

Federalism and Education: Cross-National Lessons

Kenneth K. Wong

Professor, Brown University, USA

Lead Researcher, Program on
Federalism and Education, Forum of
Federations

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Federalism and Education:

A Topic of Global Importance

- Federalism is formally established in almost 30 countries, encompassing about 40 percent of the world's population
- Constitutional framework defines the distribution of power and competencies (functions):
 - places constraints on the exercise of centralized power in education
 - allows for a certain degree of fiscal autonomy at the subnational level
 - enables electoral independence at the regional and local level

Research and Publication: International Collaboration

- Forum of Federations, Ottawa, Canada (Felix Knüpling, Diana Chebenova)
- Fundación Manuel Giménez Abad, Zaragoza, Spain (Mario Kölling)
- Researchers from 10 federal systems
- An invitational conference in Zaragoza, Spain to discuss draft chapters and share findings with policy makers in Spain
- Ongoing communication to ensure all the chapters move toward successful publication of a book, *Federalism and Education* (May 2018)

Researchers from 10 Countries

- *Australia: Bronwyn Hinz*
- *Austria: Peter Bußjäger*
- *Belgium: Peter Bursens, Petra Meier, & Peter Van Petegem*
- *Canadian: Jennifer Wallner*
- *Germany: Henrik Scheller*
- *Italy: Elisabeth Alber & Martina Trettel*
- *Spain: Mario Kölling & Xavier Rambla*
- *Switzerland: Béatrice Zielgler, Monika Waldis, Daniel Kübler, Andri Gustin, & Andreas Glaser*
- *United Kingdom: Deborah Wilson and Llorenc O'Prey*
- *United States: Kenneth Wong*
- *Project Oversight and Management: Kenneth K. Wong, Felix Knüpling, Mario Kölling, & Diana Chebenova*

10 Federal Systems: Subnational Entities

- Commonwealth of Australia: 6 States and 2 Territories
- Republic of Austria: 9 States (Länder)
- Kingdom of Belgium: 3 Regions (Flemish, Walloon, Brussels) and 3 Communities (Flemish Speaking, French Speaking, and German Speaking)
- Canada: 10 Provinces
- Federal Republic of Germany: 16 Federal States (Länder)
- Italian Republic: 20 Regions
- Kingdom of Spain: 17 Autonomous Communities and 2 Autonomous Cities
- Switzerland: 26 Cantons
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: Greater London Authority, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government, and Welsh Government
- United States of America: 50 States, 1 Federal District, and 5 Self Governing Territories

10 Countries: 114 Million Students: Pre-primary, elementary, & secondary

- Switzerland: 1.2M
- Austria: 1.3M
- Belgian: 2.4M
- Australia: 4.8M
- Canada: 5.5M
- Spain: 7.7M
- Italy: 9.1M
- United Kingdom: 12.4M
- Germany: 12.4M
- United States: 57.2M

Shared Research Agenda

- All the chapters shared a common research agenda on key issues:
- Governance: relative balance of power between the national and subnational government in education. Is the trend moving toward greater centralization?
- Fiscal Federalism: distribution of funding responsibilities. What is the trend in funding?
- Academic standards and quality assurance: Is the trend moving toward nationalization?

Shared Research Agenda

- Performance-based accountability: PISA performance and country-specific assessments on core subject matters in the benchmarking age groups and/or grades. Which areas need greater policy attention in promoting better academic outcomes?
- Student Diversity: policies to address changing needs
- Overall, what role will federalism play in promoting educational quality, innovation and equity in the 21st century?

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

- Constitutional and legislative framework is enacted in different governmental levels
- Shared fiscal responsibilities
- Shared responsibilities on education quality standards
- Horizontal cooperation between states
- Federalism as laboratory
- Performance gap exists between countries and regions within countries
- Policies to address regional and socio-economic disparity
- Benchmarking policy varies across countries

Constitutional and Legislative Framework: Enacted in Different Governmental Levels

- Federal constitutions do not always highlight education as a national responsibility.
- In the United States, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland, education is explicitly reserved in the domain of state government.
- State or provincial constitutions in these countries provide more details on the government's responsibilities and their citizens' right to education.

