Chapter 2

SCHOOLS AT THE CENTRE OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

Schools do not operate in a vacuum. Successful schools depend on the resources and support of their communities and schools at the centre of their communities are often the most successful schools. In turn, schools are vital to the social health of their local communities. What can policy makers with teacher unions and the teaching profession do to strengthen links with communities? Given the importance of schools for disadvantaged communities, how can system support for teachers and education staff be strengthened in these schools to drive quality and equity? What can we learn from schools that partner with businesses, educational services and cultural bodies in their community and excel at driving business and social innovation in their communities? How can schools engage the local community and contribute to social responsibility? These are some of the questions for the first session of the 2018 International Summit on the Teaching Profession.

Note regarding Israel

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

FROM VERTICAL TO HORIZONTAL FORMS OF GOVERNANCE

One conventional assumption is that governments set policy, which then descends in a vertical implementation line through local government together with implementation/support agencies, through to school principals and into the classroom. "Learning" and "education" are considered synonymous with formal schooling. Auxiliary organisations, such as education publishers, examination boards and teacher-training organisations are seen as extensions to arrangements set by governments. Such a framework of understanding has become increasingly inadequate. A perennial challenge for policy is that it is notoriously slow in changing behaviour in teaching and learning.

A number of factors have challenged and transformed this top-down conception of policy making, including the increasing use of digital technologies, the entry of new learning providers, the growing interest of employers in steering what students should learn and know and the expertise in learning in other sectors (e.g. in the creative sector). We need models that embrace the horizontal as well as the vertical, the non-formal as well as the formal, the unsponsored collaboration as well as the regulated. This is about seeing schools as part of more comprehensive ecosystems of learning with multiple dimensions:

- They are multilevel systems (local, regional, national and international), and aligning these levels is a major challenge, particularly in those that are most decentralised.
- Reflecting our societies, the systems are increasingly diverse, both in demographic terms (of students, teachers and communities) as well as in the values and identities communities and countries ascribe to themselves and expect their education systems to deliver.
- They contain a growing number of stakeholders who are increasingly vocal about their wants and desires, not only for themselves and their children, but for the system as a whole.

One obvious way for schools to engage with their communities is through engaging parents. This chapter begins by examining policies and practices for strengthening this link. It then looks outward, turning to how schools can contribute to the well-being of communities. It ends by looking at ways to reconcile aspirations for greater flexibility and parental choice with equity.

ENGAGING PARENTS

Few relationships in life are as significant and enduring as the relationship between children and their parents or the adults who raise them. Families are the first social unit in which children learn and develop. Good parenting can take different forms and be shaped by various social and cultural forces, but it invariably involves providing children with the support, care, love, guidance and protection that set the conditions for healthy physical, mental and social development.

It is not surprising, then, that interactions with parents have consistently been shown to influence students' achievement, expectations, attitudes and psychological health. The activities parents and children do together, parents' expectations for their children's future, and the behaviours and attitudes parents model for their children are all associated with children's psychological well-being. Parents are also key players in helping their children succeed at school. After all, they are their children's first and longest-serving teachers. As children grow, the connection with their parents also evolves. The relationship between parents and their 15-year-old children often reflects the greater autonomy and desire for independence that come with adolescence. Activities that parents and their young children once shared, such as reading together or helping with homework, often give way to adolescent children exploring their own interests by themselves and to more mature interactions with their parents, involving discussion and negotiation.

The following explores how some forms of parental involvement, such as interest in their child's life, the activities they engage in together and parents' participation in school-related activities, are associated with how well students do in school and how satisfied they are with their own life. It also looks at factors that parents regard as obstacles hindering their participation in their child's school activities. The data are based on the PISA 2015 assessment, and the figures and tables cited refer to *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being* (OECD, 2017a).

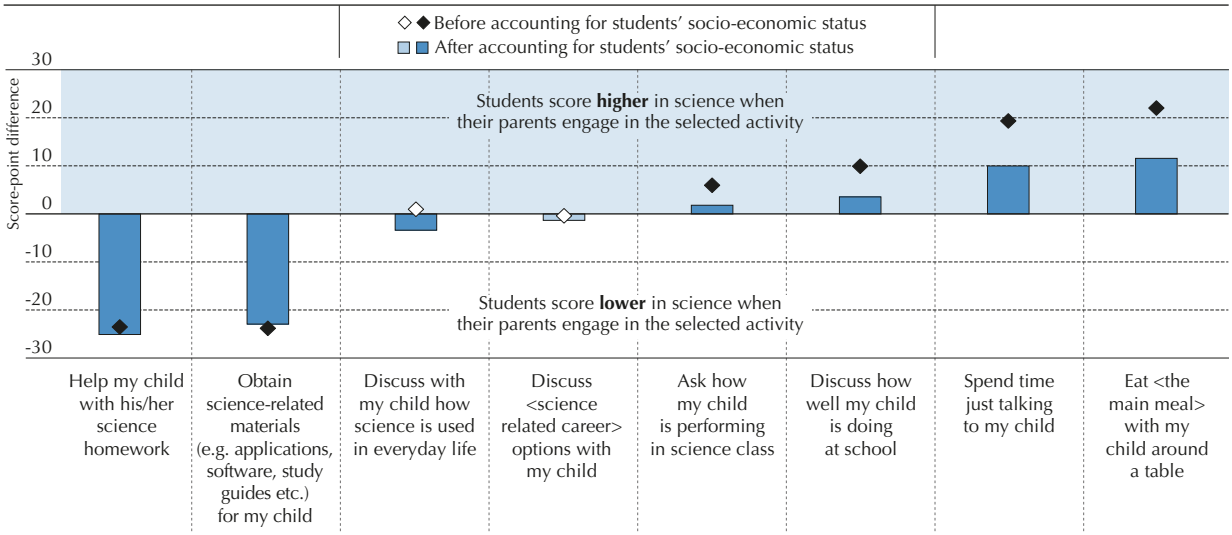
Parental involvement and student learning outcomes

The literature consistently documents positive associations between a range of home-based and school-based parental activities and children's educational achievement, measured either as school marks or standardised test scores. This positive relationship holds in various disciplines, across ethnic groups and gender and over time. Figure 2.1 shows how parental engagement in a set of selected activities is associated with differences in students' performance on the PISA science assessment.

Figure 2.1

Parents' activities and students' science performance

Difference in science performance between students whose parents engage in selected activities at least once a week and those whose parents engage in such activities less frequently (average for 18 countries/economies)



Note: Statistically significant values are marked in a darker tone.

Source: OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, Figure III.9.2, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472199

Parents' activities that typically take place at home or in the context of the family, namely "discussing how well my child is doing at school", "eating the main meal with my child around a table" and "spending time just talking to my child" are all positively related to the child's science performance in PISA 2015. An activity as simple as eating a meal together at least once a week is associated with an increase of at least 12 score points in science, on average, after accounting for students' socio-economic status. While there is no theoretical reason to expect a direct connection between students' performance in school and routinely eating a meal with their parents, the observed relationship may be capturing underlying traits of families that nurture this habit, traits that are more closely related to children's performance at school. For example, parents may use mealtime as an occasion to encourage their children, monitor their progress in school and show support. These families may also be able to maintain an orderly, structured environment for their children at home with less stress and greater stability.

Similarly, students whose parents "spend time just talking" to them at least once a week score 10 points higher, on average, than students of similar socio-economic status whose parents do so less frequently. This relationship is positive and significant in Georgia, Hong Kong (China), Korea and Portugal. Another possible explanation for the positive relationship between parent-child discussions and performance is that parents might find it easier to talk about school with children who perform relatively well and are engaged at school. Conversely, most activities that reflect parents' direct involvement in their child's science education have a negative relationship with the student's science score. Students whose parents reported that they "help my child with his/her science homework" or "obtain science-related materials (e.g. applications, software and study guides) for my child" at least once a week, score over 20 points lower in science, on average, than students whose parents engage in these activities less frequently (Figure 2.1). Poor performance in science may be the reason why parents are more directly involved in their child's school work. PISA results are also consistent with research findings showing a negative relationship between parental help with homework and student performance in early adolescence and beyond.

While help with homework might have been effective in the early years of school, during adolescence, students may respond better to other forms of parental support that respect their growing need for autonomy. This is illustrated by the positive associations found between students' performance in science and parents reporting that they "discuss how well my child is doing at school" or "spend time just talking to my child". As Figure 2.1 shows, parents' involvement in science homework or in monitoring their child's progress in science education is not strongly related to socio-economic status. This suggests that while advantaged and disadvantaged parents may differ widely in how they interact with their children at home, parents from all socio-economic groups try to help their children when they are struggling in school.

Box 2.1. Experiment to increase parent participation in Chile

An experiment in Chile offered each participating parent the chance to receive a high frequency of information via SMS messages regarding the attendance, behaviour and mathematics test scores of their children. After four months, the students involved had significantly higher math grades, improved attendance and a lower prevalence of bad behaviours, and they were less likely to fail the grade at the end of the year.

Source: Berlinski, S. et al., (2016), "Reducing parent-school information gaps and improving education outcomes: Evidence from high frequency text messaging in Chile", Working paper, December 2016, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), Cambridge MA, www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/726_%20Reducing-Parent-School-information-gap_BBDM-Dec2016.pdf.

Box 2.2. Bringing the community together: "Maker's Space" in Bulgaria

When Yordan Hodzhev began teaching, ethnic and community tensions outside the classroom strongly affected students' relationships inside the classroom. The result was an environment that was not conducive to effective learning, where students would refuse to collaborate and work together on projects. This led Mr Hodzhev to start what he calls "Maker's Space" in two primary schools in the villages of Mirkovo and Chelopech, in Bulgaria. Maker's Space sought to bring fractured communities together to find solutions to local problems, while also addressing students' low levels of interest in science and technology. Additionally, Mr Hodzhev used Maker's Space to help demystify science to girls and motivate them to pursue careers in science.

Maker's Space was designed as a workspace where parents and students could make and repair objects together. The space was equipped with tools and 3D printers and was available to everyone. There was no charge for using the space or the tools. The idea behind Maker's Space was to encourage everyone to engage in a practical way with science and exploration and to better understand how things work. An added advantage was that since all segments of the community needed to repair items, by providing everyone equal access to tools through this unique space, Mr Hodzhev succeeded in bringing together groups that were once hostile towards each other, in a creative and productive way. Because of this innovative space, community tensions have lessened, and parents have begun visiting the schools more often, becoming more involved in their children's education.

Source: OECD (2018), *Teaching for the Future: Effective Classroom Practices to Transform Education*.

Parental involvement and students' satisfaction with life

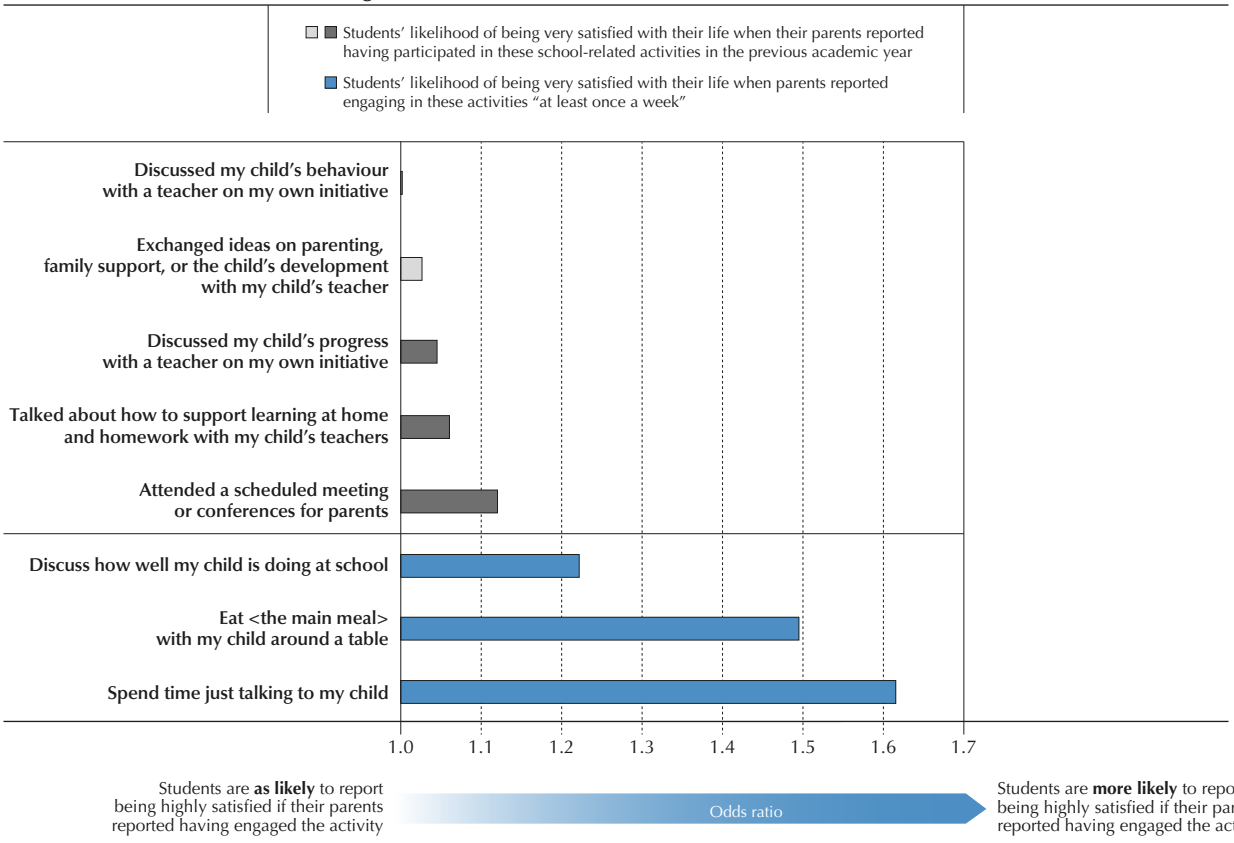
PISA data show that certain types of parental activities are positively related not only to students' performance, but also to other areas of their life, such as how satisfied students are with their own life. Students whose parents reported "spending time just talking to my child", "eating the main meal with my child around a table" or "discussing how well my child is doing at school" at least once a week were between 22% and 62% more likely to report high levels of life satisfaction (i.e. their responses put them at the equivalent of 9 or 10 on a scale of 0 to 10) than students whose parents reported engaging in these activities less frequently (Figure 2.2). Some school-related forms of parental involvement, such as having attended a school meeting or conferences for parents in the previous academic year or having interacted with their child's teacher, are also positively related to students' satisfaction with life, but the strength of these associations is considerably weaker. Parents of students who are struggling in school and perhaps less satisfied with their life may be more likely to interact more often with their child's teachers and school, which could partially explain these weaker associations.

