

Are schools highly regulated or autonomous?

- Most OECD countries set a standard or partially standardised curriculum for public schools; the requirement is less widely imposed for independent private schools.
- About half of OECD countries allow public schools to promote a religion or religious practices; almost all allow independent private schools to do so.

Significance

This spread looks at schools' autonomy – the extent to which they are free to design their own curricula, promote a religious viewpoint and set their hiring rules, and the requirement for students to take national exams, among other factors. For true school choice to exist, schools must differ so that parents can make meaningful decisions on the basis of school profiles or pedagogical practices. If all schools are identical, or very similar, choice is less attractive and less meaningful. More heavily regulated schools are assumed to be more similar to each other. On that basis, the nature and scope of regulation can be seen as influencing the amount and significance of school choice.

Findings

The autonomy of schools is examined here across five areas: requirement to follow standardised curriculum; requirement for students to sit national exams; promotion of religion; requirement for teachers to meet certification standards; and restrictions on staffing and class size.

Requirement to follow standardised curriculum: At the lower secondary level, 93% of OECD countries reported a standard or partially standardised curriculum in public schools. For government-dependent private schools, the percentage was 91%; for independent private schools 59%; and for homeschooling 61%. The picture is similar at the primary level.

Requirement for students to sit national exams: At the lower secondary level, 36% of OECD countries had mandatory national exams for public schools. For government-dependent private schools, the percentage was 32%; for independent private schools, 30%; and for homeschooling, 18%. Such exams are less prevalent at the primary level, ranging from 14% of OECD countries for public schools to 5% for families that homeschool.

Promotion of religion or religious practices: The religious profile of schools is an important driver of school choice. At the lower secondary level, 46% of OECD countries allowed public schools to promote religion or religious practices. But for government-dependent private schools, this proportion rose to 83%; for independent private schools it was 95%; for homeschooling 83%. The picture is similar at the primary level.

Employment and certification standards: With the exception of Chile, all countries reported having employment and certification standards for personnel working in public schools at primary level; all but Denmark reported that this also applied to government-dependent private schools. These standards were less often obligatory for independent private schools – ranging from 16 out of 21 OECD countries at the primary level and 14 out of 20 at the lower secondary level. Of the countries that permitted homeschooling, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland and Estonia also had standards for personnel who instructed students in the home.

Restrictions on staffing and class size: These exist in around 70% of OECD countries for public schools compared with around half for government-dependent private schools and around a third for independent private schools. Only Switzerland and Estonia reported such restrictions for homeschooling. Restrictions were slightly more prevalent for primary than for lower secondary schools.

Definitions

Data are from the 2009 OECD-INES Survey on School Choice and Parent Voice and refer to the school year 2007-08. Educational institutions are classified as either public or private. Public institutions are controlled and managed directly by a public or government agency or by a body whose members are appointed by a public authority or elected by public franchise. Private institutions are controlled and managed by a non-government organisation or by a governing board whose members are mostly not publicly appointed: They cover three categories: 1) Government-dependent private institutions – these receive more than half of their core funding from government agencies or rely on government funding to pay teaching staff. 2) Independent private institutions – these receive less than 50% of core funding from government and teachers are not paid by government. 3) Homeschooling – education of children at home, by parents or sometimes tutors, that replaces school-based compulsory education.

Information on data for Israel:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

Going further

For additional material, notes and a full explanation of sourcing and methodologies, see *Education at a Glance 2010* (Indicator D5).

Areas covered include:

- National assessment requirements.

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Table S.2. Government regulation of schools, 2008

These tables shows the extent to which regulations are applied to schools at the primary and lower secondary levels across five major areas (x = no, ✓ = yes).

