not fully embrace a school choice system in the public sector. Explanations of existing Exclusive Choice institutions in the publicly financed private sector go back to the history of the state-church cleavage and French secularism. Accordingly, policy-makers in present times cannot manage to tilt the fragile balance between proponents and opponents of the private school system that was struck with the 1959 loi Debré (Poucet 2009).

Looking at private and public education as interdependent when it comes to student sorting provides a new perspective to these accounts. Similarly to the Swedish and British Left and Right, French partisan governments had policy preferences that matched their socio-economic coalitions. The French and British governments went similar paths until the late 1980s/early 1990s, when the education coalitions in the middle and upper income groups similarly pointed to Exclusive Choice. The French Right in 1986-88 and 1993-97 however made a different political cost assessment than Thatcher's government in 1988. To the difference of Britain and Sweden, the French Left could never rely on a substantive enough intermediate education group within the M+L coalition. They remained split on the matter of school choice and thus preferred the status quo to Inclusive Choice reform.

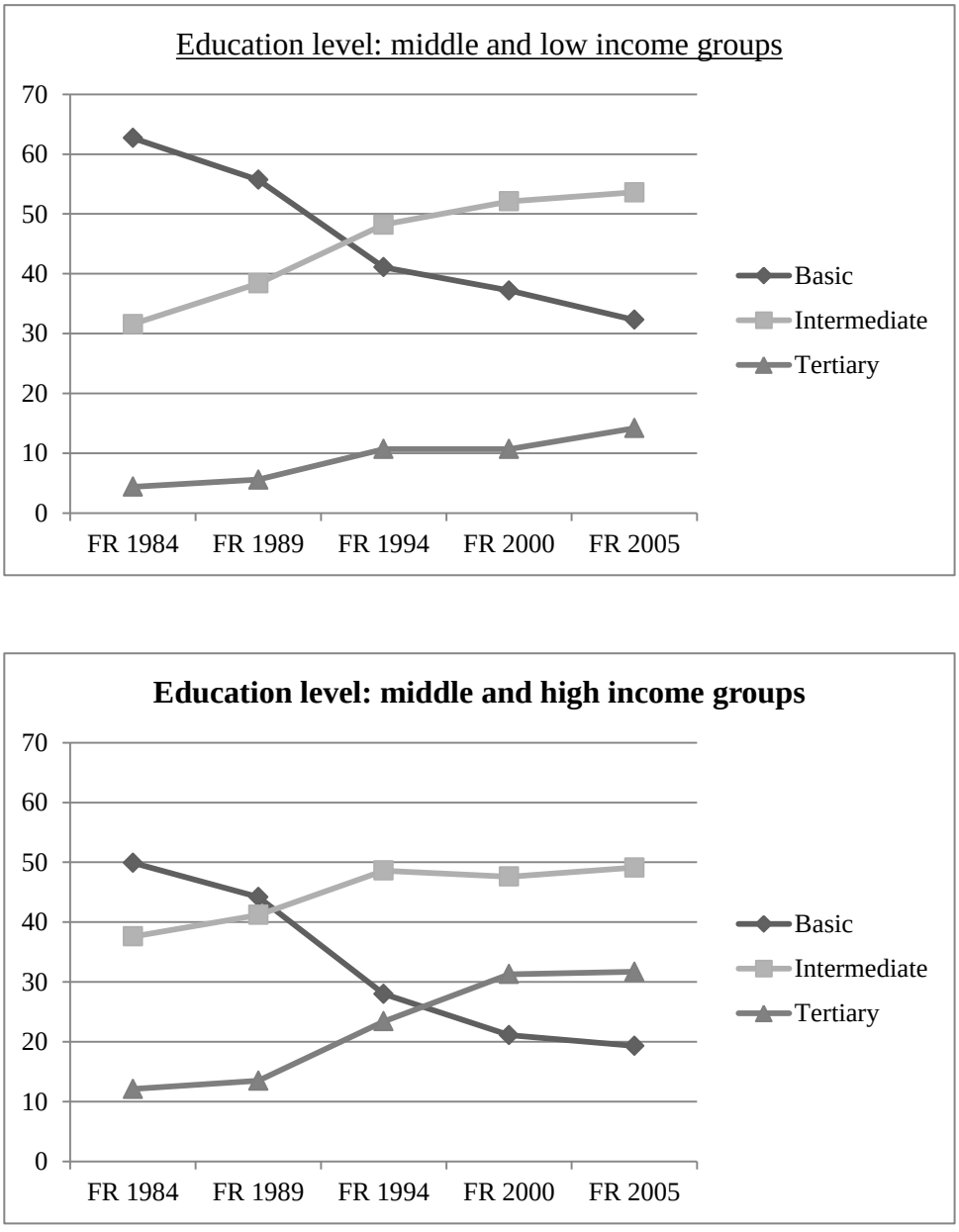
As for the previous chapters, the French case starts with an assessment of the independent variable: how the education characteristics of income group coalitions changed from the 1980s to the 2000s. The subsequent three sections look into several policy-making episodes when policy preferences changed, but reforms that would change the type of SSIs did not occur. Section 2 provides an account of Left and Right positions and policies in the 1980s. Section 3 looks into the centre-right's more aggressive but not conclusive interest in Exclusive Choice in 1993-1995 and a similar episode in 2007-2012. The last section explains why the French Left considered the option of Inclusive Choice but firmly rejected it as superior to the status quo in the run-up of the 2007 and 2012 presidential and legislative elections.

6.1. Educational Expansion and Coalitions for School Choice 1980-2010

This section shows that the particular patterns of educational expansion in the cross-class coalitions of the French Right and Left are different from the UK and Sweden examples. We will see that in both coalitions (M+H and M+L), the basic education group did drop and a coalition in favour of school choice was to be expected (Figure 6.1.). However, in the M+H coalition, as the basic education group waned, the intermediate group remained stable – at around 50 percent – and the tertiary education group grew. In the M+L coalition, the basic education group did not decrease as much in numbers as it happened for the UK or Swedish cases, thus keeping the intermediate educated group also at levels of around 50 percent. The continuity of an Exclusive Choice system is consistent with our expectations as neither cross-class coalition had a clear majority of either those with basic or with intermediate education.

Table 6.1. presents the LIS data on which this analysis rests.

Figure 6.1: Income groups and educational expansion in France 1985-2005



Source: Luxembourg Income Study. Own calculations.

Table 6.1. Income groups and educational expansion in France 1985-2010

1984 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	63	65	34	63	50	54
Intermediate education	32	32	43	32	38	36
Tertiary education	4	2	22	4	12	10
Total	99	99	99	99	100	100

1989 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	56	57	33	56	44	48
Intermediate education	38	40	42	38	41	40
Tertiary education	6	3	24	6	14	12
Total	100	100	101	100	99	100

1994 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	41	40	18	41	28	32
Intermediate education	48	53	45	48	49	47
Tertiary education	11	8	37	11	23	21
Total	100	101	100	100	100	100

2000 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	37	30	13	37	21	29
Intermediate education	52	57	39	52	48	48
Tertiary education	11	13	49	11	31	24
Total	100	100	101	100	100	100

(Table 6.1 continued)

2005 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	32	26	12	32	19	26
Intermediate education	54	58	40	54	49	49
Tertiary education	14	16	48	14	32	25
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

2010 (LIS)	Low income	Middle Income	High Income	L and M coalition	M and H coalition	Total
Basic education	58	30	13	44	22	33
Intermediate education	33	55	39	44	47	43
Tertiary education	9	14	48	12	31	24
Total	101	99	100	100	100	100

6.1.1. Income group coalitions and education levels 1980-2005

For France, there is Luxembourg Income Study data on education for the whole period of interest (Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) 2015).[28] In the mid-1980s, the coalition of the Right, the middle and upper income groups, had an equal share of those with basic education on the one hand and those with intermediate and tertiary education on the other hand. The middle income group was mainly composed of individuals with basic education (two thirds), and a negligible share of tertiary educated in its ranks. In stark contrast, less than half of the higher income group had basic education credentials. A fifth of that group had tertiary education credentials, and two fifth had intermediate credentials. Together, then, M and H had as many individuals with basic education as those with tertiary and intermediate credentials taken together. Half of that group would benefit from a Community Schooling system, while the other half would improve its educational opportunities under an Inclusive or Exclusive Choice system.

A decade later, the coalition of the Right looked quite different. In the middle income

[28] cf. Appendix 2

group, the share of basic educated had dropped under the 50 percent mark, but those with tertiary education continued to be fewer than 10 percent. Around 50 percent of the middle income group now had intermediate education, and *I* was now equal to *B* and *T* taken together. In the high income group, the share of *I* barely moved in a decade. In contrast, the share of those with tertiary education nearly doubled (37 percent) and the share of those with basic education halved (now 18 percent). In that group, *B* and *T* together were now a bigger group than *I*. Now, the cross-class coalition had almost as many individuals with intermediate education as those with basic and tertiary education taken together. The new fault lines were between those who would benefit from Inclusive Choice (45 percent) and an Exclusive Choice coalition against such a shift.

Although further strong shifts happened within the income groups in the 2000s, this did not impact the cross-class coalition: *I* stayed just below the level of *B* and *T* taken together. Within the middle income group, both *I* and *T* increased their share as *B* now only represented a quarter of that group. Hence, the middle income group now had a clear majority of individuals with intermediate education. The higher income group, however, now had almost as many individuals with tertiary credentials as those with basic and intermediate taken together. In it, the intermediate education group had not grown. Considering M and H together, we would then again expect an equal share to prefer Exclusive Choice to Inclusive Choice than vice-versa.

For the left-wing coalition of lower and middle income groups, there was not much difference between the income groups' education levels in the 1980s. Hence, as shown above for the middle income group, the M+L coalition predicted a system of Community Schooling as two thirds had basic education credentials only. The educational expansion of the mid-80s to mid-90s again produced similar results in the M and L groups, where *I* was equal to *B* and *T* taken together, pointing to either Inclusive or Exclusive Choice as the preferred policy of the Left in the 1990s. In the 2000s, while education continued to expand in the middle income group, the education level of the lower income group remained similar to the 1990s. Taken together, this only changed the coalition in a very limited way, not altering our expectations towards Student Sorting Institutions: a tight race between Inclusive and Exclusive Choice.

There was then no clear majority of families with intermediate education in the middle and lower income groups for the period of 1985-2005. As the left-wing coalition grew more educated, the middle income group became increasingly different from the lower income group in terms of educational achievement. The latter maintained remarkably high levels of families that had not reached more than basic education (over 30 percent). Hence, especially

in the low income group, a change towards Inclusive Choice would not have improved educational opportunities for the least well-off. In turn, a change towards Community Schooling was not in the interest of a clear majority either.

The M+H coalition in France reached similar education levels as the equivalent coalition in Sweden and the UK, but the left-wing coalition did not. We therefore expect French governments of the Right to pursue similar policies as their English and Swedish counterparts did from the late 1980s: generalise Exclusive Choice to private and public schools. In contrast, while we expect the French Left to pursue Community Schooling in the 1980s, we do not expect such a government to introduce Inclusive Choice.

6.1.2. Income group coalitions in power: governments and parties 1980-2010

When did French partisan governments have the occasion to introduce such reforms? The Left could reform when in government from 1981 to 1986 under the Mitterrand presidency and socialist governments legitimated by a left-wing majority in the national assembly, notably with the Communist Party (334 out of 491 seats).[29] They also governed from 1988-1993, this time with a much tighter left-wing majority in the national assembly (300 out of 577 seats). After renewed alternation, L. Jospin's cabinet governed from 1997 to 2002, legitimated by the 'gauche plurielle' including amongst others the Green Party. Now, the President of the Republic (J. Chirac) was of the opposition. The Left came back to power in 2012. There are then three reform opportunities from 1980-2010: the early 1980s, the late 1980s to 1990s, and the late 1990s-2000s. In the 2000s, there are two electoral campaigns (2007 and 2012) in which to observe left-wing reform willingness. While keeping Exclusive Choice in place can be expected from the governments from the 1990s onwards, we will have to ask why the Left did not introduce Community Schooling in the 1980s.

The Right governed from 1986 to 1988 while F. Mitterrand was still president. Then, the electoral coalition was composed of the conservative RPR (Rassemblement pour la république) and the more centrist and liberal UDI (Union des démocrates et des indépendants). This coalition came back to power in 1993, staying in government until 1997. In the meantime, the Left had lost the presidential elections of 1995, which meant a new

[29] Information elections and seats in the national assembly of subsequent paragraphs are drawn from the Parline database of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1981; Inter-Parliamentary Union 1986; Inter-Parliamentary Union 1988; Inter-Parliamentary Union 1993; Inter-Parliamentary Union 1997; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2002).

alignment between presidential and governmental partisanship. While the 1986-88 government relied on a tight majority, the 1993 elections left the Left with less than 100 seats, an astounding victory for the Right. The Right was then back in charge (government and president) from 2002 onwards. Thus, a shift to generalise Exclusive Choice beyond private education was possible in 1986-88, but much more likely in 1993-1997 (especially 1995-97) and 2002-2012.

Like for England and Sweden, it is useful to compare these results to electoral studies' results on the education level of left-wing and right-wing electorates at legislative elections. French electoral studies data confirm the common shift of the Left and the Right to Exclusive Choice from the 1990s onwards (CEVIPOF 1988; CEVIPOF 1997; CEVIPOF 2002).[30] In both the Left and the Right, as the group of basic educated (just over 50 percent in the 1980s) shrank, the group of intermediate educated (at just under 40 percent in the 1980s) remained stable, but the group of tertiary educated (of around 10 percent in the 1980s) grew. This effectively means a shift of balance to an Exclusive Choice alliance on both sides of the political spectrum. The question then is: why did the Right in France not generalise Exclusive Choice as did Thatcher for late 1980's England? The summary of the education coalitions 'in power' (Table 6.2.) already hints at very unstable or uncertain partisan positions: a majority for choice existed, but were bold moves politically more costly than in Sweden or England? In the case study sections of this chapter, I will show that the Right did have a preference for Exclusive Choice reform in each of these government periods and that this preference can be traced back to its cross-class coalition, in similar fashion as for the Swedish and British Right. The Left did have a clear preference for Community Schooling in the 1980s, but positions became more uncertain and conflicted from the 1997 government onwards. Again, positions can be traced back to the socio-economic situation of the Middle and Low income groups.

