

## **Is school autonomy an indicator of teaching quality?**

School autonomy is being considered in international reports (EURYDICE, 2008, McKinsey, 2010, OECD, 2012, 2015, TALIS, 2013) and in an extensive scientific literature as a factor that positively influences educational outcomes. The vision of school autonomy has evolved in the last years: to be associated with the principle of participation, has come to be considered as a requirement of educational quality.

Granting schools more autonomy over the curriculum may give teachers more opportunities to adapt their instruction to students' needs and knowledge. Students score higher in science in education systems where principals exercise greater autonomy over resources, curriculum and other school policies.

The consideration of education as a fundamental human right argues more deeply the sense of autonomy that reflects the diversity and plurality of our societies, respond to the demands of equity and equal opportunities and promote a deeper social mobility and integration in Europe through education.

[European Foundation Society and Education \(EFSE\)](#)

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# Is school autonomy an indicator of teaching quality?

School autonomy and school values: religion, pedagogical concepts and philosophical approaches.

Round table hosted by the EP MEP Nuno Melo and EP MEP Andrew Lewer  
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Fundación Europea Sociedad y Educación  
European Foundation Society and Education

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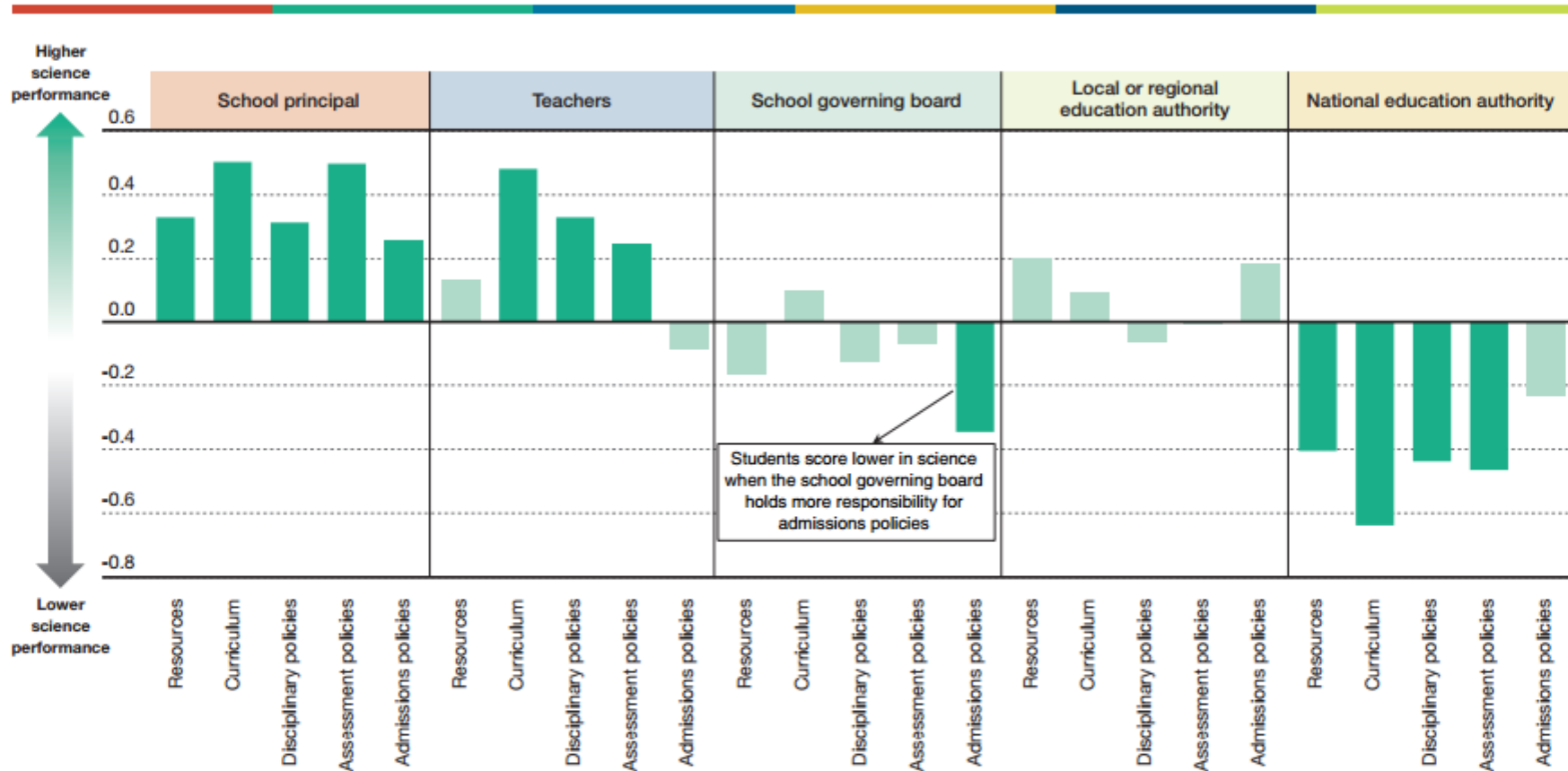
School autonomy is being considered in international reports (EURYDICE, 2008, McKinsey, 2010, OECD, 2012, 2015, TALIS, 2013) and in an extensive scientific literature as a factor that positively influences educational outcomes. The vision of school autonomy has evolved in the last years: to be associated with the principle of participation, has come to be considered as a requirement of educational quality.

