



QUALIFIED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN SASKATCHEWAN

*An Examination of a Recent Policy Change for a New Category
of Funded Independent Schools* | September 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Independent school enrolment is increasing in Canada, but the statutory environment has remained stable across the provinces. Saskatchewan is an exception. In 2011 the province created an additional funded independent school category referred to as Qualified Independent Schools (QIS). The addition of the new category provides an opportunity to observe how the independent school sector responds to substantive policy change.

This paper examines changes in enrolment and independent school distribution between 2011/2012 and 2017/2018—the six-year period following the introduction of qualified independent schools.

The QIS category was added to four existing independent school categories in Saskatchewan. Schools in three of the four categories receive some level of funding. The categories are defined by the nature of the schools and their services in relation to the ministry of education.

Registered Independent Schools meet basic eligibility requirements but do not necessarily receive government funding. Alternative Independent Schools are funded through individual service agreements and only educate “students of the province.” Service agreements fund between \$23,728 and \$56,190 per student. Historical High Schools are a closed group granted status because of their historical contributions in filling educational gaps. These schools offer grade 9 to 12 and receive 70 percent of the provincial, per-student average funding. Associate

Independent Schools are faith-based and operate in association with local boards of education, receiving approximately 80 percent of the provincial per student average funding.

Qualified Independent Schools meet many of the standards of the other categories and are required to participate in the ministry’s accountability framework, disclose financial statements, and receive ministry supervision and inspection. QIS receive 50 percent of the provincial per-student average funding

This study finds that the introduction of QIS resulted in an initial shift of approximately a third of independent schools from non-funded Registered Independent Schools into the partially funded QIS category. Following the initial shift, the growth of the independent school sector stabilized. During the six-year period following the introduction of QIS, independent school enrolment increased 24.1 percent in Saskatchewan. This trend reflects the national growth in independent school enrolment over the last several decades. Despite increased enrolment, only 2.4 percent of students in Saskatchewan attend independent schools.

Independent schools offer greater choice for families, and provide space for innovative approaches in education. The implementation of Qualified Independent Schools in Saskatchewan correlated with an initial shift in the sector as independent schools welcomed the new policy. In the following years, enrolment growth and school entrance in the sector stabilized.

INTRODUCTION

Among Canada’s provinces, Saskatchewan has experienced one of the most recent significant changes in the regulation directly affecting independent schooling. Despite a steady increase in independent school enrolments across Canada, the statutory environment in all provinces for independent schools has remained relatively stable over recent decades. One of the more recent policy changes, nevertheless, occurred in Saskatchewan. The December 2011 announcement of funding for a new category of independent schools—Qualified Independent Schools (QIS)—is a policy innovation worth noting, and its implications are worth examining. It is one of the rare instances in Canada where a new category of funded independent schools has been established in recent years.

Independent schools, “sometimes also referred to as private or non-government schools, are usually established as not-for-profit organizations” (Van Pelt, Hasan, and Allison 2017, 1) and are owned and operated outside of the government sector. They typically operate under their own board of governors and are usually directly accountable to the ministry of education and in five provinces in Canada they may receive some funding from their provincial government. They are subject to regulation, and four provinces have a dedicated independent or private school act, Saskatchewan being one such province.¹

At the time of the December 2011 announcement, Saskatchewan had nineteen independent schools in receipt of some government funding. A total of thirty-nine additional independent schools, called Registered Independent Schools, existed but did not receive funding. This brief paper describes the 2011/2012 regulatory change which established a new category of independent schools that would receive 50 percent of the operational funding awarded to public schools. It examines Qualified Independent Schools within the larger context of independent schooling in Saskatchewan. The changes following such funding and regulatory initiatives in the independent school sector are worth examining for their implications, both within

the province and in other jurisdictions that may be considering such changes.

It is reasonable to assume that increased availability of funding in the independent school sector could cause an increase in the numbers of independent schools and/or the enrolments in such schools. To study such possible effects of the regulatory change, this paper examines enrolment and independent school distribution changes between 2011/2012 and 2017/2018. The paper then focuses specifically on the new category of Qualified Independent Schools and examines changes in types of Qualified Independent Schools and enrolments over the same period within this category specifically. It concludes with discussion about the implications of the establishment of this new category of funded independent schools.

POLICY: QUALIFIED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL POLICY AND RELATED REGULATIONS

In July of 1989 the Independent Schools Branch was established in Saskatchewan in response to a December 1987 report by Gordon Dirks on private schools, which was commissioned in response to the Supreme Court judgment in the Alberta case *Jones v. The Queen*. The resulting independent school regulations and policy manual granted legal recognition and status to registered independent schools in Saskatchewan and “laid out the four categories of registered independent schools that were recognized in the province: Registered Independent Schools, Alternative Independent Schools, Historical High Schools and Associate Independent Schools. Each category had specific criteria attached to it . . . and varying levels of supervision, inspection and accountability” (Gabel 2015, 2).

In December of 2011 a new category of independent schools was announced. The *Saskatchewan Gazette* of July 6, 2012, contains the resulting amendment to the Education Act, in particular to the Independent School Regulations to include a new section titled “Qualified Independent Schools.” It outlines the application for certification details (s. 38.2(1)) and the implications of certification as a qualified independent school,

1. See Van Pelt, Hasan, and Allison (2017), particularly pp. 28 and 29, for an overview of the applicable statutes for independent schools.

one of which is eligibility to apply for operating grants pursuant to the education funding regulations (s. 38.3(1)).

Why did Saskatchewan create the new category? According to a 2015 presentation by a ministry official, this new category fit within the overall framework for education in the province that “parents have the right to direct the education of their children and the state has a vested interest in the education and well-being of students.” As such the creation of the category was in the best interest of the *student* and the *parents*, as it would ensure curriculum consistency, teacher supervision, school oversight, and financial contribution. It was also viewed as in the best interest of the *school*, as it would provide improved professional development, teacher supervision, credibility, and financial input. Furthermore, it was viewed as in the best interest of *the public and the government*, as it would improve accountability, transparency, choice, and opportunity for students. It was widely recognized that independent schooling will exist regardless, and thus this new category was viewed as being in the *best interest of all* and would ensure the “best possible education” for students (Gabel 2015).

CONTEXT: DESCRIPTION OF THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL LANDSCAPE IN SASKATCHEWAN

Independent school enrolments as a share of total school enrolments are comparatively small in Saskatchewan. Only 2.4 percent of students in Saskatchewan attend independent schools, according to the most recently available provincially comparative data from 2014/2015, ranking it seventh among the provinces, even behind two provinces, Ontario and Nova Scotia, where funding for independent schools is not available (MacLeod and Hasan 2017, v). In all, 73.3 percent of students in Saskatchewan attend English public schools, 22.1 percent attend English Roman Catholic public schools, 0.9 percent are enrolled in French public schools, and 1.2 percent are enrolled as homeschooled (in 2014/2015).

