



Choice and Effectiveness: International Empirical Evidence about Two Different Aspects of the Relation between Private & Public Schools

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Important distinctions

- School choice processes \leftrightarrow differences in school effectiveness (value added) between private and public schools. These are two different processes, which might have contradictory effects.
- Two types of private schools, with different choice and effectiveness processes: private state-independent & private state-dependent schools.



Public and private state-dependent schools in Europe

The coexistence of public and private state-dependent schools is the unintended result of:

- the struggle between the state and the established churches in Europe; the fight between the 18th-century *anciens régimes* and 19th-century liberal governments. Neither church nor state could win these battles and made often compromises:
- In Austria-Hungary, Belgium, France, German *Länder*, the Netherlands & Scotland, these processes had comparable results: the establishment of public and subsidized school sectors that offer parents a choice of schools with the same curriculum and usually similar financial costs.
- Since the fall of the communist regimes and the rise of neo-liberalism (Chubb & Moe, 1990), also a revival of religious but also genuine private schools in former communist societies (Hungary) and a rise of private state-dependent schools in other European societies (Scandinavia), but also in Australia.
- 2003: US Supreme Court allows state grants for non-public schools: *Zelman v. Harris* case

A higher effectiveness of private state-dependent schools

Possible explanations:

- Teaching of religious schools is more effective as a by-product of attaining other non-cognitive goals (discipline) that are valued by irreligious parents.
- Less interference of political motivated education experiments
- Lower effectiveness of public schools due to malfunctioning state bureaucracies
- Lower level of community building by parents and teachers around public schools.
- Overview of the empirical evidence of evidence:

J. Dronkers, 2004. "Do Public and Religious Schools Really Differ? Assessing the European Evidence." in *Educating Citizens. International Perspectives on Civic Values and School Choice* Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press

J. Dronkers & P. Robert, 2008 "Differences in Scholastic Achievement of Public, Private Government-Dependent, and Private Independent schools: a Cross-National Analysis" *Educational Policy*, 22: 541-577.

Choice of private and public schools

- No cross-national comparison of choices of private and public school as sociological processes
- Emphasis on legal and historical aspects
- Economic and sociological research tend not to distinguish systematic between Choice and Effectiveness

Italian school-choice and school-effectiveness in comparison with of those other societies

- Italy as a ‘missing’ country in school choice and school effectiveness research, see Ribolzi (2004)
- Pooled data of OECD/PISA 2000, 2003 & 2006
- Enough Private independent schools: Austria, France, Italy, Spain, UK, USA
- Enough Private dependent schools: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain



Pooled PISA 2000, 2003 & 2006 survey

- 15 year old students in all OECD countries.
- Public school: publicly controlled and managed directly by a public education authority or agency or controlled and managed either by a government agency directly or by a governing body, most of whose members are appointed by a public authority or elected by public franchise.
- A government-dependent private school receives more than 50 % of its core funding from government agencies.
- An independent private school receives less than 50 %.
- Reading score as indicator of quality of teaching and learning

Number of schools, % 15-year old pupils in private and public schools & total N pupils

COUNTRY	PRIVATE INDEP.	PRIVATE DEP.	PUBLIC	N pupils
Austria	16 (3%)	39 (7%)	540 (90%)	13634
France	12 (8%)	24 (14%)	117 (78%)	3759
Germany	2	34 (5%)	572 (95%)	13475
Italy	38 (2%)	48 (3%)	1249 (95%)	36743
Netherlands	0	297 (73%)	111 (27%)	10625
Spain	80 (7%)	430 (36%)	694 (57%)	32671
UK	43 (4%)	7 (1%)	1120 (96%)	28936
USA	34 (7%)	2	457 (93%)	11891

	Boys	Immigrant	Foreign language	Cultural possessions	Family wealth	Mother ISCED	Father ISCED	Mother SES	Father SES	School composition	School size	Admission-parents endorsement	Admission Special program	Student/teacher ratio	Computer/student	Educational resources
Austria	+				+	-		+		+	-	+	-	+	+	+
France		-			+					+	-				-	
Italy			-	-	+					+	-	+		+		+
Spain		-	+	-	+		-	+		+	-	+	-	+	+	
UK		+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-	+
USA	+	+		+		-	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	+