What then explains the lack of reform to Community Schooling in 1981-1986 and the lack of generalising Exclusive Choice by the Right from 1986 (especially 1993) onward? I will show for each of these sequences that a combination of the socio-economic coalitions and risk assessment argument is superior in explaining these instances of non-reform than arguments of political institutions (especially the constitutional court, the centralised, and the semi-presidential system), teacher union corporatism, path dependence from the French solution of the state-church cleavage, or exposure to neoliberal ideas.

[30] Own calculations with online tool. Cf. remarks in section 3.3.2. regarding comparison between income group data and voter data. Corresponding tables in Appendix 2.3.

For example, the electoral studies data vary from the income group data in one point: The share of left-wing voters with tertiary education is constantly roughly 10 points higher than the share of those with middle and low income with tertiary education. At the same time, the share of right-wing voters with basic education is constantly around 10 points higher than the share of those with middle and high income with basic education. For the right, this means that the coalition in favour of choice is still over 50 percent, but less pronounced than the income group data suggest. This difference could be one of the factors that feed into policy makers' political cost assessment. If the coalition for choice is not that strong in the electorate, this can also be one channel for a reduced demand for more choice, making the government more reluctant to reform.

Table 6.2: Education group coalitions and SSI stability in France 1985-2010

	1984	**1986**	**1993**	**1997**	**2007**
coalition 'in power'	Centre-left	Centre-right	Centre-right	Centre-left	Centre-right
education level (income group)	M+L income groups: B>I+T	M+H income groups: B=I+T	M+H income groups: I=B+T	M+L income groups: I = B+T	M+H income groups: I=B+T
education level (voters)	B = I+T	B > I+T	B < I+T I < B+T	B < I+T I < B+T	B < I+T I < B+T
expected position	Community Schooling or Exclusive Choice / division.	Exclusive or Inclusive Choice/ division.	Inclusive or Exclusive Choice / division.	Inclusive or Exclusive Choice / division.	Inclusive or Exclusive Choice / division.
occurred SSI change	No change. (EC status quo)	No change. (EC status quo)	No change. (EC status quo)	No change. (EC status quo)	No change. (EC status quo)

6.2. The 1980s: too late for Community Schooling, too soon for more Choice?

With the 1975 reform of lower secondary schooling, Tracked Schooling ended in France. Like in England and unlike in Sweden, it was replaced by an Exclusive Choice system. Families could opt out of the local public school into a publicly funded private school. This section shows that this Exclusive Choice system was stabilised rather than transformed in the 1980s, despite both right-wing and left-wing governments' reform attempts. The process tracing evidence shows that this outcome can best be explained with the interest-based cross-class coalition approach. Changes in these coalitions drove the policies left-wing and right-wing governments pursued from the mid-1970s onward, culminating in the 1984 reform attempts by Pierre Mauroy's left-wing government. This would have been the reform moment for the left to turn to Community Schooling. But the left did neither manage to introduce Community Schooling nor Inclusive Choice because of its lack of unity on the subject and the political pressure from a new Exclusive Choice coalition on the right. While process-tracing evidence increases our confidence in this argument, it simultaneously calls for reducing our confidence in the prevailing arguments of institutional and ideational differences of the French case.

6.2.1. Setting the stage for Community Schooling reform

When it comes to Student Sorting Institutions, the main reform attempt of the 1980s was Education Minister Alain Savary's 1984 plan to create one unified public education service. This plan resulted from the Socialists' (PS) electoral promise of the 1981 presidential elections (Savary 1985). Existing Student Sorting Institutions were incompatible with the Left's constituents, a great majority of which had not received post-compulsory education. These institutions originated from three reforms conducted by the Right: the public subsidies to private (mostly catholic) schools in 1959, the introduction of centrally defined catchment areas requiring children in the public sector to be schooled in their catchment areas' schools in 1963, and the creation of a comprehensive school system, ending selection by ability in public schools while private schools remained their own – unregulated – admission authorities in 1975. The Socialists' education team of the late 1970s criticised the existing system on three issues, all linked to unequal educational opportunities for the working class and neither of them concerning the religious character of private education (Parti Socialiste 1976). To

start with, private schools were fostering inequality in the school system, taking away precious funds from the public schools in dire need of investment in order to properly implement the comprehensive school reform. This would further foster the bias to the advantage of private schools and the distinction – at least in the minds of parents – between a public system of declining quality and a successful private system. Moreover, they pointed out that private schools were not schools only for the rich, especially in areas where they were widespread, but still excluded the least well-off: admissions were a class problem but not a problem generated by the rich. Indeed, the rich were not seen as a solvable policy problem – they would always find ways to segregate, and "if they could not open schools in France, then they would open them… in Switzerland (or elsewhere)."[31] (p. 17). Finally, private schools increased the role of parents' decisions on children's educational opportunities. Not only was this a problem for social mobility, but also for the broader class struggle: in private schools, bourgeois parents had more say than in the public system. They then inculcated bourgeois values to those working class children attending private schools. This potentially widening gap between education for the poor and education for the better-off working and middle classes had to be tackled. The policy paper concludes that these challenges require a thorough new analysis of the existing – too ideological and unrealistic – Socialist policy and find a real solution to the problem of school choice via private schools. The party leadership then defined the position for the 1981 elections as a pledge to integrate the private and the public school system into a "great unified and secular public service of national education" (Grand service public unifié et laïque de l'Education nationale" (GSPULEN) of which the particular terms would have to be negotiated, not imposed (Savary 1985). This was the opportunity for the Left to introduce Community Schooling.

Exclusive Choice institutions at that time existed through public subsidies to private – most of them catholic – schools. The 1981 government was the first Left government since the church-state conflict over schooling had found its settlement with the loi Debré that had instituted these subsidies in 1959. One therefore has to very carefully consider the possibility that this settlement, a critical juncture, had set the French school system on an Exclusive Choice path that structured the political conflicts and reform proposals around private schooling. Indeed, quite a hard core of the left was convinced that private schooling was incompatible with the fight for secularism and with the values of the French Republic in general (Poucet 2009). Partially, the position of the PS to nationalise the private schooling

[31] Translations from French to English are my own.

system can be understood as a reaction to the institutions of the loi Debré. Partially, also, the reform options can be understood as being constrained by positive feedback effects; both from the population seeking 'refuge in private schools (Ballion 1974) and from the strengthened institutional capacity of the central private school governance. The Left looked at the latter with growing suspicion, fearing the creation of a 'parallel education ministry' (Parti Socialiste 1976). This account has a caveat. First, as I will argue, it is not completely sufficient to explain the reform trajectory, but requires a redistributive interest-based element. Second, from the 1980s onwards, we do not need the path dependence account to explain why the French system remained an Exclusive Choice system.

Why is the path dependence account not sufficient? The main reason for this assessment is that the nature of the institutions and the historical value of the church-state conflict only explains the position of 'hardliners' on secularism of the left who wanted to dismantle private education. Their radicalism had been criticised by the education team in its 1976 statement, and Louis Mexendreau, the education spokesperson and author of that document was himself not considered a moderate (Poucet 2009). Similarly, in opposition to reform, the church institutions were certainly mobilised and important actors in the negotiations. However, they did not lead the opposition to reform. Opposition to reform was led by the political right and significant parts of the press that managed to mount a popular opposition against the proposed reforms once the Left had come to power (Poucet 2009). The moderate left, in turn, had no willingness to frontally attack private education. And yet, they were convinced that reform was necessary because the system as it stood fostered educational inequality (Savary 1985). They were also ready to face significant costs for that reform, knowing that private schools were popular and their institutions powerful mobilisers. For historians and observers, it is particularly telling that Mitterrand and Mauroy did not appoint Mexendreau as education minister, but the much more centrist Alain Savary (Poucet 2009; Prost 2002; Savary 1985): they wanted the reform, but they did not want it captured by the state-church conflict. The alternative path dependence account on private schooling institutions creating positive feedback amongst user groups and negative feedback amongst those that do not use the service does not fit the evidence adequately either. It cannot explain why a left-right cleavage emerged on the issue. Certainly, conservative voters were overrepresented in the share of private education users. But as Ballion's studies showed, the religious argument was not sufficient to explain that (Ballion 1974). It was clear for the Left and for the Right that private schools were no longer used for religious motives, a fact which had even been criticised by the Socialist education team (Parti Socialiste 1976). Also, the

secularism issue was no longer consensual within the Left (Prost 2002). The cleavage emerged as the Right fought for more freedom of choice amongst aspiring parents while the Left fought for equal educational opportunities.

The path dependence account is also not necessary to explain the policy decisions once the decision for reform was taken. Community Schooling did not fail to occur because the option was considered unfeasible from the start. To be sure, and this goes without saying, I do not dispute the fact that Exclusive Choice existed at that time because the church-school conflict had historically been solved by subsidising private education. In that sense, existing institutions do matter. But it was not endogenous forces within these institutions that led the Left to propose reform. Rather, it was a detailed analysis of the extent to which such institutions created inequalities that its alternatives could alleviate. When Alain Savary started his work in 1982, the GSPULEN project was very unspecified (Poucet 2009; Savary 1985). It did then not exclude any of the three options – Exclusive Choice, Inclusive Choice and Community Schooling. He used two methods to narrow down reform options. He consulted experts to find policy solutions to the identified problems of inequality and quality of the public system. In parallel, he heard different interest groups' take on the vague project to get a clearer picture on the conflict lines within and across interest group coalitions. During this period of consultation, all options remained open (Savary 1985). It appeared quickly that Community Schooling was the preferred option for the teacher unions and the left-wing of the Socialist party in parliament (Prost 2002). Yet, in his account of the reform process, Savary notes that no clear common party position on his proposals had materialised before voting on the text in the national assembly two years after he had struck the compromise with the reform opponents (Savary 1985, 149). At the opposite side of the political spectrum, the positions were crystal clear. Private schools could not lose too much of their autonomy, and parents should be able to choose a school. Catholic education institutions and centre-right parties defended that line of argument (Poucet 2009). After consultation, it became apparent that the reform could only be a compromise between both options that would have to be carefully negotiated with both sides. Community Schooling thus went off the table considering that the Right had won over public opinion on the subject leading an effective campaign against the government's plans (e.g. RTL and Le Monde 1983). The RPR started to own the issue more than the catholic education institutions themselves, who "bashfully closed their eyes regarding who supported their cause" (Poucet 2009, 147). They knew that their institutions served less the religious and more the economic interests of their users (Poucet 2009, 155). In this respect, going in the Community Schooling direction would come as a

greater cost for the government than embracing school choice and school autonomy. In any case, it was clear that the pledge of integrating private schooling into the public system had not been a vote winner for the elections (Savary 1985, 122). Moreover, the reform had originated in the wish to unite rather than further divide society on the matter of schooling. Given the state of public opinion on the matter and the effectiveness of the Right to influence the public's beliefs on the government's plans, going down the Community Schooling path would thus be counterproductive. The reform would mainly be about regulating private school funding and the status of private school teachers.

6.2.2. Within-party opposition to the Inclusive Choice compromise

In the face of this necessity to compromise, Savary decided to reform the public system alongside the private system and presented negotiation partners with a plan that resembled an Inclusive Choice system. He presented the first version of that plan in Winter 1982: public schools would also be able to define their own 'school project' (projet d'établissement) and parents should be able to choose between different types of schools – public and private – within a larger catchment area (Ministère de l'Education Nationale 1984; Ministère de l'Education Nationale 1983). Local committees would decide on pupil admissions. This would give the necessary freedoms to public schools to rid themselves from the public perception that bureaucracy stifled quality of teaching and thus reduce competition between public and private providers. Savary hence integrated the problem of private schooling into a larger education reform that stood in line with decentralisation reform and the freshly created priority education zones (Zones d'éducation prioritaire) which shifted the rhetoric of equal education for all to the idea that children had different educational needs that had to be met. All these plans did not originate from neoliberal ideas carriers. Rather, Savary's team sought input from French education experts like Louis Legrand, Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Prost, and Robert Ballion (Savary 1985). These thinkers were all highly implied in research on educational inequalities and parents' behaviour in the school system. The main idea was that educational inequalities could only be tackled if public schools were as able as private schools to meet the individual education needs of children (Parti Socialiste 1976; Toulemonde 1988). Public education would improve through pedagogical reform rather than market pressures. In theory, Savary's move was strategic in this respect, as it allowed him to diminish the stress on the private school reform by making it one subcategory of a larger reform project. On paper, this unified both education systems as both systems were

equally affected. In practice, the Socialist Party was not ready for this transformation of the education system.

Evidence of the causal process leading to the failure of reform and acceptance of the status quo fairly uniquely points at the role the Socialist Party's lack of position played throughout the reform process. Indeed, the opposition was ready to support his reform as it stood (Toulemonde 2009, 155). It would not support any further restriction to private schooling, threatening to call for mass demonstrations that would certainly put an end to all reform plans (Poucet 2009; Prost 2002; Savary 1985). The only option then for Savary was to stand firm, despite the lack of clarity – and open divisions – of the Socialist Party stance on the matter. Clearly, the interest groups defending secular education (the CNAL, composed of teacher unions, charities, and parents' organisations) was openly hostile (Toulemonde 1988, 256–257). During the technical phase of negotiations in 1983, the group of Socialist MPs did not declare frontal opposition to the reform plans. However, it never officially endorsed them either. Opposition to the government's plans became clearer shortly before the project was presented to the national assembly. Now, Socialist leaders started to dig out old slogans against private education subsidies and on the day of the vote, Jospin was amongst the group that presented and voted an amendment to the project that overstepped the red line the Right had defined (Savary 1985, 151–165). This led to the mass demonstrations that caused the end of the Mauroy government and Savary's project. The project failed as the Socialist group in the assembly voted the amendment they knew would put an end to Savary's project.

