

Faith, Rights and Choice: The Politics of Religious Schools in Canada

Jim Farney
jim.farney@uregina.ca
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FAITH,
RIGHTS,
and
CHOICE

THE POLITICS OF
RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS
IN CANADA

JAMES FARNEY
and CLARK BANACK

1. Canadian Context

1. Saskatchewan

1. Wrong Question?

1. Q + A

Canada

Core Puzzle: Why is it that Canadian provinces have evolved and maintained different ways of governing, funding, and regulating religious schools?

Core Answer: “...an evolution through historical periods where contention over faith, rights, and choice have defined political debate on this theme. Evolution in the problems faced by policy-makers, and in the central issue of debate, led to changes in the institutional support...” (190)

- Patterns of governance change driven both by gradual shifts within provinces (eg secularization) and by outside shocks to provincial politics (eg immigration or economic crisis).

- Fundamentally provincial stories

Historical Evolution of Policy Problem

Faith: Religious divide essential to politics, institutional configuration designed with religion in mind. Roughly 1840s-1960s

Rights: Along w other group identities like language, claims to group rights start to be an important framing 1960s-80s. Something of a complex transitional period

Choice: Building of regimes ostensibly neutral on secular v religion regimes of government regulation and support based on support of parental choice from 1970s forward

<u>Province</u>	<u>Contemporary</u>	<u>Historical Path</u>
Ontario	Public/Seperate	Faith
Quebec	Public/Independent	Faith, Rights, Choice
PEI/NB/NS	Public	Faith
Nfld and Labrador	Public	Faith
Manitoba	Public/Independent	Faith, Rights, Choice
British Columbia	Public/Independent	Faith, Rights, Choice
Saskatchewan	Public/Separate/Independent (3)/Historical High School	Faith, Rights, Choice
Alberta	Public/Separate/Independent (2)/Charter	Faith, Rights, Choice

Saskatchewan

Faith in Saskatchewan

Manitoba Schools Crisis as critical national unity crisis c 1900

1905 *Saskatchewan Act* protects public (Protestant) and separate (RC) systems

1915-30 Political debate between national school (Cons) and multiple system (Lib), especially over language of instruction

1964 Lloyd (CCF) government extends funding to Catholic high schools after political campaign that drew on themes of natural law, UN Declaration of Human Rights, and parental rights but sought a “harmonious” and “political” resolution.

Rights in Saskatchewan

Element of rights arguments, though not court test, in separate high school 1960s

Francophone mobilization dates to 1912, but really gains post 1968 Tait Commission and cemented by 1990 *Mahé* Supreme Court decision

Rights claims at heart of *Good Spirit v Christ the Teacher*

Bill 89 *School Choice Protection Act* (2017)

Choice in Saskatchewan

Historic High Schools receiving variable support 1964 (Thatcher Liberals) forward

Home-Schooling and Evangelical Christian Schools receive attention with Dirks Report (1987) and Ministers Advisory Board on Independent Schools (1990).

Starts modern framework of:

- Registered, Qualified, and Certified* Independent Schools

- Associate Schools with Board Relationship

- Alternative Schools

- Historical High Schools

What's Different Now?

Legacy Christian Academy abuse scandal

Good Spirit appeal

Online Education

Sex Education + Pronoun Usage

Politically active Sask Teacher's Federation

Govt use of notwithstanding clause

But so what??

Existing Measure of Choice Between System in Canada

Asadolahi, Farney, Triadafilopoulos, and White 2021b measuring 8 indicators over time:

- Homeschooling
- Independent School Support
- State Delivered Religious Education
- State Delivered minority language education
- Indigenous Education
- Charter School
- Choice inside public education
- Accredited International School

