Parents’ School Choice at the Primary Education Level in Azerbaijan

A Comparative Study Between Azerbaijani-Speaking and Russian-Speaking Parents

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Abstract

School Choice has been introduced into several national education programs during the past three decades in Azerbaijan. Parents are invited to select from various schools to locate the one that “suits them the best”. However, there is a need to understand the factors that go into parents’ decision-making when choosing primary schools for their children, especially in various native languages and educational fields. The purpose of the study is to explore Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents’ school choices at the primary education level in Azerbaijani and Russian sectors. Furthermore, the study investigates the factors influencing parents’ selections when selecting a primary school for their children, such as socioeconomic status, educational values, and cultural preferences. The study also aims to compare the school choice patterns of Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents, particularly emphasizing how their varied native languages may influence their decision-making processes. Additionally, this study presents a framework of the national policies regarding parental school choice in Azerbaijan. The study’s theoretical frameworks were framed by Human Capital Approach (HCA), Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and Capability Approach (CA). By utilizing these frameworks, parents can better understand the various factors that impact their decisions when choosing a school for their children and how these decisions can ultimately affect their children’s educational achievements. The HCA believes education is a valuable investment in human capital, and parents choose schools based on their perception of the returns on this investment. On the other hand, the HRBA sees education as a fundamental human right, and parents’ selection of schools should be based on fairness and non-discrimination principles. The CA emphasizes the importance of education in enhancing individual capabilities and freedoms. This research used qualitative research methodology will contribute to select the right school for children at the primary education level in Azerbaijan. The comparative perspective was based on the Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents. The semi-structured interviews with 12 participants were conducted to gather data, focusing on the factors influencing their decision-making processes and thematic analysis was applied to the data analysis. The author encountered codes and themes in the interview data through qualitative research methods and thematic analysis. This approach provided detailed insights
into the complex and diverse nature of parents’ school choice decisions. Overall, the research on parents in Azerbaijan found that they, irrespective of their native language, possess a keen interest in and knowledge of factors that impact their decision in selecting primary schools for their children. This highlights the significance of considering aspects such as language options, school location, and reputation while devising policies to offer quality education to all children. Further exploration is necessary to comprehend the decision-making approach of parents and develop effective tactics to support them in making informed and appropriate school selections. Finally, the implications to the policy and practices for school choice are discussed.

**Keywords**

Parent, school choice, primary education, Azerbaijan
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List of Abbreviations

BED  Baku city Education Department
CA   Capability Approach
EU   European Union
GEMR Global Education Monitoring Report
GDPR General Data Protection Regulation
HCA  Human Capital Approach
HRBA Human Rights Based Approach
ICE  International Comparative Education
MDG  Millennium Development Goals
PISA Programme for International Student Assessment
SDG  Sustainable Development Goals
SES  Socio-economic status
SSC  State Statistics Committee
UDHR Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN   United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF United Nations International Children’s Emergency
USSR Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics
US   United States
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Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter shows the introduction of the research. It begins with the background of the research and follows the research aim and the research questions. The relevance of the research to the field of international and comparative education, significance of this study, limitations and delimitations are also presented in this chapter. Lastly, the chapter finishes with the organization of the study.

1.1 Background of the Research

Every child in the world must have access to a free, equitable, and high-quality education that promotes the development of human capabilities (United Nations, 2015). This was outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United Nations (hereafter called UN) has actively supported and promoted. UN discourse promotes universal education by establishing development goals since 2002 to motivate people worldwide to take a stand. The current global development agenda’s Sustainable Development Goal (hereafter called SDG) 4 calls on all states to “ensure an inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” (UN, 2015). As we know, education is requisite for society, therefore the state is primarily responsible for its provision and should guarantee equity and equality, as well as free access in schools (Glaeser et al., 2007 p. 83). It is also claimed that schools are the crucial social institutions that shaping the ethos of future citizens. Schools are also introductory knowledge that being imparted to children (Glaeser et al., 2007 p. 89). And school choice in education is an essential tool promote social justice (Feinberg & Lubienski, 2008 p. 15).

School choice as a new context in which educational expectations and standards have increased, “the very success of the policy efforts to equalize opportunities has produced new demands as households have sought to ensure that their own children have privileged access to the best schools and programmes” (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006, p. 23). According to Feinberg and Lubeinski (2008) school choice “essentially positions parents as consumers empowered to select from several options – thereby injecting a degree of consumer-driven, market-style competition into the system as schools seek to attract those families” (p. 2).

The various perspectives, including philosophical perspectives, economic perspectives and educational perspectives help justify school choice policies. Advocates for school choice frequently use economic or market-related themes and language to highlight the benefits of the policy (Kane, 1992). The philosophical features are reviewed by Kane (1992). He claims that decisions and schools we establish are based on the presumptions and commitments about the principles of the human intellect and spirit. The human spirit is referred to our basic conceptions of ourselves, our nature, world and moral liability. Schools play a significant role in forming these conceptions. Thus, the question of school choice is more concerned with the fact that what students are being taught as well as, how and why they are being taught (Plank & Sykes, 2003, p. 23). The economist includes phrases like “customer,” “competition,” “efficiency,” “excellence,” “supply and demand,” and “product”. In the context of economic perspectives there are two dimensions of school choice (Elmore, 1988). The demand part investigates what extent the consumer plays a principal role in ascertaining the nature of the educational output. When it comes to supply part, suppliers have some autonomy and flexibility how they respond to consumer demands (Feinberg & Lubienski, 2008, p. 43). The educational perspective examines the consequences of both private and social educational goals for educational experience.
against parental choice. Elmore (1988) argues that education is where two competing sets of rights meet. The first is the parents’ right, including choosing the experiences, influences, and values they expose to them. The second is the ability of a democratic society to replicate its most fundamental political, economic, as well as social institutions through a shared educational experience (Feinberg & Lubienski, 2008, p. 58). Thus, the above-mentioned philosophies are being used to defend the perspectives of school choices.

Since more than ten years ago, parental school choice has been a contentious political issue and is now a pillar of federal educational policy. According to Ball (2003) “Parental choice seems to be something that has to be good and is therefore difficult to criticize” (p. 31). The author has been interested in school choice from the perspectives of parents because they are ones who are regarded micro-level actors have an essential position for choosing the right school for their children.

According to Cohen et al. (2018), the research’s focus can be related to the researcher’s personal interests and curiosities. In this master thesis, the author investigates the relationship between parents’ characteristics and school choice and whether school and parents influence the decision to opt for school. As a former post-Soviet country, in Azerbaijan education in public schools is conducted in two languages: Azerbaijani and Russian (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2009). The author specifically focuses on investigating the factors that prompt parents, belonging to two distinct groups in Azerbaijan, to opt for the Russian sector for their children's education, despite Azerbaijani being their native language. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the underlying motivations and considerations that lead these parents to favor the Russian sector over the Azerbaijan sector, shedding light on the complex dynamics involved in school selection within the context of language preferences and cultural influences. These parents predominantly consist of well-educated individuals who prioritize the Russian sector for their children's education. This phenomenon is primarily observed in the capital city of Azerbaijan, Baku. Consequently, the author has placed particular emphasis on examining this case within the context of well-educated parents residing in Baku. By focusing on this specific demographic, the author aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis that accounts for the unique socio-cultural dynamics and educational preferences prevalent in the city, providing valuable insights into the motivations and decision-making processes of these parents. The primary focus of the author's inquiry lies in exploring the decision made by Azerbaijani-speaking parents to opt for the Russian sector for their children's education. While the rationale behind Russian-speaking parents selecting the Russian sector may be more readily comprehensible, the greater curiosity lies in understanding the motivations driving Azerbaijani-speaking parents to make a similar choice. This aspect of the study presents a heightened level of interest, as it delves into the factors and considerations specific to Azerbaijani-speaking parents that lead them to favor the Russian sector for their children's educational path. By examining this distinct phenomenon, the research aims to shed light on the underlying dynamics and decision-making processes that shape the educational choices of Azerbaijani-speaking parents within the context of the Russian sector.

In the speech of the minister of science and education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Emin Amrullayev, in August of last year, he noted that the number of pupils in the Russian sector increases compared to the Azerbaijani sector every year (Ministry of Science and Education, 2022). Since places in the Russian sectors are limited, some parents claim their constitutional rights are violated because they cannot send their children to Russian language schools. Consequently, the quality of education decreases due to the increase in the number of children in that category. This case causes a shortage of teaching staff in the Russian language schools; for example, there are 106 vacancies for teaching mathematics in the Russian sectors. However, only 22 teachers have passed the teacher recruitment exam, or there are 158 places in informatics, but 12 teachers got a passing score. The minister of
science and education. E. Amrullayev said, “In such a case, parents should think about who will teach their children?”. He also stated, "If you want quality education, send your child to Azerbaijani language school" (Ministry of Science and Education, 2022). If 90,000 pupils studied in Russian language schools five years ago, this academic year, their number has exceeded 150,000 (Ministry of Science and Education, 2022). However, since the demand does not meet the supply, the choice of a language school in the country has become one of the current topics. At the same time, the minister calls on parents to study their children in Azerbaijani language schools (Ministry of Science and Education, 2022). Based on the above, this research makes comparisons between Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents. In light of the aforementioned context, this research draws a comparison between two distinct groups of parents in Azerbaijan: Azerbaijani-speaking parents and Russian-speaking parents. It is worth noting that both groups of parents share Azerbaijani as their mother language. However, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there remains a Russian-speaking population within our country who predominantly utilize the Russian language in their daily interactions, despite Azerbaijani being their mother language. Additionally, there are individuals who possess knowledge of the Russian language but predominantly converse in Azerbaijani. Therefore, to differentiate between these groups, the author categorizes them as Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents, respectively. This classification allows for a more precise and nuanced examination of their attitudes, preferences, and decision-making processes in relation to school choice for their children. Furthermore, this study explores the challenges that parents face while choosing a school for their children. The crucial intention of the study is to raise awareness of parental school choice to contribute quality education to their children.

1.2 Research Aims and Research Questions

The study aims to explore parents’ school choices between the groups of Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents at the primary education level in Azerbaijan. Parents’ decision-making process while choosing a school for their children is called “school choice”. In Azerbaijan, variables like educational standards, accessibility, the language of instruction, and cultural and religious considerations may all impact a learner’s decision about which school to attend. Concerns have been raised regarding the decreased usage of Russian in the educational system, which could affect the decisions made by parents who speak Russian. In Azerbaijan, language is crucial when choosing a school, especially for parents who speak Russian. Moreover, a socioeconomic position might influence a parent’s choice of school because parents with higher incomes may have access to more options and resources. The school choice and educational quality may be affected by policies, the language of instruction, school administration, and curriculum (Dadaşzadə & Cəfərov, 2021).

Concerning research questions, the initial step is to make them researchable (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 168). Furthermore, theories and previous studies need to be linked to research questions (Bryman, 2016, p. 82). Therefore, it is recommended that researchers read a variety of literature before formulating research questions (Bryman, 2016, p. 83). After reading and analyzing previous research, the research questions are:

- What are the reasons behind the parents’ school choice?
- What are the similarities and differences in the reasons of school choice between Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents?
- Are parents’ social-political backgrounds related to their school choice?
1.3 The Relevance of the Research to the Field of International and Comparative Education

This study presents a comparative approach because it compares Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents at the primary education level in Azerbaijan. To the author’s knowledge, the comparative research has never been researched before in Azerbaijan. Thus, the research aims to fill a need in choosing school policy. The findings of this research will not only affirm the previous studies on parental school choice in other countries but also what has not been discussed yet. The author discusses detail about this in the discussion chapter.

Bray and Thomas (1995) dispute against the traditional method of approaching to the field of comparative education, which merely concentrated on issues across states and regions. Bray and Thomas, on the other hand, adopted an international dimension and a larger conceptualization of comparative education (Bray & Thomas, 1995, p. 478). Bray and Thomas (1995) also state that “comparative research requires multilevel analysis to achieve multifaceted and holistic analyses of educational phenomena” (p. 472). Thus, Bray and Thomas' illustration of a three-dimensional framework for classifying comparative studies is more significant (Bray & Thomas, 1995, p. 473). Figure 1 is the framework that describes the main three dimensions, including geographical/locational levels, nonlocational demographic groups and the aspects of education and society in the field of international and comparative education (hereafter called ICE).

As this research analyses within different backgrounds of parents’ school choice in Azerbaijan, according to framework, the study is situated in a cube where schools from geographical/locational levels, other groups from nonlocational demographic groups, and other aspects from aspects of education and of society are intersected. Thus, this research is certainly relevant to the field of ICE.

Figure 1. A framework for comparative education analyses

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study of parents’ school choice has importance to contribute to the international context, as well as the field of ICE. The topic of parental school choice has been addressed at the international level (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006, p. 23). This phenomenon has been constituted in the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (hereafter called UDHR) which adopted by the United Nations (hereafter called UN). The UN has taken initiatives to promote parents’ school choice, which was written in Article 26 of the UDHR “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” (UN, 1948). According to the last Global Education Monitoring Report (hereafter GEMR) of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereafter UNESCO), school choice has been identified as a significant issue contributing to social inequalities in education, benefiting wealthier families while further marginalizing parents and schools (UNESCO, 2017, p. 51). Furthermore, the benefits and drawbacks of school choice are also discussed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (hereafter OECD). The OECD refers to “school choice will only generate the anticipated benefits when the choice is real, relevant and meaningful” (OECD, 2017, p. 5). As mentioned above, it is evident that the international community has been implementing actions on this matter, however it has been neglected in some countries (Stanfield, 2021 p. 4). Therefore, this study intends to raise global awareness of school choice.

Parents’ school choice is seeming an interesting research topic at the national level in Azerbaijan. School choice is reflecting the social needs of educational actors (Musset, 2012 p. 6). Since people make decision based on their needs, these social needs are not necessarily established in a framework that is widely accepted. These choices made by people may undermine the idea of social cohesion and be socially destructive (Henig, 1995, p. 202). If there is a social structure protecting and equally informing a state’s inhabitants, needs can be translated into social demands. Therefore, the study aims to contribute to investigate and analyze social demands in Azerbaijan, by examining determinants which impact on parents’ school choice. Besides, this topic must be researched and developed for parents to understand the preferences of school choice better. Eventually, this research can be useful for educational planners to redesign educational reforms, develop the quality of school choosing. As mentioned above this research has never been done before, therefore parents’ challenges on school choice may be heard by interviewing them. As a result, the study can help governments and policy-makers to reorganize the holistic structure of school choice so that parents can decide easily on school choice for their children.

1.5 Limitations and Delimitations

Researchers must be aware of any restrictions when planning their research. The following aspects of qualitative research would be criticized: a lack of transparency, too much subjectivity, difficulty duplicating, and problems with generalization (Bryman, 2016, p. 399). The author acknowledges that this study has some limitations and delimitations.

This master's thesis is being conducted for the master programme ICE at the Department of Education at Stockholm University. As a result, various limitations and delimitations affecting the duration and scope of the research occurred. It should be acknowledged that the study of the results would not be exhaustive as a master's thesis. However, the author would methodologically assess the results via a chosen theoretical framework. This framework, created from the ICE literature's content, should be constrained to a specific range to make the study feasible.
In terms of limitations, the reasons for school choice are wide ranging. The participants may therefore interpret school choice and their reasons in different ways. The participants in this study may have agreed to the author’s invitation for an interview because they were already particularly interested in school choice. The comprehension and use of school choice by parents cannot be generalized in this study as it is qualitative research. Moreover, the focus on primary education could be seen as a limitation. The author chose to focus on primary education because there has been little research on compulsory education compared to the amount of research on secondary and upper-secondary education addressing school choice. Furthermore, because the author is in Sweden, interviews in this study were conducted online, even though face-to-face interviews were better. Finally, the duration of the Master’s Thesis course was also limited. It was too time-consuming to use other techniques, including classroom observation, in addition to interviews. It should be mentioned that this study is not a longitudinal one.

When it comes to delimitations, purposive sampling was employed in this research. Therefore, the findings of the study are insufficient to generalize. Furthermore, as a result of only 12 participants agreeing to participate in this study, the author acknowledges that the sample size is constrained. Second, although though it may have been more elaborated, the selection criteria were straightforward. Yet, in order to get a specific number of participants, the author took feasibility into account. As a result, the study excluded information about gender, work status, role, and level of education. As other part of the delimitations of this study, the participants were primarily selected from urban areas and characterized by their high level of education. This deliberate choice was made to specifically focus on a particular subset of the population who predominantly opt to send their children to the Russian sector rather than the Azerbaijani sector. However, it is important to acknowledge that this participant selection may introduce certain delimitations to the study. The concentration on urban areas and well-educated individuals may result in findings that may not be fully representative of the broader population or reflective of the experiences and perspectives of parents from remote or rural areas. Therefore, the results and conclusions of the study should be interpreted within the context of these limitations, recognizing the potential impact of participant selection on the generalizability of the findings. The last obstacle was the language barrier. Data collection and analysis procedures were carried out in Azerbaijani and Russian. Azerbaijani and Russian texts were translated into English while the author worked on this thesis. She was as accurate as she could be during this process. Nonetheless, there can be variances in nuance between Azerbaijani, Russian and English.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

Bryman’s framework for social research is consistent with this study. A literature review, concepts and theories, research questions, sampling cases, data gathering and data analysis, and writing up are all examples of research steps provided by Bryman (2016). The general introduction of the study, including background information, research aims and research questions, as well as its relevance to the field of ICE are presented in Chapter one. Furthermore, the significance of the study is stated, while limitations and delimitations are also provided. Chapter two entails previous research about empirical studies of school choice, parental role in school choice, and school choice policies. Chapter three outlines the context of the study which including historical and theoretical context of Azerbaijan education system, language policy in Azerbaijan education system, modern education system of Azerbaijan Republic, and education policies in school choice in Azerbaijan. Chapter four presents human capital approach, human rights-based approach and capability approach in order to support the study. Chapter five explains the methodological framework of the study which ranging from
epistemological and ontological considerations, research design, sampling, participants, data collection and data analysis, and quality criteria to ethical considerations. In order to answer research questions, chapter six critically shows the results and findings from the data collection in accordance with the themes that are defined in the data analysis. Chapter seven discusses the result and findings of this research compare to previous studies. This thesis is concluded in Chapter eight with further conclusions and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2 Key concepts and Previous Research

The main key concepts and previous studies are presented in this chapter. Section 2.1 discusses the concepts and empirical studies of school choice. Section 2.2 examines parental role in school choice. How school choice policies are related to quality and equity in education is delineated in Section 2.3.

2.1 Empirical studies of School Choice

Section 2.1 introduces various views on school choice with a brief information of what school choice means in different states worldwide. Section 2.1.2 traces parents and schools and Section 2.1.3 raises discourse in factors influencing school choice.

2.1.1 Various Views on School Choice

Internationally, governments employ school choice policies to give underprivileged better educational possibilities for disadvantaged children. Every state interprets and manages parental school choice in a different way. As different states, provinces, or regions interpret policy goals and intentions in local circumstances, permutations may also arise inside countries (Hill, 2005, p. 141). According to Hill (2005), there are a variety of school policy options available in the United States (hereafter called US), reflecting various views on how to regulate and give parents the opportunity to choose school for their children (p. 141). He describes about the political and ideological movements that have an impact on the “No Child Left Behind” regulations, which support more equal access to education for all students, regardless of race, class, or ability. Mechanisms like the Private Voucher system were implemented to help parents transition into previously exclusive types of schooling, which occasionally caused the mobility of children geographically and into various social communities (McGinn & Ben-Porath, 2014, p. 179). The promotion of specialized schooling via other strategies such as Magnet and Charter schools could be seen as either preserving or developing certain cultural forms and educational objectives. McGinn and Ben-Porath (2014) argue that the purpose is to give parents a variety of school choices. Numerous studies have been conducted to determine whether these options democratize educational possibilities.