Constitutional and Legislative Framework: Enacted in Different Governmental Levels

- Several countries rely on the national constitution and national legislation to specify the power and function of the shared responsibility between the national and the subnational jurisdictions.
- In Spain, the 2013 Organic Act on Education Standards expands the Constitution by providing clarifications on the distribution of powers between the Central Government and the Autonomous Communities. The Spanish Constitutional Court arbitrates policy disagreements between layers of the federal system.
- In Italy, the legislature passed the “good school reform” (2015) that empowers school principals to give teachers merit-based pay bonuses and to hire qualified local teachers. The reform also empowers the national Ministry of Education, University and Research (MUIR) to establish uniform learning standards, criteria on certificates and diplomas, and the definition on the scope of school autonomy.

Shared Fiscal Responsibilities

Country	Percent GDP	Primary Per Pupil in USD	Secondary Per Pupil in USD
Australia	3.4	\$8,289	\$10,932
Austria	3.2	\$10,780	\$15,024
Belgium	4.3	\$9,957	\$12,763
Canada	3.2*	\$9,130	\$12,086
Germany	2.9	\$8,103	\$11,106
Italy	2.9	\$8,392	\$9,023
Spain	2.7	\$6,956	\$8,520
Switzerland	3.5	\$15,930	\$18,994
United Kingdom	4.1	\$10,669	\$12,200
United States	3.3	\$10,959	\$12,740
OECD Average	3.4	\$8,477	\$9,911

Shared Fiscal Responsibilities

- In Spain, the Central Government provides about 15% of the education spending and the Autonomous Communities provide about 85%.
- In the U.S., the federal government provides about 10% and the state and local communities make up the remaining 90% of education spending.
- In Switzerland, the federal government provides about 10% of the education spending, while the Cantons provide 63% and the municipalities 27%. Among the 26 Cantons, education expenditures range from 2.4% to 7.8% of the GDP. Interestingly, there is a growth in horizontal transfers of funding between Cantons due to inter-cantonal collaboration in education.

Shared Fiscal Responsibilities

- In Australia, while states retain authority over primary and secondary education, the Commonwealth (Australia's central government) is increasing its power to support standardization.
 - Increasing amounts of “tied grants,” earmarked grants that come from the federal government for specific purposes, have allowed the Commonwealth to exercise greater control over funding decisions of states and localities.

Shared Responsibilities Between Layers: Education Quality Standards

- Spain: implementation and inspection of education quality standards involve all levels of the government
- Belgium: national government establishes the quality assurance standards; each of the three language-based Communities assumes primary responsibility in monitoring educational progress and quality
- Austria: schools are governed by recently adopted federal standards on German, English, and mathematics

Shared Responsibilities Between Layers: Education Quality Standards

- Belgium has two simultaneous sub-state levels of government: there are three Communities (which group Belgians culturally and linguistically into a French, Flemish and German Community) and also three Regions (which group Belgians geographically into Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels)
- In 1995, the question of language of instruction in school drove education policy to become a competence of the Communities (rather than a federal competence).
- However, funding still comes primarily through block grants from the federal government to the Communities and Regions.

Horizontal Cooperation Among States

- Despite competition among states, interstate or interprovincial exchange of human capital, financial resources, and professional knowledge is growing
- Council for Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) supervises the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), aims to “complement existing jurisdictional assessments with comparative Canada-wide data on achievement levels attained by Grade 8-Secondary II students across the country.”

Federalism as Laboratory

- Federalism enables governmental and non-governmental organizations at all levels of government to “experiment” with innovative ideas.
- In the U.S., many states and districts have started charter schools, and encouraged diverse (non governmental) service providers to manage government schools. Non-governmental organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, are promoting the integration of technology in the classroom for personalized, “blended learning” and teacher development.
- In the United Kingdom, England and Northern Ireland are expanding their school choice initiatives, including “free schools” in England that are similar to charter schools in the U.S.