Some growth in choice across provinces but less than in rest of OECD

School Choice Across Provinces

1980 1990 2000 2010 2020

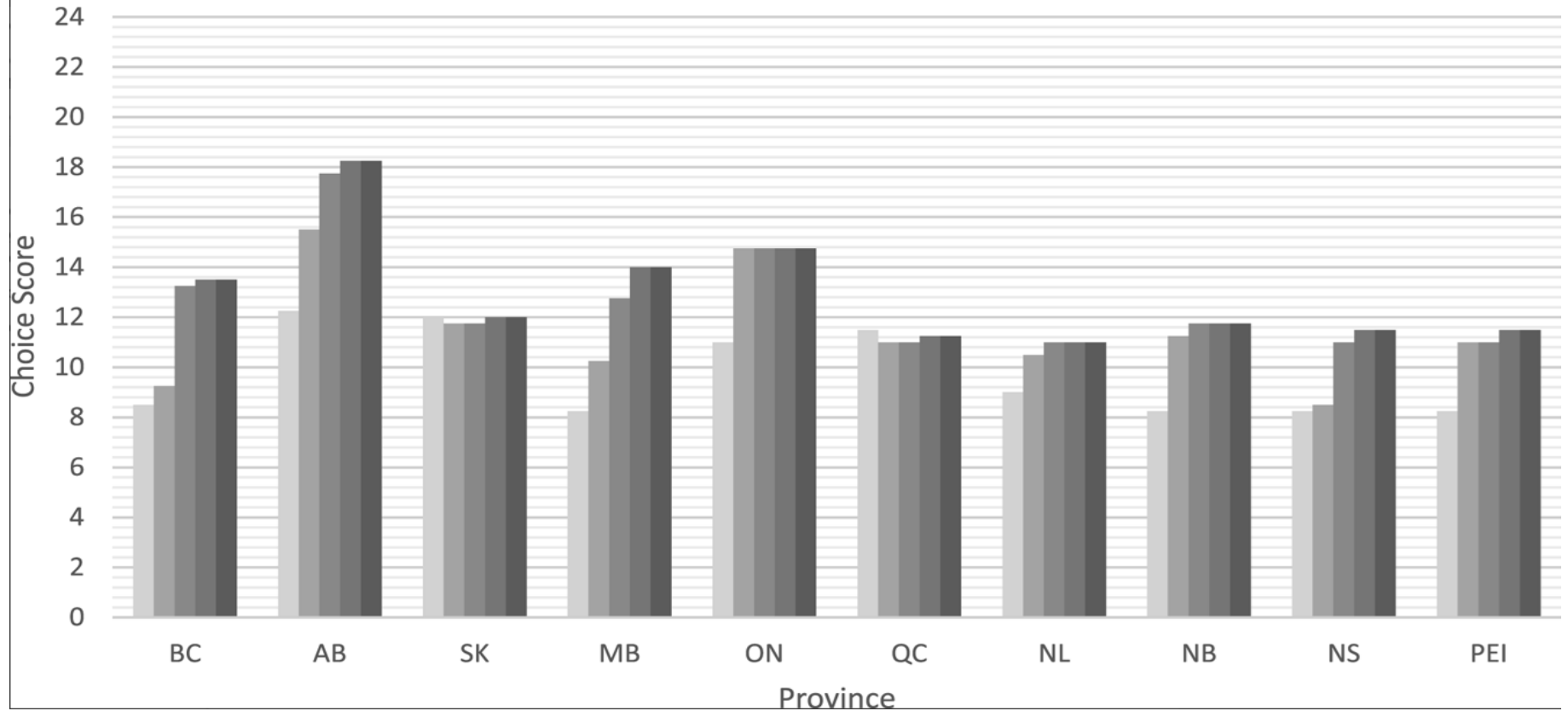
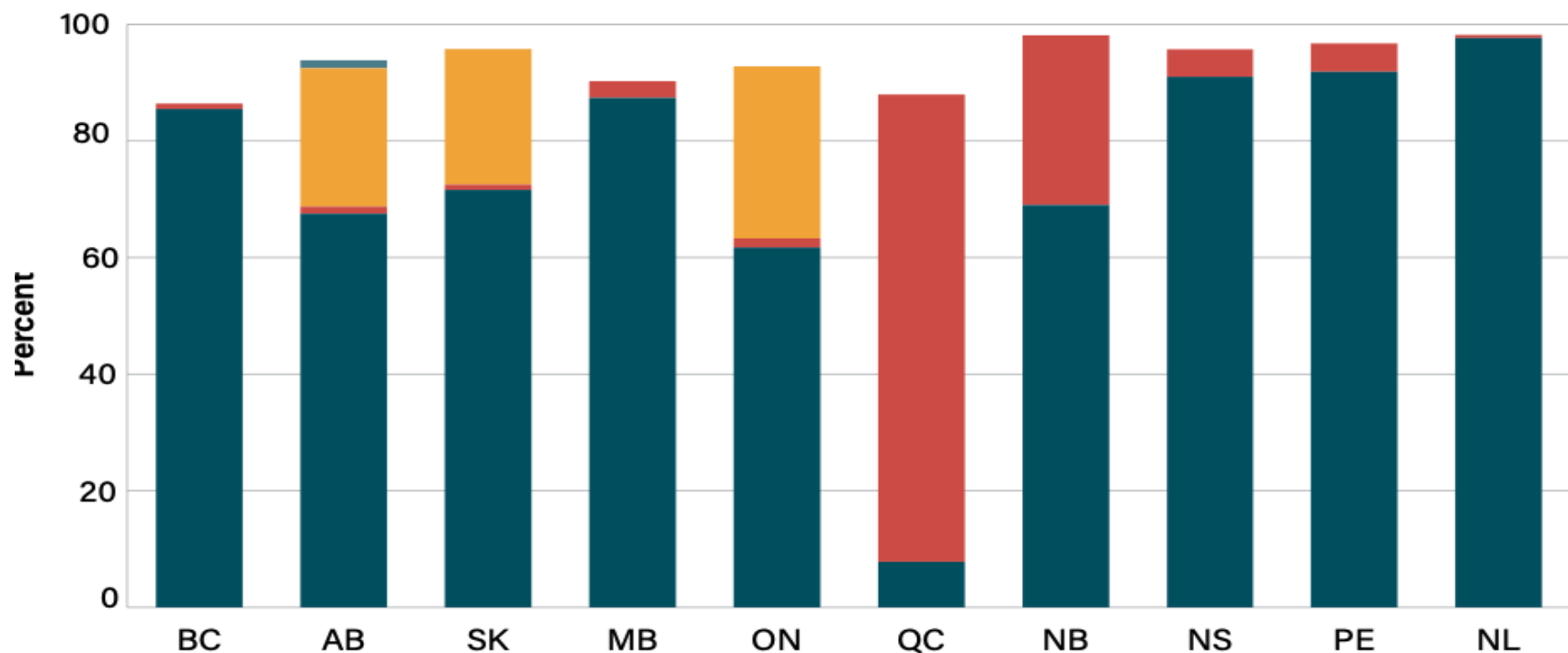


