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School systems, regulation and assessment of schools and the social quality of education

Education has multiple tasks

	Optimize core competencies (math, reading)	Prepare for labour market	Increase civic engagement
“Efficiency”: <i>maximizing the outcomes</i>			
“Equality”: <i>equalizing the outcomes (across pupils, schools, regions...)</i>			

Education policy makers, inspectorates and politicians have to navigate through these multiple objectives

Civic and Citizenship outcomes

- A core function of education
- Particularly relevant from the perspective of efficiency and equality:
 - **What is a better society; one with high average civic engagement but large inequalities, or another with lower average civic engagement but small inequalities?**
- Despite its centrality, there is little comparative knowledge on the influence of the **educational system** on civic and citizenship learning (unlike core subjects and the labour market).
- Issues of standardization (such as centralized guidelines and accountability) are system characteristics.



Educational system characteristics related to national standardization and civic and citizenship outcomes

	Efficiency of civic and citizenship outcomes	Equality of civic and citizenship outcomes
Centralization	?	?
School accountability	?	?

(Joint work with PhD candidate Jacqueline Witschge)

Standardization: two forms

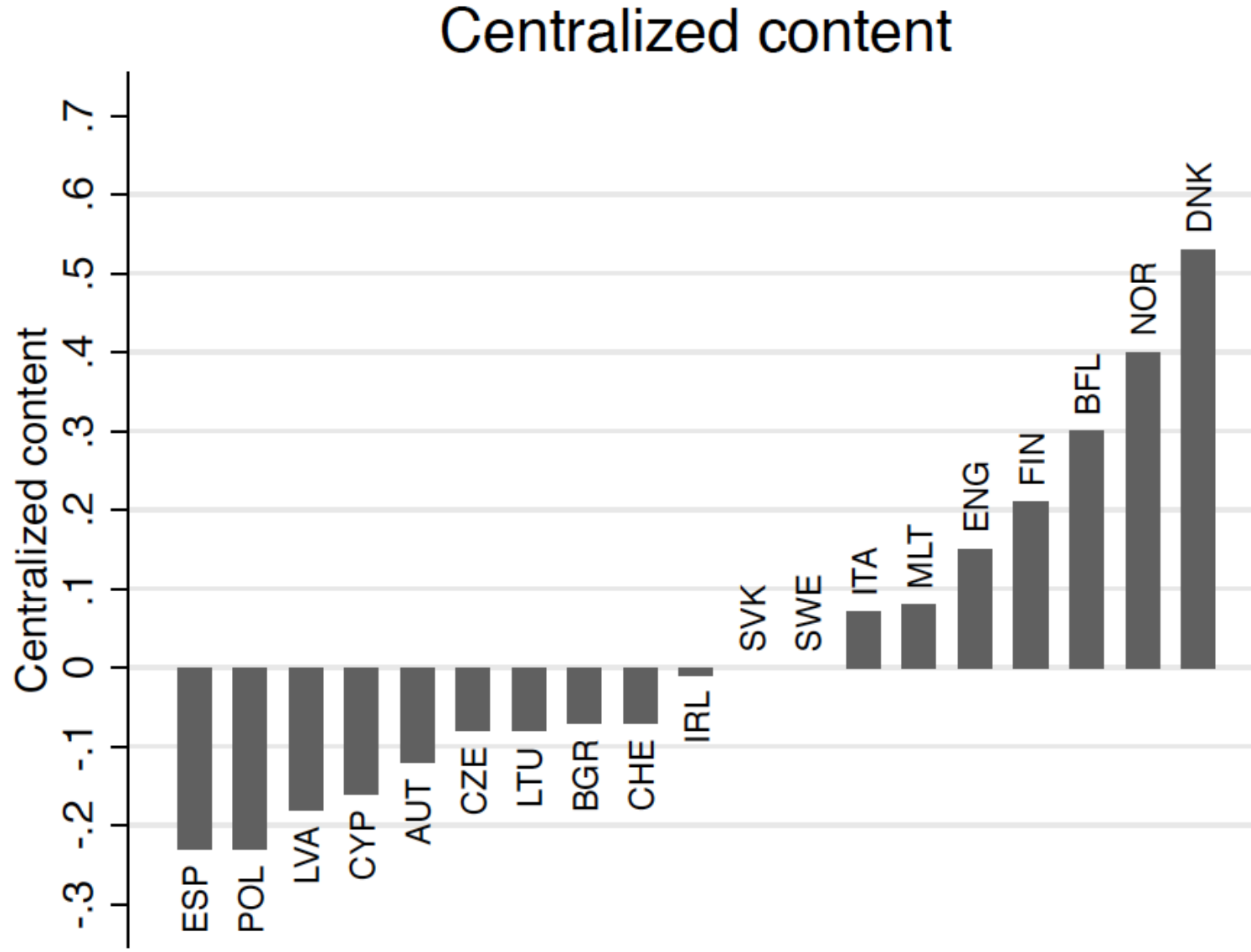
- **Centralization:** (sub)national regulations and recommendations for schools concerning civic and citizenship education (aggregate of ICCS teacher survey).
- **Accountability:** External school evaluation of civic and citizenship education (yes or no).