Further evidence increases our confidence in a coalition-based origin of the Socialist MPs position to the expense of an ideas or institution-based account. On the basis of that evidence, I make the claim that it was the lack of an Inclusive Choice coalition within the Left at that time that made Savary's project politically unsustainable (as long as the Right dominated public opinion on the issue). First, the fact that they preferred an unregulated private system to a regulated one shows the limits to their dedication to the idea of secularism. Second, although their opposition was in the name of secularism, their conception of the term was rather large, including opposition to any form of differentiation between schools. They agreed that the existing system fostered inequalities that were detrimental to the working class. They were opposed to school choice because it increased parents' power over children's futures which they saw as a threat for socialism and the well-being of the working class (Parti Socialiste 1976). They wanted "public funds for public schools, private funds for private schools" (Savary 1985, 152–153).

The Socialist group's rejection of Inclusive Choice stopped the reform process as it

triggered a nation-wide demonstration organised by private schools' parental representation organisations, other catholic education institutions and the Right. The government withdrew the project and stepped down. The Right could mobilise extensively on the question of school choice, while the government proposal actually did not take away any choice for the consumer but set limits to the producer (Toulemonde 1988, 256–257). The government did not have the corresponding mobilisation capacity for its own version of school choice. To sum up, Community Schooling was not an option because of the strong coalition in favour of School Choice led by the Right. Inclusive Choice was a compromise to improve equality of opportunity without impinging on families' willingness to choose a school. However this compromise failed within the Socialist government's ranks, leading to claims that went a step too far for the coalition on the right that mobilised and thus ended the reform project. We cannot explain this advantage of mobilisation of the right or the government's failure to control the parliamentary group with the proposed ideas-based or institutions-based accounts.

6.2.3. The centre-right 'freedom of choice' position

The mobilisation of the Right in favour of Exclusive Choice was a key constraint for Savary's reform plans. For the coalition theory to hold, evidence is needed about the exogeneity of this Exclusive Choice position from both the state-church conflict and the rise of neoliberal ideas in the 1970s-80s in European governments. Similarly to England and Sweden, I argue we have the necessary evidence to conclude that the Right changed its position from Tracked Schooling to Exclusive Choice as a consequence of educational expansion. In 1975, the centre-right government under the Presidency of Valery Giscard d'Estaing and with Jacques Chirac as Prime Minister had reformed the French Tracked Schooling system at the lower secondary level, turning it effectively into an Exclusive Choice system. The *Loi Haby* unified all lower secondary tracks into the *collège unique*, the French comprehensive school system. Private schools also had to comply with this change, but remained their own admissions authorities without regulation on how to select students. Different secondary analyses point at public pressure for more equal opportunities at the lower secondary level as the driver behind the government's plans (Duclaud-Williams 1983; Poucet 2009). Importantly, as Poucet notes, the government did not include catholic education institutions in the negotiations and consultations prior to reform (Poucet 2009, 131–133). Hence, the government did not see admissions to private schools as a policy problem. The catholic education leadership feared that this was just the start of a process that would come to

harm their education freedoms. However, in 1977, the year the loi Haby was implemented, new legislation came to improve the financial conditions of private schooling (loi Guermeur). The end of Tracked Schooling then came hand in hand with an affirmation of the right to choose a school, albeit selective to the extent that catholic schools maintained their large leeway in admitting students.

The Chirac government was not trying to ensure equality of opportunity for all. The change from Tracked Schooling to the *collège unique* was following the interests of the better off rather than improving access to upper secondary education for the working class. Traces of the reform process attest this: Following the loi Haby, all children of secondary school age who would not opt out to private schooling were to attend the secondary school defined by the *carte scolaire*. Differentiation within that school was possible at later stages. Yet, in original plans, the loi Haby was more than that (Duclaud-Williams 1983). It included a change in primary school age and curricular reform thereof which would permit the 'faster' pupils to move on more quickly, while giving enough time for the others to acquire the necessary skills for further education before entering lower secondary schooling. The reform was stripped off most of its proposals regarding primary education and upper secondary curricular changes because of teacher union disagreement (Duclaud-Williams 1983, 78–85). Those parts of the reform that were supposed to allow better preparation to lower secondary education for low performers were scrapped. Despite teacher union opposition and the absence of essential elements to equalise opportunities for all, the government abolished tracks. Duclaud Williams concludes that the government went down this reform path despite this opposition because of electoral goals and knowledge of favourable public opinion (pp. 82-83).

Three years later, in 1980, the government loosened the catchment area system, effectively allowing parents to request an opt out of the local school, which would then be examined by the administration (Barrault 2013). This system resembles Thatcher's school choice policy in 1980 that started to move the English system towards a generalised Exclusive Choice system. The *dérogation* (opt-out/exemption) concept was born. This observation also attests that the Right developed a broader policy of increasing the level of choice in the school system. In part, then, the policy for school choice was exogenous from the state-church conflict. This then further questions the extent to which the Right's support for private education that proved essential for the outcome of the 1982-1984 Savary reform plans was a matter of the state-church conflict. Similarly to the *collège unique* reform, the *dérogation*s reform happened under clear awareness that there was a social bias in school choice behaviour which could lead to further segregation between schools. Looking back to that

period, Agnès Van Zanten even identifies a certain pessimism of intellectuals and scholars (e.g. Bourdieu) on the capacity of the education system to tackle the problem of equal educational opportunity. She states that this pessimism might have structured the public discourse and even increased the pressure parents felt to make sure their children received a good education (Barrault 2013, 117–118).

The shared knowledge on the new social function of private schools is a particularly important clue to support the interest-based account. By the early 1980s it was well known to policy-makers of the Right and of the Left that private schools were now responding to new 'types' of parents: parents who 'consume' education and were eager to get the best education for their child in view of upward social mobility or at least to make sure they will not be downwardly mobile (Ballion 1974; Ballion 1982). As exposed above, the Left extensively discussed this characteristic and its problems. But the Right was well aware of it as well. For instance, the catholic education institutions – especially the parents' organisation – embarked on a fight for 'education freedom' (*liberté d'enseignement*) rather than a fight for religious education (Poucet 2009, 143). They certainly could not use the methods that had structured their fight for private education in the first half of the 20th century, when parents were called to support private schooling for the sake of their children's salvation (Poucet 2009, 21). They now attracted parents for other reasons. Moreover, in the pamphlet *Pour libérer l'école* ('Releasing the school'), the liberal MP Alain Madelin asserted that parents' expectations towards schools had changed and mobilisations for the rights of catholic education were unrelated to historical or religious motives, but due to the better education it delivered (Madelin 1984). Madelin enumerated the same reasons for parents' decisions to opt out as scholars like Ballion and Prost did, as numerous public opinion polls showed, and as the Left feared. He dismissed the idea that reducing social segregation in schools was a credible objective (pp.146-148) but suggested that a school voucher system could improve opt out opportunities for all. This observation has two implications. First of all, neoliberal ideas on the education voucher circulated in France as much as they did in England or Sweden. Second, the policy was not discussed by experts behind closed doors, but school choice proponents were able to massively mobilise parents in favour of a school choice system. The idea of generalising school choice to all schools was then very present in the public discourse of the 1980s. The difference between France on the one hand and England and Sweden can then not hinge on a different stance towards neoliberal ideas.

6.2.4. Possible generalisation of Exclusive Choice in 1986-88

The fight for school choice did not stop with the end of the Savary reform project. It came to be one of the central education policies for the 1986 legislative elections, when the centre-right alliance promised to abolish the catchment area system and introduce a system of school choice for all within the public system, too (Toulemonde 1988). As the right won the elections, we would have expected them to fulfil this pledge. Yet, they dropped the plan to abolish the catchment area system and instead decided to develop the *dérogations* system while maintaining catchment areas in place. This episode again strengthens confidence in the interest-based account when compared to its alternatives. Three sets of observations provide further confidence in the interest-based theory when compared to others. First, social and economic policy of the time was certainly influenced by neoliberal ideas (Palier 2006, 113). But key policy-makers did not anticipate that choice would be superior to the planned alternative in terms of economic efficiency and quality of education. The Education Minister René Monory – an entrepreneur – considered the possibilities to introduce a system based on school choice and vouchers. He commissioned an internal report to evaluate the different reform options. Its authors concluded that school choice reform would come with significant costs that local authorities would not be happy to bear (Toulemonde 1988, 274–275). On the one hand, one could state that given the internal nature of the report, its authors had vested interests against a market system in education thus weakening the argument that decision-makers themselves did not believe in improved efficiency. On the other hand, it is more than reasonable to assume that Monory and Chirac were aware of such a possible bias and would not have commissioned the report internally had they wanted another take on the matter. Hence, although neoliberalism became a more important economic policy idea in that government, it cannot explain the pledge for more school choice.

Second, policy-makers' awareness on the relationship between social class and school choice had been sharpened since the 1984 debate. Following his reform project's failure in 1984, Savary had started local experiments with school choice. With sociologist Robert Ballion, the policy team had selected five *départements* to create so-called 'free choice zones'. There, families could now also choose between different schools within the public system by expressing their preference which was then examined by a local committee. Ballion's role had been to evaluate the reform, especially regarding the effect on schools' social intake. His study concluded – again – that a clear class bias in choice behaviour existed, meaning an increased segregation in schools with predominantly working class intake

(Ballion 1991; Toulemonde 1988, 274). The class bias was then not restricted to opting out to private schools. It was confirmed within choice areas in the public system and very relevant for the *dérogations* system in general. The common knowledge was then that generalising choice was a policy that would particularly benefit the educated individuals from middle and upper income groups and increase segregation in schools of children with low education and income background. In 1986, when the Right was in government, the middle and upper income groups together formed an Exclusive Choice coalition. Their position – like for Sweden and England – stood in line with this coalition's interest. Unlike the Bildt government in Sweden and the Thatcher government in England, the Chirac government did not introduce a generalised Exclusive Choice system despite the RPR and UDF alliance's pledge.

Third, then, Monory chose to continue on the reform path set by his predecessors: to further expand the free choice zones to additional local areas, still in form of a trial-version rather than to undertake a full-fledged reform. In 77 out of 100 départements, the local offices of the central ministry were requested to identify some areas in which to set up such 'free choice zones'. These were to take into consideration the specific local characteristics in their choice of zone (Toulemonde 1988). Interestingly, very little is known about how these decisions were made. Bernard Toulemonde, who was advising the government during the initial trial phase of 1985 recalls that the original five zones were chosen in an attempt to get some kind of representative sample, but that this also depended on local administrators' motivations ((Toulemonde) interview). Interestingly, then, Exclusive Choice was generalised in some areas, while it remained restrained to private schools in others.

The government's decision not to generalise Exclusive Choice but continue to expand school choice incrementally certainly was less politically costly than to go for full-fledged reform. As long as the central ministry could coordinate with local offices whether pressure for more choice existed in some defined areas and flexibly react to that, they could maintain their administratively and economically superior planning system in place for the rest of the territory. Ballion and his colleagues continued to evaluate the reforms that corroborated their results. In free choice zones, parents did use the opt-out possibility, but they remained a minority (Ballion 1991).

We can now draw these results together and confront them with alternative explanations' expectations. I have shown that ideationally speaking, the Thatcher, Bildt, and Chirac governments were similar. Another possible explanation for the policy divergence is the role of teacher unions in French education policy. However, none of the sources mentions negotiations with teacher unions or protests in the context of these reforms. Yet, given the

belief – not only in public opinion, but also in the academic discourse – that teacher unions make education politics in France, we would have expected to find mention of such negotiations if teacher unions had indeed played a role here. In case teacher unions mattered, such negotiations should have taken place in the open and hence be reported in studies that recount the policy events. Further, it is unclear why teacher unions would have rejected a general application of school choice but accepted it to be experimented with on over three quarters of the territory.

6.3. The Centre-Right in favour of generalising Exclusive Choice (1993-2010)

In the 1990s and 2000s, the education level in the middle and upper income groups rose further, meaning that over two thirds of that group would benefit from a school choice system. And indeed, despite having dropped reform plans in 1986, the Right continued to pledge for a full-fledged reform in the public and private system to generalise school choice. Again, their position was similar to the British and Swedish centre-right. Again, empirics allow us to increase confidence in the interest-based account for this part of the causal mechanism. The position however did not result in a reform that would have further generalised Exclusive Choice to include choice within the public system. Evidence also suggests that political cost calculations drove the decision not to reform. Costs of non-reform were lower than costs of reform. In this section, I will look more closely into two reform projects of the Right that were not carried to the end. The first half deals with the 1993 reform of the *Loi Falloux of 1850* that hindered local authorities to invest into private school buildings. The 2007 UMP government's project to abolish the *carte scolaire* is the object of the second part.

6.3.1. The road to a new type of government-maintained private school

In 1993, the centre-right won a resounding victory in the legislative elections. Edouard Balladur became prime minister and appointed François Bayrou from the liberal party (UDF) as education minister, under François Mitterrand's presidency. Education was one of seven flagship policies of the centre-right alliance's electoral campaign. The first measure proposed was that "parents shall have the full freedom to choose their children's schools. There shall be

no financial discrimination concerning subsidies of schools that parents have freely chosen for their children" (Bayrou et al. 1992). The second measure further specified the increased pedagogical and financial autonomy to be granted to schools and the need to extent the possibility for local authorities to invest in school buildings to private schools. This required opening up the legislation on private schooling. Yet, it was not only a reform for private schooling, but the question of private schools subsidies was embedded into a larger pledge for increased school choice. Furthermore, indeed, they proposed to allow public schools to opt out of certain administrative and financial constraints by subscribing to "autonomy contracts" (*contrats d'autonomie*). This very much resembled the English grant-maintained schools. In sum, there was a real plan, negotiated between the two parties of the centre-right alliance, RPR and UDF, to extend school choice and create a generalised Exclusive Choice system.

