

# The Three Pillars of Educational Pluralism

## Availability, Access, and Accountability

Joanna DeJong VanHof | July 2025

### Key Points

- Educational pluralism is a system of education found in many democracies around the world, in which the government funds and regulates, but does not necessarily deliver, the education.
  - Educational pluralism as a philosophy differs from school choice and privatization, which are two other ways of thinking about schooling options.
  - To put it simply: educational pluralism views education through the lens of institutions and communities in addition to the individual and the state. By contrast, the lens of school choice is of the individual versus the state, and the lens of privatization is of state versus non-state actors.
  - There are three pillars, or essential characteristics, that should undergird a robust policy of educational pluralism: (1) a commitment to the availability of educational options, (2) broad access to these options, and (3) accountability to families, civil society, and government for educational quality and student outcomes.
- **Availability:** Schooling options should extend beyond the availability of choice within district systems. The options available should reflect the full range of diverse needs and values of children and communities.
  - **Access:** Broad access to options should be facilitated by government funding and by reducing or eliminating geographic and technical barriers.
  - **Accountability:** Schools should operate according to established norms that unify schools in their local spheres and build societal trust more broadly. Government has a role to play in ensuring that broad goals are met relating to educational outcomes, student safety, and the like.



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