Countries vary in which parental activities are most strongly related to students' life satisfaction, but "spending time just talking" is the parental activity most frequently and most strongly associated with students' life satisfaction across all countries with available data. It is not possible from these results to determine the direction of the relationship between communication within the family and students' life satisfaction. Parents may be more likely to engage in these activities if their children are, in general, more satisfied with their life, which makes them more open to communicating and sharing a closer interaction with their parents and others. How adolescents perceive their parents' attempts to communicate with them can also play a role.

Figure 2.2

Parents' activities and students' life satisfaction

Students' likelihood of reporting being highly satisfied[1] with their life when their parents reported having engaged in the selected activities, after accounting for students' socio-economic status (average of all countries and economies with available data)



1. A student is classified as "very satisfied" with life if he or she reported 9 or 10 on the life-satisfaction scale. The life-satisfaction scale ranges from 0 to 10.

Notes: Statistically significant values are marked in a darker tone. All values regarding activities parents reported engaging in "at least once a week" are statistically significant.

Source: OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, Figure III.9.4, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472215

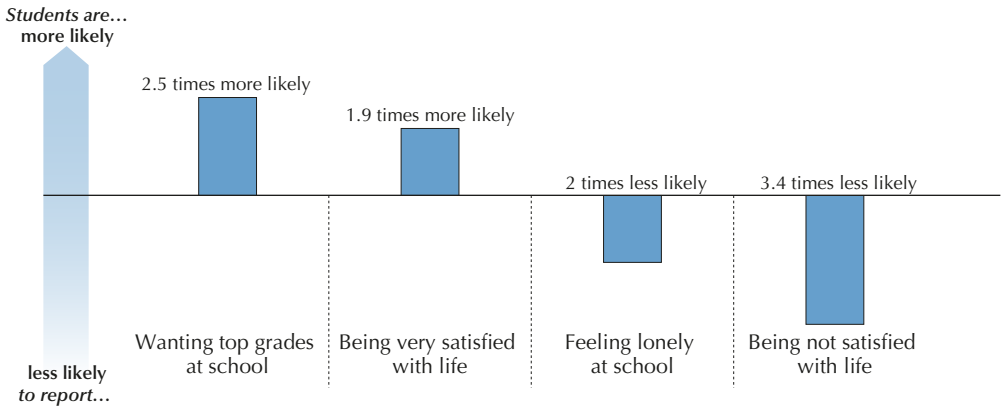
Parents' interest in school and students' performance in PISA and life satisfaction

Students' perceptions of how interested their parents are in them and in their school life can influence their own views on the value of education, the goals they set for themselves and how much effort they put into learning – all of which may affect their performance and their motivation to do well in school. These perceptions may also be related to students' feelings and beliefs about their parents' appreciation, care and love in general, which may be linked to how satisfied they are with their own life. Indeed, students who reported that their parents are interested in their school activities perform better in PISA than students who reported a lack of interest from their parents. This is true at all levels of performance in science, although this association is stronger among low-performing students. This may indicate that parental interest acts as a protective factor against low performance, without necessarily being an equally powerful catalyst for high performance. In fact, students who "agree" or "strongly agree" that their parents are interested in their school activities are also more motivated to do well in school. Across OECD countries on average, these students were 2.5 times more likely to report that they "want top grades in school" (Figure 2.3). Likewise, students who hold these perceptions of their parents' interest were almost twice as likely to report being highly satisfied with their life (reporting 9 or 10 on a scale from 0 to 10 of life satisfaction) than students who do not hold those perceptions. Students' positive views of their parents' interest in their school activities may signal some underlying protective effect in supportive parent-child relationships, as these students were also less likely to report feeling lonely at school and to report low satisfaction with life.

Figure 2.3

Parents' interest in their child's activities at school and well-being

Increased likelihood of students to report the following measures of well-being[1] if they agree or strongly agree that their parents are interested in their school activities, after accounting for students' socio-economic status (OECD average)



1. Students want top grades at school or feel lonely at school if they agree or strongly agree to related statements in the questionnaire. Students who are very (not) satisfied with life are those with self-reported values of 9 or 10 (between 0 and 4) on the life satisfaction scale, which ranges from 0 to 10 points.

Notes: The figure reports a logarithmic transformation of the odds ratios of the outcome (e.g. wanting top grades at school) related to parents' interest. The logarithm transformation makes the values of odds ratios below one and above one comparable in the graph. The label at the end of each bar displays the corresponding odds ratios (change in the likelihood of the outcome).

Source: OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, Figure III.9.7, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472242

How parents engage with their children about school

PISA asked parents how often they engage in certain activities at home with their child and whether, in the previous academic year, they had interacted with their child's teacher in school (Figure 2.4). Across the 18 countries and economies that distributed the parent questionnaire, eating the main meal together is by far the most common activity reported by parents. On average, 82% of parents reported that they eat the main meal with their child around a table, followed by 70% who reported that they spend time just talking to their child and 52% who reported that they discuss how well their child is doing at school every day or almost every day. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, more than 90% of parents eat a meal with their child daily or nearly every day. Spending time just talking, while relatively less frequent, is also practiced routinely by most parents in 18 countries with available data.

Overall, the share of parents who reported that they talk with their child about how he or she is doing at school is both smaller and more variable than that of parents who eat a meal with their child or spend time just talking to their child on a daily or nearly-daily basis (OECD, 2017a, Table III.9.1). Nonetheless, in Italy, Portugal and Spain, about 75% of parents reported that they discuss how well their child is doing at school almost every day.

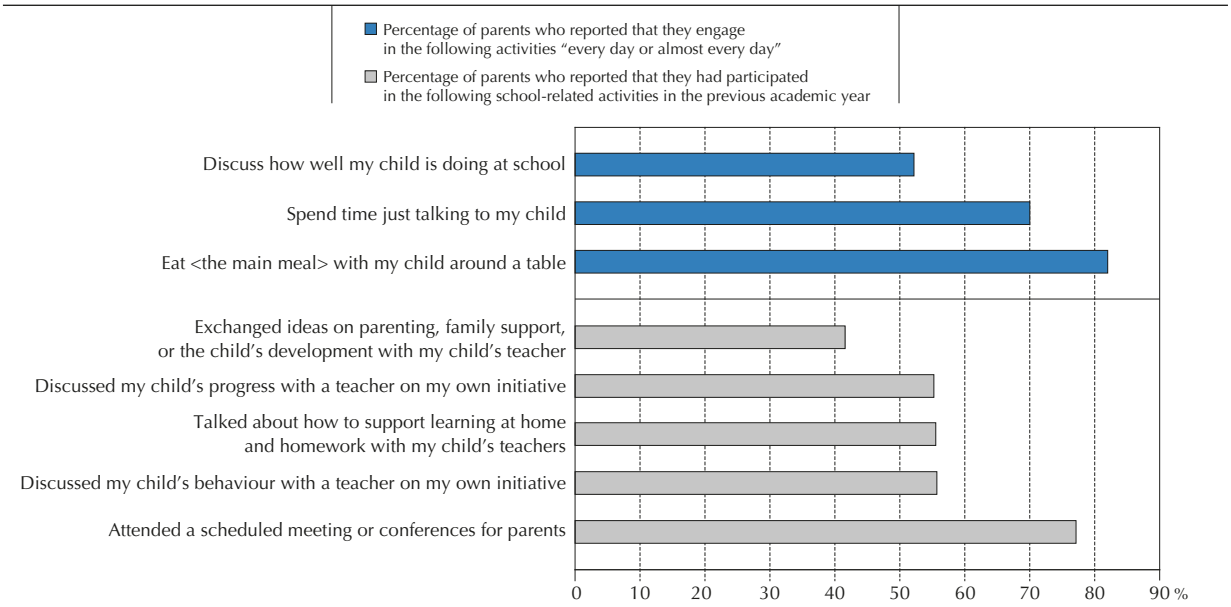
Among the school-based activities shown in Figure 2.4, the activity most frequently reported by parents is attending a scheduled meeting or conference for parents in their child's school. Some 77% of parents, on average, reported having done so during the previous academic year. Slightly more than half of the parents reported that they had "discussed my child's behaviour with a teacher on my own initiative", "discussed my child's progress with a teacher on my own initiative" or "talked about how to support learning at home and homework with my child's teachers". Compared to most other countries, smaller shares of parents (between 15% and 37%) in the Flemish Community of Belgium, Ireland, Macao (China) and Scotland (United Kingdom) reported that they had conversed with their child's teacher at their own initiative (OECD, 2017a, Table III.9.3).

On average, parents reported that they had "exchanged ideas on parenting, family support, or the child's development with my child's teacher" less often than the activities mentioned above. Around 42% of parents reported that they had done so during the previous academic year. This could reflect a perception among some parents that these topics are more private than school-related in nature. Smaller proportions of parents reported that they had engaged in other school-related activities, such as participating in local school government such as a parent council or school-management committee (19%), volunteering in physical or extracurricular activities (15%), and volunteering to support school activities (12%) (OECD, 2017a, Table III.9.1).

Figure 2.4

Parents' activities with their child and at their child's school

Percentage of parents who reported engaging in home-based activities routinely and who had participated in school-related activities during the previous academic year (average for 18 countries/economies)



Source: OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, Figure III.9.1, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.

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Overall, these results are an encouraging indication that most parents in participating countries and economies have been able to find some time to be with their children and that they have cultivated the habit of routinely talking with their children, eating with them, and participating in their school life. Such simple daily or weekly family interactions can provide students with the structure, regularity and support they need to thrive on their own.

Students' reports of their parents' interest in their life at school

Through the activities they engage in at home and at school, parents manifest their values as well as the aspirations and concerns they have for their child's life, in general, and for his or her success in school, in particular. But what parents tell their children, how they show affection and interest in them and how they support their academic achievement are ultimately subject to their children's interpretation. When asked about their perceptions regarding their parents' interest in their school life, 94% of PISA-participating students across OECD countries reported that they "agree" or "strongly agree" that "my parents are interested in my school activities" (OECD, 2017a, Table III.9.18). In most countries where this proportion is above the OECD average, there is little variation in students' responses related to socio-economic status (OECD, 2017a, Table III.9.19; and Figure 2.5). However, in countries where this proportion is below the OECD average, the share of students who "agree" or "strongly agree" that their parents are interested in their school activities is significantly smaller among disadvantaged students. Cross-country comparisons of such data need to be interpreted with care, as response behaviour for these kinds of questions may vary across culture. For example, students in several of the East Asian countries that are known for their strong parental engagement in education report fairly low levels of parental interest the education of their children.

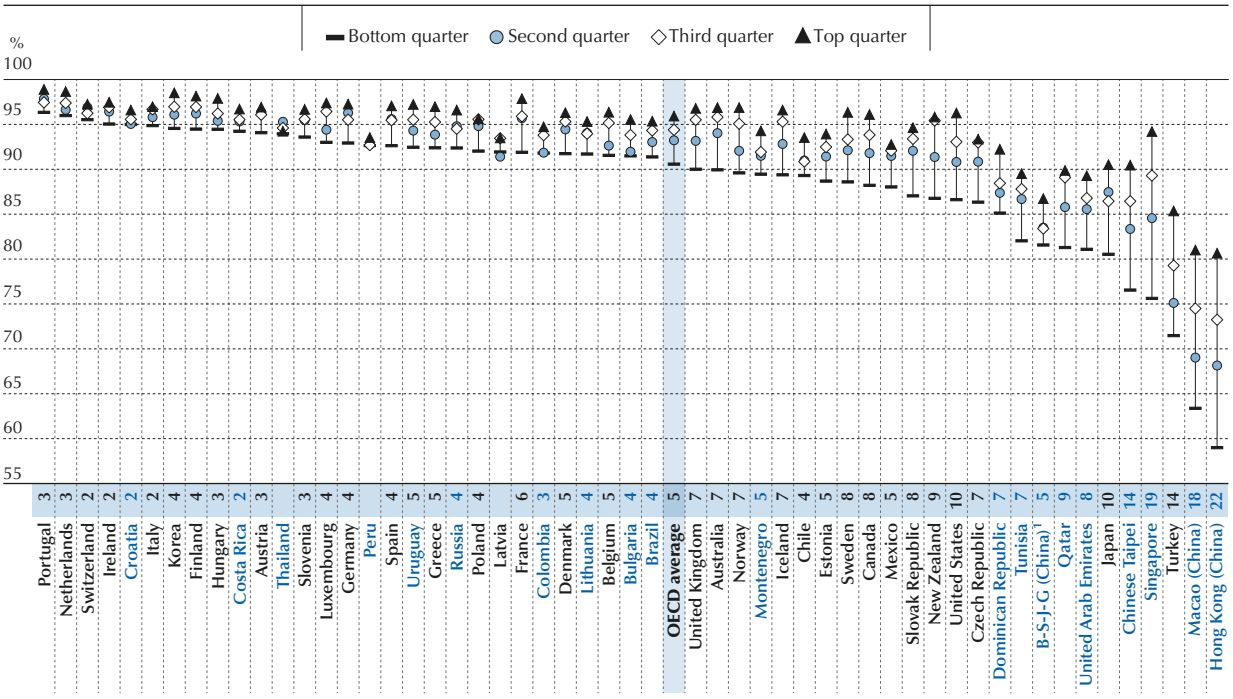
Obstacles to parents' participation in school activities

One meaningful way for school leaders to help parents engage more often and more effectively with their child's school is to help remove the barriers that hinder their regular participation in school activities. PISA asked parents what kinds of factors have hindered their participation in activities at their child's school during the previous academic year. Considering factors external to school, 36% of parents reported that "I was not able to get off from work", 33% reported that "the meeting times were inconvenient", and 13% of parents selected "I had no one to take care of my child/children", on average across 18 countries (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.5

Parents' interest in their child's activities at school, by socio-economic status

Percentage of students who reported "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement "My parents are interested in my school activities"



Note: Statistically significant differences in the percentage of students who reported that their parents are interested in their school activities, between students in the top and bottom quarters of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status, are shown next to the country/economy name.