This policy episode would become known as Bayrou's failed revision of the *loi Falloux* and analysed as the opposite version of Savary's failed *GSPULEN* of 1984. Bruno Poucet's historical account of the relationship between catholic schooling and the state since the loi Debré shows that the changed function of the private schools also spilled over into changed politics: the centre-right's plan was not limited to review the relationship between private and public schooling, it had a bigger plan to reform public education as well (Poucet 2009, 186). Still, there is some reason to believe that the institutional history played a role to put the loi Falloux back to the agenda. The private schools' parents' organisation had started to lobby the socialist government to alter its terms in the early 1990s. Jack Lang, with the advice of Bernard Toulemonde, had fruitfully solved some outstanding issues between public and private schooling that resulted in the Lang-Cloupet agreements. Even the presidential adviser on education had mentioned the issue of the loi Falloux to Francois Mitterrand (Poucet 2009, 178). Mitterrand resisted but the RPR and UDF agreed to put this matter back on the political agenda. François Bayrou acknowledged the need for more investment into catholic schools, recognising a dire need to renovate buildings that schools would otherwise have to finance with families' fees (Dumay 1993). For the path dependence account to work here, this lobbying effort should have been the main reason for putting the question of private school finances back to the agenda.

Putting school choice back to the agenda and including better subsidies to private schools was not a matter of interest group politics. Indeed, catholic institutions withdrew their support for the reform during the drafting of the bill in 1993 (Chanet 2005; Poucet 2012, 193). The reform was broader as its aim was to permit the third type of schools (publicly funded non-catholic private schools) to spread (Poucet 2009, 186). This was only possible if local

authorities were allowed to subsidise fixed costs (as teaching costs were taken over by the state for all private schools). This required new legislation. Such schools would then come to compete with the catholic schools system that would cease to be the opt-out monopoly. Church schools then did not have that much of an interest in revising the loi Falloux. Bayrou appointed Guy Bourgeois to become his principle private secretary (directeur de cabinet). Bourgeois was very keen on creating a new type of schools with his project *Créateurs d'Ecole*. For that plan, they needed more investments into buildings than what was allowed by the loi Falloux (Coq 1995, 82–88). At the beginning of its term, the government also had the plan to abolish the *carte scolaire* and thus generalise school choice. The school choice policy thus stood in continuity with the 1993-1997 government. While plans to privatise went further than in the 1986 pledges, plans to introduce vouchers and other markers of neoliberal policy were less present. Bayrou did not expect that this would improve the school system. What is more, the government did not find it useful to start with such a reform that would pit everyone's interests against one another (Garin 1993). Clearly, its plan to revise the loi Falloux was not less of a hornets' nest. Both projects could not be carried simultaneously.

6.3.2. A rushed project fails to get Constitutional Court approval

The bill failed as in December 1993 the Socialist Group put it to the Constitutional Council for constitutional review (Chanet 2005). Although the complaint was made mostly on reasons of formality of the decision-making procedure, arguing that the bill had been rushed through a reading in the senate, the Constitutional Council decided that it was unconstitutional because it violated the constitutional principle of equality (Les Echos 1994). It is important to note here that the government had asked a former constitutional court judge, Vedel, to report on the constitutionality of the bill. That report had estimated the reform was necessary to ensure educational freedom – another constitutional principle – given the dire state of school buildings in private schools (MIDI 2 1993). It is therefore also relevant that François Mitterrand was still President of the Republic, and had not kept his disagreement with the reform project a secret (Poucet 2009). What he as a President feared most was a revival of the 'school war' that his government had been a 'victim' of in 1984. Indeed, demonstrations had been organised and had again very successfully mobilised beyond the secular pressure groups establishment. This turn of events requires us to look more deeply into the institutionalist argument. Is France different because it has more institutional veto-points and veto-players that in that particular case were particularly active?

Two observations throw the ball back into the camp of the political cost assessment account. First, the failure of the bill in the process of constitutional review could have been avoided. The Constitutional Council stated that such a bill could be conforming with the constitution if it included more precise conditions of private school subsidies (Conseil Constitutionnel 1994). Such further thoughts would not have imperilled the original objective of Bayrou's reform. Many – including politically conservative – local authorities were wary of the project as it did not simplify the problem of financing private schools, rather adding a layer of complexity to it (Les Echos 1993).

What the Constitutional Council then really sanctioned with its assessment was that the project had not been thought through enough. Second, at the start of the reform project in spring 1993, Bayrou had decided that if he were to act, he had to act quickly, estimating a very short window of opportunity for such a reform project that in society would be perceived as another battle in an ongoing school war (Chanet 2005). This decision to rush through the reform was apparent at each step of the procedure and especially on the last reading of the bill in the Sénat in December 1993, when the government put the bill on the agenda last minute.

Bayrou then faced a trade-off between the necessity to be fast, estimating a very short window of opportunity to bring his project through the National Assembly and Senate given the divisions within own ranks, and the necessity to carefully prepare such a project for it to be successful. He chose to act quickly, and this decision characterised the rest of the reform process. For some observers at the time, the constitutional council decision was then the elegant way out of a reform that many local policy makers thought highly problematic to implement (Les Echos 1993). From this reading, institutions are not a sufficient condition for the outcome of limiting Exclusive Choice to private schooling. The path to failure of this reform project started earlier and regarded the small window of opportunity for reform that tilted the balance to speed at the expense of thoroughness (Chanet 2005).

This small window of opportunity was due to the mobilisation capacity of those against reform, hence, it was anticipated that the pressure against reform would mount, although at the beginning of the reform process, Bayrou estimated that the teacher unions were too divided for a credible opposition (Poucet 2009, 191). Indeed, as the church institutions distanced themselves from the reform project, the mobilisation capacity of those in favour of reform waned while with time, the capacity of those against reform increased. For instance, the prime minister had to promise a general investment into school buildings for public schools in order to calm the opposition (Jarreau 1994).

Following this failure, Bayrou remained Minister of Education until 1997. However,

he did not engage in any new structural reform. He became known as the Minister close to the teacher unions and avoiding any potential source of conflict (Prost and Bon 2011). With the failure of the loi Falloux, there was no room for reforming the *carte scolaire* which was completely dropped from the centre-right's agenda until the electoral campaign for the 2007 elections started in 2006 (Barrault 2013).

To be sure, the 2002-2007 government did pursue substantial education policies at the lower secondary level, giving schools more autonomy and reformulating learning outcomes so as to conduct national testing (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale 2006; Ministère de l'Education Nationale 2004). These policies were mainly related to the government's spending review and to a national consultation on education policy conducted by Claude Thélot (2004). In this consultation, the Exclusive Choice system was identified as a policy problem. Not the lack of school choice however was put forward as problematic, but the inequalities created on the one hand by opt out to private schools and the *dérogations* system and on the other hand by residential segregation (Thélot 2004, 85–90). Reforming this system was not identified as a priority. The report from the consultation and subsequent legislation was about improving individualised and competency-based learning and stressed the importance of redistributing more resources to failing schools rather than asking who gets access to what school. Considering the bottom-up structure of the consultation, we would have expected the report to more deeply discuss the question of school choice in case there had been a demand for such a policy. The real policy problem however was in the growing disparity between the quality of schools in segregated poor areas and the quality of education elsewhere. Previous reports by sociologists Dubet and Duru Bellat had noted this divide in quality and the necessity to react (Barrault 2013, 127; Dubet and Duru-Bellat 2000). The problem of who got access to quality education in the system was mainly a problem for the poor.

6.3.3. A new education policy for the 2007 presidential election

Generalising Exclusive Choice was again put on the table in the run-up to the 2007 presidential and legislative elections. Education policy was to become one core area of reform, and the team responsible for creating the electoral platform became highly invested into the topic (Martel and Messika 2007). The core measure was to increase school autonomy and school choice at the same time, and to eventually abolish the *carte scolaire*. One central argument in that debate was that the *carte scolaire* could not be justified anymore by pointing

at socially mixed intakes in schools as segregation had increased, effectively limiting the possibility for the most deprived to get access to better schools (Darcos (interview), Mignon (interview), Antoine (interview)). It was argued that the government of the time – of the same political party – was not doing enough to counter this problem. To respond to the criticism, the government launched an investigation and consultation on reform possibilities to specifically tackle the problem of social inequality created by the existing system, but did not come to any new result (Albert 2005). School choice would then become the flagship education policy of Sarkozy's campaign team (Martel and Messika 2007). With the electoral victory in 2007, France could again have shifted to a generalised Exclusive Choice system. Again, it did not.

One explanation for this new interest for school choice could be the neoliberal turn of the party. Sarkozy's campaign team was headed by the liberal mind of Emmanuelle Mignon. At the same time, it is difficult to make a qualitative difference between the degree of neoliberal influence into the 2005 school reforms when school choice was off the agenda, and Sarkozy's education team's proposals. The 2005 school reforms had very much started to create a market where schools would compete for resources as they would be evaluated and bound to the ministry by certain contracts and their students' competences could be evaluated. These reforms were about increasing the efficiency of the education system, increasing their accountability to the ministry and taking away power from the teachers. What is more, Sarkozy's campaign team and education advisers did not seek to increase choice in order to improve the system, but rather by continuing on the same reform path in terms of school autonomy and accountability (Mignon (interview), Antoine (interview)). School autonomy and increased accountability led to an improvement of their quality, but the choice mechanism was rather understood as a means for students of failing schools to get access to better education than a measure to improve the overall quality of the system. The team thought of using the rhetoric of the voucher (but refrained for it) in view of explaining the concrete changes to the population (Mignon (interview)).

The necessary observations for the coalition-based account are present. To start, there is a clear shift between the early 1990s and the mid 2000s on what group the government wants to target with their choice reform. Indeed, Sarkozy's project was about the inequalities created by residential segregation. In the earlier case, decision-makers omitted to speak of inequalities, which was the weapon of the opposition to school choice reforms. Now, decision-makers tied the reform plans to socio-economic change within the population, according to which the *carte scolaire* did not work anymore as guarantor for socially mixed

intakes in a new residentially segregated reality. This shift is what we expect to find in the educational composition of the M and H coalition at the time. The level of education of M and H taken together had not changed dramatically. But if one looks into change within each of the groups, one sees that the group of intermediate educated of the middle income group had moved from a relative majority to a clear absolute majority within 10 years, and those with tertiary education had doubled from 8 percent to 16 percent of the M group. The H group instead had moved towards a relative majority of individuals with tertiary education, moving close to the 50 percent mark of that group. The education gap between the middle and higher income group then drastically increased in the second half of the 1990s and remained fairly stable throughout the 2000s.

We then expect the centre-right policy makers to target mostly the M group when it comes to Student Sorting Institutions, as most of the H group are happy in any system and school choice would not that much improve access conditions for those with intermediate education. They thus targeted those who wanted to opt out of the local school to get better education. They believed that for this group the existing system was unfair, as only some got access to private schools and the existing *dérogations* system and wanted to improve their opt out odds. To build this analysis, they consulted sociologists and economists who were working on school segregation (Barrault 2013; Martel and Messika 2007). The quest for policy solutions included a visit to Sweden, the US, and England to seek expertise on school choice effects (Mignon (interview)).

They did not target lower income groups too specifically with this proposal. On the one hand they used the rhetoric of the 'poor bright kid' who had to get out of their 'ghettos' (Ministère de l'Education Nationale 2010; Royer 2006). Yet their policy plans did not include concrete provisions on how school choice would achieve this (Obin and Peyroux 2007). On the other hand, they knew that parents had a limited choice of schools based on their residential area. This limited the possibilities for the poor bright kid to actually 'opt out' of the 'ghetto' via school choice. How exactly such a choice system would work was surprisingly little thought through when the UMP government of 2007 started their work (Obin and Peyroux 2007). These observations reduce the confidence that they really designed the choice policy for the 'poor bright' kid and increase the confidence that it was targeted to those who did not live in 'ghettos', who wanted to opt out of their schools, and who had the means to exercise informed choice, but could not get access to better schools for their children via residential choices: the middle income group.

6.3.4. A lack of reform incentives

The reason that they did not go forward with a full-fledged choice reform is then again to be found in the second part of the causal mechanism: a lack of political costs of non-reform that would make the cost of reform worth the effort. The political position matched the coalition of the time and the proposed policy was then to further expand the Exclusive Choice system. This policy was much more than a footnote to the campaign but at the centre of a new education policy. It was thus a real reform priority to abolish the *carte scolaire*, unlike in 1993 when this was the secondary goal after private school financing. The education reform team had designed an incremental strategy and carefully thought of how to attenuate possible opposition to reform. Once in government, they immediately reformed the *dérogations* system, requesting administrators to grant parents opt out of the local school and drafting a catalogue of cases that should be prioritised in the allocation process (amongst which a social-economic indicator, granting opt out priority for those of the lowest socio-economic group) (Barrault 2013). This completely reopened the allocation process of the 2007-2008 school year. The plan was then to evaluate that experience and develop a plan for full-fledged removal of the *carte scolaire* by 2010.

It was very obvious to the education team that teacher unions would be opposed to such reform (SNES (interview), SGEN-CFDT (interview)). The policy team around Emmanuelle Mignon had worked on the incompatibility between such a deep reform and the savings the government planned to do on civil servants (to which teachers belong in France) (Mignon (interview)). In short: they would not be able to reform the school system and decide to only replace 50 percent of retiring teachers. They had thus thought of a way to attenuate that staff pressure on teachers in return of more leeway on their reforms. The appointment of Xavier Darcos at the Ministry of Education and Dominique Antoine as the President's education adviser also went into the direction of attenuating pressure on the administration: both of them had worked in Bayrou's teacher-friendly cabinet in the 1990s (SGEN-CFDT (interview), Obin (interview)).

But beyond the first round of 'flexibilising' the *carte scolaire* and increasing possibilities within the derogations system, Nicolas Sarkozy withdrew his support for further reform (Mignon (interview), Antoine (interview)). Considering that Xavier Darcos and team were not particularly eager to reform the system, this lack of impetus from the Presidential team meant a quick burial of further reform plans. This lack of motivation for the more ambitious plan was noticed at several points. First, when Sarkozy decided that teachers would

also be touched by the civil service reform, meaning a reduction in the number of teachers. Second, he did not support Xavier Darcos against students' protests in the wake of another ambitious reform of upper secondary education (Antoine (interview)). The reform goal was reformulated: after a year or so, the minister declared that if a certain share of parents who started the derogations procedure would get their preferred school, then that would effectively mean that the *carte scolaire* had been removed (Obin (interview)). The open disappointment of close friends and advisers of Sarkozy at the gap between the efforts they put into designing a workable policy and the lack of support of their political leader testifies that on the outset, the policy was not planned to be the void pledge it became. Recalling this policy episode, Mignon (interview) reckons that the campaign team did not do enough to convince public opinion – especially those who would be better off with a generalised school choice system – that the reform would benefit to them. Opinion polls showed quite contradictory results according to how questions were framed (Ben Ayed 2015). In short, they were not eager to abandon the known system of the *carte scolaire* but always happy to have more choice. In hindsight, it seemed that those who would have benefited from change believed that the reform would turn out to "another policy for the rich" (Mignon (interview)). Eventually, the chosen approach neatly fit the state of public opinion: choice possibilities were further extended, but within the existing framework that did not require anyone to change their behaviour in the competition for quality school places.