Federalism as Laboratory

- Italy has five regions that have special statutes granting them policy discretion.
- These regions have linguistic minorities that require instruction in languages other than Italian. Consequently, these regions have produced innovations in multi-lingual schooling (in Ladin, for example, they have achieved remarkable success in teaching students three or more languages) and areas such as vocational education (as is the case in South Tyrol, where their system is held up as a best practice).
- Overall for all federal systems, in supporting innovation, policy makers will need to continue to pay attention to issues of equity in providing innovative services.

Performance Gap: Between Countries and Regions within Countries

- When comparing the PISA mean scale scores in reading, mathematics, and science between 2000 and 2015, the 10 countries show mixed results:
 - In reading, 2 countries show improvement.
 - In mathematics, 3 countries show improvement.
 - In science, 5 countries improve in the mean scores.

Performance Gap: Between Countries and Regions within Countries

Country	Reading 2000/2015	Mathematics 2000/2015	Science 2000/2015
Australia	528/503	533/494	528/510
Austria	492/485	503/497	505/495
Belgium	507/499	520/507	496/502
Canada	534/527	533/516	529/528
Germany	484/509	490/506	487/509
Italy	488/485	457/490	478/481
Spain	493/496	476/486	491/493
Switzerland	494/492	529/521	496/506
United Kingdom	523/498	529/492	532/509
United States	504/497	493/470	500/496

Performance Gap: Between Countries and Regions within Countries

- There is variation in student performance between regions within individual countries.
- In Spain, academic outcomes vary across the 17 Autonomous Communities. Graduation rates in compulsory secondary education range from 63.1% to 85.4%. The percentage of low-performing students with PISA 2013 reading skills below level 2 ranges from 10% to 30%. The percentage of low-performing students with PISA 2013 math skills below level 2 ranges from 14% to 33%.
- In the United States, about one-third of all 50 states perform well above the PISA OECD average scores, while about one-third of the states are underperforming.
- In Austria, PISA results show a substantial gender gap in math and science. Vocational tracks are overrepresented by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Address Regional and Socio-economic Disparity

- Federalism, while recognizing regional and local autonomy, involves some degree of allocating resources to “equalize” the fiscal disparity among local communities.
- In Australia, 2012 legislation promotes needs-based funding, providing supplemental funding for students with disabilities, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and the indigenous populations.
- In Canada and the United States, special appropriations are directed at Natives or Aboriginal peoples given their unique challenges.
- The Canadian federal government maintains several allocation streams, including the Canada Health Transfer, the Canada Social Transfer, the Territorial Formula Financing, and equalization grant.

Address Regional and Socio-economic Disparity

- In Germany, some Länder have far better education systems than others. Top states spent an average of over 5,000 euros per pupil between 2005 and 2012 while poorer states could only invest 1,500 euros per pupil.
- These disparities are reinforced by the fact that wealthier districts can offer teachers higher salaries and better benefits, thus causing instructional quality in poorer areas to suffer.
- In efforts to fix such problems, Germany employs a method of power-sharing known as “cooperative federalism.”
- However, cooperative federalism faced difficulties in supporting the 1.1 million immigrants who entered the country in 2015-16 as well as students with special needs.

Address Regional and Socio-economic Disparity

- Australia has ensured schooling opportunities for a very diverse population.
- More than half of all Australians were either born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas, and contrary to Germany or Austria, Australia has been highly successful with students of migrant backgrounds from non-English speaking countries.
- A higher percentage of this population completes tertiary education than non-migrants. This may in part be because of state and commonwealth policies including free translation services in schools and fully-paid English language learning tuition at many worksites.
- Another example is Queensland (Australia), which improved its performance through investing in preschool education and adding an extra year of primary school.