1. B-S-J-G (see Figure 1.1).

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of students in the bottom quarter of the ESCS index who reported that their parents are interested in their school activities.

Source: OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, Figure III.9.5, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.

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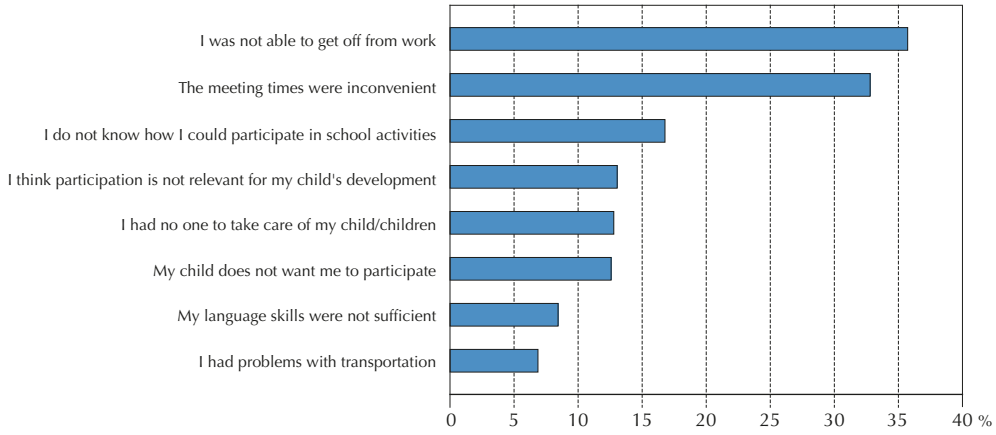
Figure 2.6

Obstacles to parents' participation in their child's school activities

Percentage of parents who agreed or strongly agreed that the following factors hindered their participation in their child's school activities in the previous year (average for 18 countries/economies)



Source: OECD (2017a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*, Figure III.9.8, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933472257

Considering barriers related to communication, 17% reported that "I do not know how I could participate in school activities". Some 13% of parents selected the following reasons as obstacles: "I think participation is not relevant for my child's development" and "My child does not want me to participate". Some 8% of parents cited language barriers, and 7% mentioned problems with transportation. Parents often face several of these obstacles at once. These barriers can be related to the neighbourhoods in which families live, the work arrangements they may have, the infrastructure and other human and social services available in their area, and the demographics of the region.

In most countries and economies, relatively more parents reported that meeting times at school were inconvenient or that they were not able to get off from work than reported other reasons for not participating (Table III.9.26 and Figure 2.6). These two reasons can overlap, as parents may have reported that meeting times are inconvenient because they cannot get time off from work to participate. In some countries, work constraints and inflexible schedules seem to be the major barriers to participation. In Latin American countries, such as Chile, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, in addition to scheduling times and inflexible work schedules, parents frequently reported a lack of childcare services and problems with transportation. These countries also show some of the largest shares of parents who reported that they do not know how they can participate in school activities, who think that their participation is not relevant for their child's development, or who reported that their child does not want them to participate. Between 29% and 46% of parents in the Dominican Republic and Mexico reported at least one of these reasons as obstacles to participation.

The PISA question about barriers to parents' participation in their child's school activities reveals the concerns of parents whose interaction with the school is constrained in various ways. But what can one learn about parents who do participate in their child's school life? Do these parents differ in any way from those who do not participate? PISA data show that parents' or guardians' levels of education, their income level, how much they spend on education, and their gender are all significant indicators of whether or not a parent takes the initiative to speak with his or her child's teacher. In particular, parents with a tertiary education were 21% more likely to report that they had "discussed their child's progress with the teacher at their own initiative" during the previous academic year, after accounting for students' performance. High-earning parents were 14% more likely, and those who spend more on education were 33% more likely to report that they had done so. Mothers or female guardians were, on average, 13% more likely than fathers or male guardians to report that they had talked to their child's teacher about his or her progress in school (survey respondents included only one of the two parents for each child); foreign-born parents were as likely as native-born parents to report that they had done so, after accounting for their child's performance in PISA.

SCHOOLS DRIVING PROGRESS AND WELL-BEING IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

While communities can play a crucial role to support schools, schools in turn can have a major impact on communities. In many countries, schools are important spaces in the local community. The time has long passed when schools were seen as merely secluded spaces where children and youngsters were dropped off and locked away while parents went to work. More and more schools are looking outward, opening up to local communities and to the learning opportunities that the local environment provides. At the same time, they are taking on activities and roles promoting the common good and well-being in the local community.

For example, schools offer extracurricular activities that enrich the life of the local community in sports, social care, voluntary work and culture. Research and development projects offer innovative answers to the needs of local enterprises and social-purpose organisations, while enhancing entrepreneurialism among students and providing real-world experiences. The concept of "service-learning", which expresses the learning value of students engaging in providing services to the local community, offers an appealing vision of the opportunities available to schools to drive progress and well-being in local communities.

In connecting to the local and regional environment, schools also engage many stakeholders to work together to improve the well-being of everyone involved. Schools not only engage parents and families in learning, but also draw on the various resources provided by local enterprises, community organisations, social services, and sports and cultural institutions, such as museums, theatres or libraries. Yet, because local communities differ in wealth and cultural capital, schools do not find themselves on a level playing field. Geographical segregation can lead to unequal opportunities for schools to benefit from engaging with the local community, although policy can overcome community disadvantage by providing targeted funding for schools in disadvantaged areas to offer extended services to their community (Box 2.3).

Box 2.3. Extended schools in Northern Ireland (United Kingdom)

In Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), the Department of Education launched its extended schools programme in May 2006. It aims to improve levels of educational achievement for disadvantaged children and young people by providing the additional support that they might need to help them reach their full potential. Over the following ten years, the programme has provided over GBP 100 million of funding to allow schools serving the most disadvantaged areas to offer a wide range of services or activities outside of the normal school day to help meet the learning and development needs of pupils, their families and local communities. Extended school activities are designed to support learning, raise school standards and promote healthy lifestyles, enabling schools to work closely with members of the wider community and connect local people with local services. Some examples include breakfast or homework clubs, sport activities, art, drama, information and communication technology, programmes for parents and families and community use of school premises.

A video (https://youtu.be/-aBPTt7m_78) describes the programme and the positive impact it has had on local communities.

Source: Department of Education of Northern Ireland (n.d.), Extended schools programme, Department of Education, Bangor, www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/extended-schools-programme.

Schools can also become partners in serving the needs of local communities, especially in disadvantaged communities or through working with populations at risk of exclusion or distress (Boxes 2.4 and 2.5). In recent refugee crises in various parts of the world, there have been inspiring examples of schools playing a socially and ethically responsible role in providing help, shelter and assistance to refugees.

Box 2.4. Community schools and early childhood education in the United States

Collective impact initiatives have proliferated in the United States, premised on the idea that multifaceted problems require multifaceted responses and addressing the needs of low-income children requires schools partnering with community organisations to support them and their families in a co-ordinated fashion across education, health and social services. In these initiatives, schools are reaching out to families through community organisations, beginning in the early childhood years and then continuing with school-based social, health and even job-related services once the children are enrolled in school. Successful initiatives in Ohio and Oregon are worth highlighting in this respect.

In Cincinnati (Ohio), all schools in the Cincinnati Public Schools district are community schools, known as Community Learning Centers (CLCs). In this city district, which includes a large minority population, this strategy came in response to declining enrolment and an exodus of families in the 1990s. Most schools have full-time resource co-ordinators, and ensuring that all partner supports are targeted towards meeting each school's specific academic goals is central to the district's approach to CLCs, as is an emphasis on community engagement and input. Cincinnati's CLCs have expanded in two ways to also serve as hubs for children and their families before they enter kindergarten. First, the district has begun increasing the number of preschool programmes housed in elementary schools, giving younger children access to the same supports as K-12 students, including health clinics and vision and dental services. Second, a non-profit has begun piloting early childhood resource co-ordinators at CLCs, assigning them to reach out to families with young children and organise networks of early childhood providers that are anchored by an elementary school CLC. These networks share instructional practices and work on transitions, resource referrals and hosting joint events for children and families. Since implementing CLCs, Cincinnati has gone from being one of Ohio's worst-performing districts to becoming the state's first urban district recognised as "effective". It is now regarded as a national leader in community schooling.

In Multnomah County (Oregon), the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Service System supports 86 community schools in this diverse county that includes Portland and five other districts. The county is the managing partner for the system and, in that role, contracts with non-profit agencies that hire and support full-time site managers at the community schools. The site managers work with school staff and community partners to align resources,

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including after-school programmes, with the school's academic and social-emotional goals. They support family engagement and advocacy and co-ordinate resource referral for family basic needs and other services. In recent years, Multnomah County has also extended its work to include early childhood programmes. In addition to increasing the number of preschool classrooms in its schools, the county implemented a highly regarded three-week summer early kindergarten transition class across many of the community schools, launched a vigorous kindergarten registration campaign and supported home visits by kindergarten teachers. SUN is also implementing a new pilot project in eight schools, whereby facilitators in these schools reach out to families with young children before their children start school and engage them in school activities such as play-and-learn groups in school buildings. SUN is now working with these schools on how they will begin collaborating with the family childcare providers located near each participating elementary school.

Source: Jacobson, D. (2018), "A powerful convergence: Community schools and early childhood education", *Phi Delta Kappan,* Vol. 99/5, pp. 19-24, www.kappanonline.org/david-jacobson-powerful-convergence-community-schools-early-childhood-education/.

Creating wider partnerships is also an outstanding feature of innovative schools. They have an urgent drive to avoid isolation and are aware that significant innovation cannot be achieved and sustained alone. They look to build and maintain the capital they need as organisations (social capital, intellectual capital and professional capital) through forging alliances, partnerships and networks. They extend themselves beyond given institutional and organisational boundaries and introduce their learners to a range of other possibilities and resources, with benefits for both the learners and the community.

Box 2.5. Community schools in the Flemish Community of Belgium

Inspired by community schools and extended schools in various countries and by recent developments in the Netherlands, a number of initiatives started around the turn of the century in the Flemish Community of Belgium to develop a concept of *brede* school (which could be translated as "lifewide school"). The purpose of such initiatives, mostly situated in primary schools, was to firmly integrate schooling and learning in the network of social, medical, cultural and welfare services of a local community in order to develop an integrated approach to the social conditions of effective learning. The local community is seen as an integrated resource of services that help to support the learning and development of all children, more specifically those from a disadvantaged background.

One of the pioneering schools was *De Buurt* ("The neighbourhood"), an innovative primary school in a disadvantaged area in the city of Ghent. The school itself was oriented towards experiential and child-centred pedagogy, but was also embedded in a wide network of services and initiatives with strong impact in the local community: a clubhouse, a café, local community work, an evening school, services to help parents with their children's homework, etc. The school opened up its infrastructure for local associations and initiatives.

Similar local initiatives have spread across the Flemish Community of Belgium. The public education network GO! developed a policy to support *brede scholen* and to generalise its principles in all its primary schools by 2020. A *brede* school should be a very open and transparent glass house integrated in an extended social and cultural network in the local community. The benefits of this approach are manifold: children learn effectively in interaction with their environment, not only during school hours but also in their leisure time; parents, local associations and stakeholders and ordinary citizens become active participants in creating the educational environment; and schools that adopt these principles are more positively valued and supported by their local communities.

The development of *brede scholen* has been supported both by local governments and the Flemish government. At the local level, cities and municipalities can reinforce the opportunities for *brede scholen* by supporting partnerships and synergies between various social and cultural services. Especially in the context of urban renewal initiatives, with the establishment of new infrastructure and social services, the concept has become influential in shaping an integrated and co-ordinated approach. At the Flemish level the principles of *brede* school have inspired the criteria and decisions for new school building projects. Openness, integration in the community and synergies with other social and cultural services are now seen as very favourable conditions for the approval of new school building projects.

Sources: GO! *onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap* [GO! education of the Flemish Community] (2012), *Brede open school: Visietekst van het GO!*, GO! *onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap,* Brussels, www.g-o.be/media/1927/go-visietekst-bos-definitief_2013.pdf and related web page www.g-o.be/brede-open-school/.

When looking at innovative schools, the range of some of their partnerships is quite impressive, as illustrated by the following examples (these case studies and those that follow are taken from OECD Reviews of Regional Innovation [OECD, 2013a]).

Jenaplan-Schule (Thuringia, Germany) co-operates with diverse institutional partners in the city and region. Prominent among the partners are Goepel Electronics, the Planwerkstatt, the Schiller House, the Romantic House, the One-World-House, the Public Radio Channel Jena, the public cinema in the Schillerhof, Kommunal Real Estate Office of the City of Jena, the Ernst-Abbe Public Library, the University of Applied Sciences Jena, the University of Jena, the Protestant Adult Education Thuringia, the Philosophia e.V., the Imaginata, the Heritage Office, the City Museum Göhre, the Diskurs e.V., Grund genug e.V., the Theater House Jena and the German National Theatre in Weimar.

The starting point of *Liikkeelle*! (On the Move!) (Finland) was an initiative of the Finnish National Board of Education, which attracted the attention of the town of Kalajoki and the Science Center Heureka. They applied for the funding together, building on existing social networks and good practices. An important further partner has been *PaikkaOppi* (Location Learning), which collaborated in developing an interactive virtual map (their primary aim is to produce an interactive map to support the teaching of geography, geographical information systems (GIS) and environmental studies in schools). The template for the map came from the National Land Survey of Finland. Other partners are the universities of Helsinki and Oulu which have helped to create new teaching methods, such as time-space-paths, and a jointly organised course for student teachers of the arts and upper secondary school students. In addition, the universities have contributed by studying *Liikkeelle*! and producing scientific knowledge and a survey report about the project. Commercial actors are also involved to further develop the virtual environment to accommodate the needs of teachers and learners.