The question here remains whether particular political cost of reform exists in France that requires a high cost of non-reform for the centre-right to go forward with further choice reform. However, we can also ask whether France has a particularly low political cost of non-reform in this domain, which could be determined by its particularity in terms of socio-economic coalitions. For instance, one difference between France in 2007 and England in the late 1980s when Thatcher generalised Exclusive Choice beyond church schools is that in 2007 France, the middle and high income group coalition had a small share of families with basic education credentials while in England in 1980, there was still a quite significant share of families with basic education within that coalition. Then, the probability of being in a school with students of less educated families was lower for middle income families in France in 2007 than in England in 1988. In France of 2007 then, improving opt out by generalising Exclusive Choice would have made less of a difference than it would have done in the context of a higher share of low educated individuals in a similar income situation. At the very least, what this teaches us is that we cannot simply make the power of teacher unions or the centralised characteristic of French education responsible for the lack of reform if we do not

at the same time look at the lack of incentives for government to overcome these institutional hurdles.

6.4. The Centre-Left and its preference for the status quo (1997-2010)

We now know the extent to which the coalition-based approach explains why France got and kept an Exclusive Choice system that did not extend to public schools. But why did the French Left not reform Student Sorting Institutions and create a less selective Inclusive Choice system? First, I show that the Left's position from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s is consistent with the level of education in the middle and low income groups. Second, I show that causal process observations decrease our confidence in the possible theories of path dependence and the influence of (anti-)neoliberal ideas. Third, I argue that in contrast, we can significantly increase our confidence in the proposition that because Inclusive Choice was not a better option for an important part of left-wing constituents throughout that period of time, the Parti Socialiste did not put much effort into developing a new policy and putting it on its reform agenda.

6.4.1. An unsolved policy problem

By the mid-1990s, the coalition for Community Schooling was crumbling in the lower and middle income groups with just about half of that group having reached intermediate education credentials. The Parti Socialiste came back to government in 1997. The government's position was that the *carte scolaire* had to serve the policy objective of socially mixed schools. On the one hand, the position was that school choice would lead to increased segregation, which was estimated bad for the quality of education (Barrault 2013). On the other hand, decision-makers were explicit about the fact that parents were already opting out of local schools to get access to better education and that catchment areas had to be redrawn in order to get less segregated schools. The position was then not more in favour of school choice than in previous years, but the policy problem of student sorting and inequality of opportunity became more firmly established, which led to an active search for policy solutions (Barrault 2013, 124–127). In short, the party did not have a clear policy solution, but a clear objective of solving the policy problem of a fairer distribution of quality education with the instrument of Student Sorting Institutions. Education policy makers then more

actively attempted to find solutions to the problem of parents' wish to opt out and the aim of keeping schools as socially mixed as possible (Dubet and Duru-Bellat 2000). This opening up and search for solutions however did not result in a change of position in favour of Inclusive Choice, neither during the time in government from 1997 to 2002, nor during the subsequent electoral campaigns of 2007 and 2012.

This preference for the status quo could have an institutional and/or an ideational cause. The institutional argument regards the incentives of reform created by existing institutions that could have made Inclusive Choice an unavailable option to the socialist government. Inclusive Choice would have required regulating admissions to private schools. For instance, that would have meant to ban the selective elements they were allowed to use in the admission process such as interviews with parents and assessment of previous school-work. Indeed, such regulation would have sufficed to make the Exclusive Choice system an Inclusive one (albeit limited to the private schools). The fear of a new 'school war' was very present in policy makers' minds and they did not even dare to think about the possibility to propose new legislation on the matter of private schooling (e.g. Cartron (interview), Peillon (interview)). Teacher unions and other organised interests provide a second institutional factor pushing against introducing Inclusive Choice. Teacher unions – except for one smaller union, the SGEN-CFDT – were categorically opposed to reforming the *carte scolaire* (SGEN-CFDT (interview), SNES (interview)). The same applied for one of the two major parent representation organisation, the FCPE. Teachers and well-informed parents were those that could most easily escape the constraints of the *carte scolaire* while staying within the public system by using the derogations system (Obin and van Zanten 2010). Their opt out requests were much more likely to be met than other parents' attempts to circumvent the *carte scolaire*.

We further have to consider whether the party stayed hostile to school choice because of its rejection of neoliberal ideas. The comparative literature on Third Way politics in Europe has clearly established that Jospin's government more firmly rejected neoliberal policies than Tony Blair or other Third Way advocates (Lewis and Surender 2004). The sociologist Dubet has noted that there is a tendency in the French policy debate to use neoliberalism as a scapegoat for all problems of the education system (Dubet 2013). They then certainly had different ideas on how to reform the education system than the centre-right at that time, or if compared to England, to Tony Blair's public sector reforms. In that sense, the variation on acceptance of markets in education could have led to the variation in outcomes.

The institutional argument does not manage to jump through a set of important hoops.

Private school representatives had been willing to seek new compromises and found such compromises on several occasions with PS governments since 1984 (Poucet 2009; Poucet 2012). The Left was informally negotiating with church school actors in the late 2000s to explore reform options within the existing system (SGEC (interview)) and participating in policy reviews (Cartron 2012). This included exploring ways with which to redistribute funding within the private sector to those schools that admitted more disadvantaged children. With respect to teacher unions, the Jospin government was particularly hostile to them, and Education Minister Allègre went as far as refusing to negotiate with them (Prost and Bon 2011). He had to water down many reforms following teacher strikes, but he made quite bold reform proposals that were much more clearly against the interest of teachers than was the issue of school choice. Had the government wanted to reform, it would at least have proposed such a reform, despite potential need to water it down after potential strikes. No government proposal between 1997 and 2002 or official communication of the Parti Socialiste thereafter contained a concrete reform proposal in this respect.

The neoliberal ideas account fails if one considers a further set of observations. First, the Jospin government was determined to end producer capture in education and shift power back to the state (Prost and Bon 2011). New ways of governing education were considered despite hostility to the ideas that were connected with it. Hence, criticism towards the Third Way or neoliberalism did not mean that French policy makers would not also be critical to producer power and consider service reforms in the same fashion as other welfare states that developed markets to govern their services. Second, some central ideas of Fillon's 2005 reforms that further tackled producer power and gave schools more autonomy had been developed during the Jospin government and continued to receive the support of the party's education team. This was especially the case of the 'socle commun des compétences et des connaissances' (common basis of competencies and knowledge) which altered the national curriculum to include less knowledge-based and more competency-based content. This idea was also at the centre of a policy report commissioned by the Jospin government in 1998 (Dubet, Duru-Bellat, and Bergounioux 1999, 4). In sum, rhetorically the Right and the Left differed when it came to supporting neoliberal ideas in education. But a closer look at their policies does not reveal the difference that would explain the difference in outcome. The difference between both parties' policies lay in their interpretation of inequalities created by school choice. While the right pointed at the postcode lottery as unfair, the left was more interested in keeping segregation in disadvantaged schools at a minimum.

6.4.2. New debates and new divisions

The consensus that the only form of change should be in how catchment areas are drawn and how private schools could be integrated into a catchment area system waned in the early 2000s. Then, voices in the party leadership started to more openly criticise the *carte scolaire* and pointed at the necessity to further relax its rules of allocating students (Barrault 2013, 130). Ségolène Royal, in her race to become the presidential candidate of the 2007 elections, announced that the country needed to admit that socially mixed schools are a myth (de Montvalon 2006). Instead, her proposal went back to what Savary had proposed twenty years earlier: give parents the choice between two or three schools and increase the size of catchment areas to reduce social segregation. The two other internal candidates and party heavyweights Dominique Strauss Kahn and Laurent Fabius refused to pick up on this policy (Le Monde 2006a). The party leadership quickly watered down its support of school choice once Royal had become the PS candidate for the 2007 elections (Hollande 2007; Le Monde 2006b). This was the first time though that the PS had publicly acknowledged the inconsistency and doubt over the effect of the *carte scolaire* on social segregation. Dubet and Duru-Bellat – two of the sociologists most involved in the policy debate – took part in the public debate following Royal's pledge and gave support to her argument about the hypocrisy of those who denounced parents who would want to opt out of the local school in a choice system (Dubet and Duru-Bellat 2006). A new policy could not ignore that group of people but would have to meet their expectations on providing good education for their children. Following this debate, the party watered down the criticism to the *carte scolaire* in its declarations, but maintained the plan to relax its rules and allow more choice as long as it would lead to more socially mixed schools.

This official position changed again with the new leadership following the Party Conference of 2008 in Reims. The three main platforms in that contest differed on their take on the *carte scolaire* (Parti Socialiste 2008a). Royal did not call Sarkozy's reforms into question while Martine Aubry and Delanoë saw the *carte scolaire* as a necessary but not sufficient condition for fighting segregation. Aubry won the contest thanks to the support of Delanoë and Benoît Hamon. The new leadership then formulated a policy document based on Aubry's, Delanoë's and Hamon's platforms where they reiterated the position of "objecting to the calling into question of the catchment area system" (Parti Socialiste 2008b, 5). In contrast to a list of concrete measures to improve the education system for the least well-off, there was no mention of how and indeed whether they wanted institutional change with respect to

Student Sorting Institutions.

From that moment onwards, one can make out three coexisting positions: maintain the status quo (Exclusive Choice), create a new Community Schooling system, and create an Inclusive Choice system by widening the catchment areas and allowing parents to choose between different schools within those areas, including private schools. In the following three paragraphs, I will show that each of these position relied on good knowledge of the trade-offs involved, and that proponents of the Community Schooling model laid more emphasis on access to quality schooling for the low income group, the Inclusive Choice supporters focused on inequalities created by the exclusive nature of school choice, while those who tolerated the existing Exclusive Choice system understood it was impossible to create a coalition of both these groups for either Inclusive Choice or Community Schooling and thus decided to concentrate their efforts on the flipside of the coin: distributing quality to schools.

6.4.3. Three co-existing positions and the leadership's status quo preference

In the process of the policy review in preparation for the 2012 elections, the party's new education team around Bruno Julliard came to the position of supporting a Community Schooling system. This included to rethink the *carte scolaire* system to ensure that catchment areas are redrawn and do not include only residential but also other social criteria and open up the question of how to include the private sector into such a system. The policy was developed as a part of the new economic policy project of the party, with the *Convention Egalité Réelle* in 2010 (Parti Socialiste 2010a). The text drew on expert advice and consultation with local policy makers. The PS think tank 'Laboratoire des idées' had one working group on lower secondary schooling and one working group on education and the territory (PS Paris education spokesperson (interview)). Both groups came to the conclusion that the *carte scolaire* had to be rethought (Parti Socialiste 2010b; Parti Socialiste 2010c). The *Education and the Territory* group thus stated that the victims of school choice and residential strategies for access to better schools were the most disadvantaged families, and that any policy to improve the situation had to be linked to an urban policy that would put an end to residential 'ghettos'. Here, the *carte scolaire* is uniquely seen as an instrument to tackle social inequalities for the most deprived. The 'understanding' for parents that try to opt out of their local school or segregate residentially ends where this attitude leads to an "extremely preoccupying" situation for those at the lower end of the social strata (Parti Socialiste 2010c, 14). The *Convention Egalité Réelle* then called for a thorough rethinking of how the *carte*

scolaire instrument could achieve its goal. As a Parti Socialiste member and education expert notes, this call was never taken much further as the party "never ventured far enough into the technical debate, but the technical debate is extremely political in nature" (PS Paris education spokesperson (interview)).

A second strand of the party continued to explore the option of creating a system of school choice that would be less selective and thus more inclusive. The main point that those exploring this option had in common was that they took a pragmatic approach towards parents' wishes to opt out from the local school. They then did not find it useful to blame parents and the *dérogations* system for the inability of the *carte scolaire* system to provide equal opportunities. They shared Ségolène Royal's analysis of the 2007 campaign that social pressure on education led to anxious parents that wanted to have a possibility to opt out, but that existing means to do so remained exclusive to those who could navigate the system and whose children were welcome in private schools (Cartron 2012; Montebourg 2011). Furthermore, one could not expect an alleviation of either residential segregation or the pressure on schooling soon and had to find a solution to that problem. In absence of parents' trust in the local school, one could not expect them to stay loyal: "it would be an additional violence made to families" (Peillon (interview)). Opt-out behaviour and preferences were seen as a nuisance and constraint that could not be ignored and therefore had to be acknowledged and addressed in order to improve equality of opportunity.

For instance, this view was shared by researchers and party supporters that worked with the new progressive think tank *Terranova* (Obin (interview); Merle (2012)). Also, the socialist group in the Senate had started an evaluation on Sarkozy's 2007 reform. Notably, the reporting Senator Françoise Cartron drew the conclusion that Sarkozy's reform had provided an "inappropriate answer to the pertinent questions raised during the 2007 presidential debate" (Cartron 2012, 8). Therefore, there was a need to go beyond the previously existing system. Both these groups organised auditions with sociologists and educationalists. Amongst them was Jean Pierre Obin who had co-authored an unpublished evaluation report on the 2007 reform for the Education Ministry and co-authored a book with sociologist Agnès Van Zanten on the *carte scolaire* (Obin and van Zanten 2010). Both groups also auditioned Nathalie Mons, who had published on school choice reform and had worked on a classification of different school choice arrangements (cf. chapter 2) (Cartron 2012; Merle 2012). Two teacher unions supported this policy (SGEN-CFDT and UNSA-education) (Obin (interview)). Arnaud Montebourg, candidate to the socialist primaries in 2011, explicitly integrated a shift to Inclusive Choice into his manifesto on education while heavily criticising the neoliberal

paradigm in education (Montebourg 2011). At the same time, they were all very well aware that this measure could further lead to the deserting of failing schools (Cartron 2012). To tackle this problem, they advocated large-scale investment projects to draw parents back to those schools and to seek to improve parents' trust in the local school.