Benchmarking for Learning: Canada

- Provincial assessments begin at 3rd and 4th grade and focus on literacy and mathematics; these are formative
- Summative assessment at 11th or 12th grade – links to graduation
- Assessment data not connected to federal sanctions or direct provincial intervention
- CMEC focuses on “lifelong learning” and facilitates voluntary policy coordination; CMEC lacks enforcement capacity

Benchmarking for Performance

Accountability: Switzerland

- Federal-state tension: federal-directed action to improve student performance
- Switzerland: Cantonal sovereignty is one of the most cherished rights
 - Federal actions, in response to the 2000 PISA low-performance shock, have led to standardization
 - Cantons have tended to pull their resources away from history, geography, religion, music, and sports because those subjects are not tested or monitored.
 - To avoid further federal expansion in the Swiss education system, many Cantons have formed agreements for inter-cantonal cooperation through mutually supporting teachers' colleges, setting up systems for transfer payments from wealthier Cantons to financially strapped Cantons, and other strategies.
 - Despite these strategies, the Confederation plays a rather active role in determining which subjects receive the most attention through monitoring learning objectives in the subjects of language, math, and science.

Benchmarking in the U.S.:

Evolving Federal-State Role 1960s-Present

	Equity as Focus	Performance-Based Accountability	State Control to meet Federal Accountability
	Since the 1960s	2001 NCLB; Race to the Top – 2015	2015 Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) - present
Federal Objectives	Equity	Equity Outcome-based Accountability	Equity Outcome-based Accountability Institutional Innovation
Institutional Boundary for Service Delivery	Confined within the Public Sector	Boundary opens to diverse service providers	Boundary opens to diverse service providers
Funding Mechanism	Formula-based Categorical (Title I, IDEA)	Formula-based Categorical (Title I, IDEA)	Formula-based Categorical Grants (Title I, IDEA)
Tension in Intergovernmental Benchmarking	Administrative and Audit Compliance, e.g. supplement non supplant	Local/state resistance vs. federal direction (e.g. annual testing, AYP, corrective action) Local/state filed lawsuits for more federal funds Achievement Gap for various subgroups Mixed support for diverse provider model and school choice	States determine academic standards, multiple measures on performance (such as growth), identify low performing schools, and decide on intervention; Trump administration reduces regulations on administrative and audit compliance; Trump administration promotes school choice

Policy Implications and Promising Strategies

- Ensuring service quality across decentralized regions within a country.
 - Austria, Australia, Italy, and the United States, among others, are developing legislative and administrative clarity on governmental standards on equal schooling opportunities.
 - Federal transfers and earmarked grants tend to create fiscal incentives for states and localities to ensure service quality in exchange for additional funds.

Policy Implications and Promising Strategies

- Federalism may undermine national priorities. Consultation and deliberation among regional entities often necessitate policy compromise and tend to slow down reform implementation.
 - Germany, Switzerland, Canada, and other countries have invested in horizontal cooperation with the aim of achieving specific national goals.
 - The central government also relies on regional and local entities to use national grants to support the learning needs of students with disadvantaged backgrounds.

Policy Implications and Promising Strategies

- Federalism tends to allow for duplication of administration and management at the subnational level.
 - Consolidation of smaller, autonomous regional units may generate cost savings through capitalizing on economies of scale.
 - States and local communities are making efforts to coordinate the use of school buildings, transportation, athletic centers, and other facilities for cost savings.

Policy Implications and Promising Strategies

- States and local communities need ongoing data collection to inform their policy and practice. Subnational entities can benefit from a coordinated data collection strategy across the country. Comparable measures of academic progress enable schools and communities to validate their efforts to ensure student success for all.
 - With comparable data across regions and various student populations, Australia and Canada have sharpened their focus on achievement gaps among citizens of First Nations.
 - Austria has redoubled its efforts to narrow the gender gap in science and math.
 - Italy requires local schools to implement three sets of accountability systems: INVALSI (testing for student outcomes), INDIRE (evaluating internal school development), and the Ministry Inspectorate (evaluating schools and principals).

Policy Implications and Promising Strategies

- Federalism offers a strong, diverse leadership pipeline.
 - When state and local leaders show good results, they can anchor their regional success in policy development at the national level.
- Overall, the education sector is generally well-served by the system of federalism in the 10 countries.
- Federalism remains a unique structure to allow for experimentation, validation, and scaling up of education programs.