A range of institutions collaborate with the *Centro de Educación Infantil y Primaria* (CEIP) Andalucía (Seville, Spain) in different ways: the Cajasol Foundation subsidises library activities; RENFE (the Spanish railways network) finances the travel expenses to Madrid of some students; the Universidad de Sevilla (teachers and students of the Faculty of Psychology) do some hours in the school in exchange for credits and participate in interactive groups; and the Universidad Pablo de Olavide (scholarship holders of the Flora Tristán student residence and some teachers) take part in interactive groups and in workshops, mainly on the radio.

Horizontal connectedness

As illustrated in OECD Innovative Learning Environments project, innovative schools are often characterised by a high level of horizontal connectedness to their environment. In many innovative learning environments, inquiry-based or problem-based learning is defined by real-world problems and carried out with real-world partners, such as universities and vocational training centres, the local business community, libraries, museums, theatres and sports clubs.

The early childhood development centre CENDI (Nuevo León, Mexico) draws significant content from the daily life of the community, its families, its neighbourhood stories, social and demographic developments, and traditions to enrich its educational programme.

The Culture Path programme (Kuopio, Finland) is for all elementary schools of Kuopio and involves the community in students' learning process. Students follow one "path" for each grade level, such as the library path or the music path. In so doing, students visit at least one local cultural institution or other cultural destination outside the school environment during the school year. These field trips are accompanied by various learning activities at school before and after the trip, and each path is planned according to the requirements and the curriculum for the specific grade level.

Another boundary crossed was between participating in school activities and contributing to adult activities outside of school. The students engaged much more seriously in measurements similar to those reported in the national media. For example, the students asked more insightful questions and realised that conducting the measurements and documenting the results was surprisingly hard and messy (*Liikkeelle*! [On the Move!], Finland).

In the Enrichment Programmes at Rodica Primary School (Slovenia), students participate in voluntary activities, such as helping nursery school teachers or helping in schools for children with special needs.

One of the unique features of the *Dobbantó* (Springboard) programme in Hungary is that, by design, the place of study is not just the classroom; opportunities for learning outside the school are part of the curriculum.

At the Yuille Park P-8 Community College (Victoria, Australia), the school and the community are very closely linked as part of the Community Learning Hub, which includes education, health and facilities for all members of the community. The building is designed so that the community facilities can be accessed from within or outside the school. Having access to these is particularly important for the community, as it is one of the most disadvantaged in Victoria, and many parents are unemployed.

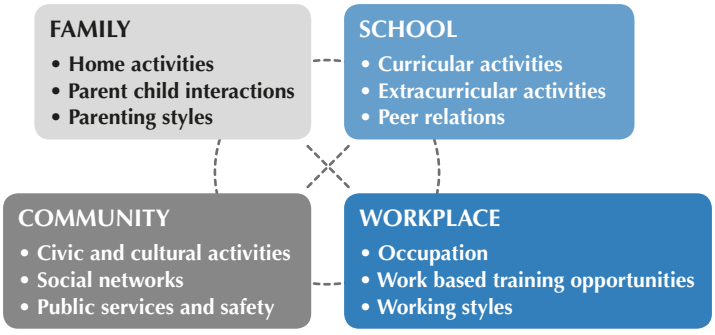
The school library at CEIP Andalucía (Seville, Spain) supports the publication of the school newspaper, *Nevipens Andalucía*. *Nevipens* means "news" in Romany. The idea of the newspaper is to get students closer to the press and make them assume the role of journalists. They prepare the different sections of a newspaper: leading articles, news stories on the school and the neighbourhood, culture (with a section on children's literature), reading and library, citizenship, puzzles, dedications, etc. The newspaper helps to open communication and participation of families and other educational agents in the neighbourhood and develops linguistic communication and social citizenship skills in learners.

Multidimensional ecosystems of learning

The diversity of social contexts in which learning takes place highlights the value of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Formal learning involves institutionalised, curriculum-based learning and teaching (such as learning that occurs within the education system) or workplace learning. Informal learning can take place within work, family or community contexts. It is often more unintentional from the learner's perspective. This type of learning happens, for instance, when children play. Non-formal learning is situated between formal and informal learning. It is structured and intentional, but it is not regulated, accredited or formally supported.

Hence, learning takes place in a variety of social settings, summarised in the current framework as the school, the family, the community and the workplace. Within each type of context we can distinguish a number of specific elements (Figure 2.7). Each context contributes to the development of cognitive, social and emotional skills, although their relative importance will change depending on an individual's stage in life. For instance, parents are clearly crucial during infancy and early childhood, but school and the community become increasingly important as a child enters formal education and interacts with diverse social networks. The workplace, in turn, is a key learning context, particularly during late adolescence and early adulthood.

Figure 2.7
A framework of learning context



Source: OECD (2015a), *Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills*, Figure 2.7, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264226159-en.

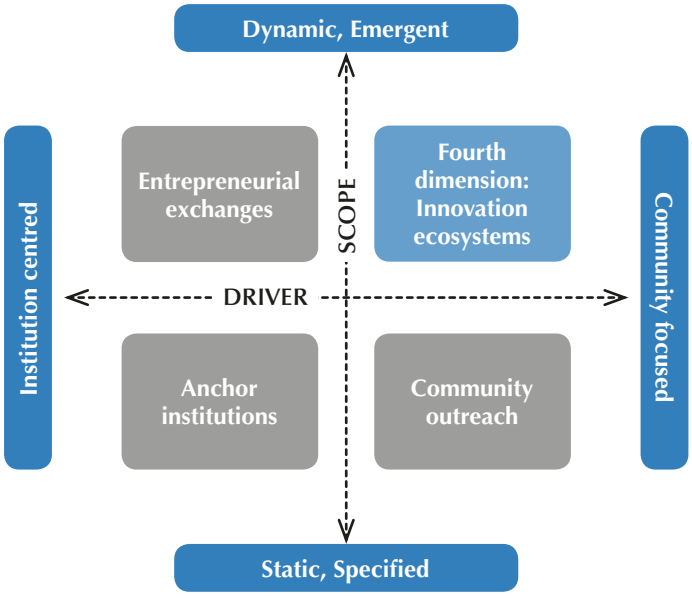
Schools can engage with their communities in different ways

Schools' engagement with their communities can take different forms:

- schools' standing as anchor institutions in their communities, with benefits arising from just being there
- schools' entrepreneurial trading relationships with different client groups, providing educational services to students and employers, and transferring knowledge-based expertise to industry, policy makers and public services
- involvement of schools in the life of the wider community through a variety of corporate social responsibility activities, ranging from outreach programmes with schools or community groups to public lectures and cultural events, and opening campus facilities to public and outside users.

Figure 2.8 illustrates schools' engagement with their external communities along two axes, from provider-centred to community-focused, and from static and specific activities to dynamic and emergent solutions. This framework captures the three domains described here, while highlighting a fourth space of open and collaborative partnerships through which schools and stakeholder communities work together to resolve shared needs and to create collective economic and social benefits. This mode of engagement goes well beyond institution-centred interactions and can help develop local or regional responses to economic and social challenges.

Figure 2.8
Dimensions of school/community engagement



Source: OECD (2017b), *Schools at the Crossroads of Innovation in Cities and Regions*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264282766-en, adapted from Stevenson and Boxall (2015), *Communities of Talent: Universities in Local Learning and Innovation Ecosystems,* PA Consulting, London.

Serving the community through extracurricular activities

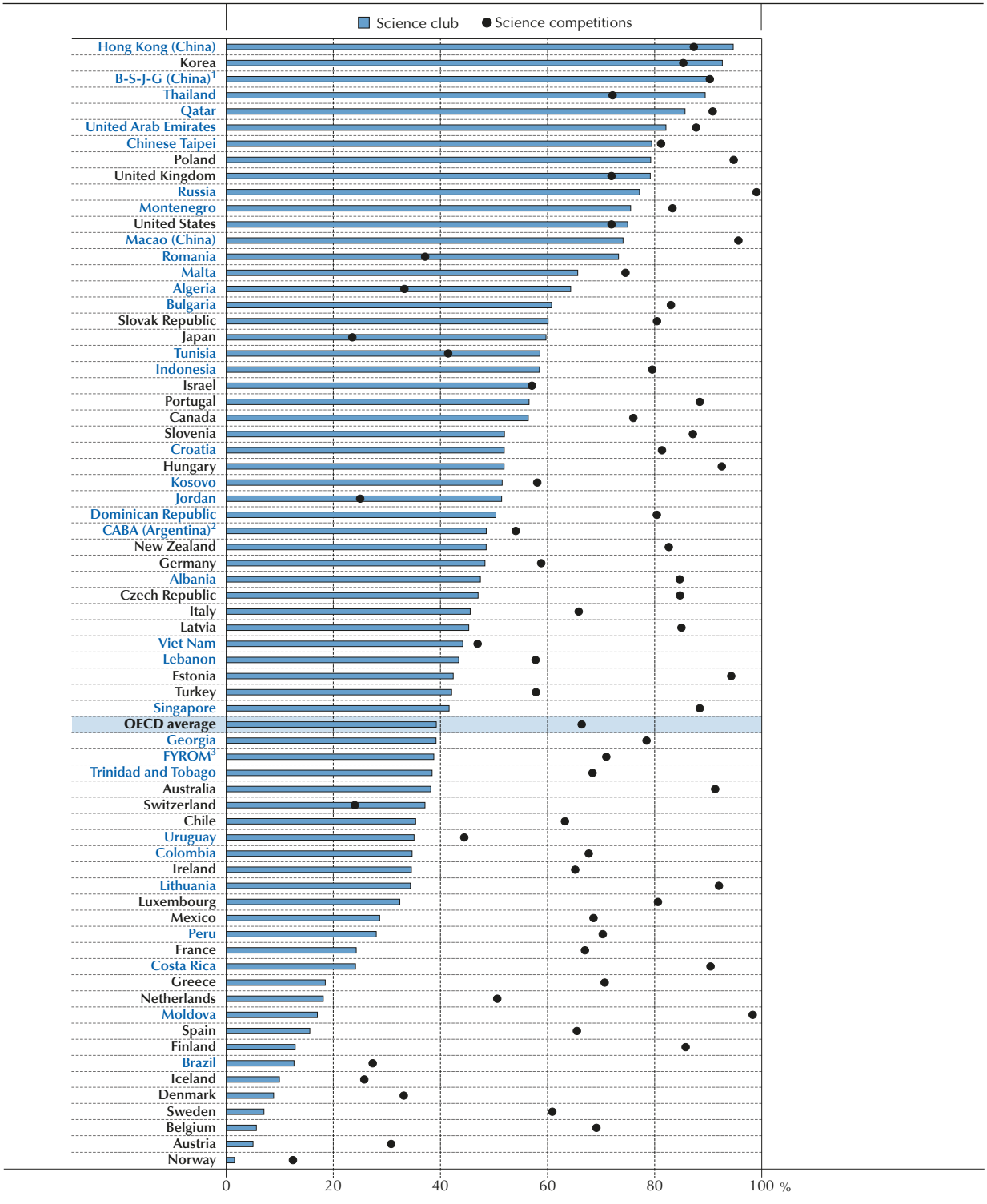
In many school systems, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to engage in the local community and to develop social and emotional skills, including civic engagement. Extracurricular activities refer to activities that complement academic content, such as sports, clubs, student government associations, volunteer work and school chores. These activities provide students with real-life situations outside the classroom, with the help of adult facilitators who can act as mentors.

Principals in the PISA 2015 science assessment were asked if their school offers a science club and science competitions at the school (Figure 2.9). Across OECD countries, 39% of students are enrolled in schools that offer a science club, and 66% attend schools that offer science competitions. Such offerings are beneficial to student learning: on average across OECD countries, students in schools that offer science competitions score 36 points higher in science (12 points higher after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile) and 21 points higher if the school offers a science club (6 points higher after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile). Across OECD countries, students who attend schools that offer science-related extracurricular activities hold stronger epistemic beliefs, such as believing that scientific ideas sometimes change or that evidence comes from experiments. However, access to these extracurricular activities is uneven, and advantaged schools offer science clubs and competitions more often than disadvantaged schools. For example, while 53% of students enrolled in disadvantaged schools are offered science competitions, 78% of students in advantaged schools are offered this activity, on average across OECD countries.

Figure 2.9

Science-related extracurricular activities offered at school

Results based on school principals' reports



1. B-S-J-G (see Figure 1.1).
2. CABA (Argentina) refers to the adjudicated region of the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.
3. FYROM refers to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of schools offering a science club.

Source: OECD (2016a), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, Figure II.2.9, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933435520

Countries approach the organisation of extracurricular activities in schools in different ways. In the majority of OECD countries, the organisation of extracurricular activities is not formally regulated. The implementation of these activities is often left to the discretion of local authorities or individual schools. However, in some countries, there are formal national guidelines for extracurricular activities that specify the hours and types of activities. For example, extracurricular activities are organised as an integral part of school education in Japan (Box 2.6). The Japanese curriculum (Courses of Study) for primary school students specifies minimum hours that schools should secure for four types of special activities: homeroom activities, student government, club activities and school events. For school events, the curriculum suggests organising specific activities, such as school trips, through which students can experience intensive group interactions and learn to be respectful of others. Besides these activities specified in the curriculum, most schools organise the cleaning of school facilities by students. This provides an opportunity for students to learn ways to collaborate with others and discipline themselves, while helping to maintain a clean learning environment. Korea also has similar guidelines on extracurricular activities, specifying time allocation for "creative experiential activities", including self-regulated activities, club activities, voluntary activities and career education.

Box 2.6. Collaborative development network in Japan

The Community Co-operation Network for Learning and Education (*Chiiki Gakkou Kyoudou Honbu*), launched in 2016 by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), is a system designed to promote collaboration between schools and local communities and encourage local residents and organisations to participate in an open network.

The network is based on a number of previous projects, including the following:

1) The School Support Regional Headquarters initiative (*Gakkou Shien Chiiki Honbu*), launched in 2008, aims to promote the participation of local volunteers to support schools. The school support activities range from relatively easy tasks, such as patrolling school routes and tending school flower beds, to more systematic tasks, such as setting up a community centre within a school.

2) The Programme to Promote After-School Classes for Children (*Houkago Kodomo Kyoushitsu*), launched in 2007, provides children with learning support and opportunities for various hands-on activities after school, with participation of community members.