Last but not least, the education team around Vincent Peillon, the first Minister of Education of the 2012 PS government, decided to adopt neither of both options. Education reform was a top priority of the government, but Student Sorting Institutions did not form part of the proposed measures (Parti Socialiste 2012). Despite approaching Peillon's team on several occasions, it did not positively react to their proposals (Obin (interview), Cartron (interview)). The minister and his team did not expect that they would allow a satisfactory solution to the problem of student sorting (Peillon (interview), Delahaye (interview)). They analysed that choice behaviour was socio-economically driven and would therefore necessarily lead to more segregation. In that sense, there was no possible coalition between those who wanted to choose and those that would not choose except if those who wanted to exit could be convinced to stay following an improvement of school quality. School improvement was therefore higher on the agenda than the question of who gets access to what school. That question would only monopolise the debate and endanger other reform projects. As one policy-maker noted in conclusion to the interview: *"We will be able to make things happen only if the upper and middle classes accept to live with other children. And that, you will agree, is not a question of regulation. These parents, you will not be able to convince them if you don't provide them with an equal distribution of education supply."*

To conclude this section, the Left moved away from supporting Community Schooling in the early 2000s as the coalition in favour of it was crumbling and the discourse on blaming parents for wanting to opt out was not tenable anymore. At the same time, there was never a clear coalition in favour of Inclusive Choice that would have legitimised to improve opportunities for those who wanted to exit to the expense of those who would not exit. France thus kept its Exclusive Choice system, which stayed limited to opt out to private schools and the derogations system in the public sector. This policy outcome was not due to institutional constraints, as top-level decision-makers never intended to thoroughly consider an Inclusive Choice reform but initiated comparable reform projects with potential institutional barriers. Taken together, this set of observations also starkly reduces our confidence in the theory that the French Left was less exposed or willing to adopt neoliberal ideas in the public service and therefore did not consider to shift to an Inclusive Choice system. One observation that

confirms the partisan theory while disconfirming the ideas approach provides strong evidence to support that claim: Arnaud Montebourg's education reform project for the 2011 primaries that condemns neoliberalism in education but proposes Inclusive Choice to improve equal opportunities. At the same time, we do find the necessary ingredients to further increase our confidence in the social coalition account. The loss of consensus led to different strands of reform, each of which focused on a certain group that had to be considered as a priority for student sorting. But when it came to decide between the new Community Schooling option and the Inclusive Choice option, the leadership decided to drop the question from the agenda, as it saw no possible coalition between parents of different socio-economic background. Rather, they expected this matter to further divide society and imperil the rest of the education reform programme.

Conclusion

This case study has shown that partisan politics have been the warrants of French policy stability of SSIs. As for Sweden and England, parties' positions corresponded to their constituents' education level. The position of the centre-right was very much in line with the Swedish and English conservatives throughout the time period: a clear preference for school choice and pledges for Exclusive Choice reform. The centre-left's divergence from England and Sweden in the late 1990s/mid-2000s is matched with a higher share of constituents with basic education. Each of the positions I have examined originated from an understanding that most constituents lost from the present partisan position and institutional status quo. Policy-makers worked very closely with designated experts to weigh between options. Thus, the partisan hypothesis met its tests in all sequences. The alternative hypotheses did meet some important tests, and were certainly part of the process. But they were never the protagonists of formulating policy problems and choosing corresponding solutions. In this time span, the Parti Socialiste leadership either did not manage to reform because of a split party, or did not have reform plans. In contrast, the centre-right held clear reform-friendly positions on three occasions. On all three occasions, once in government they decided against a reform to generalise Exclusive Choice beyond faith schools: they did not expect any political costs to flow from the decision not to reform.

This exercise gave a fresh perspective at the French case of education politics. In 1984, Savary could have come close to solving the conflict between church schools and

public schools. That is, only under the condition of having a party in favour of school choice between public schools. As we know now, the conditions for such a school choice coalition within the PS were not ripe at the time. Additionally, the centre-right did not refrain from its Exclusive Choice reform because of teacher union opposition. The question is rather why they never faced political costs from being status quo friendly. With the evidence of these case studies, we could well have imagined an alternative scenario in which the centre-right of 1986 would have generalised school choice. It is not certain though that the Left would have followed with an Inclusive Choice reform in its 1997-2002 government, as was the case in Sweden, and later in England. Evidence from the 2006-2010 policy-formulation process suggests that in such a scenario, too, they may well have been too divided for such a step.

Beyond its lessons for the French case, this account also permits to state more generally – within scope conditions of this sample – that parties attempt to redistribute opportunities to their constituents with Student Sorting Institutions. France was the least-likely case for parties' ability to redistribute. But the same mechanism was at work in Sweden, England, and France. Variation between France on the one hand and Sweden and England on the other hand was that the Left never reached a clear Inclusive Choice coalition, and the Right never faced political costs flowing from the status quo. Like Sweden, France is a most-likely case for some iteration of the feedback-effect argument. We have learned that the importance of past political conflicts is overstated in current explanations of the French case. Another alternative explanation of the French case was that the Right did not hold neoliberal ideas. This was also disconfirmed, and the empirical work suggests ideational variation across cases to be smaller than previously expected. In the conclusion, I discuss this comparison with its implications for the study of political economy of education more in depth.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

How do policy-makers distribute quality education to students at the lower secondary schooling level? What do their institutional choices imply for the social right of equal opportunity in education? I raised these questions at the start of the thesis as I found cross-national variation of Student Sorting Institutions intriguing. Western European welfare states whose welfare, education, and political institutions differ have similarly turned their back to Tracked Schooling but then went different paths. The pattern of the variation seemed puzzling at the start of the research project. Especially, why did both the Swedish and English left embark on school choice although it did not point towards more equality, and why did the French left not regulate existing school choice arrangements to make them less selective? These sets of questions motivate this study's central research question: what explains variation of Student Sorting Institutions and whose right to equal opportunities is favoured? The main answer can be summarised as follows. Individuals' education and income defines interests towards Student Sorting Institutions. Left-wing governments cater to middle and low income groups while right-wing governments cater to middle and high income groups. They then gear their policy preferences towards their income coalitions' education level. They reform institutions that contradict their policy preferences only if they expect higher political loss from maintaining the status quo than from the new divisions created by reform.

In this concluding chapter, I first put the findings from the three empirical chapters in a comparative light. I then examine the extent to which findings travel beyond the cases and the limits of my argument given methodological choices and the focus on formal Student Sorting Institutions. The chapter closes with a reflection on how the trilemma of Student Sorting Institutions relates to other complex redistributive choices, meaning that governments have to navigate their way through a web of trilemmas. This study hence comes with valuable lessons on redistribution in the political economy of education and beyond.

7.1. Discussion of empirical findings

The first task of the project was to conceptualise variation of SSIs. I found it useful to think of variation along the two dimensions of parental choice and selectiveness of schools. Each of

the four types has its own implication for the social right of equal opportunities in education. Selective systems allow social origins to work both through their effect on individual achievement and its effect on educational decisions. When making decisions between non-selective systems on the choice dimension, the question is whether the family as a co-producer of education has responsibility for the school quality in the community school, as their opt-out behaviour affects the educational opportunities of those left behind. Empirically, I found each of the four systems represented in my sample, and also a number of reforms or reform attempts in each country. Evidence from the policy-making process clearly showed actors were highly aware of trade-offs between these options. They saw SSIs as an instrument for guaranteeing the social right of equal opportunities and reflected on limits posed by residential segregation and the structure of inequalities in society. Hence, we can consider this typology not only useful to meaningfully capture cross-national variation of how the competition for quality school places is regulated and such regulation's implication for equality of opportunity. The typology also helps to map policy options and carefully consider and debate the trade-offs of reform in a more applied policy exercise.

Next, framing the policy problem in this way permitted to shed new light on the role of political parties and their participation in government on redistributive outcomes, especially when it comes to education. The main message here is that parties are divided. Centre-left and centre-right governments – whether coalitions or single parties – had to convince their parties of the reform projects in order to change institutions. These divisions were generally not motivated or explained by usual factions within parties. This evidence, recurrent in each of the countries, parties, and policy episodes, provides an important hoop test for my theory of partisan politics. In Sweden, this materialised as well across parties, as Centre and Green Party votes to pass a reform was neither guaranteed for the conservative right nor for the social democratic left. But getting the required votes for change of government party MPs was also an uncertain task in the electoral systems of France and England. The failure of Alain Savary in 1984 and Tony Blair's tough negotiations prior to the 2006 Education and Inspections Bill attest this.

One might wonder whether insisting on the existence and importance of divisions within parties is not just pointing out the obvious. To date, unfortunately, both the repeatedly cited literature on education spending and the literature on school choice and markets in education have refrained from opening the blackbox of the party when theorising party preferences. Now, we have learned that divisions not only exist, but are important to explain the outcomes that interest us. Importantly, these divisions were not easily solved by tying

policy packages. Therefore, if comparative political economy seeks to strengthen the argument that who is in government matters for redistribution and inequality, then it seems important to further discuss the nature of such divisions across policy contexts and look into policy-making within parties.

In all three country-cases government parties and coalitions experienced important divisions, but the nature of the divisions and policy outcomes varied across these cases. For the Left, this difference is apparent when we compare governments of the late 1990s. In all three cases, new Left governments were faced with an Exclusive Choice system. The Swedish Left had the most educated constituency when compared to France and England. There was some opposition to school choice, especially from local representatives of rural areas, but this opposition was not significant enough to steer the party leadership away from the Inclusive Choice trajectory on which they had embarked. In England, divisions within the party gave the leadership a hard time regarding school reform. The first Blair government did not move towards Inclusive Choice. Reform happened as the party was more united on choice, but pressure mounted to make it more inclusive. In the meantime, the middle and low income group had starkly increased its education level: in 1991, over half that group had only basic education credentials. In 2004, that group had shrunk to a quarter of the middle and low income coalition. The French left instead never actively promoted Inclusive Choice, sticking instead with the Exclusive Choice status quo. In this sample, France also has the highest share of individuals with basic education in the low and middle income groups, remaining at around 40 percent until the 2000s. In France, the division between those that promoted Community Schooling, those who advocated for Inclusive Choice reform, and those that preferred the status quo remained an important feature of education policy throughout the 2000s.

In each of the empirical chapters, I have shown that policy-makers of the left were aware of their respective electorates' conflicting interests when it comes to Student Sorting Institutions. Governments had to manage cleavages within their own ranks in order to define their positions on the matter. In opposition, a clear position sometimes did not crystallise at all. The nature of these divisions did not relate to common party cleavages on other dimensions. It changed with educational expansion patterns within the electorate. From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s education expanded rapidly in England and Sweden. This was much less the case in France. One core implication of these findings is the insight that France is not a special case because political and historical institutions blocked reform processes. Like in England and Sweden, French policy-makers knew of Inclusive Choice as a policy option since the 1980s. Yet, unlike England and Sweden, this option was never backed by a

viable majority. This finding encourages further research to challenge the argument that education policies in France are gridlocked by its institutions. Moreover, rather than asking about the institutions, we need to ask why educational expansion within income groups differs between these countries. The stagnation of educational expansion within the low income group is particularly relevant. On the one hand, the basic educated remain a strong enough group to hinder an Inclusive Choice coalition – the worst of the three options for that group. On the other hand, this creates as suboptimal outcome for both the basic and the intermediate educated within the left-wing coalition, and left-wing governments thus only promote institutions that favour educational opportunities for families with high educational achievement.

Looking at the right and its positions towards SSIs provides further leverage for the argument that divisions within parties exist and matter. For all three country-cases, the late 1980s and early 1990s were a crucial period. While the right in Sweden and England pushed SSIs into the generalised Exclusive Choice corner, the right in France kept Exclusive Choice limited to church schools. Yet, all three government parties pledged to generalise Exclusive Choice. Unlike the comparison of the left this comparison of the right shows similarity across the cases when it comes to parties' positions. In all three cases, the right sled from promoting Tracked Schooling to accepting the Comprehensive Schooling reforms, but in their Exclusive Choice form. With educational expansion, the level of education of the centre-right electorate had become more diverse. By the early nineties, around two fifth held basic credentials and another two fifth intermediate credentials in France and England. In Sweden, two fifth held intermediate credentials, but the remaining group was equally split between those with tertiary and those with basic education. There also is a remarkable difference between the education level of the middle income group and the high income group at that time. Those with tertiary education are starkly concentrated in the high income group and those with basic education in the middle income group. In all three cases, important parts within the right – be it within parties for England and France or between coalition partners for Sweden and France – were not keen on the Exclusive Choice position. These divisions shaped the reform agenda in all three cases. Eventually, Exclusive Choice was the response across the board, despite institutional and ideational variation between cases. In the context of educational expansion, the centre-right is thus capable of upholding a selective system that limits educational opportunities and means that spending at higher education levels benefits the already better off.

All three centre-right governments pledged for Exclusive Choice, but France did not

reform. Yet, process tracing evidence has shown that ideational differences cannot account for this variation. Indeed, French policy-makers held the same ideas as their British and Swedish peers. The coalition-based account only explains the similarity across cases. This similarity sheds considerable doubt on alternative explanations: the role of 'old politics' of the church and 'school wars' on the one hand, and the role of 'new politics' and neoliberal drive to marketisation on the other hand. As put forth in the empirical chapters, process tracing evidence has revealed that party positions on their own were necessary but not sufficient to explain the outcome. The second part of the mechanism explains variation of outcomes across cases.

Findings strongly point toward an element of status quo bias in the decision-making process. This argument rests on two pillars. First, I have shown that in each of the cases analysed – different countries, periods, and government parties – governments were not eager to reform SSIs. In the cases in which they reformed, they anticipated more damage for their further reform legitimacy from maintaining the status quo than from the reform. Second, the variables that usually make up a constrained partisanship explanation cannot account for this similarity across cases, different reform behaviours across time within cases, and variation of reform outcome across cases. To take the example of centre-right governments in the late 1980s/ early 1990s, we see that everywhere policymakers held neoliberal ideas but did not use them in their assessment of SSIs. Still they were not eager to reform. For England, it emerged as a new priority after a lost by-election and with a new secretary of state in 1986, leading to the 1988 reform. For Sweden, the Center Party was against reform in the early 1980s but shifted towards a favourable position when scarce supply of education in rural areas sparked a national debate on private schools subsidisation. In France, the government did not deem it necessary to change the whole system, but chose to soften its pledge for school choice.