As noted earlier, the independent school sector in Saskatchewan in 2011/2012 consisted of four main categories of independent schools—unfunded Registered Independent Schools, and three categories of funded independent schools: Alternative Independent Schools, Associate In-

dependent Schools, and Historical High Schools. In 2012/2013 a new category, Qualified Independent Schools, was added, and for three years, from 2013/2014 to 2015/2016, an additional category existed, called Outreach Schools. Each type is briefly outlined below (from Gabel 2015).

REGISTERED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Registered Independent Schools meet basic eligibility requirements: They must have a board with three adults from different family units; have two students from two different family units; have facilities that meet safety, health, and construction standards; be incorporated in Saskatchewan; have a distinct and non-misleading name; and agree to be inspected by ministry officials. If offering secondary-level credits, the school must follow provincial curriculum policy, provide only approved programs, and agree to be supervised by ministry personnel (teachers). The sole designation of Registered Independent School does not qualify a school for funding.

ALTERNATIVE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Alternative Independent Schools meet the basic requirements of Registered Independent Schools, plus they follow provincial curriculum, provide only approved programs, employ only approved professional “A” teachers, and agree to be supervised by ministry officials. In addition, the teachers are members of the provincial teachers’ organization (Saskatchewan Teachers Federation) and receive the same benefits and rights of school-district teachers in the union. Alternative Independent Schools are funded by an individual services agreement whereby only “students of the province” placed in the school by the government receive funding. These schools are funded between \$23,728 and \$56,190 per student depending on the negotiated requirement to serve the individual student.

HISTORICAL HIGH SCHOOLS

Historical High Schools offer only grades 9 to 12. They meet the basic requirements of Registered Independent Schools plus follow provincial curriculum policy, provide only approved programs, employ only professional “A” teachers, and agree to be inspected and supervised by ministry officials or designates. Their teachers are associate members of the provincial teachers’ organization (Saskatchewan Teachers

Federation) and received the same benefits and rights as school district teachers. This is a closed group—schools are in this group due to their historical contributions in filling educational gaps—and no new schools will be added to this category. These schools receive partial government funding at 70 percent of the provincial per-student average.

ASSOCIATE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Associate Independent Schools are those schools that have entered into an agreement with a school division, and operate as a school within the school division, following all of their policies and procedures. They meet the basic requirements of Registered Independent Schools, plus have operated for two consecutive years immediately before entering into the associate school agreement, follow provincial curriculum policy, provide only approved programs, employ only professional “A” teachers, and their teachers are associate members of the provincial teachers’ organization (Saskatchewan Teachers Federation) and receive the same benefits and rights as school district teachers. “For 2017–18, ten Associate schools are recognized for funding. Associate schools are independent schools that have been established for faith-based reasons and have a contractual agreement with a board of education to operate in association with that board” (Ministry of Education, Government of Saskatchewan 2017, appendix H). Eight are Christian and two are Muslim. These schools, in 2017–2018, were funded at \$8,484 per student (Ministry 2017, 65), which is approximately 80 percent of the provincial per-student average.

QUALIFIED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

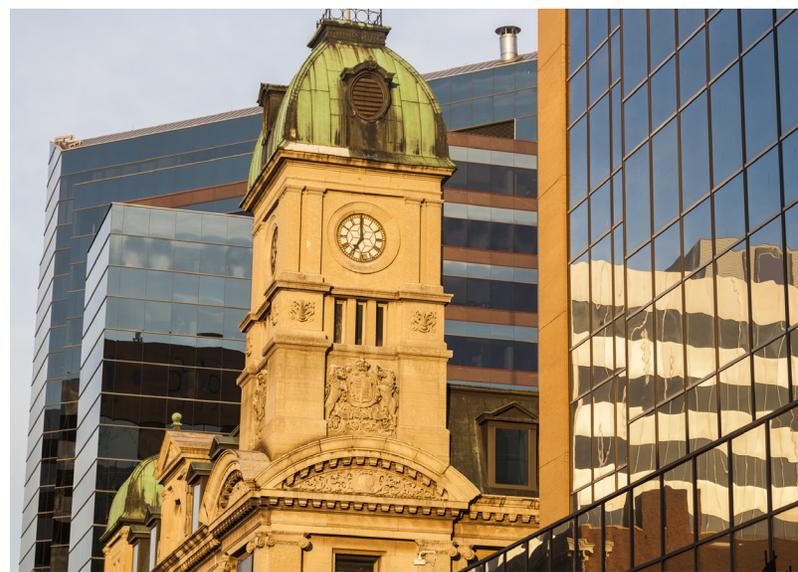
Qualified Independent Schools meet the basic requirements of Registered Independent Schools, plus have operated for two consecutive years before applying, are owned and operated by a non-profit corporation, follow provincial curriculum policy (in other words, the curriculum must align with the Saskatchewan curriculum), provide only approved programs, employ only professional “A” teachers, participate fully in the ministry’s accountability framework, submit annual financial state-

ments, agree to be supervised and inspected by ministry officials, and comply with ministry policy and directives. These schools receive partial government funding of 50 percent of the provincial per-student average.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS DISTRIBUTIONS

This analysis begins with examining the distribution of independent schools, that is, the number of schools in each funded and non-funded independent school category in each year from the year the regulatory change was announced (that is the year before Qualified Independent Schools came into existence) to the year for which most recent data are available. Thus, our analysis covers the data for seven years, from 2011/2012 to 2017/2018.² The number of schools in each category are shown on page 6 (Figure 1a). See the appendix on page 16 for corresponding tables).

