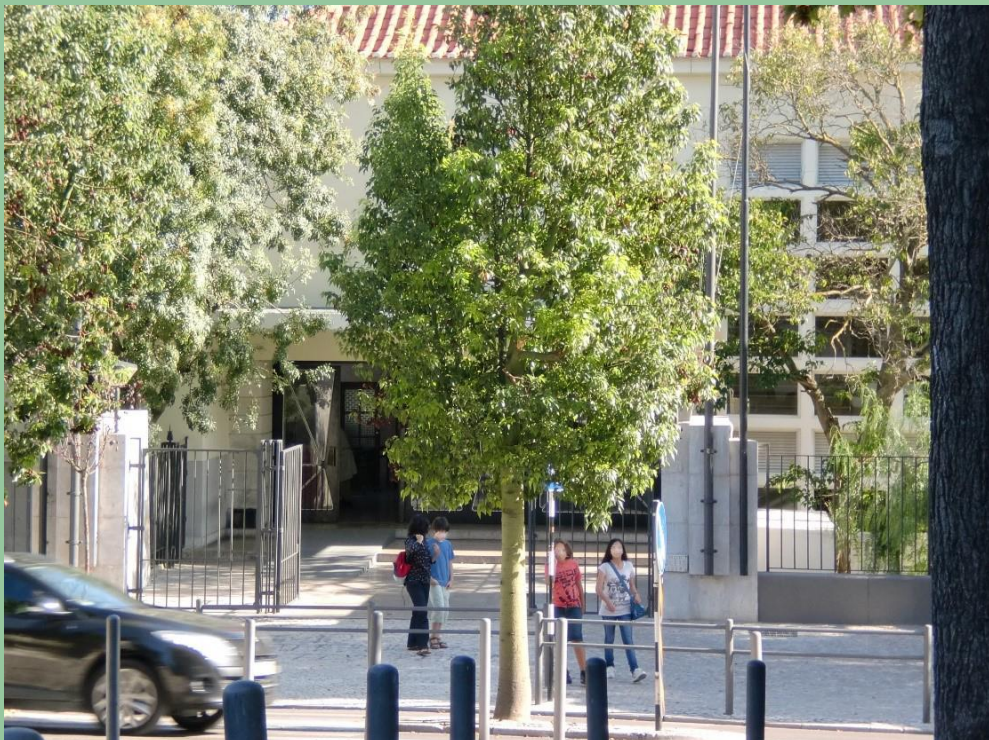Susana da Cruz Martins
Luís Capucha
João Sebastião
(Orgs.)

School Autonomy, Organization and Performance in Europe

A comparative analysis for the period from 2000 to 2015

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Susana da Cruz Martins, Luís Capucha and João Sebastião (Orgs.)

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Introduction

Luís Capucha, Susana da Cruz Martins and João Sebastião

Framing of the study

In recent decades, there has been widespread recognition of the central role of education in the knowledge economy and the information society in Europe and around the world. This is perhaps one of the few subjects that currently enjoys broad consensus, even if some see it only as training human capital for the economy, and others view it simply as preparation for active and critical citizenship.

Perhaps both views are correct if they are not opposed but rather articulated. The qualification of the population is probably one of the most determinant factors today in economic performance and the quality of society. Thus it can be considered that public policies are under great pressure to obtain the results expected of education.

One theme that stands out as decisive in achieving these results is the changes in the way education systems are organised. Among the topics around which debate on this theme revolves are the relationship between national decision centres and local actors; the relationship between schools and municipalities; institutional structures of the Ministries of Education; and many others. But within this broad thematic domain, the specific issue of school autonomy has been the object of most focus and subject of most controversy. This theme is becoming increasingly salient as education is progressively conceived of as a neighbourhood service, both as regards citizen access and also quality of learning. But the rationale of service delivery is one thing, and the space for autonomy and freedom granted to those actors closest to the people is another. In other words, the education provision may be close to citizens as a mere enactor of decisions, or it may have a greater or lesser degree of autonomy to deliberate on activities, priorities, projects and management of resources.

Advocates of centralised systems often call for equal levels of educational service delivery to uphold the idea of greater equity and effectiveness of the system. However, much work and many studies have been focused on autonomy, on the various ways it is conceptualised from the point of view of politics and practice, in terms of freedom and ability to act in order to improve results, by better adapting to the characteristics and needs of each local context. For example, according to Neelman (2019) and Woessmann et al. (2009), school autonomy is understood as the right to self-government or self-administration, taking into account the responsibilities assigned to schools, and at the same time as a necessary condition for taking on those responsibilities.

This study aims to contribute to a reflection on the nature of the transformations in the area of school autonomy – those which are underway and those that still need to be put into practice – by seeking to know the direction taken, the pace chosen, the resources mobilised and the objectives of the actors who operate in them. Our intention is to focus on the relationship

between policies, the ways in which educational systems are organised and the functioning of the institutional mechanisms that operationalise them for citizens, as is the role of schools.

Our starting point is the beginning of the 2000s, punctuated by the Lisbon Strategy, as well as being the beginning of the PISA Program (OECD), with particular attention to the changes which have taken place in education in just over 15 years (until 2015).

The present study has two fundamental parts. One is an in-depth and multivariate European comparison, based on diverse educational indicators and which we can subdivide here by dimensions of organisation and those regarding models of school autonomy, autonomy and leadership of actors, in particular those of school direction and management, education funding and student and education system performance. The undertaking of comparative analyses is based on statistical indicators and other documentary sources (including reports and legislation, as well as statements by central actors on their national education systems). This allows an operationalization of research to be taken, guided by a methodology of collection and processing of secondary data and analysis underpinned by a double orientation: on the one hand, a more quantitative type (with statistical indicators), and to an extent prevalent in the different approaches; the other hand is qualitative in nature (based on the analysis of the discourse recorded on video by education stakeholders from various European countries). In this first part of the European comparison study, a team of CIES-IUL researchers, Susana da Cruz Martins, Luís Capucha, Helena Carvalho, João Sebastião, Adriana Albuquerque, Bernardo Machado, Ana Rita Capucha and Eliana Durão participated in this study.

In the second part of the study, the very wide range of indicators and available information, essentially covering all these strands, allows other European researchers to participate, with the production of texts on the characterization and analysis of the organization of education systems and autonomy participation in their countries. These texts, following a comparative analysis at European level, provide expert knowledge on their national situations. Thus, this participation was carried out via studies which synthesise the national contexts.

The guidelines for these contributions were as follows:
1. A description of each respective national education system, its organization and recording distinctive national specificities where noteworthy;
2. Identification of the main changes in the organisation of the education system and how these impacts its morphology and educational offer. A reflection on the debate that such changes aroused was also proposed.
3. Characterization of the current model of school autonomy and in which areas this autonomy has been strengthened or expanded.
4. Identification of the transformations in school autonomy in the last decade and a half (from 2000 to 2015). Providing an account of the type of consequences that have transpired in the system (if any) and what discussions have arisen in this regard. A further description of the evaluation (or monitoring) for these policies and what results they have achieved.

The European partners who participated in this study for creating national profiles were Lejf Moos (Danish School of Education, Denmark), Rafael Feito (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain), Maddalena Colombo and Agnese Desideri (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy), Dominic Orr (Forschungsinstitut für Bildungs- und Sozialökonomie, FIBS, Germany) and the Portuguese CIES-IUL team (Luís Capucha, João Sebastião, Ana Rita Capucha and Ana Raquel Matias).

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PART I

Autonomy and performance of education systems in Europe

1. School autonomy and administration. Configurations and processes in Europe

Susana da Cruz Martins, Adriana Albuquerque and Luís Capucha

1.1 School autonomy in Europe: an introduction

Viewing schools as complex social systems where a set of actors with varied but interdependent roles and contributions operates, the autonomy retained by these organizations influences their performance profile and educational practices (Gargallo, 2013; Wermke & Salokangas, 2015). School autonomy places an emphasis on the capacity and conditions for making decisions by delegation from (central) authorities in educational matters (Gargallo, 2013) as well as according to the specific contexts of the schools. This dimension of school governance is highly determining of their ability to act and their administration and management profiles.

In turn, school governance in the various European education systems is very much subsidiary to its historical construction, as it is shaped in each state's framework of construction (Archer, 1979). Authors such as Hans Weiler (1999), who focused on the position of the state in terms of control and legitimacy, considered the comparison between centralization and decentralization in the field of education to be one of the most relevant issues in the scientific field. A good deal of the research and policies have focused, on the one hand, on the role played by educational authorities at the national level and the limits placed on it, and on the other hand, on the capacity which the principal actors have for decision-making on school governance and administration as organic units, and within a strategic framework of their territorial contexts.

When these processes are considered from a relatively recent historical perspective, the 1980s appear as distinctly shaped by reforms and state restructuring, also observed in many European countries, which had significant effects in the area of education (Barroso 2003, Vasconcellos, 2000). Some school autonomy models made their first appearance at this time. The 1980s were thus marked by a rationale or ideology of democratic participation, the 1990s by new forms of management in public administration – new public management – centred on a rationale of efficient management of public funds, and the 2000s saw the transfer of new responsibilities to schools, bringing with it new demands such as educational quality (European Commission, 2017; Eurydice, 2007; Iftene, 2014; Moos, 2013; Ongaro et al., 2018; Rinne et al., 2016). After the 2000s, a series of experiments was carried out within a political model of pilot projects, the result being the implementation of autonomy policies for schools in various European countries.

In recent decades, the belief that decentralization and increased school autonomy make an unequivocal contribution to increased educational quality has been very persistently stated (cf. Eurydice, 2007; Maslowski et al., 2007). As in other cases, this assertion has not been without controversy. This chapter examines some of the features, areas and expansion of autonomy in EU countries.

1.2 Autonomy, processes and dynamics in Europe

Figure 1.1 shows how greater or lesser responsibility is allocated to schools and their actors through an index of school autonomy. This indicator reveals the percentage of tasks for which school principals, teachers and/or school administrative bodies are responsible in the different countries. It takes into consideration situations where responsibility for tasks is at least shared amongst schools and other actor(s). It should be noted, however, that the indicator tells us nothing about the strategic weight of delegated decisions in school life. However, it does allow us to perceive general trends and address the topic under analysis.
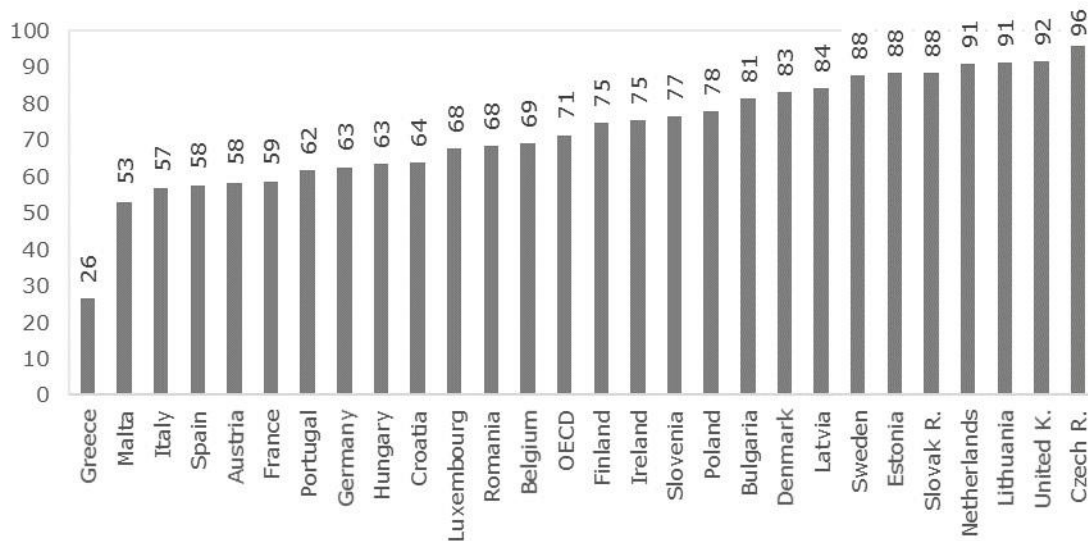
Figure 1.1. Index of school autonomy, European Union countries (27), 2015
Source: OECD (2015), PISA (Data). Author's own production.

As can be seen in Figure 1.1, in the group of OECD countries, schools have responsibility for about 71% of decisions on educational matters. This is a significant percentage in a transnational context, but the value tells us little about the circumstances in different countries and their main configurations and occurrences in a European context. Indicators such as these are important in identifying the volume of responsibilities carried out in schools, despite the fact that their quantitative nature does not allow us to contextualise them more accurately. Some important mechanisms are thus lost in the analysis of the application of autonomy or its effects, as local processes, including competitive pressure in schools (as stated in Zanten, 2009) are not taken into account.

However, in the European context, it is worth addressing the different ways in which autonomy is expressed. Given the diversity found, it can be seen that among the 13 European countries which have the lowest rates of school autonomy in relation to the OECD average are those in Southern Europe (Greece, Malta, Italy, Spain and Portugal), some from Central Europe (Austria, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium) and others from Central Eastern Europe (Hungary, Croatia and Romania). It is noteworthy that Greece has very limited autonomy even compared with other low autonomy countries (as shown in the OECD document, 2017).

Higher levels of school autonomy – with rates above 90% – are found in the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Lithuania and the Netherlands. The proportion of tasks assigned to schools within the framework of educational governance is very high, and almost everything is decided a at school level. In some of these countries, this is an expression of predominantly liberal approaches to education policy. Those above the average school autonomy levels in OECD are Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark and Finland, with some of the Baltics, such as Estonia and Latvia), Ireland and the other Eastern European countries (Slovakia, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovenia).

Taking the most recent year available for diachronic comparison as the reference point (2011), and after an analysis of the year 2015 (albeit with an indicator that is not strictly comparable with that of 2011 or earlier), differences can be seen in Figure 1.2 between the different European countries regarding the percentage of decisions taken by schools.

Most countries with lower than average levels of school autonomy in 2011 for which we have data show declining trends in recent years (see Luxembourg, Portugal, Germany, Spain, France, Italy and Greece). Luxembourg and Germany had a noticeable drop in level from 2003 onwards, though their numbers remained relatively close between 2003 and 2007. Only in the most recent years did Portugal, Spain and France witness a clear reduction of responsibilities allocated to schools, coming after a significant increase in previous years (Batista, 2014). These reversals coincide with the onset of the financial crisis that ravaged Europe and was keenly felt in countries such as Portugal, Spain and Greece. The only exception, Austria, maintained its levels of autonomy over the years under review. Greece, which had extremely low autonomy almost a decade before (in 2003), saw it become almost non-existent by 2011.
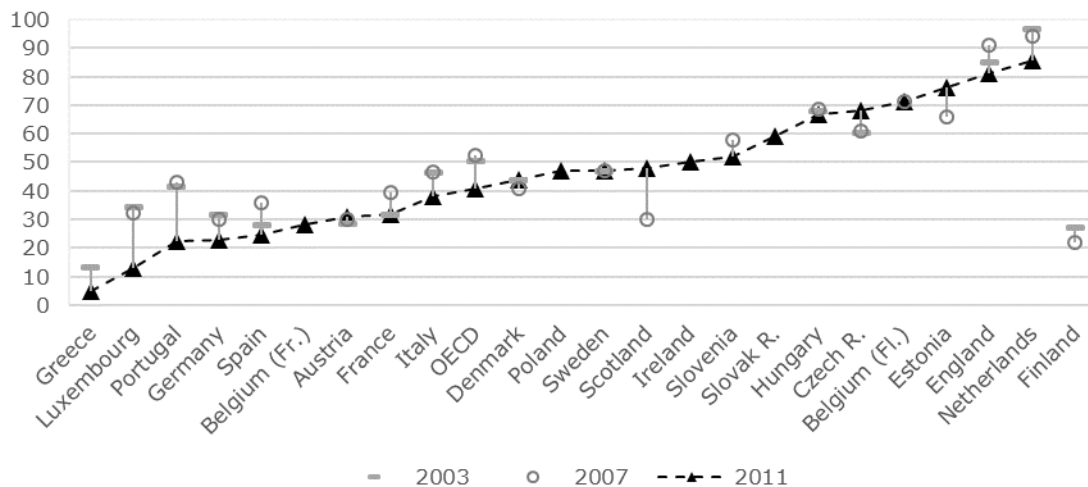
Figure 1.2. Development of decisions taken at the school level (at equivalent of ISCED level 2), European Union countries (or sub-regions) (24), 2003, 2007 and 2011 (%)

Note: Countries ranked in ascending order according to the most recent year (2011).
Source: OECD (2004, 2008, 2012). Author's own production.

Of the fourteen European countries or regions with levels of school autonomy above the OECD average, only three had had rising values during the period under analysis (Scotland, Czech Republic, Estonia). The remaining countries, in general, already had a high degree of autonomy in 2003 and 2007 – due to political contexts where the prevailing rationale is one of

decentralization of educational governance from the central state (Martins, 2012). Thus, most countries with this characteristic maintained their levels of school autonomy (for example, Denmark, Sweden, Hungary, Flemish Belgium) or even witnessed a slight decrease (Slovenia, England, Netherlands).

How is the division of responsibility at the various levels of government structured in European education systems? This analysis draws on the observation of several levels of decentralization in these education systems. Hans Weiler (1999) systematizes the processes of decentralization, while raising an alert to the fragile consistency of its terms, under two fundamental approaches: territorial decentralization, oriented toward the representation of interests by smaller "subnational" units; and, alternatively, functional decentralization, carried out by parastatal, non-governmental bodies or private organizations.

Figure 1.3 shows the distribution of the various countries according to the percentage of decisions taken at different levels of educational governance, from the most centralized (state and regions) to the most decentralized (local authorities and schools). The first view can thus be partially discussed based on information on decision-making on educational matters at the various levels of territorial government (OECD, 2008, 2015): central, federal state, province/region, subregion, place and school. With an understanding of autonomy from its decentralization processes, particularly the territorial, we can find very different national configurations in the European Union (Gargallo, 2013).
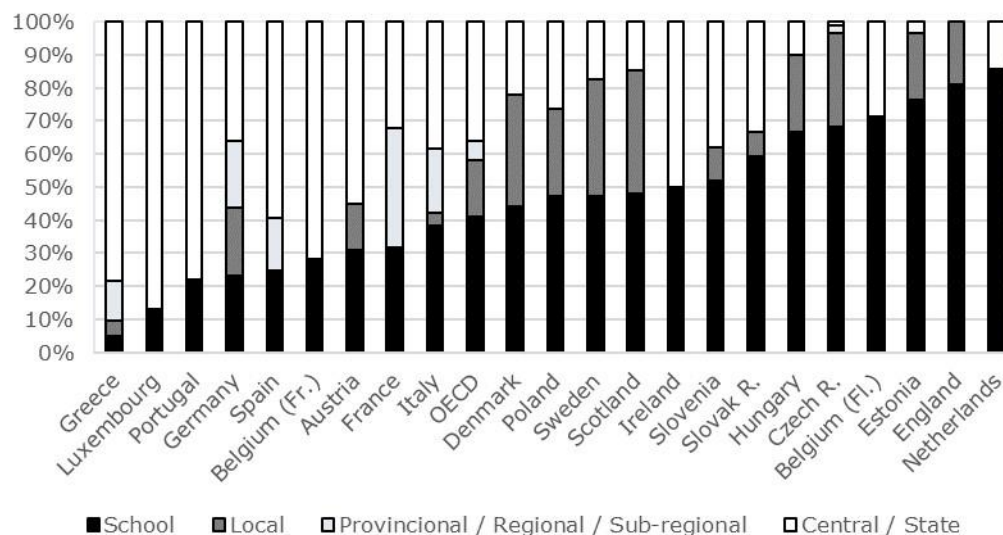
Figure 1.3. Decisions taken by level of educational governance (equivalent of ISCED level 2) in European Union countries and regions (22), 2011 (%)

Note: Countries ranked in ascending order according to the percentage of decisions taken at the school level.
Source: OECD (2012). Author's own production.

During the last year under review, countries in Europe where central education bodies have more responsibility for decision-making than schools are in the minority. This group consists mainly of Central European countries (Luxembourg, Germany, French Belgium, Austria) and Southern European (Portugal, Spain and Greece).

The autonomy of schools vis-à-vis central government seems to be clearly evident in twelve countries. These are subdivided into two groups that constitute distinct configurations of

educational autonomy. On the one hand, those where high levels of participation of local and/or regional authorities in educational decisions are paired with high levels of school autonomy. These include some countries in Eastern Europe (Estonia, Czech Republic and Hungary) and Nordic countries (Denmark and Sweden), as well as Scotland and England. This is in line with what some authors have evidenced as processes of affirmation where the movement towards territorial decentralization is favourable to the strengthening of local decision-making (Ladner et al., 2016). On the other hand, national contexts where the central state is next in line to schools in terms of decisions taken include a set of Eastern European countries (Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia) and Central Europe (Flemish Belgium and the Netherlands). It is thus noteworthy that, depending on the context, school autonomy may be an expression of a broader process of territorial decentralization (Christ and Dobbins, 2016: 362). In three countries, schools and the central state have the same power to intervene in educational governance (France, Italy, Ireland).
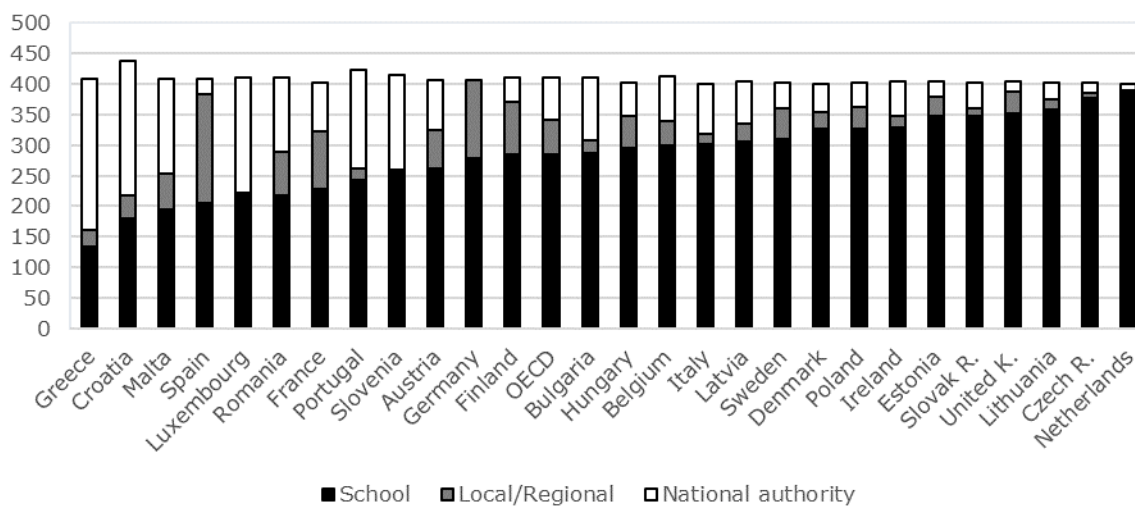
Figure 1.4. Decisions taken by level of educational governance (ISCED 2) regarding curriculum, student admissions, resources, learning assessment policies and disciplinary policies, European Union countries (27), 2015 (cumulative %)

Note: Countries ranked in ascending order according to the cumulative percentage of decisions taken by schools.
Source: OECD (2015), PISA. Author's own calculations.

1.3 Autonomy: dimensions and profiles in Europe

Regarding the concept of school autonomy, several international organizations/agencies have defined it and proposed dimensions and areas which are useful operationalization tools within the framework of a polysemic understanding. There has been more or less relative consensus on this issue. A study carried out by the Eurydice Network (2007) focused on three areas of observation: teaching, human resources management and financial resources management. The OECD has given a consolidated definition of the areas which these decisions are concerned with. They are: (i) organization of teaching: student admissions, educational paths; lesson times; choice of textbooks; constitution of classes; supplementary support for students, teaching

methods; daily assessment of students. (ii) Personnel Management: hiring and firing of teaching and non-teaching staff; rights and conditions of service; salary tables; influence on careers. (iii) Planning and structures: the opening or closing of schools, creation or removal of a level of education; design of study programmes, selection of study programmes taught at a specific school; choice of subjects taught in a specific school, definition of course content, creation of qualification exams for a certificate or diploma; certification (content analysis and assessment, scheduling and administration). (iv) Resources: allocation and use of resources for teaching staff, non-teaching staff, capital and operating expenses. Despite this classification, the OECD itself has used others in various projects and editions, albeit similar to this one.

As can be seen in Figure 1.5, on a scale ranging from 0 to 500 – where each dimension of autonomy corresponds to 100 points –, schools in OECD countries amass an average of 375 points of responsibility for decisions taken in those categories (OECD 2015), considered here cumulatively.

Now considering schools' decision-making in five key areas – student admissions, curriculum, resources, learning assessment policies and student disciplinary policies – figure 1.5 shows us that school principals in Europe admit a greater role of schools in student admission and in the definition and application of curricula. Schools' autonomy in the definition of disciplinary policies for students has a similar degree of prominence.
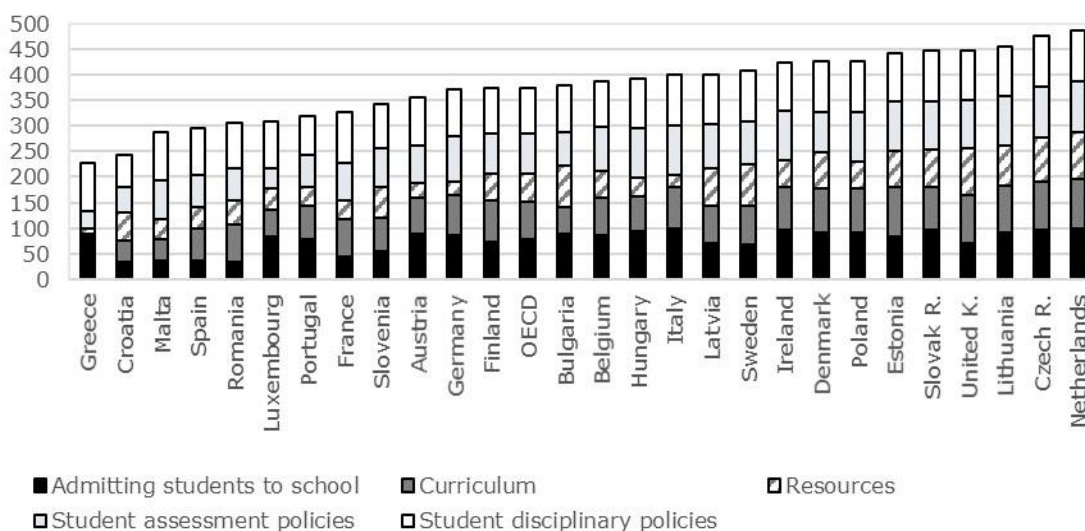
Figure 1.5. Decisions taken at school level (equivalent of ISCED level 2) by areas of autonomy, European Union countries (27), 2015 (%)

Notes: (1) Countries ranked in ascending order according to the cumulative percentage of decisions taken in the five dimensions in 2015.
(2) "Resources": hiring and firing of teachers, setting teacher's salaries, setting teachers' salary increases, setting the school budget, deciding budget allocation in school. "Curriculum": choosing textbooks, determining programme content, deciding what programmes are offered in schools. See PISA – International Data Explorer Help Guide.
Source: OECD (2015), PISA. Author's own calculations.

Almost all Southern and South-Eastern European countries (Croatia, Malta, Spain, Romania, Portugal, Slovenia) are below the OECD average, as are some from the Central Europe

(Luxembourg, France, Austria, Germany) and Scandinavia (Finland). However, countries such as Finland, Germany, and Austria have significant levels of school autonomy except in resource management. Even though there is some equivalence in this distribution between these countries, there are differences, particularly regarding their position in relation to decisions taken at the central, regional or local level. Only in Greece, Croatia, Malta and Spain do schools have less than 300 in accumulated percentage in the various categories – i.e. in some cases less than half of the responsibility is delegated to schools. However, Greece has important autonomy in student admissions.

There are fifteen European countries above the OECD average, with at least two-thirds of the decisions taken by schools, including those in the Central East (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia) and Baltic countries (such as Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania), together with some Central European countries with liberal traditions in education (Belgium, Ireland, United Kingdom, the Netherlands) and two Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark). Countries with very diverse political and historical traditions have adopted models of heightened autonomy. Despite assigning it different meanings, all contribute in some way to the reinforcement of school decisions and their strategic approaches in key areas of educational governance. The Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Lithuania enjoy high levels of autonomy in various areas with the United Kingdom following them, although it has the lowest level of student admissions on which to make decisions.

We have seen so far that, between 2003 and 2011, most European countries did not reinforce their levels of total school autonomy (Figure 1.2), although this did happen from 2011 to 2015 (comparing Figures 1.5 and 1.6). It remains to be seen what the substance of this autonomy has been in the various areas of responsibility. Figure 1.6 represents the structure of school autonomy diachronically in European countries. In the OECD, we see that it has declined since 2007, mainly due to the loss of decision-making power as regards personnel management, structural planning and resource management; the power of schools over organization of the curriculum has remained unchanged since 2003.

European countries whose schools have high levels of decision-making power in 2011 (the Netherlands, England, Estonia, Flemish Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ireland, Scotland, Poland, Sweden and Denmark, above the OECD average) share some characteristics in their structure of autonomy. It is in the area of curriculum organization that schools in these countries have greater responsibility. Personnel management – teaching and non-teaching staff – follows on immediately and has a similar weight, followed by structural planning in the case of the six countries with greater autonomy, and resource management. We can see that this structure remains relatively unchanged from the beginning of the millennium (2003) to the most recent year available for diachronic comparison (2011) (Figure 1.6).
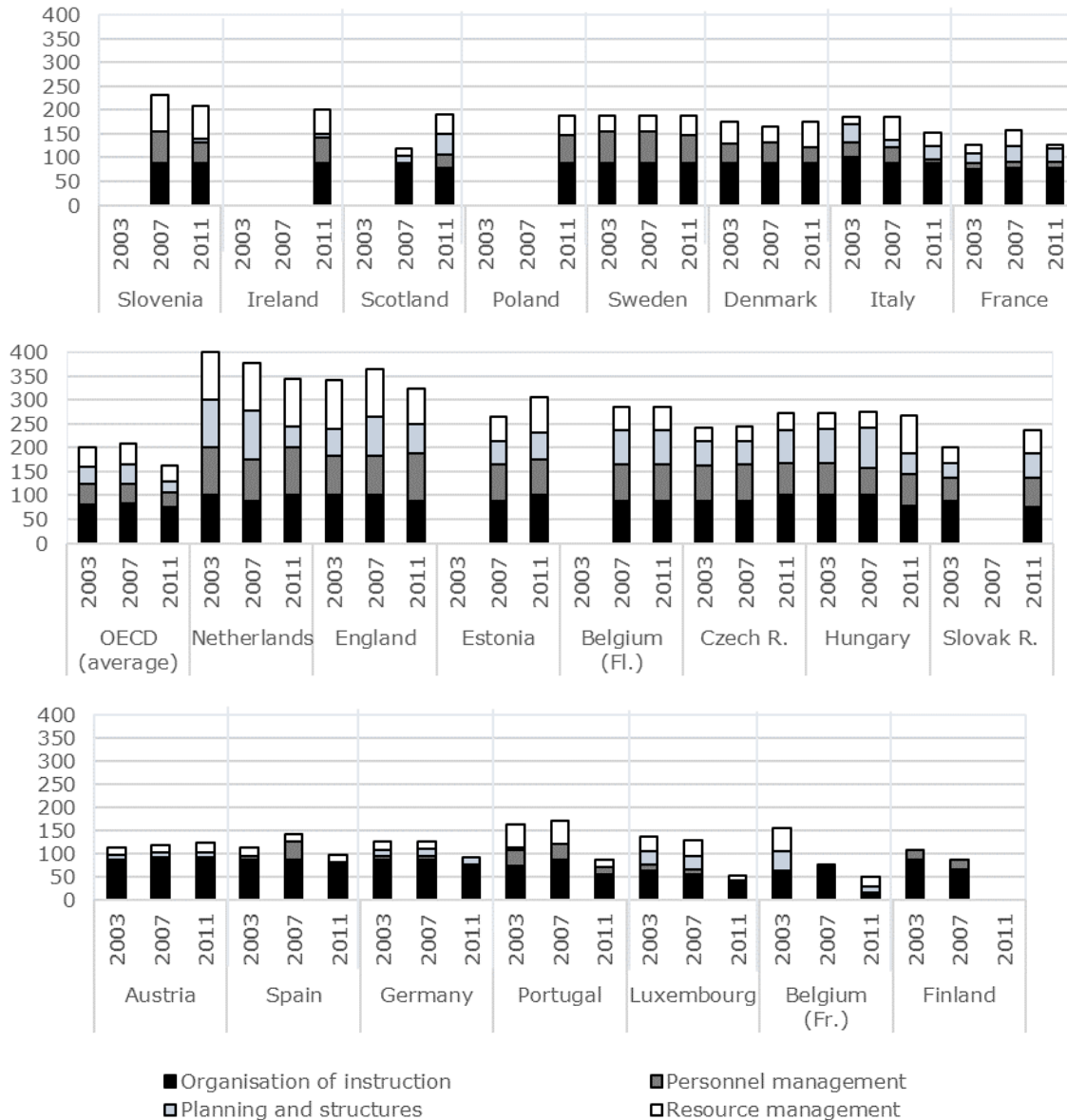
Figure 1.6. Decisions taken at the school level (equivalent to ISCED level 2) according to the areas of autonomy, European Union countries and regions (23), 2003, 2007 and 2011 (cumulative %)

Notes: (1) Countries ranked in descending order according to the cumulative percentage of decisions taken in the four dimensions in 2011. (2) "Organization of instruction": student admissions, educational paths, lesson times, constitution of classes, supplementary support to students, teaching methods, daily assessment of students. "Personnel management": hiring and firing of teaching and non-teaching staff, rights and conditions of service, salary tables, influence on careers. "Planning and structures": opening or closing of schools, creation or removal of a level of education, design of study programmes, selection of study programmes taught in a specific school, choice of subjects taught in a specific school, definition of course content, the creation of qualification exams for a certificate or diploma, certification (content analysis and assessment, marking and administration). "Resource management": allocation and use of resources for teaching staff, non-teaching staff, capital and operating expenses.
Source: OECD (2004, 2008, 2012). Author's own production.

Among European countries whose schools have decision-making power below average in 2011 (Italy, France, Austria, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Luxembourg and French Belgium), the power of schools over curriculum organization prevails over all other dimensions, which have a residual weight by comparison. In this group of countries, there is considerable variation in the structure of autonomy, both within the group and over time, which is related to the concentration of educational power in other instances of governance and to educational policies which laid little emphasis on decentralization or the deconcentration of power within this period.

Table 1.1 summarizes trends in school decision-making in the four domains of educational autonomy between 2003 and 2011 – that is, between the earliest and the most recent year with available data – in European countries. It is possible to identify a strong tendency in Europe to reduce the power of schools in curriculum organization and personnel management, while there is a relative increase of their responsibilities in resource management. Structural planning lies between stagnation and growth. The Central and Southern European countries have the lowest increase in levels of school autonomy; in contrast, several Eastern European and Nordic countries have made bold moves to transfer educational responsibilities to schools in all four dimensions considered.

In order to detect European school autonomy profiles, we analysed the interrelations of some indicators already described in this chapter in an exercise of multivariate statistical grouping, the main results of which are shown in Table 1.2. If we take into account five of the most recent international indicators produced on school autonomy, it is possible to identify three distinct country profiles in the European Union.

The first group is composed of nine countries, mostly from Northern and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Latvia, Sweden and the United Kingdom) with robust levels of school autonomy in all indicators considered. Schools in these countries have, on average, a high level of decision-making power both in strictly educational issues – related to the curriculum, assessment and the definition of disciplinary policies for students –as well as in the allocation and management of resources and in the definition of criteria for student intake. It is the index of total autonomy and the proportion of decisions on educational resources taken by schools that most distinguish school autonomy in this set of countries as compared to the others.

The second group that emerges from the analysis is composed of twelve countries, including some from Central Europe (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg) but also Finland and countries from Southern Europe such as Portugal, Italy, Bulgaria and Slovenia, as well as Hungary and Poland from the East. There are significant levels of school autonomy in terms of criteria definition for student intake, policies for student assessment and discipline and curriculum organization. However, these countries are distinguishable from the first set due to schools having only intermediate levels of total school autonomy (68.7% versus 88.9%), and residual autonomy in terms of allocation and management of resources (only 45.2% versus 80.3%). Some of these countries can be considered newcomers to greater autonomy.

The third group is composed of only five countries, the remaining Southern European countries (Croatia, Malta, Romania and Spain) and France. Here, school autonomy is clearly limited, with a situation of highly concentrated political power at the respective central and regional state levels, and where education system reform has proceeded at a relatively slow pace compared to the rest of the European Union. The difference between this group's total autonomy indices and those of the previous set of countries is residual (62.9% versus 66.7%), as is the proportion of decisions taken at the level of student disciplinary policies (86.9% versus 92.2%).

It is mainly because of the low proportion of decisions taken by schools on student intake and educational resources that these countries are distinct from the others.

Table 1.1. Summary of trends in the development of school autonomy between 2003 and 2011 in the organization of instruction, personnel management, planning and structures and resource management, European Union countries (20)

	Fall	Stagnation	Rise
Organization of instruction	Belgium (Fr), England, Scotland, Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Hungary, Slovak R.	Austria, Belgium (Fl), France, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Slovenia	Czech R., Estonia
Personnel management	Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Luxembourg, Czech R., Slovenia	Belgium (Fl), Belgium (Fr), France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Estonia, Hungary, Finland	Austria, England, Scotland, Slovak R.
Planning and structures	Belgium (Fr), Luxembourg, Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Hungary	Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Austria, Belgium (Fl), Germany, Spain	Czech R., Estonia, Slovak R., Slovenia, France, Scotland
Resource management	Germany, Belgium (Fr), England, France, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia	Belgium (Fl), Netherlands, Spain, Finland	Czech R., Estonia, Hungary, Slovak R., Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Scotland, Austria

Notes: (1) The graded grey tones represent the most common trends (dark grey) and the least frequent (light grey). (2) "Organization of instruction": student admissions, school courses, lesson times, choice of textbooks, constitution of classes, supplementary support for students, teaching methods, daily assessment of students. "Personnel management": hiring and firing of teaching and non-teaching staff, rights and conditions of service, salary tables, influence on careers. "Planning and structures": opening or closing of schools, creation or removal of a level of education, design of study programmes, selection of study programmes taught in a specific school, choice of subjects taught in a specific school, definition of course content, the creation of qualification exams for a certificate or diploma, certification (content analysis and assessment, marking and administration). "Resource management": allocation and use of resources for teaching staff, non-teaching staff, capital and operating expenses.
Source: OECD (2004, 2008, 2012). Author's own production.