In the US, there are certain Magnet schools that are specialized public schools that include areas such as Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Humanities that draw parents from other types of public schools. Charter schools are a type of public-private education because they are publicly sponsored private schools with a distinctive curriculum that attracts certain parents and their children. Depending on their objective and method of delivering the curriculum, some studies contend that charter schools could be viewed as conservative, liberal, or even radical (Dauber, 2013, p. 21). There are also corresponding school policy models that operate some schooling contexts in the UK. Whitty (2001, p. 289) for instance, reviews the “Assisted Places Scheme”, which provides low-income students with financial aid to attend private schools. This is viewed as a conscious effort to support class mobility among working-class pupils with great academic capacity so they can enroll in better quality private education, which is typically only available to middle- or upper-class students due to its high cost.

However, choosing a school involves more than offering financial aid to cover tuition. Morgan and Blackmore (2013, p. 93) state that the Australian government pays for children to take buses to attend
schools in more affluent areas when they live in remote areas. In reality, parents have rights to send their children to any school they choose. Due to budgetary limitations, some families are not able to make this decision (Morgan & Blackmore, 2013, p. 95).

These examples demonstrate how school access and choice policies seek to interact with parents’ expectations of what education should be. The political and social goals are connected to the policies. Numerous people advocate for egalitarianism and seek to eliminate social segregation and marginalization. They also support parents’ rights to select the types of curriculum and educational opportunities they want for their children. Parents are demonstrating “consumer choice” by utilizing school choice options (Forsey et al., 2008, p. 19). According to Forsey et al. (2008, p. 11) “consumer choice” is referred to as a contemporary economic paradigm where economics drive the school choice. The governments such as in the US, the UK, Australia and Austria that understand the value of education get very involved in ensuring that parents have the rights to use such alternatives. Access to schooling, rather than quality education, is the main priority in developing countries (such as Azerbaijan and other post-Soviet countries) (Rzayeva et al., 2020, p. 8). Thus, this research explores how parents from various backgrounds comprehend and use school choices for their children.

To evaluate the type of school option that parents can choose in accordance with the form of school ownership, it is crucial to understand the various types of education that are offered. Across with public schools, parents have a choice between government-dependent private schools and government-independent private schools (Musset, 2012, p. 9).

Table 1. Definitions of type of schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public school</strong></td>
<td>a school is classified as public if it is controlled and managed directly by a public education authority (“traditional public schools”), or controlled and managed by a governing body, whose members are either appointed by a public authority or elected by public franchise (“autonomous public schools”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private school</strong></td>
<td>a school is classified as private if it is controlled and managed by a non-governmental organization or most of the members of its governing board are not appointed by a public authority:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A government-dependent private school is an institution that receives more than 50 % of its funding from government agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A government-independent private school is an institution that receives less than 50 % of its funding from government agencies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Across the OECD, 85% of students are enrolled in public schools, with government-dependent private school enrollment reaching 10% of all lower secondary students in 12 countries (Australia, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Korea, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, and the Netherlands), and government-independent school enrollment above 10% in Australia, Korea, Mexico and Japan. It is also important to note that more than 50% of children in Chile, Ireland and the Netherlands attend privately run schools. In contrast, more than 98% of children attend publicly run schools in Iceland, Norway and Turkey (Musset, 2012, p. 10).
There are many different studies that focused on the operation of school choice markets. Rohde et al. (2019, p. 293) explain how children are typically placed to different kinds of schools based on their geographical location. The government subsidies increase as enrollment rises. This encourages competition as schools see themselves as an agent in a market that seek to capture alluring students who will serve as advertisements of the school’s aptitude (Rohde, 2019, p. 298). Thus, they choose the students who will enlarge their reputation and image. Poder and Lauri (2014, p. 453) claim that this combines market and governmental transformational forces.

Forsey et al. (2008) note “The idea of choice offers alluring promises of equality, freedom, democracy and pleasure that traverse political and social boundaries” (p. 15). The school choice laws have reorganized how equity and high-quality education are perceived by granting schools and parents freedom of choice, autonomy, and responsibility (Forsey et al., 2008, p. 15). While school choice reforms support parental autonomy and improved possibilities for the underprivileged and marginalized, they have also continued to commodify and marketize education. Poder and Lauri (2014, p. 448) argue that a school choice model must enlarge equity in order to attain quality and social desegregation. The competitive goals of education are mediated by an equality model, which also expands parental choice options and gives parents the power to make well-informed decisions (Poder & Lauri, 2014, p. 453).

### 2.1.2 Parents and Schools

School choice decisions are also influenced by structural effects such as parents and schools. The parent is at the center of the school selection process. The way parents construct themselves in the educational field influences how they make school choices. School choice should be based on
knowledge of what constitutes quality teaching and learning and good schools. Nevertheless, not all parents are aware of the various types of schools and curriculum delivery. This makes difficult for them to make the right decisions (Mhic Mhathúna & Nic Fhionnlaioch, 2021, p. 442). According to Mhic Mhathúna & Nic Fhionnlaioch (2021, p. 443), judgments regarding a child’s education are based on two presumptions: that the parent has the knowledge necessary to select a good school, and that the school offers a quality education. Luke (2010, p. 148) discusses that “The broad underlying model was that socio-economic status (hereafter called SES) pupil characteristics (age, gender, repeater status), access to textbooks, academic effort (proxied by homework frequency), teacher characteristics (age, gender, training, qualifications), school resources, school location, school processes, teacher and pupil problems experienced in school (violence, pupil behavior, health, etc.) and characteristics of the principal may have determined learning outcomes”. Parents look for recognizable resources that they assume could guarantee successful results. Parents’ school evaluation is influenced by the social economic status of theirs and schools, teachers’ qualifications, school resources and location, students’ academic achievements and learning process (van der Berg, 2008, p.150). The parents’ agency to select a school is influenced by the evaluation of the school’s quality. However, macro systemic factors also have an impact on parents. Thus, a variety of factors, parents’ social status and educational background and upcoming expectations for their children, all effect the decision making process of school choice (van der Berg, 2008, p.152). Therefore, another aim of this study is to ascertain whether or not particular aspects are likely to have an impact on proper groups of people.

Luke (2010, p. 169) describes four types of schools including working-class schools, middle-class schools and lastly affluent schools. He notes “four school types, each representing a homogenous socioeconomic and cultural background are described. In each, distinctive “stances” towards knowledge acquisition and construction are at work” (Luke, 2010, p. 171). The working-class schools emphasize fundamental knowledge and rules, middle-class schools promote comprehension, and affluent schools form knowledge through inquiry, experimentation and experience (Luke, 2010, p. 174). While choosing a school, parents are aware of that different schools have different outcomes and some have higher success rates. However, as laws, policies and procedures work to make education more generic, these kinds may overlap. Despite the fact that the types of schools are primarily related to the parents’ SES, government regulations are making an effort to eliminate disparities (Luke, 2010, p. 175). As the private education is the central point of the elite, and give opportunities to wider range of parents, complicating their decision-making procedure as the parents must choose public or private schools.

There are obvious differences between public and private education. Public education is used by government expenditures to further the general welfare and social well-being (Horowitz & Spector, 2005, p. 189) Private education, on the other hand, is thought to underpin particular interests. Private education is frequently quite expensive and is a type of social stratification (Horowitz & Spector, 2005, p. 191). However, private and public education in Azerbaijan have blended in recent years. First and foremost, the system in both private and public schooling are referred to the same national curriculum. Secondly, a number of private schools with low cost are also appeared (Samadova, 2016, p. 65). Thus, the above-mentioned factors affect how parents realize the decisions they make when choosing the school, they want to enroll their children in. The components that influence parents’ motivation to choose a school is also the focus of this study.

2.1.3 Factors Influencing School Choice

Section 2.1.3.1 describes the parental social class. Section 2.1.3.2 moves on to social networking. Finally, Section 2.1.3.3 examines parents’ gender and working class in relation to school choice.
2.1.3.1 Parental Social Class

Parents’ social class has an impact on what drives their decisions on school choice and the resources available to them to participate in such choice. Families divide into three major classifications: upper class, middle class, and working class. Each has specific characteristics that contribute to the stereotyped constructions as well as the certain types of impacts and anticipated results that support their relationship with education (Williams & Filippakou, 2010, p. 33). Families are typically considered upper-class by genetic, lucrative businesses, marriage, or privileged economic or educational backgrounds. Choosing the right schools for their children is a crucial decision for upper-class families who want to keep their current status and for middle and for low class families who want to use education as a means of achieving it. Middle-class families are headed by tertiary-educated professionals who have certain levels of assets and are driven to give their children educational preferences (Reay, 2001, p. 388). According to Reay (2001), the middle class prioritizes competitive education and supports academic success. He contends that they have access to information networks, are aware about educational issues, and are in charge of their children's destinies (Reay, 2001, p. 412). The middle-class children who have access to networking opportunities, private instruction, and tangible resources such as musical instruments typically convert their social advantages into educational gains, assuring social mobility (Brantlinger, 2003, p. 18). Thus, making the greatest decisions for the social outcomes they need means choosing the best schools for middle-class and upper-class parents (Brantlinger, 2003, p. 10).

According to the previous studies, working-class parents have less favorable educational experiences than upper and middle-class parents since they have less educational and employment options. Because a working-class education is frequently linked with failures, when working-class parents send their children to working-class schools, their children may meet the same fate. In the existing literature, images of working-class schooling are rife with failure (Reay, 2001, p. 341). Despite school choice is theoretically and legally obligatory for all social and economic groups in Azerbaijan society, the working-class is disadvantaged due to a lack of resources, location, and fees (Topuz, 2011, p. 13). This does not imply that these individuals are unable to make school options, but rather that such decisions are made under particular limits. For instance, Azerbaijani working-class parents who cannot afford to send their children to schools outside of their neighborhoods, look for better schools within townships, determining good schools by evaluating the methods of teaching and learning (Topuz, 2011, p. 15). Topuz (2011, p. 18) notes that Azerbaijan families that gain access to the Russian schools, do so as an investment in class objectives. They also appreciate their traditional, as well as cultural conceptions as they are assimilated into the-Soviet culture of school (Topuz, 2011, p. 18).

2.1.3.2 Social Networking

Social networking involves interacting with those who run and grant access to specific social organizations and communities, which requires adoption of values, practices, and beliefs. Another factor that influences school choice decisions is social networking. More social networking opportunities and school choice options are available to those who can afford to send their children to private school (Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 312). Social networking, which fosters relationships and shares information that shapes ideas, increases social capital. However, such information is not always correct (Bosetti, 2004, p. 402). Parental school choice is significantly influenced by informal social networking. Social networks are socially organized, but access to them can help ease parents' concerns. The network's recommendations make sure their confidence in their decision (Bosetti, 2004, p. 395). The middle- and upper-classes appear to benefit from social networking. Even though the accurateness of the information delivered may be in doubt, it is occasionally disputed. The network
fosters a sense of security and of shared ideals among parents. Thus, social networking has essential possibilities to affect which school to attend (Bosetti, 2004, p. 408). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to ascertain the types of social networking platforms that the sampled parents have access to, as well as how they affect their ability to choose a school.

2.1.3.3 Parents’ Gender and Working-class

Mothers appear to be the primary decision-makers when it comes to their children’s educational options, and their socioeconomic class influences how they handle educational concerns. Cooper (2007, p. 495) claims that working-class women are conscious of their inability to participate in educational-related issues and structures and submit to the school’s authority while accepting their given positions. He also argues that the working-class mothers choose their children’s schools is influenced by their race and social class (Cooper, 2007, p. 497). Middle-class mothers, however, exhibit a type of narcissistic behavior as they utilize their success in raising children and making educational decisions to make strong their agentic qualities. This also affects how they assess their children’s success in comparison to others (Cooper, 2007, p. 501). The academic qualifications of the mother also effect school choice decisions. Cooper (2007, p. 498) comes to the conclusion that elite educational paths are chosen by highly educated moms, which perpetuates social division. What issues are considered while Azerbaijani-speaking mothers choosing a school for their children? Given the lack of research on this issue this is also another focus of the study.

2.2 Parental Role in School Choice

Section 2.2.1 overall explains parental education and how it effects to school choice. Section 2.2.2 exhibits family income and describes the link between family income and school choice. Section 2.2.3 mentions parental rights to educate their children. Section 2.2.4 raises discussions in relation to emphasis on academic outcomes, and Section 2.2.5 explores contentment of parents with their school choice.

2.2.1 Parental Education

Guryan et al. (2008, p. 23) suggest that parents’ attitudes toward school choice depend on their educational level. They indicate that educated parents are more regarding their choice within public or private school choice rather than less or non-educated parents (Guryan, et al., p. 25). Chevalier (2004, p. 5) also claims that educated parents implement more choices than less-educated parents. The educated parents can get more information about types of schools, as well as programs (Chevalier, 2004, p. 6). Parents who have access to more information and are aware of more alternatives to enable them to make decisions about their children's education are more engaged in educational choice (Chevalier, 2004, p. 8). Guryan et al. (2008, p. 28) argue that many of parents who are engage in the public sector have lack of knowledge regarding the educational regulations. As a result, it is critical that they receive assistance in gathering information in order to make informed decisions.

According to National Education Longitudinal Study, there is a significant difference between students in 8th grade private and public schools. Students who have better educated parents were over-represented in all types of private schools, whereas students with low level of education were over-represented in all types of public schools (Schneider, et al.,1996, p. 25). There are also a variety of studies which do not agree that educated parents favor school choices. Schneider, Schiller & Coleman (1996, p. 24) state that low level parents were more likely than high level parents to take advantages of options. As above mentioned, different parents with different levels of education have different
viewpoints on choosing a school. Most research came to the conclusion that parents with higher levels of education are more active in exercising their right to choose either inside public-school systems or private school systems. However, another crucial element—home location—also influences how parents view the decision-making process. Parents with low levels of education who reside in the inner city also employ use their right to choose a school. In conclusion, whose parents are able to express choice the most successfully typically depends on their social class status and where they live (Schneider, et al., 1996, p. 32).

### 2.2.2 Family Income

While some research found a direct correlation between family income and parental school choice, others found an inverse correlation. Family income is a complex topic because it includes factors including the parents’ socioeconomic position, parents’ employment status, geographical location, and parents’ educational background (Murnane & Reardon, 2018, p. 6). Parents with lower incomes were more likely than parents with higher incomes to think about alternatives to the public schools in their location. Due to their access to better schools, parents from higher income brackets had fewer reasons to investigate alternatives. Also, low-income families embrace school choice policies (Gregg & Macmillan, 2010, p. 262). The social class position of the parents, along with their place of residence, is related to family income and frequently decides which parent will support a choice the most. Families in the suburbs are often less supportive of choice programs (Gregg & Macmillan, 2010, p. 268). Some studies have disputed the assumption that family income and choice are inversely related. According to Corak, Lipps, and Zhao (2003, p. 14), parents with a higher income and are not bound by racial or ethnic barriers in their community can choose their school by deciding where to live. Parents that have enough money can also think about private schools.

These findings show that low-income families in school districts with limited resources support school choice as a policy. These results also demonstrate how the actual characteristics of school districts influence parents’ opinions on choice. And again, the home’s location—often connected to income—is crucial. Families who live in districts with lower levels of property wealth, higher percentages of poor students, lower mastery rates on state exams, and lower graduation rates are more likely to support choice. In contrast, those who live in districts with higher values on these metrics are more likely to be against it (Murnane & Reardon, 2018, p. 14).

### 2.2.3 Parental Rights to Educate Their Children

According to UDHR, parents have the right to decide what kind of education they want for their children. They can do so based on several considerations, such as the school’s academic standing, curriculum, affiliation with a particular religion or culture, extracurricular activities, and special needs accommodations (UN, 1948). Parental choice does have some practical and legal restrictions, albeit these can vary based on the country and educational system. Other international accords, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, have reiterated this norm (UN, 1966). Particularly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child highlights the importance of parental involvement in a child’s education and stipulates states uphold and protect it. According to Article 5 of the Convention, “States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention” (UNICEF, 1989). The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education
also acknowledges parents’ freedom to decide the educational program for their kids. It forbids discrimination against kids based on their parents’ values or socioeconomic standing (UNESCO, 1960).

In many countries, parents have the legal right to select the school for their child. Parents are in the best position to decide on their child's education because they are the ones most familiar with their child's strengths, limitations, and learning preferences, according to supporters of parental rights to select their child’s school. They contend that competition and innovation in the educational system are encouraged by school choice, which results in higher-quality instruction for all children (Hess & Eden, 2021). Parental school choice opponents claim it would increase inequality and segregation in the educational system since more wealthy parents might have access to better schools or resources for homeschooling. In contrast, low-income families might have fewer options. Opponents also claim that parental choice may damage the public education system by removing funding from public schools (Owens, 2020, p. 33). In summary, while parental rights to inform their children about school choice may provide the educational system with more flexibility and customization, balancing these rights and considerations for equity, access, and quality in education is crucial. No matter their socioeconomic status or parental preferences, policies and regulations must be carefully developed to guarantee that all students have access to high-quality education.

2.2.4 Emphasis on Academic Outcomes

Jabbar et al. (2022) have found a relation between parents’ school choice and children’s achievement. Children from many families who get involved in choice programs and select children’s schools perform better academically (Jabbar, et al., 2022, p. 250). However, pupils’ academic achievement is not merely determined by the kinds of school. Studies show significant disparities in pupils’ academic achievement are revealed by pupils’ characteristics and experiences and not by the features of private schools (Wigfield & Cambria, 2010, p. 13). Wigfield and Cambria (2010, p. 23) claim that the number of children, parent’s employment status, parents’ perspectives and experiences on school choice, parents’ engagement in schooling programs, and the structure of families all have a substantial impact on student’s academic performance and success. Correspondingly, Cookson (1993) also discovered that in addition to the children’s socioeconomic characteristics, the number of advanced courses taken, the quantity of homework, and staff issues at the school are contributed to the relative achievement differences between students in public and private schools. He also found that once the background of the children is considered, the attendance at a private school is not directly related to student accomplishment (Cookson, 1993).

In Figure 3, we can see how school admissions and academic performance are connected, with a focus on various types of schools. The information in the figure offers valuable insights into previous studies on student achievement and school selection. In conclusion, previous studies about student achievement and school choice are mixed. Private schools, in particular, attract a lot of families with higher levels of education and wealth and their children achieve high performance outcomes. However, children from low-income and minority parents who attend in the choice programs perform poorly in school (Wigfield & Cambria, 2010, p. 18).
2.2.5 Contentment of Parents with their School Choice

In the competitive education system of today, parental satisfaction with schools their children attend and defined by school choice and governmental standards is a significant concern (Friedman et al., 2006, p. 471). Friedman, Bobrowski, and Geraci (2006, p. 475) argue that parents who are dissatisfied with their children’s schools prefer to explore other alternatives, whether by getting involved in choice programs or searching for private schools. These parents are more active in schools, and have more expectations for their children and generally well-educated. Parents are most dissatisfied with aspects such as school location, which has little to do with how the school operates, and are most concerned with how much the child learns and school discipline. Parents might be dissatisfied with public schools because their children need to study better in those schools. After choosing a school for their children, parents typically expressed greater satisfaction with the new school than with the old one (Friedman et al., 2006, p. 477).