In the year of the policy announcement Saskatchewan had 58 independent schools. Just under a third of independent schools in Saskatchewan at the time of the announcement received some form of government funding, and two-thirds (67.2 percent) were Registered Independent Schools that did not receive funding. The introduction of a new funded category of independent schools caused a shift



2. Requests for data were submitted to the Saskatchewan ministry of education on April 7, 2018, and the data in response to the request were sent to the author on May 7, 2018.

in the distribution of independent schools, the most notable of which is that in the first year (2012/2013) more than a third of independent schools in Saskatchewan were classified in the new category of Qualified Independent Schools (35.1 percent). A third (33.3 percent) were in the traditionally funded independent school categories (Alternative, Associate, or

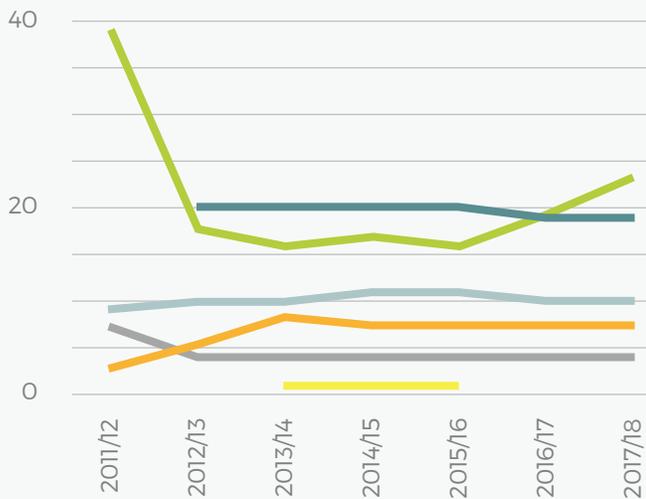
Historical), leaving less than a third classified simply as Registered Independent Schools (31.6 percent) receiving no government funding. This distribution, as shown in figure 1b, has been relatively stable since the introduction of the funding change, with a third of schools still (as of 2017/2018) in the traditionally funded independent schools categories (33.3 percent), a little less in the Qualified Independent School category (30.2 percent), and more than a third in the Registered unfunded category (36.5 percent). In all, after six years, the sector showed sixty-three schools compared to fifty-eight at the beginning of the period (8.6 percent growth in the number of independent schools over the period) (Figure 1b).

It is relevant to note, then, that other than the year immediately following the policy change, there has been relative stability and consistency in the number of schools in the Qualified Independent School category. Indeed, in the first year there were twenty Qualified Independent Schools and in the most recent year there were nineteen. It was only the category of Registered Independent Schools that experienced a notable shift, from 67.2 percent of schools to 36.5 percent of schools, decreasing from thirty-nine to twenty-three schools over the period, and even that change was only dramatic in a single year. Growth in number of independent schools overall has also been steady, showing just under 9 percent increase.

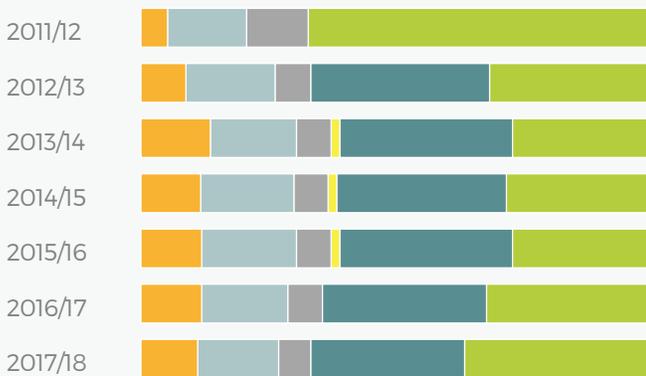
Figure 1: Independent schools in Saskatchewan by ministry category



1a: Number of independent schools in Saskatchewan by ministry category



1b: Distribution of independent schools in Saskatchewan by ministry category



INDEPENDENT SCHOOL ENROLMENTS

Given the relative stability in the distribution of independent schools across the funded categories (other than in the year immediately following the policy announcement), and given the solid but not dramatic increase in numbers of independent schools over the period, it is worth examining enrolments and their changes in the different categories of independent schools since the policy change. Enrolments in each funded and non-funded category for the years from 2011/2012 to 2017/2018 are shown (Figure 2a).

In the year of the announced funding change, a total of 3,878 students attended independent schools in Saskatchewan. Six years later 4,814

students were enrolled in independent schools. Overall this is a notable enrolment growth of 24.1 percent in the sector over six years. This growth in itself is not that surprising given the growth in independent school enrolments in all but one Canadian province over the last several decades.³

The enrolment growth in the new independent school category is worth consideration. In the first year of the policy change, 608 students were enrolled in Qualified Independent Schools, and six years later 834 were, reflecting a 37.2 percent increase in Qualified Independent School enrolments over the period. Of course the most dramatic shift happened in the first year, from no students to 608.

As demonstrated in figure 2b, at the time of the policy announcement, almost four out of every five independent school students (78.5 percent) in Saskatchewan attended a funded independent school. Stated another way, 21.4 percent attended unfunded Registered Independent Schools, and the remaining independent school students attended Alternative, Associate, or Historical High Schools. At the end of the period, almost about nine of every ten Saskatchewan independent school students (89.4 percent) were in funded independent schools, and only 10.6 percent are enrolled in unfunded Registered Independent Schools. After six years, 17.3 percent of independent school students in Saskatchewan were in Qualified Independent Schools. This is certainly a notable share of independent schools *students*, but not as high as the 30.2 percent share of independent *schools* in the province, which in 2017/2018 are Qualified Independent schools (Figure 2b).

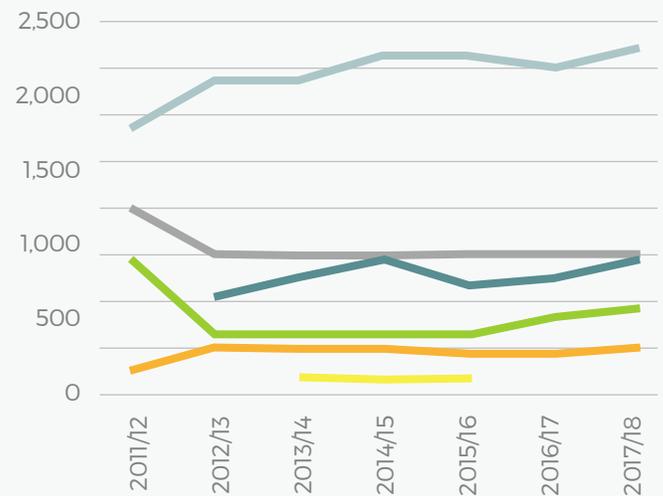
Thus, *enrolment* growth in both the independent sector overall (24.1 percent from 2011/2012 to 2017/2018) and in Qualified Independent Schools (37.2 percent from 2012/2013

to 2017/2018) indicate more dramatic growth than examining the growth in numbers of independent *schools* alone. Still, we must keep in mind that the size of the sector compared to the larger education sector overall is one of the smallest in any Canadian province.