3) The Saturday Educational Activities project, launched in 2014, aims to provide children with educational activities on Saturdays, in partnership with community members and organisations.

4) The Community Tutoring School for the Future project (*Chiiki Mirai Juku*), launched in 2015, is community-based learning support for junior and senior high-school students who need learning assistance.

By 2016, around 10 000 of the 29 453 public compulsory education schools in Japan (19 974 elementary schools and 9 479 junior high schools) were working with about 4 500 School Support Regional Headquarters across the country. About 16 000 After-School Classes for Children were conducted at public elementary schools. In addition, Saturday educational support activities, carried out with the help of local residents and companies or other organisations, are conducted at about 12 000 public elementary, junior high schools or high schools. The newly launched Community Co-operation Network for Learning and Education is expected to allow comprehensive co-ordination of school-support activities by local residents that have been provided independently.

Source: MEXT (2016a), *OECD-Japan Education Policy Review: Country Background Report*, MEXT, Tokyo; MEXT (2016b), *"Community School no secchi joukyou" [The status of establishment of Community Schools]*, MEXT, Tokyo, www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/community/shitei/detail/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2016/06/16/1372303_04.pdf; MEXT (2016c), *"Gakkou, katei, chiiki no renkei kyouryoku suishin jigyou oyobi chiiki no yutakana shakai shigen o katsuyou shita doyoubi no kyouiku shien taisei tou kouchiku jigyou jisshi joukyou" [Implementation status of the "Promotion of Coordination and Collaboration among Schools, Families and Communities" project and the "Development of Educational Support System for Saturdays Based on Rich Social Resources of Communities" project]*, MEXT, Tokyo, http://manabi-mirai.mext.go.jp/assets/files/H28jissijoukyou/28jissijokyo.pdf; MEXT (2016d), *"Chiiki to Gakkou no Renkei, Kyoudou no Suishin ni Muketa Sankou Jireishuu" [Collection of Reference Examples for Promotion of Coordination and Collaboration between Community and Schools]*, MEXT, Tokyo, http://manabi-mirai.mext.go.jp/assets/files/sankojirei.pdf.

Whether there are formal regulations or not, schools and local education authorities have greater autonomy to plan extracurricular activities than those included in the curriculum. Since schools are less constrained by the physical boundaries of classrooms (and, in some cases, of schools), facilitators or mentors of extracurricular activities can flexibly mobilise real-life activities and scenarios to teach life skills that typically require strong social and emotional capability. Extracurricular activities often stimulate students to actively contribute to designing their own learning experience. They can also provide opportunities for schools to strengthen linkages with the community.

School-community partnerships can also provide additional opportunities for social and emotional learning, by improving children's access to extracurricular activities, and can enhance their engagement in the community.

In Denmark, a public school reform has been in place since 2014 to enhance a school-community link that aims to improve extracurricular activities. With this reform, schools are required to collaborate with the surrounding community by involving local sports clubs, cultural centres, art and musical schools and various associations. The municipalities are required to commit to ensuring school-community co-operation.

In Portugal, PEDIME (Strategic Plan of Inter-municipal Development of Education) is an integrated and innovative plan to combat school failure based on joint work between the 13 municipalities and between the municipalities and their respective schools, valuing convergence and complementarity with strategic plans of schools.

In the United Kingdom, the Outward-Facing Schools programme at the Sinnott Foundation promotes schools' links with communities and parents by providing fellowships to education practitioners in secondary schools. Their initiatives include active collaboration by schools with local groups and businesses to create community work opportunities for students, such as volunteering at care homes and teaching at local primary schools.

Service-learning

Learning based on engaging with the local community is often referred to as service-learning. At its most basic level, academic service-learning is an experiential learning pedagogy in which education is delivered by engaging students in community service that is integrated with the learning objectives of core academic curricula. Academic service-learning is premised on providing students with contextualised learning experiences that are based on authentic, real-time situations in their communities. Using the community as a resource for learning, the primary goal of academic service-learning is to enhance students' understanding of the broader value and utility of academic lessons within the traditional disciplines (e.g. science, mathematics, social studies, language arts and fine arts), while engaging young people in social activities through which they derive and implement solutions to important community issues. Ideally, the community service the students perform helps them better understand how the academic concepts taught in the classroom can be applied to situations in their everyday lives. In this regard, academic service-learning seeks to simultaneously enhance students' academic achievement and their civic development.

The literature on service-learning reveals that the community-service activities in which students are engaged tackle a broad range of societal issues, including those concerning the environment, health, public safety, human needs, literacy and multiculturalism. In implementing service-learning activities, students can address a societal issue either through direct service (e.g. serving food at a homeless shelter) or indirect service (e.g. producing a research report that provides recommendations to the homeless shelter for improving its food distribution). Regardless of the type or focus of the service activity, academic service-learning is designed to help students apply their academic content knowledge to act on authentic and often complex societal issues.

In contrast to other forms of project-based learning, academic service-learning projects are purposefully community-focused and community-based, are usually conducted in partnership with members of the community, and, most importantly, are designed with a community need in mind. In essence, like a textbook or laboratory, the community becomes a resource for learning whereby the environs outside school offer students authentic learning opportunities to use their academic knowledge and skills to construct and implement solutions to real-life social problems in the local community or broader society.

The emphasis on community service and its use of the community as a resource for academic study intentionally shifts the role that students play in the learning process. They become producers rather than recipients of knowledge, active rather than passive learners, and providers rather than recipients of assistance. Unlike most other experiential learning approaches, academic service-learning places students in situations where they focus less on using resources

for their own gain and more on acting as a resource for the benefit of others. Service-learning creates an educational atmosphere whereby learners confront real-life issues through community-engaged experiences that call on them to develop meaningful, academically-relevant actions that have real consequences for the community and themselves. Perhaps more than any other experiential or community-engaged learning pedagogy, academic service-learning has a strong civic dimension at its core. Its emphasis on community service establishes an inherent civic dimension that promotes social responsibility and citizenship among participants.

Learning to engage

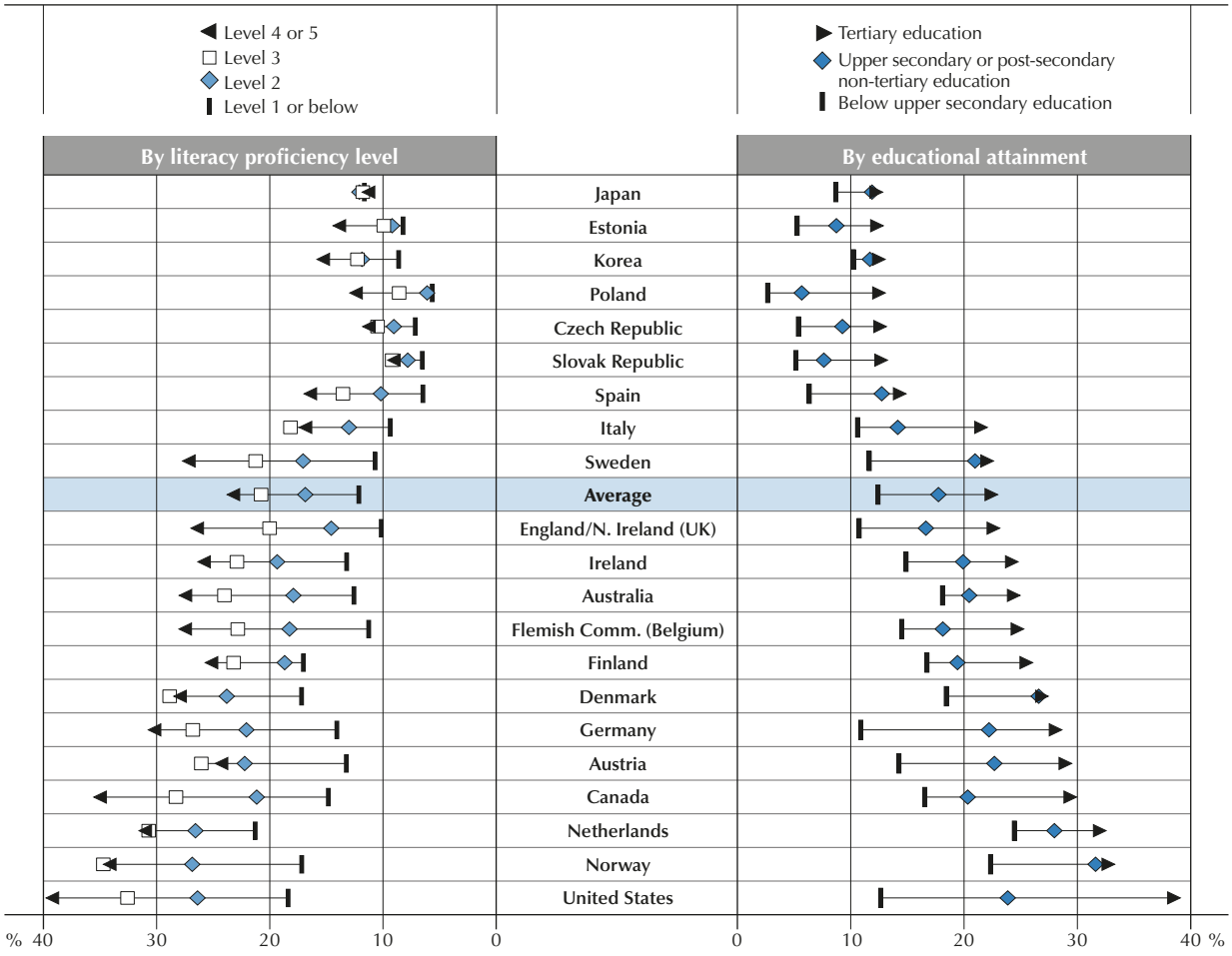
Education, whether measured in terms of educational attainment or skills acquired, seems to have a strong impact on the civic and community engagement shown later in life. Figure 2.10, based on data of the Survey of Adult Skills, a product of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) shows the strength of the relationship, but also that the strength differs from country to country.

On average, better-educated individuals are more likely to exhibit higher levels of civic and social engagement than the less educated. Also, better-educated parents are more likely to stimulate their children's civic engagement, and an educated society in turn tends to be more cohesive and have less crime. However, the precise mechanisms and pathways through which education promotes civic and social engagement remain unclear.

Figure 2.10

Percentage of adults reporting that they volunteer at least once a month, by educational attainment and literacy proficiency level (2012)

Survey of Adult Skills, 25-64 year-olds



Countries are ranked in ascending order of the proportion of people with tertiary education reporting that they volunteer at least once a month.

Source: OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933116680

Partnering with business and cultural bodies in the local community

Contemporary learning environments often develop strong connections with partners to extend their boundaries, resources and learning spaces.

Cultural partnerships can be very useful in extending the boundaries of the learning environment beyond formal school provision, and in offering access to arts materials and experiences directly. As in the case of the Fiskars Elementary School (Finland), artists and craftspeople become part of the educational workforce too.

> The Fiskars Elementary School (Finland) may be defined as an enlarged learning environment. The basis for the model and its central working method are the workshops that are developed, and organised in co-operation with such actors as the Artisans, Designers and Artists Cooperative of the village of Fiskars.
>
> Thanks to the cultural offer of Sant Sadurní D'Anoia and other nearby towns, all students at *Instituto Escuela Jacint Verdaguer* (Spain) annually attend a performance of each artistic discipline (music, dance and theatre), visit exhibitions and have similar cultural experiences.
>
> The Culture Path programme (Finland) has been implemented in close collaboration with local cultural institutions, schools and teachers, as well as other relevant interest groups, such as the Eastern Regional Centre for Dance, the Children's Cultural Centre Lastu, many cultural associations and private culture activists. The project aims to produce a service that is easily accessible, and which enables both students and teachers to experience culture and art as a source of learning and enjoyment. The programme has nine paths, one for each grade level: library, art, museum, media, environment, dance, music, theatre and the K-9 card. With the K-9 card, a Grade 9 student can use the city's cultural services for free, or at minimal cost, after "trekking" for eight years on the Culture Path.

These, and many other examples of partnerships with museums, galleries and theatres, and also with radio and media companies, extend the materials and the means of learning as well as the range of professionals involved.

Another channel through which schools partner with and contribute to the local economy and community is their engagement with local business and industry (Box 2.7). Some corporate partnerships may be the more conventional community links of businesses helping through taking a funding or sponsorship role, but they may also be much more oriented to the learning that takes place.

> The Lobdeburgschule (Thuringia, Germany) co-operates with many regional partners. This includes membership in *Berufsstart plus* (a project for transition into vocational training) of the Eastern Thuringian Apprenticeship Network. Other co-operation partners include a car dealer, an educational institution, an education centre in Jena, the regional office of the German Children and Youth Foundation, the University of Applied Science of Jena, a registered association, the International Academy Berlin for Innovative Pedagogy, Psychology and Economics, the University of Berlin, the University of Jena, a day-care centre, the vocational training centre for health and social issues, a theatre, the adult education centre Jena, and the vocational training centre in Jena-Göschwitz.
>
> The connection between schools and the economic activity of the surrounding community is exemplified in the *Instituto Agrícola Pascual Baburizza* (Chile). The education of these students is guided by a group of farmers from the community, who are part of the school board and make sure that what is taught at the school is linked to real needs ("learning by doing and producing"). Internships must be done in real situations to train people and professionals. The students learn about employers' demands, and it is expected that they will continue to develop throughout their professional lives. Everything that students learn in internships must have a practical application. All of this is done in the countryside, the "big classroom".

Box 2.7. School partnership with the local community in Portugal

Within the framework of experimental teaching, one school in Alcanena (Santarem region) works with a number of partners: the Alviela Science Center; Nersant (a regional business association); the *Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologias da Universidade de Coimbra*, the *Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologias da Universidade Nova de Lisboa* and the *Instituto Politécnico de Tomar* (higher education institutions); and the Technological Center for the Leather Industry.

...

The aim of these partnerships is to increase student exposure to the community and blend classroom learning with practical experiences. Each partnership serves a different purpose:

- Alviela Science Center: This partnership aims to improve the skills and knowledge of students through participation in workshops and interactive exhibitions.
- Nersant Business Association: This partnership aims to improve students' entrepreneurship skills and to equip them with the skills needed to design, develop and communicate a business idea for new products.
- Higher education institutions: This partnership provides students with opportunities to interact with researchers from different fields. Students can work with these researchers on projects and benefit from their expertise and guidance.
- Technological Center for the Leather Industry: This partnership familiarises students with the local leather industry and tannery procedures. Students can also make use of labs in the technological centre for their own research related to leather.