(Source: Eurydice. (2012). *Citizenship education in Europe*. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency)

“evaluation of the quality of the teaching and learning process, student learning outcomes, as well as adherence to official curriculum content and to recommended teaching methods”).

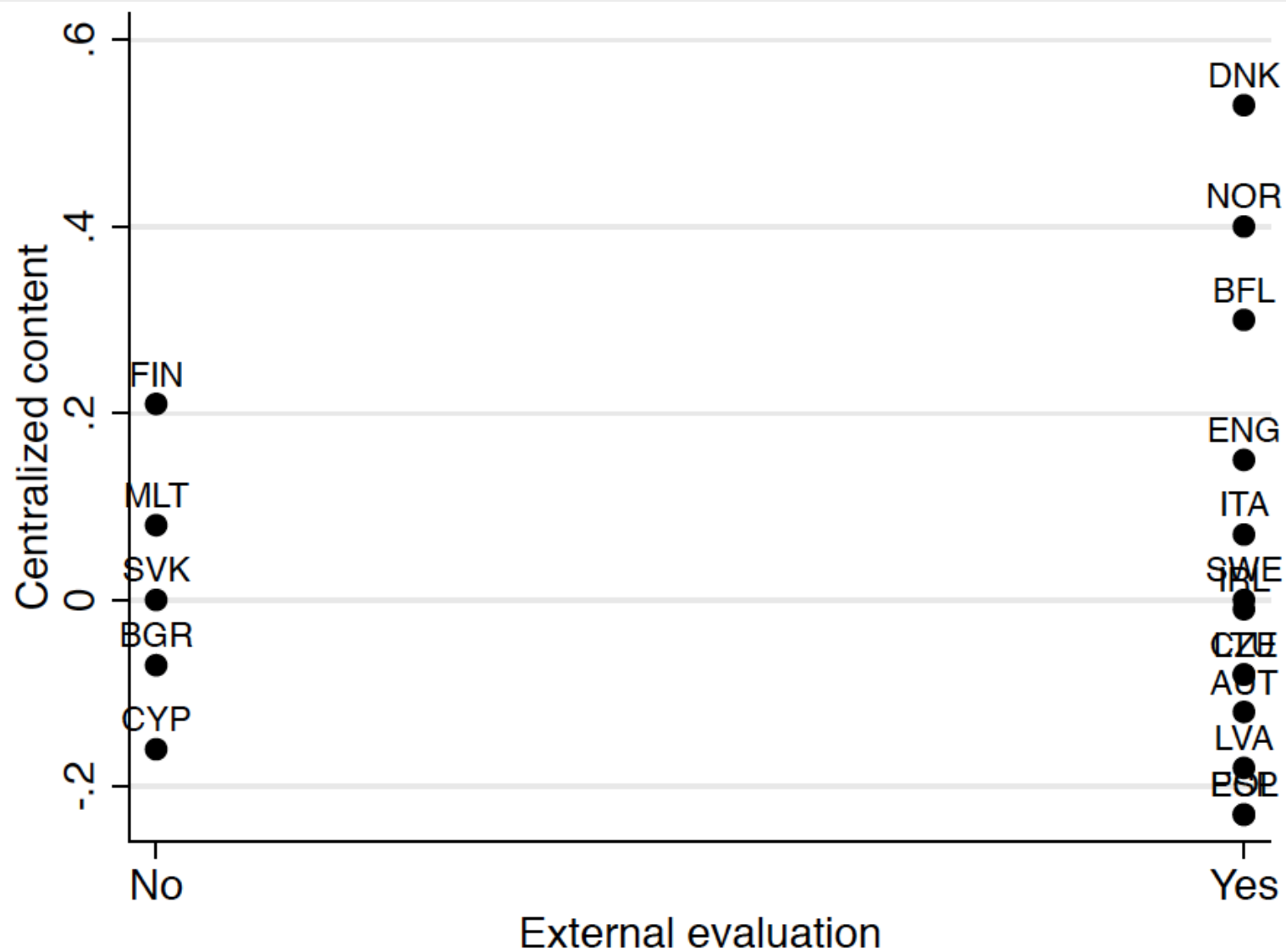
Centralization and accountability

- Centralization: reducing inequality? Making schools more alike.
- Accountability: Increasing school competition, thereby increasing inequality?





Centralization and accountability in civic and citizenship education



The central question is: Are centralization and accountability of civic and citizenship education related to average student-level civic engagement and equality in civic engagement?

- **Efficiency**: High averages
- **Equality**:
 - ❖ **low variance** between schools