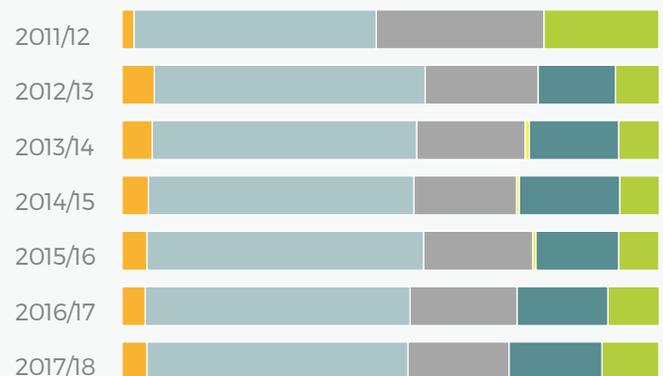
Figure 2: Enrolment in independent schools in Saskatchewan by ministry category



2a: Enrolment in independent schools in Saskatchewan by ministry category



2b: Distribution of enrolment in independent schools in Saskatchewan by ministry category



3. In fact, independent school enrolments for all ten provinces combined increased 23.2 percent from 2000/2001 to 2014/2015, while total public school enrolments declined by 7.7 percent. Still, for the period 2000/2001 to 2014/2015 Saskatchewan showed the highest growth in independent school enrolments of all provinces—89.8 percent growth over that fourteen-year period (the most recent period of comparable national data) (MacLeod and Hasan 2017, 17).

QUALIFIED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

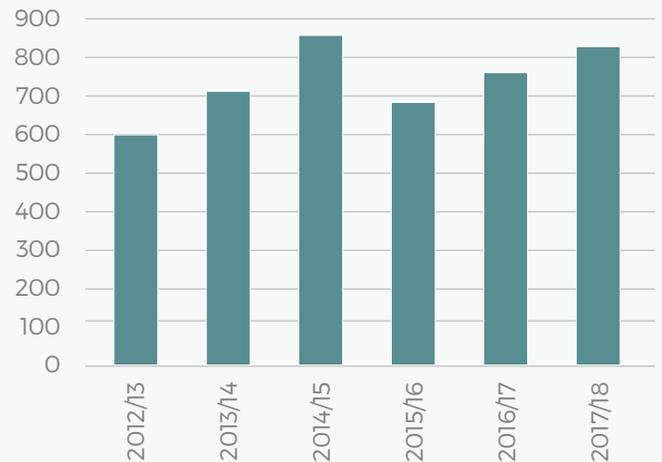
This section of the paper more closely examines the new sector of Qualified Independent Schools. What types of schools entered this sector, and how do they differ in type from other independent schools in the province? How are enrolments distributed across the Qualified Independent School sector, and what changes can be noted?

As observed earlier, this sector began with twenty schools and after six years had nineteen schools. Several opened and closed over the period, and one large one moved to the Associate Independent School sector. Enrolments have increased 37 percent over the period, showing an average yearly growth of 7.4 percent. Figure 3a shows the yearly enrolment changes, and figure 3b shows the year-over-year actual enrolments, while figure 3c shows the share of independent school enrolments that Qualified Independent Schools hold. In the first year, Qualified Independents School enrolments held 14.4 percent of independent school enrolments. Six years later the share of independent school students in Saskatchewan in Qualified Independent Schools increased to 17.3 percent. It would not be too conservative to conclude, as above, that other than the first year, changes have been modest in this sector, nor has the sector taken a dominant position (figure 3).



Figure 3: Qualified Independent Schools

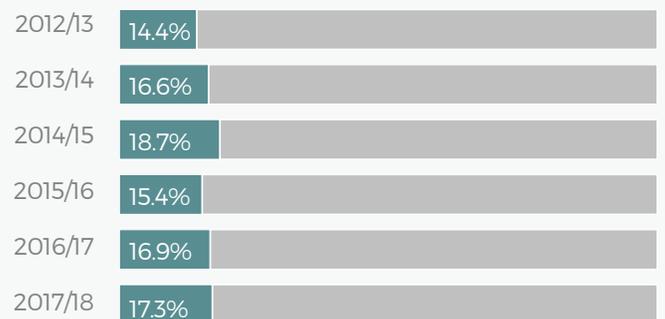
3a: Enrolment in Qualified Independent Schools



3b Year-over-year enrolment growth in Qualified Independent Schools



3c: Share in enrolment of independent schools that Qualified Independent Schools hold





RELIGIOUSLY-ORIENTED SCHOOLS

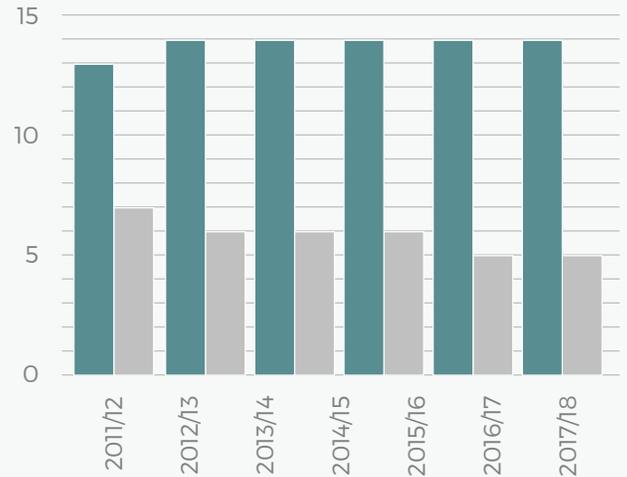
The type of schools that this sector features is of some interest both for Saskatchewan and for jurisdictions elsewhere that may be considering the implications of adopting such a policy. As is the case in many jurisdictions, the independent school sector is one of the places parents turn for a religiously-oriented elementary and/or secondary education of their children. Qualified Independent Schools from their beginning reflect this. In the first year, 65 percent of the Qualified Independent Schools were religiously-oriented (thirteen of twenty). Six years later, 73.4 percent (fourteen of nineteen schools, as shown in figure 4a) were religiously-oriented. In terms of the type of religious orientation, all fourteen were Christian (figure 4a).

The distribution of enrolments across religiously-oriented and non-religiously-oriented Qualified Independent Schools is slightly more balanced than the distribution of the schools. Figures 4b and 4c show the enrolment comparisons between religious and non-religious Qualified Independent Schools. (figures 4b, 4c). As show in figure 4c (see also figure 4b for actual enrolments), in the first year 58.4 percent of Qualified Independent School students were in religiously-oriented schools, and six years later 57.6 percent were.