These partnerships help ground learning in real-life situations that require practical solutions. Due to this, students in Grade 10 grade were motivated to design a project using the industrial waste of the leather industry to develop an eco-friendly battery, which was both more efficient and more sustainable.

Source: Ministry of Education (2018).

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

Poverty need not be destiny

What wise parents want for their children is what communities should want for all children. But there can be tensions between innovation, flexibility and openness in an education systems, on the one hand, and coherence and equity, on the other.

There has been much discussion on the extent to which the performance of nations on tests like PISA is shaped by the socio-economic context of families, schools and communities. In all countries taking the PISA test, learning outcomes are associated with the social background of students and schools, highlighting that social background is a major challenge for teachers and schools. However, the strength of the relationship between social background and the quality of learning outcomes varies substantially across education systems, highlighting that poor results are not an inevitable outcome of social disadvantage. On the PISA 2015 assessment, the 10% most disadvantaged students in Estonia or Vietnam performed at the level of the average student in the OECD area (Figure 2.11). If the poorest students in Estonia, Shanghai (China) or Vietnam can perform at a level that would be associated in western countries with typical performance, why should not the poorest children in these other countries do as well as their counterparts in Estonia, Shanghai (China) or Vietnam?

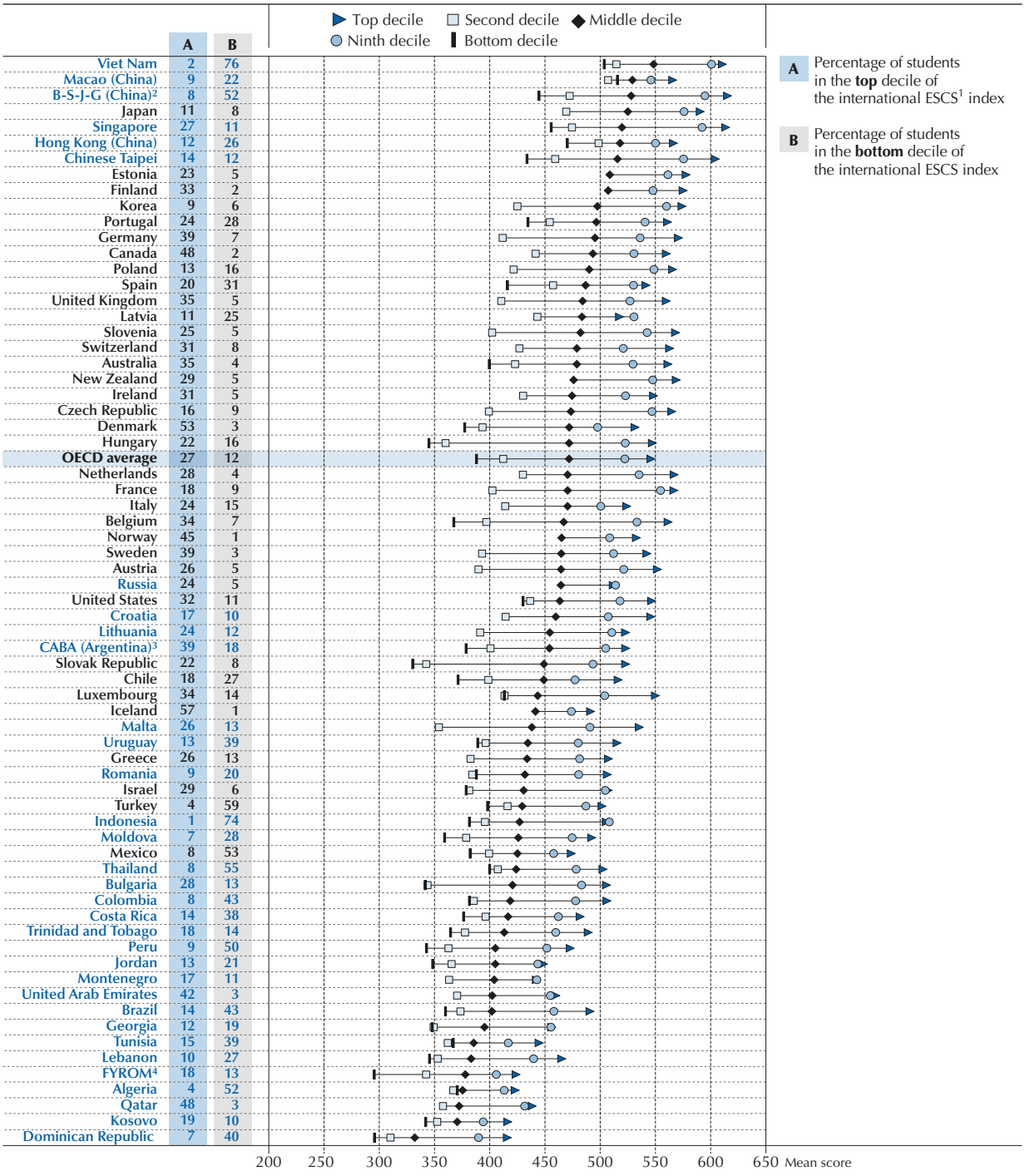
Aligning resources with needs

PISA data show that one of the most important factors that can affect a student's performance is the socio-economic background of the other students in the class. The implication is that one of the most important resources to be allocated to schools and classrooms is the students themselves. Germany failed to join the northern European nations in moving away from a tripartite secondary school organisation based on social class in the years leading up to and just following the Second World War. This has made it difficult for that country to provide its lower-income students, especially immigrant students, with the quality of education that they need to have a decent chance to get a qualification and become productive members of German society. The post-PISA move in Germany to reduce the system from three to two divisions has contributed to the improvement in student achievement in recent years. Along the same lines, Poland produced a substantial improvement in overall performance by converting a secondary school system that was mainly organised according to the social class of its 15-year-olds to one in which comprehensive schools enrol all social classes.

Many OECD countries still face difficulties in equipping socio-economically disadvantaged schools to effectively address the challenges they face and offer their students a high-quality education (Figure 2.12). Nevertheless, some education systems have taken active steps to improve the alignment of resources with students' needs.

Figure 2.11

Mean performance in science, by international decile on the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status



1. ESCS refers to the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status.
2. B-S-J-G (China) refers to the four PISA-participating provinces: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Guangdong.
3. CABA (Argentina) refers to the adjudicated region of the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.
4. FYROM refers to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

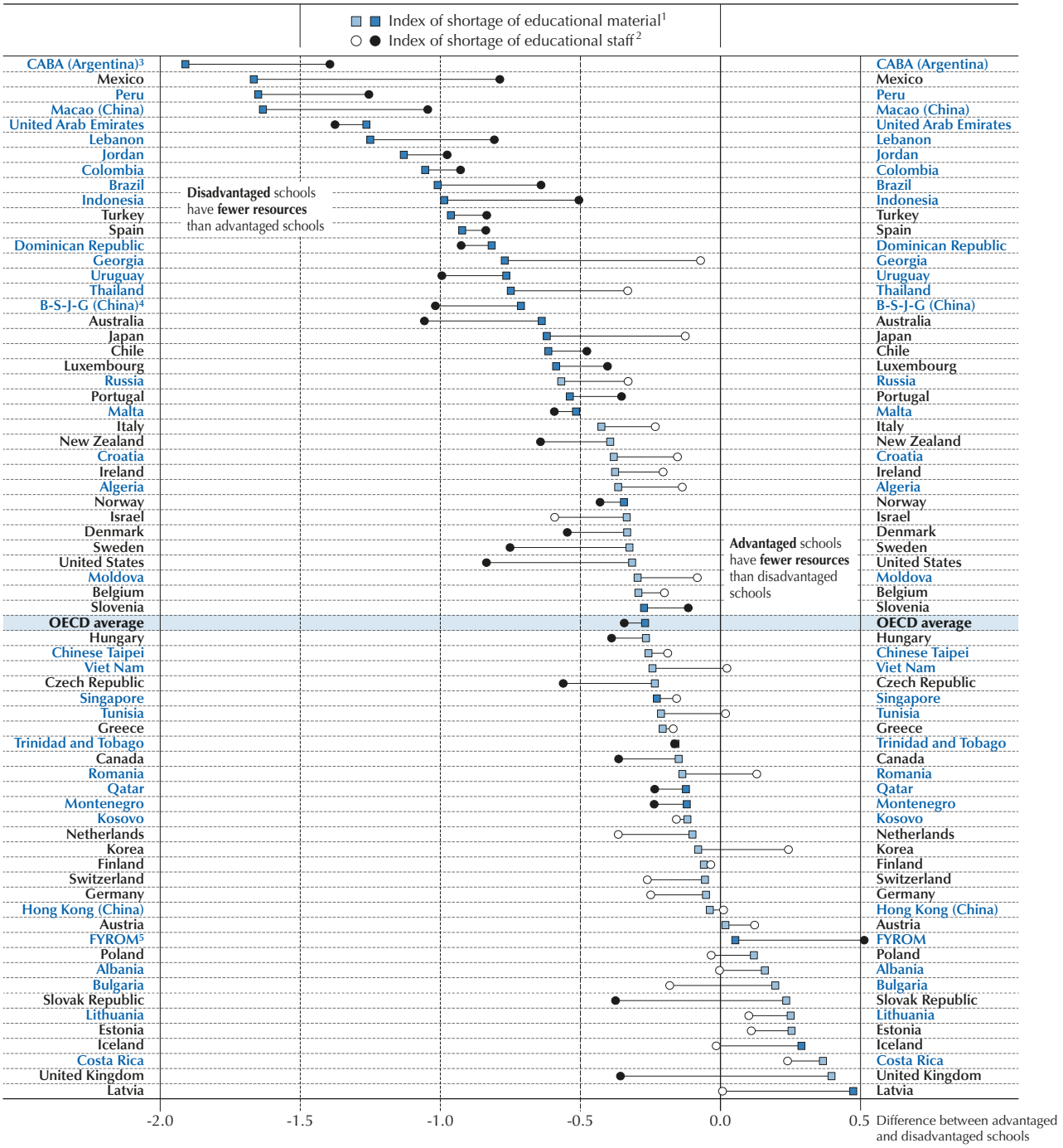
Notes: International deciles refer to the distribution of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status across all countries and economies.
Only countries and economies with available data are shown.
Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the mean science performance of students in the middle decile of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status.

Source: OECD (2016b), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, Figure I.6.7, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933432757

Figure 2.12

Differences in educational resources between advantaged and disadvantaged schools



1. The index of shortage of educational material is measured by an index summarising school principals' agreement with four statements about whether the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered by a lack of and/or inadequate educational materials, including physical infrastructure.

2. The index of shortage of educational staff is measured by an index summarising school principals' agreement with four statements about whether the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered by a lack and/or inadequate qualifications of the school staff.

3. CABA (Argentina) refers to the adjudicated region of the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.

4. B-S-J-G (China) refers to the four PISA-participating provinces: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Guangdong.

5. FYROM refers to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Note: Statistically significant differences between advantaged and disadvantaged schools are marked in a darker tone.

Countries and economies are ranked in ascending order of the difference in index of shortage of educational material between advantaged and disadvantaged schools.

Source: OECD (2016b), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, Figure I.6.14, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933432823

Singapore, for example, sends its best teachers to work with the students who are having the greatest difficulty reaching the country's high standards, and in Japan, officials in the prefectural offices transfer good teachers to schools with weak faculties to make sure that all students benefit from equally qualified teaching staff. In addition, the OECD School Resources Review notes that an increasing number of countries use formula-based school funding as a means to advance equity objectives through the distribution of financial resources (OECD, 2017b). Many of the most effective funding systems acknowledge differing needs across schools through a combination of targeted funding or the inclusion of coefficients that assign additional resources to schools with particular needs based on the students they serve, their educational offer or school characteristics, such as their size or location.

In the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, for example, the formula used to allocate operating grants and staff resources to schools includes weights for students' socio-economic characteristics, special educational needs and school location. There is also additional targeted funding allocated as a restricted block grant to school providers for specific student groups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds and newly arrived immigrants and refugees (Nusche et al., 2015). All of this serves to support an efficient and equitable distribution of funds to ensure that the schools with the greatest needs receive sufficient resources to adequately serve the students of their communities.

Levelling the playing field and enabling all students to succeed also requires systems to address regional discrepancies and ensure that all students can benefit from a high-quality educational offer. Educational institutions are often vital to the social health of their surrounding communities. Yet many communities, particularly those in rural areas with declining student populations, are facing pressures to consolidate their educational offer, given the high cost of operating and maintaining small schools. Small schools may also find it difficult to provide their students with a broad educational offer and also to attract qualified teachers to provide specialised courses and teach under the challenging conditions found in many rural schools (such as multigrade classes). Providing high-quality education at the heart of rural communities thus relies on the efficient use of educational resources and a careful adjustment of the school network to changing educational demand and students' needs. Countries have used a range of policy levers and steering tools to make sure that educational provisions adapt to local demand and enable teachers to meet their students' needs. Portugal, for example, has redesigned its school network and clustered small rural schools into larger hubs with a critical mass of students, to ensure that available resources are used efficiently to provide a high-quality education regardless of a school's location (Box 2.8).

Box 2.8. School clustering in Portugal

In 2005/06, Portugal, implemented an ambitious reform to consolidate its school network and address its inefficiencies and drastic regional inequalities. Between 2001 and 2016, the number of schools was reduced from 16 454 to 8 350. Prior to the reform, rural areas were dominated by small schools with poor facilities and low performance, while schools in urban areas were often overcrowded and relied on double-shift education. To address this problem, the Ministry of Education co-operated with local governments and school executive boards to close down small, underperforming schools with above-average annual repetition rates in 2005/06, while simultaneously providing the affected local governments with financial support to build and invest in new school centres and provide funding for school transport. Many small schools were thus replaced by new school centres with a minimum of 150 students at more than one level and full-day school with extracurricular activities.