Table 1.2. European configurations of school autonomy in European Union countries (26), 2015 (%)

		Index of school autonomy	School decisions: student admissions	School decisions: curriculum	School decisions: resources	School decisions: student assessment	School decisions: student disciplinary policies
Robust autonomy (educational, admissions and resources) (n = 9)	Czech R.	95.6	96.9	94.9	86.5	98.8	98.8
	Denmark	83.1	91.6	85.7	72.1	76.3	99.7
	Estonia	88.2	83.7	95.6	72.3	95.3	96.1
	Latvia	84.1	70.8	71.4	75.0	87.2	96.7
	Lithuania	91.1	92.2	90.4	79.7	95.2	97.4
	Netherlands	90.8	97.8	97.0	92.9	100.0	100
	Slovak R.	88.4	95.6	84.0	74.2	94.2	99.2
	Sweden	87.7	67.3	76.8	80.4	85.2	99.1
	United K.	91.5	70.8	94.8	90.0	95.0	97.1
	Total (average)	**88.9**	**85.2**	**87.8**	**80.3**	**91.9**	**98.2**
	Standard deviation	*3.86*	*12.41*	*9.09*	*7.81*	*7.59*	*1.42*
Significant autonomy (educational and admissions) (n = 12)	Austria	58.3	88.2	72.1	28.7	71.7	95.3
	Belgium	69.1	84.7	75.4	52.0	86.5	89.0
	Bulgaria	81.2	88.1	52.6	81.7	65.3	90.4
	Finland	74.7	72.9	82.1	50.2	78.8	90.9
	Germany	62.5	84.6	79.5	27.1	87.4	93.7
	Hungary	63.3	92.5	69.9	35.2	97.2	98.0
	Ireland	75.2	96.5	84.7	51.5	95.8	96.4
	Italy	56.8	97.8	82.6	23.9	96.6	100.0
	Luxembourg	67.7	84.4	52.4	41.7	38.1	91.0
	Poland	77.7	91.2	85.2	52.4	97.9	99.1
	Portugal	61.5	76.9	67.5	36.1	63.1	76.5
	Slovenia	76.5	55.7	63.8	61.8	75.8	86.6
	Total (average)	**68.7**	**84.5**	**72.3**	**45.2**	**79.5**	**92.2**
	Standard deviation	*8.24*	*11.59*	*11.56*	*16.57*	*18.04*	*6.51*
Limited autonomy (admissions and resources) (n = 5)	Croatia	63.6	32.7	43.7	53.7	50.5	62.1
	France	58.5	44.6	73.0	35.9	74.3	98.1
	Malta	53.0	35.6	42.0	38.7	77.6	92.7
	Romania	68.2	32.3	75.5	45.7	63.5	89.4
	Spain	57.5	36.6	63.6	41.3	62.7	92.1
	Total (average)	**60.2**	**36.4**	**59.6**	**43.1**	**65.7**	**86.9**
	Standard deviation	*5.86*	*4.96*	*15.90*	*6.96*	*10.73*	*14.21*

Notes: (1) The Ward method of hierarchical grouping was used for European Union countries according to the five explanatory variables with descriptive measures shown in the table. The analysis of the agglomeration coefficients and the dendrogram (see Annexes A and B) pointed to a three-cluster solution for optimal statistical quality. In order to increase the substantive consistency of the solution, Greece was not included as it was considered a moderate outlier. (2) "Resources": hiring and firing of teachers, setting teachers' salaries, setting teachers' salary increases, setting the school budget, deciding budget allocation in schools. "Curriculum": choosing textbooks, determining programme content, deciding what programmes are offered in schools.
Source: OECD (2015), PISA. Author's own production with SPSS 24.

1.4 Closing comments

In general, we can say that when the size of school autonomy is taken into account (interpreted by means of a general index by the OECD PISA Programme), several configurations are recognized, coinciding to a greater or lesser extent with spaces and geographies in the European Union context. However, this is only the viewpoint of the analysis of school autonomy. When we analyse and strive towards a better understanding of each country in terms of its structure, areas of autonomy and the relation between levels of governance of the education system, we find great diversity (Woessmann et al., 2011, Hatzopoulos et al., 2015). This is related to the observation, among others, of two rationales of how to incorporate models of school autonomy into the European context:

‣ One is related to the historical construction of education systems which, as a constituent part of the national states, share some of their institutional characteristics, modes of operation and administration and objectives, and are effectively subsidiary to the action rationale of each. This becomes clear in the period when the education systems were established (Archer, 1979) – during periods of reform or transformation of the states – and the rationales of administration and management which prevail in them. This is particularly clear in the Dutch and British education systems – it is obvious in their historical teaching processes (Eurydice, 2007) and in the measures shown in Table 1.2.
‣ Another, not always in accordance with the previous rationale, is the definition of reforms and policies of autonomy, often as global effects of cross-contamination or borrowing of models for policies and school administration (Martins, 2014). This affects and interacts with different education systems and schools in European countries (see the Czech Republic and Estonia – Eurydice, 2007) with robust levels of autonomy in recent years, as can be seen in Tables 1.1 and 1.2. Despite the effects of globalization, which has its own European manifestations as regards autonomy policies, the diversity and divergence that can be found in Europe do not allow claims to be made for the existence of common political approaches on these matters (Hatzopoulos et al., 2015).

However, and while accepting all this diversity of school autonomy policies (Hanushek, et al, 2011), it was important to provide an overview of the dynamics and the levels and configurations in Europe both prevailing and unique, and also to underline the centrality of educational reforms and policies from the 1980s to the present day (Hatzopoulos et al., 2015, Eurydice, 2007).

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Annexes

A. Dendrogram of the hierarchical grouping of European Union countries (26) according to indicators of school autonomy (Ward's method)
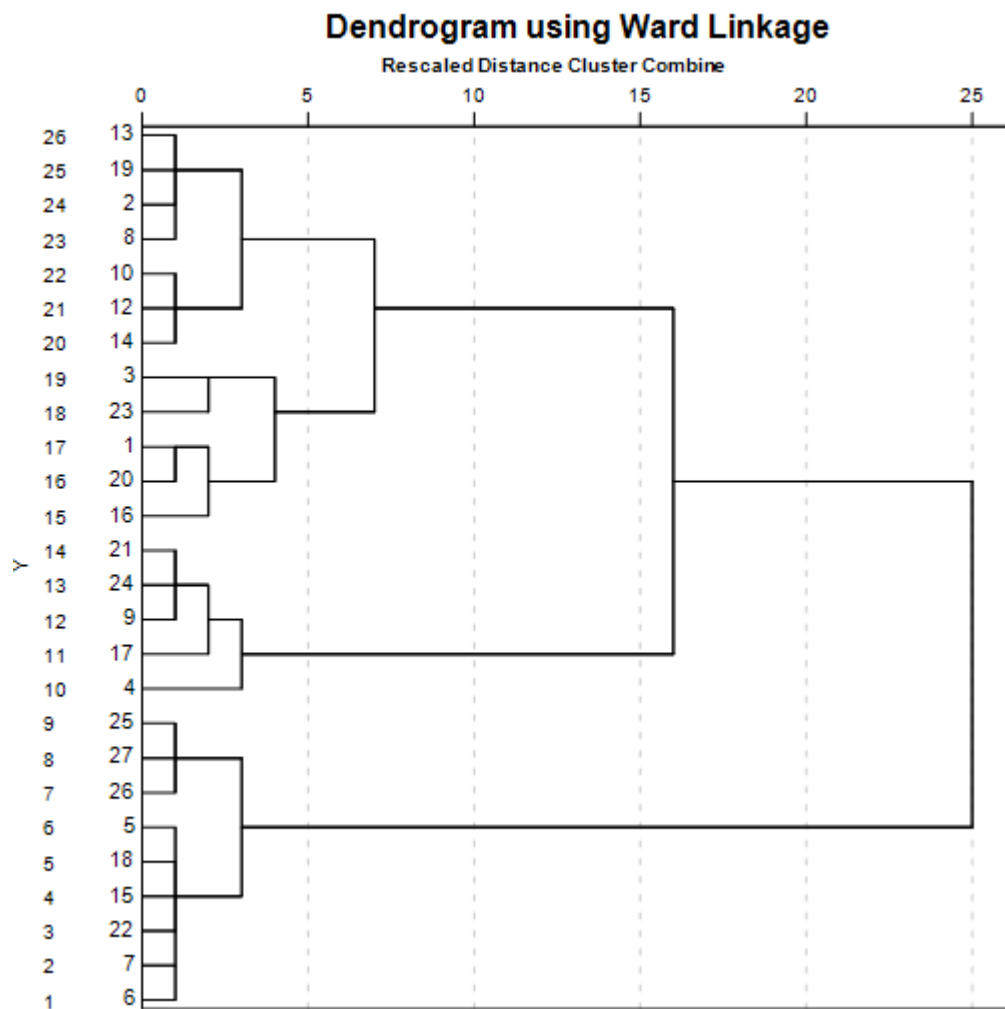
Note: After the third grouping, the distances between cases become too great to considered them as belonging to the same cluster.

Source: OECD (2015), PISA. Author's own calculations.

B. Fusion coefficients of the hierarchical grouping of European Union countries (26) according to indicators of school autonomy (Ward's method)
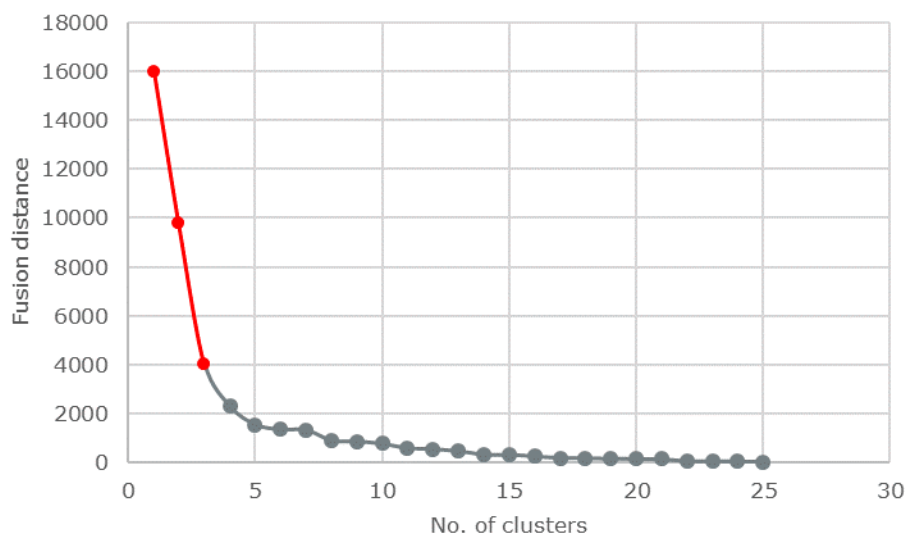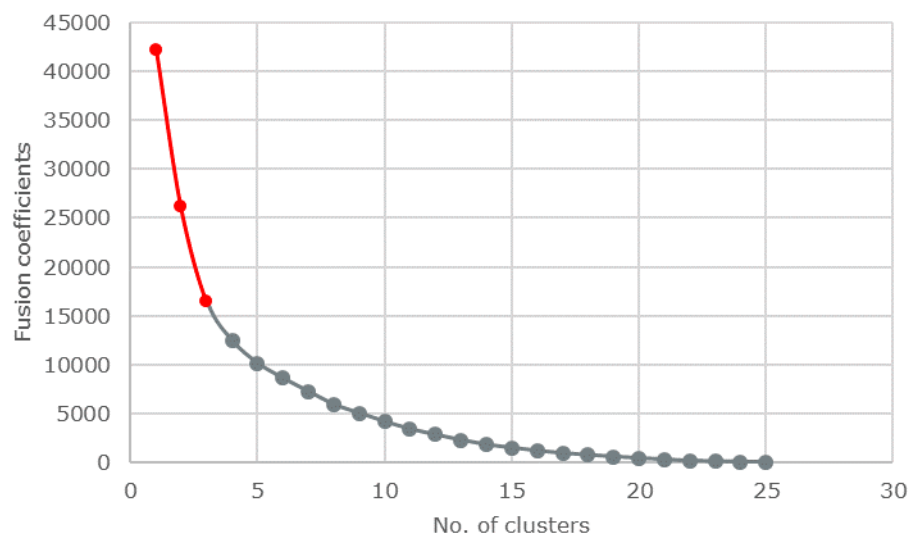
Note: After the third grouping, the distances between clusters become residual and as such the number of clusters cannot be increased.
Source: OECD (2015), PISA. Author's own calculations.

2. Autonomy and leadership of school actors

Susana da Cruz Martins and Adriana Albuquerque

2.1 Opening remarks

When the central theme of a study is school autonomy, it is indispensable that school leaderships should be convened to discuss it. Thus, we can consider autonomy a critical precondition for the development of school leadership policies. Authors such as Pavlos Hatzopoulos, Andreas Kollias and Kathy Kikis-Papadakis (2015) place great emphasis on this, regarding school leadership as a multifaceted process. School leadership practices are limited or enabled by both the degree of autonomy granted to schools and by the forms that such autonomy may take in different educational contexts and areas (idem, 2015).

The transformation of education policies in contexts where neoliberal approaches have been reinforced has had consequences for the status and organizational recognition and mission of schools, as well as for the assignment of responsibilities to school principals in Europe (Rinne et al., 2016). The reinforcement of a neoliberal approach to school and education system governance (Hatzopoulos et al., 2015 and Moos, 2013) has led to a growing understanding of educational institutions as competitive arenas. Agnes Van Zanten (2015) examined precisely how competitive processes affect various school activities and how they are perceived by their main actors, namely principals, teachers and parents. She gives a comparative definition, involving 6 cities from different countries, of typified responses to competition and competitiveness in the "school market".

One aspect about which there is some consensus in international studies is related to the increase in leaders' responsibilities and how it is necessary to empower leadership to exercise it in an environment of change and emerging challenges (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008; Vaillant, 2015).

2.2 School leadership: the principal and the school board

Principals

Figure 2.1. shows that there are marked differences between countries in terms of school principals' responsibilities in Europe, as part of the total responsibilities shared by the other actors in the education system.

Principals have more responsibilities in some countries from the Central-Eastern Europe, namely Czech Republic Slovakia and Poland; from the North such as Denmark, Sweden and Finland plus the Baltics, with Estonia and Lithuania; and others with more liberal traditions in their prevailing approaches to education, like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.
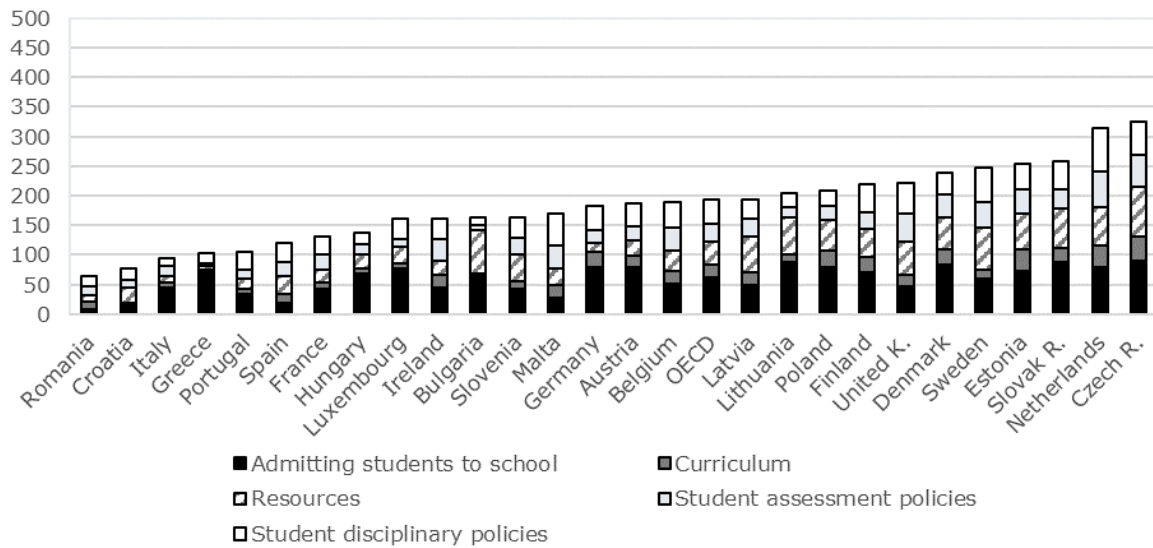
Figure 2.1. Responsibility of school principals for student admissions, curriculum, resources, learning assessment policies and student disciplinary policies, European Union countries (27), 2015 (cumulative %)

Notes: (1) Countries ranked in ascending order according to the cumulative percentage of decisions taken by schools. (2) "Resources": hiring and firing teachers, setting teachers' salaries, setting teachers' salary increases, setting the school budget, deciding budget allocation in schools. "Curriculum": choosing textbooks, determining programme contents, deciding what programmes are offered in schools. See PISA – International Data Explorer Help Guide.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own production.

The school principals who have the least autonomy to operate within the organizations they direct are from countries such as Romania, Croatia, and other Southern European countries (Portugal, Greece, Italy and Spain). These have more centralised education systems or a recent history of educational decentralization.

Upon a first analysis of the most important area of autonomy for principals, in 16 of the 26 countries presented, student admissions is their main responsibility (Figure 2.1).

Only in Spain, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and Sweden is resource management the dimension of autonomy that carries the greatest weight among principals' responsibilities. These countries, however, still have relatively low levels of responsibility in terms of curriculum development and applying policies for student assessment.

There is a tendency for countries where principals have more responsibility for student admissions to also have more autonomy in resource management. This group includes predominantly Eastern European countries (with Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, as a broad geographic group), [1] as well as some Nordic countries (Finland and Sweden) and the Netherlands.

Decision-making on curricula is the dimension in which principals have the least responsibility in the overwhelming majority of European countries, followed by establishing student assessment policies.
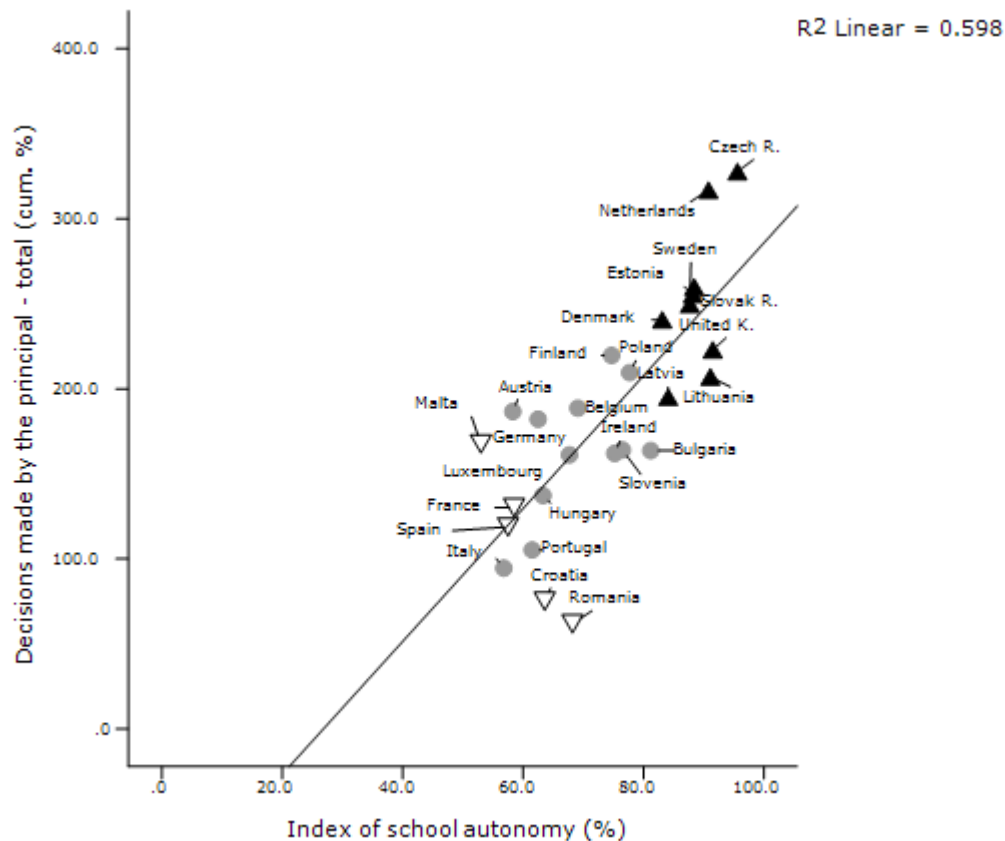
Figure 2.2. Responsibilities allocated to school principals and autonomy allocated to schools (index), European Union countries (26), 2015 (%)

Legend: ▲ Robust autonomy in the various areas; ● Significant autonomy in some areas; ∇ Limited autonomy
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own production.

Some international studies (such as those by Rinne et al., 2016) indicate that despite national differences in the position and status of principals, there is a global trend towards its strengthening along with increased autonomy in their functions – except in Finland – while monitoring and assessment of their activity is increasingly found (idem, 2016).

Figure 2.2 shows a strong relation between the allocation of autonomy for decision-making in schools and the reinforcement of decisions made by the main school leaders, the principals – about 60% of the variation of principals' decision-making power is explained by the respective country's school autonomy index ($R^2 = 0.598$).

The group of countries with robust autonomy in the various areas (indicated in the figure with a black triangle) is distinct due to the great power given to school principals – the central figure in European schools with greatest autonomy. This means that there is a prevailing model of concentration of responsibilities in the figure of the principal in school systems with greater and broader autonomy.

In short, European school autonomy regarding student admissions and, to a lesser extent, management of the organization's human and financial resources, is essentially carried out by the principal.

25

Governing bodies

While the principal plays an important role in the educational decision-making process among European countries, this cannot be said so unequivocally about the school board (as a collective body or board of governors). Indeed, Figure 2.3 suggests that this collective actor has a secondary position in European school leaderships, as can be seen in all areas of autonomy considered – except for defining disciplinary policies, amongst countries with above average autonomy.

None of the countries has a governing body which is responsible for more than half of the decisions taken in its education system. Nordic countries stand out as those where this body has less weight (Finland and Sweden). These actors play a more forceful role in Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania and Ireland.

In countries where the governing body has little power in student admissions, it generally has a greater responsibility – albeit moderate or limited – in remaining aspects of school autonomy, such as curriculum definition, the establishment of policies and application of student disciplinary policies and resource management, which is essentially true for some Central European countries (France, Germany and Luxembourg, Poland) and in Northern Europe (such as the Baltics, Lithuania and Estonia, and Denmark).

On the other hand, there is no clear relationship between school autonomy and possibilities for decision-making by the school's governing bodies – only 5.7% of its' variation is explained by the countries' autonomy index ($R^2 = 0.057$). As can be seen in Figure 2.4, countries with robust school autonomy do not have a corresponding reinforcement of their collective leaderships.
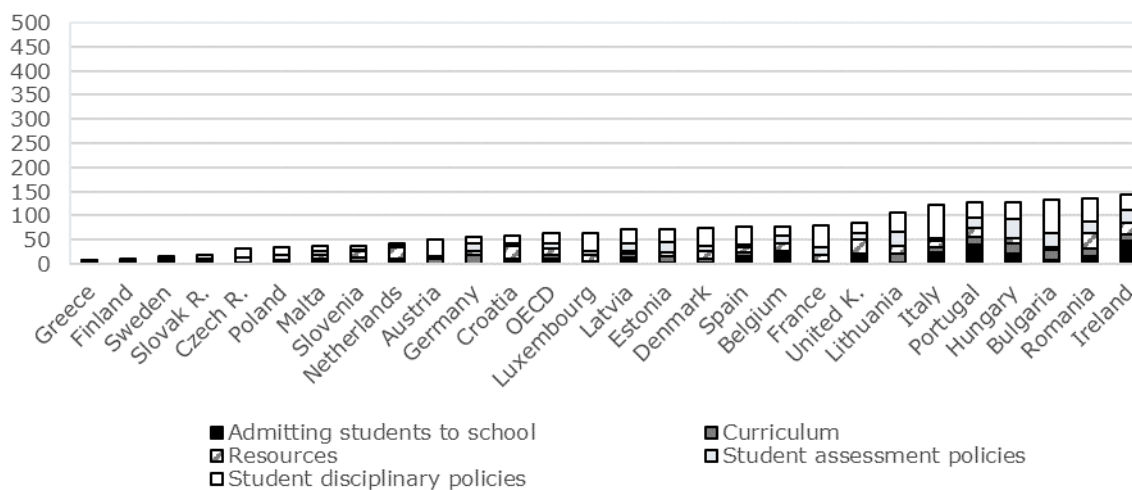
Figure 2.3. Responsibility of governing bodies by area of autonomy, European Union countries (27), 2015 (cumulative %)

Notes: (1) Countries ranked in ascending order according to the cumulative percentage of decisions taken by schools. (2) "Resources": hiring and firing teachers, setting teachers' salaries, setting teachers' salary increases, setting the school budget, deciding budget allocation in school. "Curriculum": choosing textbooks, determining programme content, deciding what programmes are offered in schools. See PISA - International Data Explorer Help Guide.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own production.

2.3 Teacher participation in school decision-making

What is the role of teachers in school decision-making in Europe? According to Figure 2.5, the area where teachers are most active is the curriculum, followed by defining student assessment policies.

Contrary to what was found regarding the responsibilities of principals and school boards, there is much greater homogeneity among countries where the structure of teachers' participation in school autonomy is concerned. There is a clear division of power within school organizations and teachers are charged with an important part of decisions concerning pedagogical practices and contents, while simultaneously being excluded from the more administrative aspects of school management (resources and student admissions).
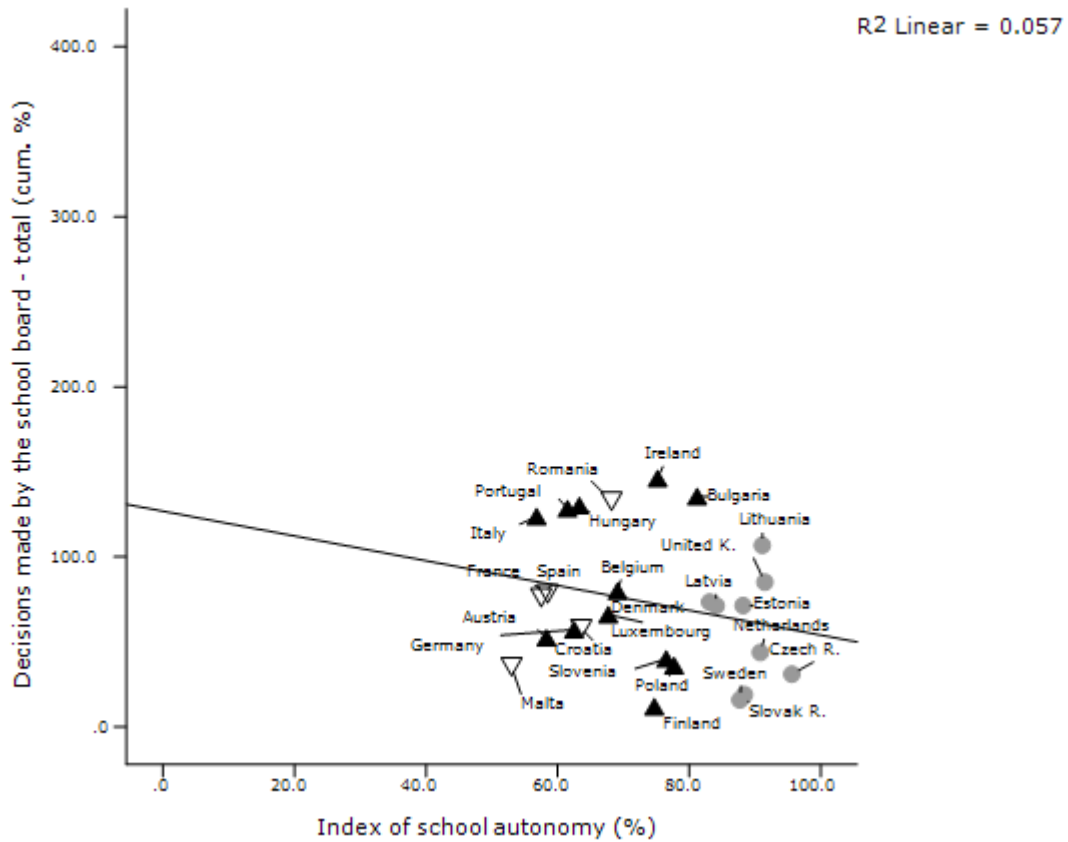
Figure 2.4. Responsibilities allocated to the school boards and autonomy allocated to schools (index), European Union countries (26), 2015 (%)

Legend: ▲ Robust autonomy in the various areas; ● Significant autonomy in some areas; ∇ Limited autonomy
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own production.
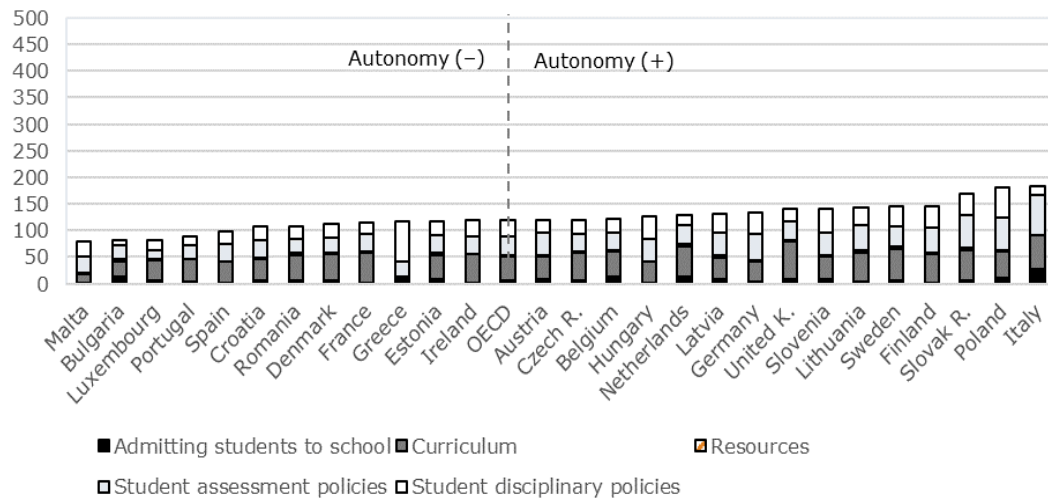
Figure 2.5. Teachers' responsibility for autonomy, European Union countries (27), 2015 (cumulative %)

Notes: "Resources": hiring and firing teachers, setting teachers' salaries, setting teacher's salary increases, setting the school budget, deciding budget allocation in school. "Curriculum": choosing textbooks, determining programme content, deciding what programmes are offered in schools.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own production.
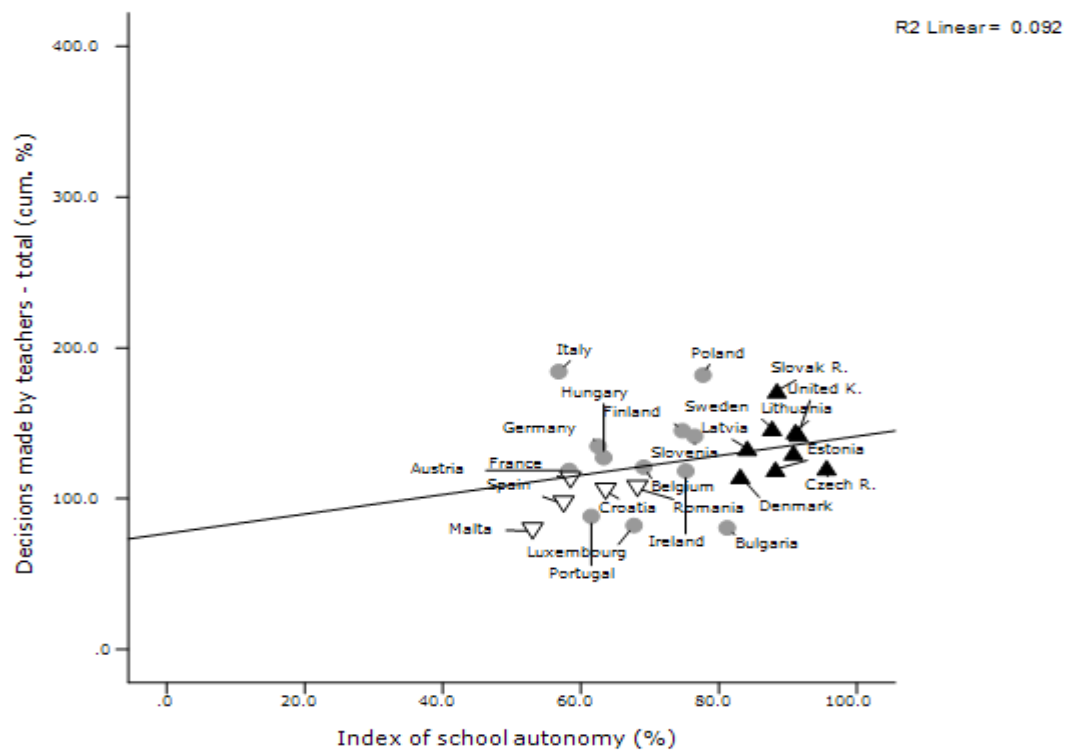
Figure 2.6. Teachers' responsibilities and autonomy allocated to schools (index), European Union countries (26), 2015 (%)

Legend: ▲ Robust autonomy in the various areas; ● Significant autonomy in some areas; ∇ Limited autonomy
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own production.

The greatest variation among European countries concerns, for example, the importance of the teachers' role in defining student assessment policies. Below OECD average (36%) we have only Portugal, Luxembourg, Romania and Denmark. The contrary position of Greece can also be highlighted, where teachers have a very limited capacity for decision-making – it is higher as regards the definition of disciplinary policies and student assessment but almost non-existent with respect to resource management and administration. However, there are other countries where teachers have equal responsibility in defining policies for student assessment and the curriculum (Austria, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, Slovakia, Lithuania, Spain and Finland). A very recent OECD publication (2018) points out which countries, such as Portugal, should increase teacher participation in defining and operationalizing curricula and student assessment. It is likewise recommended that these competencies be reinforced especially towards more qualified and experienced teachers and where disadvantaged students are concerned.

Figure 2.6 shows a tenuous relationship between school autonomy and responsibilities allocated to teachers – only 9.2% of the variation is explained by the respective school autonomy index ($R^2 = 0.092$). In this reading, Italy stands out as being in a very unique position, with relatively small school autonomy and an important set of responsibilities allocated to teachers.

2.4 School leadership profiles in Europe: closing comments

The rules of power distribution are variable; they take place on a school playing board that is inclined to reinforce the powers of the school principal.

Generically speaking, when there is a robust autonomy in schools, its main leader, the principal, also has a higher capacity for decision-making (considering the set of areas analysed here), particularly in relation to other actors in the school organization (this can be seen in Figure 2.7, which shows the high correlation between school autonomy and the principal's powers).
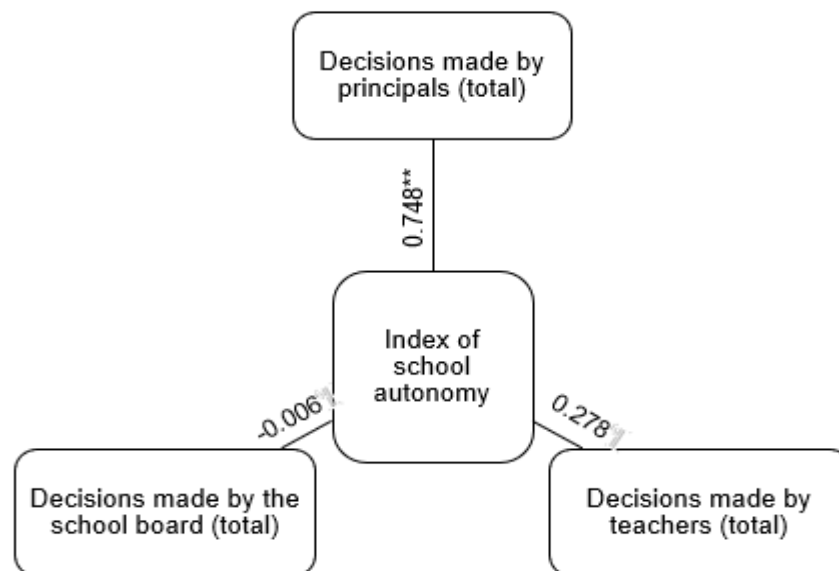
Figure 2.7. Correlations between the responsibilities allocated to the various actors (cumulative %) and school autonomy (index), European Union countries (27), 2015

Legend: ** *p* < 0.01 (significant Pearson's R correlation)
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own calculations.

Yet how are powers distributed among the various actors, especially between the principals, who assume top level responsibilities in the school organization, and others?

What Figure 2.8 suggests is that principals who are strong from the point of view of their allocated responsibilities have no correspondence, at least not in a linear fashion, to school boards with great power in the organizations where they operate. On the contrary, if there were some relationship, even if weak, it would be negative (R^2 = 0.342). In fact, a diversity of situations can be found; yet countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia or Sweden provide very clear examples that the greater robustness of single-person control corresponds to a school board with fewer responsibilities.

However, there are countries where the school boards have more responsibilities and take more decisions than their principals – see the cases of Romania or Portugal. Neither belongs to the set of countries in which schools have more autonomy in their governance and administration.