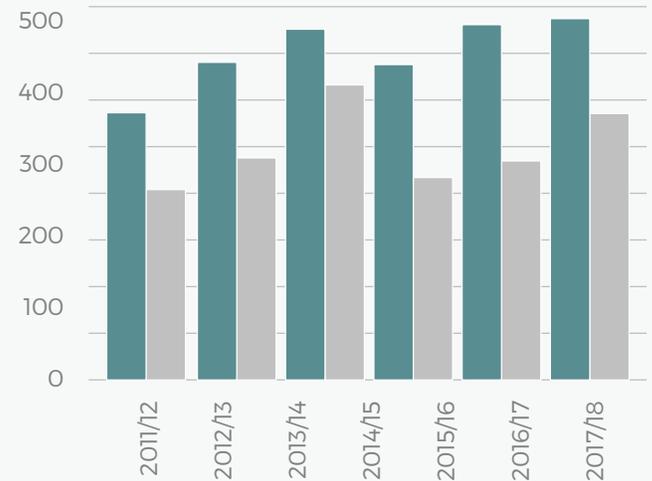
Figure 4: Qualified independent schools by religious orientation

■ religious, Christian ■ non-religious

4a: Number of qualified independent schools by religious orientation



4b: Enrolment in qualified independent schools by religious orientation



4c: Distribution of enrolment in qualified independent schools by religious orientation

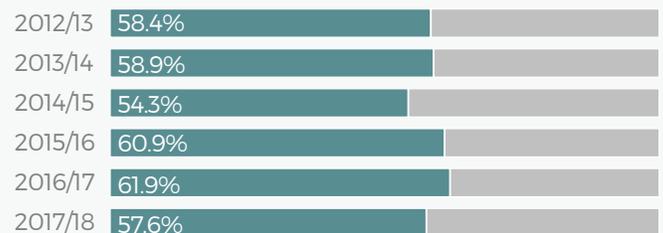
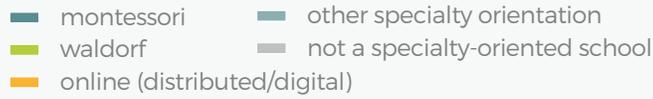
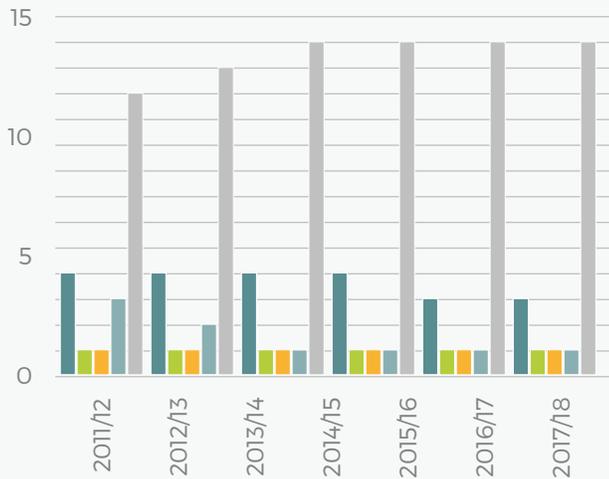


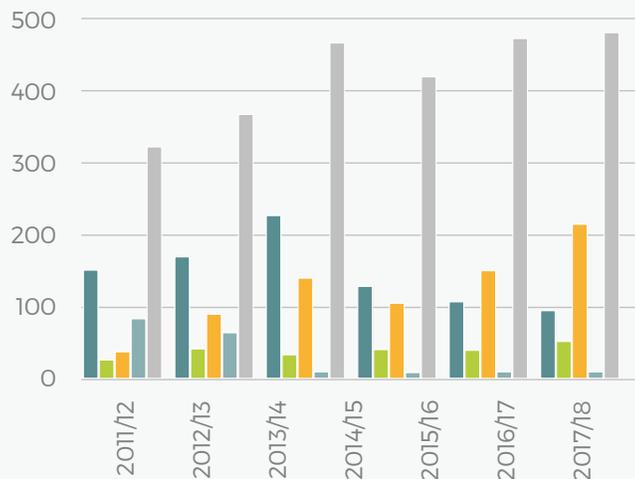
Figure 5: Qualified independent schools by specialty orientation



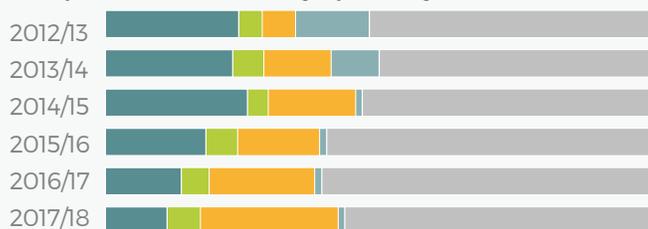
5a: Number of qualified independent schools by specialty orientation



5b: Enrolment in qualified independent schools by specialty orientation



5c: Distribution of enrolment in qualified independent schools by specialty orientation



SPECIALTY-ORIENTED SCHOOLS

In the first year (2012/2013) 45 percent of the Qualified Independent Schools were specialty schools, schools with a distinct pedagogical or unique student focus. We coded for four types: Montessori, Waldorf, online (distributed learning/digital learning), and other (which included international schools, sports schools, schools serving vulnerable and at-risk students, boarding schools, language, Reggio Emilia approach, etc.). In the most recent year less than a third (31.6 percent) were specialty schools (figure 5a).

In terms of enrolments, in the most recent year, 43.7 percent of students in Qualified Independent Schools are in specialty schools. (Note that in our analysis a school could be classified as both religious and specialty, which is the case in several instances.) Figures 5b and 5c show the enrolment distributions by year and the declines in share of Qualified Independent School enrolments in Montessori and other, and the increased share in online/distributed learning school enrolments (figures 5b, 5c).

Thus, almost three of every five (57.6 percent) Qualified Independent School students are in a religious school (which, it turns out, are all Christian schools), and at least two of every five (43.7 percent) are in a specialty school.

QUALIFIED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AND THE SASKATCHEWAN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SECTOR AS A WHOLE

Our analysis included one final item: considering the Qualified Independent School sector within the sector as a whole with respect to religiously-oriented schools and specialty-oriented schools. As noted earlier, sixty-three independent schools were in operation in 2017/2018, nineteen of which (17.3 percent) were Qualified Independent Schools.

In terms of the religiously-oriented schools, before the policy change 72.4 percent (42) of the independent schools were religiously-oriented. In the year immediately following the change, 73.7 percent (forty-two) were religiously-orient-

ed, and in 2017/2018 a reduction to 69.8 percent (forty-four) of the independent schools were religious. In other words, the overall share of independent schools that were religious did not change dramatically but trended downward slightly (figure 6a).