Besides rationalising the administration, management and use of school resources, the introduction of school clusters also aimed to ease the transition between different levels of compulsory education. Portuguese school clusters therefore often include two or more levels of compulsory education, comprising preschool establishments and one or more education cycles within a single organisation, sharing its administration and management. This facilitates transition between different levels of education in one specific geographic area. The reorganisation of the school network is considered to have improved its efficiency, expanded educational opportunities for disadvantaged students in isolated areas, and fostered a collaborative approach between the Ministry of Education (centrally and regionally), municipalities, schools and other stakeholders.

Several features of the reform contributed to the success of the reorganisation, including that: 1) the reform was guided by a clear vision and criteria that specified which schools should close and which should replace them; 2) it was recognised that parents needed to be convinced that the clustering would have positive outcomes for them and their children, and incentives were provided (including free transportation); 3) municipalities supported cluster hubs in assuming their new leadership.

Sources: Ares Abalde, M. (2014), "School Size Policies: A Literature Review", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 106, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jxt472ddkjl-en; OECD (forthcoming), *The Organisation of the School Offer* (working title).

The most impressive result of the performance on PISA of Shanghai (China) is not just its high average score, but the low variability in school performance that is achieved despite considerable social and economic inequalities in the population of the province. This has not come about by chance but can be seen in the context of determined efforts to improve the school system by converting so-called weaker schools to stronger schools. These efforts include:

- systematically upgrading the infrastructure of all schools to similar levels
- establishing a system of financial transfer payments to schools serving disadvantaged students and establishing career structures that incentivise high-performing teachers to teach in disadvantaged schools
- pairing high-performing districts and schools with low-performing districts and schools, where the authorities exchange and discuss their educational development plans and work together to deal with problems such as teachers' development, and where institutes for teachers' professional development affiliated with both authorities share their curricula, teaching materials and good practices
- implementing arrangements under which the government commissions "strong" public schools to take over the administration of "weak" ones, by having the "strong" school appoint its experienced leader, such as the deputy principal, to be the principal of the "weak" school and sending a team of experienced teachers to lead in teaching, in the expectation that the ethos, management style and teaching methods of the high-performing school can be transferred to the poorer-performing school.

There is nothing other than outdated regulation and a lack of imagination that would preclude other education systems from pursuing similar efforts. And in fact, there are similar examples in many education systems. In the state of Ceara in Brazil, the highest-performing schools received a significant reward in terms of additional financial resources, which allowed them to hire more specialised teachers and experts. However, they were not allowed to deploy these additional resources in their own school but were required to use them to support the schools that struggle most. So everyone won: the high-performing schools gained additional prestige and an expanded team, and the low-performing schools benefitted from the expertise of high-performing schools that may have been more valuable to them than additional money.

Of course, in the early stages of a country's economic development, the demand for highly educated people is limited, and so are the resources for developing such people. One way to meet that need is to put what money there is into children who are, by virtue of the education and income of their parents, the most advantaged students in the whole society. That is why segregating schools by social class and concentrating efforts on a small number was a very efficient strategy for providing education in the first stages of an industrial society. But when far larger proportions of highly educated people are demanded in the world's high-wage economies, it is not only socially unjust but highly inefficient to organise an education system this way.

Reconciling flexibility and equity

A wide range of indirect background factors can have an impact on the role of schools in their communities. At system level, these include: student admissions policies and whether or not parents are able to choose schools; whether there is tracking/selection of students on grounds of ability and aptitude; system-wide forms of accountability and assessment; and forms of national curricula. While these factors are outside the main focus of the International Summit of the Teaching Profession, it is worth reflecting on evidence about the relationship between school choice and equity, as the social background of students admitted to schools is affected by policies in these areas.

While enhanced school autonomy seems a common characteristic of high-performing education systems, these education systems differ substantially in how they regulate autonomy. They often pursue very different approaches when it comes to linking school autonomy with school choice, and to reconciling choice with equity. For example, England (United Kingdom) and Shanghai (China) both place considerable emphasis on market mechanisms, but while public policy in England mainly operates on the demand side of markets, seeking to drive school improvement through enhancing parental choice, the main emphasis of public policy in Shanghai lies on the supply side, aiming to provide schools in the most disadvantaged areas with the best educational resources. And while Finland and Hong Kong (China) both put considerable emphasis on local autonomy, in Finland that autonomy is exercised within a strong public school system, while most schools in Hong Kong are managed by private entities with rather loose steering mechanisms (Box 2.9).

Some countries have tried to strengthen flexibility and equity-related mechanisms at the same time. England (United Kingdom), for example, has rapidly increased the number of academies, which are autonomous state-funded schools directly funded by the Department for Education and independent of local authority control. At the same time, England has established a pupil premium that provides schools with additional resources based on the composition of their socio-economic intake. The diversity of approaches that schools in England use to allocate the pupil premium is intriguing.

Many of the schools went beyond exams and results to prioritise efforts around student well-being, with examples ranging from pastoral care, safeguarding, school uniforms or breakfast clubs to improving student attendance. Some schools focused on parents, conducting workshops for parents to understand current teaching methods or to engage parents in academic work and assessment, or introducing students to the world of work. But all of the schools own the process through which they seek to leverage the potential of disadvantaged students and are publicly accountable for it.

Some countries have also made it possible for private schools to be integrated into the public education system as government-dependent schools or as independent schools that receive a certain amount of public funding.

One of the most controversially debated levers around flexibility is school choice. Proponents of school choice defend the right of parents to send their child to the school of their preference – because of quality, pedagogical approaches, religious denomination, affordability or geographical location – regardless of legal restrictions or financial or geographical barriers. The idea is that, given students' diverse needs and interests, a larger number of options in any one school system should offer better value by reducing the cost of failure and mismatch, stimulate competition and, in doing so, prompt schools to innovate, experiment with new pedagogies, become more efficient and improve the quality of the learning experience. Proponents argue that the increasing social and cultural diversity of modern societies calls for greater diversification in the education landscape, including by allowing non-traditional providers and even commercial companies to enter the market.

Critics of school choice argue that, when presented with more choice, students from advantaged backgrounds often opt to leave the public system, leading to greater social and cultural segregation in the school system. They are also concerned with over-reliance on theoretical models of rational, price-based economic competition as the basis for efficient allocation of resources. At the macro level, such segregation can deprive children of opportunities to learn, play and communicate with children from different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds which, in turn, threatens social cohesion. To critics, vouchers and voucher-like systems divert public resources to private and sometimes commercial providers, thereby depriving public schools, which tend to serve large populations of disadvantaged students, of the resources needed to maintain the quality of the education provided.

A closer look at the evidence shows that the case is not so clear-cut. Hong Kong (China) is a system that has a market-driven approach in virtually every field of public service, but it has been able to combine high levels of student performance with a high degree of social equity in the distribution of educational opportunities (see Box 2.9). The Netherlands provides an example of a successful choice-based system (Box 2.10). On the other hand, in Sweden, the introduction of choice-based mechanisms seems to have led to widening social disparities without overall improvements in results (Box 2.11).

Box 2.9. Hong Kong (China): Success through entrepreneurship

The backdrop for the education system in Hong Kong (China) is that schooling used to be entirely the domain of philanthropy, and it was only when the economy gathered strength in the 1960s that the government began to subsidise education.

With the majority of schools run by private entities, the government has few levers for direct intervention, and parents have a powerful influence on schools, both through their choice of schools (though still banded) and through local control.

Parents sit on school management committees, parent-teacher associations and home-school co-operation committees. According to a former Permanent Secretary for Education, parents have more influence on what happens on the ground than the Education Bureau. The vibrant cyber-community has added to the tremendous pressures on schools to maintain a high quality of education.

Most leading newspapers have education pages that deal on a daily basis with policy debates as well as disputes in schools. An inspiring principal from one of Hong Kong's elite schools explained how principals and teachers face a daily struggle to balance administrative accountability, client accountability and professional accountability while keeping their focus firmly on nurturing well-rounded children and helping parents see beyond their children's entry to university.

All that does not mean that education is not a government priority. On the contrary, Hong Kong devotes 23% of its public budget to education, more than any OECD country, realising that it is talent that transforms the lives of its citizens and drives its economy.

Source: Schleicher A. (forthcoming), *Worldclass: How to build a smart school system*.

Box 2.10. School choice in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is a high-performing school system where more than two-thirds of 15-year-old students attend publicly funded private schools. It is also a highly diversified system, with wide differences among schools in pedagogical approaches, religious denomination and socio-economic profile. However, the between-school variation in PISA science performance in 2015 was one of the largest among OECD countries (just over 65% of the performance variation is explained by between-school differences in performance).

The Netherlands has a highly decentralised school system. School autonomy is grounded in the principle of freedom of education, guaranteed by the Dutch Constitution since 1917. This allows any person to set up a school, organise teaching and determine the educational, religious or ideological principles on which teaching is based. In principle, parents can choose their child's school (although this is somewhat restricted by the school guidance given by education professionals when students complete primary school), but local authorities control enrolments to some extent in order to mitigate imbalances in school composition or weight student funding to support greater social diversity in schools.

In 2011, about one in three primary students was enrolled in public schools, one in three was enrolled in Catholic schools, one in four attended Protestant schools and the remainder was enrolled in other types of government-dependent private schools. While public schools are open to all students, government-dependent private schools may refuse students whose parents do not subscribe to the school's profile or principles.

A distinctive feature of the Dutch system is the institution of school boards. These bodies are given far more powers than the schools that are governed by these boards. The boards oversee the implementation of legislation and regulations in the school and employ teachers and other staff. In the past, public schools were governed mostly by local authorities, but governance has increasingly been devolved to independent school boards. The school governors who make up the boards may be volunteers (laypeople receiving an honorarium) or professionals (who receive a salary).

The role of the school boards is a subject of debate in the Netherlands. A recent OECD review (OECD, 2016c) calls for strengthening the governance capacity and accountability of schools boards by improving transparency and rebalancing decision-making powers between the board and school leaders.

Since the 1980s, the government has devolved additional responsibilities to schools. Private foundations have assumed responsibility for schools managed by local authorities (although the schools themselves remain public), and lump-sum financing has been introduced, which gives school boards the freedom to make their own spending decisions. Conversely, some recentralisation has taken place through the establishment of national learning objectives and examination programmes. Mergers of school boards have been promoted, as larger school boards are considered to be more professional and financially stable.

In the decentralised Dutch education system, religious organisations and associations of citizens receive public funding for the schools for which they are responsible, provided that they meet government regulations. Public and private schools receive the same amount of public funding in the form of a lump-sum allocation based on the number of students enrolled. Since the mid-1980s, additional subsidies were assigned for disadvantaged students, reflecting the higher cost of teaching them. Since 2006, these voucher weights have been based on parents' educational attainment, replacing previous criteria based on students' immigrant background.

Although publicly funded private schools are not allowed to charge mandatory tuition fees or operate for profit, state-funded schools can supplement their funding with voluntary contributions from parents or businesses. Private schools receive significantly more of such contributions than public schools. Publicly funded private schools are not allowed to engage in selective admissions, but parents of prospective students may be required to subscribe to the school's profile or principles.

The education system of the Netherlands manages to offer parents a wide choice and to fund private entities that organise schools with public resources in a way that is generally seen as fair. The overall high quality of the system can partly be attributed to its diversity, the degree of competition among schools, and the high level of autonomy enjoyed by school boards, school leaders and teachers. While the Netherlands shows large between-school variations in PISA performance, it succeeds in maintaining equity in its system. The accountability system works well; teacher professionalisation is well-developed, and the relative consistency in the quality of schools allows for examinations to be centrally designed.

Source: OECD (2017c), *School Choice and School Vouchers: An OECD Perspective*, www.oecd.org/edu/School-choice-and-school-vouchers-an-OECD-perspective.pdf.

Box 2.11. School choice in Sweden

Student performance on PISA has declined, from near the OECD average in 2000 to significantly below the OECD average in 2012. These disappointing results fuelled a national debate on the quality of school education and the consequences of the introduction of market mechanisms, leading to a broad consensus on the need for change. The recent OECD review (OECD, 2015b) highlighted a number of policy recommendations, including revising school-choice arrangements to ensure quality with equity. These include improving the access of disadvantaged families to information about schools and supporting them in making informed choices, as well as introducing controlled choice schemes that supplement parental choice, to ensure a more diverse distribution of students in schools. A major reform undertaken in Sweden in the early 1990s was the liberalisation of rules for establishing and running independent schools. Independent schools are fully funded by the public purse and have full autonomy to allocate resources as long as they conform to government regulations. School choice was introduced in parallel in 1991. As a result of these reforms, the education system changed from one where the vast majority of students attended the public school in their catchment area to one where many students opt for a school other than their default school, and where schools that are privately-run and publicly funded compete with traditional public schools. Students in Sweden are first allocated to a school based on geographical criteria. Parents and students can then opt to stay in the school to which the student has been assigned or can choose another public or independent school, if places are available. In primary and lower secondary schools, no selective criteria for admissions are applied other than first-come, first-served. The independent schools (publicly funded private schools) must follow the national curriculum and are not allowed to charge extra fees. In Sweden, 86% of students attend public schools, and 14% attend independent schools. Public funding for independent schools is provided through a voucher system. Students are allocated a certain amount, decided by municipalities. With this expansion of the education market, the number of independent schools in Sweden increased from around 60 in 1991 to 792 in 2014, with the greatest increase in upper secondary schools.

Source: OECD (2015b), *Improving Schools in Sweden: An OECD Perspective*, www.oecd.org/education/school/Improving-Schools-in-Sweden.pdf.

Evidence on school choice and competition from PISA has concluded that results indicate a weak and negative relationship between the degree of competition and equity. Among OECD countries, systems with more competition among schools tend to show a stronger impact of students' socio-economic status on their performance in mathematics. Caution is advised when interpreting this result, as the observed relationship could be affected by outliers. But this finding is consistent with research showing that school choice – and, by extension, competition – is related to greater levels of segregation in the school system, which may have adverse consequences for equity in learning opportunities and outcomes (OECD, 2013b).

The degree of choice that parents enjoy and the level of competition in school systems vary widely between countries and within countries among different social groups. Across 18 countries with comparative data in the PISA 2015 assessment, the parents of 64% of students reported that they had a choice of at least one other school available to them, but this percentage varies widely among countries (OECD, 2016a). Parents of students who attend rural and disadvantaged schools reported having less choice than parents of students in urban and advantaged schools.

