

School Choice

Sociology

What choice systems do to sorting, and who is best placed to use them.

The design promise, then what research repeatedly finds.

The promise

Competition raises school quality.

Families escape a failing local school.

Diversity of provision to suit pupils.

Accountability through enrolment.

What research finds

Choice is used unevenly by class.

Transport and information are real barriers.

Popular schools select as much as they are chosen.

Sorting between schools often increases.

Average effects on attainment are small.

Results differ sharply between systems.

Educational reference. Evidence on charter, free and voucher schools is mixed and contested; effects vary by design and setting.