One then has to ask less about veto-players, and more about absence of reform advocates in France. Examining this question went beyond the scope of this thesis. But with inductive reasoning, we can reach some preliminary answer to this question. In the particular case of the late 1980s to early 1990s, in Sweden and England local pressures led to a rising political cost of the status quo. Also, school policy was decentralised to a much bigger extent in England and Sweden than in France. Local conflicts gained national political importance, and national actors could not respond on a case-by-case basis. In France, policy-makers could react from the top by directly intervening in local conflicts and expanding choice on a case-by-case basis without making local problems to national ones. The premise here is that the national government can suffer twice in a decentralised system. First, it is held accountable by

the public for failures in a locally governed system. Second, it cannot readily respond to these failures to limit that local problems get discussed in the national public sphere. Perhaps, then, the centralised system 'saved' French policy-makers from having to accept school choice.

Another possible root of this variation is the extent to which veto-players can be silenced if pressure for reform is high. Why did policymakers in England and Sweden pit the parents against teachers and local administration while the French did not? If teacher union unrest is a cost of reform, then it could be toppled by the cost of non-reform – in other words: parents. Possibly, however, parents in France are on the side of the teachers. In order to reform, then, the state would have to pit parents against teachers. Possibly this was easier in England (low trust in politicians, low trust in public service) and Sweden (high trust in political institutions, low trust in welfare state institutions) than in France (low trust in political institutions, higher trust in public services) at that time.

To summarise, the argument I make does not contradict but build on the historical institutionalist argument of constrained partisanship. I argue that we gain from going beyond the approach of institutions constraining parties because they block reforms. In some way, my argument echoes the claim made by the literature about institutions provoking change (Streeck and Thelen 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Weaver 2010). Yet, I take a different approach. The status quo bias gives political institutions one role amongst other factors that may come in to structure the extent to which demand for policy change becomes a political cost that challenges the status quo. Further theorising on the similarities and differences of these arguments and findings seems promising.

Yet, the status quo element of the theory was more reliant on inductive findings, and would thus need further testing, especially since other inductive findings from the case studies could point towards an alternative historical institutionalist explanation based on the difference of electoral systems and party systems: in France, parties were never as prepared for reforming SSIs before entering government as they were in England or Sweden. In Sweden and England, the Right had most policy options spelled out clearly while in opposition, and were ready to make changes as soon as they entered government. New Labour's policy was defined almost three years before entering government in 1997. This did not happen in such an organised fashion in French parties. Hence, an institutional argument which is not based on the veto players concept, but relying on party systems and electoral institutions could be a key factor to explain variation between these cases. Manow and Palier (2009) have pointed out how important the French electoral and party system has been in the development of its welfare state. According to them, parties are weaker in France because of

the semi-presidential system and the two-round majoritarian electoral system. This also resonates with Iversen and Soskice's (2006) hypotheses on differences of representativeness between majoritarian and proportional representation systems, where parties in majoritarian systems are more leadership oriented and represent their voters less effectively. Another tentative finding that I have addressed in section 6.1. is that in France, the right had more voters belonging to the basic education category than had the left. This was not the case in Sweden or in England. It would be of interest to further explore to what extent different institutional factors come in to shape the process of decision-making in which partisan actors define their constituents' interests towards SSIs.

7.2. Limits and ways forward

This hypothesis-testing exercise has limits of external and of internal validity. When it comes to external validity, it is useful to reassess the scope conditions as defined by the case selection. To start, we have seen that partisan policymakers in different welfare, education, economic and political regimes face the same trade-offs. These trade-offs are decisive in their decision-making process. We then strongly expect that the theory has explanatory value beyond the three cases. This assessment also holds if we consider France, Britain, and Sweden to be different types of cases. I have argued that England and Sweden are most likely cases for the partisan and coalition-based theory to work, while France is a least-likely case. Considering that the theory is based on many assumptions, it was useful to assess it both in very friendly and in more hostile environments. I found that the theory worked for all three cases – explaining positive outcomes in England and Sweden and negative outcomes in France.

Important caveats of the case selection call for caution when seeking to draw conclusions for a wider range of cases. The claim of generalisation for instance cannot too strongly rely on the least-likely case strategy. This is because the French case has raised a number of questions, especially when it comes to asking about the lack of pressure for reform in France. In order to strengthen the claim that this was because of its particular socio-economic context rather than other variables, one could conduct a new case study on France. This case study would profit from the theoretical learning on the alternative hypotheses. The core question now seems to be whether the difference between England and Sweden on the one hand and France on the other hand lies in how the right reformed student sorting in the

late 1980s/early 1990s. Would the left in France have made choice inclusive if faced with a generalised Exclusive Choice system? As I will discuss in more depth below, the extent to which I was able to show that this institutional argument was not the reason for variation hinges on the limits of internal validity. For now, it is important to consider that process tracing and the comparison has allowed refining the alternative hypotheses that need to be further tested in view of reaching the degree of confidence necessary to generalise findings from the premise that France is a least-likely case.

Another caveat lies in the similarity between cases that leads to a set of scope conditions for the theory. The cases are all developed market-economies and democracies with compulsory lower secondary schooling. I do not aim to generalise the approach to cases that do not fall within this category although the theory can certainly be adapted. The cases are also all centralised governments with different extent of decentralisation at the local level. They are thus not federal states. There is no particular reason why the theory would not work in federal states – either at the central or at the individual state-level. This could prompt a deeper analysis of how party organisation channels redistributive conflicts between the local and the national level, and regarding geographical variation of distributive institutions' effects. Another potential scope condition to keep in mind is that all three cases abandoned Tracked Schooling in a similar time period. Can the theory also explain cases like the United States where mass enrolment in lower secondary education had historically not been organised around tracks, but where a low level of standardisation across schools and the financing mechanism leads to a high variation of quality between schools (Allmendinger 1989, 233–235)? Can it explain why some systems never left the Tracked Schooling corner? The theory is certainly designed to explain this variation – a different educational distribution of centre-right constituencies and a lack of pressure for reform given a lower education-income link. Yet, the extent to which the relationship empirically holds across such cases remains an empirical question and is subject to conducting a large-N enquiry. The theory might have to be extended to account for these cases.

One also needs to consider that limits of internal validity result from the process tracing exercise. In each of the cases, I discussed the difficulty of distinguishing between the observable implications of the path dependence and the interest-based arguments. This results mainly from the lack of specification of the path dependence literature having turned to feedback effects as the main causal mechanism tying institutions to reform opportunities. The task was then to define whether the micro-level interests to which policy-makers catered to were endogenous or exogenous from existing SSIs. One question emerging from this attempt

was whether we have the methodological tools to operate such a distinction. This is also important as political economy moves towards assessing individual preferences for social policy as a new important dependent variable. Similarly, the wall between an ideas and an interest-based argument becomes very thin when one thinks of each theory's observable implication. Despite Jacobs's important input on that matter (2015), there is room for disagreement about the extent to which the consultation of experts is a necessary observation for policy-makers to form their policy-preferences to capture their constituents' redistributive interests. If it is, can an interest-based account remain uninfluenced by ideas? These issues are not only a particular problem of this study but also a broader problem for the discipline. The problem is that our theories are underspecified for the application of process-tracing and the distinction between ideas, interests, and institutions. We can certainly specify them, but this amounts to further theorising, thus multiplying the potential alternative explanations and making the "three cornered fight" between theory, alternatives, and evidence almost impossible to manage. Process-tracing might point to the empirical futility of distinguishing between interests, ideas, and institutions, and their respective combinations. Or we might want to stick to these theorising tools, but might have to be more explicit about our expectations from theory-testing with process-tracing.

A further problem with the theory-testing process tracing exercise regards the choice of alternative explanations. My strategy of this choice was guided by the puzzle of variation between France on the one hand and England and Sweden on the other hand. I therefore selected alternatives to be tested that could account for this variation. However, I could have made a different choice. For example, I could have tested more explicitly alternative partisan explanations for variation of SSIs. Two examples of alternative partisan explanations I discussed were Gingrich's (2011) and Hicks's (2015) respective partisan accounts of varying market reforms. Their focus on the redistributive implications of markets driving partisan choices could be confirmed. However, I did not explicitly disconfirm their accounts of the English and Swedish cases. I rather complemented them by adding that I found similar dynamics of partisan division over which policy would redistribute best at work in both cases, which their theories did not predict. Hence, the politics of markets seem less consensual – even in Sweden – than their work might suggest. Another alternative partisan theory is that Social Democracy in the 1980s and 1990s was re-adjusting its policy preferences for strategic reasons, as their voters had changed because of a change of values in the electorate (e.g. Kitschelt 1994). A lot of the findings I presented would also pass hoop tests of this theory, as these strategic adjustments could also come with intra-partisan conflicts. However, Third

Way politics would be one consequence of such electoral strategies, and I have shown that the Third Way account was not sufficient to explain outcomes in the cases of interest. Still, more detailed theorising of such a values-based account, and definition of corresponding empirical tests, would help distinguishing between these different partisan explanations. An even less materialist partisan account might be based on the role of ideas. I have shown that the extent to which actors held neoliberal ideas was not as helpful to understand policy trajectories as the materialist partisan alternative. Yet, we have seen that partisan actors justified their choices with a stance on what is good for equality of opportunity, and that the interpretation of this concept varies. I have argued that they adopted the concept that suited the opportunities of their constituents best. However, further research could point at an alternative explanation: actors of different parties, and of different country-cases, could hold different beliefs about what constitutes a policy that improves equal educational opportunities. Such cognitive maps could lead to the preference of one set of aims in the trilemma over another. I have not found very compelling evidence pointing in that direction, as I found more similarity than variation across contexts when policymakers discussed different concepts of equality of opportunity. Yet, further research would certainly improve our understanding on the potential role of different ideational explanations that could complement the partisanship account. In this context, it is also of importance to note that I have only shown that partisan actors were attempting to assess the socio-economic characteristics of society and their electorate, and that this was an important step in the definition of SSIs as a policy problem. However, the observations I made were not sufficient to show that parties were specifically analysing the education level of income groups. Rather, they were speaking of different levels of 'aspirations', of a general sense that the education level had increased across society, and of the problem of remaining disadvantaged groups that had not benefitted from this educational expansion. Again, with further research to test different partisan arguments against one another, we would learn more about the class-concepts that policy-makers use. This would permit to estimate more precisely whether or not they are able to use institutions like SSIs to effectively represent the socio-economic groups they consider their constituents.

One last limit merits attention. The focus on *formal institutions of student sorting* as one aspect of the task of distributing quality education to all has its advantages. It has helped to identify the question as a policy problem in its own right and to assess the redistributive implications of the organisation of schooling without opening the Pandora box of school quality and its variation. This disaggregation of the problem of distributing quality education gave us a more fine-grained understanding of the trade-offs policy-makers face. This focus

comes with the caveat that the effect of Student Sorting Institutions is conditioned by the social structure, the level of variation of quality between schools, and the informal institutions. This limits the effect of institutional change on educational equality. Yet I could show that net of these considerations of the absolute effect of these institutions, we can make an argument about the extent to which these institutions follow the social right of equal educational opportunities. Still, in focusing on neoliberal ideas and path dependence arguments as alternative explanations, I have neglected the role of informal institutional change and variation of school quality as factors that could influence the politics of formal Student Sorting Institutions. As both these factors could feed in to explain the differences of pressure for reform, this does not mean that my theory is not valid. However, it is important to stress that these factors are variables amongst others that feed into that 'political cost of the status quo' category. I have not systematically analysed their effect on formal institutional reform. In other words, it is useful to analyse these different aspects of distributing quality education to schools separately. What has to be borne in mind though is that these elements together produce the effect on who eventually gets access to what kind of education. At the same time, we can expect that the elements also stand in a relationship of reverse causality.

Needless to say, to improve internal and external validity of this study's findings, further research is required. To justify such a research agenda on the redistributive politics of distributing quality education to all, the next section elaborates on my findings' implications.

7.3. Implications for the Political Economy of Redistribution

The core argument of this thesis is that the pattern of educational expansion has an incidence on parties' capacity to build coalitions for a certain type of Student Sorting Institutions. Moreover, to build these coalitions, I have shown that policy-makers navigate a complex set of trade-offs. The politics of redistribution at lower education levels then resemble the politics of redistribution at higher education levels, as accounted for by Ansell (2008; 2010), but also by Garritzmann (2015b). One central implication of this argument is then that the decisions of intermediate and higher education expansion that defined enrolment levels and class-bias thereof of one generation may impact the decisions of policy-makers for Student Sorting Institutions of pupils one generation later. By arguing against the path dependence and institutional argument, I thus do not discount the importance of politics of the past. Importantly, theories of politics of redistribution at higher education levels imply that the

level of stratification of education at lower levels matters for redistributive preference formation of higher education spending (Ansell 2010; Busemeyer 2009; Busemeyer and Iversen 2014). We then have a relationship of reverse causality operating between SSIs and higher education institutions. Put differently, the SSI trilemma is closely linked to the trilemma of higher education. This increases the complexity of redistributive politics of education, all the more so if we accept Ansell and Gingrich's (2013) argument of the connection of reverse causality between the higher education trilemma and Iversen and Wren's (1998) trilemma of the service economy.

One could solve the trilemma of student sorting by distributing enough resources to disadvantaged schools in an Inclusive Choice system to mitigate the negative effects of opt-out behaviour for those remaining in such schools. This means regulating the distribution of quality education to schools. It quickly appears that the policymaker is faced with a new trade-off that with a budgetary constraint again takes the form of a trilemma. Without spending more, one then needs to trade between investing in middle class and elite education on the one hand, and distributing funding to the disadvantaged schools on the other hand. One could argue that taking away such significant funds from middle class schools to equalise access to quality education amounts *de facto* to privatising such schools, as parents' educational resources come in to play a larger role alongside public resources in the production of quality education.