	P.S. Public schools				G.P.S. Government-dependent private schools				I.P.S. Independent private schools				H. Homeschooling							
	<i>Primary</i>																			
	A standard curriculum or partially standardised curriculum is required				Mandatory national examination is required				Schools can promote religion or religious practices				Personnel must meet employment and certification standards				There are restrictions on staffing and class size			
	P.S.	G.P.S.	I.P.S.	H.	P.S.	G.P.S.	I.P.S.	H.	P.S.	G.P.S.	I.P.S.	H.	P.S.	G.P.S.	I.P.S.	H.	P.S.	G.P.S.	I.P.S.	H.
Austria	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x
Belgium (Fl.)	✓	✓	m	a	x	x	m	a	x	x	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a
Belgium (Fr.)	✓	✓	m	✓	x	x	m	x	x	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a
Brazil	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a
Chile	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Czech Rep.	✓	✓	a	✓	x	x	a	x	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	x
Denmark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	x
England	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x
Finland	✓	✓	a	✓	a	a	a	a	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	x	x	x	a	x
France	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	a	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	a
Germany	✓	✓	m	a	x	x	m	a	x	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a
Greece	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	m	a	m	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a
Hungary	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	✓	x	m	a
Iceland	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Ireland	✓	a	✓	x	x	a	x	x	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	✓	a	x	a
Estonia	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	a	✓	✓
Israel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	m	m	m	m	✓	✓	m	m
Italy	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	✓	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a
Japan	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a
Korea	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a
Luxembourg	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
Mexico	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a
Netherlands	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	x	x	x	x
New Zealand	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x
Norway	✓	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
Poland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
Portugal	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	m	a
Scotland	m	m	x	x	m	m	x	x	m	m	✓	✓	✓	m	✓	x	✓	m	x	x
Slovak Republic	✓	✓	a	✓	x	x	a	x	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	x	a	a
Slovenia	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	a	a	✓	✓	a	a
Spain	✓	✓	✓	a	x	x	x	a	x	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a
Sweden	✓	✓	a	✓	x	x	a	x	x	x	a	x	✓	✓	a	x	x	x	a	x
Switzerland	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
United States	x	a	x	x	x	a	x	x	x	a	✓	✓	✓	a	m	x	✓	a	x	x
	<i>Lower secondary</i>																			
Austria	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x	x
Belgium (Fl.)	✓	✓	m	a	x	x	m	a	x	x	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a
Belgium (Fr.)	✓	✓	m	a	x	x	x	x	x	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a
Brazil	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a
Chile	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Czech Rep.	✓	✓	a	a	x	x	a	a	✓	✓	a	a	✓	✓	a	a	m	m	a	a
Denmark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	x	x
England	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x
Estonia	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	a	✓	✓
Finland	✓	✓	a	✓	a	a	a	a	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	x	x	x	a	x
France	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	a	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	a
Germany	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	x	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a
Greece	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	m	a	m	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a
Hungary	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	m	a	✓	✓	m	a	✓	x	m	a
Iceland	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Ireland	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	✓	a	x	a
Israel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	a	m	m	m	m	✓	✓	m	m
Italy	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	✓	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a
Japan	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a	✓	a
Korea	✓	✓	a	a	x	x	a	a	x	x	a	a	✓	✓	a	a	✓	✓	a	a
Luxembourg	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	x	x	a
Mexico	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	x	a	✓	a	✓	a	x	a	x	a
Netherlands	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	a	x	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	x	x	x	a
New Zealand	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	x
Norway	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
Poland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x
Portugal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	m	a
Scotland	m	m	x	x	m	m	x	x	m	m	✓	✓	✓	m	✓	x	✓	m	x	x
Slovak Rep.	✓	✓	a	a	x	x	a	a	✓	✓	a	a	✓	✓	a	a	✓	x	a	a
Slovenia	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	a	a	✓	✓	a	a
Spain	✓	✓	✓	a	x	x	x	a	x	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a	✓	✓	✓	a
Sweden	✓	✓	a	✓	x	x	a	x	x	x	a	x	✓	✓	a	x	x	x	a	x
Switzerland	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	a
United States	x	a	x	x	x	a	x	x	x	a	✓	✓	✓	a	m	x	✓	a	x	x

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