 - ❖ **low association** between social background and civic outcomes

How is standardization related to efficiency and inequality in civic and citizenship education?

- Data: International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, ICCS 2009.
- Grade 8 students in 38 countries, of which I use 22/19 European countries (depending on availability of country-level statistics).
- Two sorts of inequality:
 - Inequality by social background
 - Differences between schools in civic outcomes
- Social background: SES and Parents' political interest.
- Controls for religion, migrant status, gender, age.

Results from multilevel models: students nested in schools, nested in countries.

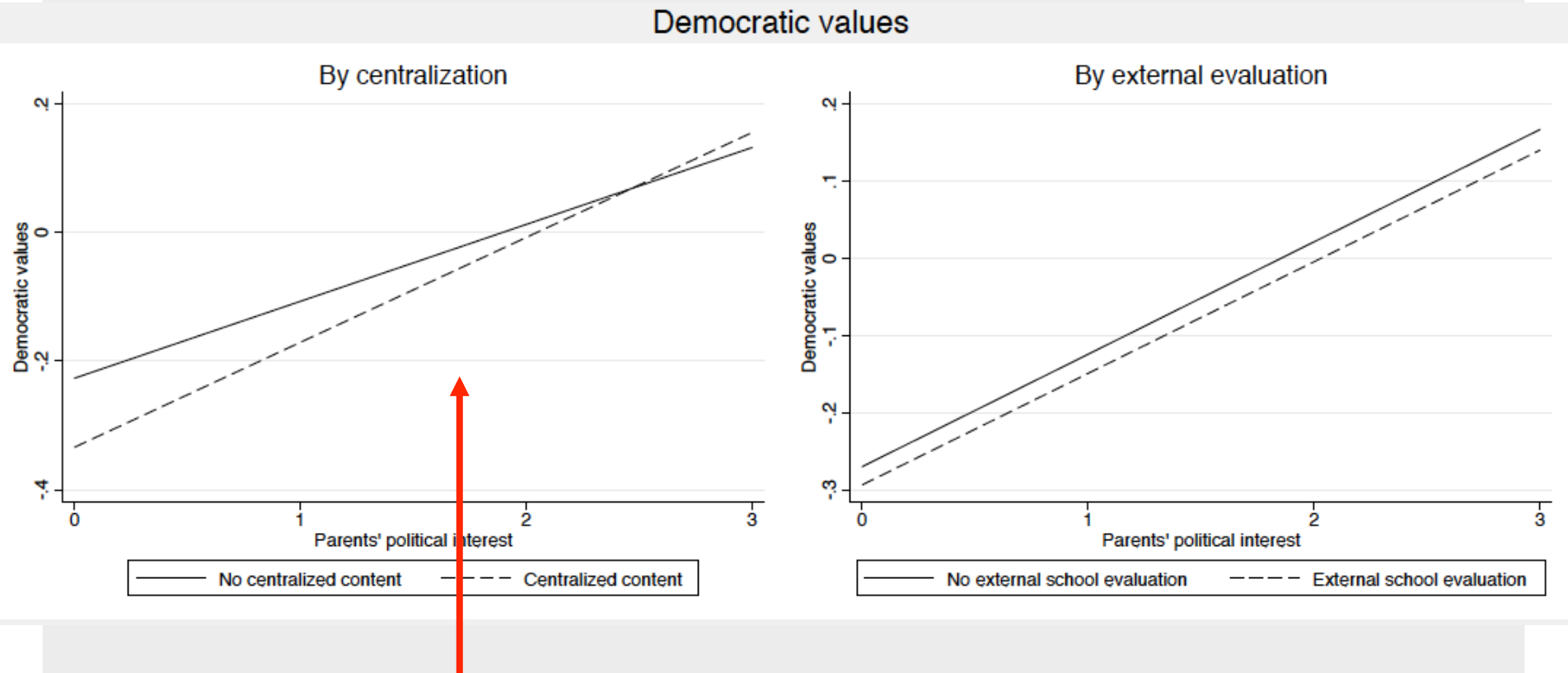
- I use **three civic and citizenship outcomes** measured among students:
 - **Civic Knowledge** test
 - **Democratic values**
 - **Interest in political and social issues**