This takes us to the broader implications of such 'webs of trilemmas' for the study of comparative political economy. These trade-offs have in common that decisions within them affect social stratification. Through that mechanism, they then define the possible coalitions for other decisions within that web. The institutions that result from such decisions then – jointly with other variables – affect the coalitions that feed into other institutions. In this respect, they certainly also contribute to further stabilising the status quo, as decisions within that web of trade-offs have so complex sets of long term outcomes. In that sense, parties may matter at certain points in time, but may have less influence in other times, as some authors have advanced (Busemeyer 2014; Garritzmann 2015b). However, we cannot understand this stability of one institution by referring to this institution's feedback effects alone. Institutions do not only feed back but also feed 'through' to other decisions via the coalitions they create. Another broader implication of these trilemmas and their complex relationship is that we can see how the right has an easier task than the left which is divided (cf. Auf Dem Brinke 2015). The right can more easily stick with its budget constraint while at the same time providing quality education to the middle class (better opportunities for the worse-off in their income

group coalition). The left has the hard task of justifying its spending by showing the middle class they receive a quality public service. This at the same time strains its possibility to provide equal access to education for the most disadvantaged, thus dividing its constituents. This insight shows the inherent limits of Third Way-style policy-making for binding successful cross-class coalitions.

A final take-home point is then that the complexity of the decisions and of winning and losing coalitions makes binding policy-packages and simultaneously delivering a coherent message to the voters nearly impossible. Yet, learning from the political cost assessment aspect of this theory, this coherent message is needed to mobilise in favour of change in view of mitigating the loss expected from change. Policy-makers are not victims of the costs of reform, but can influence the extent to which costs of non-reform outweighs the cost of reform. First, they might incorrectly assess such costs, missing out on reform opportunities. Second, an open question to be further discussed is the extent to which political actors can manipulate saliency of education issues in the public debate (Busemeyer 2014). Although these decisions are complex, I have shown that political actors have a good understanding of winners and losers and policy options. This study invites them not to hide behind a discourse of historical legacy and institutional constraints but to take responsibility for the social rights of the society they govern.

When I started this project, it was still legitimate to consider comparative political economy of education an understudied field. Over the years, our knowledge on the matter has considerably expanded. My contribution to this expansion is not only the focus on comprehensive education and the question of Student Sorting Institutions.

Moreover, I have shown that studying political economy of education teaches us about the politics of the left and divided coalitions. It also teaches us about policy makers navigating complex questions with complex coalitions – they do care and know about outcomes and are not blinded by ideas or directly stifled by political institutions. At the same time, the results invite us to learn more about the nature of left-wing and right-wing governments' constituents and the divisions they face. They call for a reassessment about where feedback effects fit in the distinction between interests, preferences, and public opinion. Further research projects could investigate how institutions that structure economic inequalities and economic returns to education create pressure necessary for reform to happen on other education levels. To grasp better how institutionally entrenched interest groups like teacher unions or local policy-makers matter alongside such partisan mechanisms, we should also seek to learn more about

when consumers and producers coalesce against the government and when the opposite occurs. This is likely to feed into the government's cost assessment and thus decide over the prevalence of the status quo or the possibility to reform.

Today's decisions on education opportunities not only have long-lasting effects because of a status quo bias, or for life-course opportunities of young people experiencing the education system now. We can expect the opportunities for today's student cohorts to structure social cleavages – and the political economy of educational opportunities – of the future.

Appendix 1: List of Interviews

1. Interviews in Sweden, conducted in March-April 2013

a) *As cited in Chapter 4:*

Interviewee	**Position**	**Date and Place of interview**
Bergström, Henrik	*Senior adviser at Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions*	12.03.2013 (Stockholm)
Björkman, Jan	*Former chairman of Education Committee in Parliament and MP (Social Democrats)*	20.03.2013 (Stockholm)
Edholm, Lotta	*Former mayor for education, Stockholm, Liberal Party*	05.04.2013 (Stockholm)
Eiken, Odd	*Former 'State Secretary' for Education, Moderate Party*	26.04.2013 (Stockholm)
Lindskog, Ingrid	*Skolverket (National Education Agency, former civil servant in Government Dept. for Education*	17.04.2013 (Stockholm)
Lundgren, Ulf P.	*Former head of Skolverket, Professor emer. Uppsala University*	05.04.2013 (Uppsala)
Johansson, Ylva	*Former Education Minister, (Social Democrats)*	30.04.2013 (Stockholm)
Olsson, Per	*Green Party member of Stockholm City Council*	26.04.2013 (Stockholm)
Pertoft, Mats	*Member of Parliament, Green Party*	29.04.2013 (Stockholm)
Rendling, Gudrun	*Friskolornas Riksförbund, lawyer.*	14.03.2013 (Stockholm)
Ringborg, Erland	*Former head of the education agency* Skoloverstyrelsen	14.03.2013 (Stockholm)
Stockhaus, Maria	*Moderates Municipalities member of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions*	29.04.2013 (Stockholm)

b) *Additional interviews:*

- 'Ombudsman' at Lärarförbundet (Teacher Union)
- Information specialist at Skolverket (National Education Agency)
- Jenny Kallstenius, Researcher at Skolverket (National Education Agency) (March 2013)

Note: All interviews for the Swedish case were conducted in English and face-to-face.

2. Interviews in Britain, conducted in March-April 2013

a) *As cited in Chapter 5:*

Interviewee	**Position**	**Date and Place of interview**
Bell, David	Former Permanent Secretary at Department for Education	26.11.2013 (Reading)
Black, Ann	Former member of Labour Party National Executive Committee	11.12.2013 (London)
Meek, Stephen	Former Programme Director, Children and Young People Board, Local Government Association	11.11.2013 (London)
Millar, Fiona	Education Columnist, *The Guardian*	28.01.2014 (London)
Ryan, Conor	Former senior policy adviser to Tony Blair and special adviser to David Blunkett	16.12.2013 (London)
Sheerman, Barry	Labour MP, former chair of Education and Skills Committee	11.12.2013 (London)
Stuart, Nick	Former deputy secretary for schools at Department for Education	06.01.2014 (London)
Conservative Member of Parliament; former member of Education and Skills Committee		26.11.2013 (London)
Former Senior Civil Servant (1)		04.12.2013 (London)
Former Senior Civil Servant (2)		07.11.2013 (London)
Former Policy Adviser for the Labour Party		28.03.2014 (London)

b) *Additional interviews:*

- Anne West, Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science *(Sept. 2012)*
- Geoff Whitty, Professor, former Director of the Institute of Education, London *(Sept. 2012)*
- Former local council leader, Labour Party, Brighton
- Former Conservative Party education adviser
- Former policy adviser, Department for Education
- Former local council leader, Liberal Democrats, Islington

Note: *All face-to-face interviews.*

3. Interviews in France, conducted in March, September, and October 2014

a) *As cited in Chapter 6:*

Interviewee	**Position**	**Date and Place of interview**
Antoine, Dominique	Former Policy Adviser, Elysée	04.03.2014 (Paris)
Cartron, Françoise	Senator, Parti Socialiste	04.03.2014 (Paris)
Darcos, Xavier	Former Minister for Education	05.03.2014 (Paris)
Delahaye, Jean-François		01.10.2014 (Paris)
Mignon, Emmanuelle	Former Policy Adviser, UMP	04.12.2014 (Paris)
Obin, Jean-Pierre	Former General Inspector, Department of Education	25.09.2014 (Paris)
Peillon, Vincent	Former Minister for Education	16.09.2014 (Paris)
Toulemonde, Bernard	Former General Inspector, Department of Education	30.10.2014 (Paris)
Former member of the SGEN-CFDT teacher union steering committee		06.03.2014 (Paris)
Member of the SNES teacher union administration		06.03.2014 (Paris)
Former president of the catholic schools' general administration (SGEC)		28.02.2014 (La Roche sur Yon)
Member of the SGEC administration/finances team		02.04.2014 (Paris)
Parti Socialiste (Paris section) education spokesperson		21.10.2014 (Paris)

a) *Additional interviews:*

- Dubet, François, Professor, EHESS (October, 2014, telephone interview)
- Duru-Bellat, Marie, Professor, Sciences Po Paris (September, 2012)
- Former senior civil servant at the Paris school administration
- Former member of the Catholic Teacher union administration (FEP-CFDT)

Note: All interviews for the French case were conducted in French. All are face-to-face interviews, unless otherwise specified.

Appendix 2: Education level of income groups, additional tables

1. Income groups' education levels compared

Low Income Group[32]

	Basic	Intermediate	Tertiary
SE 1992	43	45	11
SE 1995	36	48	17
SE 2000	28	60	12
SE 2005	25	57	18
UK 1986	66	27	7
UK 1991	51	39	10
UK 1994	46	45	9
UK 1999	38	55	8
UK 2004	29	61	10
FR 1984	63	32	4
FR 1989	56	38	6
FR 1994	41	48	11
FR 2000	37	52	11
FR 2005	32	54	14

[32] Own calculations, Luxembourg Income Study data, cf. sections 3.3.2., 4.1.1., 5.1.1. and 6.1.1.: share of individuals with basic, intermediate, tertiary education credentials in income groups, percentages; own calculations.

Middle Income Group

	Basic	Intermediate	Tertiary
SE 1992	39	47	14
SE 1995	31	51	19
SE 2000	26	60	14
SE 2005	18	63	19
UK 1986	65	30	5
UK 1991	55	39	6
UK 1994	43	51	6
UK 1999	28	64	8
UK 2004	19	69	12
FR 1984	65	32	2
FR 1989	57	40	3
FR 1994	40	53	8
FR 2000	30	57	13
FR 2005	26	58	16

High Income Group

	Basic	Intermediate	Tertiary
SE 1992	16	38	46
SE 1995	13	40	47
SE 2000	11	49	40
SE 2005	9	49	42
UK 1986	35	45	20
UK 1991	24	52	24
UK 1994	20	55	25
UK 1999	13	56	31

UK 2004	10	56	34
FR 1984	34	43	22
FR 1989	33	42	24
FR 1994	18	45	37
FR 2000	13	39	49
FR 2005	12	40	48

M+L coalition

	Basic	Intermediate	Tertiary
SE 1992	41	46	13
SE 1995	33	49	18
SE 2000	27	60	13
SE 2005	22	60	18
UK 1986	66	29	6
UK 1991	53	39	8
UK 1994	45	48	8
UK 1999	33	59	8
UK 2004	24	65	11
FR 1984	63	32	4
FR 1989	56	38	6
FR 1994	41	48	11
FR 2000	37	52	11
FR 2005	32	54	14

M+H coalition

	Basic	Intermediate	Tertiary
SE 1992	28	42	30
SE 1995	22	45	33
SE 2000	18	55	27
SE 2005	13	56	30
UK 1986	50	38	13
UK 1991	39	46	15
UK 1994	31	53	16
UK 1999	20	60	20
UK 2004	15	63	23
FR 1984	50	38	12
FR 1989	44	41	14
FR 1994	28	49	23
FR 2000	21	48	31
FR 2005	19	49	32

2. Educational expansion 1985-2010 compared (data: Barro and Lee (2013))

Sweden (age group: 25+), percentage:

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Basic education	38	32	26	20	12	14
Intermediate education	45	49	52	57	61	58
Tertiary education	16	19	22	23	27	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

United Kingdom (age group: 25+), percentage:

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Basic education	52	46	42	35	26	16
Intermediate education	37	39	40	42	50	56
Tertiary education	11	15	18	23	24	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

France (age group: 25+), percentage:

	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Basic education	61	52	40	29	26	21
Intermediate education	29	37	47	53	54	55
Tertiary education	9	11	14	17	20	24
Total	99	100	101	99	100	100

3. Changing electorates: voters' education levels compared

Sweden, percentage:

1982	Soc. Dem.	Center	Moderates	Liberals
Basic education	66	60	29	34
Intermediate education	27	29	45	47
Tertiary education	7	10	27	19
Total	100	100	100	100

1991	Soc. Dem.	Center	Moderates	Liberals
Basic education	56	48	26	18
Intermediate education	30	37	45	47
Tertiary education	14	15	29	35
Total	100	100	100	100

1998	Soc. Dem.	Green Party	Center	Moderates	Liberals
Basic education	41	21	43	19	9
Intermediate education	40	29	29	40	36
Tertiary education	18	50	28	41	54
Total	100	100	100	100	100

2006	Soc. Dem.	Green Party	Center	Moderates	Liberals
Basic education	29	3	19	11	12
Intermediate education	50	36	29	40	25
Tertiary education	19	61	53	49	54
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: *Swedish National Election Studies (1982; 1988; 1991; 1998; 2002); own calculations*

United Kingdom, percentage:

1987	Labour	Conservatives
Basic education	54	45
Intermediate education	37	44
Tertiary education	9	11
Total	100	100

1997	Labour *I)*	Conservatives *I)*	Labour *II)*	Conservatives *II)*
Basic education	47	36	40	31
Intermediate education	42	51	51	58
Tertiary education	12	14	10	11
Total	101	99	101	100

2005	Labour *I)*	Conservatives *I)*	Labour *II)*	Conservatives *II)*
Basic education	20	18	18	16
Intermediate education	47	47	57	57
Tertiary education	33	35	26	27
Total	100	100	101	100

Source: *British Election Studies* (Clarke et al. 2011; A. Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1993; A. Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 2002);
own calculations:
- 1987: recoded education to ISCED levels (original variable: age finished full-time education)
- 1997 and 2007: Education levels recoded to ISCED levels.
  I) *using Schneider (2008)*
  II) *using ONS (2015)*

France, percentage:

1986	PS	UDF and RPR
Basic education	50	56
Intermediate education	34	31
Tertiary education	17	12
Total	101	99

1997	PS	RPR
Basic education	38	43
Intermediate education	42	35
Tertiary education	20	22
Total	100	100

2002	PS	UMP
Basic education	30	35
Intermediate education	40	38
Tertiary education	30	27
Total	100	100

Source: Electoral Studies (CEVIPOF 1988; CEVIPOF 1997; CEVIPOF 2002), calculations with Online Tabulator.

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