Such diversity in this analytic relationship also exhibits different configurations when combined with the patterns of autonomy presented in Chapter 1.
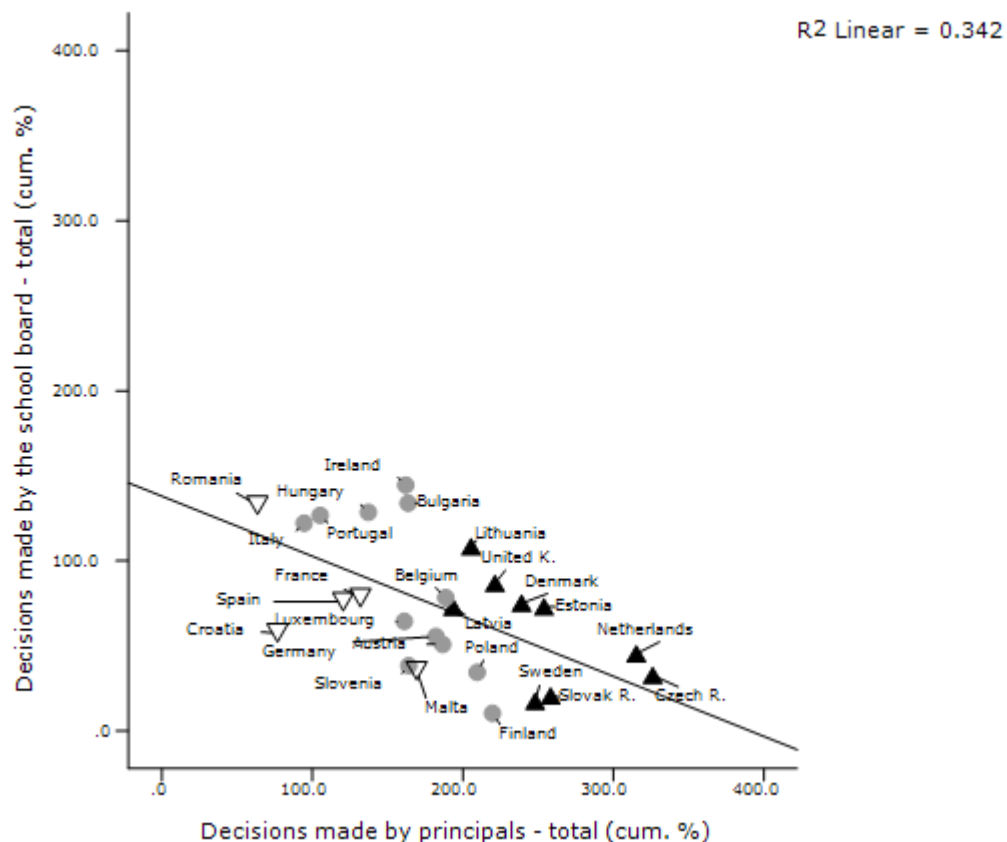
Figure 2.8. Responsibilities allocated to school principals and school boards, European Union countries (26), 2015 (cumulative %)

Legend: ▲ Robust autonomy in various areas; ● Significant autonomy in some areas; ∇ Limited autonomy
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own production.

Figure 2.9 also shows greater diversity in European education systems (R^2 = 0.071). As is to be expected in the countries surveyed, with the exception of Italy, principals have more decision-

making power than teachers. However, teachers in countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland and the United Kingdom make many decisions compared with other countries, making them close to their principals on this level.
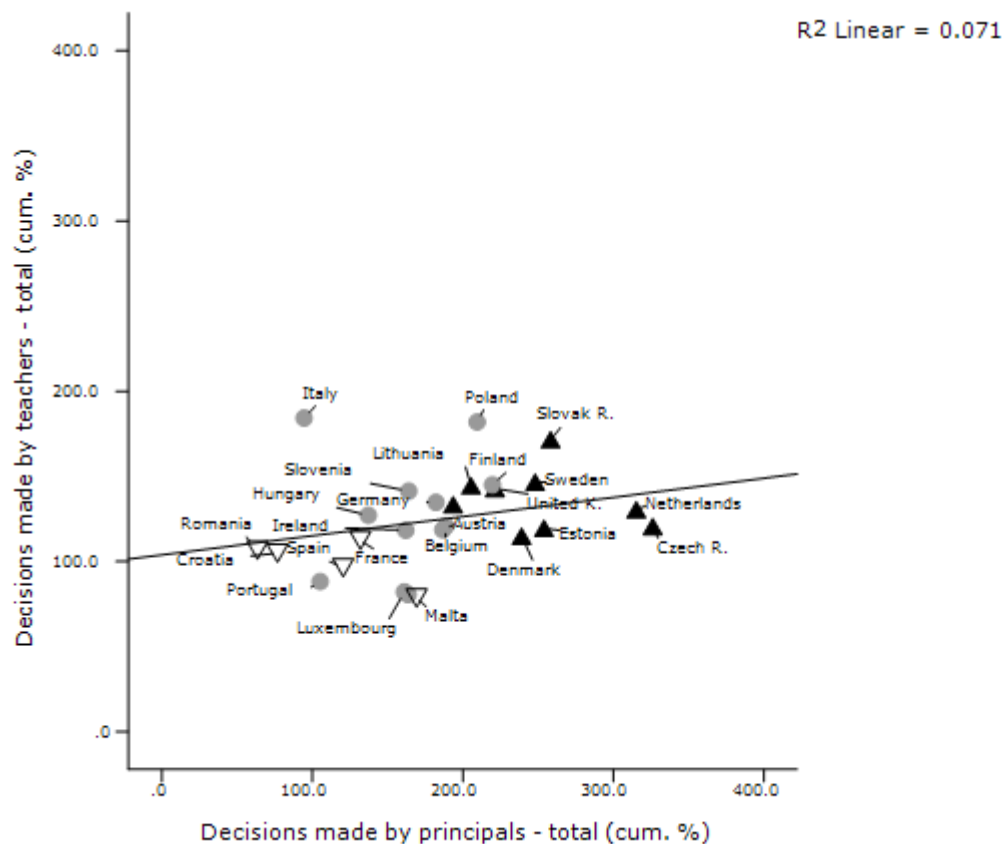
Figure 2.9. Responsibilities allocated to school principals and teachers, European Union countries (26), 2015 (cumulative %)

Legend: ▲ Robust autonomy in various areas; ● Significant autonomy in some areas; ∇ Limited autonomy
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Author's own production.

From this analysis, we can identify a set of trends or leadership profiles marked by the context of their autonomy:

‣ It is, to a certain extent, clear that the leadership of principals is all the stronger because they have a highly autonomous school context in diverse areas of activity (Figure 2.1) and in less centralized education systems (Figure 1.4). The prevalent areas of decisions are student admissions and resource management – that is, the areas which have a stronger link to school management and administration and less so to a concept of direct intervention in more strictly educational and pedagogical approaches. This trend in the European context can be designated as single-person management leadership in a high autonomy context – the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, among others, are good examples.

‣ In other cases, a greater preponderance or equivalence can be seen in the role of school boards compared with principals. This is the case in Portugal, Romania and also Ireland and Hungary, with school boards very close in power to the principal. These are cases of collective leadership in a moderate autonomy context.

- Finally, another approach concerns educational and professional leadership in a diverse autonomy context. These are cases where teachers have an active role in decision-making in schools, especially in areas of an educational nature, such as the curriculum and setting assessment policies. Such leadership profile can be found in countries whose schools enjoy varied autonomy but tend to be outside the robust autonomy cluster, such as Italy, France, Spain and Croatia.

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Endnotes

[1] These are part of the historical concept of Mitteleuropa, which was linked to a system called the economic and customs union of Central European countries, led by Germany and, to a lesser extent, Austria-Hungary.

3. Evaluation and accountability processes in schools and education systems. A European characterization

Susana da Cruz Martins and Bernardo Malcatanho Machado

3.1 Opening comments

This chapter aims to identify the main models of accountability and evaluation of schools, especially in the field of external evaluation. As stated by Daniela Salvioni and Raffaella Cassano (2017: 176), the consolidation of autonomy and of a school evaluation system is a decisive element in stable and effective school governance structures.

Accountability in education is a broad concept that can be addressed in various ways. These processes have been almost globally implemented and, in the case of Europe, are already far removed from the 1990s in countries like the United Kingdom or others in Eastern Europe (Figlio and Loeb, 2011). In fact, the implementation of school evaluation systems, although in a more piecemeal and less structured way, has existed since the 1960s (Janssens and Amelsvoort, 2008). However, while many countries share reforms that include the development of evaluation systems, it is also true that many of them are based on specific national circumstances and have very different political, economic and social contexts, giving different contours and goals for these evaluations (idem, 2008: 16; Leithwood, Edge & Jantzi, 1999: 30).

Authors such as Leithwood, Edge & Jantzi (1999) present some different types of approach to school accountability, resulting in different blends in different countries: the market competition approach, the decentralisation of decision-making approach, the professional approach and the management approach. The application of this classification was based on a cross-country comparison study (cf. Leithwood, Edge, & Jantzi, 1999), after which other teams started to do comparative studies, taking the same typology as a reference (as in the case of Janssens and Van Amelsvoort, 2008). In this chapter, although we make some references to this typology, the basis used concerns questions related to the conceptualisation itself of the term school accountability, more oriented here to an analysis of external evaluation of schools. This type of evaluation aims to monitor or improve the quality of school and/or student results by its implementation (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015; Janssens and van Amelsvoort, 2008). The models and the intensity of external regulation imposed upon these processes vary greatly from country to country, as does as the range of aspects assessed; this may depend, for example, on the extent of school autonomy (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

As Leithwood, Edge and Jantzi (1999: 30) stated, "accountability has been conceptualised in response to five issues: who is accountable, to whom, for what, at what level, and with what consequences." The dimensions of this profile focus mainly on the objectives of school evaluation, the type of actors involved, the guidelines and procedures, the results and the reporting of these results. The rating of the dimensions proposed here attempts to cover the objectives and type of action associated with the various models for evaluation of school

governance (covered in Leithwood, Edge and Jantzi, 1999: 30) and also takes into account other reconnaissance exercises which come under other projects (such as Arcia et al., 2011). To this end, a mapping process was carried out via document analysis, based on the information contained in the report Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe (European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). This analysis also benefited from up-to-date information and country-specific examples from the European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2017) publication.

3.2. Objectives principal actors in provision of accounts and external evaluation of schools

One of the central aims of this chapter is to ascertain which objectives for external school evaluation prevail in the various European education systems. Two types were distinguished for this purpose: the first more focused on educational and pedagogical issues and the second more oriented to processes of management and administration regulation in educational organisations. Both occur extensively in Europe but have distinct focuses in the different systems.

The great majority of the cases analysed[1] (24 out of 30) clearly define the objectives of their evaluation programmes as "educational quality control" and "improving the education system" (16 out of 30) which fall under the first type of objectives (see Table 1). Indeed, quality control and improvement of schools as a whole are premises of the basic guidelines for external evaluation, as defined at the European level (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

The third most mentioned objective (10 out of 30) relates to the "consistency between the school's working procedures and the legislation in force" (see Table 1), which is more a matter of legal or administrative regulation. Secondary, but still notable in school evaluation models, are objectives such as "counselling" (nine countries) and "provision of accounts (financial and educational results)" (seven countries).

Lastly, "direct decisions on the school's capacity for autonomy", "responses to complaints/grievances" and "encouraging school autonomy" are the goals in the context of "school regulation and administration" which are least often mentioned by countries in their external evaluation programmes (based on the information in the report by the European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Indeed, only in part of Belgium and in Portugal is promoting school autonomy declared to be an explicit objective of external evaluation (see Chapter X on Portugal). One of the reasons that Italy does not have the objective of any of the subcategories included in the "regulation and administration" of schools (see Table 1) is due to the external evaluation model which is still at a very early stage of implementation and is more supported in pilot projects than in consolidated and extended implementation (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015; Barzanò, 2011).[2]

In general terms, Table 3.1 shows that the objectives of the "educational/pedagogical" type are the most often mentioned in external evaluation programmes in European countries. The objectives which are more focused on administration or governance of schools, such as school autonomy, are referenced in fewer cases. The countries that go against this trend most are two Baltic countries, Estonia and Latvia, and France. This finding is highly consistent with the imposition of sanctions on schools in these countries where administrative and legal procedures are not fulfilled, and regulatory functions are reinforced in external evaluation of schools (in

these cases with the threat of penalties) – for example, in Latvia, where schools may face disciplinary sanctions such as losing the right to issue certificates recognised by the state upon completion of general education; or in Estonia, where the ministry can declare school licences invalid (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

In identifying the levels of implementation of the external evaluation programmes and the actors involved, it can be seen that external evaluation is carried out in most cases (23 out of 30) by institutions under governmental jurisdiction at the central level, that is, directly connected to central ministerial state services. Exceptions to this rule are very rare, this being the case of Italy and Finland, part of Belgium and France (ISCED 1 schools only), where there is decentralised (local) ministerial jurisdiction. In other cases, external evaluation programmes are carried out under ministerial jurisdiction, but in conjunction with local/regional delegations of the ministry (Table 3.1). The countries indicated here are Estonia, Spain, France, Cyprus, Hungary, Austria, Poland and Belgium (but only the German-speaking Community). It is known that most of these countries have a centralist state tradition, but autonomy is more decentralised in the area of education, either due to state reform or the regional organisation of its major sectors and public services (as in the case of Spain).

It is important to mention three cases which are infrequent in global terms, but relevant to the following analyses – Denmark, Finland and Hungary. In these the external evaluation is carried out by institutions under the responsibility of local authorities/regional communities/local government. The countries included, such as Denmark and Finland, are recognised for their strong implementation and high level of competence at the local community level as regards education.

Concerning other actors involved in external evaluation, that is, those on which the external evaluation is directly focused, the main targets are teachers and school management (28 cases). Students and parents (in 21 of the cases analysed) are also often "participants in"/"targets of" external evaluation. In the case of students, this is usually done via analysis of school results and responses to surveys by questionnaire. Parents are asked to participate via interviews or by answering questionnaires.

In countries such as Denmark, France (upper secondary only), Austria and Finland, the actors whose participation is required are schools and their respective administrators and teachers. Representatives of the educational community also participate quite often (in 14 cases) in the external evaluation of schools. In these cases, accountability is limited to those who are directly responsible for school organisations.

As for the actors involved, there are some differences in terms of type of participation. While teachers, school boards and students are evaluated formally and in accordance with a variety of criteria based on the results they present, parents and the rest of the educational community tend to be called on to "give an account of" their participation in school life (as happens in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom). These national contexts are very diverse and reflect the growing importance of recognising the involvement of educational communities. In some (very rare) cases regarding parents, the information collected is used for a social contextualisation of a particular community or student.

Table 3.1 Objectives and main actors in external evaluation of schools

			BE Fr	BE De	BE Nl	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	ES	FR pri	FR sec	IT	CY	LV	LT	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI¹	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT
Objectives	Educational/ Pedagogic	Education quality control																									Ø					
		Improving the education system																									Ø					
		Counselling on quality of provision																									Ø					
	Regulation and Administration	Checking fit to the national curriculum																									Ø					
		Checking compliance with legislation in force																									Ø					
		Stimulating/fostering school autonomy																									Ø					
		Provision of accounts of financial and educational results																									Ø					
		Decision-making on schools' capacity for autonomy																									Ø					
		Response to complaints/grievances																									Ø					
Actors	Initiative/ Executors	Under ministerial jurisdiction – central-level units										*5			*1												Ø	*3	*4		
		Under ministerial jurisdiction - local units													*2												Ø					
		Responsibility of local authorities/regional communities/local government																														
		Requested by the owners																									Ø					
	Participants	Schools and principals																														
		Teachers																														
		Students																				*6				Ø					
		Parents																									Ø					
		Educational community²																									Ø					

Source: Classification produced by the authors based on information in European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015).

1 - Finland: No central external school evaluation (School Inspectorate abolished in 1991). Education providers may commission and pay for external school evaluations by the Education Evaluation Council (the same body that conducts national evaluations) (OECD, 2013).

*1 Formal external evaluation is limited to the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education; *2 For the first cycle of basic education, the authorities at regional level carry out direct and constant supervision; *3 Evaluation carried out by non-ministerial, governmental department; *4 Independent governmental public body; *5 The evaluation of the 1st cycle of basic education focuses mainly on evaluating teachers and their work; *6 Students in the 1st cycle of basic education are not directly involved in the external evaluation process

3.2. Implementation procedures for external evaluation of schools

The range of compulsory procedures for conducting external evaluation is broadly shared among the various European education systems. Of all the aspects analysed, this is the one that shows the lowest diversity in terms of procedures adopted, with the majority of the countries analysed following "analysis of documentation", "school visits", "classroom observation", and "interviews with staff (including teaching staff)".

Analysis of Table 3.2 regarding the level of structuring and definition of criteria to be taken into account in evaluation reveals that in most cases analysed (17), there are guidelines with well-defined criteria and formal structures. There is generally detailed and objective information on these procedures to support the external evaluation.

However, there are cases where guidelines are based on broader pillars or general criteria with less detail regarding the criteria, the methodology and the procedures to be carried out during external evaluation. In these situations, there is still division regarding the results of these evaluations. In three cases, however, a final rating is reached based on values allocated (quantitative or qualitative), according to whether the previously set objectives are fulfilled – this is the case of Ireland, Malta and the Netherlands. In seven of these cases, there is no rating as a result of the evaluation, although a descriptive report on the school situation is presented – this is the case in the French Community of Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia and Sweden (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). The less prescriptive and rating-based nature of this type of evaluation system is not found in less autonomous schools (see Chapter 1 of this book).

Regarding the effects or consequences of external evaluation, a division was made of the types of results that could stem from the evaluation and the way in which they were made public or not.

As a general rule, after the team in charge of the external evaluation carries it out with a particular school, outlines for recommendations are given with the aim of solving any problems identified. Subsequently, a plan for correcting these problems is prepared (although it may not have exactly the same designation from case to case), and the team responsible for undertaking this is changed. Thus, there were four modalities were divined in the constitution of these teams (given here in descending order of their frequency in the table above):

‣ The most common modality among those presented here, in which the correction plans are/can be drawn up by the inspection teams in conjunction with the schools themselves;
‣ Correction plans drawn up only by the investigative team;
‣ Design of the correction plans is the responsibility of the schools;
‣ Correction plans are drawn up by local authorities/regional communities/local government (very uncommon in the cases presented here – only Denmark is explicit in making local authorities responsible for drawing up correction plans).

As regards the type of results, in many cases (16), it was found that a new evaluation/inspection follows after designing and executing correction plans.

Another modality which follows non-compliance with the recommendations and objectives outlined by the inspection team may result in different forms of sanctions, such as fines, dismissal of principals/administrators, cuts in subsidies or even putting mechanisms into motion

Table 3.2 Procedures and structure for external evaluation of schools

		BE Fr	BE De	BE Nl	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	ES	FR pri	FR sec	IT	CY	LV	LT	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT
Compulsory procedures	Documentary analysis	—	—	—	—	Ø	—	—	—	—		—	—	—*7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Ø	—	—	—	—	—
	School visit	—	—	—	—	Ø	—	—	—	—		—	—	—*7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Ø	—	—	—	—	—
	Classroom observation	—	—	—	—	Ø	—		—	—		—	—	—*7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Ø	—	—	—	—	—
	Interviews with employees (teachers…)	—	—	—	—	Ø	—	—	—	—		—	—	—*7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Ø	—	—	—	—	—
	Highly structured (including rating)	—	—	—	—	Ø	—			—			—		—	—				—	—	—	—		—	Ø		—	—	—	—
Definition and regulation of procedures	General guidelines leading to rating					Ø			—		—							—	—							Ø					
	General guidelines	—				—		—						—			—							—		Ø	—				
	Unstructured					Ø					—	—														Ø					
	Stakeholders	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		—	—	—*7	—	—	—	—	—		—	—	—	—	—	Ø	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Classification produced by the authors based on information in European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015).

*7 External evaluation in the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education is not carried out routinely or cyclically, and results from information formally and informally collected by government bodies about the administrative and academic performance of schools

that result in the loss of the license allowing the legal operation of the school. There are a large number of instances of these practices (in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France – but only in ISCED 1 schools, in the cases of Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and in education systems with very diverse types of school autonomy.

An option which is less frequent consists of forming external teams that are part of schools' daily routine and which provide direct technical and pedagogical support for solving the problems identified – seen in examples such as the French Community of Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Hungary, Austria and Scotland.

Growing scrutiny of the work of schools, both in creating strategies to improve their quality and in strengthening positive interaction with the community, has also resulted in increased attention of parents and families of students to results. This has pushed schools and the entities responsible for their evaluation to create new reporting formats and to make them public within a school communication policy (Salvioni & Cassano, 2017).

Table 3.3 also refers to a final dimension that is immediately connected to the publication of the final reports undertaken by external evaluation teams. Analysis of this makes it clear that the results of the report will always be communicated, in some way, at least to ministerial bodies (even when not directly responsible for carrying out the evaluation). In most cases, the final reports are delivered directly to the school boards and are often shared with the school community (teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders). In about twelve countries, reports are made public with open access, often via websites. In other cases, the school or local authority can decide on whether to publish or not (Denmark, France – but only for ISCED 3, Italy and Hungary). Only in Hungary, Poland and the French Community of Belgium are reports are not public and should not be made so, except for entities for which the Ministry of Education or schools and/or local authorities (as occurs in one case) decide to do so (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

Closing comments

Processes for evaluation or external scrutiny of schools in general serve to assess the quality of schools according to national and local performance standards, legislative and professional requirements and the educational needs of pupils and parents (Janssens and van Amelsvoort, 2008). What can be observed is that increasing multi-level governance in education requires a transformation in culture and action. This requires the various actors to have greater engagement with evaluation in order to improve processes and results (European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice, 2017), or simply due to the need to meet what has been defined as school and education system quality.

Many dimensions of school governance (such as regulation and evaluation) which are deeply involved in the reforms of European education systems have been associated with a political conjuncture of the emergence of the "new right", as some authors have called it. In other cases, particularly that of France, reform has been progressive and not aligned with any specific party nor based on opposition of values (such as equity and responsibility) (as explained in Meuret and Duru-Bellat, 2003). While this is true in the French context, it is no less so in the United States for example, where accountability has been demanded by both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party (Figlio and Loeb, 2011). However, it is true that this reinforcement of school evaluation is part of a broader movement of evaluation of education systems and their actors.

Table 3.3 Consequences of external evaluation of schools and presentation of results

		BE Fr	BE De	BE Nl	CZ	DK¹	DE	EE	IE	ES	FR pri	FR sec	IT	CY	LV	LT	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT
Consequences of external evaluation	External support teams for schools	–							–				–				–			–											–
	Penalties – fines, subsidy cuts, dismissal of principal			–	–	–		–			–						–	–		–	–							–	–	–	
	Penalties – mechanisms triggered for school closure or loss of licence	–		–	–			–							–		–	–		–			–				–	–		–	
	New inspection		■	–	■		–	–	■				–	–	–	■	–	–	–	–		–	–	–		–	–	–	■	–	■
	Correction plan	Drawn up by inspection team			–	–		–	–	–		–		–	–			–	–		–	–	–	–	–	–		–	–		–	–
		Drawn up by school	–	–	–			–						–	–		–	–	–			–	–	–	–			–				–
		Drawn up by local authorities					–																									
	General recommendations by the inspection team*¹	■		■	■	■		■		■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	School chooses whether to accept suggestions	Only in positive evaluations with no shortcomings indicated		–		–																–										
		Complete autonomy												–	–																	
	Additional resources	–	–	–	–	–		–		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–									■	■	■	■	■
	Additional training		–	–	–	–								–			–	–		–											■
	Recognition of good practices	Example: publication on website																			–									–	–	–
Publication of results	Report made public	Public	■	■	■			*⁸		■				*in following years	■	–	*summary	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
		Not public	–															–			–											
	Entities where made public	Ministry	■	–		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
		School community		–	–	–		–	–	–	–	–		–	–			–	–		–	–	–	–	–			–	–	–	–	–
		School administration		–	–	–			–	–	–		–	–		–		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	■	–	–	–	–	–	–
		Decided locally (in school or local authority)					–						–	*⁹				–														

Source: Classification produced by the authors based on information in European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015).

1 - Denmark: The National Agency for Quality and Supervision performs an annual screening of individual schools in order to identify the municipalities where improvements are needed. The remaining part of the process is in the remit of municipalities with the support of the top/central level authority.

*¹ Formal external evaluation is limited to the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education; *⁸ In some states, the evaluation report is distributed only to the school (administration) and supervisory authorities. In other states, members of the school community (teachers, parents and students) and local authorities may receive the report; *⁹ The intention of the new evaluation programme which has been implemented is to publish reports on external evaluation of schools; however, this seems not to be fully operative yet

In almost all countries with high levels of autonomy, forms of accountability and scrutiny of performance have been implemented. The countries where this does not occur are those whose policies of autonomy are more recent, tenuous or ineffective (such as Bulgaria, France, Italy, etc.). There seems, however, to be no correlation between levels of autonomy and the types of procedure adopted or consequences or sanctions applied to schools when they do not obtain good results (or results within agreed quality models) in the external evaluation process.

There are three main guidelines for defining external evaluation of schools. The first concerns monitoring and boosting the results of education – see the examples of Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania and Slovakia. In a second group of countries, external evaluation mainly tackles objectives of regulation and scrutiny of school administration and management – Estonia and Latvia follow this line. There is also a large third group (with the remaining countries) that has a coordinated emphasis on both of these aims.

The consequences of these models can also be diverse, and in some cases different types of results can be found in the same educational systems. One is widely generalised and accounts for the set of recommendations for improving schools with monitoring by evaluation teams. Another type is oriented towards involvement and direct intervention in processes for improving quality of schools. In some cases, the resources allocated to schools are increased. A third type emphasises the regulatory features of school organisations, applying sanctions for non-compliance with requirements.

As for the procedures adopted in external evaluation, there is no great difference within Europe, and there is widespread sharing in terms how to apply them. This accounts for the highly consolidated and disseminated methodologies of evaluation on international agendas for quality in education, particularly in Europe.

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Endnotes

[1] The number of cases presented does not correspond exactly to the number of countries, because some countries, due to differences within the education system itself and the methods, procedures and objectives of the external evaluation, or even due to regional segmentations, were subject to a fragmented or divided analysis in more than one case – examples being France, Belgium, United Kingdom.

[2] See Chapter 8 on the Italian education system.

4. Autonomy, leadership and resources in European schools. What are the effects on performance and equity?

Susana da Cruz Martins, Helena Carvalho, Luís Capucha and Ana Rita Capucha

4.1 Introduction

A broad belief has been asserted in agendas and the main debates on educational policy in Europe that school autonomy favours school performance and education systems in general (Sholderer, 2017; Eurydice, 2007).

This belief has been supported by arguments of various kinds. In Sholderer's (2017) systematization considering some of the crucial aspects of autonomy (a) the New Public Management approach has embraced increased autonomy as a guarantee of a more efficient public sector, bringing it closer to providing educational services and being in line with the needs of local territories; (b) another opinion holds that schools which have obtained more autonomy in school management policies have been able to use their resources to attract the best teachers have achieved better results; and (c) the ability to offer curricula better suited to school populations has brought about improved school performance.

However, and despite the assertion of this belief, there has been increasingly recurrent discussion and criticism of its main premises. Some authors (such as Mortimore, 2007; Hanushek, Link, Woessmann, 2013) point out the clear dangers of providing full school autonomy. One of these risks is the potential difficulty that governments will have to guarantee equal educational opportunities, and to ensure processes of inclusion and support for social mobility via schools, as they will become highly dependent on local dynamics, which are very uneven from the outset.

The different notions of school leadership have been undergoing reorientation since the 2000s. As Denise Vaillant (2014) points out, the debate began with a focus on leadership over the "what?", accounting for actors, structures and their roles and functions; now the focus is more concretely on the "how?", by which is understood the operationalization of practices and functions. This re-orientation has also meant that good management by principals is deemed insufficient, as their mandate should also create the opportunities and conditions for good results and high student performance. This requires that effective educational leadership should also be considered in the light of its educational results (Vaillant, 2014) and that diverse contexts of consolidation of educational systems, their resources and conditions should be taken into account (Hanushek, Link, Woessmann, 2013).

Another issue linked to the discussion on school autonomy and its relation to student performance and learning is that it is a crucial tool for reducing inequalities in educational opportunities and performance. This problem has been posed by many authors (cf. Hatzopoulos, Kollias, Kikis-Papa, 2015) who have dedicated themselves to the study of autonomy and school leadership. It considers the educational inequalities found in and between schools and the

potential for a set of educational policy proposals which may reduce these inequalities and forms of discrimination (socio-economic, gender, cultural and ethnic plurality, etc.) that are produced and reproduced in school organizations.

This chapter provides a consolidated overview of the relation that the various domains of autonomy[1] and school actors has with student results and performance and ascertains these in terms of socio-economic equity in the set of European countries under analysis. These relationships were established mainly by reference to PISA 2015 (OECD) data and, as some authors (Hatzopoulos, Kollias, Kikis-Papa, 2015) point out, the performance indicators can only be considered as approximate equivalents to the learning achieved by students in schools.

Indicators have also been added in this chapter on the financing of education systems and public support for students (with Eurostat as the source). This makes it possible to lend importance and specificity to national contexts and their capacity and conditions for influencing school results. This analysis is especially significant in the countries which were most affected by the international financial crisis that beset Europe at the end of the last decade (Capucha et al., 2016).

These indicators can also be seen as important, as other studies (Hanushek, Link and Woessmann, 2013) have highlighted the non-linear relationship between autonomy and school performance from the national outlook. There may be contrasting effects considering the national development standards and conditions in question – that is, autonomy has positive effects in economically developed countries and relatively limited or even negative effects where this is not the case (idem, 2013).

4.2 Autonomy, performance and equity: domains and effects

Let us first consider that school autonomy, whether in isolation or in its various domains (admission and recruitment of students, curriculum, human and financial resources and setting of student assessment policies), may not be a condition for nor guarantee of better results. The analysis of results obtained allow us to ascertain that performance in maths is not explained in any significant way by any of the domains of autonomy under analysis (i.e. those stipulated by the OECD).[2]

Table 4.1 Regression of performance in maths in school autonomy domains, European Union countries (2015)

School autonomy domains	Performance in maths		
	B	SE	p
Constant	443.93	20.29	0.00
Student admissions	0.08	0.26	0.75
Curriculum	0.67	0.45	0.13
Resources	-0.23	0.19	0.28
Setting of student assessment policies	0.03	0.38	0.93

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples. SE = standard error.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 show that the curriculum may be the domain of autonomy with greater impact on student performance in maths, although the effect is not significant ($p > 0.05$).

In Table 4.2, it can again be found that none of the domains had a significant effect on explaining the inequalities in results between the contrasting social contexts in effect. This highlights the idea that a decrease in such inequalities can come about via greater school autonomy in resource management.

Table 4.2 Regression of the difference in performance in maths between the top quartile and the last quartile of the ESCS index in school autonomy domains in EU countries (2015)

School autonomy domains	Difference in performance in maths between the top quartile and the last quartile of the ESCS index[1]		
	B	SE	p
Constant	94.66	16.99	0.00
Student admissions	0.05	0.18	0.79
Curriculum	-0.03	0.36	0.94
Resources	-0.11	0.16	0.51
Setting of student assessment policies	-0.05	0.37	0.89

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples. SE = standard error.
1: ESCS index: index of economic social and cultural status.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

A detailed analysis of Figure 4.1 shows that all countries (with the exception of Slovenia) with an average score in maths of 500 or more (such as Estonia, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Poland) have a high percentage of in-school decision-making about the curriculum, student assessment policies (Finland is slightly below this mark in this area), and student admissions – with 80% or more of decisions in these areas.

Although no significant effects can be identified in specific domains of autonomy, there are countries which deserve particular attention. The countries with the greatest performance differential with social inequality markers are Hungary, Luxembourg and France. These three countries are marked by organizational formats with very hierarchical educational systems and an analysis of Figure 4.1 reveals imbalances in the distribution of autonomy over the domains. For example, schools in Hungary and Luxembourg have very little autonomy in resource management (which includes hiring and firing of teachers, setting salaries, setting school budget management and making allocations according to established priorities) but they have a relatively high capacity for deciding on student's admission in schools, which may lead to some social segmentation and inequalities in the school network.

It should also be noted that the linear trend line ($R^2 = 0.17$) for performance in maths (Figure 4.1) rises, albeit very slightly, with the increase in school autonomy (calculated here with the percentage accumulated in all four domains). The trend line regarding inequality of performance via the index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) shows that there are few effects to

be found in the use of autonomy for countering educational inequalities as an effect of social inequalities.

Figure 4.1 School autonomy domains, performance in maths and the difference in performance in maths between the top quarter and the bottom quarter of the index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in EU countries, 2015

Source: OECD, PISA (2015), Own calculations.

Regarding decisions taken in schools, it can be seen that the possibility of making choices in the area of resources has a significant effect on reducing retention (B = -0.212, p = 0.011) and the choices regarding student assessment models and policies have a marginally significant effect on reducing retention (B = -0.343, p = 0.076, Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Regression of grade repetition[1] in school autonomy domains in EU countries, 2015

School autonomy domains	Grade repetition		
	B	SE	p
Constant	25.92	13.24	0.06
Student admissions	0.02	0.12	0.87
Curriculum	0.32	0.22	0.11
Resources	-0.21	0.07	0.01
Setting of student assessment policies	-0.34	0.20	0.08

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples. SE = standard error. 1) Grade repetition concerning students who had repeated one or more years by age 15 (self-reported).
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

Table 4.4 Regression of grade repetition in the last quartile of the ESCS index in school autonomy domains in EU countries, 2015

School autonomy domains	Grade repetition in the last quartile of the ESCS index		
	B	SE	p
Constant	41.42	20.43	0.05
Student admissions	0.01	0.19	0.97
Curriculum	0.50	0.35	0.11
Resources	-0.33	0.12	0.02
Setting of student assessment policies	-0.53	0.31	0.08

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples.
SE = standard error.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

Analysis of Table 4.4 reinforces the importance of the two domains of school decisions, with resources showing a significant effect ($p = 0.017$) and choices related to student assessment models and policies having a marginally significant effect ($p = 0.080$) in terms of reducing social inequalities evidenced in the failure rate. These two domains may not be sufficient to produce improved school performance (in this case in maths), but they may be important for counteracting a culture of socially selective failure, which is ingrained in some educational systems.

Looking more specifically at each country (Figure 4.2), it can be seen that the high repetition rates in 15-year-old students in Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal and, albeit less so, in Belgium (the countries with the most evident inequalities in Europe) are linked to educational systems in which schools have less autonomy in areas such as student admissions (as is the case of Spain) or resources, as is the case in the other countries mentioned here.

4.3 Leadership, performance and equity

Regarding the potential of school leaders to improve school performance and the conditions of equity in the organizations they govern, there appear to be important effects which are worth paying close consideration to in the European countries under analysis here.

In terms of performance in maths, there is a significant relationship between principals' actions and improvement in performance ($p = 0.036$) in the organizations where they lead (Table 4.5).
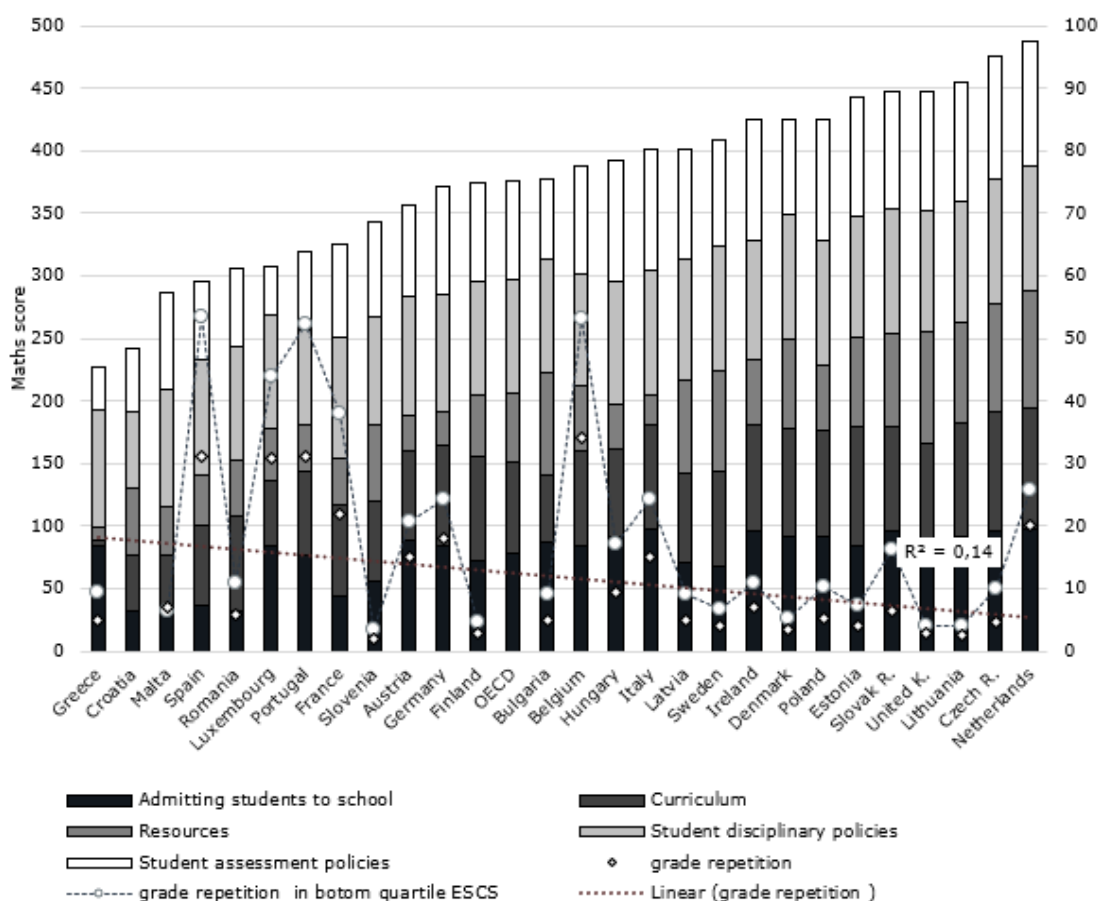
Figure 4.2 Domains of autonomy (cumulative %), grade repetition of the bottom quarter of the index of economic, social and cultural status
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations

In addition, it was found that teachers, particularly in their classroom teaching, have a significant effect ($p = 0.036$) on the reduction of social inequalities reflected in their students' performance (in this case in PISA maths tests).

Figure 4.3 shows that the more decisions that can be made in the school setting, the better its students' school performance, although this tendency is slight. The same happens when the reduction of social inequalities evidenced in these performances (math scores) is considered.

It should also be noted that a considerable number of countries have a high performance in maths. Their teachers have a relatively high range of autonomy (measured as a percentage of decisions taken in schools), in relation to teaching staff in some other countries – see the examples of Slovenia, Poland and Finland (Figure 4.3). On the other hand, the two worst performers – Bulgaria and Romania – are shown to have much less decision-making capacity for teachers and principals compared to other European countries.