Civic knowledge by indicators of standardization



More civic knowledge in systems with standardization measures, but also more inequality by social background

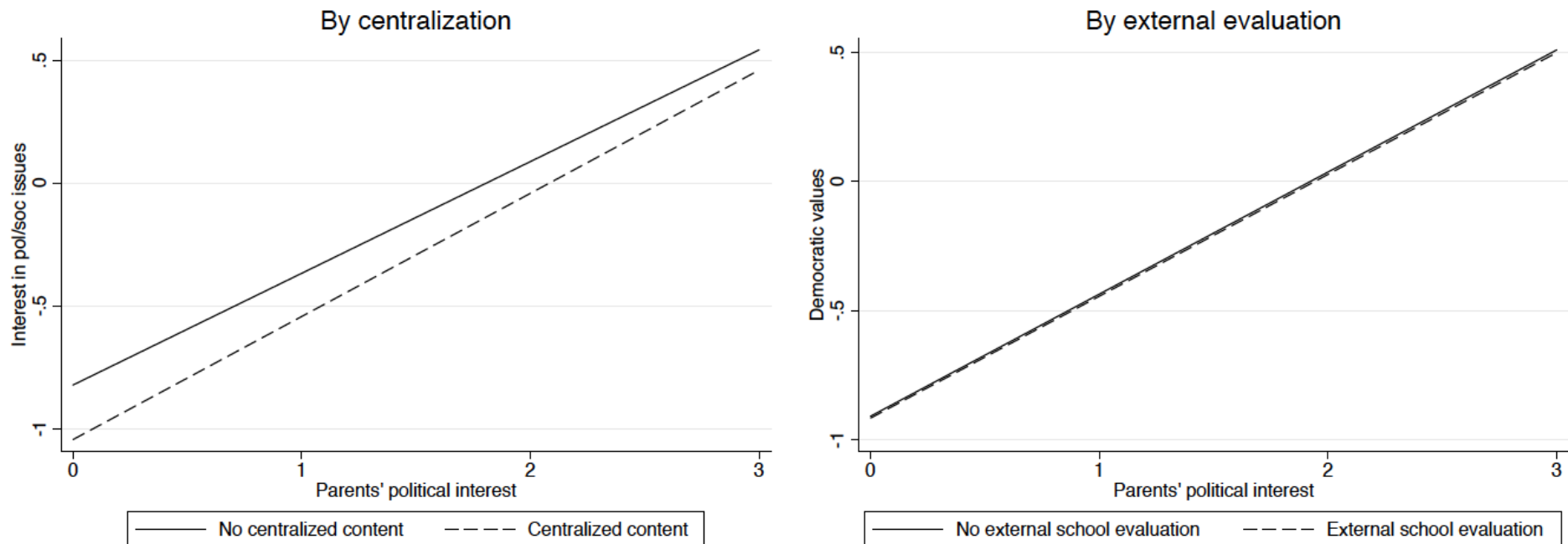
Democratic values by standardization policies