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Figure 3. School admissions based on academic performance, by school type

On the other hand, parents who are satisfied with their children’s schools are frequently against school choices. However, Lee, Croninger, and Smith (1996) suggested that administrators of suburban schools, private schools, and the families they serve can be opposed to choose. The administrators and families who do not want to make the necessary changes to school programming to accommodate children from varied educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, significantly they believe such changes will degrade indigenous schools’ quality. The upper-class parents have fewer reasons to look for alternatives because they have more access to better schools and suburban families often have fewer positive attitudes toward choice programs (Lee et al., 1996). One of the questions raised by school choice is whether parents’ satisfaction stems more from their school selection or the school’s overall quality. Fantuzzo, Perry, and Childs (2006, p. 62) note that choice parents trust the school is better because it is selected. Its status is determined by its extreme selectivity, not determined by what children achieve, parents or teachers do. There is nothing about choice schools that distinguishes them from other schools in terms of academic accomplishment, apart from the fact that they are more selective (Fantuzzo et al., 2006, p. 67) The studies show that choice is not the cause of true change (Fantuzzo et al., 2006, p. 68). Allowing schools to be most selective might increase people's satisfaction or good attitudes toward the schools, but it doesn't seem to alter the quality of schooling in any other observable way (Fantuzzo et al., 2006, p. 71).

![Conceptual framework of parental characteristics and School Choice](image)

**Figure 4. Conceptual framework of parental characteristics and School Choice**

*Note: Reformulated by the author.*

### 2.3 School Choice Policies

There is conflicting evidence regarding how school choice policies affect educational outcomes. On the one hand, increased competition may enhance educational effectiveness by giving parents and
students more opportunities to select the school that best suits their needs (Roda & Wells, 2013, p. 263). The intense competition may help enhance equity if children from low-income families have access to the most prestigious schools, even if such schools are not near their homes. On the other hand, school choice programs and policies may reduce educational equity if they allow only the most knowledgeable and privileged children to choose to transfer from their nearby schools to better-performing institutions (OECD, 2019, p. 68). Since school choice policies have an impact on social and academic segregation between various types of schools, these effects may also be consequentially magnified or diminished if children’s academic achievement is influenced by the socioeconomic background of their peers at schools. The effects of school segregation are not clear because they depend on the power and characteristics of peer influence at a given school (Roda & Wells, 2013, p. 268). It is unclear if increased segregation may have a beneficial or negative influence on educational results because sorting children based on academic achievement or social standing may have positive effects for certain children while having negative effects for others (OECD, 2019, p. 70).

Thus, quality and equity in school choice policies examine the connection to academic results, as seen in the accompanying Figure 5. It investigates the direct correlation between specific indicators of school choice, such as school admission criteria and the percentage of private schools in a system, and school segregation, which is referred to as educational performance (OECD, 2019, p. 73).

![School choice policies, segregation in schools and education outcomes](image)

**Figure 5. School choice policies, segregation in schools and education outcomes**

Note: Retrieved OECD. (2019, p. 3). *Balancing School Choice and Equity: An International Perspective Based on Pisa*. ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC.

Many visible factors, such as grade repetition and invisible factors, such as varied financial assistance for low-income families, may influence both equity and performance. Analyzing data from multiple PISA cycles and adding country-fixed variables aid in separating these impacts (OECD, 2019, p. 73). The specifics of school systems that may affect children’s performance should be considered because they could otherwise be falsely associated to school segregation (OECD, 2017). Many countries struggle to strike a balance between the need to promote equity in their educational systems and expectations for flexibility and parental freedom of school choice (Roda & Wells, 2013, p. 263). When it comes to aligning school autonomy to school choice and balancing equity with choice, educational systems accomplish various strategies. For instance, both Shanghai and England underline market mechanisms. However, government policy in England primarily performs on the demand of markets,
aiming to enhance education by improving parental choice. In Shanghai, the government places a
stronger emphasis on creating equal opportunity at the supply by ensuring schools with the best
educational allowances in the poorest communities (Davezies & Garrouste, 2020, p. 245). While both
Hong Kong and Finland have a significant focus on local autonomy, the majority of schools in Hong
Kong run private organizations with comparatively loose steering mechanisms. In Finland, a local
authority is practiced within a powerful public school system (Davezies & Garrouste, 2020, p. 247).
Some nations have simultaneously reinforced systems relating to equity and choice. For example, the
number of schools supported by the Department of Education has sharply expanded in England. A
pupil premium has also developed in England, which gives schools extra funding regarding the
socioeconomic structure of their student group. In some states, private schools can also be included in
the public education system as independent organizations that obtain public funding (Davezies &
Garrouste, 2020, p. 245). The argument for school choice is that parents should be free to send their
children to the school of their choice, regardless of any legal limitations, financial constraints, or
geographic limitations. Parents may choose a school for their child based on its quality, instructional
strategies, religious affiliation, affordability, or geographic location (OECD, 2017). According to the
theory, providing more options within a single school system should improve value by decreasing the
cost of failure and mismatch inconsistency in light of students’ varied requirements and interests
(Bunar, 2010, p. 12). Having more options should encourage competition, which will encourage
schools to try out new pedagogies, be more efficient, and enhance student learning. The argument
against school choice is that when given additional options, children from privileged families
frequently decide to leave the public system, increasing social and cultural isolation in the educational
system (Roda & Wells, 2013, p. 268).

The influence on socioeconomic segregation of children is one issue with expanded school choice.
While the indices measuring intellectual segregation within schools are typically higher than those
assessing socio-economic segregation, the contrary is seen in a number of nations, particularly those in
Latin America (Bunar, 2010, p. 12). These are also the nations where enrollment disparities between
private and public schools are largely contributed for the general level of school segregation (Bunar,
2010, p. 13). The sort of segregation is also influenced by how the educational system is structured
(Roda & Wells, 2013, p. 266). The isolation of poor performers who are “left behind” in some
schools’ accounts for the majority of academic segregation of children in some nations and economies.
In contrast, in other systems, it represents a sizable concentration of high achievers in “elite”
institutions (Bunar, 2010, p. 13). These details could have different effects on how well students
succeed (OECD, 2017).
Chapter 3 Context of This Study

This study specifically analyses the comparisons between Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents. The context of this study is discussed in this chapter. Section 3.1 begins with historical and theoretical context of Azerbaijan education system. Section 3.2 entails with language policy in Azerbaijan education system. Section 3.3 looks into the modern education system of Azerbaijan Republic. Finally, section 3.4 deals with education policies in school choice in Azerbaijan.

3.1 Historical and Theoretical Context of Azerbaijan Education System

Section 3.1.1 briefly mentions the education in Azerbaijan in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Section 3.1.2 presents education in Azerbaijan during the years of the Democratic Republic (1918–20). Lastly, Section 3.1.3 delineates the history of education of Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic.

3.1.1 Education in Azerbaijan in the 19th and 20th Centuries

The formation and development of the national school education in Azerbaijan, whose historical roots go back to ancient times and the early Middle Ages, has always been associated with the evolution of the spiritual culture of the people, the spread of religion and the presence of statehood traditions. The importance of school education, the birth of writing and the formation of the written culture of the people played a unique role (Aliyeva, 2019, p. 518). Prior to its final separation in 1828 between the Russian and Iranian empires, Azerbaijan was essentially one country with a Middle Eastern-inspired educational system. Although the majority of schools were religious, their curricula included secular courses as well. Persian and Arabic were the two main languages of instruction, with Azerbaijani being gradually added later (Isaxanli, 2005, p. 25). At the beginning of the 19th century, as a result of the Russian-Iranian wars, Azerbaijan split into two parts; the northern part was occupied by Russia, which also affected school education. Measures for the development of education carried out by tsarist Russia were also an integral part of its colonial policy (Pashayeva, 2010, p. 138). From the period of the Russian Empire (1828-1918), educational development in Northern Azerbaijan was defined by a combination of national religious and secular schools and Russian-style secular and bilingual schools. Academic programs and curricula were created in collaboration with Azerbaijani intellectuals and Russian educators (Isaxanli, 2005, p. 25). In Northern Azerbaijan, primary schools launched in the Russian language. In 1887, a Russian-Tatar elementary school established in Azerbaijan. At the end of the XIX-beginning of the XX century, more than 240 Russian-Azerbaijani schools founded in Azerbaijan. Thus, in ordinary schools with instruction in the Russian language, only Azerbaijani pupils were admitted to these schools. Along with Russian, the Azerbaijani language was taught to a large extent. In the first half of the 19th century, the development of the Azerbaijani school was influenced by two main directions: the preservation of traditional Muslim forms of education and the emergence of new primary schools with instruction in Russian (Aliyeva, 2019, p. 519). The tsarist authorities, concerned that a traditional education system operating in Azerbaijan, which is under the control of the clergy, attached particular importance to the creation and expansion of a network of educational institutions with instruction in Russian. This process was also accelerated by the need to train local management personnel (Aliyeva, 2019, p. 522).
According to the Regulations, few hours were given to study the Azerbaijani language at schools. In Russian schools, where initially only the children of Russian officials studied, Azerbaijani children gradually began to study. In 1857, 148 Azerbaijani children studied in all district schools. The fact that the Azerbaijani language and Islam were allowed to teach here also contributed to the increased interest of Azerbaijanis in studying in Russian schools (Aliyeva, 2019, p. 523). In 1867, the Azerbaijani language was excluded from the study list, and the content of the disciplines taught was increasingly subjected to Russification. The leading place in the system of school institutions began to be occupied by Russian elementary schools. Thus, the experience of the Russian-Azerbaijani schools established in Northern Azerbaijan in the second half of the 19th century soon influenced the formation of the school system in Southern Azerbaijan (Isaxanli, 2005, p. 28).

3.1.2 Education in Azerbaijan During the Years of the Democratic Republic (1918–20)

The government of the first democratic legal state in the East - the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, attached exceptional importance to the development of public education, science and culture, declaring this area a priority for cultural construction, one of the fundamental principles of national state policy, began reforms and construction in the field of education. Due to the unified management of the education system and the regulation of educational policy in the country, in June 1918, the staffing and structure of the Ministry of Public Education and Religious Beliefs were approved (Rustamkhani, 2019, p. 3). By the historic government decision of August 28, 1918, “On the nationalization of primary, higher primary and general secondary educational institutions”, educational institutions were nationalized, and schools and classes with foreign language teaching were closed. According to the decision, education in all educational institutions, without exception, was to be conducted in the Azerbaijani language, which is the state language. However, at the beginning of the 1918/19 academic year, serious problems arose in this area. It soon became clear that many students were left out of education in connection with the nationalization of education. The government was forced to make certain changes to its decree of August 28, 1918; for this purpose, it issued a special decree on November 13, 1918. According to the new decree, cities with one educational institution were also allowed to open Russian departments, starting with preparatory classes based on special consent from the Ministry of Public Education (Rustamkhani, 2019, p. 5). After the nationalization, education in all classes could be conducted in Russian in the city with the same type of public schools. The same decree determined that in schools with Russian-language instruction, the state language should be a compulsory subject for instruction, and Azerbaijani children were to study only in nationalized schools. As an exception, with special permission from the Ministry of Public Education, they could study in the Russian sector (Aliyeva, 2019, p. 533).

Later, the national government made an unprecedented step in the history of the formation of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani language acquired the status of the state language and became the language of upbringing, teaching and education (Aliyeva, 2019, p. 532). In 1919, except for the Baku secondary technical and commercial schools, two male and three female gymnasiums and all other educational institutions in the country were nationalized. At the beginning of the 1919/20 academic year, 643 primary and 23 secondary and secondary special schools functioned in Azerbaijan. Accordingly, 48,070 and 9,711 children studied in them. Compared with 1914, the number of schools decreased in quantitative terms due to the socio-political processes taking place in the country and a crisis that developed in the education system (Rustamkhani, 2019, p. 7).
3.1.3 Education in Azerbaijan During Soviet Union

The founder of the Soviet Union, V. I. Lenin, highlighted that “the upbringing, training, and education of the new generations... cannot be undertaken on the old lines” simultaneously with the transformation of the old society (Avakov & Atakishiev, 1984, p. 13). After the formation of the Soviet Union in Azerbaijan, the public education system began to be built on new principles, which constituted a new era in the history of education. The education model in Soviet Russia was taken as the basis of this system. The principles of a unified, secular labor school of joint education and equality of rights were considered essential (Avakov & Atakishiev, 1984, p. 13). During the Soviet Union era, Azerbaijan's education system was transformed in significant ways. The Soviet government implemented a centralized educational system that aimed to provide equal opportunities for all students regardless of their socio-economic background. Education was seen as a means of promoting social mobility, creating a loyal Soviet citizenry, and spreading communist ideology (Avakov & Atakishiev, 1984, p. 17).

Table 2. The educational system in the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM</th>
<th>vocational and technical education</th>
<th>higher education and specialized secondary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>general educational system</td>
<td>vocational and technical secondary schools</td>
<td>higher educational institutions (academies, universities, institutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-school education</td>
<td>technical colleges</td>
<td>specialized secondary education (tekhnikum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-year secondary schools</td>
<td>ordinary vocational and technical schools</td>
<td>specialized evening higher or secondary educational institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10- or 11-year secondary schools</td>
<td>evening vocational and technical schools</td>
<td>specialized correspondence higher or secondary institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evening schools</td>
<td>worker-training at the workplace</td>
<td>training and refresher courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extracurricular education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The education issue occupied a prominent position in Azerbaijan’s political and cultural life from the beginning of the Soviet Union’s foundation there (Avakov & Atakishiev, 1984, p. 19). During Soviet era primary education lasts five years in Azerbaijan, although only four years are required in the Russia. The difficulty of the Azerbaijani writing system and the lack of textbooks printed in the local language were the causes. Additionally, the network of secondary schools during the early years of Soviet dominance grew slowly for various reasons, and most pupils had to make do with primary education. Because of this, it was only reasonable to try to impart as much knowledge as possible to elementary school pupils (Avakov & Atakishiev, 1984, p. 24). Additionally, languages were heavily emphasized in school curricula, including the native language, Russian, and foreign languages. The structures of school formation, the needs such as the technical and material foundation for schools, an increase in student enrollment, and quality of teaching were the outcomes of the first ten years of the development of education in Soviet Azerbaijan (Avakov & Atakishiev, 1984, p. 35). These outcomes are represented quantitatively in Table 1. In the 1930s, national priorities in education faded into the background, and the false concept of internationalism became a leading factor. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereafter called USSR) system of education was created in Azerbaijan. In the 1940/41 academic year, there were 406,153 students in 1,668 primary schools in the republic, 192,825 students in 1,240 seven-year schools, and 653,071 students in all 3,575 general education schools (Avakov & Atakishiev, 1984, p. 44). Furthermore, the development of general educational schools during Soviet era can be seen from Table 2.

Table 3. The first result of public education development in Soviet Azerbaijan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Day Schools</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914/15</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927/28</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>171,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932/33</td>
<td>2,907</td>
<td>439,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4. The development of general educational schools in Soviet Azerbaijan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914/15</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>73,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940/41</td>
<td>3,575</td>
<td>655,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in %</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is impossible to understand the sources of such a singular achievement in the life of the Azerbaijani people if one does not consider the significant revolutionary transformations in the whole of Soviet society. The radical turning point in the destiny of the Azerbaijani people led them from a state of stagnation to the road of creation and prosperity. The masses of Azerbaijani working people witnessed a great contrast between the obsolete past and the developing new future (Mammadova, 2013). One of the significant changes in Azerbaijan's education system was the increased emphasis on the education of girls. The Soviet government encouraged the education of girls to promote gender equality, and the number of girls enrolled in schools increased significantly. The Soviet government also encouraged the development of science and technology. Azerbaijan's universities and research institutions received substantial funding from the Soviet government, which led to the establishment of new faculties and research centers. Overall, the Soviet Union's educational policies significantly impacted Azerbaijan's education system. Despite criticisms of the Soviet educational system, it was successful in increasing literacy rates and providing access to education for all.

3.2 Language Policy in Azerbaijan Education System

In 1920, Azerbaijan was designated as a Soviet Autonomous Republic, and Russian was declared to be one of the USSR’s official languages (Clifton, 2013). The Russian language played a crucial part in nation-building during the USSR era in terms of language strategy. The language was used in fourteen countries that were a part of the Soviet Union. (Mammadova, 2013). The main objective of the USSR’s foreign policy was to raise the level of the Russian language throughout the other fourteen nations. Consequently, the USSR developed a range of strategies to improve the prospects for studying and teaching the Russian language (Pavlenko, 2008). As a result, those who speak Russian have access to school and employment in any country of the Soviet Union, whereas those who speak Azerbaijani are constrained by the country’s borders (Mammadova, 2013).

In those times, it was also hard for diverse ethnic groups who resided in Azerbaijan. Under the USSR’s control, they were not permitted to speak their own tongue. The USSR imposed restrictions on Azerbaijan’s ethnic communities. Thus, these minority communities had to be able to speak Azerbaijani in order to preserve their own language (Pavlenko, 2008). In addition, the USSR mandated that all schools in those nations with non-Russian students teach Russian as a second language. Language divisions within Azerbaijani society were caused by the USSR’s “Russification” campaign, which is still a problem today (Pavlenko, 2008). Russian and Azerbaijani were taught in parallel in every school, and the primary language of instruction in schools was Russian. However, Azerbaijani language classes were obligatory (Clifton, 2013). The Azerbaijani language was supported to obtain its state status, and in 1978 it was incorporated into the Azerbaijani Constitution of the SSR. Learning Russian was still required for employment and school (Clifton, 2013). Despite Azerbaijani’s official status, most people believed that Russian was a more developed language than Azerbaijani. Schools that used Russian as their primary language instruction had more substantial educational and research facilities. As a result, Azerbaijani families were eager to enroll their kids in Russian schools (Pashayeva, 2010).

The new Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic established Azerbaijani as the national language following independence in 1995. (Pashayeva, 2010). To advance the state's educational and professional life, the government encouraged individuals to study and improve their Azerbaijani (Pashayeva, 2010). The article claims that Azerbaijani speaking parents could enroll their children in
Russian-medium schools and require them to take Azerbaijani-speaking parents classes (Pashayeva, 2010). Numerous families chose to send their children to Russian-medium schools because of the free education in the language and the prospects it offers in the future (Popjanevski, 2006). Even in administrative communication, Russian was the most well-known second or foreign language (Popjanevski, 2006). Azerbaijan is one of the post-Soviet states that rise was unable to reduce the number of Russian-medium schools due to domestic demand after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the post-Soviet countries (Popjanevski, 2006).

According to statistics from the State Statistics Committee in Azerbaijan (hereafter called SSC) (2013), there were 95,567 students enrolled in public and private Russian schools in 2009–2010, which dropped from 108,737 in 2005–2006. In 2000–2001, there were 108,240 students enrolled in public and private Russian schools. However, it is not referred from the declining enrollment in schools offering Russian as a second language. It is the overall decline in the student body of Azerbaijani schools, and this decline is greater than the number of children attending Russian-medium schools (SSC, 2013). Due to its historical heritage, Azerbaijan still tends to speak Russian, particularly in its northern region and capital city Baku (Zuercher, 2009). The value and acceptance of the Russian language in Azerbaijan are also made possible by the country's economic, political, and cultural connections to Russia (Pashayeva, 2010). The Azerbaijani families eventually came to see Russian as an essential language, alongside English and French. As a result, it is impossible to foresee how speaking Russian soon in Azerbaijan may be avoided (Zuercher, 2009).