Table 4.5 Regression of performance in maths in the decisions of school actors in EU countries

Decisions of school actors	Performance in maths		
	B	SE	p
Constant	443.85	20.78	0.00
Principals	0.15	0.07	0.04
Governing boards	0.01	0.12	0.97
Teachers	0.14	0.14	0.29

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples.
SE = standard error.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

Table 4.6 Regression of the difference in performance in maths between the top quartile and the last quartile of the ESCS index in the decisions of school actors in EU countries, 2015

Decisions of school actors	Difference in maths performance between the top quartile and the last quartile of the ESCS index		
	B	SE	P
Constant	106.47	15.12	0.00
Principals	0.01	0.05	0.84
Governing boards	0.03	0.07	0.73
Teachers	-0.19	0.09	0.03

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples.
SE = standard error.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.
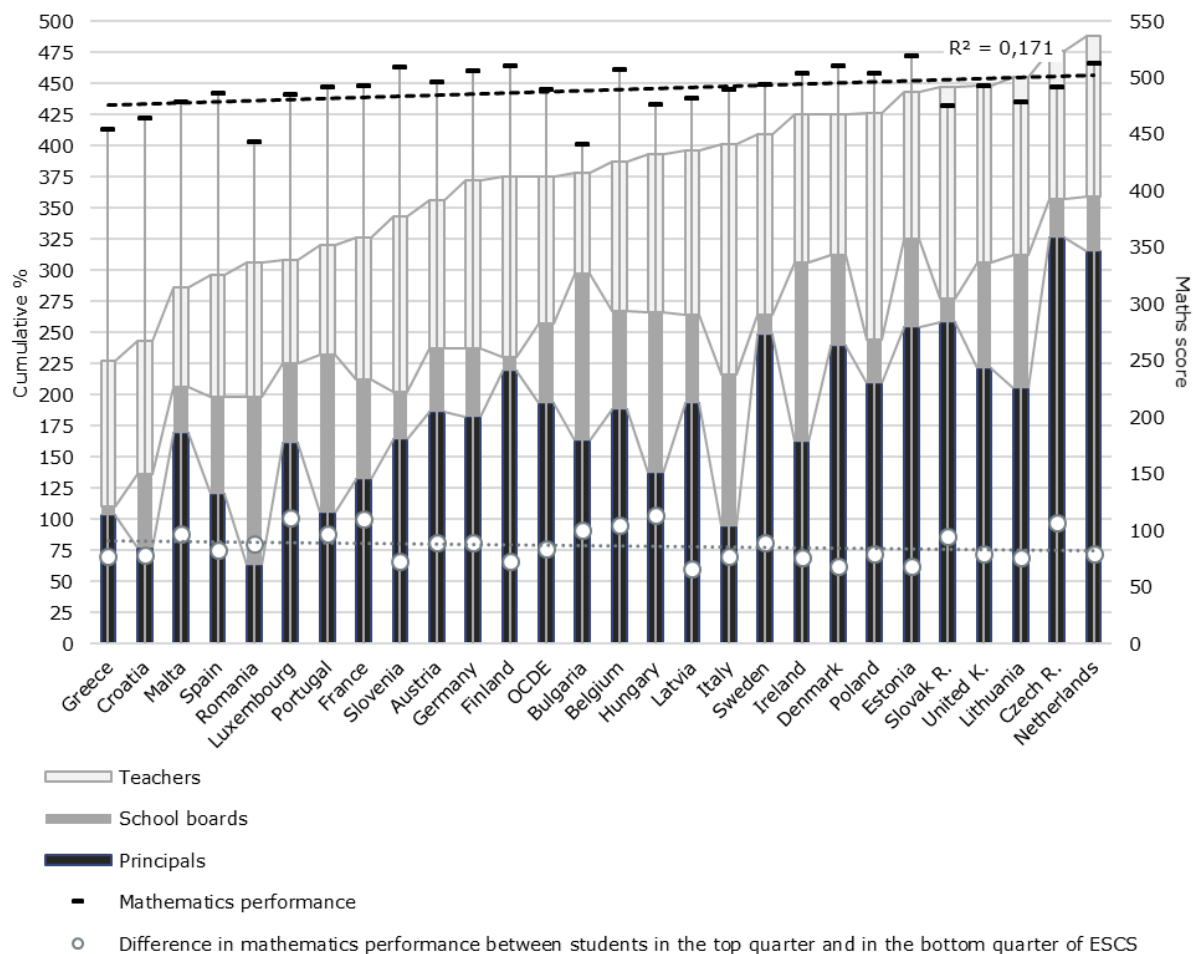
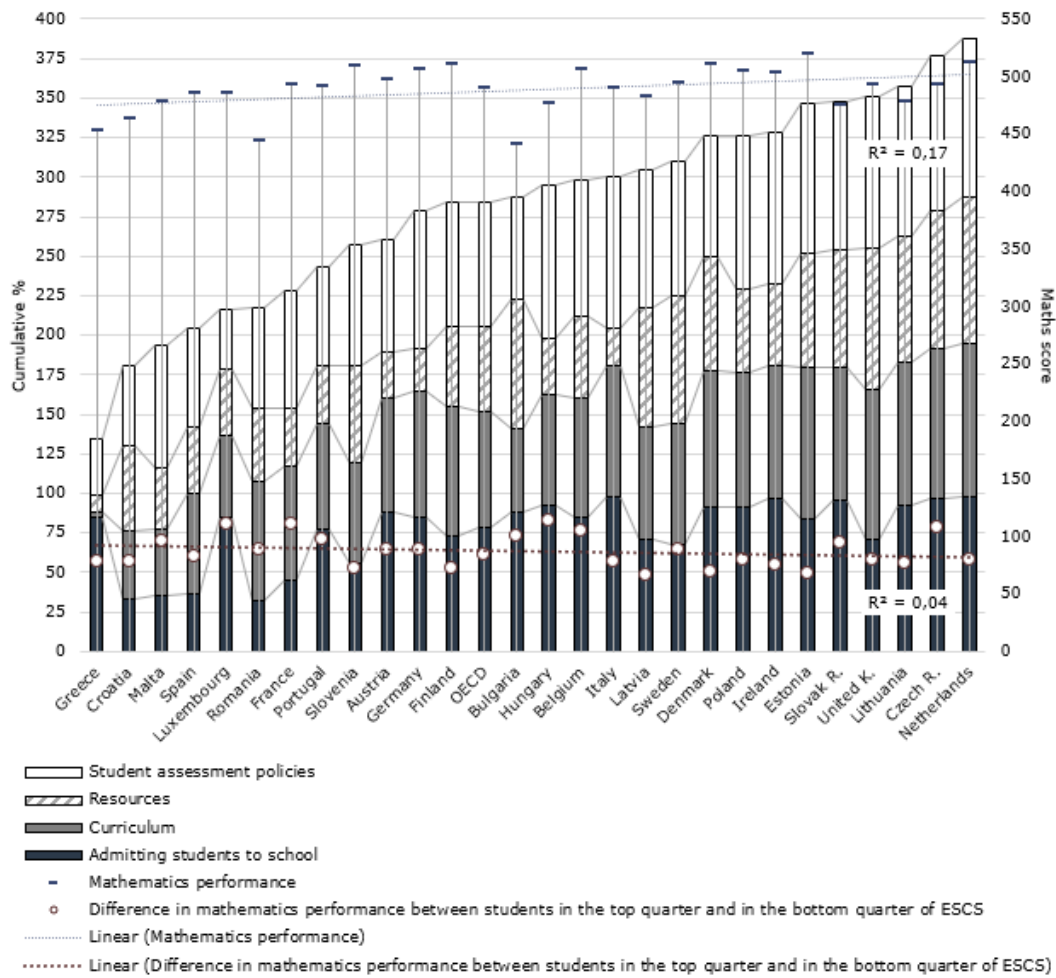Figure 4.3 Decisions of school actors (cumulative %), performance in maths and difference in performance in maths between the top quarter and the bottom quarter of the index of economic, social and cultural status in EU countries, 2015
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

Table 4.7 Regression of grade repetition [1] in the decisions of school actors in EU countries, 2015

Decisions of school actors	Grade repetition		
	B	SE	p
Constant	32.33	15.66	0.07
Principals	-0.04	0.04	0.37
Governing boards	-0.00	0.06	0.98
Teachers	-0.11	0.08	0.14

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples.
SE = standard error. [1] grade repetition concerning students who had repeated one or more years by age 15 (self-reported).
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

Table 4.8 Regression of the grade repetition1 in the last quartile of the ESCS index in the decisions of school actors in EU countries

	Rate of repetition in the last quartile of the ESCS index		
	B	SE	p
Constant	48.55	26.12	0.08
Principals	-0.06	0.06	0.27
Governing boards	0.01	0.10	0.95
Teachers	-0.15	0.13	0.24

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples. SE = standard error. 1) grade repetition concerning students who had repeated one or more years by age 15 (self-reported).
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

No significant effects ($p > 0.05$) were identified when the dependent variables are the repetition rate and its prevalence in the most disadvantaged segment of the index of economic, social and cultural status (Tables 4.7 and 4.8).

Analysis of Figure 4.4 allows a trend to be identified of a decreased rate of retention and its prevalence among students with a more disadvantaged background, as school autonomy increases with the collected decisions taken by the various actors.

It should be noted that in Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg, which have both the highest retention rates in Europe and also show signs of great inequality, teachers have the lowest levels of decision-making in their schools. At the same time, the decision-making power of school principals is highest in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, countries which have a very different the repetition rate from each other.

4.4 Financing and resources: what are the effects on equity?

The global economic and financial crisis that beset Europe, and some countries in the South with particular severity (Costa et al., 2016; Capucha et al., 2016; Mauritti et al., 2016) and the difficult and demanding processes of budget consolidation in EU Member States made political choices about expenditure in the major sectors of state intervention critical, particularly in education. Public spending on education accounts for about 90% of the total investment in education and the effect of this in terms of budgetary effort has placed this area under great pressure in the process of consolidation and emergence from the crisis (Capucha et al., 2016, Eurydice, 2014).

As has been recorded by various authors (Martins, 2012; Orivel, 2002), growth in education spending has been slowing for more than 15 years. This has happened both in the richest countries, where education has long been a public policy priority, and in the European countries of the former Soviet Union, which always valued and prioritised education and which, since the beginning of the 90s and the political change that took place, have experienced a sharp decline.
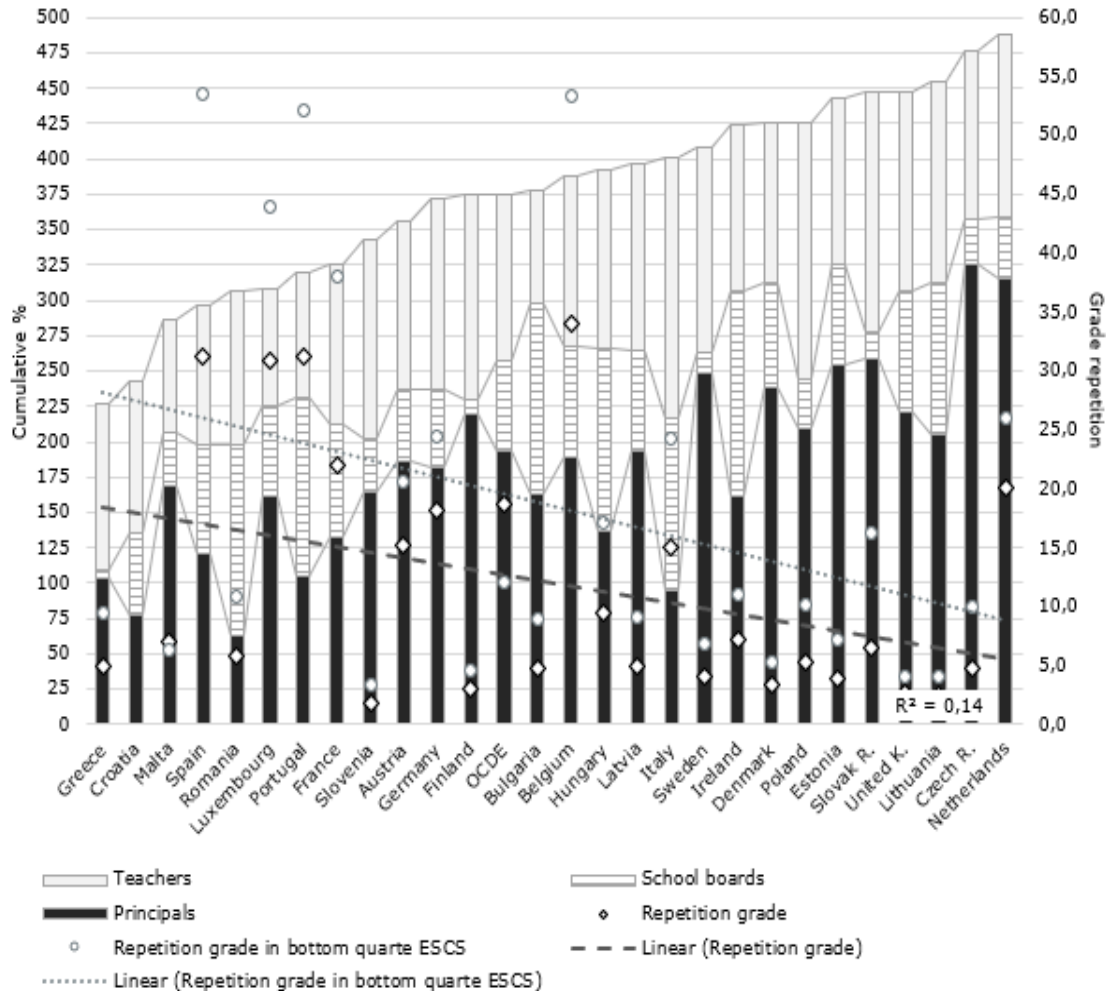
Figure 4.4 Decisions of school actors (cumulative %), repetition (retention) rate in quarter of the index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in EU countries, 2015
Source: OECD, PISA (2015), Own calculations.

The Eurydice report (2014) reveals a lack of recent information on public financing of education in Europe, making it difficult to assess and discuss the current conditions and changes in public investment in this sector or to assess the reforms undertaken in recent years.

At this point in Chapter 4, the aim is to interpret the implication of some of the indicators of education financing and direct public support for students in terms of educational performance and the effects of this performance on equity.

While aware that this is a somewhat simplistic mechanism and needs coordination or association with other moderating and contextualising factors, we will proceed here in an exploratory approach, acting as the first step in a model under construction.

At this point, two indicators were selected about funding in education (Eurostat, 2015). One is direct student support, the other concerns expenditure on education in euros per student.

Regression results showed no significant effects on school performance from the indicator of public expenditure on education per student, measured with scores obtained in maths ($p > 0.05$, Table 4.9). It can be added that there is a slight trend towards improvement in the results considering expenditure per student made by member states (Figure 4.5). On the other hand,

public support for students has repercussions on performance in maths, with a significant negative effect ($p = 0.003$). This may be due to the fact that this support mainly affects the most disadvantaged pupils, who have worse results on average, as we have seen.

Table 4.9 Regression of performance in maths in indicators of direct support for students and public expenditure in EU countries, 2015

Direct support for students	Performance in maths		
	B	SE	p
Constant	487.92	10.24	0.00
Direct support to students	-1.89	1.06	0.00
Public expenditure on education per student	0.00	0.00	0.31

Note: N = 25 countries. Bootstrap results were reported based on with 5.000 bootstrap samples.
SE = standard error.
Source: OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.
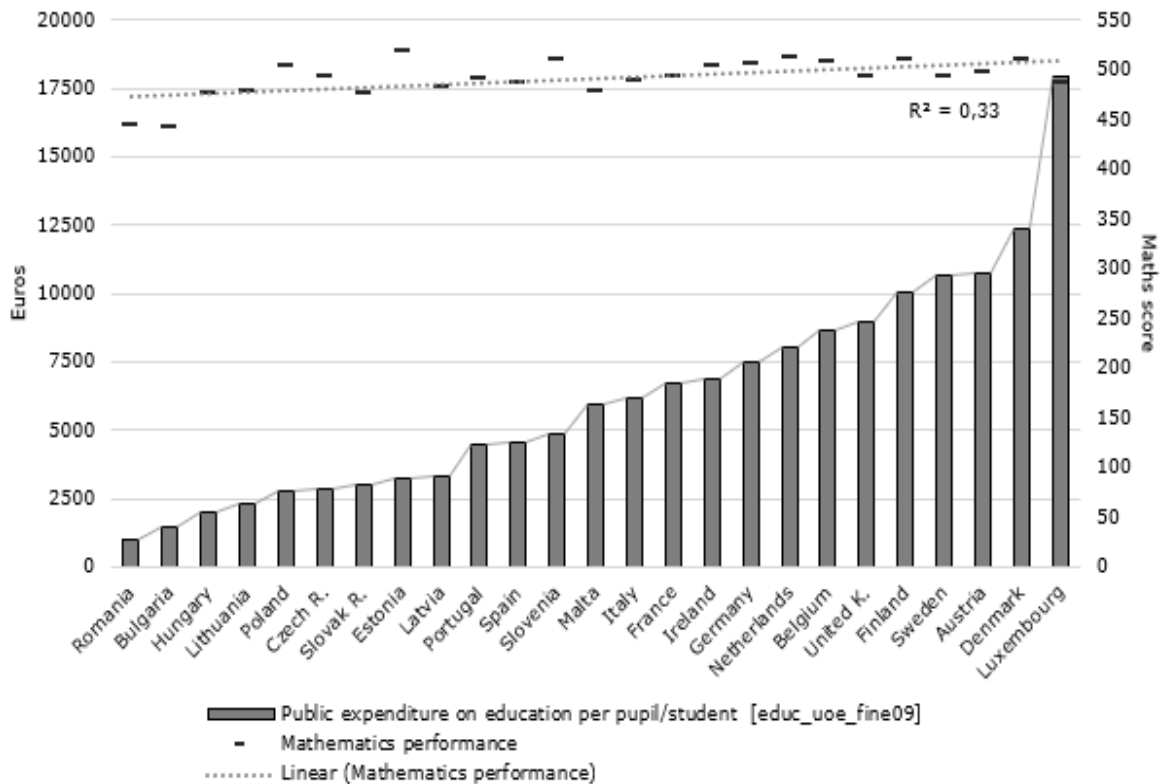
Figure 4.5 Public expenditure on education per student (euros) and performance in maths in EU countries (27), 2015
Source: Eurostat (2015) and OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

Figure 4.5 also reveals that the ten countries (Luxembourg, Denmark, Austria, Sweden, Finland, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Ireland) which have the highest expenditure on education per student have performance above the OCDE average reference value (OECD, 2016).

The difference in performance in maths between the top quartile and the last quartile were regressed on the index of economic, social and cultural status and to the retention rate and its variant, taking into account the last quartile of the same index, but no significant effects were obtained ($p > 0.05$).
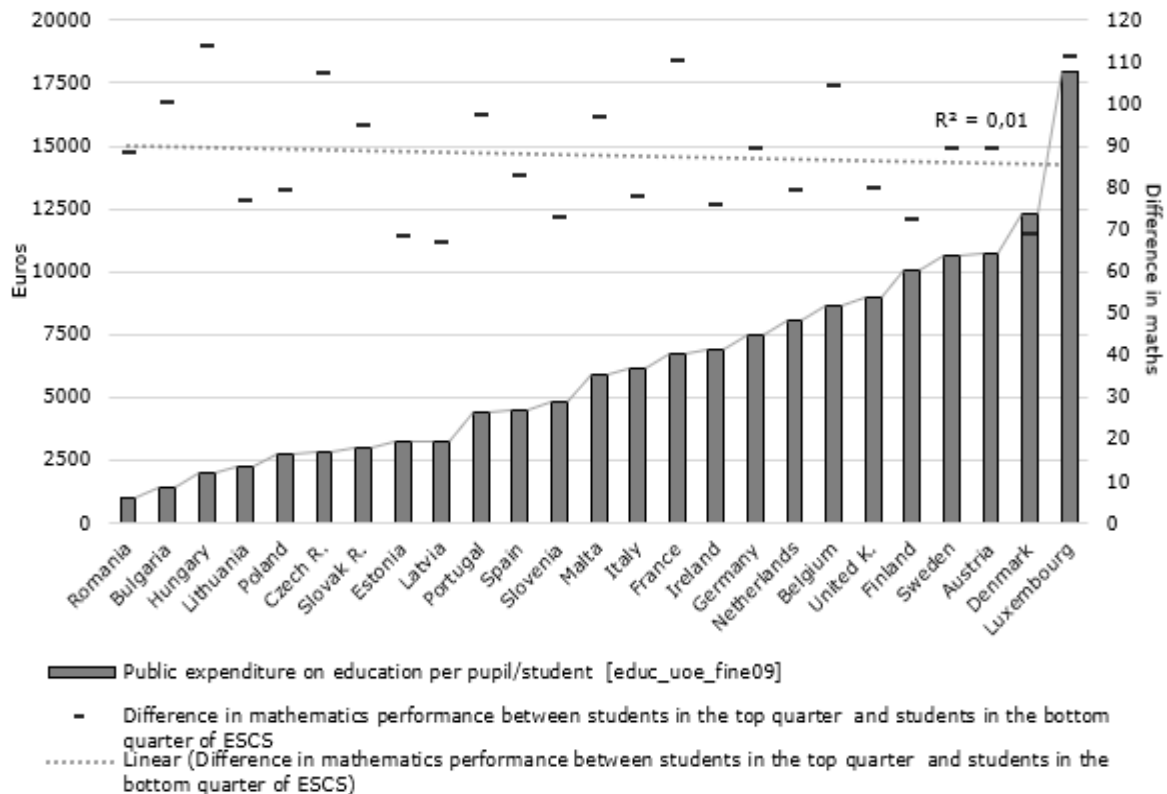
Figure 4.6 Public expenditure on education per student (euros) and the difference in performance in maths between the top quarter and the bottom quarter of the index of economic, social and cultural status in EU countries, 2015.
Source: Eurostat (2015) and OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations

Figure 4.6 does not allow a cross-analysis to be established between public expenditure on education and the evidence of social inequalities in performance in maths. However, the trend line does show that greater expenditure may indicate a moderating effect on educational inequalities, albeit faint. In other words, it does not constitute a strong isolated condition, but may constitute a reinforcement of resources in favour of greater equity in student performance (in this case in PISA maths tests).

When considering the student population as a whole, it can be seen that the impact of the amounts transferred directly from states to students has a very different significance depending on the country of the education system in question. From the point of view of results in maths and according to the difference between those most disadvantaged and most favoured on the

index of economic, social and cultural status, the trends of the two distributions do not correspond.
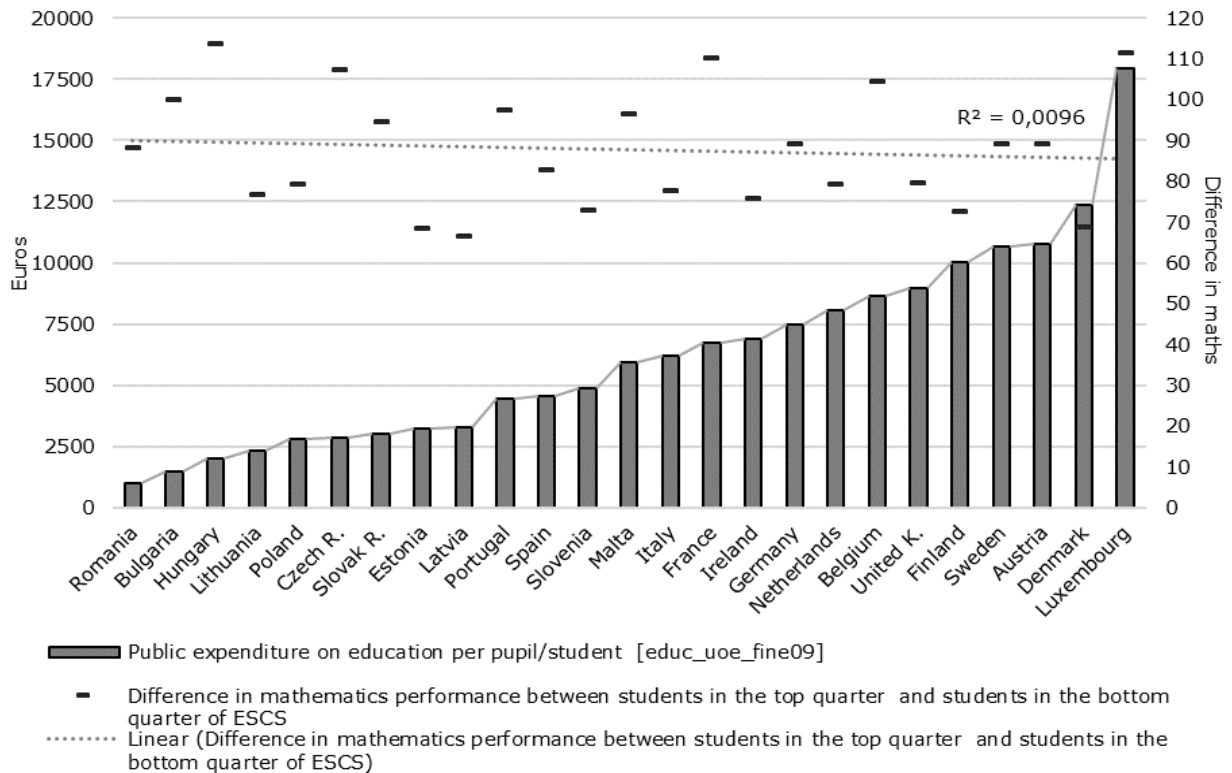
Figure 4.7 Direct support to students as % of public expenditure and difference in performance in maths between top and bottom quarter of the index of economic, social, and cultural status (ESCS) in EU countries, 2015
Source: Eurostat, Labor Force Survey (2015) and OECD, PISA (2015). Own calculations.

However, as a general trend showed in Figure 4.8, stands the conclusion that assigning a high percentage of public spending to direct student support is related to prioritised attention to inequalities of social conditions in the relationship with school and in the potential for educational achievements in this educational arena.

4.5 Closing comments

Autonomy, viewed here in most of its dimensions and taking into account its main actors, has little impact on performance in maths or on school retention, at least from an analysis of very aggregated data.

This can be more clearly perceived when management practices are framed within the contexts of educational systems, along with their activities and even teachers' working conditions (Vaillant, 2015). These actors seem to be the most determinant in acting upon school inequalities, which is reflected in student performance and learning. According to the analyses done and with reference to studies carried out (Hatzopoulos, Kollias, Kikis-Papa, 2015), it is often very difficult for principals to reverse or counteract processes of inequality with substantial

transformations of the school organization, as they find little support or resistance, particularly from teachers and parents.

These authors point out precisely the fact that school autonomy should not be treated in isolation from its broader contexts of the policies of a specific education and training system (idem, 2015). Central government policies that reinforce the autonomy of schools are generally conducive to the development of school leadership, while also reinforcing means of accountability and liability of school leaders, including their schools' results. There are undoubtedly diverse effects in reinforcing school autonomy, which operate with different rationales of action and regulation depending on the type of European education systems. They may be more centralized in Greece, France, Spain or Portugal or more decentralized, as in the case of Sweden, Denmark or the Netherlands; they may even have various educational systems, such as in Spain, Germany or Belgium (ibid., 2014; Martins, 2012), which have differentiated degrees of decentralization from each other. In all cases the context is essential to shape the role of school leadership.

A recent study by Rinne et al., 2016 showed that the European member states most affected by the financial crisis underwent an intensified process of stratification and polarization of schools, even with reinforced school autonomy. These effects have very obvious effects at the local level (as illustrated in a study by Seabra, Martins and Albuquerque, 2017, on a Portuguese municipality in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area).

Across Europe, school autonomy has been reinforced, mainly in the areas of student admissions and resource management. In times of greater financial difficulty, schools have fewer resources and compete for students and teachers, and families compete for places in the most prestigious educational institutions (Rinne et al., 2016). Among the effects are increased inequality in educational supply and demand. Thus, opportunities for fostering egalitarian education are also dwindling, not only at national levels but also at the local level, even in countries where policies that promote equal educational opportunities have traditionally been supported and practised (Rinne et al., 2016).

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Endnotes

[1] Such as admission and recruitment of students, the curriculum, human and financial resources and the setting of student assessment policies.

[2] The regressions made in section 4.2 referring to school autonomy domains did not include student disciplinary policies. This is because this area did not show variation between European countries and, simultaneously, presented high results (only Croatia and Portugal have less than 89% of these decisions taken in school), allowing no distinction between national contexts and impairing the use of regression models with this as an independent variable. Even so, most of the models explored did not present significant effects.

5. The actors and political action in education. Projections and guidelines for the development of education systems in Europe

Susana da Cruz Martins, Eliana Durão and João Sebastião

5.1 Introduction

The principal aim of this chapter concerns the identification of the main models of representation of key actors operating in European education and education systems, in particular the analysis of mechanisms facilitating the increase and enlargement of schooling and, conversely, the main obstacles to its accomplishment in each country. These protagonists, conceptually understood in the perspective of macro-actors (as proposed by Mouzelis, 1991), are essentially governors of education (ministers and members of government), representatives of central and local administration, unions and professional organizations of teachers, technical personnel/experts, researchers, among other relevant persons implicated in the debate and construction of education policies.

The main empirical source underlying this chapter was the video series "Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education", a joint production of the OECD and the Pearson Foundation (2009 to 2012). This video production aimed to delineate the profile of the policies and practices developed in the framework of national education systems that have been successful in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests or have progressively and very clearly improved their scores. These videos, reflecting each national scenario, contain testimonials of these actors, mostly authorities in the education sector, somewhat all over the world, on the performance of their education systems and the initiatives carried out to improve them. For this chapter, the European countries featured in the series were selected, namely: Germany, Belgium (Flanders), Poland, Portugal, Netherlands and Finland. In all cases, these methodological options do not underestimate the analytical limitations posed by a secondary source of this type.

The key findings of our analysis are the underlying rationales of reflexivity and action of the respective education systems and their contextualisation in Europe. [1] In other words, we will attempt to identify shared visions and models of education (according to the meaning used in the cognitive analysis of public policies) that steer the evolution of the modes of regulation of education systems, their recent reforms and performance. Greatly focused on the ideas and positionings of the political actors, the cognitive analysis of public policies as conceived by Pierre Muller (2009), this chapter contributes to understanding how these guidelines frame the actors' action and decision-making.

The State has gradually overturned its traditional role in distributing responsibilities among education actors by, on the one hand, enhancing the intervention capacity of local school actors (see chapters 1 and 2) and, on the other hand, imprinting a stronger influence of supranational instances on the development of education systems. This double-edged thrust has seriously challenged the previous balances between actors responsible for conducting the education systems.

5.2 Positionings of the (macro) actors on the performance of education systems: an analytical proposal

The interpretations and positionings of the relevant social actors have had an enormous influence on political decision-making (Faria, 2003; Muller, 2009; Duarte, 2015). By actors we mean the individuals and collectivities (organizations, institutions, groups, movements) that are able to influence political decision-making in the pursuit of goals linked to problems considered crucial, or dependent on their relations with other actors (Muller, 2009, Ferreti, 2016). In fact, the ideas, arguments and their drifts have broken new ground as independent variables in the analysis of political processes, and may be instrumentalised by the public actors, framed in a specific institutional context, who propose to resolve a collective problem (Knoepfel et al., 2007).

The attention focused herein on social actors draws our investigation towards the manner in which their action is framed by the ideas and meanings they convey about the world, and by the positions they hold in the social structure. In his foundational work, Nicos Mouzelis (1991) states that in order to understand the opinions and positionings of the actors, we should also take into account their social dispositions (or habitus, that arise from different types of socialisation) and other types of constraints related to the specific circumstances of their social existence.

In this regard, the actions of individual actors, namely those holding lower positions in the economic, political and cultural hierarchies, in general have little impact on the institutional macro order. But this is not the case of the macro actors, as Mouzelis (1991) notes. For Nicos Mouzelis (1991:108) it is important to highlight the fact that, both via representation and by other means, the individuals holding higher positions in bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic hierarchies are actually macro actors, as their social positioning enables them to mobilise considerable resources, and their interactions and decisions can drastically affect a large number of people. Consequently, the term macro does not necessarily imply a substantial number of individuals engaged in political decision-making. It frequently refers to the decisions taken by small groups of actors or by a single individual participant. In the author's perspective, the term refers to entities vested with decision-making powers, whose strategies incorporate consequences that are extended comprehensively over time and space. This definition of macro actors covers: (i) collective actors, generators of decisions, through interactions based on democratic and non-democratic forms of representation, with examples being business actors, unions or political parties; (ii) mega actors, i.e. individual actors with a sphere of economic, political or cultural influence, and with sufficient power for the implications of their decisions to be widely impacting. Accordingly, it could be concluded that social actors, placed in diverse positions in society, contribute in different ways to the building of the social order. However, as a rule, it is the decisions of the actors positioned at the top of social hierarchies that most influence exert

over time and social space, and that most conspicuously contribute to the construction of macro phenomena.

However, in our perspective, public policy analysis does not merely imply the identification of the existing actors in the political process, but also the understanding of their strategies and positionings. In this regard, the cognitive approach to public policies, proposed, among others, by Pierre Muller (2000, 2005), in particular his concept of benchmarking, seems to be capable of providing a more holistic appropriation of the object reviewed herein, namely the actors, their discourses and action in the area of education policy.

The cognitive approach is based on a constructivist perspective and focuses on studying the role of ideas and representations in the formation and change of public policies (Muller and Surel, 2002; Batista, 2014; França and Farenzena, 2016). Following Muller (2005) these are the normative and cognitive frameworks that are established as a means of articulation between stabilised social structures and social actors with autonomy in political participation. Previously, Pierre Muller (2009) had already reminded us that the creation of public policies is not an abstract process, devoid of meaning or disconnected from social, cultural or economic circumstances. For this reason, the author elucidates that public action should be comprehended around the dynamics that articulate different benchmarks and interests.

Thus, a policy orientation is composed of a set of prescriptions that provide meaning and direction to a political programme. It is the production of direction, in other words, this corresponds to decisions and practices endorsed by the State taking into account the historical circumstances in which it operates. According to Muller (2005), the overall benchmark constitutes a generalised representation of society, in its relationship with the world, around which the varied sectoral representations will be organized and hierarchised. Hence, this corresponds to a general interpretation of the world going far beyond the limits of a policy (França and Farenzena, 2016). In turn, as indicated by its name, the sectoral benchmark refers to a single policy sector (health, transportation, education, among others), with specific operational rules, values and standards.

Taking the framework mentioned above as our starting point for our analysis, it is evidently interesting to understand the underlying rationale of the reflexivity and public action of the actors in European education systems, with a view to improving their performance. Here, this involves a reflection on the macro position that they hold in society, in relation to the cognitive frameworks and benchmarks that provide a meaningful basis and direction to their political action.

5.3 Analysis of findings: the actors and their underlying rationale of action in education systems

This work concentrates on identifying the underlying rationale of reflexivity and action of the macro-actors in education systems reflected in discourses. These will certainly be accompanied by ideological and philosophical constructions concerning education, pointing to different factors and historical, social and political reasons for the position that each country involved in our analysis holds in the European scenario (with the essential pretext being the PISA/OECD scores). Likewise, these will also be present in the discourses, conceptions about the mode of intervention to boost and broaden schooling in the different national contexts.

The interviews of the series "Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education" show varying discourses about education expressed by actors of importance due to their position or relationship with different education systems. A first step of our analysis thus involved identifying the interviewed actors and an attempt to recognise them in view of their influence.

The majority of the participants in these interviews are governors of education, gathered together in the category of "Ministers and members of government" (the latter primarily being Secretaries of State); mega actors, as conceived by Mouzelis (1991), vested with enormous political decision-making power who led the reforms operated in their countries. In second place, we find "School Principals", mega (meso) actors responsible for the appropriation, recontextualization and operationalisation of policies and central guidelines, according to their different levels of autonomy and responsibility. These two groups of actors, "Ministers and members of government" and "School Principals (and teachers)", are clearly present in all the videos of the countries involved in our analysis. we also identified members of "Advisory Bodies", such as for example chairpersons of the National Board of Education in Finland, of the Education Council in the Netherlands, and of the Council of Schools in the case of Portugal. In addition to the presence of "Parent and Student Representatives" (Portugal, Belgium (Flanders), Poland and Netherlands) and "Experts and Researchers" (Portugal, Finland and Germany), we also highlight "Union Representatives" (one representative for each country), as their discourses and interventions are constructed based on some benchmarks expressed by representatives of teachers.

Table 5.1. Identification and classification of the actors interviewed in Germany, Belgium (Flanders), Finland, Netherlands, Poland and Portugal (2009-2012)

Actors	Number	Type
Ministers and members of government	16	Mega actors
School Principals	14	Mega (meso*) actors
Advisory Bodies	7	Collective actors
Union Representatives	6	Representatives of collective actors
Parent and Student Representatives	5	Collective actors
Experts and Researchers	5	Mega actors

Source: Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education, PISA, OECD, own processing.
* An adaptation to Mouzelis's proposal (1991)

In a more detailed scrutiny of the group of actors showing greater political influence, the "Ministers and members of government", the interviews point out that these mega actors used their political and mobilises resources for the purpose of contributing to the resolution of problems in education systems, strongly driven by the reading and interpretation of indicators and observations in the PISA reports, and supported by national experts and researchers. The reference to the importance of the PISA (OECD) dataset could be due to the actual context of production of the interviews (triggered by the selection of countries that showed excellent performance or significantly improved this performance). These perspectives, recurrent throughout the interviews in the six selected countries , reveal, about the aspects under review herein, a relationship between knowledge and political decision-making that is underpinned by a

more instrumental point of view and, for this reason, closer to a knowledge-based policy approach, in which knowledge is considered resource, or a form of legitimising political decisions (Barroso, 2010).

In the process of designing public policies, through their power and influence, these actors manage to incorporate in their country's agendas issues that are primarily related to the organization of schooling (such as for example, school timetables, supplementary support for students and its daily assessment), and to the education planning and structures (the creation or elimination of an education level, the design and selection of study programmes and choice of the subject matters, among others). This they did with the primordial goal of improving the performance of their education systems, by identifying mechanisms facilitating an increase and widening of schooling in addition to the main obstacles to its achievement. As stated by the following Ministers:

> "The PISA Study, and the discussion of the results of the PISA study, managed to suddenly wake up the majority of people. Because the PISA study held a mirror in front of everyone, and made it obvious that we have considerable weaknesses in our education system that could no longer be ignored and had to be addressed." (Edelgard Bulmahn, German Federal Minister of Education, 1998-2005).

> "In short, my most important ambition is to make education go from good to excellent. It is good in the Netherlands, but it could be better and we have to strive for excellent education because we are already a highly educated country, and in the future, we will have a knowledge-based economy. Together we will make education even better than it is today." (Jet Bussemaker, Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science since 2012).

The positioning of the macro actors in bureaucratic hierarchies could greatly influence their underlying rationale of reflexivity, their positioning in terms of the ideas they defend, their understanding of social phenomena and the reforms they consider necessary. For this reason, following the identification of the macro actors who were interviewed (in these videos), we examined their discourse, using various instruments associated to content analysis and cognitive analysis of public policies. We thus sought to pinpoint the benchmarks that could underlie the reforms and performance in question, in each education system, paying particular attention to the directions, justifications and positionings revealed by the actors of these same political actions. Concomitantly, our analysis does not leave aside the consideration of national particularities in the evolution of each education system, giving rise to differentiated modes of representation and action in the education policy of each country.

