

## **Reasons for school choice in the Netherlands**

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Freedom of school choice is a major topic in recent educational debates. Recently, a lot of research on freedom of school choice has been conducted, especially in the USA and the UK. Freedom of school choice is said to stimulate the quality of education and to contribute to a higher degree of parental involvement. Opponents to freedom of school often state that freedom of school choice may lead to an unequal distribution of minority pupils between schools.

In contrast to many countries, the Netherlands has an educational system in which school choice is totally free. Each Dutch parent has to choose a school for his child; there is no assignment of schools. In this study we will present an analysis of the reasons for school choice of approximately 10,000 Dutch parents of elementary school pupils, who participated in a national survey.

Seventeen reasons for school choice, ranging from the quality of education to the geographical distance between home and school, have been rated by the parents. The analyses of the ratings of these reasons for school choice are divided in three parts: First, we have analyzed differences in ratings between parents with varying cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Second, we have analyzed differences in ratings between parents whose child attends schools with specific ethnic, socio-cultural and religious characteristics. Third, we have analyzed interactions between parents' and schools' characteristics on ratings of reasons for school choice.

We will discuss the results of this study in terms of educational inequality and segregation between schools.