Figure 6: Public School Enrolment as a Share of Total Enrolment by Type of School, 2019-20



Notes and sources: See Appendix.

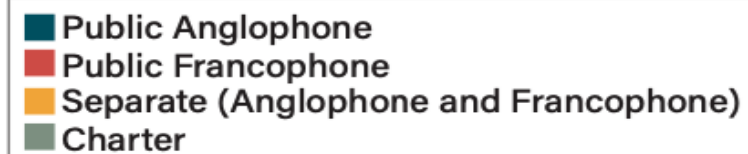
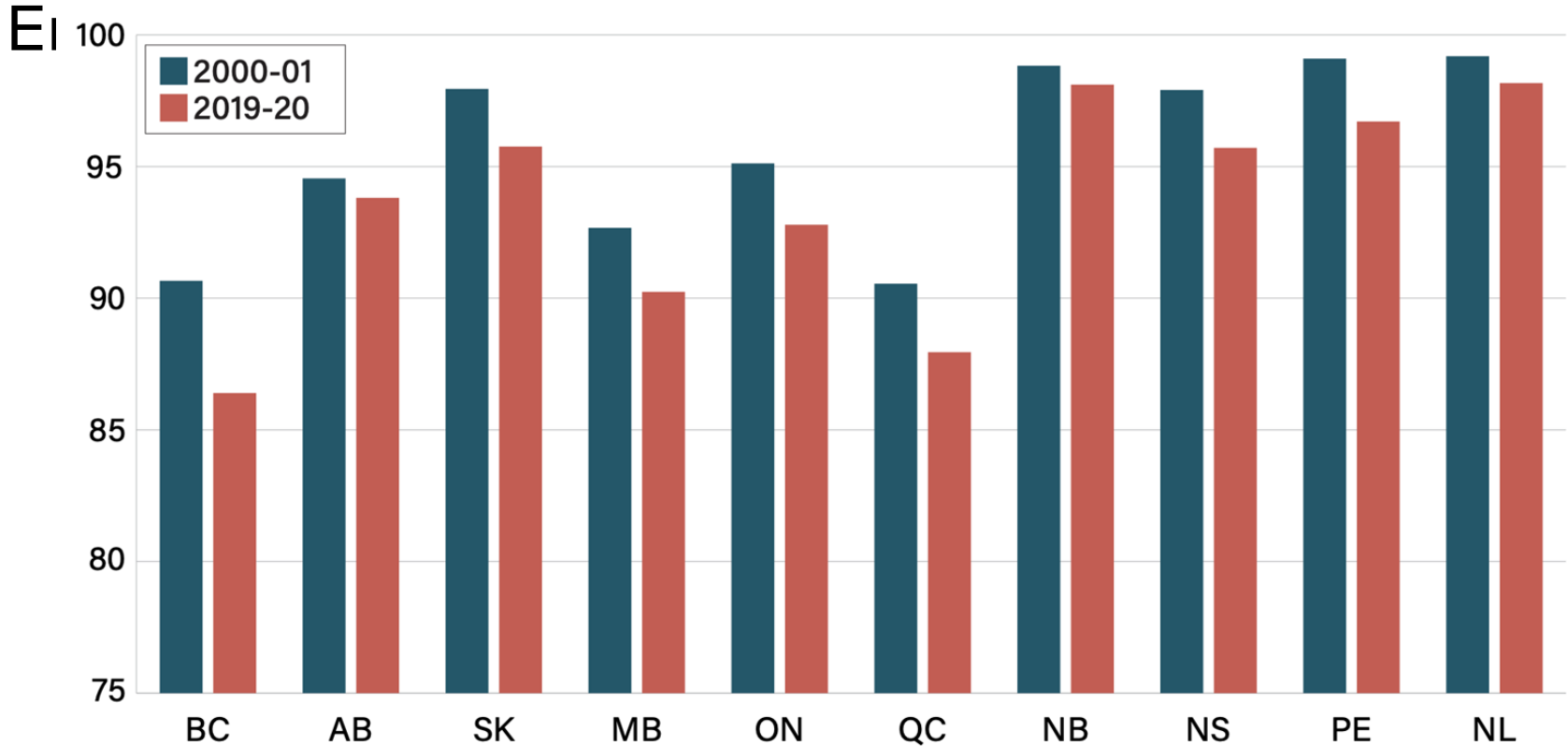