At this second stage of our analysis, we concentrated on the actors and their discourses. Hence, we proceeded to identify categories of discourse, that is, major thematic pronouncements encompassing a variable number of issues that, on the one hand, summarise the key topics addressed and, on the other hand, reveal the primary guidelines and information highlighted (Table 5.2.). This means to say, the primordial aim of this step was to explore and discover the main drifts of concepts expressed in the interviews.

The main priority of the different actors is to reveal the evolution of their education system, present its current structure and describe the corresponding performance of its students, in light of PISA assessments (subcategory Performance of the Education System). This context serves as the driving theme of the reforms in question, in most of the countries under review.

Table 5.2. Summary of the categories and subcategories extracted from the videos of
Germany, Poland, Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders), Finland and Portugal

Category	Subcategory/countries	Description and guidelines of the discourses
	Education System Organization **Germany, Netherlands**	References to the institutional structure of the education system, namely education levels, mandatory schooling and different teaching and training models predominant in elementary and secondary education.
	Performance of the Education System **Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal**	Identification of recent trends in schooling levels, namely the qualification levels of different ethnic groups, emphasising the population of school age at the time. Reflections on the PISA reports that provide facts and figures on educational outcomes, and disparities within these numbers by comparison with other OECD countries. Indicators are referred to, such as student pass and failure rates in maths, literacy and science, students who fail the year and repeat it, dropouts, rates of completion of mandatory schooling, and how the interpretation of this information motived the political reforms in question/under review.
Characterisation of the Education System	Equality/Inequality in the Education System **Germany, Finland, Poland**	Reflections about social inequalities during the school trajectories of European students, and on the issue of equality as a cornerstone of the more prosperous education systems. On the one hand, some countries, in their specific political and cultural scenario, analyse the influence of the social contexts and resources of the families of students in their access to education and in their performance throughout their academic trajectory. Reference is also made to differences between immigrant students and native students, as well as difficulties or examples of good practices of integration and approximation of the performance of the two groups. On the other hand, some countries reveal that equal access to education and equality in the support provided to the students, according to their tastes and particular difficulties, are the very watchwords of the system, having implications on the definition of policies and on performance.
	Models of autonomy and presentation of accounts **Belgium (Flanders), Finland, Netherlands**	References to the different models of autonomy of the education systems, i.e. the different degrees of control and decision-making power in the education area of central and local governments, federal states, regions and the actual schools. The issues mentioned refer to the organization of teaching (with special emphasis on methods of teaching and student assessment), the allocation of resources, planning and education structures (primarily about the design and selection of study programmes and choice of the subject matter taught), and staff management. In general, the countries also present reflections on how to achieve higher efficiency not only in terms of use of resources, but also regarding the performance of their pupils. Various measures relative to the inspection and assessment of the education systems are also mentioned.
Profile of the Teachers	Vocational Training **Germany, Finland, Netherlands.**	In this field, the discourses are incident on the teacher training and certification in each country, as well as about social representations of the profession. Teachers are portrayed as one of the pillars of education, and their performance is viewed as determinant for the school trajectories of the pupils and their performance. Questions are also raised as to the importance of stimulating continuous training and the assessment of others.
	Performance (pedagogical) **Finland, Netherlands, Poland.**	Reflections arising from the previous subcategory, namely about how the training of teachers enhances their performance in class, both in terms of teaching and the assessment of the students. In most of the of the countries there is an outstanding need for individual support to students which depends, to a large extent, on the pedagogical performance of the teachers.
Recent Reforms in the Education System	Recent Changes **Germany, Finland, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal.**	References to recent reforms in the education systems of each country. The reforms are the outcome of reflections around the PISA study results, and the need each country shows in improving its performance and access to education, and in modernising the education system.
	Pilot Projects **Germany, Netherlands, Portugal**	Mention and description of pilot projects in each country, aimed at publishing successful policies and practices. The projects are carried out in schools, covering a diversity of issues such as for example, projects on new forms of teacher assessment and continuous learning throughout their career, projects aimed at initiating or improving individual support to pupils, or even reforms in the school network, namely through the creation of school groupings.
Visions on education **Germany, Belgium (Flanders), Finland, Poland, Portugal.**		Social portrayals of the function or role of education, and on the values underpinning the education systems and policies. In times of change, such as during the period under review, reference is made to goals to be achieve that reflect the valorisation of education, its associated ideological conceptions both concerning equal opportunities and equality, and how education can contribute to attaining the entire potential of the human being.

Source: Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education, PISA, OECD, own production.

Table 5.2 presents the first findings of our content analysis, in this case the main categories of discourse of the actors, and their description. The discourses portray some of the organizational designs of the education systems under review, such as the case of Germany and the Netherlands (subcategory Education System Organization). For example, Martin Spiewak, a German journalist, states: "In Germany we have a multi-pillared school system. This means that we divide up the students relatively early, generally after the fourth grade, to different schools supposedly in accordance with their performance. We have the Hauptschule, we have the Realschule, and we have the Gymnasium. This is the German three-pillared school system.". However, in the Netherlands, children start their school trajectory at the age of 4 years old. After this, mandatory education begins with primary education (ISCED 1) and continues to the age of 12 years old. Following this, the students have to choose between various options of secondary school education (ISCED 2 and 3), from a general academic education to vocational training, as indicated by Ton Duif, Chair of the School Leaders Association. However, none of the other interviewees of the remaining countries gave such a precise description of the organization of their education system, despite the fact that these arrangements are mentioned in the category Recent Reforms in Education Systems. In the video of Poland, merely as an example, we are reminded of the necessity to reform the education system established in the 1950s, during the Communist period, as well as the changes implemented in 1999, after it was found that the education structure persisted in remaining the same as the previous one. According to Zbigniew Marciniak, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Science and Higher Education:

> "It was clear that a reform was needed in order to address these obvious issues. Our 8 year lower secondary education was insufficient. It was trying to cram all the information of our modern world in those 8 years. This was way too ambitious a task for the majority of students. The result was that the majority of young Poles would simply abandon their studies after completing the 8th year of lower secondary school and not continue onward to upper secondary education and beyond. It was called the Grade Eight Syndrome."

With respect to the subcategory Equality and Inequality in Education Systems, it is on this point that some countries (Germany, Finland and Poland) reflect on the influence of the social contexts and resources of the families of the students in terms of their access to education and corresponding performance, especially concerning immigrant students. In the case of Germany, major emphasis is placed on the particularity of the system's tendency to being rigid and inflexible:

> "The PISA study results questioned the fact that it had become normal and accepted that children from poor families, or so called socially under-privileged families, don't have the same educational opportunities and achievements as children from privileged families. (…) The students who perform very well generally go to Gymnasium, but even that really depends on the social status of the family. For instance, we have very high-performing students from immigrant or working-class families who do not go to a Gymnasium, but to a Realschule. The Realschule is the so-called middle level school, and then there is the Hauptschule. Most children that go to Hauptschule are children from immigrant families, or children that come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Because of this three-pillared system, our system has a lack of

permeability." (Edelgard Bulmahn, German Federal Minister of Education, 1998-2005).

In turn, in this subcategory, the discourses of Finland and Poland portray their concern to establish an education system that is accessible to all, that is able to adjust according to the options and specific needs of its students, aimed towards valorisation of the principle of equality:

> "I think one of the most important political issues in Finland is that we want to have a system where all the pupils and all the people have the equal opportunities and education, and it doesn't matter where you are living or are you rich or poor, or are you girl or boy. We want to give equal opportunities for everyone." (Henna Virkkunen, Minister Education, Finland)

> "I think the other thing that is significant in the Finish case, in this respect, is that we have much higher rates of those who are recognized, or labeled, if you wish, special needs pupils. If you look at the 15 year-olds or 16 year-old Finns who are leading this basic school, most of them have been in one or other type of special education throughout their schooling, which means that special education actually is nothing special, so it's that you are a special child or student if you haven't ever used special services. So, I think with this we have been able to positively affect both the equity of the system and also the quality of the system that we can see now in these international studies." (Pasi Sahlberg, Director General, CIMO. Finland.)

> "Today in Poland there is a widespread belief that higher education is not only for the privileged, but for everyone who aspires to higher education. They [young people] are no longer doomed to a poor quality education that leads to a dead end. All doors are open to those who put in the necessary effort. Finishing lower secondary school in Poland today opens many more possibilities for a bright future. Many young people are grabbing this opportunity." (Zbigniew Marciniak, under-secretary of state, ministry of science and higher education, Poland).

Table 5.3. Table of direction attributed by each group of actors, in each country, in each category

	Characterisation of the Education System				Profile of the Teachers		Recent Reforms in the Education System		Visions on education	Performance in maths (2015)	Evolution 2015-2003
	Education System Organization	Performance of the S.E.	Equality/ Inequality in the Education System	Models of autonomy and presentation of accounts	Vocational Training	Performance (pedagogical)	Recent Changes	Pilot Projects			
GERMANY											
Ministers and members of government	√(-)	√(-)					√(+)		√(-) √(+)	506	-3
Teachers and School Principals								√(+)			
Advisory Bodies				.							
Union Representatives			√(-)		√(-)						
Parent and Student Representatives					√(-)						
Experts and Researchers	√	√(-)									
BELGIUM (FLANDERS)											
Ministers and members of government				√(+)					√(+)	521	-8
Teachers and School Principals				√(+)							
Advisory Bodies				√(+)							
Union Representatives				√(+)							
Parent and Student Representatives											
Experts and Researchers				√(+)							
FINLAND											
Ministers and members of government			√(+)	√(+)	√(+)				√(+)	511	-33
Teachers and School Principals			√(+)	√(+)	√(+)	√(+)					
Advisory Bodies			√(+)	√(+)	√(+)		√(+)				
Union Representatives					√(+)						
Parent and Student Representatives											
Experts and Researchers						√					
NETHERLANDS											
Ministers and members of government	√			√(+)	√(-)(+) √(+)	√(-)(+)				512	-26
Teachers and School Principals		√(-)	√(+)				√	√			
Advisory Bodies		√(-)									
Union Representatives						√(+)					
Parent and Student Representatives				√(+)		√(+)					
Experts and Researchers		√(-)									
POLAND											
Ministers and members of government		√(+)	√(+)				√(+)		√(+)	504	+14
Teachers and School Principals		√(+)				√(+)	√(+)				
Advisory Bodies							√(+)				
Union Representatives							√(+)				
Parent and Student Representatives		√(+)					√(+)				
Experts and Researchers											
PORTUGAL											
Ministers and members of government		√(-)					√(+)	√(+)	√(+)	492	+26
Teachers and School Principals							√(-)(+)				
Advisory Bodies							√(-)(+)				
Union Representatives		√(-)					√(-)				
Parent and Student Representatives		√(-)					√(+)		√(+)		
Experts and Researchers		√(-)					√(+)				

Source: Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education, PISA, OECD, own processing.

Key: (+) positive valorisation; (-) negative valorisation.

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Regarding the category Profile of the Teachers and the subcategory Models of autonomy and presentation of accounts, it is interesting to note that only the schools or local communities benefiting from greater autonomy in relation to central states, as in Belgium (Flanders), Finland or the Netherlands, talk about this feature of their education systems, always in a positive sense (Table 5.3). In all the other countries under review, where there is still a strong dependence on central governments for action in the education area, the actors do not mention this topic, throwing up differentiated rates in the achievement of school autonomy in Europe. In the case of Finland, a process of decentralisation has been underway since 1980, and was incremented during the 1990s. It is pointed out that in particular the local authorities have gained greater autonomy in decision-making on the education policy, while respecting general indications provided by the central state. Here, the teachers have been fundamental in this process. Highly qualified, highly esteemed by society and vested with considerable pedagogical autonomy, they embody a virtuous circle sustaining the top performance of the Finnish education system.

In the Dutch case, country's constitution establishes freedom of education, which means that schools have major autonomy and the government does not interfere in issues linked to the teachers' pedagogical and didactic approach. Nonetheless, the actors refer to the need to continue to invest in teacher training, throughout their entire career, and also address the issue of assessment among these professionals, in a perspective of improvement of pedagogical performance.

> "I think that most importantly we should invest more in the teachers in the classrooms. (…) In my experience in education, many teachers are very busy with their own classes and their own subject, and they don't go and look in other classrooms or check out other institutions, and I think that we should encourage that much more in order to see what makes a good teacher. And how can others acquire positive qualities from this, and learn from it, and implement these at another school, and in another classroom." (Jet Bussemaker, Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Netherlands)

Finally, concerning these categories, Belgium (Flanders) reveals that, as is the case of the Netherlands, its constitution also enshrines freedom of education, meaning that, generally speaking, there is freedom to create a school as well as the teaching method adopted. The main responsibility for education lies in the school and in the teachers, but it is the central government that assures a minimum and standard quality at each school, to this end consulting the School Inspection, an independent and advisory body. This body is responsible for checking that the educational goals established at a central level are evident in the curriculum and in the practices of each school.

While each country is a particular case, either due to greater emphasis on implemented reforms or due to their performance, it is perceptible that the actors follow a script that structures their interview. Although different types of actors were interviewed, a certain convergence of the discourse is observed, the presentation of a certain narrative, with a common thread linking the testimonials around the objectives throughout the series of interviews, which enabled us to establish the categories of analysis presented above. For this reason, the specific action and influence of each actor in the process of change is evident in a fainter less distinct manner, and likewise the concrete positionings in relation to the policy options endorsed. Nevertheless, it was possible to glimpse some significances attributed by the actors to the reforms in question, alongside some type of valorisation of these reforms (Table 5.3). Here, the key concern was to identify any benchmarks framing the actors' action and decisions on modes of regulation of the

education systems, perceived in the analysis of specific policies and reforms, attributed significances and important elaborations on the part of the actors. Our analysis is thus based on the discourses of the actors and what they value in education, the direction they attribute to the evolution of their education systems, and on the reforms carried out and the type of justifications used for the policy options taken.

A first glance of the table of direction attributed by each actor, in each country, to each of the categories of discourse under review, enables detecting the constitution of two groups of countries. First and foremost, countries in which the actors' discourses are primarily directed at characterising education systems by reference to the models of autonomy and presentation of accounts, equality; and then countries also focused on describing the profile of the teachers operating in the system, whether in terms of their vocational training or their pedagogical performance. These countries are Finland, Belgium (Flanders) and the Netherlands. This group, albeit sliding somewhat down in their uppermost positions, constitute one of the sets of countries with best performance, in the context of the OECD countries participating in the PISA tests.

In contrast to the majority of European countries, Belgium and the Netherlands uphold a tradition associated to decentralising education policies, including school autonomy. In both cases, this tradition derives from a power struggle between the public and private sectors, giving rise to the establishment of highly autonomous organizations (Eurydice, 2007). In Belgium, the regional government of Flanders, combining regional and municipal powers, supervises an education system that is among those with the very highest performance at a worldwide level. Accordingly, the discourse of key protagonists in Belgian (Flemish) education is above all focused on the description of one of the aspects that is most considered to strength the system, namely its model of autonomy of schools and presentation of accounts. Thus, in the different Belgian communities, including the Flemish, the considerable independence of the schools is enshrined by the constitution. This means that, as has been noted above, there is substantial autonomy to create schools and to adopt particular pedagogical models. At the same time, the parents have the right to choose the school that they wish for the young people under their care, inclusively different schools for different students found within a single household. For this reason, Georges Monard, former Secretary General of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, states:

> "This freedom of choice for parents, and later also for the students, is very important, and our population is very invested in this. People would not accept the government limiting them in this choice."

The main responsibility for education lies in the school, but it is the regional government of Flanders that assures a minimum and standard quality at each school establishment, enabling an informed and fair choice of the parents and students.

> "Pedagogically, for how they teach, we don't impose norms. That's the school's responsibility. But it is important to know that we, as the government, determine the final attainments levels, the objectives for what the children should know. How the final objectives are to be achieved has to be set out in their curriculum. This curriculum is drawn up by the school. And the government has to approve it. We check the curriculum and how they are going to reach their final objectives, to see if these objectives can indeed be reached." (Pascal Smet, Flemish Minister of Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels affairs).

Another way that the government assures compliance with quality standards in education programmes is through the expert opinion of the School Inspection. While respecting the autonomy of the schools, the School Inspection, on the one hand, checks whether the standards established by the government are visible in the education programmes and, on the other hand, visits the schools to assess, together with the principals and teachers, whether the final goals are in fact achieved. This audit could give rise to a positive or negative assessment, where, in the latter case, the school is given the opportunity to establish a recovery plan for its performance. If, after this plan's implementation, the assessment continues negative, then the government is empowered to shut down the school.

The discourses in question proved to be inspired by ideas based on the freedom of education, operationalised through the capability of choice given to families in relation to the school that their children will attend. On the other hand, there is a perceptible valorisation of the autonomy of educational establishments in relation to the endorsement of differentiated teaching practices, albeit framed within minimum standards assured by the government. Finally, the testimonials of the Belgian actors also reflected a belief in education as a primary driver towards the achievement of productivity, competitiveness and economic development. That scientific knowledge would be able to meet the progressive increase of technical requirements and professional skills:

> "Education is really the only thing we have in our Flemish society to keep Flanders prosperous. We don't have natural resources, we do of course have industry, we have services, but you need highly-skilled people for that. We have always had those, and we would like to keep having them in the future. That's why we invest in education above the OECD average, and above EU average. And that's why we try very hard to make education better, because it is the only way a society can remain prosperous." (Pascal Smet, Flemish Minister of Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels affairs).

In the Netherlands, while freedom of teaching methods and school autonomy developed in the early twentieth century, the majority of the pedagogical responsibilities have been transferred to schools since the 1980s, aimed at stimulating innovation (Eurydice, 2007). Now, this rather ancient and positive valorisation of school autonomy in relation to the state, also reflected in the country's constitution, is the bedrock of the actors' discourses. In fact, the government does not interfere in issues linked to the teachers' pedagogical and didactic approach, but it does have a say in the contents that should be conveyed and in the knowledge and performance levels that should be attained by the students, as well as the requirements in terms of the skills of education professionals. Although school autonomy is considered a strength in quality education, with relationships actually being established between pedagogical autonomy, equality and top performances, the actors show some concern with the apparent stagnation of performance:

> "I think something complex is happening in the Netherlands. Education in the Netherlands is good. We have always been in the top group when it comes to PISA results. But what we saw in the last PISA survey in 2009, is that the Netherlands has dropped in the rankings: we are now 10th, I believe, in reading, and 11th in math and science." (Geert ten Dam, President Education Council).

> "In 2012 we see relatively few week schools, so our performance is good. We also don't see very poor, under-achieving students. So, ultimately, things are okay. But we also see with average and better students, and average and better

schools that there is no improvement. In fact, there's stagnation. We are worried about this." (Annette Roeters, Inspector General of Education).

In this light, the interviewed actors redirected their discourses towards the issue of the profile of the teachers, as they believe that a continuous focus on their professional development will breathe new life into the system. Thus, in order to improve the performance of the teachers, the Minister of Education launched a national register aimed at compiling a complete list of all the teachers in the country by 2018, in order to investigate whether they are working on investing in their skills. At the same time, the Ministry encouraged the practice of assessment among teachers, in a classroom context. This initiative is highly defended by the corporation that represents these professionals, as can be seen in the discourse of the entity representing them (teachers union):

> "We are especially excited about peer review, because it greatly benefits teachers in terms of ownership, the feeling that the profession is yours, that you yourself are responsible for your choices, for decisions, and for improvements. This is all against a background of a past in which teachers in this country were very much harassed from the outside by academics, educators, researchers, who were very critical of the teaching methods, while we think that it is much better when teachers themselves evaluate their teaching methods, and decide together about improvements, instead of an us versus them situation." (Walter Dresscher, Chair of Teachers Union AOB).

Finally, also in the case of the Netherlands, it is interesting to perceive that, apart from the positive valorisation given to the autonomy of schools and teachers, the variable knowledge arises as especially important in a scenario in which scientific knowledge and skills play a distinguished role in the emerging societies. The discourse of the group involving Ministers and members of government, in particular, reflects benchmarks related to the construction of a knowledge society, instructed with elevated levels of higher education and professional contexts inclines towards the valorisation of know-how disseminated by the school system (Martins, 2010).

In Finland, the movement of educational decentralisation was consolidated in the 1990s. At that time, the local authorities gained preponderance in the educational scene, and were able to decide to attribute autonomy to the schools of their area of jurisdiction. This resulted in a variety of models of transfer of responsibilities to these bodies. Accordingly, the Finnish discourses also reveal a positive valorisation of this feature of their education system, as well as the affirmation that alongside the existing teacher training, this is one of the main routes to achieve quality education and top academic performance.

Continuing the analysis of the direction attributed by the actors of each country, in each category, observation of Table 5.3 shows a second group of countries, namely Poland, Portugal and, albeit less expressively, Germany. These countries concentrate their discourses on the performance of their education systems (reflected in the PISA assessments) and on the presentation and appraisal of the reforms implemented in recent years on the date of the discourse. In view of their relatively low or median performance, are the cases of Poland and Portugal, with strong progress, both in absolute terms (in the difference of scores between 2003 and 2015) and in terms of their ranking relative to other countries. The manner in which the performance of education systems was perceived at the end of the last decade can be gauged by the drift attributed by the actors of each country, which vary between positive (Poland) and negative (Germany and Portugal), in view of the favourable evolutions in Poland, the outcomes

still below those expected in Portugal (at that time), and the unexpected negative results in Germany. Common to this group of countries is a positive opinion on the implemented reforms, albeit with some criticism in the case of Portugal.

Among the European countries of the series, Germany is the one that most describes its education system by noting that, after primary education (ISCED 1), the students are directed to one of three types of secondary education (ISCED 2 and 3), according to their academic performance and vocational preference. All the actors that talk about this structure, namely Ministers and members of government, Union Representatives, Experts and Researchers, attribute negative drifts to it, expressing dissatisfaction with the situation experienced during the first decade of the twenty-first century, pointing to weaknesses and critical aspects.

The PISA study conducted in the year 2000, published in 2001, placed in evidence some critical aspects of the education system, up until then rather ignored. On the one hand, it revealed that the performance of the students was not as high as the expected levels; on the other hand, it portrayed a rather undemocratic and unequal system, in which a strong correlation was observed between the social origin and the proficiency of the students, as was the case, among others, of immigrant students. The study proved to be a real shock to the system, as it clearly placed in evidence that the children of poorer families did not have the same opportunities of academic performance. For this reason, the common thread of the testimonials centres on the public and political debate raised by the published results, and on a reflection about the reforms carried out in the structure of the German education system, tendentially rigid and impermeable.

The statements by Edelgard Bulmahn, German Federal Minister of Education, 1998-2005, and by the journalist Christian Fuller describe the situation experienced and illustrate the positioning of the actors, unveiling visions and benchmarks guiding the education policy based on the fight for equal access to education, equality, investment in human capital and the valorisation of education as a crucial aspect of national economic development.

> "(…) our system has a lack of permeability. At the age of ten children are assigned to one of these pillars. And this effectively determines their subsequent academic career, and thus also their later working career. And I'll say it again, this is absurd and does not correspond to human development potential." (Edelgard Bulmahn, Federal Minister of Education, Germany, 1998-2005).

> "The most important finding in the study was that Germany had as many as 25 percent of so called "at risk" students, and 10 percent of these students were functionally illiterate. This was a huge shock to our system. All of a sudden an industrialized country, a world leader in exports had to recognize that 25 percent of its students went to school without learning what they would need later in life, to contribute to the economy and act as a responsible citizen." (Christian Fuller, Journalist, Die Tageszeitung).

Concerning the teachers, the fragmentation of the system is also visible in their training, as each region has its own method of certification, not equivalent to methods of other regions, which hinders, for example, professional mobility. In turn, the actual training of the teachers was placed in question, due to the difficulties shown in guiding the students:

> "We have this divided school system but teachers have repeatedly sorted children into the wrong academic tracks, they sent them on the wrong path. And so, it was said that we have to enable our teachers to better assess our children." (Martin Spiewak, Journalist, Germany).

In view of this alarming scenario, the objective of the implemented reforms was to resolve these problems. The testimonials of the Ministers and members of government and of the Teachers and School Principals indicate that the main focus of the system would henceforth be individual support to students through, for example, learning contracts between students, teachers and patents and extension of school hours. On the other hand, they invested in the definition of quality standards at a national level with respect to the academic skills and competencies to be achieved (up to this point there had merely been generalised guidelines for different states, schools, academic years and subject matters). Added to this was the institution of group work among teachers, and greater pedagogical autonomy given to schools, under the pilot project "Responsible Schools". Furthermore, the Minister of Education at that time noted that the majority of the states were beginning to debate the transition to only two types of school, a thinking based on the belief that it is necessary to construct a system that offers more options to its students, instead of placing them in increasingly smaller "boxes".

In Poland, the discourses of the actors are marked with positive drifts and considerations about the reconfiguration of the education system and its manifest approximation to countries with top performance and academic standards. This country has shown, since the 2000s, a strong capacity of certification in terms of secondary education, moving towards overcoming the impediments to widening schooling observed during the era of the Communist regime. At the time of its collapse, Poland embarked on a major reform of its education system, aimed at modernising its structure, and removing the hallmarks of Communist ideology from education programmes. However, in spite of this intention, the education structure remained precisely the same as the previous one, resulting in a very modest participation in higher education, and in high rates of early school leaving following lower secondary (8 years of schooling), as noted (see above) by the Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Thus, the changes initiated in 1999 advanced with the aims of improving the quality of education, assuring equal opportunities in the access of young people to education, and increasing the progression from lower secondary to upper secondary, and even to higher education. Underlying all these efforts are the concepts of equality and fairness, demonstrating that the country's education policy has endeavoured to make the system more attractive and more adaptable to the individual needs of the students:

> "The goal of Poland's education reform was not just to add an extra year of lower secondary school, but to make education more attractive, by making it more adaptable to meet the unique talents of each child. So, the education system has become accessible to anyone with the interest and talent to pursue their education as far as possible, according to their own ambition and individual abilities. (...) Sometimes when you do something for a long time you fall into a routine. Which is not necessarily a good thing. I think that reform was a good thing in a sense because it knocked the old system out of its stagnancy."
> (Miroslaw Handke, Former Minister of National Education, Poland, 1997-2000)

Now, it is in this sense that the discourses of the actors are positively established in relation to the recent changes in the education system and to the description of the outcomes achieved. Indeed, by adding an extra year to the lower secondary, by introducing standard national exams and by granting greater autonomy to the schools and teachers (also encouraging the modernisation of teaching methods), the country has managed to attain higher levels of certification of its school age population, increasing participation in secondary and higher education.

> "The goal of the reform was to improve student learning so that our tertiary education enrolment would increase to 80%, and we achieved that." (Stanislaw Drzazdzewski, General Counsellor, Ministry of National Education, Poland)

> "Today in Poland there is a widespread belief that higher education is not only for the privileged, but for everyone who aspires to higher education. This has resulted in a five-fold increase in university enrolment. At the end of the 1990s we had about 400,000 university students in Poland, which is about 10 percent of eligible youth. Currently we have almost two million college students. That means every other young person in this age range who is eligible to admission to university is actually enrolled in university. It's a huge success. Many other countries struggle with the same problem: how to encourage greater participation in higher education. We have dealt with this in Poland by giving all young people the chance to realize that they can achieve academic success. They are no longer doomed to a poor-quality education that leads to a dead-end. All doors are open to those who put in the necessary effort. Finishing lower secondary school in Poland today opens many more possibilities for a bright future. Many young people are grabbing this opportunity." (Zbigniew Marciniak, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland)

In Portugal, the interviews with the main actors in the country's education policy flowed around the most recent reforms operated in the system in the middle of the last decade, in an integrated strategy of reversing a systematic backwardness of the population's qualifications. However, the implemented changes are rather different from the type of reforms in all the other countries under review, as they concern the reorganisation of the network of the educational offer, aimed at providing better educational facilities and, consequently, new opportunities to enable achieving success and the enlargement of schooling.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the country was still confronted with high levels of illiteracy. And it was really only after the Revolution of 1974 that a series of public policies were implemented that sought to respond to this deficit of education and skills:

> "The main goal was to make education universally accessible. To guarantee a quality education to everyone, and focus on the effectiveness of schools and the competency of teachers. To make sure that at every level of the education system, students could achieve results." (Isabel Alçada, Minister of Education, 2009-2011).

However, and despite the progress, Portugal continued to show unsatisfactorily low levels of achievement, being positioned totally out of line with the normal range of qualification levels of the European Union. For this reason, the discourses of the actors reveal a negative sense, due to recognising the stumbling blocks along the way towards a better schooling of its population, namely, difficulties in the democratisation and universalisation of schooling:

> "Ten years ago, we had a very high dropout and failure rate, and high rates of grade repetition. And we had a very high level of illiteracy among the families of our students." (João Dias da Silva, General Secretary, National Federation of Education, Teachers' Union, Portugal).

> "In 2002, we were going through a considerable crisis. We became aware that resources for education were not being used properly, there was low efficiency. To a large extent, this was because, since 1995, the school population had been

decreasing, and we were still hiring a lot of teachers. The second problem was that we had a very high number of small schools in rural areas, very isolated, with very few students. So, at this time we started a process of rationalization of the use of resources." (David Justino, Minister of Education 2002-2004, Portugal)

It was based on this scenario that the country embarked on a reorganisation and modernisation of its school network, grouping schools together in clusters that offer better facilities for all. On a par with all the other countries under review, the political action is established with the aim of assuring equal opportunities and quality education, able to provide successful performances. These values are thus operationalised by the construction of larger schools, modernised, with decent libraries and laboratories, more qualified teachers and a greater socialising among students.

It is also interesting that, in contrast to all the other countries under review, none of the discourses about these most recent reforms are favourable, but rather to the contrary indicate some concern. These positionings are evident in the groups of Teachers and School Principals, Advisory Bodies and Union Representatives, and are constructed based on key concerns such as the travel of the students to the new and more distant schools, the depopulation of the more rural regions and the scale of the established school clusters.

> "I agree that schools with very few students and few or no facilities or links with other schools should be closed. Where they don't have a recreational space, a gym for physical education, or a library. I 100 percent applaud the idea of closing a school like that. But we have to be extremely careful about the size of these clusters we are creating." (Manuel Esperança, President of the Council of Schools, Portugal)

> "Very often we do our reforms from the roof down to the ground, instead of starting from the bottom up. What worries us, and we think this can be addressed, is the time that children spend travelling to and from school. This should be as short as possible." (João Dias da Silva, General Secretary, National Federation of Education, Teachers' Union, Portugal).

> "But it wasn't easy. There was a concept in Portugal, and in some places that still remains, that each village needs to have a school. It needs a school, a church, a graveyard, and various other things. What I was about to do was the antithesis of that, to centralize all of these schools into clusters. Imagine how dramatic that was, to remove the children who were often the life of these villages, and put them into these educational centres." (José Maria Ministro dos Santos, Mayor of Mafra, Portugal)

Although Portuguese policies have an eminently incremental direction with respect to the expansion and schooling of its population, and there is an existing consensus on these dynamics, there has always been a very heated debate about the strategies for their conduct.

Following various illustrations focused on national experiences, the discourses of the actors are established around carefully engineered topics with the objective of producing a narrative for the specific purpose of the project "Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education". Nonetheless, we can observe that the statements of the Ministers and members of government, mega actors in the social hierarchy, particularly highlight the reforms operated in the education systems, the reasons justifying their pertinence, and their more specific role in the regulation of

the country's education policy, namely the decisions that they suggested and/or were responsible for implementing. The gist of the testimonials of the Ministers and members of government is reminiscent of some elements of the analysis of the political discourse of Shmidt and Radaelli (2004), authors for whom the ideas play an important role in the legitimisation of policy decisions in the face of public opinion, as in democracy political leaders must explain to parliament and to the voters the reasons substantiating their action. Hence, the discourses under review herein, portrayed in Table 5.3, confirm the pronouncements of the authors, as they confer conceptual substantiation and coherence to policy decisions. In their words: "… discourse serves to explain political events, to legitimate political actions, to develop political identities, to reshape and/or reinterpret political history and, all in all, to frame the national political discussion.", (Shmidt and Radaelli, 2004: 202). Now, the conceptual framework and the justifications that sustain the policies mentioned by the mega actors, together with visions on education that consistently mark their discourses, can greatly help us to better understand the benchmarks that overshadow their thinking and political action, according to the perspective of cognitive analysis of public policies.

5.4 Conclusion

The discourses reflect the differentiated rhythms in the evolution of education systems, considering national contexts, traditions and trajectories, whether in terms of academic performances and accreditation, teacher training or the network of the educational offer.

These contexts are extremely marked by the transformations of the relationships of the education systems, more precisely of the schools with the State, in terms of greater school autonomy and a stronger emphasis on assessment and accountability by their organizations and key actors.

Another very outstanding aspect is the confrontation of some of the actors with their country's PISA (OECD) results, placing the focus in a supranational perspective, constituting a key element in the recognition of a globalised space and a configuration extended to a transnational scale. This type of data constitutes a source of legitimisation for the development of education policies (Lawn and Linghard, 2002). It is the amplified visibility of national education structures, based primarily on statistical data, that places it at the very heart of the political agenda, in particular when reinforced in the context of the new type of "magistrature of influence", demonstrably impartial and non-partisan.

Among the different discourses it is evident that there are two groups of countries. On the one hand, whose actors focus on the importance of autonomy (school and local), the accountability of the education action and the relevance of qualified pedagogical relationships (aspects more insistent in countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Finland); on the other hand, a group of countries (Poland, Portugal and Germany), in which the discourses of their actors concentrate on the performance of the education systems, on the proposition and appraisal of reforms or major action programmes.

The main references (Muller, 2000 and 2005), as visions or models of education present in the discourses, greatly derived from modes of reflexivity, enable identifying, in the action in the education field, the importance conferred by the actors to equality and fairness, to the relevance of education in the knowledge society, to the expansion of qualifications and to the need for the capacity-building of one of its key agents, teachers.

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Endnotes

[1] This perspective represents the development of the framework of analysis proposed in the context of the Postdoctoral Project of Susana da Cruz Martins (2011-2016), entitled "A Nova Era das Desigualdades Escolares: A educação em análise pelos seus atores centrais" [The New Era of Education Inequalities: Education analysed by its key actors], financed by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT).

PART II

Policies of autonomy and school organization. National cases

6. Denmark. The Danish Educational System

Lejf Moos

6.1 Introduction

6.5 million hardworking inhabitants live in Denmark. The main sources of income shifted from agriculture to industry fifty years ago and this is now evolving to information and knowledge production. The Danish society used to be characterized by democracy and equality, (low power distance) and inclusiveness of other cultures (low uncertainty avoidance) (Hofstede, 1980). Over the past decade this is changing in parts of the population as Denmark has experienced some immigration.

Danish society and its education system are in many respects very similar to those of other Nordic countries (Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), as a result of history and culture (Blossing, Imsen, & Moos, 2013). Due to the rising influences of trans-national agencies like the OECD and PISA, these similarities seem to grow further over time (Moos, 2017).

6.2 An overview of the Danish education system

Kindergarten (ISCED 2011: below the ISCED age 3 - 6)

The general starting point for most Danish children's educational career is attending kindergarten from age 3-6. Approximately 95% of children of that age attend a private or public day care institution. Out of a total number of 178.659 children aged 3-6 (2017)[1] 173.320 attend a kindergarten of some kind (2016)[2] because the number of working parents is very high: 90% of fathers and mothers of children attending day care are actively engaged in the labour market.[3]

Over the past 10 years 'schooling' has been moving progressively down to kindergarten for which educational programs must be written for children and children's language abilities screened, as a series of responsibilities are being distributed to kindergartens from the Ministry of Education.

Folkeskole (elementary school) (ISCED 2011: 0-2)

The Folkeskole (elementary school) consists of one year of pre-school class (0), nine years of primary and lower secondary education and an optional one-year 10th form. Education is compulsory in Denmark for everyone between the ages of 6-7 and 16. Whether this education is received in a publicly provided school, a private school or at home is a matter of individual

parental choice, as long as the accepted standards are met. It is education itself that is compulsory, not school.

The Folkeskole is the responsibility of the municipalities, but Parliament and the Ministry of Education decide on purpose, competences-outcome-measures and national tests. The municipal board is responsible for ensuring that every child in the municipality is offered free education in the Folkeskole. The municipal board is entrusted with setting the targets and framework for the activities of the school within the provisions of the Folkeskole Act.

Each school is responsible for ensuring the quality of education in accordance with the aims of the Folkeskole education, under the framework of the Act, and for determining the planning and organisation of the education programme (Ministry of Education, 2014).
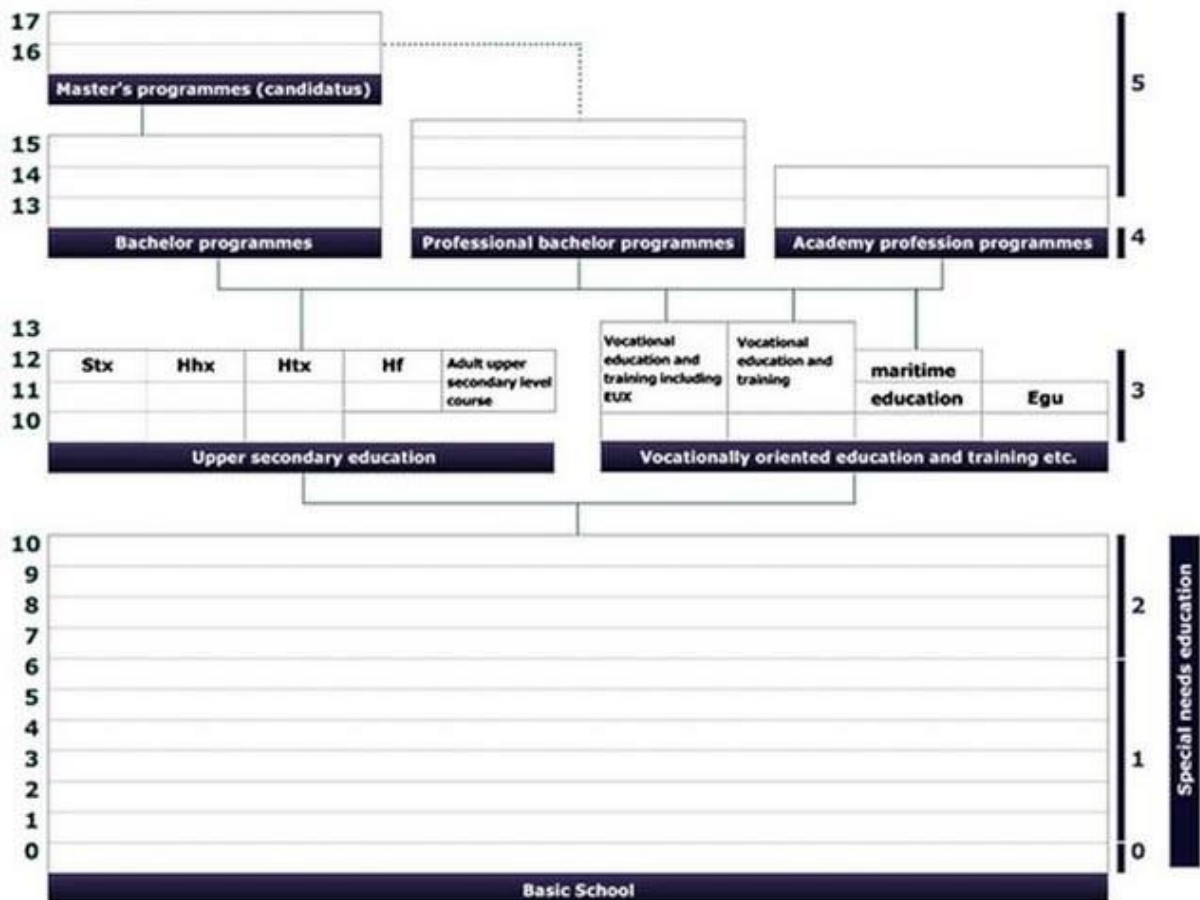
Figure 6.1 Overview of the Danish Education System
Source: Danish Ministry of Education (http://www.eng.uvm.dk/general-overview/overview-of-the-danish-education-system).