With respect to enrolments, before the policy change 82.1 percent of independent school students were in religiously-oriented schools, either Christian or Muslim. In the year immediately following the change, 77.6 percent were enrolled in religiously-oriented independent schools, and six years after the change 77.3 percent of independent school enrolments were in religious schools. Thus, both the share of independent schools and the enrolments that are in religiously-oriented schools declined six years after the policy took effect (figure 6b, c).



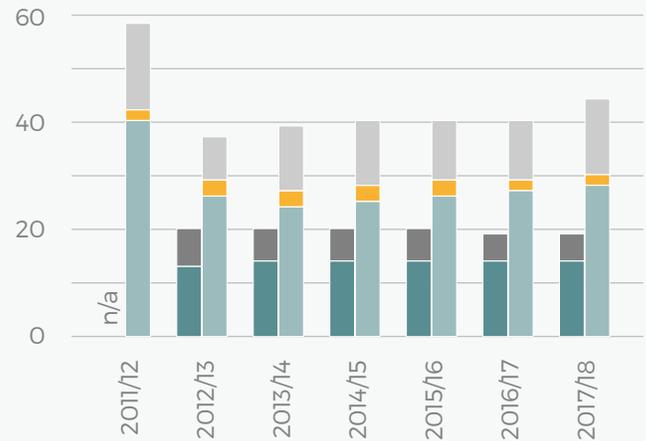
In terms of specialty-oriented schools within the independent school sector as a whole, before the policy change 43.1 percent (twenty-five) of the independent schools were specialty-oriented schools. Immediately following the change, 43.9 percent (twenty-five) were specialty-oriented schools. After six years, in 2017/2018, fully 46 percent of independent schools were specialty-oriented. In other words, the share of independent schools that were specialty-oriented, while still smaller than the share that were religiously-oriented trended upward (figure 7a).

With respect to enrolments, before the policy change 40.0 percent of independent school students were in specialty-oriented schools, including a wide range of specialities, as note above. In

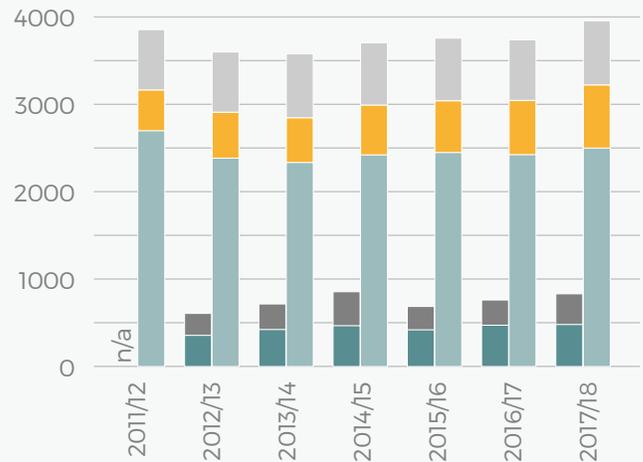
Figure 6: Independent schools by religious orientation

- qualified independent | religious - Christian
- qualified independent | not religious
- other | religious - Christian
- other | religious - Muslim
- other | not religious

6a: Number of independent schools by religious orientation



6b: Enrolment in independent schools by religious orientation



6c: Distribution of enrolment in independent schools by religious orientation

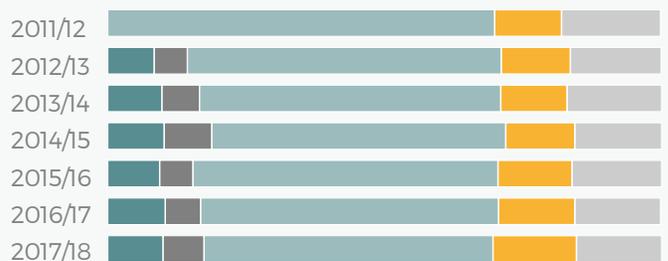
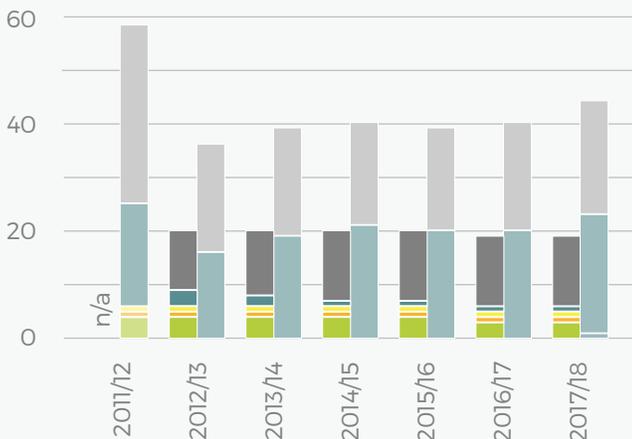


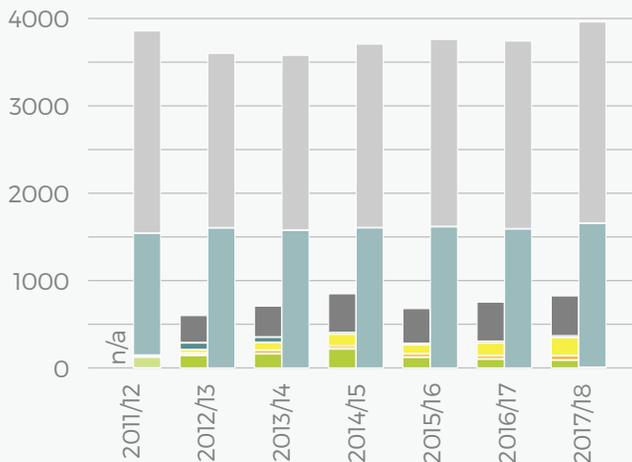
Figure 7: Independent schools by specialty orientation

- qualified independent | montessori
- qualified independent | waldorf
- qualified independent | online (distributed/digital)
- qualified independent | other specialty orientation
- qualified independent | not a specialty-oriented school
- other | montessori
- other | waldorf
- other | online (distributed/digital)
- other | other specialty orientation
- other | not a specialty-oriented school

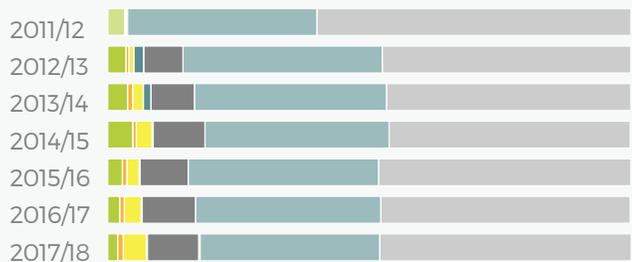
7a: Number of independent schools by specialty orientation



7b: Enrolment in independent schools by specialty orientation



7c: Distribution of enrolment in independent schools by religious orientation



the year immediately following the change, 45 percent were enrolled in specialty-oriented independent schools, and six years after the change 42.2 percent of independent school enrolments were in specialty schools. Thus while the share of specialty schools in the independent school sector increased after the policy change, the share of independent school students in specialty schools showed an increase, but not quite as large as the increase in school share (figure 7b, c).