### 3.3 Modern Education System of Azerbaijan Republic

Since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan has implemented significant reforms in its education system to modernize it and align it with international standards. The modern education system of Azerbaijan is governed by the Ministry of Science and Education and includes both public and private institutions. Except for switching from Cyrillic to a modified Latin alphabet, Azerbaijan has made minimal fundamental changes to its educational system since attaining independence (Rustamkhanli, 2019, p. 7). Primary school, secondary school, and senior secondary school are the three basic stages of the Azerbaijani educational system, followed by vocational training or university education (Samadova, 2016, p. 65). The average age of entry into school is six, and each school must follow a particular educational program. Russian and English are frequently taught as second languages, with Azerbaijani being prioritized as the main teaching language. The Ministry of Science and Education of the Azerbaijan Republic (hereafter called MSE) oversees and regulates the country's educational system (MSE, 2022a). In Azerbaijan, primary education typically starts at age six and lasts for the first four years of a student's education. The elementary school curriculum prioritizes reading, writing, and computer skills. Additionally, it aims to aid pupils in gaining a foundational knowledge of society and the capacity for logical reasoning. At the same time, the corresponding net attendance ratios for the same period were 73.8 per cent and 72.4 per cent (Samadova, 2016, p. 66).

The fifth through ninth grades, or ages 10 to 14, are the required years for general secondary education. The main goals of general secondary education are the improvement of writing qualities, the use of spoken communication to communicate ideas and exchange information, the development of logical thinking skills, and the use of contemporary technologies and communication tools to enhance learning. At the conclusion of their general secondary education, every student is formally
evaluated, and those who pass are given a certificate indicating their eligibility to move on to the next level of study (Samadova, 2016, p. 66). Ages 15 to 16 and the 10th through 11th grade make up the whole secondary schooling period. Students might start specializing in their educational track once they have completed their secondary education. The broadest areas of specialty are in the sciences, the humanities, and the natural world. Additionally, it is required students to become excellent communicators in one or more foreign languages. Each student receives a final evaluation after secondary education to see whether they are eligible to move on to higher education. The successful students award a state certificate at the end of their studies (Samadova, 2016, p. 68).

Figure 6. Organization of education system in Azerbaijan


3.4 Education Policies in School Choice in Azerbaijan

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the law on education state that every person has the right to study in their mother tongue and foreign language simultaneously in any school of their choice (Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 1995).

The process of admitting children to first grade in Azerbaijan's educational institutions has changed in recent years. The traditional method of in-person registration has been replaced by an electronic service, making the admission process easier and allowing parents to apply to multiple schools from
home. However, the admission process may vary depending on the school type and language of instruction. While state schools, lyceums, and gymnasiums that teach in Azerbaijani follow the usual admission process, other schools with different primary languages may have different procedures. For others where teaching is conducted in other languages; the MSE run the steering committee and takes interviews with children to evaluate children's oral speech skills, as well as thinking ability in that language. MSE in Azerbaijan sets a quota every year for public schools to provide education in languages other than Azerbaijani, particularly the Russian language. This quota determines the number of students who can enroll in public schools that offer instruction in Russian. The decision is based on factors such as demand, availability of resources, and the number of qualified teachers (MSE, 2022a).

The quota system aims to provide students who want to learn languages other than Azerbaijani with access to public schools that offer such programs. However, some people criticize the system, arguing that it may worsen existing inequalities by limiting access to quality education for students who prefer learning in Azerbaijani or other languages (Qasımova, & Hüseynov, 2021). Thus, more children are studying in the Azerbaijani sector in public schools. Furthermore, Azerbaijani language is also added as a main subject to the curriculum of Russian sector. Due to the increase in the number of pupils studying in the Russian sector, starting from the 2022-2023 academic year, the subject “Azerbaijani history” is taught in the state language in the Russian sector of secondary general education schools of Azerbaijan (MSE, 2022a).

Public schools in Azerbaijan have to follow the MSE's regulations when admitting pupils to first grade and choosing the language of instruction. However, private schools have more freedom in setting their own admission policies and language quotas. As a result, private schools generally have a higher number of pupils studying in Russian, with fewer pupils in the Azerbaijani sector. This difference in policies between public and private schools can significantly impact students and their families by affecting their ability to access education in their preferred language. It highlights the importance of policymakers ensuring that all students have equal access to high-quality education, regardless of their socio-economic status or language background (Qasımova, & Hüseynov, 2021).
Chapter 4 Theoretical Framework

Existing theories advise researchers on what to concentrate on as well as how to interpret results (Bryman, 2016, p. 5). Three theoretical frameworks underpin this study: Human Capital Approach (hereafter called HCA), Human Rights Based Approach (hereafter called HRBA) and Capability approach (hereafter called CA). This chapter presents HCA, HBA and CA theories following.

According to the HCA, parents decide whether to invest in their children's education based on their anticipated return on investment, which could be higher earnings or other advantages. In the context of parental school choice, parents may consider both the costs of attending those schools and any potential benefits. The relevance of education for both parents and society at large can be explained using the HCA. Education is a type of human capital that can improve production, income, and other advantages. Therefore, parents may view school choice as a chance to boost their child's future opportunities and invest in their human capital. All people have the right to receive a high-quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic status, language, ethnicity, spoken language, or gender, according to the HRBA, which highlights the significance of human rights as a framework for development. This strategy views education as a fundamental human right that should be available and equitable to everyone. Thus, this study aims to align with the HRBA framework as the author intends to investigate the factors that influence parents’ decisions to choose primary schools for their children. Specifically, the study examines whether MSE is providing equal access to education for all children, regardless of their spoken language.

On the other hand, the CA emphasizes the value of people’s capacities and ability to pursue any lifestyle they desire. The CA sees education as a crucial skill that empowers people to realize their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. The study aims to align with the CA framework since the author explores parents’ choices regarding primary schools, which are essential for their children’s future. The study also examines whether studying in the Russian sector enhances or limits children’s capabilities to pursue their goals and aspirations and analyzes how language barriers affect access to education. In conclusion, the HCA, HRBA and the CA provide a comprehensive framework for the research, which aims to investigate Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents at primary education level. These approaches will allow the author to assess the extent to which Azerbaijan's education system provides equitable access to excellent education, as well as how these options affect children's capabilities and freedom to choose their way of life.

4.1 Human Capital Approach (HCA)

The Human Capital Approach is a philosophy that emphasizes human development and investment to achieve economic growth and prosperity. It is based on the premise that people have natural abilities and skills that can be developed and advanced via education and training, resulting in increased production and economic success (Nafukho et al., 2004, p. 546). According to this HCA, investing in education and training can increase overall workforce quality, improving productivity and economic growth. This is since education and training assist individuals in acquiring the skills and information required to be successful in their chosen professions, resulting in enhanced earning potential and higher levels of economic mobility (Nafukho et al., 2004, p. 548).
The human capital theory provides an economic perspective on human behavior. Olssen, Codd and O’Neil (2004) state HCA “economic approach to human behavior attributes means-end calculational rationality to human agents, and it is under such a model, where rational human behavior is seen as purposeful and goal-oriented, that individuals will invest in education” (p. 144). However, it is clear that people actively determine both their welfare and the country’s economic health. The information and skills required for economic success are transferred through education as a tool for economic progress. Accordingly, one of the critical principles of the theory of human capital is that “education and training increase an individual’s cognitive capacity, which in turn increases productivity, and an increase in productivity tends to increase an individual’s earning, which becomes a measure of human capital” (Olssen et al., 2004, p.145). Furthermore, the goal of education is also closely related to workforce productivity. Individuals’ knowledge and skills are expressed as human capital, affecting their productivity and potential employment. As a result, education is crucial as an investment in increasing one's labor productivity. Since its effects are quantified in terms of economic outcomes, economists can calculate the return on investment in education (Norton, 2008, p. 226).

Robeyns (2006) outlined three key concerns that critics of the human capital approach to defining education’s purpose have brought up. The first problem stems from its purely economic stance: “the only benefits from education that are considered are increased productivity and a higher wage” (p. 72). Through this lens, other aspects of life, such as the social and non-material, are suppressed and ignored. As a result, the human capital approach to education appears to overestimate economic concerns while inadequately considering topics like culture, gender, identity, and emotions. Accordingly, the human capital hypothesis acknowledges that people only behave for economic motives and cannot explain why someone would spend time in school if there were no chance of financial gain (Norton, 2008, p. 226).

The additional issue with this theory is that it is entirely instrumental because “it values education, skills, and knowledge only in so far as they contribute (directly or indirectly) to expected economic productivity” (Robeyns, 2006, p.73). Combining these two criticisms, Robeyns notes that problems with inequality between various racial and ethnic groups could arise. Due to internal or external limitations, not everyone receives the same rate of return from schooling. The logic used to compare education investment to other financial investments is another problem with the human capital strategy. Gillis (1992) claims, “One family would invest in education if it provided the maximum return” (p. 231). In conclusion, viewing education just in terms of human capital can limit its intrinsic significance in terms of both personal and societal advantages.

**4.2 Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)**

Since the 1948 passage of the International Declaration of Human Rights, education has been explicitly acknowledged as a human right (Craissati et al., 2007, p. 7). This Declaration was created by Eleanor Roosevelt, chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights, as the new social contract that would end the hostilities of the two world wars and establish international peace (Offenheiser & Holcombe, 2003, p. 275). All children have a right to free, obligatory primary education under these treaties. There is also a duty to promote secondary education and take actions to make it attainable to all children, along with a responsibility to deliver basic education for those who have not finished primary school (Craissati et al., 2007, p. 7). The declaration also states that education should support people's personal growth, improve esteem for human rights and freedoms, empower them to engage fully in a free society, and foster tolerance, understanding, and a sense of community (Craissati et al., 2007, p. 8).
According to Craissati, Banerjee, King, Lansdown and Smith (2007), human rights for education are “Every child has an equal right to attend school. Making schools accessible and available is an important first step in fulfilling this right but not sufficient to ensure its realization. Equality of opportunity can only be achieved by removing barriers in the community and in schools”, as well as “Even where schools exist, economic, social and cultural factors – including gender, disability, AIDS, household poverty, ethnicity, minority status, orphanhood and child labor – often interlink to keep children out of school. Governments have obligations to develop legislation, policies and support services to remove barriers in the family and community that impede children’s access to school”. (p. 31). International organizations such as UNESCO and United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (hereafter called UNICEF) strongly underpin the human rights framework. This approach views education primarily as a fundamental human right to which each person is entitled. This approach views education primarily as a fundamental human right to which each person is entitled. However, while the ongoing development goals (SDGs) also emphasize the quality of schooling, the previous development goals, such as Millennium Development Goals (hereafter called MDGs), focused on achieving universal access to education. At this point, it must be stated that every child has the right to a high-quality education, without taking into account the education returns in terms of human capital since this strategy emphasizes educational gains other than economic ones (Craissati et al., 2007, p. 10).

This approach also states the importance of parents on children’s rights to education. As Tomasevski states (2004), “The importance of the family and filial responsibility is also taught in pupils. The pupils are taught moral concepts such as family unity, love, respect and care for elders, communicating and cooperating with family members, sharing household responsibilities and upholding the sanctity of marriage and the importance of parenthood” (p. 37). There are also many international treaties about human rights that many states accepted. This can be seen in Table 5.

Moreover, several states do not directly implement international agreements; instead, they transform them into domestic law, from which the national education programs, which are regularly produced separately, frequently differ significantly (Tomasevski, 2004, p. 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TREATY</th>
<th>ACRONYM</th>
<th>ADOPTION</th>
<th>ENTRY INTO FORCE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF STATES PARTIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</td>
<td>ICCPR</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rights-based approach to education explicitly gives priority to its inherent value. Governments should be accountable for providing accessible, high-quality education to their citizens because every child deserves a quality education regardless of the family’s financial capability to pay for education (Frankovits, 2006, p. 21). Governments play the role of guarantors of rights, but they also have a responsibility to guarantee that all citizens have an equal opportunity to exercise those rights. Although the state guarantees education as a public good, the rights-based approach concentrates on the structural barriers that prevent individuals from utilizing their rights to enhance their lives (Frankovits, 2006, p. 24). More precisely, Offenheiser and Holombe (2003) point out that the approach’s explicit goal is “on structural barriers that impede communities from exercising rights, building capabilities, and having the capacity to choose” (p. 272).

Regarding another goal of this theory, Gabel offers academics contend that the human rights paradigm is in opposition to the neoliberal ideology, which promotes free market principles that result in the development of economic and social inequality. Second, the fact that non-state actors, who appear to be more responsible for maintaining inequities, are required to comply by human rights ideology because it is protected by law (Gabel, 2016, p. 6). In addition, Gabel (2016, p. 8) demonstrates that the human rights framework offers the resources required for identifying the mechanisms that maintain social injustice and inequity. Moreover, the social and political engagement of citizens is another crucial component of the rights-based approach that Gabel (2016, p. 14) highlights. According to the human rights theory, everyone has the right to participate in society’s decision-making, significantly if that person is impacted by choice. Thus, respecting human rights such as “equality of each individual as a human being, the inherent dignity of each person and the rights to self-determination and education” (Gabel, 2016, p. 17), should therefore empower individuals to endeavor to establish their own standards of living. This technique has drawn criticism for being more theoretical than practical. Even though human rights rhetoric is widely acknowledged, it appears to be highly general and devoid of specific implementation recommendations. Robeyns (2006) also claims that “most grand declarations on education are formulated in terms of rights or overall outcome targets, without precisely specifying who carries which duty to make sure that these targets are met, or that these rights are effectively granted” (p. 78). For instance, it is not easy to define and guarantee quality globally, even though all children have a right to free high-quality education.

### 4.3 Capability Approach (CA)

The moral relevance of people’s capability to live the varieties of living they have justification to value is the focus on which the capability approach chooses to concentrate. This theory differentiates it from more well-known theories of ethical analysis, including utilitarianism or realism, which respectively place a significant emphasis on the existence of means to the good life and subjective well-being. The set of desirable “beings and doings” that a person may access defines their capacity to lead a good life, such as being in excellent health or having meaningful relationships with others (Clark, 2005, p. 4). Robeyns (2003) also highlights that this approach “is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society” (pp. 79-80).
The Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen is widely known for developing the Capabilities Approach in the 1980s. For instance, the United Nations Development Programme (hereafter called UNDP) has used it widely in terms of human development as a broader, deeper substitute for strictly economic measurements such as an increase in GDP per capita. Here, “poverty” is defined as a lack of the ability to lead a good life, and “development” is defined as increased capability (Clark, 2005, p. 2). Resources, capabilities, and functioning form the basis of the capability approach’s analytical framework (see Figure 8). Between capabilities and functioning, we can make the first fundamental conceptual distinction. Sen (1993) claims that “A person's capability indicates the alternative combinations of functioning the person can achieve and from which he or she can choose one collection” (p. 31). Thus, a person’s capabilities accurately represent the range of available possibilities. The set of methods of being and acting that a person finally employs is their functioning. The distinction between what is possible and what is successfully carried out is the same as the divide between capabilities and functioning (Sen, 1985).

Figure 7. Analytical framework of the capability approach; relationship between resources, capabilities and functioning


This theory places a strong emphasis on education’s significance for both fundamental and practical reasons. Access to education is a core capability, and having a good education can help the development of other abilities as well. Education appears to be the cornerstone that enables a person to grow (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 35). Sen (2005) therefore argues that a decent and society should enlarge people's capabilities rather than forcing them to do certain functions. The capability approach strongly underpins compulsory schooling because it promotes individual growth. Nonetheless, according to Nussbaum (2003, pp. 35-38), compulsory education should be of excellent quality to achieve the goal of entire human development. This approach's vast scope and interdisciplinary nature are two of its fundamental characteristics. The capacity perspective should be applied holistically when assessing societal structures or policies, considering all potential factors impacting human capacities. Furthermore, as a capacity analysis constantly aims to consider all significant effects, this method accounts for all sources of disparities in people's opportunity sets (Robeyns, 2006, p. 83).

One may argue that the capability and human rights-based approaches are very similar. The capability approach not only underpins the discourse on human rights but goes beyond by advocating for the protection of not only individuals’ rights but also their capacities and functioning. Walker and Unterhalter (2007) also state that “not only is the right to equal opportunities for students in education important, but also the capability to function as participants in equal-opportunity educational processes and outcomes” (p. 244). One example is that, although having the right to higher education,
individuals with disabilities should have their access, participation, and academic success further assessed in light of local university and societal realities.

Additionally, Sen (1999) emphasizes that whereas rights are constitutional commitments, capabilities demand the execution and assessment of such rights, drawing a clear contrast between human rights and human capabilities. Sen (2005) establishes a conceptual distinction between two aspects of rights: "the substantive opportunities that are best understood as capabilities and process freedoms that are intrinsic to a notion of rights and a theory of justice but do not play the same central role in conceptualizing capabilities” (p. 156). According to Walker and Unterhalter (2007), “the capability approach argues each and every person having the prospect of a good life, that they have reason to value, by enabling each person to make genuine choices among alternatives of similar worth, and to be able to act on those choices” (p. 251). The capacity approach assesses several features of education and social justice in various social circumstances from a freedom-focused and equality-oriented viewpoint (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 254). Lastly, the author formulated a table to present an overview of two theoretical approaches, including the goals of theories, accountabilities, and implementation process regarding education.

Table 6. Human rights based and Capability Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Human Capital Approach</th>
<th>Human rights-based Approach</th>
<th>Capability Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>Achieving Economic Growth and Success</td>
<td>Implementation of human rights</td>
<td>Human development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability</strong></td>
<td>Individuals and Governments</td>
<td>International organizations and Governments</td>
<td>Individuals and social and political settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
<td>Concentrate on the state's capacity building and individual economic development efforts</td>
<td>Concentrate on the participatory process that empowers individuals and groups to assert their rights</td>
<td>Concentrate on creating the structure each individual requires to enhance his or her capabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Reformulated by the author.
Chapter 5 Methodology

Researchers who utilize qualitative research must embrace the significance of the experience of social contexts and shape an understanding of social realities through that encounter (Bryman, 2016, p. 621). This study presents semi-structured interviews with Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents in order to acquire data. The methods used in this study are explained in this sector throughout the entire process. This chapter entails epistemology and ontology assumptions, research strategy and design, sampling design and its participants, data collection and its analyses, quality criteria and lastly, ethical consideration.

5.1 Epistemology and Ontology

According to epistemology and ontology assumptions, interpretivism was used as an epistemology in this study. The framework of knowledge known as epistemology demonstrates how research is generated holistically (Tuli, 2010, p. 102). Contrary to positivism, interpretivism is an epistemology that acknowledges that prior relationships and experiences impact researchers (Bryman, 2016, p. 25; Cohen et al., 2018, p. 18). It must be acknowledged that the author and participants’ perceptions of the world are based on their own individual, subjective experiences. The participants also reflect their opinions based on their feelings and observations (Tuli, 2010, p. 102). In terms of ontology, this study applied constructivism theory. How various norms and values are expressed, and their connections in cultural and social settings are topics covered by ontological presumptions (Höijer, 2008, p. 278). The two main ontological presumptions are constructionism and objectivism. Constructionism is regarded as an ontology that, in contrast to objectivism, identifies social actors as the primary cause of beginning social processes and creating their own content (Höijer, 2008, p. 280). This research elicited that the participants had multiple realities.