The Folkeskole Act describes the legal frames for elementary schooling in Denmark: the slide from a national focus on participation in democracy towards educating for employability (the required skills and willingness to be a part of the labour force) will be discussed later on. The governance chain, and thus the relations between government and local authorities, entails the Ministry, municipality, school and students/parents. This can be described as a two-way movement: on the one hand decentralization, and on the other re-centralization. This will be discussed in the section on governance.

The Folkeskole was, for 20 years from 1980ies, a full comprehensive school with no streaming, but lately some soft kinds of streaming have been developed. Students attend the same schools, but do not necessarily attend the same lessons as their peers.

The number of elementary schools has been reduced over the past few years, mainly as a consequence of a Restructuring of the Public sector from 2007.

In 2016 there were:

► 1,289 Public Folkeskoler (2000: 1,671)[4] with 548,453 students[5] (2003: 547.000)
► Reduction of the number of schools – 382 (23%), number of students very much the same
► 556 Free standing/private elementary schools (2000: 459) with 115,856 students (2007: 95.143)
► Increased number of schools – 97 (18%), increased number of students – 20.713 (22%) in 9 years
► 256 continuation schools (grade 8 or 9) (2000: 236) with 24.911 students (2011: 24.211)
► Increased number continuation schools – 20 (8%), number of students very much the same
► 156 special needs schools (2000: 144) with 9.060 students

Taken together, there are 28,591 classes with the average number of students per class being 19.6. The total expenditure on education in Denmark was 6.5 % of GDP in 2017, while on average in the EU it was 4.7 %.

Demographic changes are evident in Denmark as in other European countries (there are more elderly people). It is of great importance to elementary schooling that the projections show that the number of 5-9 years-old children will fall by 3.5% in Denmark while it will increase by 5.2% in the EU between 2010 and 2020.[6]

Free standing and private elementary schools

In 2018 approximately 21% of students attended private/free standing schools in Denmark, while the EU average was 18%.[7] A small number of these are attached to religious groups, but most build on the same values and norms as the Folkeskole. The main purpose of the legislation on private schools is to give parents a choice. These choices however are more often led by social rather than educational motives, and recently also geographical motives. When small country schools are closed to keep down public spending, in many cases they are replaced by private schools initiated by resourceful parents. The number of private schools is rising, and so is the number of students attending private schools. Free standing schools are semi-autonomous in that they have boards of their own to which schools are accountable on the basis of contracts with the Ministry.

Upper secondary education (ISCED 2011: 3)

School leavers from the Folkeskole can apply for upper secondary schools: the general upper secondary education provision of the Gymnasium, STX which had 161,395 students in 2018.[8] The Gymnasium aims at facilitating students to qualify for higher academic education. The higher preparatory examination or HF-programme with 30,354 students also does this but is

mainly aimed at students who have been out of education for a number of years. The higher commercial examination, or HHX-programme, has 40,790 students and the higher technical examination, the HTX-programme, has 22,271 students. These tracks seek to prepare students for vocational and technical academies.

In 2011 there were 39,000 students in total at the upper secondary level, approximately half of which were in academic education and the other half in technical or industrial education (Eurydice, 2012: 74).

General as well as vocational/technical upper secondary schools have had a quasi-autonomous status since 2007, in that they are free standing enterprises with independent boards answering directly to the Minister of Education.

Bachelor (graduate) programs (ISCED 2011: 4)

Higher education in Denmark is basically built according to the Bologna Declaration of 1999.

Upon successful completion of one of the upper secondary education tracks, students can apply to attend one out of three kinds of bachelor education: a bachelor's in social education, teacher training or ministered in the academies. The bachelor's in social education targets professionals in development and care institutions and special institutions. The teacher training professional bachelor aims to educate teachers for primary and lower secondary schools, and the business academies are directed at business and technology.

The programs are usually composed of academic studies and practical experience. Teacher training has been subject to many reforms and changes over the past decades.

In 2016 there were a total of approximately 18,000 students at the bachelor level.

The university colleges mainly offer teacher training bachelor programmes, while the universities offer masters and PhD programmes.

Masters (postgraduate) programs (ISCED 2011: 5)

Eight universities offer master programs of all kinds in all subjects. Their history is very long-standing, as the first Danish university, Copenhagen University, was established in 1479. In the 1960s developments in the labour market necessitated a fast expansion of the universities to meet the growing need to educate a large part of the citizens. Thus, three new university centres were built (university centres in Roskilde, Aalborg and Southern Denmark). In 2000 a number of educational institutions or universities were merged into The Danish University of Education (DPU). This institution was merged into Aarhus University in 2007.

The total number of students in 2016 was approximately 50.000.[9]

The expected completion rate at graduate level is 79.3% of the year group. The expected completion rate at postgraduate level is 50.6 % of the year group.[10] Taken together, it is expected that 70.1% will successfully complete their studies.

All universities and university colleges are now self-steering: they are governed by a board elected amongst external agents. The board signs contracts with the Ministry every year and is on that basis the highest university authority.

6.2 Education and schools in the governance system[11]

In order to better understand the ways in which political systems and practitioners think and talk about education, it is sensible to see them in their contexts of governance. This is so because education and thus also schools are public institutions, established in order for society and the state to make sure that the next generations are being educated to take over all functions in society, production, services and culture. Education is one of the most important links in the chain of governance of a population.

The Danish educational system is part of – and thus influenced by – transnational tendencies while also building on the Danish structures and culture. Decentralized government has been a very central part of the Danish educational self-understanding and to some extent of the practice, according to the Danish "free school" tradition. Each school has a School Board with parental majority and in a less formal sense there are parental meetings at class level. In the Gymnasium students have a student council where parents have no representation whatsoever. Today, decentralization is combined with new forms of re-centralisation; centralized and decentralized government are interwoven in a new way.

The Danish process of modernization or re-structuring of the public sector and thus the educational sector is characterised by simultaneous loosening and tightening of couplings in relations between central agencies and local agents (Weick, 1976; 2001). On the one hand, fewer prescriptions are produced by the central government for the municipal and school levels with regard to finance and day-to-day operation and administration. Thus teachers are employed by the municipal or school authorities (Eurydice, 2012: 55). On the other hand, the central demands as to fixed curriculum and testing of the pupils are increased. This became very clear in the School Reform of 2012 which made a competences-outcome governed school, according to the then Minister of Education. We can observe similar processes within schools where leadership is being decentralized from the school leader to teacher teams and to individual teachers and with the controversial Act on teachers' positions and working conditions of 2013, Act 409, as it was named. This Act shifted negotiations on teachers' working conditions from a national and municipal level to a national and individual school level. It is new that teachers' teams are becoming a permanent link between the leadership and individual teachers. New tasks and duties are being distributed, thereby loosening the organizational couplings (e.g. annual and weekly planning of lessons, parts of finance management), while other tasks are being re-centralized (e.g. target-setting and evaluation of instruction and learning), thereby tightening the organizational couplings.

A structural reform in 2007 reduced the number of municipalities from 271 to 98 because parliament wanted to have at least 30,000 inhabitants in a municipality. This has brought about new relations and positions as well as governance chains: many municipalities are structured as concerns/groups with a steep hierarchy and a unified string of management, often in the form of contracts with top-down described goals and indicators. This means that the distance between politicians on municipal boards and the institutions/schools has enlarged. In many municipalities new layers have emerged of middle managers, district-leaders, etc. Also, in 2007 the upper secondary school, the Gymnasium, was restructured: formerly having been governed by regional councils they are now self-governed institutions with direct links to the Ministry.

During the period 1990-2014 there was a decline in the number of schools in Denmark. Almost 400 schools were closed during this period. Accordingly, the school structure is increasingly characterized by fewer and bigger public schools and more private schools, also implying that more children attend private school. All schools have an individually elected board

that signs contracts with the municipal authorities. In some areas the Ministry stayed in command: Parliament and the Ministry write the act and regulations on student results/competences-outcome as well as the national tests.

Governance of upper secondary and tertiary schools

In 2007 the upper secondary schools were made quasi-autonomous. The regions ('Amt') to which they used to be accountable were abolished and the upper general and vocational schools were restructured. They are now governed by a board and have direct governance links, contracts, with the Ministry.

Tertiary education has been subject to several waves of restructuring: 16 teacher training colleges, 36 day care educators training colleges and a number of short cycle education tracks were merged into 24 centres for higher education (CVU). In 2007 these were merged into 6 university colleges that are quasi-autonomous (individual, 'professional' board, direct governance link with the Ministry).

In 2007 several research institutions and universities were merged into large universities. Politicians hoped for more effective and excellent institutions of science and research.

Both university colleges and universities have developed into concerns/groups with a steep hierarchy and strong top down, 'professional' management.

When the term 'professional' is used here, it means that boards have majorities of people from business milieus, and that managers are transferring management styles and thinking from private business to universities, putting scientific deliberations somewhat to the back.

Accountability

Relations between the central level and the local and school level have, accordingly, changed rather profoundly over the past 8-15 years as demands for national standards and accountability have been moving from political discussions and discourses towards administrative practices: national testing is being implemented in all grades in elementary school and results are routinely publicised (Eurydice, 2012: 43, 46). Day care institutions now implement pedagogical learning plans, language screening and children's milieu evaluation for 0-6 year-old children. The school has in this way been prolonged downwards into kindergarten (Kofod, 2007).

Another initiative taken by the Ministry is to make Individual Student Plans compulsory for each student every year in all subjects. This tendency is accompanied by the move to describe and prescribe the subject content of education in much greater detail than previously. This is the case at all levels from day care service to university. Despite the fact that the trend towards increased centralization of the demands for educational planning has been visible for 10-15 years, it is being much more conspicuous and influential in everyday life now that evaluations and planning technologies are being introduced, and are thus much more decisive in school and day care leadership and in relations between leaders and "teachers".

As an extension – or a precondition - new systems of quality development and documenting, the 'Quality Report' (contract) was introduced and has been implemented over the past 5 years. On this particular contract, the Act has set three areas for evaluation and development (evaluation of the educational level, how the local authority has responded to the former report

and a comprehensive report on the frames, processes and outcomes in the school district). In 2011 the quality reports were supplemented by an official disclosure of school ranking according to the test results of students in order to facilitate parents' free choice of schools.

6.3 General trends

Parallel to a development in which schools – as competitors in an educational market - create profiles which differ in many ways between schools, there is a trend towards less transparency and unclear general profiling. A bunch of different political interests pull in opposite directions when it comes to which values should underlie the school and which values should be developed. The possibility of profiling schools and part of schools differently contributes to this development. As does the frequent changes in School Acts (18 changes in 10 years), which on the one hand make it complicated for school leaders and professionals to establish an identity for the school; and on the other hand, make it difficult for different stakeholders to discover the identity of a specific school. The continuous changes in societal framework and in public structures in schooling outlined above can be summarized as follows below.

a) Numbers/indicators instead of political decisions

International tests (PISA) combined with the progressive penetration of objective/economic logic among politicians at international, national and regional level and among different sorts of commissions ("think tanks") and (other) types of medias have also enabled the possibility of increased emphasis on tests in national school systems. These factors have simultaneously made it possible to increase the weight attributed to the results of such tests and thereby further suppress the fact that we are working with interpretation of tests results. The outcome is that politicians seemingly attribute increased meaning to technical matters and less to political issues. Political decisions herby appear more based on evidence and less on political considerations. In this way, decisions within school politics can be described as having emphasized (quantitative) indications and downplayed indications of political decisions.

b) From parliamentarianism (political) towards market-driven (market)

The increased weight give to and belief in tests has been carried by and contributed to the image among politicians that it is necessary as well as sensible that schools and politics on schools should be increasingly driven by a rationale close to that in play in a market, rather than by values and reflections on "Bildung"/formation and/or distribution of (educational) wealth. These changes have concurrently, though maybe less obviously, led to a kind of de-politicization of educational governance. This means that if questions concerning school content can almost consistently be answered by "what the market wants", questions concerning necessary qualifications are no longer a matter of political reflection for parliament and municipal councils but rather a technical endeavour for (labour market) experts.

c) De-politicization of school strategy, both in terms of content and resources

These developments especially in the UK (and US) have led to massive investments in measurements of indicators of the type we see in "school effectiveness" initiatives – a type of investment that was rare a generation ago. These kinds of initiatives do not change the fact that school politics for generations has been and still is developed and handled by politicians and

administrations. Recent developments do however change the "play" with respect to at least two issues. Firstly, it entails a de-politicization of school strategies in the same way as we saw in b). This means that when "the market" (mediated by parliament and local ditto) is providing a greater part of the answer, social- and political values are providing a smaller part. This means that issues concerning content and pedagogy are discussed more as a technical matter than as a political one. Secondly, this evolution simultaneously implies that a fair share of the pedagogical reflections and decisions on content and form are removed from the schools and teachers, since national tests and standards entail answers on these issues. The direction is thus a move toward the school being perceived more as a technical matter than a didactical and pedagogical one.

d) Changing purpose of schooling and social technologies

A tendency in the changes discussed above could be described as a sort of "lean" procedure on the school content in the sense that it entails a trend towards emphasis on the parts of content that are most obviously meaningful in a market logic – that is, in qualification of the workforce. At the same time, we see a strong tendency towards believing in numbers: test, comparisons across countries and systems, evidence-based practices, best practices borrowed from elsewhere are all contributing to changing the general educational agenda from a general, comprehensive purpose of empowering children to work their way into adulthood as strong, autonomous self-confident adults and participants in democracies.

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7. Germany. German school system and autonomy

Dominic Orr

7.1 Basic description of school system

The Federal Republic of Germany has a population of approximately 80 million. The republic is a federation of sixteen states, called Länder,[1] five of which (re)joined the Federal Republic after the breakdown of the German Democratic Republic in 1990.

Legislation and administration of the education system are primarily the responsibility of the Länder. This particularly applies to the school system, higher education and the further education sector.

Schooling begins at the age of six (although this is determined at state level) with a common stream through primary schooling, which is mostly four years. Secondary school level is diversified, with the choice of stream for a pupil at the end of secondary schooling based on the pupils' scholastic achievements at primary level and the recommendation of class teachers. In most states, this recommendation is advisory, in some it is obligatory.

The organization of secondary schooling is characterised by the type of qualifications each type of school leads to and the entitlements these qualifications give the pupils. Although education falls under the jurisdiction of the states, the common pattern is a split between four school types, in which "grammar schools" – the clearest route to higher education – on average account for around a quarter of all schools in each state and a third of all secondary pupils (see Figure 7.1 below). The proportion of pupils going into each of the four school types has changed significantly over the past two decades: [2]

- 10 % of pupils are in "main schools" (Hauptschule), which is a type of school increasingly being phased out in many states due to its low status and its systemic function of being the "catch-all" for all those, who don't manage to access the other routes.[3] In 2000, 20% of pupils were in this track, that now only exists in five of the 16 German states.
- 19% of pupils are in the "secondary moderns" (Realschule), i.e. a vocationally orientated school, which only leads to the end of lower secondary schooling and is the most common entry route to an apprenticeship, but also provides a route to a vocationally-orientated path into higher education. The seven largest German states offer this type of school and the share of pupils decreased slightly from 22% to 19% between 2000 and 2014.
- 45% are in "grammar schools" (Gymnasium), i.e. the academic track which commonly leads to general entitlement to enter higher education. This type of school exists in all 16 German states and the share of pupils increased moderately from 40% to 45% between 2000 to 2014.
- 27% of pupils are in the multi-stream secondary education, i.e. they can follow more vocationally or academically orientated tracks within the same school. This type of school continues to grow, as it partly solves the problem with the Hauptschule. In 2000 19% of pupils were in this school type.

Following the lower secondary school stage, pupils in a Gymnasium continue to upper secondary level at the same school. Pupils in other streams will usually have to change school in order to progress to higher education entry qualification (Abitur). Besides the Gymnasium, the other option is the Higher Vocational School, often called Fachoberschule or Berufsoberschule. These schools usually offer courses in four specialist areas – technical, business administration, social work and agriculture. These courses last two to three years and end with either a limited entry qualification for higher education (meaning they have to study a subject related to their specialist area) or a general qualification (with no such limitations), which is otherwise obtained at the Gymnasium. The Higher Vocational School provides pupils with vocational training (if this has not already been obtained from a previous apprenticeship) and an introduction to the type of academic work required in higher education through completing a small topic-focused seminar thesis. Graduates can attain the general entitlement to higher education entry by studying for three years and successfully passing exams in their specialist area, completing the seminar thesis and passing additional exams in one additional foreign language besides English.

7.2 Transformations since 2000

Basic architecture

Two major trends have transformed the school system in the last two decades, the decline in the size of the pupil body and the shift of a large part of the pupil body to multi-stream schooling, mostly focusing on vocationally-orientated courses. This shift has been partly a response to the decline in the number of pupils (as regional areas would find it more economic to have a low number of separate institutions), which decreased by 17% between 2000 and 2014 – see Figure 7.1. But it is also important since it can increase the permeability of the school system in the states, especially where this multi-stream also includes the academic pathway (Gymnasium). This type of school grew from 19% to 27% between 2000 and 2014.

The trend towards multiple streams is therefore significant for access to higher education, in reducing the proportion of pupils who are institutionally streamed into different types of schools, each offering different routes to access higher education – from negligible chances from a Hauptschule to some chances through a vocational stream following graduation of lower secondary schooling at a Realschule at 16 and entry to higher vocational training (e.g. from a Fachoberschule), to relatively certain chances from a Gymnasium.

Duration of the upper secondary level

A further significant policy change has been the reduction of the total length of secondary schooling from nine to eight years. This occurred at slightly different times in the different states (largely between 2008 and 2013). The goal was to get young people into the labour market at a younger age. Shortening upper secondary schooling from three to two years was achieved by additional student workload and compressing the curriculum. A first major analysis of this reform showed that this change had some effect on student behaviour (Marcus & Zambre, 2016). However, instead of entering higher education 12 months earlier as expected, the average age at

enrolment decreased by around 9 months. This is attributed to a slightly higher level of pupils repeating academic years (i.e. due to failing end of year exams) and a slight increase in delaying entry into higher education. This reform and the pressure to compress the curriculum into a shorter time was not popular in many states. Three states (Bayern, Hamburg and Lower Saxony) will return to nine years in the future and other states are leaving this as a general option for their schools.
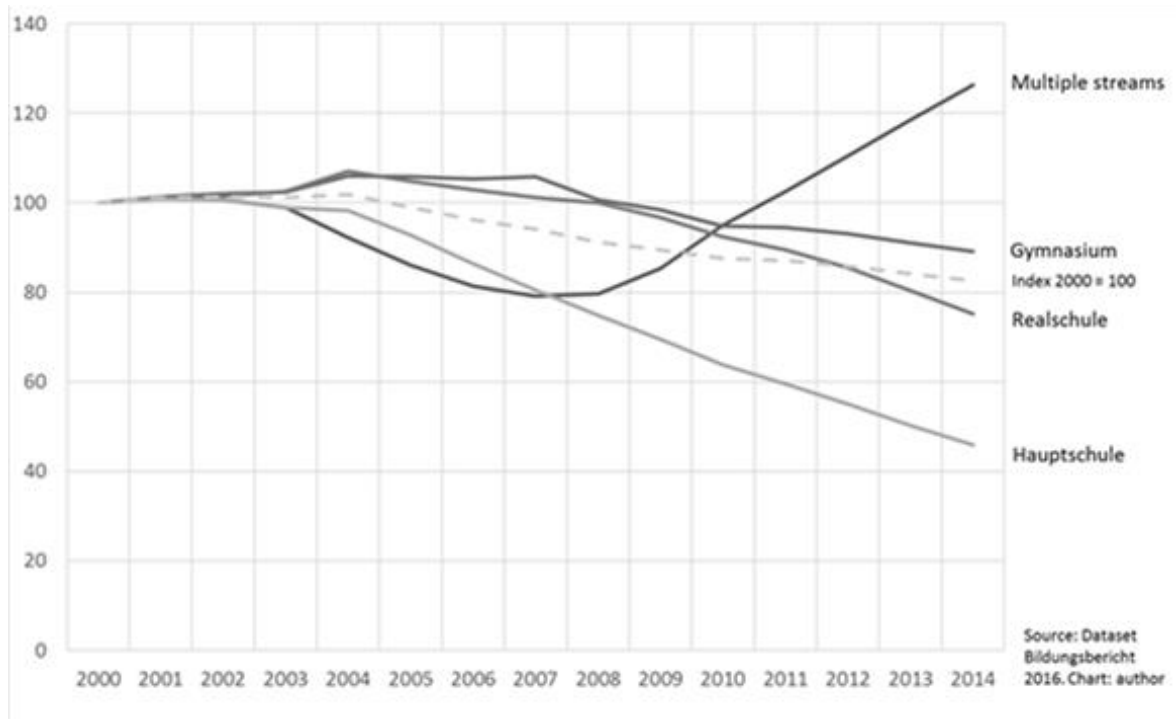
Figure 7.1 Development in the number of pupils by secondary school stream 2000-2014
Source: Dataset Bildungsbericht 2016. Own production.

Teacher training

Teachers have traditionally studied to be a teacher for a particular type of school in two phases: through a five-year programme ending in a state-level exam and then a further year of practical work in a school followed by the final state-level exam. Following this they generally receive civil servant status. According to state laws, teachers are then obliged to undertake continuous professional training annually. With a few exceptions, e.g. Bavaria, Hesse, the Saarland or Saxony-Anhalt, all federal states have introduced the Bachelor and Master system for teacher training. The Bachelor-Master study structure divides teacher training into two phases, replacing the previous one long study programme. At Bachelor level, students focus on the subject matter they would like to teach later. Only at Master level do they specialize in becoming a teacher, usually with a Master of Education, although teacher training programmes foresee internships and cooperation with schools throughout the entire programme, including at Bachelor level.

A challenge for schooling lies in the fact that teacher training tends to be for a specific school type, i.e. for primary education, for the vocational track at lower secondary level, for the vocational track during an apprenticeship and for the academic track. Despite some merging of these tracks, it generally remains difficult for teachers to change between school types, even when there is a sector-wide need for more teachers in particular parts of the school. For instance, a recent analysis foresees a need for more primary school teachers in many German states, whilst the number of teachers in the academic track (Gymnasium) is sufficient, causing a mismatch of supply and demand for teachers (Klemm & Zorn, 2018). Allowing teachers to change professional track requires regulatory modifications, which some states are currently implementing.

7.3 The configuration of autonomy in the schooling sector

State level regulations

At state level, specific regulations for the school system are formulated in state laws for education. Schools at both primary and secondary level are generally classified as institutions without legal capacity, which means that they are subject to strong external regulatory frameworks under the responsibility of two entities. On the one hand, internal activities are governed and supervised through the respective state ministry for education. The duties of these ministries and their subordinate education authorities include the detailed regulation of the school's mission and its educational objectives.

These objectives are embodied in the curricula, with the main approved textbooks being used in classrooms to support this curricula-based learning. Furthermore, the state ministry is responsible for teaching training, recruitment and alimentation. Responsibility for school buildings, interior fittings, the procurement and provision of learning and teaching materials, administrative staff and ongoing administration lies, on the other hand, with the school maintenance bodies, which are the city, town, district or municipality where the school resides. The supervision of schools includes legal supervision (Rechtsaufsicht) to assure that the school and its members operate within legal boundaries, academic supervision (Fachaufsicht) to assure that the school adheres to the educational objectives of the school curricular, and supervision of the staff at public-sector schools (Dienstaufsicht) to assure that the teachers employed as civil servants act within legal constraints. In some cases, these supervisory responsibilities are not held directly by the respective school ministry, but by a subordinate unit. Within this framework, however, schools have been given more freedom regarding control of inputs such as budget, staff, curricular and teaching materials since the mid-2000s. This approach balances more input-related freedom with more focus on controlling and evaluating outputs pursuant to the new public management approach.

Coordination on a national level

Whilst the regulation and governance of the school system varies from state to state, there is some national coordination on central issues. The heads of the ministries for education meet regularly in the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK) for coordinating purposes. According to its own understanding, the Standing Conference aims to create and preserve comparative standards and practices across all Länder, and it represents the collective interests of the Länder before other stakeholders:

> "In cross-country questions, the Länder provide the necessary degree of common ground in education, science and culture ... In the sense of the desired diversity in the education system, detailed rules are avoided to leave room for innovation." [4]

The KMK focuses on four central tasks:

• Assuring uniformity and comparability of certificates and degrees as a prerequisite for mutual recognition;
• Protecting quality standards in schools, vocational training and colleges;
• Facilitating cooperation between institutions of education, science and culture;
• Supporting coordination through decisions, recommendations, general or state agreements (decisions that must be endorsed by the individual states as state legislation).

Example of cooperation: voluntary agreement on central secondary school exit exam (Abitur)
Currently, 15 of the 16 states have central 'Abitur' exams, which means that all pupils in the same state take the same exam, ensuring in-state comparability. The other state (Rheinland-Pfalz) allows course leaders to determine the exam questions based on central standards. However, this state-level centralisation does not ensure comparability between states. For many years, there have been calls for a national central exam. The argument has been that this would lead to all German pupils being tested on the same topic in the same manner. Equally, this would also be a constraint on the regulative capacity of each state.
For this reason, this desideratum led to the establishment of voluntary educational standards for four subject areas (Maths, German, English and French) after a common agreement between the member states of the Standing Conference in 2012. Having established these standards, work progressed towards establishing a common pool of exam questions, which would test the acquisition of these standards. This pool of questions was released in 2017.

At a federal level, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF) has a limited mandate in education, especially school education. Overall, the Federal level accounts for only around 7% of total public funding for education, the rest being covered at state and communal levels. This funding is largely targeted at supporting educational research and project initiatives to support or encourage reform efforts (e.g. in the field of digital education).

Institutional level autonomy

Institutional autonomy herein refers to how much liberty a school has in taking decisions about various aspects of its operation. According to an OECD analysis of governance in education, there are two common types of accountability mechanisms: vertical and horizontal (Burns & Köster, 2016). Vertical accountability is top-down and hierarchical. It enforces compliance with laws and regulations set outside of the school, therefore limiting what a school can do. Horizontal accountability refers to non-hierarchical relationships. It focuses on monitoring how

schools and teachers conduct their profession and how they inform and involve multiple stakeholders and are accountable to them concerning the school's goal setting, strategy formulation, decision-making, implementation and results in terms of quality of educational processes, outputs and outcomes. Regarding the German school system, it would be fair to assess it as a system ruled by 'vertical accountability'. The OECD study further distinguishes two subtypes within this governance type (Burns & Köster, 2016, p. 95):

• Regulatory school accountability: Compliance with laws and regulations; focus on inputs and processes within the school. Mechanism: reporting to higher levels of school authority;
• School performance accountability: Periodic school evaluations. Mechanisms include: 1) standardised student testing, 2) public reporting of school performance, and 3) rewards or sanctions.

The changes to school autonomy occurring during the second half of the 2000s led to the German system, overall, moving away from 'regulatory school accountability' towards 'school performance accountability' – i.e. shifting from input-orientation to output-orientation with performance monitoring (cf. Altrichter & Matthias Rürup, 2010). The new configuration following these reforms can be seen in Table 5.1, which presents the results of an extensive analysis of legal regulations of schooling in all 16 German states in 2009 (Blossfeld et al., 2010). It can be safely assumed that this still provides a fair picture of the comparative situation of regulation across the 16 states.

Responsibilities and flexible use of the school budget and revenues have been cautiously increased in many of the states. The picture shows that schools can carry forward earned or saved funding into the next year either in general or as part of experimental clauses (many of these have now been permanently integrated into law).

The overview also shows that many states have given schools (particularly school heads) more responsibilities for selecting, employing and administering their staff. The school head is still largely determined jointly by the municipality (and school-maintaining organisation) and the ministry for education, which assures the use of correct procedures for civil servants. The school governing board often either suggests a candidate or chooses between two proposed by the ministry.

The vision for a more autonomous school according to the new steering paradigm is that it should be able to make more financial and legal decisions, but also be in a position to sign target agreements with the external authorities, which previously regulated these areas more directly. Again the picture in Table 7.1 is one of caution – extended decision-making powers have been allocated to schools and these are being externally steered either directly through target agreements or quality assurance.

Concerning pedagogical competencies, in contrast, the vast majority of Länder have given their schools more autonomy. Despite this, the approach continues to be cautious in most states. Illustrative of this is the fact that most states (11 out of 16) determine a list of school books and learning materials which have been authorised for school use.[5]

On balance, though, more responsibility and possibilities of shaping the school's direction and operation have been given to schools. Illustrating this point, the ministry of education in Lower Saxony, with reference to the school law reform of 2007, states on its website:

> "School members are seen as the main actors of school development, who annually review and evaluate the success of their work. This echoes the understanding of school as a pedagogical and organisational unit, in which all

members work as part of a systematic communication process and coordinated measures are taken when results are less satisfactory or conditions change."[6]

External evaluation was a common development of the 2000s as a balance to this increasing autonomy. School inspection was introduced in all German states between 2004 and 2008 (BMBF, 2016: 86). This involves a school visit with interviews and lesson observation, and is prepared through documentary analyses, surveys of teachers, parents and schoolchildren. The results obtained are aggregated and mostly translated into a strengths and weaknesses profile which is reported back to the school and the responsible authorities.

Table 7.1 Overview of frequency of locus of responsibility at school level for various aspects of school governance

Topic	Number of German states by locus of responsibility at school level (# of 16)		
	High	Medium	Low / negligible
Financial responsibility - Global budget and revenues			
Consumables	9	7	
Own revenues	6	10	
Staff budget	6	5	5
Staffing			
Staff administration	10	6	
Staff development	11	4	1
Selection of school leadership	1	13	2
Recruitment and employment of teachers	7	6	4
Recruitment and employment of teaching assistants and other staff	9	2	5
Organisation and administration			
Legal status to make contracts	2	10	4
School management responsibilities	7	6	3
New steering instruments (target agreements, staff training plan, portfolio for school)	8	6	2
Extended organisational and administrative responsibility	3	6	7
Extended organisational and administrative responsibility through policy experimental clauses	6	8	2
Pedagogical tasks			
School programme and profile	10	2	4
Flexible curricula in terms of content and organisation	13	2	1
Extended pedagogical responsibility through policy experimentation clauses	11	5	
School quality assurance			
Internal	6	10	
External	3	6	7

Source: Blossfeld et al. (2010)

A further instrument has become the standard comparative test, which is used in all the states to provide evidence on the comparative performance of pupils at different schools and therefore of

the schools and the system in general. All schools of a state are obliged to carry this test on certain dates in years 3 and 8 in the subject areas (alternating between Maths and German language) as part of a national agreement laid down in 2006. The work is coordinated by the Institute for Educational Quality Improvement (IQB).

5.4 Evaluation and outlook

In sum, the German schooling system has undergone changes in its basic architecture, in teacher training and the governance framework. Reviews of the German school system currently tend to be positive about the results, although major challenges persist. The reform of regulations and steering of schools that has occurred in Germany since the 2000s can be characterised as cautiously moving away from regulatory school accountability to performance accountability with increased school autonomy. Referencing Germany's improved performance in international comparative performance studies, this reform is generally considered to have been a success. In 2000 the PISA-based competence level of German pupils in natural sciences and mathematics was well below the OECD cross-country average, giving great cause for concern. This competence level has since risen above the OECD cross-country average in both subject areas and remained there (Anger, Berger, Orth, & Plünnecke, 2017:55). Furthermore, the proportion of pupils in the PISA risk-group has decreased significantly, and likewise the proportion of pupils who drop out of school without a formal education qualification (Anger et al., 2017:63).

Despite the differences between state governance frameworks and the performance of their pupils, an interesting comparative perspective can be drawn. The matrix below (Table 7.2) contrasts, on the one hand, the German states which lay most and least weight on shifting the locus of decision-making to school level, and, on the other hand, the average scores of pupils in these states as measured by the standard comparative tests of the Institute for Educational Quality Improvement (IQB).

Table 7.2 Comparison of level of school autonomy and school performance

	High or medium level of school autonomy	Low level of school autonomy
High overall performance of school pupils in comparative standard test	Schleswig-Holstein, Saxony-Anhalt (2)	Mecklenberg-Vorpommern, Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg, Thuringia, Bavaria, Saxony (6)
Low overall performance of school pupils in comparative standard test	Bremen, Berlin, Hamburg, Hessen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony Rhineland-Platinate (7)	Saarland (1)

Sources: aggregates score for autonomy in the national comparison of regulations (Blossfeld et al., 2010) and for performance in standard comparative tests in the 'Bildungsmonitor 2017' (Anger et al., 2017). Regarding school performance, the comparative scores between states remained constant between 2013 (first period of measurement) and 2017.

The table suggests the opposite of what might be expected, i.e. the states giving schools least autonomy have pupils with higher comparative scholastic performance with only three exceptions. This situation has received little discussion in general research or policy debates. However, it may be consistent with previous research on the connection between autonomy and

outcomes which states that autonomy without clear performance monitoring will not be able to realise its potential (Anger et al., 2017: 121). In 2017 Baden-Württemberg was the first state to introduce comprehensive education monitoring, which is meant to be used for diagnosis of performance development at school level (Anger et al., 2017:122).

There remains the question, however, of whether the policy focus has been too much on testing and standard feedback loops to schools, without enough support for school development. Certainly, educational research is suggesting that more emphasis is needed on this topic. One German study looked in-depth at how individual schools in Hamburg and Thuringia dealt with the results of external school inspections and draws some relevant conclusions. It argues that schools require more support in the transformation process between receiving external assessments and implementing new processes in order to improve on emerging weaknesses and capitalise on their strengths (Dedering, 2016). Without this, systematic change will not be possible. This is likely to become an increasing challenge to the governance and performance of the German school system in the near future, as the new digital agenda for education will require new types of teaching and learning leading to more collaborative activities between teachers and more engagement in reflective practice of pupils (Sekretariat der Kultusministerkonferenz, 2016). This suggests that a move towards a more horizontal form of accountability might become more appropriate, which will present new challenges for the governance of the German school system.

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Endnotes

[1] Länder being plural and Land singular.

[2] All data from the German Education Report. See: https://www.bildungsbericht.de/de/nationaler-bildungsbericht.

[3] This also leads to difficulties in accessing vocational training and starting a career for its graduates (Geier, 2013).

[4] From the organisation's website: https://www.kmk.org/kmk/aufgaben.html.

[5] https://www.bildungsserver.de/Zugelassene-Lernmittel-und-Schulbuecher-522-de.html

[6] From: https://www.mk.niedersachsen.de/startseite/schule/unsere_schulen/eigenverantwortliche_schule/eigenverantwortliche-schule-128101.html

8. Italy. The Italian education system and school autonomy

Maddalena Colombo and Agnese Desideri[1]

8.1 The Italian education system: its organisation and specificity

First and second cycle education

As one can discover through the Eurydice[2] and MIUR[3] websites (the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research's official repository), the Italian education system begins with non-compulsory pre-primary school for children between the ages of three and six (before 31 December). This is the mainstream recommendation, but since the academic year 2003-04 there has been a new pattern of "early school enterers" (Colombo, 2013). Law 30/2003 allows parents more flexible age requirements for enrolling their children for the first year of nursery and primary school, with the law enabling the enrolment of children with birthdays falling on or before 30 April of the given year (rather than 31 December). In addition to this reform, nursery schools have since 2006 introduced non-compulsory spring classes for two-year-olds.

The first cycle of education is obligatory and lasts eight years. It offers two pathways: primary education (five years) for children aged 6-11; and lower secondary (three years) for children aged 11-14 who have completed primary school. The first cycle of education ends with a state examination which is used to determine whether the child may enter the second cycle (Presidential Decree 89 of 20 March 2009).