# Is school autonomy an indicator of teaching quality?

- \* PISA 2015 shows that on average, across OECD countries and in 29 education systems, students in schools whose principals reported that more responsibilities lie with either teachers or themselves score higher in sciences (Figure II.4.8)
- \* In general, a majority of countries have implemented autonomy in disciplinary, didactic and pedagogical aspects, and to a lesser extent, in those that refer to personnel and economic management. Although, there is a tendency to assume an educational leadership that supposes a real direction of people of the center in what concerns its selection, training and evaluation.

## Correlations between the responsibilities for school governance<sup>1</sup> and science performance

Results based on system-level analyses



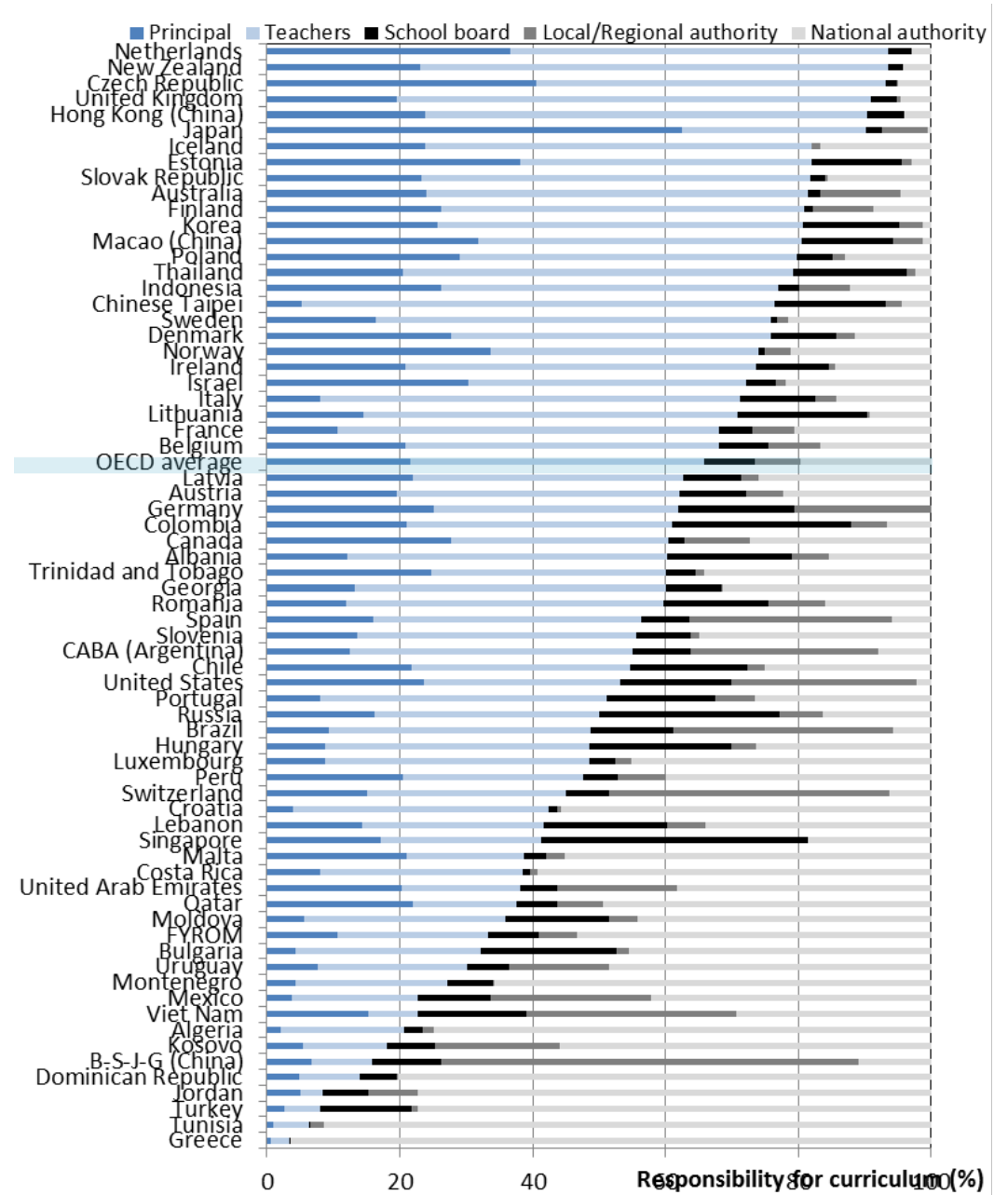
1. The responsibilities for school governance are measured by the share distribution of responsibilities for school governance in Table II.4.2 in *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*.

**Notes:** Results based on 70 education systems.

Statistically significant correlation coefficients are shown in a darker tone.

**Source:** OECD, PISA 2015 Database.

In PISA 2015, information on the level of curriculum autonomy of the education systems is presented (Figure II.4.4). In some countries, it is not easy to implement, given the structure of the regulatory framework and especially the legal nature of the public center: civil service, submission to the principle of hierarchy and laws governing economic and administrative management.



- Granting schools more autonomy over the curriculum may give teachers more opportunities to adapt their instruction to students' needs and knowledge. Students score higher in science in education systems where principals exercise greater autonomy over resources, curriculum and other school policies – but especially so in countries where achievement data are tracked over time or posted publicly, or when principals show higher levels of educational leadership. These findings highlight the interplay between school autonomy and accountability already identified in earlier PISA assessments.

# Five reasons for school autonomy

1. **Pedagogical leadership** is both the consequence and possibility of exercising school autonomy.
2. Autonomy needs **resources** and to be complemented with **accountability**, otherwise, it could operate as a negative factor for the quality of teaching.
3. Autonomy as such does not necessarily indicate a quality factor, but foster **innovation**, the assumption of **responsibilities** at all levels of the center, **active involvement** in programs and improvement actions.



# Five reasons for school autonomy

4. School autonomy allows and manifests educational pluralism and diversity of projects. It is the consideration of education as a **fundamental human right**, which argues more deeply the sense and the scope of autonomy.

5. School autonomy, with **flexibility to be able to adapt** to the particular circumstances of social environments and people, can respond to the demands of **equity** and **equal opportunities** and promote a deeper social mobility and integration in Europe through education.