5.2 Research Design and Strategy

A comparative research design was employed for this study because it targeted directly to compare Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents. According to Bryman (2016), a research design is “a framework for the collection and analysis of data” (p. 40). A comparative design, among other types of research designs, typically involves analyzing two different cases (Bryman, 2016, p. 65). Participants in this research were classified into two categories: Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents. This study employed a qualitative research methodology in terms of its research strategy. Interpretivism is the study of the world through the perspective of social actors, which is conducted within qualitative research (Bryman, 2016, p. 624). As Bryman (2016, p. 66) notes, a qualitative research strategy might be employed in studies using a comparative design. Many methods significantly distinct from one another are used in qualitative research, including discourse analysis, focus groups, interviews, and observation (Bryman, 2016, p. 378). Because of its high feasibility, the author selected the semi-structured interview method of qualitative strategy from the methods mentioned earlier to collect data.
5.3 Sampling method

In terms of research aim and research questions, as well as sampling procedure, feasibility is an important consideration for researchers (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 485). In light of this, purposive sampling was applied in this study. Purposive sampling refers to non-probability sampling strategies known as “purposive sampling” involve choosing units for your sample based on their characteristics and specific qualities. In other words, purposive sampling selects units “on purpose” (Bryman, 2016, p. 407). Thus, it is a strategic method that enables researchers to identify appropriate participants (Bryman, 2016, p. 408). Yet we must understand that it cannot result in generalization (Bryman, 2016, p. 408). In order to reach out these parents who have children study at primary education level, the author contacted Baku city Education Department (hereafter called BED) under the MSE of the Republic of Azerbaijan to ask for help. BED introduced several public and private schools to the author. The schools encompass both Azerbaijani, Russian and English sectors.

Generally, it is difficult for a student to connect with a certain number of participants in many schools. This study might have compared the participants more precisely if the author had been able to restrict a set of participants in accordance with their age, educational background, financial situation or other factors. Given time constraints, the author maintained a selection criterion as feasible as she could. The following sampling selection criteria were created as a result, 1) Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents, 2) parents with primary education level children, and 3) parents who enroll their children on the Russian sector. The importance of primary education is the most essential level for choosing the relevant school (Schneider et al., 2012, p. 438). Therefore, this study focused on parents who have children at the primary education level. Thus, the author was likely to connect with both Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents. The author assumed that native speakers of the Russian language should have more profound reasons for sending their children to Russian sector schools and carry out a more elaborate why the Russian language is essential in post-Soviet countries than native speakers of the Azerbaijani language. Hence, it was anticipated that this research would reveal comparisons between them.

The author conducted interviews with 12 parents (six Azerbaijani-speaking parents and six Russian-speaking parents), which constitutes the sample size. There does not seem to be a resolution regarding the optimal sample size, despite numerous researchers discussing it (Bryman, 2016, p. 416). As a result, there is no right or wrong answer when determining the appropriate number of participants for interpretative studies (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 483). After the author asked the chosen schools, 12 parents with characteristics mentioned above consented to participate in this study. The procedures the author took to conduct interviews are shown in Figure 7. Quotes can be built into the body text, either as an independent sentence or as part of the sentences you write. Then quotation marks should be used. Block quotes are only used when the quoted text is so long that it cannot be inserted into a sentence inside the body text. Block quotes have space before and after the quote and are indented from left and right. In addition, the font size is smaller than the body text and the line spacing is at 1.0. Italics are not used nor quotation marks.
5.4 Participants

There are a total of 12 participants (six Azerbaijani-speaking parents and six Russian-speaking parents). All respondents representing the sample from Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents are described as “AS” or “RS” through the first letter of their code name. 11 of the 12 participants are females, and one is male. More mothers participate in the interview because they are directly involved in the children's choice of school. The reason for the participation of only one father is that he is busy with the children's education at home. The participants' education levels and work statuses are different, and all of them are located across Azerbaijan. Only one of the participants from both categories has an upper-secondary education, and the rest have higher education. While two of Azerbaijani-speaking parents are unemployed, only one of the Russian-speaking parent is unemployed, and the other parents work in different fields. All participants have at least one child who goes to primary education, especially the school which is the medium of language is Russian. Studying the Russian language is still considered a recent paradigm in Azerbaijan. In other words, many Azerbaijani-speaking parents may not comprehend how this language will affect their children's life. In contrast, the author assumed that Russian-speaking parents should be more familiar with it as they also studied the Russian language than their peer parents. Thus, the author mainly focused on Azerbaijani-speaking parents and why they attempt to send their children to Russian language schools. Otherwise, there could have been insufficient school choice data from interviews.

The interview guide's opening questions were created to introduce the main subject of the interview to the participants while also eliciting some information about their profiles. Later, the specific questions about school choice were addressed to determine how responsive the interviewees were to this subject and how they felt about it. In order to protect the participants’ anonymity (Stockholm University,
In 2022, the participants were given pseudonyms by the author. While the participants who use the Azerbaijani language are labeled as AS (Azerbaijani-speaking parents), other participants who use the Russian language are named as RS (Russian-speaking parents). The AS and RS groups chose both public and private schools for their children. Information about the participants who used pseudonyms is shown in Tables 4 and 5.

### Table 7. Information about Azerbaijani-speaking participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ codes</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>The number of children studying in Primary education</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Languages skills</th>
<th>School choice</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS1</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Azerbaijani, Russian, English</td>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS2</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employed/doctor</td>
<td>Azerbaijani, Russian, English</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS3</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employed/physiologist</td>
<td>Azerbaijani, Russian, English</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS4</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employed/Department Director at the university</td>
<td>Azerbaijani, English</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS5</td>
<td>Upper-secondary school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed/Employee at the Ministry of Defense</td>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS6</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Azerbaijani, English</td>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8. Information about Russian-speaking participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ codes</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>The number of children studying in Primary education</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Language skills</th>
<th>School choice</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS1</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employed/teacher</td>
<td>Azerbaijani, Russian, English</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS2</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Russian, English</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS3</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Employed/teacher</td>
<td>Russian/English</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS4</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed/Accountant</td>
<td>Azerbaijani/Russian/English</td>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS5</td>
<td>Upper-secondary school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed/Accountant</td>
<td>Russian/English</td>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS6</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Employed/Educator</td>
<td>Russian/English</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.5 Data Collection

According to Bryman (2016), “a research method is merely a strategy for collecting data” (p. 40). One method used in qualitative research is qualitative interviewing (Bryman, 2016, p. 376). Usually, open-ended questions are used to elicit the interviewees’ own opinions (Bryman, 2016, p. 462). According to a systematic literature review conducted by Rohde, Campani, Oliveira, Rohde, Rocha, and Ramal (2019), the most popular technique for examining parents’ school choices from parents’ perspectives was interviews. This result supported the study's use of the interview method. There are three types of qualitative interviews: structured interviews, unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2016, p. 465). When researchers know exactly what they intend to investigate, they should conduct semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2016, p. 468). Due to being in Sweden, this study employed online semi-structured interviews through the Zoom platform. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has a set of questions to organize the interview, generally referred to as an interview guide, but has the liberty to ask additional questions in response to the interviewee’s responses (Bryman, 2016, p. 467).

The interview guide must be established before conducting semi-structured interviews, bearing in mind the research topic, research aim and research questions (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 490). A set of questions for semi-structured interviews is provided in the interview guideline (Bryman, 2016, p. 470). Based on previous studies, the interview guide for this study (see Appendices A and B) was prepared. To make it easier for the participants to interpret, it was initially organized in English then translated into Azerbaijani. Constructing the interview guide is an iterative algorithm (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 491). The interview guide was revised and modified by the author several times before being finally confirmed by her supervisor. Online interviews are more flexible in terms of timing and location than face-to-face interviews, but one drawback is that technical issues could disrupt the interview’s flow (Bryman, 2016, p. 492). Before conducting real interviews, it is recommended to have a pilot interview (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 511). The author conducted some pilot interviews to be acquainted with technical issues and interview skill and questions. The pilot interviews were carried out with two various parents, one Azerbaijani-speaking parent and one Russian-speaking parent who were not involved in this study to arrange for the actual interviews.

Questions in a semi-structured interview are often open-ended and their wording can be somewhat modified as the process continues on to better suit each participant (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 510). Probing and prompting are two interviewing approaches. When the interviewee requires help responding to the interviewer’s questions, probing is used to provide more information (Bryman, 2016,
When the interviewer offers a potential response to assist the interviewee in responding to a question, this is known as prompting (Bryman, 2016, p. 213). These interviewing strategies were used during the interviews. The interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, and they were conducted in Azerbaijani and Russian. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis to explore the interviewees’ responses and how they responded (Bryman, 2016, p. 459). The recordings were securely contained in the Box folder provided by the author’s supervisor. The supervisor will permanently delete them once the Master’s Thesis course (PEA475) is completed (Stockholm University, 2022).

5.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study to analyze the data gathered from interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data” (p. 79). Although there is no standard definition for thematic analysis, it is one of the most frequently used methods for exploring qualitative data (Bryman, 2016, pp. 582-584). Particularly, the process of thematic analysis is recognized as being adaptable (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Using the processes listed below, the author used thematic analysis to identify themes from the data that had been collected. To proceed with a thematic analysis, there are numerous steps that must be taken (Bryman, 2016, p. 587). First and foremost, it is essential for researchers to become familiar with materials such as transcripts and documents. The author is actively reading at this stage, making quick notes as the author goes along and searching for relevant information for the research topics. Second, researchers extract first codes from the materials that seem interesting. Braun and Clarke (2019) describe coding as “an organic and open iterative process” (p. 840). The procedure for transforming the codes into themes is started by researchers in the third step. In thematic analysis, defining the features and results of the data must come before developing themes based on patterns. Fourth, it is essential to categorize the topics in accordance to the literature and research questions before going over them again. The author reviews for any overlaps between themes at this stage and makes sure they are related to research tradition. Fifth, researchers should identify each theme, which may include sub-themes, and examine feasible relationships between the themes.

The final analysis of the relevant themes must now be presented, with a justification for their importance and applicability to the study. According to the reporting of findings, one prominent theme that emerged from the data was the strong influence of cultural heritage on parents’ school choice decisions. Participants even though expressed a desire to preserve their cultural identity and language, however they opt for the Russian sector for their children's education. This finding suggests that cultural considerations play a significant role in shaping parental decision-making processes. Another noteworthy theme that emerged was the importance of perceived academic quality and opportunities in the Russian sector. Participants believed that the Russian sector provided a more rigorous academic curriculum and better prospects for higher education and future career opportunities. This finding highlights the significance of academic factors in parents’ decision-making, suggesting that they prioritize educational excellence and future prospects for their children. Furthermore, a theme related to language proficiency and bilingualism also emerged from the data. Some participants mentioned that choosing the Russian sector allowed their children to develop proficiency in both Azerbaijani and Russian languages, which they perceived as advantageous in a multicultural and globalized world. This theme underscores the perceived benefits of bilingualism and the recognition of multiple languages as valuable assets for their children’s future. Overall, these findings shed light on the factors influencing parents’ decisions to opt for the Russian sector over the Azerbaijani sector. The cultural
heritage, academic quality, and language considerations emerge as key drivers in parental decision-making. These findings suggest that the decision to choose the Russian sector affects interplay of cultural preservation, educational aspirations, and linguistic advantages. In conclusion, the reporting of findings and the subsequent interpretation provide valuable insights into the themes that have emerged from the thematic analysis. This step adds depth and meaning to the analysis, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and contributing to the existing body of knowledge in the field.

A key component of thematic analysis is coding (Bryman, 2016, p. 570). The author used NVivo to code the transcripts of the interviews in this study. The author derived 51 preliminary codes from interview transcripts (see Table 7). Table 8 illustrates how an initial code was revealed. Following that, the author continued the analysis to identify themes. A theme is recognized as an essential component of the research questions and as an indication of certain patterns found in the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 848). Although repetitions are a recognized requirement for identifying patterns, it may not be enough to categorize them as themes (Bryman, 2016, p. 585). In conclusion, it needs to be noted that not all patterns found in several interviews are necessarily meaningful (Bryman, 2016, p. 586). Furthermore, themes should be appropriate to the research aim and research questions (Bryman, 2016, p. 586).

Researchers are expected to discuss the significance of the chosen topics and how they relate to one another or other works of literature (Bryman, 2016, p. 587). According to Braun and Clarke (2019), one of the main features of thematic analysis is that “researcher’s claims “need to be grounded in, but go beyond, the surface of the data” (p. 848). The author correctly examined the material collected before generating themes. Furthermore, theme analysis is a recursive process rather than a linear one (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Therefore, the author frequently assessed the themes while using her time.

**Table 9. Initial codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial codes</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A large number of children</td>
<td>Individual approach</td>
<td>Shortage of books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional education</td>
<td>Knowledge gap</td>
<td>Soviet period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
<td>Language difficulty</td>
<td>Status of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capabilities</td>
<td>Language knowledge</td>
<td>Suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career life</td>
<td>Literatures</td>
<td>Teacher Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s interest</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Teaching quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with teachers</td>
<td>Mindset disparity</td>
<td>Time constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsion</td>
<td>Parents’ rights</td>
<td>Trend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Law</td>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Tv, Channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance exam</td>
<td>Post-Soviet countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>Pre-school education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial situation</td>
<td>Preferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10. Example of data extract and initial code (Based on Clarke et al., 2006, as cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 88)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data extract</th>
<th>Initial code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“[…] but there are languages that if you do not learn from childhood, you will have problems and cannot learn them later. Russian is one of those languages; if you do not know it from the basics, it is challenging to learn Russian later.</td>
<td>Language difficulty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7 Quality Criteria

Replication, reliability, and validity are the criteria by which social research is evaluated for quality (Bryman, 2016, p. 40). Replication indicates that the study must be replicable (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). According to Steinke (2004), reliability measures “the extent to which the research is correct and the extent to which truth claims can be made”, while validity evaluates “the extent to which the analysis of data provides dependable conclusions that can be replicated” in various situations (p. 188). The abovementioned criteria are most suitable for quantitative research (Bryman, 2016, p. 39). The equivalent set of criteria for qualitative research presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 44) is trustworthiness. Four dimensions of trustworthiness are demonstrated by Lincoln and Guba and relate to the criteria of quantitative research: Four dimensions of trustworthiness are demonstrated by Lincoln and Guba and relate to the criteria of quantitative research: credibility equal to internal validity, transferability equal to external validity, dependability equal to reliability, and confirmability equal to objectivity. (Lincoln & Guba 1985, as cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 44). This research assessed the study’s quality according to its trustworthiness.

5.7.1 Credibility

Comparable to the criteria of internal validity in quantitative research, credibility measures how well accepted the research and its outcomes are (Lincoln & Guba 1985, as cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 384). Credibility can be guaranteed when the research is carried out following professional principles and others affirm the researcher’s thorough understanding of the subject matter (Steinke, 2004, p.186). Respondent validation is a method for ensuring credibility in research and is defined as “a process whereby a researcher provides the people on whom he or she has conducted research with an account of his or her findings” (Bryman, 2016, p. 388). In this research, the author made interview transcripts accessible to the participants to comment, edit, and validate their statements. This assisted in strengthening respondent validation. Furthermore, the author used a systematic method of data
collecting and analysis, increasing the findings’ trustworthiness. This study attempted to achieve the maximum credibility to deliver reliable and meaningful results.

5.7.2 Transferability
Transferability, which can be compared to the quantitative research criterion of external validity, determines if the research results can be used in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314, as cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 383). Findings from qualitative research usually appear from the context of the cultures and communities in that the study subjects are a core component (Barker & Pistrang, 2005, p. 206). In other words, applying qualitative research to other domains may not be appropriate. Instead, qualitative research is designed to generate a detail explanation, which is a wide variety of information (Barker & Pistrang, 2005, p. 207). The goal of this study was to analyze the interview data as thoroughly as possible. The author provided a detailed description of the study context and findings and explicitly addressed the limitations and delimitations of the study in terms of not generalizability to other populations or settings.

5.7.3 Dependability
Dependability evaluates how authentic and transparent the research is and corresponds to the dependability criterion in quantitative analysis (Lincoln & Guba 1985, as cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 383). Later, it is recommended that researchers guarantee that all stages of the study process are reachable (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). Thus, by carefully recording the process, researchers ought to be able to follow it from beginning to end (Barker & Pistrang, 2005, p. 212). The author of this study maintained the interview transcripts and recorded the entire research procedure. The author got feedback from peers and a supervisor to verify the accuracy and credibility of the findings. The research design and methods are consistent and replicable. The research process is obviously demonstrated in this thesis.

5.7.4 Confirmability
Confirmability is correspondent with the criterion of objectivity in quantitative research. Researchers’ thoughts or theoretical preferences must be kept as far away from their study results and conclusions as feasible, even though total objectivity is unachievable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 386). Although the author has some familiarity with the Azerbaijani educational system, this study prevented any influence from those political, cultural and educational backgrounds. Instead, it ensured that all of its conclusions and analysis came from the data that had been prepared and other relevant literature. To enhance confirmability, the interviews were also conducted using the interview guide.

5.8 Ethical Considerations
Regarding ethical considerations, researchers must consider various views, including anonymity, non-maleficence, confidentiality, and privacy (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 130). As a whole, this study followed Stockholm University's requirements (2022). Furthermore, this study also followed the General Data Protection Regulation (hereafter called GDPR) which established by the European Union (hereafter called EU) (EU, 2016). Additionally, personal data also was pseudonymized in this study (Stockholm University, 2022). The data collection and private information will have been permanently removed once the Master's Thesis course (PEA475) finishes (Stockholm University, 2022).
Furthermore, Stockholm University (2022) states that obtaining participants' informed consent form is crucial before conducting a study. Because it defends and recognizes the rights of self-determination, informed consent is essential (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 122). It must be voluntarily made, informed, precise, clear, and documented (Stockholm University, 2022). Additionally, it must be guaranteed that participants can revoke their consent at any time (Stockholm University, 2022). Thus, the author employed the official informed consent form created by Stockholm University and received beforehand signed informed consent from the participants (Stockholm University, 2022).
Chapter 6 Results and Findings

The findings from this study are presented in this chapter. The six themes and their sub themes are shown in relation to the previous studies in Table 11. Overall, the participants aligned with the governmental policies while having differing reasons about school choice. In terms of the choices, the participants, both parents, expressed their opinions to acquire more capabilities, as well as more opportunities to use their human rights to expand their school choices for their children. Lastly, the author classifies the challenges of school choice in Azerbaijan into the gap in the policy of MSE. The following are some of the detailed extracts.

Table 11. Themes and sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of themes</th>
<th>Name of sub-themes</th>
<th>Name of sub-themes</th>
<th>Name of sub-themes</th>
<th>Name of sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Various views on educational reality</td>
<td>Education as a means to successful career path</td>
<td>Psychology and Behavioral patterns</td>
<td>Public schools’ inadequacies</td>
<td>Private schools’ ‘extras’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background behind the school choice</td>
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6.1 Various Views on Educational Reality

The interviews with the participants revealed a range of comprehension and reasons for school choice. Section 6.1.1 focuses on education as a means to a successful career path. Section 6.1.2 highlights the behavioral patterns associated with school choice. Section 6.1.3 presents public schools' inadequacies. Finally, Section 6.1.4 draws attention to private schools’ ‘extras’.
6.1.1 Education as a Means to a Successful Career Path

The participants brought up the educational reality when they talked about school choice. It is clear that they associated a successful career path with school choice, as it is the foundation of human life in the field of education. Almost more than half of the participants argued that there is a firm belief that Azerbaijani society perceives the Russian language as the most important aspect of humans’ capacity. The promotion of Russian language schools the enhancement of the Russian language and are the main characteristics of today’s schools. The school’s principal, teaching staff, and parents all acknowledged that these were the primary reasons that draw pupils’ attention at a constant rate every year. For example, AS2 mentioned how Russian language schools affect children’s future careers. It was about successful career life with a focus on learning the Russian language. AS3 was concerned that employers had paid too much attention to knowing the Russian language rather than the Azerbaijani and English languages. AS4 distinguished the Russian language from the school choice strategy and highlighted the importance of the Russian language as a post-Soviet country in Azerbaijan. AS6 also emphasized the impact of school choice on human career life.