The second cycle of education consists of state upper secondary (five years) for students aged 14-19. Since the 2010-11 academic year there have been three types of upper secondaries:
• Lyceums (with six distinct curricula: classic, scientific, arts, music and chorus, human sciences, languages) offered over a five year period of compulsory schooling, following which students can obtain the general state diploma by passing a formal examination (the "State Maturity exam");
• Technical Institutes (with two course paths – technological and economic – and 11 curricula) taken over a two year period of compulsory schooling followed by a non-compulsory three-year period, after which students can obtain the states technical diploma by passing a formal examination (the "State Maturity exam");
• Vocational Institutes, organised in the same way as the previous schools: with two course paths – industry/trade and services – and 11 curricula) taken over a two year period of compulsory school followed by a non-compulsory three-year period, after which students can obtain the state vocational diploma by passing a formal examination (the "State Maturity exam"). The vocational institutes also offer vocational training (IeFP –Corsi di Istruzione e Formazione Professionale) with three to four-year courses designed to prepare students for the labour market and which are organised within and without the broader educational system. IeFPs

offer 22 courses in partnership with the various regions (Law 133/2008), with each course leading to a specific nationally-recognised qualification. These courses are intended for students who have completed the first cycle of education. As we will see in section 2 below, in 2003 compulsory schooling was set at eight years (until the age of 14) with IeFP vocational training introduced from the age of 14 as an option for completing compulsory education. Ministry of Education Decree 139/2007 extended compulsory education until students reached the age of 16, which means students must complete a further two years in the second-cycle after finishing the first (Raimondi, 2014).
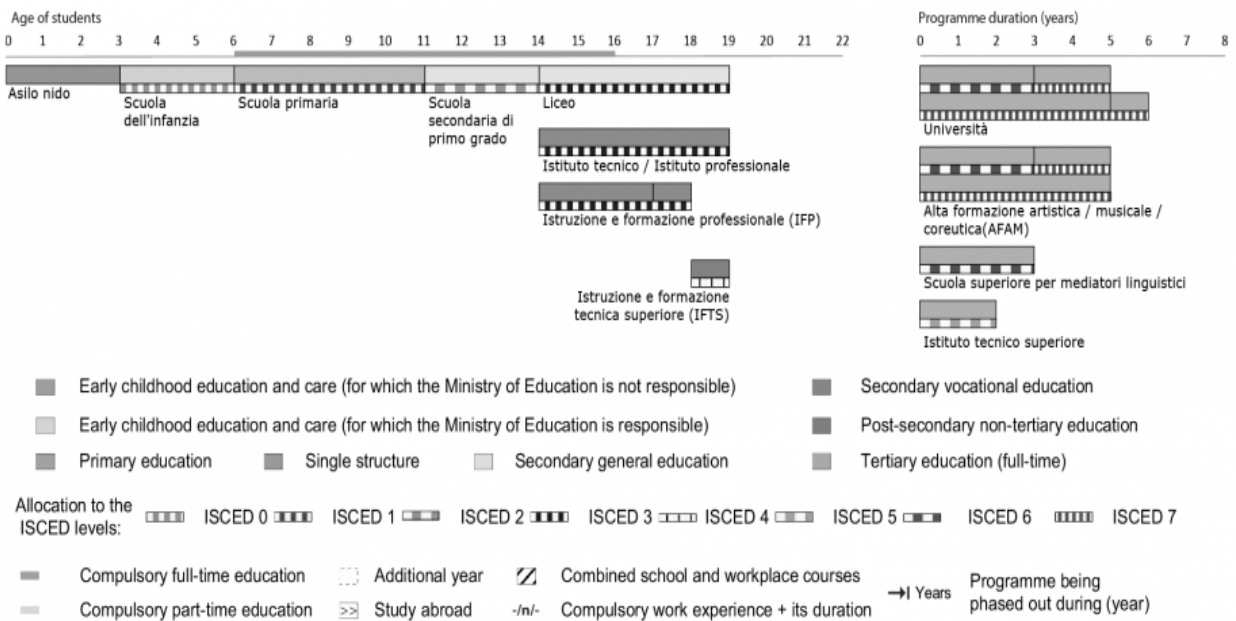
Figure 8.1. The Italian Education system
Source: Eurydice (2016).

Higher education: non-compulsory

The broader education system in Italy includes further education (extra-university or non-tertiary) through regionally-organised post-qualification and post-diploma vocational courses offering higher technical qualifications and training (IFTS) to students with a state diploma.

Higher education is offered by universities (state and non-state institutions offering traditional and online courses) and the higher arts and music education system (AFAM). Tertiary education follows the Bologna three-level process: first (laurea triennale), second (laurea magistrale or first/second-level master's) and third (doctorate). Tertiary education is supplied on a non-mandatory basis with students being responsible for part of the cost of delivering the education, even within state-funded institutes.

Enrolment in compulsory and post-compulsory education

Education in Italy is compulsory for all children between the ages of six and 16 and extends to the eight years of the first cycle (five years of primary education followed by three years at lower secondary) and the first two years of the second cycle (DM 139/2007). The final two years of compulsory education (from ages 14 to 16) can be completed at either a state upper secondary (lyceums or technical and vocational institutes) or through a three-year vocational education and training course offered by each of the country's regional authorities (Law 133/2008).

Law 53/2003 (Legge Moratti) gives everyone the right and the duty to formal education and training for at least 12 years or until they are 18 (by getting a three-year vocational qualification). The requirements for the final year of compulsory education can also be met if the student obtains an apprenticeship that is recognised and authorised by the regional authority, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the trade unions (Law 183/2010).

Compulsory education refers to both enrolment and attendance. It can be accomplished at either a state-run or private (paritaria) school and, under certain conditions, by home-schooling or a purely private school (as defined by Law 62/2000). Three-year privately and publicly-funded regional vocational training courses are offered by the relevant training agencies. Parents or caregivers are responsible for ensuring the children in their charge complete compulsory education, while oversight and supervision of this duty being the responsibility of the local authority in which the students live.

Upon completion of compulsory education, students who choose not to pursue their studies receive a certification confirming that they have met the conditions and requirements for compulsory education, with the latter setting out the education credits for the attainment of any professional qualification. Access to both university and AFAM tertiary education is open only to students who pass the state exam ("Maturity") at the end of upper secondary, with the admission conditions being set by the MIUR or by each university and AFAM institute. The three-year vocational qualification, as well as the four-year vocational diploma, are both obtained upon completion of regional vocational training courses that are sometimes organised by state technical and/or vocational institutes, which provide certificates at the end of vocational-track courses and diplomas at the end of upper secondary education. These certificates and diplomas grant access to regional second-level vocational training (IFTS).

Organisational characteristics: autonomy and coordination

Some peculiarities of the Italian education system are the result of its organisation, which is currently based on two principles: subsidiarity (both horizontal – state and local societies in cooperation; and vertical – the state gives local-level public administration offices control) (Benadusi, Giancola and Viteritti, 2008); and autonomy (Bifulco et al., 2010; see also the following sections).

After more than 150 years of centralisation resulting from Napoleon Bonaparte's reforms of the early-19th century, recent legislation has changed how the education system is governed, with four levels of responsibility:
a) The state has exclusive competence for general education matters (e.g. minimum standards, school staff and recruitment, quality assessment, financial resources). It is responsible

nationally for ensuring minimum quantitative and qualitative standards are met by every educational institute and monitors the basic principles regions must comply within their competence. MIUR is responsible for the general administration of education at the national level, with its regional offices (Regional School Offices - USRs) ensuring the application of the general provisions and compliance with minimum performance requirements and standards

b) The regions have joint responsibility with the state over some sectors of the education system (establishment of the school year according to location and climate; distribution of schools within their territory) and are responsible for ensuring the right to study at a higher level. However, the regions have exclusive legislative competence for the organisation of vocational education within their territory

c) Local authorities (single municipalities or network of municipalities, such as in the main metropolitan areas) organise education from pre-primary to upper secondary at the local level (e.g. school buildings and their maintenance, student transport, school meals and other forms of assistance).[4] In the larger cities (città metropolitana) local authorities also provide additional childcare services and pre-primary education

d) Since 2000 the Bassanini Law (see below) has allowed schools to achieve a certain degree of autonomy over the delivery of learning goals and methods, time organisation, internal education research and development/innovation activities. Schools can determine their own curricula for up to 20% of teaching hours, broaden the educational provision through extra-curricular activities and organise teaching (school time and groups of students). If they are part of the public education system (Law 62/2000), schools must respect the general education norms established by the state. Every school is managed by a head teacher, recruited following a state exam that ranks candidates into regional lists, and who is assisted by a staff of administrators who are responsible for data entry, reception and for managing funds and material resources. Each school also has a number of assistants who are responsible for monitoring students and cleaning classrooms. Both teaching and non-teaching staff report to the head teacher.

As for their core business, every three years first and second cycle schools must draw up an educational policy plan (PTOF – Piano Triennale dell'Offerta Formativa), the implementation of which is monitored by an internal assessment committee composed of the head teacher, and representatives of the teaching staff and of parents. Schools receive funds from the state to pay for their operations (Fondo strutturale per l'autonomia) and may also receive additional resources from the local, provincial and regional authorities, or from any corporate body or private individuals.[5] The head teacher is legally responsible for the school's finances, with MIUR checking the accounts at the end of each academic year. The head teacher has the ability to make decision concerning:
• Funding for extra-curricular activities (included in the PTOF);
• Funding substitute teachers and administrative staff, but only when the substitute is from among existing teaching and non-teaching staff;
• Authorising the payment of bonuses and allowances;
• Purchase of educational materials.

However, the head teacher may not spend money on:
• Employing teaching and non-teaching staff (this is a responsibility of MIUR);
• Payment of wages (wholly managed by MIUR);

• Purchase assistance or care services for students (managed by the local authorities);
• Purchase infrastructural material (managed by the local authorities);
• Pay for construction or renovation work (managed by the local authorities).

At the higher education level, universities and AFAM institutes have complete statutory, regulatory, teaching and organisational independence.

8.2 Reforms of school autonomy and their implications

To describe how the Italian education system has evolved over time we will discuss the political reforms introduced over recent decades (Figure 8.2). The Italian education system was centralised during the 19th century and has only recently started to decentralise, a process that has been ambiguous and led to paradoxical consequences.[6]

Nevertheless, educational provision has been always highly politicised by both the right and the left. Current ministerial instability has influenced the education system over time with the result that few of the general reforms have been implemented or completed. Some reforms have resulted in partial transformations to one sector or the other, albeit without modifying the general configuration of its administration as a whole.

In the years after 1996, during a period of centre-left government, the minister of education, Luigi Berlinguer, and minister of public administration, Franco Bassanini, initiated a major reform of the public administration that was reflected in the governance of education. As noted above, the age at which compulsory education ended was raised to 15, with an educational obligation (in terms of a right and duty to be educated) that must be completed within either the school system or in a professional environment (e.g., apprenticeships under the terms of Law 17/03/1999) extended to the age of 18. This reform introduced "school autonomy".

The subsequent reform (Riforma Moratti) was introduced by Silvio Berlusconi's right government in March 2003. This law sought to ensure school independence while enhancing the links of cooperation between the schools and businesses. As a result, a part of the reform enlarged the competence of regional authorities and their involvement in the definition of local curricula (additional time for studies on local affairs) for a maximum of 20% of the school week. This law also made it possible to dedicate some teaching time to alternate between school and work (alternanza scuola-lavoro) both in school and at a business. The teaching of English and other European languages is actively encouraged from primary school on.

Thanks to reforms introduced by Giuseppe Fioroni, minister of education in 2007, and his successor, Mariastella Gelmini, minister in 2008, the length of compulsory education was extended from eight to 10 years (from age 14 to 16) with the ability to meet this obligation by enrolling on an IeFP course at the age of 14 (both in upper secondary school, regional vocational courses or internship approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education). Children are not allowed to perform paid work until they have reached the age of 16.

Matteo Renzi's "good school" ("la buona scuola") reform (Law 107/2015), which was introduced at the start of the 2015-16 academic year, made education and training courses regular (instead of occasional). This law introduced many other important moves towards autonomy:

- Since 2015-16 each school has more staff ("autonomy staff"), who have proved useful for implementing the three-year education policy plan (PTOF). These are in addition to the ordinary teaching staff (and make up 3-10% of the teaching body);
- Head teachers have greater say over the recruitment of teachers (limited to the "autonomy staff" and not extendible to "organic staff");[7]
- Head teachers have more say over the assessment of and payment of bonuses to teaching staff;
- The three-year school plan (PTOF) is made mandatory in each school with the head teacher and teaching staff responsible for it each year by way of a self-evaluation report (RAV – Rapporto di autovalutazione).[8] Parents and students must receive copies of the report, which they can reject or accept on the basis of targets achieved or missed.
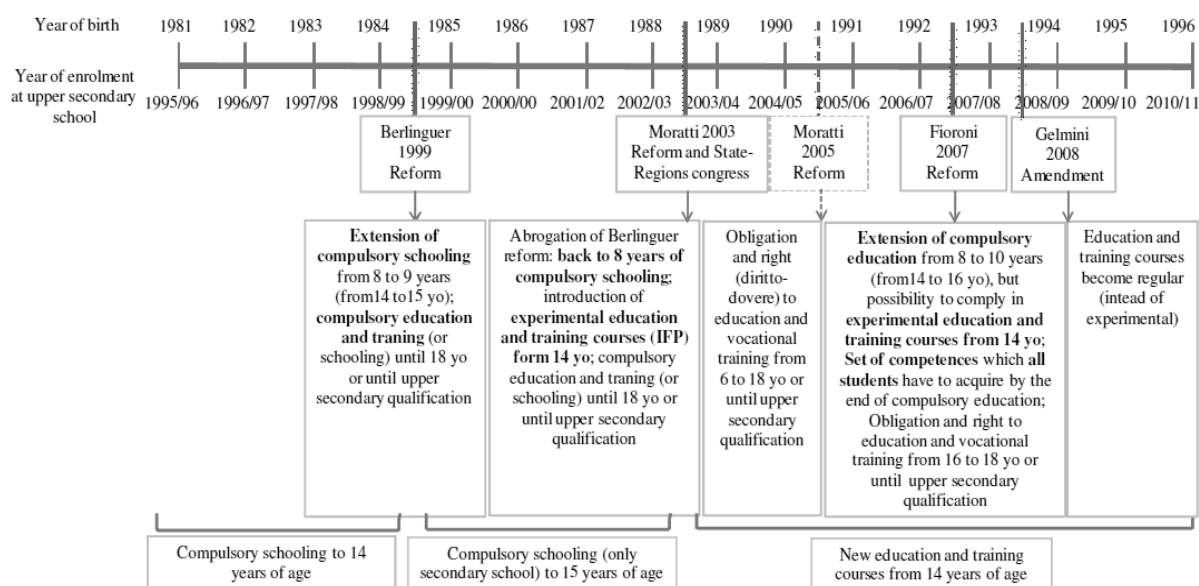
Figure 8.2. Compulsory education laws in Italy (1999-2008)
Source: Raimondi (2014).

Over the last 20-30 years, school autonomy has been at part of the Italian government's political agenda (although not at its heart). In some cases, the reforms have been promulgated more as a consequence of political desire rather than according to the needs of the Italian people.

8.3 Areas in which autonomy further strengthened

The MIUR website informs us that schools have gained a [certain degree of] administrative, didactic and organisational independence since 2000. This can be seen as the result of a long and continuing process: indeed, it can be said that there is as yet "imperfect autonomy" in Italy. The story begins with Italian unification in 1861 when the country's public administration was united according to the principles of uniformity and equality. Over a period of more than a century the education system was progressively centralised, and it was not until the 1990s that this process was put into reverse with the passage of a number of laws, from the Bassanini law 59, and associated decrees, of 1997 to the school autonomy laws of today (Benadusi, Giancola and Viteritti, 2008).

During 1970s and 1980s a degree of managerial independence and educational experimentation was introduced into the Italian education (Trainito, 2005: 51). The term "autonomy" refers to the devolution to local communities of the power to organise the education services. It was encouraged during the first decade of this century as a means of tackling the crisis within the centralised structure of the education system, which at that time appeared to be less able to meet the needs of efficiency, transparency and effectiveness as outlined in the Italian constitution.

Since 1997, following the promulgation of "Bassanini's law", which was promoted by and named after the then minister of public administration, Franco Bassanini, schools have been given administrative, didactic and organisational autonomy and operate in accordance with the state, with the final goal of improving student attainment through being able to tailor their provision. Every school is headed by the head teacher (who received by the same law the enhanced status of "school manager") and an administration office, and is supported by an annual educational policy plan (POF – Piano dell'Offerta Formativa) that is drawn up by teaching staff and parents (and, in upper secondary schools, student representatives) on a mandatory basis.[9]

Law DPR 275/99 regulates school independence through the "regulation" (Regolamento), which directs every school to follow the POF. Schools are granted more powers to make decisions about their own organisation, timetabling, research and experimentation designs, that are consistent with realising the POF.

At the outset, the regulation gave schools important juridical tools to ensure they could implement the POF in such a way as to exploit vertical and horizontal subsidiarity (see above) and to be more autonomous at an organisational level (in relation to programmes and the educational offer). The POFs have partially enabled schools to reduce their self-referential nature and to engage in collaborations with families in order to negotiate their identity and to promote projects within schools (even because families are consulted only at the end of the POF preparation phase) (Benadusi, Giancola and Viteritti, 2008: 242).

Didactic autonomy is the most important part of this reform. Schools are more flexible than before, despite the curricula being chosen by "ministerial programmes". Schools have become a central element in the territorial system of "governance" that is based on local societies (collettività locali). In his article, "A temporary eclipse of bureaucracy: the circulation of school autonomy in Italy", Paolo Landri says "the policy of school autonomy tends to transform 'schools' into 'organizations', by importing discourses, practices of managerialism, and the logic of market within the educational field according to what has been considered elsewhere as a set of elements of a neo-liberal agenda " (Landri, 2009: 77).

The introduction of a new and autonomous regime in Italy provoked the "pluralisation of the modes of governance" in addition to the traditional model of administrative regulation (bureaucratic state). According to Landri (2009) and Benadusi and Consoli (2004), there are currently three models of school autonomy, with each standing for the centrality of regulation. The first is the state evaluator model (as in France), in which the state evaluates processes; the second is the quasi-market model (as in England, the Netherlands or Belgium), in which the supplier/client dynamic has a crucial role, as schools are chosen freely by families, which encourages competition between schools; while the third model is the network, in which coordination and cooperation between internal and external stakeholder and agents characterises school activity.

According to Archer (1979), there is a further model, the local autonomy model, which seems to be a variant of those models described above. The traditional model of administrative

regulation can also have this variant. In this model local societies take the place of the state in some of its regulatory functions, which is the case in Sweden. They can also compete with schools or be replaced by them at least in some management functions (as was the case in England). This repeats the traditional conflict between centralism and decentralisation in which the power of regulation is attributed to local political societies at the intermediate level. This is the case of Germany with the Lander, or of Italy case with the regions, provinces and municipalities.

In light of these models, we are able to state that Italy today has a hybrid model of school autonomy, in which municipalities link up with schools to establish equal and horizontal relationships that would be coherent with the network model and with its local autonomy model variant. This means that in Italy the traditional model of administrative regulation (bureaucratic state) persists, where local societies (as municipalities or regions) increasingly attempt to dress in the "old clothes" of the bureaucratic state, and limit the spaces available for school autonomy (Benadusi and Consoli, 2004: 41-52).

Benadusi and Consoli also argue that the implementation of school autonomy in Italy has followed a quasi-market model, because the laws concerning this autonomy have regulated supply and not demand (Benadusi and Consoli, 2004: 54). Before the 1990s the place where students lived determined the school they could enrol in. During the 1990s, as a means of overcoming the excess of supply caused by the falling birth rate, the Ministry of Public Education (MPI – Ministro della Pubblica Istruzione) abolished school catchment areas. This alteration was responsible for some competition between schools, by directing the distribution of schooling supply towards a neoliberal regime. Brunsson and Jacobsson (2000) note that across Europe some coercive forces have made organisations very similar in respect of particular organisational fields. Here, the concept of institutional isomorphism is useful for helping us understand how organisations arise by including highly legitimised institutional pillars:

> "Through mechanisms of imitation of successful solutions to particular organizational problems, and through the professionalization, that is to say by the spreading of knowledge, expertise, and personnel, of highly evaluated professionals. In underlining the organizations–societies links, this theoretical framework would interpret the abovementioned policies of school autonomy as a consequence of the adoption and diffusion of the globalization of the neo-liberal agenda inside educational fields all over the world" (Landri, 2009: 78).

By adopting this approach, we can understand some of the macro-trends of change within schools. There are also some interesting micro-trends in respect of areas in which this autonomy has been further enhanced: e.g. local authority reforms (municipalities and regions). In fact, over the years these institutions have gained more power according to the principle of vertical subsidiarity. As we have already noted, the space available for school autonomy is limited by the state (which is in any case less powerful than before) and local institutions (enti locali). At the micro level, the creation of new partnerships also concerns the development of collective agents, such as those that follow the decentralisation of power and competences from the state to local authorities (Grimaldi, Landri and Serpieri, 2006). New partnerships were established between schools, local authorities, businesses and other relevant stakeholders for the joint governance of educational policy-making.

This shift suggests there has been an important change in the power relationships between local government and stakeholders, and in particular between schools, their "users" and local authorities, because stakeholders came directly or indirectly into the school practices, through

planning, monitoring and assessment procedures and the medium of various intermediation loci, including conferences, committees and customer satisfaction surveys. Research on that topic (Grimaldi, Landri and Serpieri, 2006; Serpieri, 2009; Landri, 2009) uncovers the general rethinking of state decentralisation and the contemporary presence of "parallel circuits of governance" (Landri, 2009: 86).

As for the impact of school autonomy on the school body, as expected, agreement for this reform was greater among head teachers than it was among class teachers. Head teachers tend to be bipartisan (Benadusi and Consoli, 2004: 84). According to some (Fischer, Fischer and Masuelli, 2002), the majority of head teachers are positive about school autonomy, while others have been more sceptical. However, generally speaking school autonomy has brought positive effects to every school, with the mobilisation of the internal and external environment. Even while some schools are now demonstrating some problems due to their "self-referentiality" (Benadusi and Consoli, 2004: 85), this reform has improved their relationships with external partners and established networks of schools while extending the ability to share financial resources and management costs (Trainito, 2005: 51). In the end, many micro-policies have been adopted in an attempt to adapt the Italian education system and make this reform valid (Landri and Queirolo, 2004).

8.4 Transformation and the consequences of school autonomy in Italy over the last 20 years

It is now worth verifying the relationship between the formal and the informal sides of autonomy, between what is prescribed and what is enacted (that is, between what is expected by law and what happens in reality) in respect of the implementation of school autonomy in Italy. Our starting point is the "weaknesses of school autonomy". In their article, "Can schools be autonomous in a centralised educational system?:on formal and actual school autonomy in the Italian context", the economists Tommaso Agasisti, Giuseppe Catalano and Piergiorgio Sibiano highlight an interesting view: that formal autonomy may not be viewed by head teachers as true autonomy for the simple reason there may be schools with highly-formal autonomy in which the head teachers perceive low-actual autonomy. Similarly, in apparently non-autonomous schools, head teachers may feel capable of achieving their goals with an adequate level of freedom.

The authors try to show that while they have a partial formal autonomy, the head teachers' perceptions and willingness can result in different degrees of decision-making and proactivity, even within a mostly centralised education system. They demonstrate this through a qualitative survey in which 35 head teachers completed a non-standardised questionnaire.[10] Agasisti et al. (2013) consider the Italian case interesting because of its specific institutional characteristics, while Vitteritti (2009) talks about the "incomplete" school autonomy process that has been implemented in Italy over the years. The Italian paradox consists of responsibilities delegated to schools without the head teacher having effective decision-making power (Agasisti et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, Italian head teachers are not passive, and despite their lack of power they use symbolic language and rituals as a means to obtain from their partners conformity and convergency to their vision (Agasisti et al., 2013: 67). This is why Biondi et al. (2009), Bertagna (2009) and Agasisti et al. (2013) claim Italian school autonomy is weak, despite the various laws (Law 537/1993 and Law 59/1997) legislating to allow greater degrees of school autonomy

(Buratti, 1995). Italian school autonomy has been also called "functional autonomy" in which the government grants schools some autonomous powers, but not executive powers (Cocconi, 2003).[11]

Returning to the point made by Agasisti et al. (2013) in their study of Italian educational autonomy, we see the following three archetypes (Figure 8.3).

The first archetype is Entrepreneurial, for which the strategies to be followed and the tools to be used are defined within legal limits but according to the head teacher's initiative. This type has a powerful vision that allows for the creation and introduction of new teaching, monitoring and assessment practices, etc. Here are some significant quotes from the survey: "We start with a meeting with the teacher. Then we assign them a tutor. Third, we propose that they attend a training course. Finally, we ask them to move".
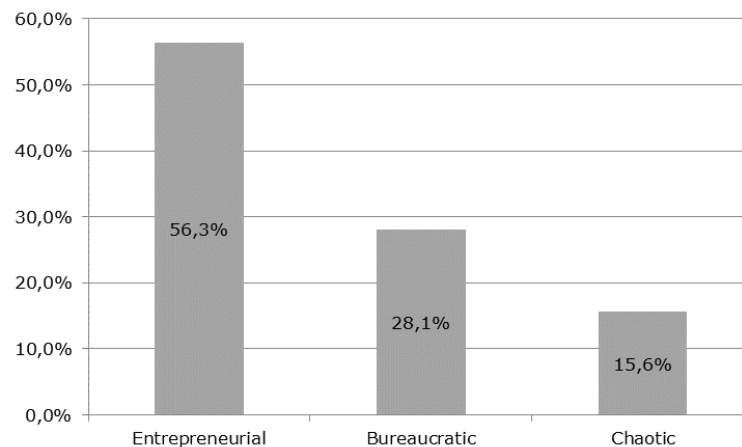

Figure 8.3. Three archetypes of school autonomy and their distribution among Italian schools
Source: Agasisti et al. (2013)

The second model is Bureaucratic, which follows the law. It does not call for anything to be done without or beyond the limits set in the law: "Informal tools are a matter of personal sensitivity. I prefer to not apply any pressure and to adhere to formal regulations".

The third is Chaotic, where many of the actors (head teacher, parents and teachers) debate their views without reaching a shared decision at the school level. One party simply gives up: "Teachers completely agree with the head teacher's proposals, while parents are very combative and uncompromising in respect of the application of the laws and regulations".

The results of this survey indicate that the Italian case can be characterised as a system that is highly-regulated, in which the style impressed by the head teacher matters more than other factors. As Figure 8.3 shows, many people follow the principal initiative (Entrepreneurial 56.3%) with the other archetypes also highly represented (Law 28.1% and Chaotic 15.6%). We can conclude, therefore, that it is possible to describe the heterogeneity of patterns in the centralised Italian educational system.

In conclusion, we can say school autonomy introduced some good elements of innovation in Italy and improved the quality of the education system, particularly in terms of the didactic plan and the capacity for schools to self-improve; however, this reform remains unfinished. It remains unfinished because Italian autonomous institutes lack the resources necessary to extend their own autonomy (especially in relation to financial and workforce resource management).

Throughout these years, we have witnessed a policy of cuts to spending on public education, with Italy having the lowest "school budgets" provided and regulated almost completely by the

Ministry of Education. The unsatisfying financial autonomy available to Italian schools has placed Italy among the countries with the least amount of school autonomy (Campione, 2005: 65). In general, while financial investment in education across Europe sits at around 5.6% of GDP, education spending in Italy is 2.2%.[12] The school workforce – administrators, teachers and managers – is appointed and regulated by the government, which hinders the development of school autonomy. As far as teachers are concerned, autonomy consists in choosing their own teaching programme (although, according to MIUR in 2012, teachers must follow the National Guidelines for the Curriculum for the first and second cycle).[13] Teachers often claim they feel more like "state functionaries" than "professionals" (Campione, 2005: 66).[14] To make schools more autonomous, the state should:

- Support the creation of networks between schools (to reduce management costs and improve the collaboration between institutes);
- Provide incentives for collaboration between schools and local authorities to assess requirements and corresponding resources;
- Subsidise non-public local authorities to encourage them to fund some aspects of what the school offers;
- Finally, professionalise the administration staff in schools and local authorities to share the peculiarities of school financial management as they would any other institution.

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Endnotes

[1] This essay is the joint work of both authors. However, the paragraphs 1 and 2 have to be attributed to Agnese Desideri; the paragraphs 3 and 4 have to be attributed to Maddalena Colombo

[2] Italian Education system – Overview, Eurydice website, 27/03/2017, webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Italy:Overview, consulted 22/04/2017.

[3] MIUR website (Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research), www.istruzione.it/urp/ordinamento_scolastico.shtml, consulted 22/04/2017.

[4] INDIRE website (National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research), www.indire.it/lucabas/lkmw_img/eurydice/quaderno_eurydice_30_per_web.pdf, consulted 21/04/2016.

5 MIUR website hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/famiglie/autonomia-scolastica, consulted 22/04/2017.

6 See Colombo and Santagati (2016). See also Thuriet (2004) and Ichino and Tabellini (2014).

7 This purview was abolished in 2019/20 after the Ministry signed an agreement with the teacher's trade unions.

8 This document was optional until 2014 and has been mandatory since 2014-15. The format and regulations for its completion are provided every academic year by INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and VET System). See www.invalsi.it.

9 MIUR website, (the Italian website about Ministry of the Instruction, University and Research) URL: http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/famiglie/autonomia-scolastica, consulted 22/04/2017. The POF would be substituted then with the PTOF, according to Law 107/2015.

10 The questionnaire was constructed according to a theoretical framework, the first group of questions related to the governing body, the second to the relationship between head teachers and teaching staff and the last group to accountability issues (i.e. evaluation policies and relationships with stakeholders and competition).

11 In 1997, when there was a conviction the state was the only depositary for all or almost all administrative functions, for the "systematic functionality of the state apparatus" and also for following the formal constitution to the letter that state it would be necessary improve periphery "powers" (such as local societies, regions and especially "schools"). This explains why the Italian government decided to offer peripheral institutes their autonomy (Bertagna, 2009).

12 INVALSI (National Institute for the Evaluation of the Educational System of Instruction and Training), II (2004), "Analysis of the education spending", cited in Campione, "L'autonomia finanziaria", Financial autonomy, seminary n° 4, 2005, Associazione Treelle.

13 See www.indicazioninazionali.it; DM 254 – 16 November 2012, published in GU 30, 5 February 2013. See also the more recent document provided by the National Committee for the implementation of National Guidelines and Teaching improvement (Comitato scientifico nazionale per l'attuazione delle Indicazioni nazionali e il miglioramento continuo dell'insegnamento), « Indicazioni Nazionali e nuovi scenari », 18th of February 2018. http://www.indicazioninazionali.it/2018/02/18/documento-indicazioni-nazionali-e-nuovi-scenari/

14 See also Colombo (2017).

9. Spain. Recent changes in Spanish education. A short report with special attention to school autonomy

Rafael Feito Alonso

This brief report will focus on three issues. Firstly, it presents an overview of the general structure of the Spanish education system. Secondly, it tackles the recent changes brought in by the new education law. And, thirdly, it describes school autonomy levels.

9.1 Description of the Spanish education system

School attendance is compulsory from the age of six through to sixteen, being divided into several stages which are explained below.

Infant education is split into two cycles. The first enrols children whose ages range from zero through to three years old and the second one involves children aged three to six years old. The first cycle of infant education is not free. The second cycle is free in state schools, provided in the so-called colegios (Infant and Primary schools). This cycle is considered to be an integral part of the education system as is proved by the fact that almost every child attends infant education.

Primary education level is made up of six academic school years from age six through to twelve. Its main objective is to give Spanish students a basic education in reading, writing and numeracy. In order to do so, subjects such as social studies, art education, physical education, the Spanish language (and, should this be the case, the official language of the Autonomous Community), foreign languages and maths are part of the general curriculum.

After primary school, students must enrol in Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) which generally spans from the age of twelve through to sixteen. Once Spanish students achieve ESO certification, they are able to advance to upper secondary education, either in the academic track (known as Bachillerato or Baccalaureate) or in vocational education. If they do not ESO certification, they may enter the workforce or remain at school for a limited number of years until they achieve ESO certification.

Students who successfully complete the Baccalaureate get a diploma. They may then opt for vocational training, university education, or in some cases both. In order to continue on to university they must sit an entrance exam. The results of this exam, combined with the student's academic grades in the Baccalaureate, will determine not only access to the university but also which degrees the student can pursue.

There are two levels of vocational education (three if we consider that vocational elementary knowledge is acquired in compulsory education): Middle Grade Training Cycles (Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio) and Upper Training Cycles (Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior) for those that have achieved a Spanish Baccalaureate diploma or have been successful in Middle Grade Training Cycles.

Spanish University degrees usually involve four years, except for medicine degrees and a few others, mainly engineering, which last six years. By 2010, in accordance with European Commission concepts of Education and Training, Spanish higher education would consist of Bachelor degrees (Grado) of four-year programs, Master degrees for one to two-year postgraduate programmes, and Doctorates for post-master education.

One of the particularities of the Spanish educational system is the overrepresentation of the private sector in levels prior to university compared to European countries. Indeed, 70% of pupils attend state schools (Colegios de Educación Infantil y Primaria (CEIP) in the case of infant and primary education and Institutos de Educación Secundaria (IES) for lower and upper general secondary education). Around 23% attend public-financed private schools (mostly Catholic) and around 7% attend profit-making private schools (in both cases the schools are called colegios and usually take in pupils from nursery to upper secondary education).

Main recent transformations and ensuing debates

Shortly after the conservative Popular Party (PP) won the December 2011 elections, preparations were underway for a new educational law. The Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE, also known as the Wert Law, after the name of the former Minister in office) was passed in 2013 and engulfed in huge controversy from the very beginning. Numerous teachers, parents, pupils (referred to by the mobilization's organisers as the educational community) took to the streets to protest against this new law. Its main innovations are as follows:

• High-stakes tests in order to achieve the certificate for lower secondary education and the Baccalaureate;
• Implementation of two tracks (academic and vocational) in the last year of lower secondary education;
• Special programs for learning improvement starting in the second year of secondary education for struggling students that will ultimately turn into another track;
• New modalities of vocational education which are basic vocational training (once again for struggling students) and dual vocational training (following in the footsteps of the experience of countries like Germany);
• An increase in the powers vested in the principal to the detriment of the school council, which is transformed into a mere advisory body;
• A more centralized curriculum controlled by the national government;
• Religion as a subject, usually Catholicism, is on a par with all other subjects;
• Curricular specialization of the upper level of secondary schools, enabling them to select their students;
• Schools offering single-sex education will be guaranteed public financing.

The general structure for the Spanish education system is shown below (figure 10.1).

Quite likely, apart from the public spending cutbacks – notably pronounced in education – the issue that has most fired-up the education community has been the topic of high-stakes tests (in Spain called reválidas as a reminiscent of the former high stakes in Franco's time). So fierce has been the rejection of these exams, that the current minister of Education finally decided on their temporary withdrawal.

In primary education two tests were proposed. The first would take place in the third year, being a diagnostic evaluation carried out by each autonomous community which would not have any academic consequences for the pupils. The second would be in the sixth and final year. This one would not be high-stakes test, although the results would be informative and used for guidance towards secondary education.
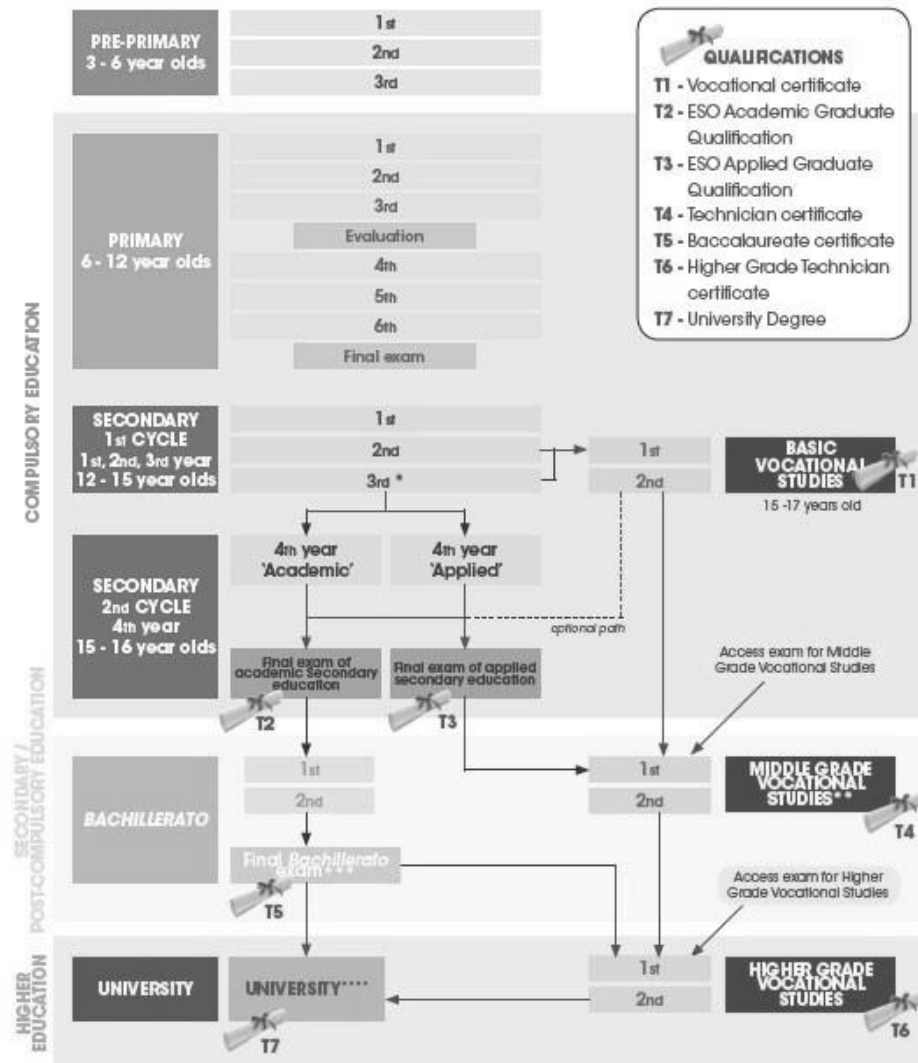
Figure 9.1 General Structure of the Spanish Education System
Source: Spanish Ministry of Education (www.mecd.gob.es).

The first high-stakes test would be taken in the fourth and last year of secondary education. Irrespective of the track students are enrolled in, they may take either the exam leading to a Secondary Education Certificate (ESO Diploma) in Academic Education (which is required to enter the Baccalaureate) or to a Secondary Education Certificate (also an ESO Diploma) in Applied Education (which is needed to enter Vocational studies at the Middle Grade Training Cycle level or even both).

And last but not least, there is another high-stakes test to be passed in order to get the Baccalaureate certificate.

In addition to these tests, every university could establish another exam to determine student enrolment.

9.2 School autonomy

The 2015 PISA report has paid special attention to the issue of school autonomy. To this end, PISA has built a school autonomy index considering the percentage tasks for which the principal, the teachers or the school governing board have a degree of responsibility in relation to regional or national authorities.

PISA has considered five actors involved in education: principals, teachers, school boards, local/regional authorities and national authorities. "It is assumed that shared responsibilities for school management amounts to a fixed number – for convenience, 100. For instance, if a principal school reports that only teachers have considerable responsibility for selecting course content, then they are assigned a value of 100. If they reported that both teachers and principals have considerable responsibility, then each receives a value of 50. If, according to the principal, the responsibility is shared among principals, teachers and a school board, then each actor is given a value of 33, and so on" (OECD, 2016: 113). Thus, the figure below enables gauging the extent to which each stakeholder is responsible for the aspects considered.