SUMMARY

The addition of Qualified Independent Schools, a fifth independent school category in Saskatchewan, the fourth to offer partial government funding, had a significant impact in the first year of the policy change. Prior to the change, in terms of schools, 67.2 percent of independent schools in Saskatchewan were unfunded. Only one year later that was reduced to 31.6 percent. Prior to the change, in terms of students, 21.4 percent of independent school students attended unfunded independent schools. Only one year later that was reduced to 8.2 percent. While these represent rather noteworthy changes, since then stability has been the story of independent schools in Saskatchewan in terms of numbers of schools and numbers of students. In the most recent year, for example, 36.5 percent of independent schools are unfunded, representing 10.6 percent of students in independent schools, which indicates only slight and stable growth in the funded independent school sector in Saskatchewan.

Furthermore, with respect to religiously-oriented schools, while they do make up a majority of independent schools in Saskatchewan, taken as a whole they represent a slightly downward trending share of the independent school sector (measured both in share of schools and in share of students). In contrast, while specialty-oriented schools represent a sizeable but nonetheless smaller share of independent schools and students, taken as a whole, they represent a slightly upward trending share of the independent school sector (measured both in share of schools and in share of students).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The announcement of December 2011 resulted in the creation of a new category of partially funded independent schools in Saskatchewan, a category beyond the original three funded ones. Prior to the change, entry to the funded schools categories was rather restricted if a school did not qualify based on historical contribution to filling educational gaps geographically (Historical High Schools), or based on serving students of the province placed in the schools by the ministry of social services (Alternative Independent Schools), or by entering into an agreement with a local school district to function within the district (Associate Schools). While the initial shift resulted in about a third of schools moving from being unfunded Registered schools to partially funded Qualified Independent Schools, since then any changes in enrolment or entrants of new schools to the market have been modest. Increases in the sector overall have been consistent and stable. Overall, while about 7 of every 10 independent schools is a religious school, that sector is trending slightly downward in terms of share of schools and students, while the specialty school sector now representing more than 4.5 of every 10 independent schools is trending slowly upward in terms of share of schools and students.

It is worth noting that the independent school sector enrolments showed 24.1 percent growth over the seven years from the year of the announcement. This could simply be a mirroring of growth in the independent school sector experienced in general across Canada in the last several decades. The fact that Saskatchewan has shown the highest rate of growth among the provinces may be a reflection of the attention offered the sector through policy changes such as the creation of a new sector. Even so, over-

all, the share of Saskatchewan students attending independent schools is one of the lowest in the country, and thus its growth rates should be analyzed in that context. It is reasonable to conclude that policy changes in independent schooling may have a dramatic, immediate, and predictable effect, perhaps correcting some latent, built-up demand, but over time the impact on enrolments in the various education sectors overall cannot be characterized as disruptive.

Other benefits of the addition of the more widely accessible independent school category (Qualified Independent Schools) are noted anecdotally and include the expansion of options for families, more innovative approaches to education being established and experimented, improved parent satisfaction, and possible improvement in contact and relationships between independent schools and ministry of education. With only 2.4 percent of Saskatchewan students attending independent schools, it can be concluded that this new category of funded independent schools had an overall limited impact on public school enrolments and served mainly as a one-time recognition of inequity of access to funded independent school options. Given the higher regulatory requirements for the funded schools, the change has resulted in increased accountability for the qualifying independent schools.

Does the establishment and relative stability in the new sector of funded independent schools depend on any unique circumstances? This is a question for further study. Certainly it appears that other than the more dramatic shifts in the initial year of implementation of the policy change, stability and lack of any further dramatic changes appears to be the result of this policy change. ^

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APPENDIX

Table 1a: Count of Independent Schools in Saskatchewan by Ministry Category, 2011/12-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Alternative	3	5	8	7	7	7	7
Associate	9	10	10	11	11	10	10
Historical High School	7	4	4	4	4	4	4
Outreach School			1	1	1		
Qualified Independent		20	20	20	20	19	19
Registered Independent	39	18	16	17	16	19	23
Total	58	57	59	60	59	9	63

Table 1b: Distribution of Independent Schools in Saskatchewan by Ministry Category, 2011/12-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Alternative	5.2%	8.8%	13.6%	11.7%	11.9%	11.9%	11.1%
Associate	15.5%	17.5%	16.9%	18.3%	18.6%	16.9%	15.9%
Historical High School	12.1%	7.1%	6.8%	6.7%	6.8%	6.8%	6.3%
Outreach School	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Qualified Independent	0.0%	35.1%	33.9%	33.3%	33.9%	32.2%	30.2%
Registered Independent	67.2%	31.6%	27.1%	28.3%	27.1%	32.2%	36.5%
Total	100%						

Table 2a: Enrolment in Independent Schools in Saskatchewan by Ministry Category, 2011/12-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Alternative	87	253	241	223	207	195	223
Associate	1,750	2,133	2,121	2,265	2,303	2,231	2,341
Historical High School	1,210	889	871	875	908	899	907
Outreach School			36	23	28		
Qualified Independent		608	717	858	688	763	834
Registered Independent	831	345	329	340	334	436	509
Total	3,878	4,228	4,315	4,584	4,468	4,524	4,814

Table 2b: Distribution of Independent School Enrolment in Saskatchewan by Ministry Category, 2011/12-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Alternative	2.2%	6.0%	5.6%	4.9%	4.6%	4.3%	4.6%
Associate	45.1%	50.4%	49.2%	49.4%	51.5%	49.3%	48.6%
Historical High School	31.2%	21.0%	20.2%	19.1%	20.3%	19.9%	18.8%
Outreach School	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Qualified Independent	0.0%	14.4%	16.6%	18.7%	15.4%	16.9%	17.3%
Registered Independent	21.4%	8.2%	7.6%	7.4%	7.5%	9.6%	10.6%
Total	100%						