In contrast, RS1 supposed studying in Russian language schools will negatively affect the professional life of the children. RS2 described the preferences of knowing the Russian language in the work placement. RS3 argued that the Russian language will always remain the significant language in our society and post-soviet countries rather than English as an international language.

“No matter how many years we have been an independent country, we cannot deny that we are a post-Soviet country. Therefore, the Russian language will always be in our lives today and tomorrow, whether we like it or not. Knowing this fact, as a parent, I cannot send my children to study in Azerbaijani language schools and become an obstacle to their future career life and being successful […]” (AS2).

“One of the main reasons I send my child to a Russian-language school is that currently, in our country, in both public and private sectors, preference is given to those who speak Russian. In fact, no matter how sad it is or how much we do not like it, it is a reality. […] if employers ignore the Russian language, then most Azerbaijani speaking parents will avoid studying their children in the Russian sector” (AS3).

“The Russian language is essential not only in Azerbaijan but also in all post-Soviet countries. Today, like other parents, I justify my child’s study in the Russian language sector by his good Russian language skills. However, we should also know there should be no connection between knowing the Russian language and choosing a school. Our children can study in the Azerbaijani sector and learn Russian as a foreign language. Unfortunately, the Russian language is not well taught in the Azerbaijani sector, so parents are forced to send their children to the Russian language sector” (AS4).

“Those people [who know Russian] always go ahead. Even when we go to interview with HR [Human Resources], their first question to us is, do you know the Russian language? If we say yes, they start to speak in Russian with us. At what level do you use this language? They ask and check. Even if it can be that the Russian language will not be used at all in that workplace, however again, it is crucial you know this language or not […]” (AS5).

Additionally, knowing the Russian language seems to be the means to a successful career path. The teachers in Russian language schools tend to recognize that studying in the Russian sector could work as an investment for pupils’ future career paths. In that way, the participants think that investing in education is reasonable since the Russian language is presented to be more guarantee for the future than the Azerbaijani language.

“[…] since they [children] are citizens of Azerbaijan, they will suffer a lot when they work in the state institutions of Azerbaijan in the future. They will be unable to read and write in the official language, which will hinder them from working in state affairs” (RS1).
“It has been 30 years since we gained our independence, but today Russian language is still required for many jobs in the labor market. […] I think this will still be the case in another 30 years […]” (RS2).

“We ourselves see the importance of the Russian language in our country, and we know well how that language is preferred, mainly in career life. In addition, you see that Russia is currently challenging the world. Therefore, I think that the Russian language will become an essential language not only in Azerbaijan but also in the world, leaving behind the English language” (RS3).

6.1.2 Psychology and Behavioral patterns
The participants both Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents, acknowledged that children who study in Russian language schools become and behave differently in comparison to children who study in Azerbaijani language schools. Almost all of the participants stated that they completely support the school choice option because it allows them to obtain a higher-quality education for their children that is consistent with their principles and beliefs. They also emphasized that this option indicates one of their human rights, which the state must respect. For instance, AS2 found it reasonable for her child to study in the Russian sector with various valuable characteristics that will inoculate her child. RS1 said that the ability of children studying the Russian language to recognize and use their human rights would have in the future. RS2 made a comparison between teachers who teach in the Azerbaijani sector and the Russian sector and found that Russian-speaking teachers know child psychology better. RS5 noted that children studying in Russian and Azerbaijani language schools can be easily distinguished according to their way of thinking and psychology.

“The main goal of sending my child to the Russian sector is that the children who study there are more unrestricted […] They decide everything more quickly, without difficulty, everything they make themselves, not at their parents’ insistence […] The Russian sector is more self-confident for children […]” (AS2).

“It is undeniable that Russian-speaking children are ahead not only in their knowledge but also in their outlook and behaviors. At the same time, I would like to say that we [parents who studied in Russian sector] have always known our rights everywhere. I remember when I joined some lectures with the Azerbaijani sector in my university years. When the teacher made unjustified objections to the demands of the Azerbaijani sector, they just kept silent. However, when this situation happened in the Russian sector, on the contrary, we demanded our rights and efficiently pointed out that the teacher was wrong” (RS1).

“The Azerbaijani sector is limited; they are either oppressed or cannot get out of their comfort zone. I mean, the Russian sector is more comfortable. They can relate to each other, and they are sociable […] Also, Russian teachers know well about children’s behaviors and social and psychological issues because they themselves learn about children’s psyche before becoming a teacher, know how to treat them, and talk to them. But our teachers [teachers who teach in Azerbaijani sector] are impatient, leaving earlier and shouting at the children […]” (RS2).

“One of the main factors in saying this is that I studied in the Russian sector, and I can see the difference between the Azerbaijani and Russian sectors. In children’s psychology, Russian sector pupils are more self-confident and open to everything, but not Azerbaijani sector pupils. I have experienced this case myself, and I can say that those who study in the Azerbaijani sector are closed and not open to innovations. Freedom is not absolute in them, but there are all in the Russian sector. What is the reason for this? I do not understand it yet, but I am 30 years old and have seen that Russian sector pupils are more complementary and self-confident” (RS5).

6.1.3 Public schools’ inadequacies
Another reason that influences school choice toward study in the Azerbaijan sector is public schools’ instability and quality regarding teaching the foreign language (Russian). The participants indicated that because public schools lack the necessary teaching staff to function, many pupils frequently miss class, and there are concerns about the quality of teaching.
“Do you know why we did not send the child to the Azerbaijani sector? As you know, Russian is taught as a foreign language in the Azerbaijani sector. Do you know how it is taught? For example, my neighbor’s child who studies in Azerbaijani sector, has not seen the Russian language lesson this year. Although teachers usually teach English very well as a foreign language, no one cares about Russian” (AS1).

“The Ministry of Science and Education calls to send our children to Azerbaijani language schools. One way to attract parents to Azerbaijani language schools is to ensure quality teaching of the Russian language there, just as the quality of the Azerbaijani language is taught in the Russian language schools […]” (AS3).

“I think the government is not doing the right policy in education. The state’s policy is to reduce Russian language hours and increase English language hours in the Azerbaijani sector. This, in turn, led to poor knowledge of the Russian language among pupils studying in the Azerbaijani sector. And after that, the flow to the Russian unit began” (RS2).

“[…] in private schools, one main issue is teaching a foreign language better, including Russian and English. It can be said that almost the Russian language is not taught in public schools. As you know, this year, along with teaching the Azerbaijani language, the history of Azerbaijan was also added to the Russian sector. They do this because the children know their mother tongue better. While compared to this, no proposal is made regarding improving the quality of the Russian language in the Azerbaijani sector” (RS3).

As a result, despite the financial constraints that the parents experience, it can be stated that the private schools are supplying the inefficiencies of the public schools.

6.1.4 Private schools’ ‘extras’

Another factor that affects school choice is the autonomy of private schools. 4 out of 12 participants send their children to a private school. According to AS1 and RS5, it is difficult for parents to work full-time and adequately care for a child in public school.

“How can parents who finish work at six choose a public school that dismisses at one and is closed for half the year due to strikes?” (AS1).

“The program for an extended school day is crucial. Thankfully, there are pricey schools that allow parents to work” (RS5).

Although the curriculum is the same in public and private schools, since private schools have autonomy, they design the curriculum as they wish. AS6 particularly emphasized that the curriculum of private schools is more beneficial for children. RS5 observed that the small number of children in private schools, in comparison with public schools, directly affects the quality of learning.

“The teaching method in private schools is very different. In addition to the curriculum provided by the state, they have organized a particular educational program. For example, our private school initially increased the number of basic subjects needed for children and reduced the number of secondary subjects. […] then they organize activities for children after school according to their interests. Public schools cannot do these because the state controls them” (AS6).

“[…] in the Russian sector of public schools, the number of children in each class exceeds 40. What learning process can be discussed in this class? The number of children increases due to the large flow to the Russian sector, and no new classes are opened. As a result, it affects the quality of lessons. There are a lot of Russian sectors in private schools, and a maximum of 20 people study in one class. Thus, this allows each student to respond to the lesson […]” (RS5).

6.2 Background Behind the School Choice

Some participants closely aligned their reasons for choosing the school with quality teaching, learning, and other factors. Section 6.2.1 discusses the language as a determinant in school
choice. Section 6.2.2 describes focus on academic results. Finally, 6.2.3 places emphasis on the quality issues which are significant for parents.

6.2.1 Language as a Determinant in School Choice

The participants especially Azerbaijani-speaking parents, understood language is essential in school choice. Five parents of six Russian-speaking parents mentioned one of the main reasons for choosing a school is the Russian language. They especially chose Russian language schools, both private and public schools. RS2, RS3, and RS4 mentioned textbooks, literature and aligned it with the quality of learning. RS5 and RS6 compared the Azerbaijani and Russian languages in the learning process.

“One of the most critical elements affecting the quality of education nowadays is textbooks and literature in that language. We grew up reading Russian books, but there were no books in Azerbaijani language. Today, even though there are books and textbooks in the Azerbaijani language, they are not as beneficial as Russian […]. Just compare the books of the Azerbaijani and Russian sectors in primary education, and you will see the difference yourself […]. I think Russian textbooks are written more maturely and academically, even for primary school children” (RS2).

“[…] If the textbooks of the Azerbaijani sector were changed and written literately, I would be sure I would send my child to an Azerbaijani-language school” (RS3).

“As I said, I am a teacher at the university, and I know that one of the branches of education is literature. As a teacher, I have never been able to find an ordinary book in the Azerbaijani language, and we do not even have translations of foreign literature. Since I teach in the English sector, I also find it convenient that my students who know Russian are the ones who know and read more in comparison with others who do not know the Russian language” (RS4).

“[…] while researching school choice, I noticed that we are experiencing a shortage of information in the Azerbaijani language, even on the internet, which is the most significant today's information transmitter […]” (RS5).

“The effect of Russian language textbooks and Azerbaijani language textbooks can be seen in children’s behaviors […]” (RS6).

6.2.2 Focus on Academic Results

Its academic results for higher education are one of the reasons that parents appear to find attractive when selecting a Russian language school. For example, AS3 talked about the strategy of the State Examination Center for both language schools, and AS6 mentioned some realities about opportunities for higher education. RS5 stated the easiest to get an excellent academic result in Russian sectors.

“I do not know how it will be in our children’s time. Still, until now, it has always been complicated to get admission to a university in the Azerbaijani sector because the score for entrance to a university has always been the highest. Based on this, since there are always few people in the Russian sector, the scores are low, and it is possible to get admission to the university by showing good academic results with fewer scores” (AS3).

“[…] there has always been more competitiveness in the Azerbaijani sector for admission to the university than in the Russian sector” (AS6).

“Whether we look at the results of the Olympiads, PISA, etc., those who study in the Azerbaijani sector have always been more successful. Also, they have consistently scored high in university admissions, and this is because pupils who study in Russian are not taught in their native language [Azerbaijani] but in another language. However, regardless of these, it is easier to get admission to a higher school and to show better results even in the university in the Russian sector.” (RS5).

6.2.3 Quality Issues

While interviewing parents, it was observed that some of them have various concerns while selecting public schools, including whether the facilities are suitable for children, the quality of the teaching
staff, and the school infrastructure. Mostly, public schools can fall short of even the fundamental standards for heating and safety. However, private schools typically have attractive structures allowing for different facilities.

“I am generally a person who cares about aesthetics. I think that after the quality of education, the schools must have a suitable environment for the learning and teaching process. Children should love the building as much as the chair when they enter school. […] and that is one of the reasons I chose a private school. Although we have very good Russian-language public schools, their buildings are either unrepaired or in poor condition” (AS6).

“[…] I would send my children to a private school if I could afford it. Public school buildings are dangerous and unsafe, and Baku [capital city of Azerbaijan] is still good, and they are repairing schools there. There is no control over public schools in Ganja [western city in Azerbaijan]” (RS1).

“Public school buildings terrify me because they resemble prisons. Small grey boxes. […] may be therefore, I prefer a private school” (RS4).

6.3 Social, Political Factors that Affect School Choice

During the interview, the participants stated that social and political factors also led to their school choice. Section 6.3.1 introduces political factors they have experienced in their school choice. Section 6.3.2 reveals the influence of parents’ social status on school choice.

6.3.1 Political Factors

The mass use of the Russian language in Azerbaijan began to decline relatively, especially after the collapse of the USSR. This was not only due to the change in the political system but also to the departure of the Russian-speaking population. Nevertheless, the local people knew and used Russian as their mother tongue even during independence.

“Most books about the last 200 years of Azerbaijan’s history are in Russian. Of course, knowing the English language, it is possible to read beneficial books on the history of Azerbaijan. However, it should be noted that Western historians also refer to Russian books as primary sources in their works. Thanks to the Russian historians of that time, we can get information about the country’s villages. All this has no meaning against the background of not knowing the Russian language. Different views on the country’s political history in some of these books do not allow for translating those books into Azerbaijani at the state's expense. Printing by private initiative is impractical because it is not delivered to the entire public. Thus, students remain under the influence of the propaganda machine. The Russian language maintains its scientific potential even in modern times. Russia is the fifth country that publishes the most books worldwide during the year (after China, the USA, Great Britain, and Japan). Since translating books into English and other languages into Russian is widespread, it is easier for people who know this language to break the information blockade” (AS2).

“[…] during the 70-year Soviet period, most of the books printed in Azerbaijan were in Russian. Until recently, almost no books were printed in our native language in Azerbaijan, especially in economics, medicine, construction and social sciences. In the 2000s, students with a Russian language base coped with this problem, but the language barrier is felt in the present age of the Internet. Due to the language barrier, the use of Russian-language books, which are easily found on the Internet in PDF format and have a lot of Soviet publications in libraries, has been reduced to a minimum” (AS4).

“Russia is at the top of the countries where people flock to Azerbaijan due to high unemployment. In 1991-2002, the number of Azerbaijani living in Russia increased more than twice. The fact that Russia does not apply for visas to Azerbaijan does not create bureaucratic problems compared to EU countries. The country's proximity makes it more convenient for young people. However, the policy of suppressing the Russian language from 2002-2018 created a language problem, especially among young people living in the region. People looking for work due to language problems are forced to do "black jobs" with very low pay and almost zero safety regulations. The importance of the Russian
language in preventing such problems is high. Let’s consider that about 3.3 billion dollars a year enter Azerbaijan at the expense of labor migrants living in Russia” (AS6).

“[…] here we are talking about political influence in two forms: The internal influence is most evident in Azerbaijani Russian speakers, and these people see the issue of closing the Russian branches every year as discrimination against them. The external influence is felt in the attitude towards Russia. The weakening of the Russian language among Azerbaijanis living in Russia reduces their ability to influence the elites who rule the Russian government” (RS2).

“I remember when we were in school, although we had just gained independence and could study in our native language, we mainly studied Russian language books left over from the USSR due to the lack of literature and textbooks. Later, as we grew up, we used to find what we were looking for, not in Azerbaijani but in Russian. We even found everything in Russian in university libraries during our university years. That’s why I didn’t want the language to be a barrier to my children’s education in the future” (RS3).

“Since my school years were in the Soviet period, I did not have a chance to choose. Since I was educated in Russian, I knew everything in that language. I was automatically influenced by this language while raising my child. In other words, I told him stories and poems in Russian. […] over time, he watched cartoons in Russian […]” (RS4).

6.3.2 Parents’ Social Status

It has also been discussed that parents' social status may have an impact on the schools they choose for their children. According to parents, there is a connection between social capital and involvement in education.

“[…] families with high educational attainment, high social standing, and affluent lifestyles are more likely to research schools for their children than families struggling to make ends meet through day jobs (AS4).

“I think wealthy parents' selfish desires to believe they are providing their children with the best education are served by school choice […]” (AS5).

In addition, the participants RS3 and RS5 mentioned that their parents' low social status adversely and depressingly impacts children's academic success.

“[…] since the family has three children, the financial situation does not allow us to send them to a private school. The large number of children in the Russian sector in public schools harms their education […]” (RS3).

“[…] for our children to get a good quality education, either we as parents should enhance our financial situation to send them to a private school, or the government should improve the quality of education in public schools” (RS5).

6.4 Opportunities for School Choice

During interviews some of the participants talked about their rights to send their children to the type of school they want. The participant also expressed their purpose how use their capabilities to find the best school for their children. Section 6.4.1 sheds light parents’ rights for school choice. Section 6.4.2 argues parents’ satisfaction with school choice.

6.4.1 Parents’ Rights for School Choice

Every person has the right to study in both their native language and a foreign language at the same time in any school of their choosing, according to both the Republic of Azerbaijan's constitution and education law. Everyone who participated in the interview said they were completely in favor of the school choice option since it gave them the opportunity to pursue a more high-quality education that
was in accordance with their values and beliefs. They further added that this choice indicates one of their human rights, which the state should have to recognize. RP1 mentioned the rights of her children to study at school, and AS6 emphasized why she preferred her children to study in a foreign language school. Furthermore, RS4 described her relationship with the Russian language.

“[… all parents have the right to choose the type of school they desire for their child to receive” (AS2).

“As a parent, I have always thought that a child will learn his or her native language sooner or later. Because everyone around, at home, speaks that language. That is why he or she has to go to school in another language to have additional language skills. The law on our education also states that everyone can study in any language. But unfortunately, when we say the preferred language, only Russian is meant here. That is, there is no English sector in public schools. Since I cannot afford to send my child to the English language sector in a private school, I use this right by sending my child to the Russian language sector at a public school” (AS6).

“The fact that I have a choice is a good sign. […] I cannot think of anything negative about exercising this right” (RS2).

“A parent must be capable of choosing amongst various options to claim the highest education for his child and avoid being assigned to a specific school by the state against his or her will” (RP4).

“It is understandable that we send our children to Russian language schools. We have grown up like this since the Soviet years […]. Simultaneously, the state thinks of people like us and gives our children the right to study in Russian” (RS5).

“I sometimes see people condemning those who send their children to a Russian language school. But it is incorrect to measure a person’s love for the country by the school he or she sends his or her child to. Sometimes it is even preached that you should take it to an Azerbaijani language school. I want to ask those people a question. The state notes in the Constitution and the law on education that everyone has the right to study in the language of their choice. If I have such a right and know it to be successful for my child, why should I not exercise my right? I do not accomplish anything illegal or go to a private school. Using the right given to me by the state, I am sending it to the Russian sector of the state school. I think those who criticize us for sending it in Russian should blame the state for the right that the state gave us” (RS6).

In contrast, the other participants stated that the government should take of Russian language from our law on education and it should be placed with the international language, English. RP distinguished the importance of English and Russian language. As argued, how to prevent to decrease in the number of children in Russian language schools. Lastly AS1 described as other post-Soviet experiences after gaining their independence.

“If you look at other post-soviet countries, for example, Georgia, Kazakhstan, etc., you will see that in their laws, when they say foreign language, they mean English. They have already almost eliminated the Russian-language schools, and they also force Russian-speaking tourists to speak their language or in English” (AS1).

[…] only after the opening of English-language sectors in public schools can the flow against the Russian language be prevented. If it is our right to study in Russian, this right should be applied to English free of charge (AS4).

“[…] we have already left behind more than 30 years of our independence. […] according to the education law, foreign language education in public schools should be changed from Russian to English” (RS1).

6.4.2 Parents Satisfaction with School Choice

As participants stated throughout the interviews, having the opportunity to select is like being able to set personal criteria based on what a parent believes is best for his or her child. RS5 connected this
capability with the financial situation, while, AS6 stated, today’s parents have more capabilities due to the improvement of technology in our life.