Parents in PISA were also asked to report how much importance they gave to certain criteria when choosing a school for their child. These were mainly related to school quality, financial considerations, the school's philosophy or mission, and the distance between their home and the school. Across the 18 education systems with available data, parents were more likely to consider it important that the school environment is safe, that the school has a good reputation and that the school has an active and pleasant climate – even more important than the academic achievement of the students in the school (OECD, 2016a).

It is concerning that the parents of children who attend disadvantaged, rural and public schools were considerably more likely to report that the distance between their home and the school is important than the parents of children in advantaged, urban and private schools and that the children of parents who assigned more importance to distance scored considerably lower in the PISA science assessment, even after accounting for the socio-economic profile of students and schools. This was also observed among students whose parents considered low expenses to be important or very important. These students score 30 points lower in science (roughly the equivalent of a school year) than students whose

parents considered low expenses to be only somewhat important or not important. And again, the parents in disadvantaged and public schools were more likely than those in advantaged and private schools to consider low expenses important when they choose a school for their child. It seems that struggling families often have a hard time assessing differences in outcomes, even with good information systems. They may not have the time to visit different schools and may not have the transportation needed to get their children to schools of choice, or the time to get them to a distant school or pick them up at the end of the school day.

The degree of competition in a school system and the rate of enrolment in private schools can be related, but they are not the same thing. On average across OECD countries, about 84% of 15-year-old students attend public schools, about 12% attend government-dependent private schools, and slightly more than 4% attend independent private schools. Of the 12% of students enrolled in private government-dependent schools, around 38% attend schools run by a church or other religious organisation, 54% attend schools run by another non-profit organisation and 8% attend schools run by a for-profit organisation. In Ireland, all 15-year-old students in private government-dependent schools attend a religious school; in Austria, all students enrolled in private government-dependent schools attend those run by another non-profit organisation; and in Sweden, over half of students in private government-dependent schools attend one run by a for-profit organisation (OECD, 2016a).

Greater enrolment in private schools is often referred to as the privatisation of education and is regarded as a move away from the notion of education as a public good. But that is not necessarily the case. In many countries where large parts of the school system operate under private legal statutes, such schools can be seen as legally private but functionally public. This means that, as private entities, they contribute to fulfilling public missions and functions. For example, they can partly or completely follow the national curriculum and serve the public mission of education by providing quality education. There are also many cases in which private schools provide access to education for underserved communities and have equity-related missions.

As in other sectors of public policy, the distinction between public and private education is often blurred. Public-private partnerships are an accepted reality in various other public policy sectors, and there is no reason why education should be an exception. The relevant question is how public policy objectives, such as providing high-quality education for all citizens, can be achieved.

Many critics of school choice claim that the prevalence of private schools would have a negative impact on the quality of education. But PISA data show that there is no relationship between the share of private schools in a country and the performance of an education system. After accounting for social background, there is also very little difference in performance between public and private schools in most countries, and where such differences exist, they are mostly in favour of public schools.

Perhaps the most contentious issue is to what extent and how public funding should go to private schools. In Finland, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic, Sweden and the partner economy Hong Kong (China), principals of privately managed schools reported that over 90% of school funding comes from the government, while in Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg and Slovenia, between 80% and 90% of funding for privately managed school does. In contrast, in Greece, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States, 1% or less of funding for privately managed schools comes from the government, while in New Zealand, between 1% and 10% does (OECD, 2016a). What is noteworthy is that, in those countries where privately managed schools receive larger proportions of public funding, there is less of a difference in the socio-economic profiles of publicly and privately managed schools (Figure 2.13). Across OECD countries, 45% of the variation in this difference can be explained by the level of public funding devoted to privately managed schools; across all participating countries, 35% of the variation in this difference can be accounted for in this way.

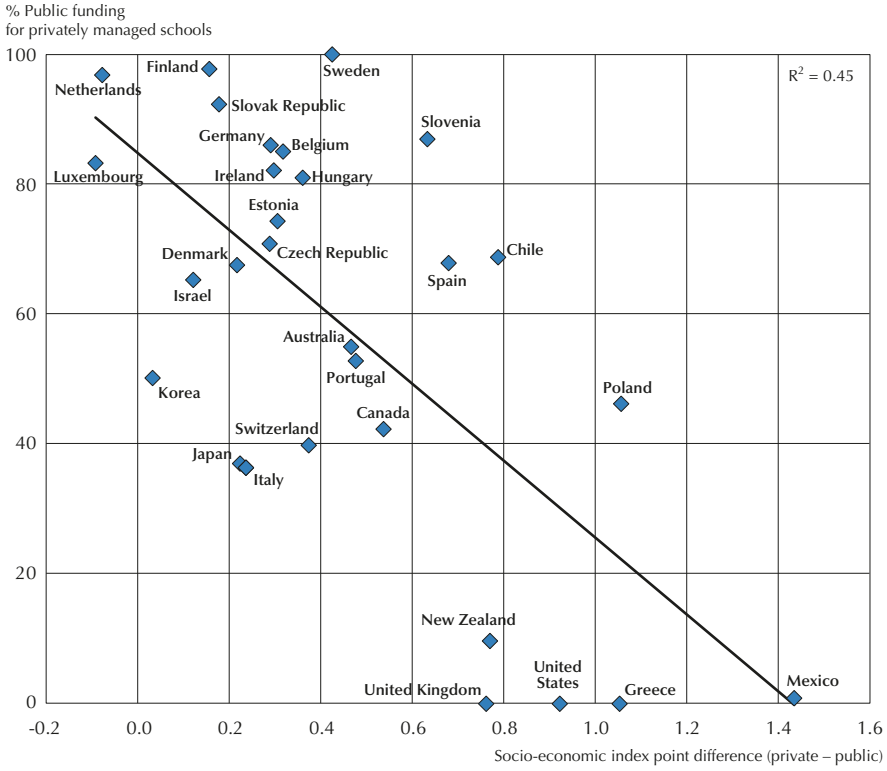
In order to mitigate possible negative effects of school choice and public funding of private schools, particularly segregation and social stratification, various governments have implemented compensatory financing mechanisms. For example, Chile, the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands have instituted weighted student funding schemes, whereby funding follows the student on a per-student basis, and the amount provided depends on the socio-economic status and educational needs of each student. These schemes target disadvantaged students and, in doing so, make these students more attractive to schools competing for enrolment.

Specific area-based support schemes, such as the "zones of educational priority" found in France[1] and Greece, are observed in school systems with large between-school variation in performance and a concentration of low-performing schools in certain locations. In Belgium, government-dependent private schools, which constitute a majority of the market, receive almost the same amount as public schools, and they are forbidden from charging tuition fees or selecting students.

Figure 2.13

Relationship between stratification and public funding for privately managed schools

Stratification: Difference in socio-economic background between students in privately and publicly managed schools, as measured by the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS)



Source: OECD (2012), *Public and Private Schools: How Management and Funding Relate to their Socio-economic Profile,* Figure 2.3, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264175006-en.

It is also important to pay due attention to the mechanisms by which public funding is provided to private schools. One way is through vouchers, which assist parents directly, although the merits and demerits of voucher systems are highly debated among countries. As of 2009, 9 out of 22 OECD countries with available data reported that they use vouchers to facilitate enrolment in government-dependent private primary schools. In five of these countries, the voucher programme was restricted to disadvantaged students. At the lower secondary level, 11 out of 24 countries reported using voucher schemes, 7 of which targeted disadvantaged students. At the upper secondary level, 5 of 11 voucher programmes were means-tested. Of the surveyed OECD countries, seven reported that they provide vouchers from primary through upper secondary education (OECD, 2011). Tuition tax credits, which allow parents to deduct expenses for private school tuition from their tax liabilities, are used less frequently than vouchers. As of 2009, only 3 out of 26 OECD countries with available data reported using tax credits to facilitate enrolment in government-dependent private schools (OECD, 2011).

Between universal voucher systems (in which vouchers are available to all students) and targeted voucher systems (in which vouchers are provided only to disadvantaged students), there are large differences in effectiveness in mitigating the adverse effects of school choice. Vouchers available for all students can help expand the choice of schools and promote competition among schools. School vouchers that target only disadvantaged students can help improve equity in access to schools. An analysis of PISA data shows that, when comparing systems with similar levels of public funding for privately managed schools, the difference in the socio-economic profiles between publicly managed schools and privately managed schools is twice as large in education systems that use universal vouchers as in systems that use targeted vouchers. The design of voucher schemes is thus a key determinant of their success, and regulating private school pricing and admissions criteria seems to limit the social inequities associated with voucher schemes.

Beyond that, the international evidence suggests that schools that are selective in their admissions tend to attract students with greater ability and higher socio-economic status, regardless of the quality of the education the schools provide. Given that high-ability students are less costly to educate and their presence can make a school more attractive to parents, schools that can control their intake wind up with a competitive advantage. Allowing private schools to select their students thus gives these schools an incentive to compete on the basis of exclusiveness rather than on their intrinsic quality. That, in turn, can undermine the positive effects of competition. The evidence also shows that selective admissions can be a source of greater inequality and stratification within a school system. However, there are few studies investigating whether these effects vary depending on the selection criteria (e.g. interviews with parents compared to results of aptitude tests). It is also important to keep in mind that students are selected not only based on explicit admissions criteria but also because of parents' self-selection, selective expulsion and more subtle barriers to entry. Policies that aim to reduce segregation should therefore also identify and address overly complex application procedures, expulsion practices, lack of information and other factors that prevent some students and parents from exercising their school choice.

Critics argue that allowing publicly funded private schools to charge tuition fees gives these schools an unfair advantage over public schools and undermines the principle of free school choice. Like selective admissions, imposing substantial add-on fees tends to skim the top students from the public sector and increase inequalities in education. Some policy interventions that limited fees for low-income families were effective in reducing segregation, but there have been few empirical studies in developed countries that have determined the effect of fees as distinct from that of selective admissions and other confounding factors.

Relatively little is known about whether there is a threshold of household contributions beyond which lower-income families will be deterred from choosing subsidised private schools. However, both simulations and empirical evidence confirm that public funding may fail to widen access to private schools unless it is accompanied by restrictions on tuition fees. If private schools invest public resources to improve their quality rather than to broaden access, subsidies can exacerbate inequities across school sectors. This is one of the reasons why abolishing substantial add-on fees, along with offering targeted vouchers, can help reduce disparities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Successful schools depend on the resources and support of their communities. In turn, schools are vital to the social health of their local communities. In recent years, the top-down conception of traditional education has been turned upside down and stretched sideways by a number of factors, including the penetration of digital technologies, the entry of new learning providers, the interest of employers in the outcomes of schooling and the expertise in learning in other sectors (e.g. in the creative sector).

Parents are a central actor in these ecosystems, and there is much that schools and school policy can do to foster parental engagement with their children and with schools and communities. Parents can be encouraged to adopt simple and healthy routines, such as eating meals together and talking together, that bring them closer to their child.

Schools can identify those parents who may be unable to participate in school activities for reasons other than a lack of interest. Building some flexibility in the ways in which parents can communicate with the school may encourage greater parental involvement. Scheduled phone or video calls may be as effective as some face-to-face meetings and may better fit the busy schedule of some parents.

Teachers can be encouraged to welcome all parents as partners in education, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds whose children most need their support to do well in school and in life. Through their engagement in their child's education, parents can help build a learning environment that encourages both high academic performance and the well-being of all students.

Removing language barriers to parents' participation in school activities may require partnerships beyond the school. In countries with large immigrant populations, including many European countries, schools may need to seek collaboration with immigration and social service agencies, as these might offer useful services, including interpreters, that can help facilitate communication between the school and immigrant families.

Finally, governments can provide incentives to employers who adopt work-life balance policies so that parents have adequate time to attend to their children's needs. Healthy young people are more engaged and productive participants in society, so advancing policies that support parents' involvement in their children's lives is one way for governments to build more inclusive societies

But the link with parents is just one dimension. Schools can shape their communities in many ways, and often schools are seen as important spaces in the local community. In connecting to the local and regional environment, schools can engage many stakeholders to work together to improve the well-being of communities.

Schools can become critically important partners in serving the needs of local communities, especially in disadvantaged communities or through working with populations at risk of exclusion or distress. In recent refugee crises in various parts of the world, there have been inspiring examples of schools playing a socially and ethically responsible role in providing help, shelter and assistance to refugees.

Schools can also create wider connections with their communities through various alliances, partnerships and networks that allow them to introduce their learners to a range of other possibilities and resources, with benefits for both the learners and the community.

But perhaps the most important role that public policy can play is to help reconcile aspirations for greater flexibility in school systems and more opportunities for parents to choose their child's school with the need to ensure quality, equity and coherence in school systems.

In and of themselves, school autonomy and school choice neither assure nor undermine the quality of education. What matters are smart policies that maximise the benefits of autonomy or choice while minimising the risks and establishing a level playing field for all providers to contribute to the school system. Well-crafted policies can help school systems deliver education tailored to a diverse student population while limiting the risk of social segregation. When market mechanisms are introduced or expanded in education systems, the role of public policy needs to shift from overseeing the quality and efficiency of public schools to ensuring that oversight and governance arrangements are in place to guarantee that every child benefits from accessible, high-quality education.

It is clear that school choice will only generate the anticipated benefits when the choice is real, relevant and meaningful (i.e. when parents can choose an important aspect of their child's education, such as the pedagogical approaches used to teach them). If schools are not allowed to respond to diverse student populations and to distinguish themselves from one another, choice is meaningless.

In turn, private schools may need to accept the public steering and accountability mechanisms that ensure the attainment of public policy objectives in exchange for the funding they receive from the public purse. All parents must be able to exercise their right to choose the school of their preference. That means that governments and schools need to invest in developing their relationships with parents and local communities and help parents make informed decisions. Successful choice-based systems have carefully designed checks and balances that prevent choice from leading to inequity and segregation.

Last but not least, the more flexibility there is in the school system, the stronger public policy needs to be. While greater school autonomy, decentralisation and a more demand-driven school system seek to devolve decision-making to the frontline, government authorities need to maintain a strategic vision and clear guidelines for education and offer meaningful feedback to local school networks and individual schools.

Note

1. In France, this scheme has since been revised to form "Priority Education Networks".

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