Table 3 (a, b, c): Enrolment, Enrolment Growth, and Enrolment Share of Qualified Independent Schools, 2012/13-2017/18

	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Enrolment	608	717	858	688	763	834
Year-over-year enrolment growth	n/a	17.9%	19.7%	-19.8%	10.9%	9.3%
QIS share of total enrolment in independent schools	14.4%	16.6%	18.7%	15.4%	16.8%	17.3%

Table 4a: Number of Qualified Independent Schools by Religious Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Religious, Christian	13	14	14	14	14	14
Non-religious	7	6	6	6	5	5
Total	20	20	20	20	19	19

Table 4b: Enrolment in Qualified Independent Schools by Religious Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Religious, Christian	355	422	466	419	472	480
Non-religious	253	295	392	269	291	354
Total	608	717	858	688	763	834

Table 4c: Distribution of Enrolment in Qualified Independent Schools by Religious Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Religious, Christian	58.4%	58.9%	54.3%	60.9%	61.9%	57.6%
Non-religious	41.6%	41.1%	45.7%	39.1%	38.1%	42.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 5a: Number of Qualified Independent Schools by Specialty Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Montessori	4	4	4	4	3	3
Waldorf	1	1	1	1	1	1
Online (distributed/digital)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Other specialty orientation	3	2	1	1	1	1
Not a specialty-oriented school	11	12	13	13	13	13
Total	20	20	20	20	19	19

Table 5b: Enrolment in Qualified Independent Schools by Specialty Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Montessori	148	166	222	126	105	93
Waldorf	26	41	33	40	39	51
Online (distributed/digital)	37	88	137	103	147	210
Other specialty orientation	82	63	10	9	10	10
Not a specialty-oriented school	315	359	456	410	462	470
Total	608	717	858	688	763	834

Table 5c: Distribution of Enrolment in Qualified Independent Schools by Specialty Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Montessori	24.3%	23.2%	25.9%	18.3%	13.8%	11.2%
Waldorf	4.3%	5.7%	3.8%	5.8%	5.1%	6.1%
Online (distributed/digital)	6.1%	12.3%	16.0%	15.0%	19.3%	25.2%
Other specialty orientation	13.5%	8.8%	1.2%	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%
Not a specialty-oriented school	51.8%	50.1%	53.1%	59.6%	60.6%	56.4%
Total						

Table 6a: Number of Independent Schools by Religious Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Qualified Independent		20	20	20	20	19	19
Religious – Christian		13	14	14	14	14	14
Not religious		7	6	6	6	5	5
Other	58	37	39	40	39	40	44
Religious – Christian	40	26	24	25	26	27	28
Religious – Muslim	2	3	3	3	2	2	2
Not religious	16	8	12	12	11	11	14
Total	58	57	59	60	59	59	63

Table 6b: Enrolment in Independent Schools by Religious Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Qualified Independent		608	717	858	688	763	834
Religious – Christian		355	422	466	419	472	480
Not religious		253	295	392	269	291	354
Other	3,878	3,620	3,598	3,726	3,780	3,761	3,980
Religious – Christian	2,712	2,397	2,346	2,434	2,461	2,436	2,513
Religious – Muslim	470	529	516	574	597	626	727
Not religious	696	694	736	718	722	699	740
Total	3,878	4,228	4,315	4,584	4,468	4,524	4,814

Table 6c: Distribution of Enrolment in Independent Schools by Religious Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Qualified Independent	0%	14.4%	16.6%	18.7%	15.4%	16.9%	17.3%
Religious – Christian	0%	8.4%	9.8%	10.2%	9.4%	10.4%	10%
Not religious	0%	6.0%	6.8%	8.6%	6.0%	6.4%	7.4%
Other	100%	85.6%	83.4%	81.3%	84.6%	83.1%	82.7%
Religious – Christian	69.9%	56.7%	54.4%	53.1%	55.1%	53.8%	52.2%
Religious – Muslim	12.1%	12.5%	12.0%	12.5%	13.4%	13.8%	15.1%
Not religious	17.9%	16.4%	17.1%	15.7%	16.2%	15.5%	15.4%
Total	100%						

Table 7a: Number of Independent Schools by Religious Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Qualified Independent		20	20	20	20	19	19
Montessori		4	4	4	4	3	3
Waldorf		1	1	1	1	1	1
Online (distributed/digital)		1	1	1	1	1	1
Other specialty orientation		3	2	1	1	1	1
Not a specialty-oriented school		11	12	13	13	13	13
Other	58	37	39	40	39	40	44
Montessori	4						1
Waldorf	1						
Online (distributed/digital)	1						
Other specialty orientation	19	16	19	21	20	20	22
Not a specialty-oriented school	33	21	20	19	19	20	21
Total	58	57	59	60	59	59	63

Table 7b: Enrolment in Independent Schools by Specialty Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Qualified Independent		608	717	858	688	763	834
Montessori		148	166	222	126	105	93
Waldorf		26	41	33	40	39	51
Online (distributed/digital)		37	88	137	103	147	210
Other specialty orientation		82	63	10	9	10	10
Not a specialty-oriented school		315	359	456	410	462	470
Other	3,878	3,620	3,598	3,726	3,780	3,761	3,980
Montessori	129						5
Waldorf	8						
Online (distributed/digital)	3						
Other specialty orientation	1,410	1,612	1,585	1,614	1,626	1,601	1,660
Not a specialty-oriented school	2,328	2,008	2,013	2,112	2,154	2,160	2,315
Total	3,878	4,228	4,315	4,584	4,468	4,524	4,814

Table 7c: Distribution of Enrolment in Independent Schools by Specialty Orientation, 2012/13-2017/18

	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
Qualified Independent	0%	14.4%	16.6%	18.7%	15.4%	16.9%	17.3%
Montessori	0%	3.5%	3.8%	4.8%	2.8%	2.3%	1.9%
Waldorf	0%	0.6%	1.0%	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%
Online (distributed/digital)	0%	0.9%	2.0%	3.0%	2.3%	3.2%	4.4%
Other specialty orientation	0%	1.9%	1.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Not a specialty-oriented school	0%	7.5%	8.3%	9.9%	9.2%	10.2%	9.8%
Other	100%	85.6%	83.4%	81.3%	84.6%	83.1%	82.7%
Montessori	3.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.1%
Waldorf	0.2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Online (distributed/digital)	0.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other specialty orientation	36.4%	38.1%	36.7%	35.2%	36.4%	35.4%	34.5%
Not a specialty-oriented school	60.0%	47.5%	46.7%	46.1%	48.2%	47.7%	48.1%
Total	100%						

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