“If a person has the financial capability, he will most likely choose a private school to provide a better education for her or his child. It also has the option of establishing its own criteria” (RS5).

“The present times have primarily been the technology world, especially after the post-pandemic. Therefore, we should owe it to ourselves to research and make decisions to best use our opportunities” (AS6).

Being informed depends not just on the availability of information regarding schools but also on the capacity of parents to do their research. As AS3, AS5, and RS4 demonstrated, they did not have time to search for a ‘good’ school and thus could not use the option of selecting a school. As a result, many parents tend to trust and base their school choice selections on what other parents have to emphasize about a school’s reputation.

“Naturally, if there is a system where pupils may select the school they wish to attend, they must also have access to information to make an informed decision” (AS3).

“I decided on this school based on recommendations made to us by others in our community who have experience there […]” (AS5).

“[…] I chose this private school because I had heard good things about it from my friends and parents […]” (RS4).

Parents believe that while school choice gives them the freedom to choose their school, it also suggests that there are good and bad schools. This could imply that not all Azerbaijani schools are equally committed to providing high-quality education.

“Now, making a decision is necessary. I do not like it, though. […] because it is not fairer, there are some locations where there is no Russian language sector in schools, and no one chooses those schools, as well as they are of lower quality. […] the system of school choice is highly unjust in these areas” (AS2).

“[…] In my opinion, the state does not seem to be involved much in schooling. The state neglects its duty to provide me with an excellent school when I feel compelled to decide” (RS5).

“I think all opportunities should be the same for all children. But unfortunately, parents living in remote areas have trouble choosing a school, mainly parents who want to send their children to the Russian language sector” (RS6).

6.5 Personal Beliefs on School Choice

All participants have different reasons, motivations, and interests and aim to send their children to the selected schools. When they talked during interviews, sometimes their answers overlapped and sometimes differed. Section 6.5.1 discusses finding common ground and section 6.5.2 places emphasis on the difference on interest.

6.5.1 Finding Common Ground

Some participants, both groups of parents, shared the same feeling regarding the importance of the Russian language in the country. One approach to finding common ground is to focus on shared goals and values. Both parents likely want their children to receive a high-quality education that prepares them for success in the future. And they see the Russian language as the key factor for this purpose. Emphasizing this shared goal help bring the two groups together and create a sense of unity.

“[…] the issue is not in which language to study but in getting a quality education” (AS1).
“[…] our children's education in Russian is not to dislike our language but to improve their future” (AS4).

“Today, if the English language sector is opened in public schools, the majority will push the children to study in English rather than in the Russian sector […]” (RS4).

“Quality education in the Azerbaijani sector should start with the replacement of all textbooks” (RS6).

6.5.2 Difference in Interest

Overall, the participants have various views regarding the relevance of the Russian language and sending their children to Russian language schools. Mainly Azerbaijani-speaking parents want their children to study in the Russian sector because they could not do this in their years, while Russian-speaking parents would have difficulty if they sent their children to Azerbaijani language schools.

“I have always been complex because I do not know Russian, so I do not want my children to experience the same feelings” (AS2).

“[…] my lack of knowledge of the Russian language has always caused me difficulties in the work environment, which continued even after gaining independence (AS4).

“In the first years of independence, the Russian language started to remove, according to which my father chose the Azerbaijani sector for us to study at schools. However, my lack of knowledge of that language always remained in my heart” (AS5).

“We did not have a choice to be Russian-speaking, and this was the rule from the Soviet years. While my husband and I speak Russian, we try to speak Azerbaijani in public. Since we study this language, we chose the Russian sector for our children” (RS2).

“I hoped that after the war [second Nagorno-Karabakh War, 2020], the importance of the Russian language in our country would weaken. […] if not today, we will see the impact in the coming years” (RS3).

“If I were in the place of Azerbaijani speaking parents, I would not choose the Russian language for my children's education” (RS4).

“We should promote our language, starting not from us but from the parents who send their children to the Russian language schools” (RS6).

6.6 Structural Issues

Participants described some structural issues which they faced when deciding on school choice. Section 6.6.1 describes dissatisfaction with national educational policies, especially the entrance exam to primary education who wants to study in the Russian sector at school. Section 6.6.2 explains school choice and the marketization of education.

6.6.1 Dissatisfaction from School Choice Policies

Another characteristic observed was that, when it came to national educational policy, every participant acknowledged their dissatisfaction with the reforms that the government had adopted, claiming that there was no stability in the education system because ongoing reforms stand in contrast to one another were being implemented. Azerbaijani-speaking parents who are critics of entrance exams argued that they could be stressful and unfair to pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds who might not have had access to the same resources or educational opportunities as other pupils. They also pointed out that entrance exams might not accurately reflect pupils' potential or abilities and that other factors, such as motivation, social skills, and emotional well-being, might be just as crucial for academic success.
“The exam organized for school admission to the Russian primary education sector is incorrect, and this exam should be after completing the initial five years” (AS1).

“[…] in general, it is not common for primary schools to require entrance exams for admission, as primary education is typically the starting point for a child's formal education” (AS2).

“[…] if an entrance exam for the Russian sector is meant to evaluate a child's language abilities or readiness for a bilingual program, then it is justifiable to implement such an exam. […] however, if the exam is excessively challenging or shows prejudice towards specific groups of students, it becomes unfair. […] one individual who took the exam reported that they noticed the experts favored passing Russian speaking parents' children over others” (AS4).

“The exam organized for the Russian language sector is quite difficult. The Ministry of Science and Education has also admitted that since this sector has a quota, we are forced to choose the best ones” (AS5).

On the other hand, Russian-speaking parents who are proponents of entrance exams argued that they are necessary to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the challenges of primary education. Entrance exams might also point to the potential benefits of early academic screening, such as identifying and addressing learning difficulties early on and ensuring that students are placed in appropriate educational programs.

“The organized exam is appalling. Concretely, particular types of questions have been prepared, which have been asked to everyone for years. This is mainly because families who no longer speak Russian send their children to prepare for the exam, and the children blindly memorize those questions. However, they do not understand that studying Russian does not mean memorizing but speaking fluently in Russian and having the ability to think in Russian” (RS2).

“As a result of the improper organization of the examination, enough children are admitted but cannot be accommodated in schools due to a lack of quota. […] as a result, the ministry tells the parents of those children to study in the Azerbaijani sector. […] the parent rightly says that my child has passed the requested exam, and the parent suffers here. […] he has two chances. Go to a public school in the Azerbaijani sector or a private school in the Russian sector” (RS4).

“In my child's class, almost more than half cannot speak Russian normally, but they are studying in Russian. This is nonsense. These are the children of Azerbaijani-speaking parents. Here, both the state and the parents are suspicious. […] because the parent should understand that in order to study in Russian language schools, the child must also have the ability to understand and listen in Russian, not only to know the language, but the state, in turn, should organize the exam with a more correct structure and avoid asking template questions” (RS5).

[…] now everyone considers education as a competition. Ten years ago, it was a trend to speak Russian, we have broken that trend now, but when our children grow up, it will repeat. If the people cannot prevent it, the state must prevent it. From this point of view, the educational strategies of the state are not reprehensible” (RS6).

6.6.2 School Choice and the Marketization of Education

Another point concerning the interviews was made regarding the business-like profile of private schools and their market-like methods for making money. The interviewees mentioned that for-profit corporations might manage private schools in Azerbaijan and that their primary goal is to increase their profits by employing marketing techniques and publicizing their accomplishments to entice students who cannot pass the entrance exam for primary education to enroll in public schools.

“Private schools are frequently quite good at marketing themselves and well positioning themselves in the market to earn more money. Unlike Azerbaijani, they primarily open just the Russian and English sectors. And even when they are in a difficult financial situation, parents who want their children to attend school in the Russian sector but who failed a public exam choose to prefer private schools. Private schools also make use of this problem. So, they are slightly shadier regarding business than the communal schools. They are aware of the grants, know where to get pupils, and understand that the more pupils they enroll, the more revenue they generate, and the more their
school may grow. Hence, I believe that private schools are very adept at establishing themselves in the market and marketing themselves in a variety of ways” (AS6).

“It shouldn't be possible for someone to profit from education. Public good is education” (RS1).

“[…] we can say that the role of private schools in promoting the Russian language in the country is irreplaceable. It means that, as a society, we do not respect our language. […] making money comes before it” (RS6).

6.6.3 Teaching Quality of Foreign Language

According to participants one of the challenges facing foreign language instruction in Azerbaijan is the shortage of qualified and experienced language teachers. Many schools struggle to find and retain qualified language teachers, leading to uneven instruction and inconsistent teaching quality.

“[…] if the quality of the Russian language subject in the Azerbaijani sector was high, many parents would perhaps refrain from placing it in the Russian sector (AS1).

“The poor knowledge of the Azerbaijani language of students in the Russian sector is directly related to the poor teaching of the subject of the Azerbaijani language […]” (RS6).
Chapter 7 Discussion

This study’s results and findings are explained in more detail by referring to the theoretical frameworks and previous research. The chapter is divided into three sections: reasons behind the parents’ school choice are in Section 7.1, and Section 7.2 signifies similarities and differences between the two groups of parents. Finally, 7.3 discusses parents’ social and political backgrounds affect school choice.

7.1 Reasons Behind the Parents’ School Choice

Examining the study's findings, numerous reasons behind school choice became apparent. Based on previous research, it is clear that parents consider various factors when choosing a school for their children. Proximity and convenience are essential, with parents typically selecting schools close to home or work to reduce travel time and logistical complexities. Academic performance is also a significant facet, as parents look for schools with a strong record of providing high-quality education. Additionally, parents place great value on schools that create a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment for their child's overall growth and development. When choosing a school for their children, parents emphasize safety and security, and they prefer schools with reliable safety standards and protocols to protect their children's well-being (Forsey et al., 2008, p. 15). Parents are interested in schools that offer specialized programs or facilities that cater to their children's interests or talents. A school's reputation and recommendations within the community are also essential factors that influence parents' decisions. Positive word-of-mouth endorsements and a robust local standing hold significant weight. Furthermore, parents highly value schools that actively encourage and facilitate parental engagement. They seek open communication channels, volunteering opportunities, and parent-teacher associations when making decisions. Thus, parents' values and beliefs significantly impact their school selection process. They look for schools that align with their cultural, religious, or philosophical beliefs to create a sense of unity and shared goals (Morgan & Blackmore, 2013, p. 97).

It should be noted that this study has discovered some similarities in reasons for school choice with previous research. However, there are also specific factors unique to the country's historical context, especially relevant to post-Soviet countries, that were identified as important considerations for parents in this study. It is important to note that these factors may not apply universally to other countries or contexts. Throughout the interviews conducted, one of the most significant reasons that emerged was parents' perception that studying in the Russian sector is a more efficient path to a successful career when compared to the Azerbaijani sector. According to the participants' perspectives, educating children is necessary for a fruitful career path. The ambition to provide their children with the best education possible so they are well prepared for their academic or professional futures is one of the main reasons parents prefer to select from various schools. So, parents perceive education as a means to an end, and their decision to send their children to Russian language schools is deliberate and focused on achieving those ends. It could be argued that these parents' perspective of education as a future investment is consistent with the Human Capital Theory, which presents an economical approach to human behavior (Olssen et al., 2004). Furthermore, the participants have described learning of all subjects in the Russian language, further focus on Russian language instruction, and high levels of teachers' discipline as the significant characteristics of ascertaining the quality of a
school. They are a crucial tool for an upcoming successful career (Власенков & Рыбченкова, 2003). And consequently, it means that parents accept education as an investment with the prospect of return.

Both two groups of parents argued that Russian language schools tend to be better structured and organized. The interviewed parents reported that the Russian sector in schools provides better literature that affects children's psychology and behavioral patterns, which is also one of the main reasons they prefer the Russian sector. In addition, parents believe that children who study in the Russian sector behave more independently and become more outlook, unrestricted and self-dependent. These facts make children more flexible in their way of life. Parents also choose these schools since they have stricter behavioral norms and social ethics than Azerbaijani language schools. It might be stated that Russian sectors have their in-school behavioral regulations based on each school's beliefs and ideals, strengthening the school's social role in shaping characters and social attitudes. The many kinds of literature and various learning and teaching methods offered by Russian sectors appear to be primary determinants of the rise in the number of enrollments in Russian language schools since they aim to increase children's prospective capacity (Lyutykh, 2011).

Another reason parents choose Russian language schools is the opportunity for the teacher to teach the Russian language effectively since this language is harder to learn. Russian is usually regarded as one of the most challenging languages to learn (Ryazanova-Clarke & Wade, 2002, p. 33). Russian is a language of worldwide importance, as evidenced by the fact that it is one of the official languages of organizations like the United Nations (Ryazanova-Clarke & Wade, 2002, p. 48). As a result, proficiency in Russian can provide Azerbaijani students with a wealth of opportunities in terms of higher education, career, and cross-cultural interaction. Although the children are taught the Russian language in the Azerbaijani sector, the subject is presented in the curriculum to a more limited extent than other subjects. Furthermore, teachers do not have enough passion for teaching the Russian language in the Azerbaijani sector, especially in public schools.

All schools should adhere to national educational standards. However, private schools develop their distinctive educational philosophies and pedagogical approaches (Koirala, 2015). Private schools frequently use curriculum extensions to increase their academic subjects and extracurricular activities (Nambissan, 2012, p. 53). According to parental interviews whose financial status is high, the high quality of the teaching staff is one of the motivating aspects behind their decision to enroll their children in the Russian sector of private schools. The rising demand for Russian sector in schools has resulted in an overcrowding of more than 30 pupils in the Russian sector of public schools, prompting some parents to prefer private schools. Teachers in private schools have more autonomy to deviate from government rules and develop their own instructional practices (Spinner-Halev, 2005, p. 142). Moreover, with a maximum class size of 25 pupils, the educational quality is superior than that of public schools. Further, the infrastructure of public schools may be inadequate in some places, with reports of no-heated classes in the winter and ancient buildings. Therefore, parents select private schools to avoid such situations. Finally, the expanded daily school schedule was identified as a significant factor in parental choice because private schools allow children to stay longer at school, benefiting working parents. Furthermore, private school teachers are expected to report on their pupils’ progress toward educational goals on a regular basis, making it easier for parents and school officials to monitor pupil achievement.

Another study finding relates to the academic outcomes of competitiveness, particularly concerning higher education entry. It is related to the reasons why parents choose to enroll their children in Russian language schools. According to the findings, pupils attending Russian sector schools have an advantage when applying for admission to higher education because of the high level of competition
among pupils in the Azerbaijani sector (MSE, 2022b). So, it indicates that this fact influences parents' choices to enroll their children in Russian sector schools. Moreover, one of the most crucial points for further discussion, which was raised through the analysis of the findings, relates the disparity issues of admission exam to primary education who wants to enroll in Russian sectors. Even if the human rights discourse argues that everyone should participate in social decision-making when those decisions influence them, this is not the reality in Azerbaijan.

In Azerbaijan, the Russian primary education sectors are subject to a limited quota system that requires prospective pupils to take an entrance examination to gain admission to these schools. As a result, approximately half of the registered applicants are chosen by the Steering Committee, while the others are denied the opportunity to attend Russian language schools (MSE, 2022b). In this case, parents express their concern over this issue, as their children are forced to choose between attending public schools in Azerbaijani sectors or Russian language private schools. As a result of the circumstances mentioned above, the marketization of private schools has emerged. Private schools use a variety of marketing strategies to draw in more students because enrollment determines how much money the school can generate, making kids their clients. According to the analysis of the results and what Broucker, De Wit and Verhoeven (2018) have suggested, private schools that operate as businesses tend to place a greater emphasis on their financial performance than on the importance of offering high-quality education. These schools have begun attracting parents' attention by providing exclusive Russian language education. For a while, despite the government's emphasis on every child's access to education, some pupils cannot enroll in Russian language public schools. Higher-income parents can enroll their children in these schools, while the rest of the pupils must attend Azerbaijani language public schools. This condition runs counter to the human rights-based approach to education, which emphasizes that all children should have access to school regardless of their background or circumstances.

Education quality and equity concerns fluctuate amongst various schools (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007). According to the respondents, the ability to select from various schools may indicate that some are higher quality than others. When choosing a high-quality school for their children, parents generally opt for private schools since they frequently provide extra services or have a particular teaching approach. Private schools typically have a beautiful infrastructure and hire highly educated employees. As the participants said, some parents find it difficult and, in some circumstances, unattainable to choose a school for their children. Other structural barriers that hinder parents from using their rights to choose schools include their limited leisure time and lack of a particular level of schooling. The interviewees also said that parents need to be at a certain socioeconomic level in order to be able to make an informed decision about a school, and Böhlmark et al. (2015) discovered a substantial relationship between parents' socioeconomic background and their preference for private schools.

Based on what parents highlighted Russian language school pupils may have a greater opportunity to grow and improve their talents than other pupils who study in Azerbaijani sectors due to the “extras” that these schools may offer. Extracurricular activities, various literature, and specific teaching methods may allow pupils to explore their interests and talents in Russian sectors rather than imposing certain obligations on them. Due to their greater freedom in educational planning and the use of multiple pedagogical approaches, Russian language schools may place more emphasis on subjects outside of the core curriculum. Since the study results revealed that Russian language school pupils are more privileged than Azerbaijan language school students in having the opportunity to develop
themselves throughout education, it is clear that further disparities result from the capability approach to education.

7.2 Similarities and Differences Between the two Groups of Parents

This study also investigated the similarities and differences between two groups of parents. Section 7.2.1 identifies the similarities between the two groups of parental school choice. In comparison, Section 7.2.2 illustrates the differences between the two groups of parental school choice.

7.2.1 Similarities

Some similarities and differences regarding the participants' perceptions of the notion of school choice were revealed by comparing the two groups of parents, using their country's case and the interviews' results. Beginning with the similarities, interviewees in both parent groups said they see the opportunity to choose their school as a human right. Parents agreed that one of their freedoms as human beings is to choose the schools their children attend. Regarding competitiveness among private schools, the parents also shared certain similarities. Due to government restrictions on public school choice enrollment for Russian sectors, private schools compete with one another to attract such pupils. According to interviews, the idea of competition brought about by establishing private schools benefits school choice, creating better and more varied schools by requiring them to upgrade their facilities.

Parents also accepted the significance of the Russian language in Azerbaijan. Despite their linguistic differences, both groups agreed that their children's education and future success depended on their capacity for Russian. In addition, parents from each group indicated their shared objective to provide their children highest education regardless of the language of instruction. Parents highlighted that while they send their children to Russian sectors, they are not entirely satisfied with the situation of matters in their own country. They would prefer the total elimination of Russian as a language of instruction. Citizens are barred from public speaking Russian in some post-Soviet countries, including Georgia and Ukraine. A growing number of schools are being formed to promote the use of native languages in those countries (Burai, 2016, p. 67). This could contribute to eliminating the divide between Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents, eventually leading to a sense of unity. The language of instruction in schools is a concern not only of education policy but also of social cohesion and national identity. Language regulations have been a cause of discord and conflict in many countries with various linguistic groups. Finding the proper equilibrium between fostering multilingualism and protecting national identity is a complicated and continuing task requiring careful consideration and debate among all stakeholders (Demont-Heinrich, 2005, p. 80).

