Abstract

During the 1980s most European countries, among which Spain, introduced educational policies to increase the family's school choice possibilities. The main objective of this article is to analyze to which extent public policies (financial and non-financial) established in Spain during the last three decades have increased family's school choice on equal terms, that is, whether they have provided effective school choice possibilities for all households. First, we describe main educational policies related to school choice since 1985, especially the public funding system for private schools (named concertos). Then, we show results from an empirical analysis related to determinants of family school choice. The latter reveals, among other factors, the significance of family's socio-economic and cultural characteristics as well as nationality (not being immigrant) on choosing private school, especially those funded by the government. Likewise, whether other family members attended the same school and whether students have attended kindergarten more than one year also have a positive effect on the probability that student goes to public funded private schools. Thus, the study reveals that in addition to family preference for private schools, the probability to attend private schools (including those funded by the government) depends on the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the family and, therefore, there is no equal opportunity in school choice.

Keywords

school choice; inequality; private state-funded schools.