Choice private independent school ↔ public school

- More favorable school composition, smaller school size, more educational resources effect choice of private independent schools in all countries.
- Wealthy families choose more often private independent schools in nearly all countries
- In Austria, Spain, UK & USA parents with the highest educational level choose more often public schools, while parents with high occupational status prefer private independent schools in these countries.
- Private independent schools are not always chosen because of higher teacher/student ratio (UK, US ↔ Austria, Italy, Spain)
- Sometimes private independent schools are an immigrant choice (UK; US), sometimes a native choice (France, Spain)



	Boys	Immigrant	Foreign language	Cultural possessions	Family wealth	Mother ISCED	Father ISCED	Mother SES	Father SES	School composition	School size	Admission Parents endorsement	Admission Special program	Student/teacher ratio	Computer / Student ratio	Educational resources	Tuition
Austria	-							+		+	-	+	-	-	-	+	+
France			+								-					+	-
Germany	-			+	+	-			+	+		+	-	+	+	+	+
Italy	+	+	+						-	+	-	+	-		+	+	-
Netherlands		-						-		-		+			+	+	+
Spain										+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+



Choice of private dependent school ↔ public school

- Higher educational resources and parental influence on admission effects choice of private dependent schools.
- Private dependent schools are not choices of higher or richer classes (except Germany).
- Tuition payment influence the choice of private dependent schools in Austria, Germany, Netherlands & Spain; not in France & Italy.
- Smaller school sizes of private dependent schools effect choice in Austria, France, Italy & Spain
- Favorable school composition of private dependent schools effects choice in Austria, Germany, Italy & Spain, contrary in the Netherlands.
- Private dependent schools are the immigrants' choice in Italy, but the native school in the Netherlands.

Choice and effectiveness of private schools compared to public schools

Three steps:

1. Observed differences in reading scores of pupils from private minus public schools.
2. Differences, corrected for choice selectivity.
3. Differences, corrected for choice selectivity and parental social & cultural background



Differences in reading scores between pupils in private independent & public schools

total sample No of pupils	Raw total sample	Raw matched equal choice sample	Correct for parental characteristics matched equal choice sample = value added
Austria (7482)	22***	9	8
France (1993)	12 *	6	3
Italy (17678)	8	-10	-19
Spain (12500)	38***	5	16
UK (19104)	75***	12	8
US (4186)	21***	2	7



Conclusions higher effectiveness of private independent schools (= value added)

- Higher reading scores in private independent schools are fully the consequence of a positive school choice selectivity, and not of a higher effectiveness or value added.
- Possible a higher effectiveness in the core curriculum topic is not necessary, because the favorable social composition is already enough for the parents: room for other activities (sport, personality building, art)



Differences in reading scores between pupils in private dependent & public schools

total sample No of pupils	Raw total sample	Raw matched equal choice sample	corrected for parental characteristics matched equal choice sample = value added
Austria (7838)	19***	-16*	-8
France (2025)	-0	1	3
Germany (7861)	45***	23**	24**
Italy (17753)	-41***	-9	-22**
Netherlands(6793)	-0	10**	3
Spain (18575)	27***	-2	2

Conclusions higher effectiveness of private dependent schools

- Higher reading scores in private dependent schools are the consequence of a positive school choice selectivity (Austria; Spain), but not in Germany and the Netherlands
- Parental characteristics explains the higher effectiveness in the Netherlands.
- The lower reading scores in Italian private dependent schools can fully be explained by the school choice processes. But they have a lower effectiveness than public schools, taking into account the parental characteristics.



General conclusions education

- More choice does not mean automatically more effectiveness.
- More choice means a higher need for quality control: teacher qualification, centralized exams, league tables with added values of schools, etc
- More school choice strengthens school composition differences within an educational system, but lowers neighborhood segregation
- Private-dependent schools in some countries have a higher effectiveness compared to public schools; private-independent schools have never a higher effectiveness
- Italian private schools are deviant cases, compared to other countries: the school choice processes are different in Italy, and their effectiveness tends to be lower.