

What might public education policy makers learn from the governance of private education in the GCC?

Key Ideas:

- Effective governance is an essential component in greater school autonomy.
- Accountability combined with greater autonomy can improve school performance.
- Governance models should encourage diversity and innovation.
- Empowering stakeholders is a cornerstone of good governance.

Across the world, policy makers have been grappling with the challenge and ambition of providing greater levels of school autonomy in public education. This ambition raises questions about effective models of governance for public education, and how these models can support the aims and objectives of policy makers. In the GCC, policy makers have long wrestled with the challenge of providing effective governance of private education. What can policy makers in public education learn from this experience?

In the GCC, private schools educate a substantial and growing proportion of the student population. For example, in Dubai alone, there are 215 private schools, educating over 300,000 students and offering 18 different curriculum choices. Alongside the private sector, there is a growing and increasingly diverse public sector, especially in the UAE. The Charter Schools and Ajyal Schools initiatives, for example, are especially prominent examples of policy makers' ambitions to encourage greater diversity and innovation in the public sector, and to develop effective partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Evidence has consistently shown that accountability contributes to improved outcomes, especially in a context of greater school autonomy. Tribal recommends that effective governance should encourage both diversity as well as innovation, but also provide a framework for robust accountability. We believe that policy makers should reflect on the extent to which public school governance ensures a focus on four key policy goals:

Policy goal 1: Encourage Innovation.

Most high achieving countries allow schools varying degrees of autonomy over resources, personnel, and educational content.

Policy goal 2: Ensure accountability.

Increases in autonomy should be matched by standards and interventions to increase access and improve quality.

Policy goal 3: Empower stakeholders.

When parents and students have access to information on school quality, they have greater power to hold schools accountable and the voice to lobby for better services.

Policy goal 4: Promote diversity.

By encouraging a more diverse range of schools, governments can promote improvements in school performance.

Tribal has long played an important role in supporting accountability and governance systems and across the GCC, primarily through our world-class model for school inspections. As policy makers wrestle with the challenge of an increasingly diverse public education system, we look forward to playing a part in ensuring highly effective governance and accountability.

For more information on strengthening the governance of public education systems, get in touch with one of our Middle East Education Specialists.