Figure 7: Aggregate Public School Enrolment as a Share of Total Enrolment, 2000-01 and 2019-20



Fraser Institute

Fraser Institute 2022

How French immersion inadvertently created class and cultural divides at schools across Canada

As affluent white families drive demand for francophone programs and immigrant diasporas urge schools to teach in other languages, officials and parents are struggling to redefine what equitable education looks like

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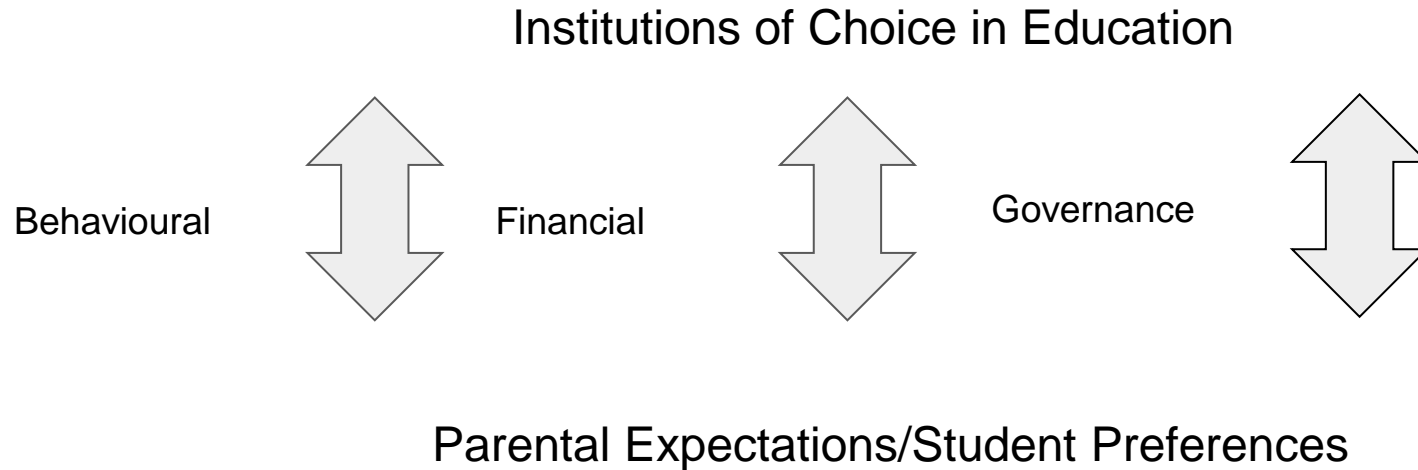
Pages 279-298 | Received 27 Jun 2016, Accepted 20 Jun 2017, Published online: 29 Jun 2017

Cite this article

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1346203>

Check for updates

What Might be Going on



Granular Stories of Increased Choice?

Culturally or pedagogically specialized schools (+)

Curricular Streaming (+)

Parental Permissions: Sex/Religious Ed or Pronouns (+)

Open or closed catchment areas and geographic sorting (+)

Standardized Testing (-)

Delivery Modality (+)

Spending on Extra-Curriculars (+)

Shifts in Finance and Governance affect response

Ministry Oversight (+)

Union/Teachers College/Federation role in curricular setting (+)

Ministerial Directives/political oversight (+/-)

Board/District Operational Autonomy (-)

Board/School Financial Autonomy and Charitable Status (+)

School/Parent Councils (-)

Other Agents (ie Children's Advocates) (+)

Exit, Voice, and Loyalty ? (Hirschman 1970)

Exit

Economic

Fails in absence of market
competition

Pricing is crucial

Voice

Political

Fails in absence of accountability
mechanisms

Quality crucial

'Loyalty' as a critical to good governance

Basic Concept

Belief that product can be improved

Belief that you can influence org

Requires engagement and credible
threat of exit to be effective

Summing up

Faith, Right, and Exit as map variation in Canadian model

Faith, Right, and Exit as guide to Saskatchewan's history

But, perhaps,

Exit, Voice, or Loyalty as a better way to think about future

Choice is about more than sex ed or pronouns

THANKS!