Regardless of more possibilities, abilities, and experiences accessible to today's pupils, the education system during the Soviet time is often seen as more robust than the present model (Kuraev, 2016, p. 193). Many parents agree, believing that a Russian language education will better prepare their children for future success. Despite appreciating the benefits of today's school system, these parents claimed that the Soviet period system emphasized discipline, rigor, and basic knowledge, all of which they believe are necessary for life's success. They attributed the perceived reduction in educational quality to various issues, including curriculum changes, the expanding influence of technology, and a trend toward a more student-centered approach to teaching. Given these concerns, some parents believe a Russian-language education would give their children a competitive advantage in an increasingly globalized society. They regard Russian proficiency as a great advantage, particularly
considering the language's broad use in research, technology, and international diplomacy. While perspectives on the relative merits of Soviet period and modern education systems may differ, it is evident that parents are passionately committed to their children's education and are looking for ways to provide them with the most excellent possible chances for success (Kuraev, 2016, p. 187).

### 7.2.2 Differences

In contrast, the author identifies two differences between the two parent groups. The participants' views on the value of learning Russian and whether to enroll their children in Russian language schools are divided. Because they could not study in that sector during their education, parents who speak Azerbaijani are more likely to choose the Russian sector for their children's education. On the other hand, Russian-speaking parents find it challenging to enroll them in Azerbaijani language schools. After the recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine some participants expected that the Russian language's significance in the world would decrease, while others underlined the necessity of promoting the Azerbaijani language.

Parents seeking admission for their children have expressed a variety of perspectives regarding the introduction of an entrance exam for a primary school in the Russian sector by MSE, showing the different wide range of opinions and attitudes toward the educational policies. Due to their children’s lower proficiency in Russian than children of Russian-speaking parents, Azerbaijani-speaking parents are particularly opposed to the admittance examination. They contended that the exam disadvantages their children and evaluates them unfairly based on their language, which they see as a breach of their linguistic, human and cultural rights (Craissati et al., 2007, p. 6). On the other hand, other groups of parents support the exam since it determines a student's eligibility to study in Russian-language schools. Furthermore, they argued that the current exam is very simplistic and advocate for the MSE to develop a more demanding test to better evaluate pupils’ language skills and logical ability.

In general, the debate surrounding the primary school entrance exam in the Russian sector gives insight into the complicated issues of language, identity, and educational access in a multiethnic and multilingual nation like Azerbaijan. It emphasizes how important it is for decision-makers to take a comprehensive and all-encompassing approach to educational reform that considers various communities’ various needs and aspirations while guaranteeing equal opportunities and fair treatment for all pupils, regardless of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Karimzad, 2018, p. 150). Furthermore, Russian-speaking parents believes that when considering whether a child can attend a Russian-language school, the government should prioritize the educational background of the child's parents. If the parents were educated in Russian, their children immediately enrolled in any Russian-language school. If the parents received an Azerbaijani education, their children would not be able to receive a Russian-language education. Suppose one parent has an Azerbaijani education and the other has a Russian education. In that case, the government should hold an entrance exam for the child to enroll in a Russian-language school.

On the other hand, Azerbaijani-speaking parents think that language should not be a barrier to education. They contend that all children, regardless of linguistic background, should be able to pick the language they are educated in. This not only assures that every child has an equal chance of success, but it also encourages language diversity and tolerance. In addition, Azerbaijani-speaking parents claimed that the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan protects the right to school in the language of one's choice (Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 1995). Denying children, the right to an education in their preferred language violates the Constitution's spirit and fosters discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. According to Azerbaijani-speaking parents, multilingualism is
an asset in today's globalized world. Azerbaijan can educate its inhabitants to compete in the global marketplace and develop bridges with other cultures and nations by allowing students to learn many languages (Karimzad, 2018, p. 145).

In Azerbaijan, there are numerous contrasts between the two categories of parents regarding language instruction. One significant distinction is the opinion of Russian speaking parents that children with Azerbaijani speaking parents struggle with studying in Russian due to poor proficiency in the language. Some parents have noticed that their children frequently struggle with their assignments and turn to chat in Azerbaijani after school. On the other hand, Russian-speaking parents claim that their children do not have such issues and can communicate effectively in Russian even after school. However, Azerbaijani-speaking parents deny these assertions, claiming that their children are likewise fluent in Russian and capable of flourishing in school. They argued that rather than a natural incapacity to acquire the language, any disadvantage may result from difficulty getting used to it at home. Overall, the problem of language education in Azerbaijan is complicated and multifaceted, and various circumstances influence the viewpoints of various parent groups. To guarantee that all students have access to high-quality education in the language of their choosing, a comprehensive strategy that considers the nation's cultural, socioeconomic, and historical background may be required (Karimzad, 2018, p. 148).

### 7.3 Parents’ Social and Political Backgrounds Affect School Choice

In the end of this chapter, the author explores the political and social factors that affect parental school choice. Section 7.3.1 starts by discussing the political factors that are considered pertinent to the current study. The social factors that impact the current situation are then discussed in Section 7.3.2.

#### 7.3.1 Political Factors

After reviewing previous research, it is clear that political factors impact parents' school choices worldwide. These factors include school choice policies, governance models, policy priorities, and resource allocation (Lubienski et al., 2009). However, political factors have greatly influenced Azerbaijan's education system over the years, primarily due to the country's historical and geopolitical situation. During the Soviet era, education was centralized and heavily influenced by ideology, leaving a lasting impact. After gaining independence from the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan underwent significant political and social changes, resulting in a unique educational environment shaped by its post-Soviet history. Mainly since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has seen a reduction in the use of the Russian language. The population's departure from Azerbaijan, who spoke Russian, influenced its drop (Yunusov, 2012). Despite this, many publications about Azerbaijan's history are written in Russian, and the local populace continues to speak Russian as their mother tongue. Understanding the Russian language is crucial for gaining information on the country's past because Western historians also use Russian books as primary sources. Those times Azerbaijani literature and textbooks were minimal, which forced educators to rely heavily on Russian-language resources (Yunusov, 2012).

It is also clear that the Russian language has a political effect. Because the weakening of the language among Azerbaijanis residing in Russia decreases their potential to influence the elites that dominate the Russian government, the closure of Russian-language branches is perceived as discrimination against Azerbaijani Russian speakers (Noack, 2021). Finally, the parents' personal stories reveal that the Russian language was crucial to their childhood and education, and they desire the same
possibilities for their children. Significantly, Russian-speaking parents described their education during the Soviet times influenced the language choices they made for their children. Russian was the person's primary language of instruction, so since they were fluent in it, they naturally utilized it to raise their children. This includes reading them Russian tales and poetry and letting them watch Russian cartoons.

Like many post-Soviet nations, Azerbaijan has a complicated relationship with the Russian language. Azerbaijani-speaking parents have stated that although the Soviet Union is no longer in existence, there is still a political relationship between Azerbaijan and Russia. This relationship impacts the importance of Russia in Azerbaijan. Historically, the Soviet Union was influential in developing Azerbaijan's linguistic policy. During the Soviet times, Russian was the primary language in the country, and Azerbaijani was considered inferior. As a result, many Azerbaijaniis learned Russian, and it became the language of education, culture, and governance. Even though Azerbaijan attained independence in 1991, the impact of this time lives on (Yunusov, 2012). Today, parents believe that the country's political relationship with Russia continues to influence the relevance of the Russian language. They believe most Azerbaijani politicians speak Azerbaijani and Russian rather than Azerbaijani and English. This is owing to Azerbaijan's close relationship with Russia, the country's neighbor and a vast and prominent country. Parents anticipate that this interaction will continue to affect Azerbaijani language policy and parents' school choices for their children.

### 7.3.2 Social Factors

Previous research has extensively studied social factors that influence parents' decisions in choosing schools for their children. These factors include socioeconomic status, social networks, cultural and ethnic background, and community characteristics, and they are consistently found to be significant considerations in different contexts (Berends & Zottola, 2009). In Azerbaijan, these social factors are also recognized as essential determinants of parents' school choice decisions, but with unique characteristics and nuances specific to the country. Research has shown that a person's socioeconomic status greatly influences the school choices made by parents in Azerbaijan and other areas. Parents' income, occupation, and level of education play a significant role in their preference for specific schools. Wealthier families generally consider private or prestigious schools, while those with lower income may opt for public schools or those offering financial aid (Burgess & Briggs, 2010). The various studies and research in Azerbaijan have shown that social networks play a crucial role in the school selection process of parents. Furthermore, cultural and ethnic background is another social factor that consistently affects parents' school choices worldwide, including Azerbaijan. Parents seek schools that align with their cultural values, offer language programs or cultural enrichment, and have a diverse student population reflecting their background. Cultural and ethnic considerations play a role in parents’ desire to maintain their children's sense of identity, connection to their heritage, or exposure to multicultural experiences (Berends & Zottola, 2009). The importance of cultural and ethnic factors in school choice decisions is recognized in previous research and the Azerbaijani context. When comes to the community characteristics, the previous studies have shown that specific community characteristics, including the quality of schools, safety, accessibility, and availability of extracurricular activities and support services, play a vital role in parents’ decision-making when choosing a school for their children. This is also true in Azerbaijan, and the community's characteristics affect parents’ perceptions and choices. The level of community cohesion and belonging varies by country and also influences parents' preferences and choices within their local context. Although there are similarities in the social factors influencing school selection worldwide, it is crucial to understand that each country, such as Azerbaijan, has its distinct characteristics and nuances for these factors (Burgess & Briggs,
These differences arise from Azerbaijan's specific cultural, historical, and socioeconomic context, which shapes parents' considerations and priorities. Policymakers, educators, and researchers must recognize these national variations to create effective policies and strategies addressing the unique social dynamics influencing parents' school selection decisions in Azerbaijan.

Participants in this study acknowledged that social capital, education, and economic standing are important factors in school selection decisions (Plagens, 2011, p. 61). Yet, the discourse highlights a darker side of school choice: affluent parents are more willing to send their children to private schools. This can lead to a disparity between public and private schools, making it difficult for families' children with few resources to obtain a quality education. The participants' views also showed that parents' low social status negatively impacts their children's academic achievement. Parents with limited financial resources may be unable to afford private schools or access the resources required to assist their children's education at home. As a result, their children may not receive the same level of schooling as children from more affluent parents. Some parents highlighted the need for policymakers to consider the impact of social status on school choice and educational prospects. There is a need for more assistance for low-income families, mainly by providing affordable and high-quality public schools. Furthermore, authorities should aim to reduce inequities between public and private schools, ensuring that all children, regardless of their parent's financial situation, have access to quality education (Plagens, 2011, p. 63). Overall, the results relating to parents' social status and school choice indicate that socioeconomic differences in education remain. Addressing these gaps necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers the impact of social status on educational prospects and strives to ensure equal access to quality education for all children.
Chapter 8 Conclusion

Finally, this thesis concludes with remarks and suggestions for further study on school choice. This study was conducted to achieve the aims and respond to the research questions. In Section 8.1, the author summarizes the study's significant findings and argues the role of parents in school choice. Section 8.2 presents concrete suggestions for future research based on the findings of this study.

8.1 Conclusion Remarks

The focus of this study was to investigate the reasons for school choice and parents' decision-making processes at the primary education level in Azerbaijan. The participants were compared with Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents who enrolled their children in the Russian sector of primary education. A comparative analysis was performed to study the differences between the groups mentioned above of parents. The research investigated and compared the differences between Azerbaijani-speaking and Russian-speaking parents. Finally, this study discussed parents' political and social backgrounds that affect their school choice for their children.

Overall, participants expressed substantial discourse for their schools' choice. All participants in the study, with the exception of one, were inhabitants of the capital city of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the results cannot provide generalization. Albeit this study comprehensively supported previous research findings, it also revealed its findings, as indicated in the Discussion Chapter. Regarding the reasons behind parents' school choice, the participants from both categories explained their decision with the arguments. According to the study's findings, participants reported a desire to use their newly acquired language abilities to enhance their children's future career paths. Furthermore, the participants noticed beneficial changes in their children's confidence, flexibility, and overall outlook due to their children's participation in Russian language schools. Additionally, the study discovered that learning the Russian language as an independent course while studying in the Azerbaijani sector is extremely difficult (Арутюнова, 2012). Besides these participants in the research mentioned academic outcomes as another factor for enrolling their children in the Russian sector. They noticed a lack of competitiveness in this sector and believed it could provide their children with a better educational experience. Lastly, participants stated that private schools have more preferences over public ones (Spinner-Halev, 2005).

Concerning the differentiation between parental figures there were many similarities between the two groups' parents' school choice reasons. The study showed that despite the fact that their native language is various, however, they have the same views regarding the importance of the Russian language in the country (Якубова, 2016). They also linked this issue with their rights about enrolling their children in Russian language schools. On the other hand, the study also defined the differences regarding the entrance exam for primary education employed by MSE. The study discovered that Russian-speaking participants were more aware of children from Azerbaijani-speaking parents’ low Russian language proficiency. On the other hand, Azerbaijani-speaking parents expressed confidence in their children's academic performance.

Finally, this study's findings gave insight into how parents' social and political backgrounds influence their school choice decisions. The political reasons outlined the Russian language's historical and ongoing impact on Azerbaijan (Avakov & Atakishiev, 1984, p. 35). The Soviet era left a lasting effect on language policy, with Russian dominating education, culture, and governance. Today, parents
perceive a continuing political connection between Azerbaijan and Russia, influencing their children's school selection. On the other hand, social factors emphasized the importance of social capital, education, and economic standing in school selection decisions. Affluent parents may have more possibilities to enroll their children on private schools, resulting in discrepancies between public and private schools and perhaps influencing the academic achievement of children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Spinner-Halev, 2005). The findings highlighted the importance of policymakers considering the impact of social and political issues on school choice and educational possibilities. Low-income families may require additional assistance, such as inexpensive and high-quality public schools, to guarantee their children a good education. Moreover, resolving discrepancies between public and private schools is critical to ensuring that all children, regardless of their parent's financial circumstances, have equitable access to a high-quality education. It is critical to take a comprehensive approach to resolving socioeconomic disparities in education and achieving equal access to high-quality education for all pupils. In summary, parents' social and political backgrounds influence their school choice options, and addressing the impact of these factors on education demands deliberate analysis and action on the part of policymakers in order to create equitable possibilities for all students.

8.2 Suggestion for Further Research

Finally, this study examined the phenomenon of parental school choice by focusing on the comparison of two cases studies referring to Azerbaijani speaking parents and Russian speaking parents’ context. A broader investigation of the consequences of school choice on social equity, on the other hand, requires more representative cases from around the world. According to Noah and Eckstein (1998), further studies using international and comparative approaches could expand our understanding of educational phenomena and assist policymakers. Furthermore, intra-national and comparative studies on the same issue area could offer insight into the similarities and differences in school choice across different parents' backgrounds in Azerbaijan. While conducting the research, the author observed little literature on school choice in Azerbaijan. Russian language schools in Azerbaijan, which draw a considerable proportion of the entire parent population, might be studied further regarding socioeconomic equity and its social effects. Furthermore, future studies could conduct beneficial comparisons of education quality between public and private schools in a given national context to address their discrepancies and inspire the design of future changes.

Expanding school choice policies to other post-Soviet countries is a proposal that should be looked into further. The significance of the Russian language in these countries is to be recognized, especially given recent developments such as the expansion of the Russian sector in schools. Future research efforts could aim to assess and effectively compare the techniques used by various post-Soviet countries in this regard. The potential impact of increasing school choice policy in these countries could be broad with significant consequences for education systems and societies as a whole. As a result, any policy changes must be thoroughly analyzed and their potential consequences properly assessed. Furthermore, given each post-Soviet country's distinct geopolitical and historical contexts, a comparative approach to assessing these policies would provide significant insights into the most effective ways to implement school choice programs. As a result, future studies should concentrate on assessing the varied approaches followed by post-Soviet countries, particularly emphasizing the significance of the Russian language in schools.
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Appendices

A. Interview Guide (English)

1. Could you introduce yourself?
   a. What is your and your husband/wife’s educational background (degree and majors)?
      Which school/university did you go to?
   b. What language do you speak at home?
   c. Where did you and your husband/wife’s learn the Russian language?

2. How many children do you have attending school today?
   a. Do they (she or he) go to the Russian sector school? Private or public schools?
   b. What is the reason behind you choosing the school for your children (child)? Depending on your interest? What kind of interest?
   c. What are the significant factors from your perspectives that you consider while choosing the Russian language for your children?

3. What is your understanding of school choice?
   a. In your opinion, what are the social factors and social influences that led to school choice?
   b. What are your expectations from the school you choose for your children?

4. Concerning language,
   a. Could you please rank the reasons why you send your children to the Russian language school according to their importance?
   b. In your opinion, what are the benefits of Russian language schools compared to Azerbaijani language schools?
   c. In your opinion, why do parents choose mostly Russian sector schools? What is your perspective?
   d. How do you expect the Russian language school to contribute to your child’s life in the future?
   e. Do you speak the Russian language with your children at home? And who helps your children to prepare for their homework?

5. Under what conditions would you choose the Azerbaijani language school?

6. If you were in charge of proposing an educational reform regarding the language of studies schools, what would you propose?
7. During the past years, there has been an increase in the number of pupils who attend Russian sector schools in Azerbaijan. Do you know this? How could you explain this phenomenon based on your experience?
B. Interview Guide (Azerbaijani)

1. Özünüzü təqdим edə bilərsinizmi?
   d. Sizin və ərinizin/arvadınızın töhsili (dərəcə və ixtisaslar) nədirdi? Hansı məktəb/uniuersitetə getmişiniz?
   e. Evdə hansı dildə danışırısınız?
   f. Siz və əriniz/arvadınız rus dilini harada öyrənmisiniz?

2. Məktəbə oxuyan neçə uşağınız var?
   d. Onlar (və ya o) rus sекторu məktəbinə gedir? Özəl yoxsa dövlət məktəbinə gedir?
   e. Övladlarınız (övlərdiniz) üçün məktəb seçiminizin əsas səbəbi nədirdi? Öz maraqlarınızı və sosial təsiriniz fərqləndirir?
   f. Övladlarınız üçün rus dildə seçdiyiniz perspektiviniz hansı mühüm amilləri nəzərə alır?

3. Məktəb seçimi ifadəsinizi necə başa düşürsünüz?
   c. Sizcə, məktəb seçiminə səbəb olan sosial amillər və sosial təsirlər hansı nəzarətdən hasil olardır?
   d. Övladlarınızın üçün seçdiyiniz məktəbən gözələnilən nəzərdən nəzərə alır?

4. Dilə əldikdə, 
   a. Zəhmət olmasa övladlarınız rus dili məktəbinə göndərməyiniz səbəblərinin əhəmiyyətinə görə səralaya bilərsinizmi?
   b. Sizcə, rusdilli məktəblərin Azərbaycan dilli məktəblərə müqayisədə üstünləkləri nələrdir?
   c. Sizcə, niyə valideynlər daha çox rus sektoru məktəblərinə seçirlər? Sizin perspektiviniz necədirdir?
   d. Rus dili məktəbinin gələcəkdə övladlinizin hayatına necə təffərə və yaradıcı gözləyirsiniz?
   e. Siz evdə uşaqlarınızla rus dilində danışırısınız? Uşaqlarının ev tapşırığını hazırlamağa kim kömək edir?

5. Azərbaycan dili məktəbinin hansı şərtlərə seçərdiniz?
6. Məktəblərin tədris dili ilə bağlı töhsil islahatının təklifinin cavabədən əlsoydmiz, nə təklif edərdiniz?
7. Ötən illər ərzində Azərbaycanda rus bölməsi məktəblərinə gedən şagirdlərin sayında artım müşahidə olunur. Bunu bilirsinizmi? Təcrübənizə əsaslanaraq bu hadisi necə izah edə bilərsiniz?