Table 9.2 Summary of responsibilities for school governance

Responsability		Held mainly by[1]	Shared with[2]	Minor role[3]
Resources: teachers	Establibling teachers' starting salaries	National authority	Local/Regional authority	Principal
	Determining teachers' salary increases	National authority	Local/Regional authority	Principal
	Selecting teachers for hire	Principal		Local/regional/national authority
	Firing teachers	Principal	Local/Regional authority	School board and national authority
Resources: budget	Formulating the school budget	Principal	School board and local/regional authority	National authority
	Deciding on budget allocations within the school	Principal	School board	Local/regional authority
Curriculum	Deciding which courses are offered	Principal	Teachers and school board	Local/regional authority
	Choosing which textbooks are used	Teachers	Principal	National authority
	Determining course content	Teachers	Principal and national authority	Local/regional authority
Establishing student assessment policies		Principal and teachers	National authority	School board
Establishing student disciplinary policies		Principal and teachers	School board	
Approving students for admission to the school		Principal		School board and local/regional authority

1. More than 50% of students attend schools whose principal reported that given actor has considerable responsibility.
2. Between more than 25% and 50% of students attend schools whose principal reported that given actor has considerable responsibility.
3. Between more than 15% and 25% of students attend schools whose principal reported that given actor has considerable responsibility.

Source: OECD (2016: 113).

In each of these aspects, Spanish schools show a slightly lower degree of autonomy than the OECD country average.

The resulting average index for the OECD is little more than 70%, while in Spain this figure is a little less than 60%. In fact, Spain turns out to be one of the countries with the lowest degree of autonomy. Bulgaria, Denmark, Latvia or Sweden, among other countries, are above 80%. "Students in school systems where principals and, to some extent, teachers have greater autonomy in managing their schools score higher in science. This is particularly true when principals or teachers have greater responsibility for the curriculum, but less so when they have a greater say in admitting students to the school. Students score lower in science in those systems where school governing boards have greater responsibility for school admissions policies, and also when national education authorities hold greater responsibility for four areas, especially for the curriculum. No link is observed between the responsibility held by local/regional education authorities and performance in science" (Ibid., ibidem: 114).

In the Spanish case, headmasters and teachers hold around 30% of responsibility for economic and human resources (42% being the OECD country average), 56% for the curriculum (66% for OECD countries), 57% for student assessment (68% for OECD countries), and 19% for student admissions (67% for OECD countries).

The authorities of the autonomous communities have greater autonomy over resources (53%) and admission policies (60.1%). In turn, the school board has greater responsibility (36.9%) in student disciplinary matters. Table 9.1 summarizes these data.

Table 9.1 Responsibility assumed by regional and/or national authorities (%)

Percentage of responsibility assumed by regional and/or national authorities	OECD average	Spain
Resources	A little more than 50%	A little more than 60%
Curriculum	A little more than 30%	Around 45%
Establishing student assessment policies	A little more than 30%	Around 45%
Establishing student disciplinary policies	A little more than 20%	A little less than 40%
Approving students for admission	A little more than 20%	A little more than 40%

Source: OECD (2016). Own production.

PISA has found a clear correlation between school autonomy and science performance. So, Spanish data are quite worrying.

Back in 2009, a PISA report on the Canary Islands (OECD, 2012) – most of their remarks are valid for the rest of the country – showed that

> "Spain's educational system is characterized by low school autonomy in terms of teacher salaries, dismissal and promotion. 95% of Spanish students are in schools where those decisions are made by regional or national education authorities. (…) Overall, Spain has a mean index of school responsibility for resource allocation of -0.47, compared to an OECD average of -0.06. School

autonomy in the Canary Islands, at -0.57, is low even relative to other Spanish regions – only principals in Ceuta and Melilla reported a lower degree of school autonomy" (*Ibid., ibidem*: 76).

This same report considers the current process for selecting teachers for positions in state schools to be a clear example of lack of school autonomy. In fact, neither school principals nor school boards play any role in this selection process. Accordingly, it is extremely hard to produce a coherent team of teachers sharing a common set of ideas around an educational project for any particular school. Nowadays this is becoming a heated debate as this is not a problem for private schools (as they can select the teachers that they prefer provided that they meet the official certificate requirements). Trade unions seem to be the main opposition to increasing the hiring and firing powers of the principal or/and the school boards as they consider it to be against labour consolidated rights that allow teachers to select the school of their preference irrespective of its educational project. Civil servant status, including not only the teachers but also the rest of the staff – even the janitors – turns out to be an obstacle for changing education. This has profound implications for the exercise of effective leadership and for planning school development initiatives at an individual school level.

The PISA Canary Islands report points out that "there is just one way in which public school principals can choose their staff – by engaging teachers of their choice on "service commissions". Service commissions involve bringing in, for a limited period, as if on secondment, a teacher who has a full-time permanent post elsewhere. One primary school the team visited had two staff on service commissions, recruited for specific purposes. The principal told the team that such arrangements are under constant attack by the unions who see them as bypassing the usual civil service post allocation procedures and can only be set up if the principal has the support of their inspector, who agrees that this particular staff is needed to fulfil the school project. This principal told the OECD team that the best thing our report could do for him would be to trigger change in current staffing rules so as to enable principals to choose the teachers in their schools" (*Ibid., ibidem*: 77).

School principals carry a huge burden of administration and paperwork, which leaves them little time for leading and managing the learning in their schools, which it is supposed to be their main role. This same PISA report for the Canary Islands indicates that "principals said that they pay the bills for services provided but could not make complaints about poor services; they cannot sign for procurements; and all decisions made in the schools have to be approved at regional level. Principals would also welcome a greater degree of autonomy with regard to the carrying out of minor repairs and decoration to buildings, arguing that this could be done more quickly and effectively if managed at local level" (*Ibid., ibidem*: 76).

Applicants for principalship are required to have a minimum of two years of teaching experience. Applicants for this position must pass an exam and prepare and defend a "school project", setting out what they intend to achieve at the school and how they will do this. They must complete an initial training program covering all aspects of running a school. Outgoing principals return to the classroom upon completion of their term of office, and the team understands that many are glad to do so.

At the school level, the School Council is made up of the management team (which includes besides the principal, the head of studies and the academic secretary) and representatives of the main stakeholders: teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, pupils and the school's local community. Prior to the passing of the LOMCE, the School Council had an important role in ensuring that the school responds to the needs of its community by providing an education of the highest quality possible, and that the rules and regulations prescribed by the government are

observed. Formerly, councils approved school plans and budgets, reviewed academic performance and extra-curricular activities and took part in the selection of principals.

In this light, the team in charge of the PISA Canary Islands report suggested guidelines suitable for the entire Spanish education system, especially when it "(…) recommends that the regional authority should assign the competency for selecting of teachers for posts in their schools to school principals. Principals would be required to make their selections in association with the School Council, from among those deemed qualified for appointment by the regional authority. If necessary, for legal reasons, appointments could be formally made or ratified by the regional authority. Principals should also be given the authority to assign teachers to particular classes and duties as they deem appropriate, and to ask the regional Education Ministry to re-assign elsewhere teachers who both under-perform and refuse to undertake re-training the principal regards as necessary. They should be entitled to select teachers for promotion to the new middle management roles the team recommends introducing" (*Ibid., ibidem*: 82).

9.3 Conclusions

The Spanish education system is a comprehensive one in which pupils remain, generally speaking, in the same track until they are sixteen years old. Nevertheless, the current law allows several routes of early segregation through basic vocational educational and remedial groups at the lower secondary education level.

One of the peculiarities of the Spanish educational system is the comparative high proportion of private schools (up to seventy per cent of the system).

The degree of school autonomy is, in comparative terms, alarmingly low. Especially worrying is the meagre competence bestowed on principals in spite of the rather huge amount of responsibilities assigned by the law.

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10. Portugal. Educational policies and autonomy in Portuguese schools

Luís Capucha, João Sebastião, Ana Rita Capucha and Ana Raquel Matias

10.1 Context, trends and transformations

While striving to join the Euro zone and further participating in the enduring process of Europeanization (Featherstone and Kasamis, 2000), Portugal featured among countries with the lowest levels of growth, productivity and competitiveness, besides expressing historical and latent structural problems. Portugal has a sizable proportion of individuals with low levels of qualification, along with a progressive retraction in its demographic configuration – a declining younger population and increasing elderly people – with direct impacts on the labour market structure, namely depressing the activity rates. Although the most recent OECD´s Education at Glance reports that the attainment of tertiary education has increased remarkably, it remains a considerable challenge as only one-third of young adults achieved this level of education (OECD, 2017).

Portugal shows a non-linear trend in the evolution of education outcomes, despite the continuous, but irregular, improvement in this field since the 1970s. In the last decades and particularly since the 2001 Lisbon Agenda, there has been a notable effort to evolve within a pathway of substantive recovery. Portugal had been following a route of convergence towards European standards, more intense up to the eruption of the financial crisis, where policies were marked by lines of continuity in the demand for these results and consequent convergence. During the last decade, we highlight the increase of compulsory education to 12 years of schooling; a positive trend in fighting against early school leaving and dropout; the reinforcement of adult education and training options, adult educational attainment; the development of vocational and training courses and special needs education.

At the peak of the crisis and with the entry of a new executive in 2011, which coincided with Troika in Portugal, profound transformations were carried out in education, both in the policies and consequent educational outcomes, interrupting the convergent trends and setting a clear recession. Some of these changes can be generically listed: ending Adult Education options (which was until then, one of the main domains of national policy, even recognized and distinguished by several international partners); modifying the inclusive policy of Special Education; implementing further national examinations (made compulsory at Primary level (ISCED 1), for instance); increasing class size; more state incentives to private schools, and less to public schools; promoting early tracking with the creation of vocational courses at the end of Lower Secondary education (ISCED2), contrary to all recommendations from international bodies like the OECD; closing all the Regional Education Authorities, therefore reducing progress made in decentralization, among other measures that turned it into a more centralized system, more focused on external evaluation, and less focused on pedagogical processes and practices, on schools, students and social inequalities. At the centre of the discussion of the

Portuguese scientific community was the key question: are we facing an attempt to turn education into yet another instrument at the service of a conservative and neoliberal agenda?

With the elections in 2015 and the entry of a new government, many of the measures and policies prior to 2011 were reinstated, with the political drive once again focused on the need to promote school success, social equity and access to public education assured for all – children, youth and adults, with and without special educational needs, with and without economic resources. Vocational courses were ended, national examinations in Primary education (ISCED1) were replaced by benchmarking tests, class sizes were reduced, and several programmes are underway aimed at boosting success and equity.

The Portuguese school system has a comprehensive matrix mostly of French inspiration, seen however as a highly centralized system with low levels of autonomy. This is a sensitive and widely debated topic, mostly because schools and school principals have been claiming more autonomy in financial and pedagogical management and in some respects in school and class organization. Teachers' organizations, namely unions, tend to be against some dimensions of school autonomy, mostly because this may represent a visible restructuring in system management. Local governments have been fighting for decentralization, but under the condition of fair funding of the new responsibilities to be assumed, while negotiating the division of areas of responsibility with the actual schools. Nevertheless, autonomy and decentralization are currently considered two of the main priorities, and a number of steps can be identified since the development of the "democratic school" during the 1980s. In particular, most recently, national programmes such as "Flexibilization and School Autonomy" and "More School", that are encouraging schools to take over the management of various pedagogical processes and control of their resources.

10.2 Overview of the Portuguese education system
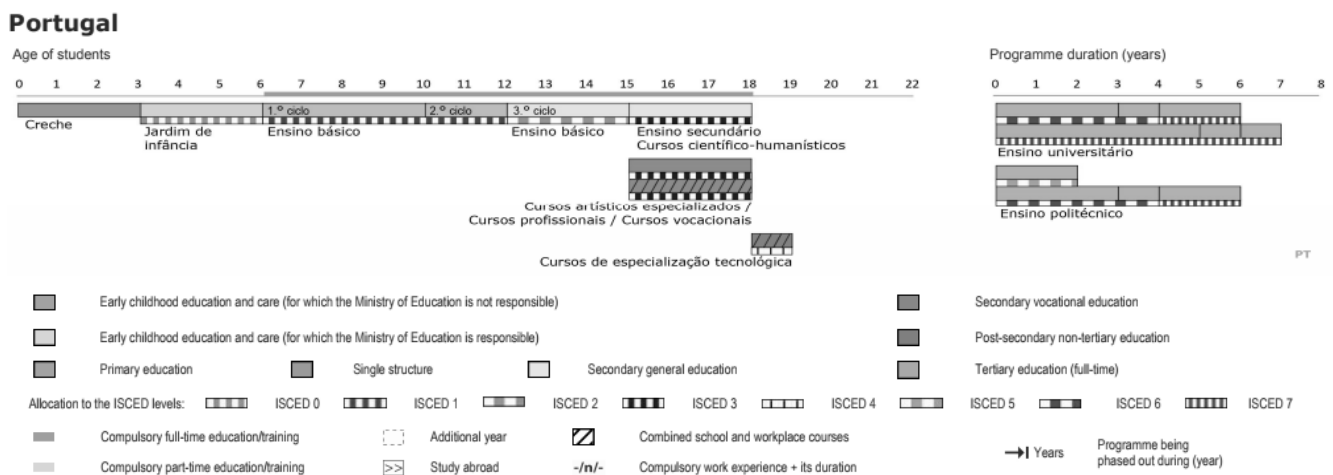
Compulsory education (ISCED 1 – ISCED 3)

Figure 10.1 Overview of the Portuguese Education System
Source: Eurydice

Since 2009 compulsory education corresponds to age 6 to 18 (or completion of upper secondary education), divided between elementary and upper secondary education. Basic education lasts for 9 years and is divided into three cycles. The 1st cycle, with four years of schooling from 6 to 10 modal ages; the 2nd cycle, with two years of schooling from 10 to 12 modal ages; and lastly, the 3rd cycle, with three years of schooling from 12 to 15 modal ages (corresponding to the end of lower secondary education, ISCED 2). Upper secondary education comprises three academic years (including 10th to 12th grades), from 15 to 18 modal ages, combining different curricular routes which in general converge in tertiary education plans. This means that the last stage consists of a scientific-humanistic regular pathway (more academic) and another vocational (more technical) pathway, which includes technological, specialized and artistic courses, apprenticeship and vocational courses.

To summarize, all compulsory education stages provide general courses (for elementary level), scientific and humanistic courses (for upper secondary), artistic courses (for all levels), and training through a dual regime (at school and on-the-job). Students at risk of surpassing the maximum age in compulsory education at each stage have further specific opportunities. Those who are dropping out, have dropped out or are in need of requalification may complete compulsory or further education through Education and Training Courses (CEF) from 3rd cycle to upper secondary. Students under 15 years old or at risk of surpassing compulsory education maximum age, with learning difficulties, at risk of social exclusion and/or school dropout have Alternative Curriculum Paths (PACs) for elementary education levels. Students aged 15 – 18 who are early school leavers or at risk of showing delinquent behaviour are offered the Integrated Programme for Education and Training (PIEF) for the 2nd and 3rd cycle of elementary education with schedules and curricula adjusted to individual skills and proficiencies, relational and citizenship skills and labour market demands. Those under 25, who completed lower secondary education or equivalent, can enrol in an educational offer for upper secondary education, including Technological (currently residual), Vocational and Apprenticeship courses (initial vocational training courses taught in the Vocational Training Centre Network).

Non-compulsory education

Pre-primary education (ISCED 0) is the first step of the Portuguese Education System in a lifelong learning process, being an optional cycle for children from 3 to 5 years old, wherein universal access is enforced as a State guarantee for those 5 years old or older. The public network is composed of education institutions under tutelage of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security, while the private network is composed of for-profit and non-profit educational institutions.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4) is taught in higher education and non-higher education establishments, offering Technological Specialization Courses (CET). These are mainly provided by higher polytechnic institutions, in upper-secondary teaching establishments (autonomous schools, either public, private or cooperative), in vocational training centres (network coordinated by the Employment and Vocational Training Institute, IEFP), in technological schools (set up under joint ministerial order), and other training institutions accredited by the Ministry of the Economy. They are designed for young people aged 18 and 19 years old up to 23, awarding qualification levels 4 and 5 in the National Qualifications Framework (QNQ).

The higher education system (ISCED 5 - 6) includes university and non-university sectors. The main access of students has been centred on the public system, reinforced during the last 10 years, with the university sector being dominant compared to polytechnics, with the latter representing one third of tertiary education enrolment. Currently, higher education is divided into cycles: three-year courses for the 1st cycle (bachelor degree); two-year courses for the 2nd cycle (master degree); four-year courses for the 3rd cycle (Doctoral degree), pursuant to the Bologna process.

The New Opportunities Programme (INO) represented, between 2006 and 2011, an important investment in adult education. More than 2,000,000 students were involved, with 700,000 having achieved an elementary or upper secondary diploma. The programme was driven by the concept of "education and training" and included specific measures suitable for adults, such as Recognition, Verification and Certification of Competencies and Education and Training of Adult courses, besides small and accumulative modular training actions. A network of 450 New Opportunities Centres ensured the proximity and diversity of promoters (schools, training centres, companies, associations, local government, etc.) enabling an extensive participation of persons with education potential. The INO was interrupted in 2013 when adult education was cast aside by the government in office during 2011 – 2015, and has not yet been fully restored by the current government, despite being suggested as a priority in its agenda.

10.3 Autonomy and schools' management and organization

Autonomy can be seen through the processes of redistribution of responsibilities, on the one hand, and on the other hand as the autonomous competence of schools and teachers to conduct their educational/school activities and practices (Baptista, 2014a).

Structurally, the Portuguese Education System is highly centralized. Despite the efforts made since the 1980s with the creation of various structures, new administrative figures and management bodies, autonomy is still limited in Portugal. It is identified by Formosinho and Machado (2014) as a "prescriptive" autonomy since school activities and education issues in general are heavily regulated and tied to long bureaucratic processes. In fact, although the OECD's first report on the Portuguese education system in the 1960s called for the need for far more decentralization, meaning the need to give more autonomy to schools and more responsibility to local authorities, educational policies have shown limited effects in significantly changing the centrality of the top-down structure of power and decision-making (see Table 10.1).

The central government plays a predominant role in the areas of management, planning, coordination and evaluation. The State is the main employer of teachers; the overwhelming financier of public schools, in fact non-state hiring and financing are absolutely residual; the prescriber of the national curriculum and its contents, responsible for the regulation of school timetables and academic workload (Baptista, 2014b). Table 10.2 confirms, in general terms, that Portugal has the highest portion of education responsibilities controlled by the central government, when compared to the OECD. Therefore, Portugal's index of autonomy (measured by a combination of factors under PISA testing) that is below the OECD by about 10% percentage points.

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Table 10.1 Portuguese Education Services, Bodies and Structures.

Ministry of Education Services, bodies and structures	
Central services	• General Secretariat (SG); • General Inspection of Education and Science (IGEC); • Directorate-General for School Administration (DGAE); • Directorate-General for Education (DGE); • Directorate-General of School Establishments (DGEST); • Directorate-General of Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC); • Institute of Educational Evaluation (IAVE); • Institute of Financial Management of Education, I.P.
Advisory bodies	• National Education Council (CNE); • Council of Schools (local)
Structures in coordination with other ministries	• National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education, I. P. (superintendence and guardianship). • Publisher of the Ministry of Education and Science (EMEC)

Source: Portuguese Ministry of Education.

Generally speaking, local authorities still have few competencies and responsibilities in Portugal, although recent efforts have been made to endow these actors with more responsibilities; mainly concerning the responsibility of elementary public school funding (they receive the state funds and are then responsible for their distribution). The biggest share of responsibilities is in fact transferred directly to the schools, meaning to the Principal, the School Board and the teachers.

Table 10.2 Distribution (%) across the education system of responsibility for school resources, curriculum, assessment and student admission.

Autonomy Index PT: 61.5 OECD: 71.3	Resources		Curriculum		Assessment		Student admission	
	PT	OECD	PT	OECD	PT	OECD	PT	OECD
National Centralized Authorities	66.6	23.1	26.5	19.6	34.8	14.5	18.7	7
Local/Regional Authorities	9.9	23.1	6.6	7	2.2	6.7	4.4	14.3
Principal	17.9	39	8.8	21.6	14.1	31.5	34.8	61.4
School Boards	5.4	12.3	16.4	7.6	23	11	39.6	11.2
Teachers	0.9	2.5	43.1	44.1	26	36.3	2.5	6.1

Adapted from: PISA OECD (2016)

In what ways do these levels of autonomy become a reality in schools? We can roughly identify 3 areas where efforts have been made in the last two decades to more give responsibilities and powers to schools and local authorities.

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School management, participation model and school network

Discussion on school management and organization has stressed the need to understand transparency and fairness in school decisions, participation of families and other external agents, and similarly on programmes focusing on early school dropout prevention and monitoring of education progress and specific actions. The main aim has been to fight exogenous factors leading to school failure and early school dropout, concentrating on the need to adjust schedules and curricula to individual skills and proficiencies, to labour market demands and relational and social citizenship skills.

Although sparing on autonomy, the Education Basic Law of 1986 - still the most important legal document concerning Portuguese education policies - opens the way for decentralization, and therefore, for the creation of smaller and local structures and new management bodies in schools and municipalities, as well as enabling new participatory experiences for parents and the community in general. Despite these positive trends at the level of human resources management, there is still a substantial centralized operationalization – for instance, teacher recruitment is controlled by the central education services, resulting in little autonomy to schools for contracting their own teachers (with few exceptions) (Batista, 2014b).

Considering local authorities, we highlight the Education Councils (since 2003), composed of school representatives, community members and representatives of the educational structures of local authorities. As noted above, local bodies are charged with the management of elementary schools (ISCED 1) (mainly maintenance, the redevelopment of facilities and funding aspects) and also have responsibilities in school transport and canteens. The level of expenditure concerning these procedures is shared between local and central authorities.

School Network is currently organized in school clusters (school groupings), expanded to provide full schooling to students during the 12 years of compulsory education (from 2000 onwards). School facilities and clusters are directly under the supervision of the Directorate-General of School Establishments (once the regional entities were terminated in 2012). These clusters are units consisting of different schools from each teaching cycle (except for Higher Education), with their own management, administrative bodies, pedagogical coordination and "school education projects" (see Table 10.3). In addition, a recent reorganization of the school network resulted in the construction of new school centres to replace elementary schools (ISCED 1) with a small number of students. This follows continuous recommendations from OECD reports (from the early 1960s, 1980s and 1990s), finding consensus among all democratically elected governments. We must also include in this context the Priority Intervention Territories (TEIPs) set up since 1997 as a measure to fight the phenomena of school failure and school dropout which are more visible in certain territories. These schools also benefit from a somewhat different regime of autonomy, different from that commonly found in other schools, as they are authorized to conclude partnerships within the communities, hiring specialized technicians and developing specific and localized education projects. They also have autonomy in recruiting teachers and other staff.

There is also a set of public schools that in fact benefit from greater levels of autonomy, by having signed the so-called "Contracts of Autonomy" (an instrument that emerged in the late 1990s and was reinforced in 2012) (Formosinho and Machado, 2014). With such a contract signed with the Ministry of Education, these schools have more control over the budgetary management of their resources and more freedom to acquire goods and services. These contracts also provide the conditions for "flexibility in curriculum management", leading to the creation of innovative pedagogical curricular projects; the offer of education courses more adapted to the

community's reality; and establishment of partnerships with other organizations, companies and entities. They also introduced a new stimulus to the institutionalization of self-assessment in schools, making it compulsory for schools to have their own mechanisms for monitoring their results and accountability procedures (submitting activity, self-evaluation and budget reports to central education bodies) (Directive 265/2012).

Along with a redesigned configuration of the school network and clusters, a new school management model emerged in 2008 which remains up to date (see Table 10.3 with a description of the responsibilities of each school body). In fact, this model has been a central aspect of autonomy in schools. The General Board stands out, as it is actually the place where participation is extended to persons outside the school, in particular parents; and likewise the figure of the Principal, who is elected by the General Board, as the central person concerned in all matters and aspects related to school management and administration and whose decision-making powers have been progressively increased.

Since 2008, budgetary management has been a stimulus to the autonomy of schools. Although funding is strictly state-owned, it is up to the schools, through the Principal and the General Board, to manage the organization of the budget with a clear definition of priorities. However, public funds are primarily foreseen for more operational expenditures, with limitations imposed for the acquisition of other materials and resources. The legislation also foresees that the schools themselves seek their own financing mechanisms (for example, via the rental of school spaces), although autonomy to apply these resources continues limited (Baptista, 2014b). Schools that have autonomy contracts find their monetary management more facilitated.

Table 10.3 Portuguese School Boards and Bodies

Portuguese School Boards and bodies	
General Board	Responsible for school activities guidelines; election of the school principal; strategic decisions on the school's *Education Project* and activity plans. This Board is composed of several members: principal, teachers, parents, members of the community and local authorities.
Principal/Director	Responsible for the school budget; appointment of heads of department; management of school facilities; some evaluation procedures; various administrative and bureaucratic procedures.
Pedagogical Board	Responsible for curricular and pedagogical supervision; the approval of the *Education Project*; definition of the guidelines of the activities plans; proposals of programmes and projects; the national curriculum; school textbook choices; school timetables. This board has several representatives: teachers, department members and students;
Administrative Board	Responsible for school and financial administration. This board is essentially composed of the Principal and the principal's deputies.

Source: Ministry of Education; PISA 2015.

Curricular and pedagogical dimensions

Although the curriculum has a strongly centralized framework with its contents being "traditionally" standardized, schools and teachers have a degree of decision-making choice: in

the organization of the teaching / learning process and the teaching work in the classroom; in the admission of students; in the organization of school schedules and constitution of classes (although there are national criteria that regulate these procedures); in the adoption and management of the subjects of optional nature; and, also, in the adoption of textbooks, among other responsibilities.

Considering this framework, particular note should be made of the school Educational Project, developed in the late 1980s and consolidated since then, as one of the most important instruments of pedagogical autonomy for schools. This is defined in collective and participatory terms by the School Board and Pedagogical Board. It is a document that indicates the strategic lines of the school policy and the "identity" of the school, determining the importance of the educational offer, detecting the main problems, and delineating the main goals to be achieved. Alongside this element, also deserving mention is the "flexible management of curricula", implemented since 2001, which allows schools to choose specific curricular areas in the development of transversal competencies.

More recently, the Ministry of Education and the Programme of the XXI Constitutional Government for Education, have been committed to making autonomy an increasingly preponderant reality in Portuguese schools, establishing curriculum implementation and definition with a project of autonomy and curricular flexibility for primary and secondary education (Order 5908/2017, of 5 July). This project aims to promote learning and school success but also a greater focus on schools, students and teachers.

Evaluation and Assessment – international and national-based

In short, the OECD, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and the European Commission (EC) have promoted international programmes evaluating children and youth performance worldwide in mathematics, sciences, reading and foreign languages. Since 1991, Portugal has participated in comparative studies on educational achievements (the International Assessment of Educational Progress (IAEP I and II); IIEES – International Indicators and Evaluation of Educational Systems; PISA – Programme for International Students Assessment; TIMSS - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study; PIRLS – Progress in International Reading Literacy Study; ESLC - European Survey on Language Competences; IECL; EAG - Education at a Glance). These participations had a major influence in the development of OECD instruments for examining national policies worldwide, focusing on the organization of each educational system and recommending specific public policies. The main aim has been to construct, compile, consolidate and disseminate international comparable indicators, through what later became the IIEES, for further uses in governance mechanisms, standards and benchmarks, and to prescribe behaviour in detail and influence convergence processes between countries.

Alongside these international evaluations, national Law 31/2002, of 20 December, defines the non-higher education evaluation system (pre-school, elementary and secondary education), based on self-evaluation in all schools (whether clustered into school groupings or not) and external evaluation – with multiple initiatives from private and public entities, not rarely related to the existing international evaluation assessments. The General Inspectorate of Education (IGE) has been one of its main actors. For instance, the Programme on Integrated Evaluation of Schools (1999-2002), followed by a second evaluation cycle occurring between 2006 and 2011

(including 43 school clusters and 57 single schools), a third cycle between 2008-2009 (including 172 schools' clusters and 101 single schools), and since 2012 the new General Inspectorate of Education and Science (IGEC) evaluated more than 1107 schools and schools clusters. Hence, external evaluation and self-evaluation mechanisms have been of great importance in the development of better and new opportunities for autonomy in schools, enabling central authorities to understand the main gains from schools that benefit from autonomy contracts.

The national evaluation system has been focusing on student, teacher and school performance, combining self-evaluation and external evaluation with international evaluation. Specifically, for compulsory education (elementary and secondary levels), tests at the end of each cycle and national exams evaluate the knowledge and competencies acquired by the students. The latter are also expected to work as a school quality indicator, for curricular adjustment and the implementation or adjustment of educational projects, thus, in helping to improve the system's quality. Previously, the process of teacher performance evaluation was based on a self-evaluation report, complemented with a critical reflection from other teachers and school management bodies, and was mainly for those wishing to develop their career. In general, their final evaluation was on average satisfactory. The current evaluation of teacher performance is regulated by Regulatory Decree 26/2012, of 21 February, and combines an internal and external evaluation managed by the schools, taking into consideration all the duties and activities of teachers (meaning teaching activities, other services and active participation in school dynamics).

Private schools

Private schools falling under the tutelage of the Ministry of Education and Science regarding their pedagogic contents, benefiting from the same kind of status applied to private companies and administrations, working with the management principles and practices of private enterprises. Thus, the freedom enjoyed by private schools is enshrined in the State's obligations and competencies to: subsidize families when they exercise their rights and fulfil their duties in terms of their children's education; ratify the setting up of private education facilities and authorize them; monitor their regular functioning; provide technical and pedagogic assistance when requested; monitor the pedagogic and scientific suitability of their programmes and study plans; provide aid to private education through contracts allocating tax and financial benefits, as well as monitor their correct application.

10.4 Concluding notes

Over the past three decades, important steps have been taken to make decentralization and autonomy a reality for Portuguese schools, which was expected to be reflected in increased school success and in the quality of learning. We should say that the main points correspond, on the one hand, to the very process of democratization of schools since 1974, and the opening of schools to the community; and on the other hand, more relevant in the last decades, to a new model of school management and administration that sought to stabilize the organic structure of schools and transfer some competencies and decisions to schools, strengthening the leading role of the Principals. Likewise, we highlight the recent efforts made to give more responsibilities to

local authorities. The (external) evaluation is also seen as the "keystone of the system" (Veloso et al., 2013), providing answers to further interest in creating opportunities for more autonomy.

Nonetheless, we conclude that sometimes simpler procedures such as curriculum, student recruitment, acquisition of material and human resources are still overly centralized. Besides, when dealing with autonomy – for instance, contracts of autonomy, flexible management of curricula, educational offer – schools still face a complex and bureaucratic context that requires them to be accountable several times during the school year and to different bodies of the Ministry of Education. Autonomy thus becomes too limited, regulated and controlled. Even more than what the OECD indicators can reveal.

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School autonomy and organization in Europe: Conclusions and contributes for debate

Susana da Cruz Martins, Luís Capucha and João Sebastião

This study essentially reflects the importance of the autonomy of schools, as a crucial linchpin in the organisation of the education systems and its growing weight in education policy-making. We have identified the dominant profiles and areas of this autonomy, the guiding principles of these systems, the critical problems, policy priorities and solutions advanced, and some of the more pertinent practices and outcomes.

An encompassing perspective of efficiency and diversity was sought in comparative analytical proposals, based on methodological assumptions and empirical material also of diverse nature.

The first analytical track drew up a comparative characterisation of various features of governance in schools according to the construction and design of education systems in the European context, following a series of approaches and illustrating national profiles (Denmark, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain).

A second thrust concentrated on examining the configurations of school autonomy, obtaining an analysis more based on cases (operating as aggregates of countries).

Finally, the focal point was placed on the relationship between variables related to autonomy, its protagonists, and the performance and equity observed in school outcomes. These different analytical approaches enabled triangulating the investigation of the essential dimensions of this study, integrating diversified empirical (documental) materials.

European education systems: guiding principles and policy priorities

From the substantive point of view, the two main guidelines encountered in the definition of education policies are marked by the need to improve student results and performance, and by concerns about equity and combat of inequalities in their various manifestations. In some countries, this policy action moves towards convergence; in others, tensions and friction are visible in the establishment of priorities.

Chapter 5 of the book clearly illustrates these concerns in the discourse of the key actors. This is also stressed in an OECD report (2018) which identifies the policy priorities, showing the predominance and persistence in the design of policies over recent years of "bridging gaps in performance due to socioeconomic background"; and, in the context of new policies for a core set of OECD countries, of "improving student performance for all". This double-sided orientation in the definition of policies is very present in the discussion on endowing schools with autonomy and the way in which this could be applied in practice and managed in view of these concerns. In addition to the priorities and guidelines in policy design, its successful

implementation requires institutional alignment and being well received by the sector, enabling the fulfilment of a jointly constructed vision and planning (which includes schools as the centrepieces in this definition), with policy monitoring and assessment, even during project stages (OECD, 2018:31).

The analysis conducted in Chapter 5 provides a vision very much in line with this type of outcome. The discourse of the actors clearly highlights the importance given to equality and equity in these systems, but also the need for capacity-building among key education agents, namely teachers, for improved schooling performance. The point of view of this policy action (the importance of which is also extremely evident in another OECD report on education policy analysis, 2019), and the visions incorporated therein, closely follows the context and circumstances of each national system. Chapter 5 portrays two clear-cut groups: countries with higher performance and few structural problems to resolve in their education systems (like Finland and the Netherlands); and countries with worse performance, but with recent progress, facing greater structural challenges or undergoing reform and restructuring processes (such as Poland and Portugal).

Autonomy and education systems: crossed diversity

Nowadays, when we consider the functioning of schools, the complexity of education systems and the preparation of students this implies taking into account the scenario of change towards attaining higher standards as to the skills and needs of the students, current demographic dynamics and the greater intricacy of the administration of education systems (OECD, 2018).

Thus, it is important to take stock of the importance of one of the core instruments of the administration and management of schools and education systems – school autonomy – in the different European countries.

One of the key findings of this study is that policies related to school autonomy in Europe (cf. Hanushek, et al., 2011) show an enormous diversity (particularly identified in Chapters 1 and 2). This is evident, on the one hand, in the comparison between countries with differing levels and intensities, with the various configurations being identified – ranging from the Netherlands with strong autonomy to the more southern European countries, such as Greece, Malta and Italy, with centralist traditions in the governance of their systems. On the other hand, even some of the countries that are currently more configured as such embody a great diversity in the trajectory of these more centrally driven policies, with autonomy in some cases reflecting relatively recent public administration reforms as well as more overreaching contaminations of the actual policies. And, in other cases, countries that have historically been at the forefront of processes of autonomy and decentralisation in the education area, a step backwards or even a weakening is observed in some aspects of this autonomy. This national diversity also showed a divergent manner of dealing with different state reforms and progressive commitments to guidelines, with New Public Management being the most prominent (a process greatly reflected by authors such as Derouet, 2017, concerning the French example).

As the policy agenda and discourse on autonomy gradually gained shape globally, a whole policy and technical apparatus evolved on forms of accountability and scrutiny of its action (see Chapter 3). Nonetheless, there does not appear to be a direct relationship between the autonomy levels and the types of procedure endorsed or the consequences, such as sanctions applied to schools unable to provide a satisfactory response in the process of accountability. Just as in

school autonomy, the regulatory logic of school and education systems and organisations – more centred on the state, or the market or local communities – is also diverse in the European space. Conversely, our findings indicate, for example, that the external assessment of schools, the procedures and methods of operationalisation are very homogenous in the countries under review. This could be due to the constitution of a procedural technology contaminated by a wide-sweeping "magistrature of influence" enacted by the main international agencies.

Equity, results and school autonomy: critical aspects and contributions to the discussion

Our investigation of the relationship between school autonomy and academic results and equity proved to be rather inconclusive. Contrary to what is sometimes announced, or even instituted as an educational belief (identified in Eurydice, 2007), school autonomy is not the panacea for all the problems of education systems. Chapter 4 clearly illustrates the need to analyse the effect of autonomy on school results with a certain dose of precaution. What our analysis suggests is that there are benefits to be gained from strengthening school autonomy in the management of school resources reflected in the reduction of school year repetition rates, with higher incidence in the socio-economically most deprived segments (as shown in Chapter 4). In the definition of policies and strategies concerning student assessment, school autonomy also appears to have a positive impact on these dependent variables, but not very significantly.

The analysis of national profiles (see Chapters 6 to 10) likewise does not reveal a clear-cut relationship between these variables. For example, in the German case some of the *Länders* (federal states) where the schools are given less autonomy are precisely those with the best student performance. In the Spanish case, there has been a strengthening of centralisation, in particular through standardised national tests for students, and this procedure has been contested due to jeopardising the schools' ability to design strategies adapted to their particular problems. On the other hand, the chapters referring to Denmark and Italy reveal that some of the processes of decentralisation and reinforcement of autonomy have given rise to school organisations moving closer towards market dynamics, in administrative and educational terms. In Italy, a paradoxical situation has been exacerbated of greater delegation of responsibilities to schools accompanied by a loss of decision-making capacity of their directors. Another trend, which emerged visibly during the period of financial crisis, especially in the southern European countries, was the reinforcement of autonomy associated to a restriction of resources, thus limiting the possible decisions that could be taken within the school sphere. Portugal, which faced this type of financial cutbacks, also experienced somewhat contradictory policy guidelines. There was a strengthening of the external and centralised assessment of 4th year students in the beginning of the decade of 2010 led by the centre-right government, with effects on loss of autonomy in teaching relations embodied in a selective branding of students at a very early age. This assessment measure (in the meantime withdrawn by the current centre-left government) was implemented simultaneously with a reinforcement of the transfer of powers and responsibilities to local authorities on education matters.

A broader and more thorough investigation could also throw light on the meanders of these types of effects. Special note should also be taken of the possible dangers of greater concentration of powers in schools, to the benefit of schools with more resources. If, on the one hand, some authors (Hofman, Homan and Gray, 2008) argue that schools should be in a position

to intervene, without bureaucratic obstacles, in their classrooms and different educational spaces, taking into account innovative strategies and their surrounding social contexts, on the other hand, and of no lesser pertinence, other authors (among whom Mortimore, 2007) draw our attention to the fact that a scenario of almost full autonomy could contain aspects detrimental to some segments of the population, namely the most deprived, weakening their access to and involvement with the school.

Some authors (Hanushek, Link and Woessmann, 2011) stress the weak linearity in the relationship between autonomy and school outcomes (which is also a finding mentioned in Chapter 4 of this study). These authors and the available evidence suggest that school autonomy could lead to better results for students of developed countries with high performing systems, but could be disruptive in low performance systems of developing countries. Such statement (which its authors refer to having withstood various tests, idem, 2011) points out as a consequence the diversification of reforms or policies according to distinct national contexts.

In fact, the conclusions of this study indicate, and in a manner very much in line with other projects (Hatzopoulos, Kollias and Kikis-Papadakis, 2015), that it is risky to seek to formulate universal solutions on matters of school autonomy. Here, it is preferable to design policies on autonomy that are adapted to specific scenarios, focused on the achievement of goals on equity and in conformity with the diversified experiences of support to learning of European education systems.

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