More inequality by parental background in systems with centralized civic education content

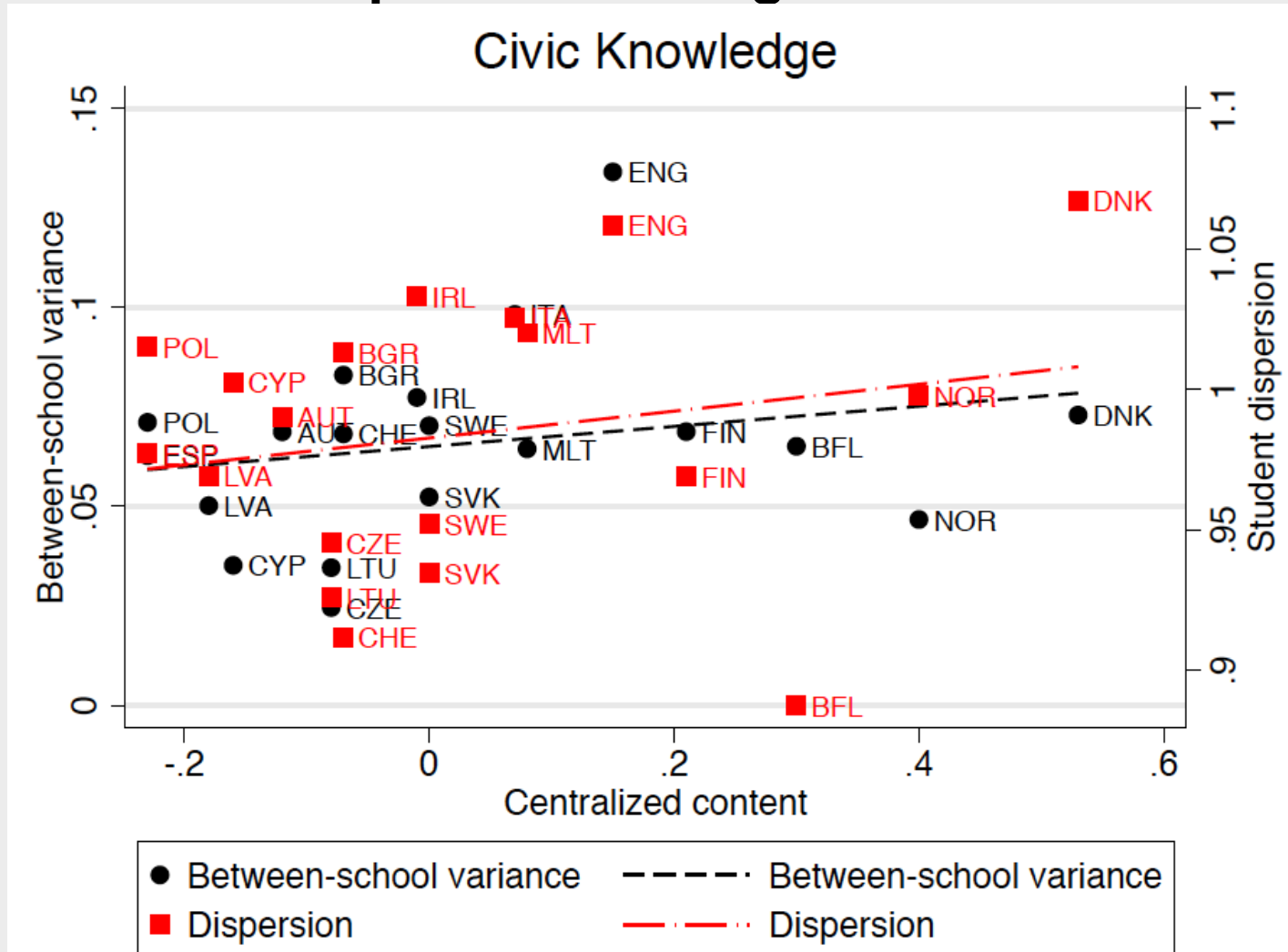
Interest in political and social issues and standardization policies

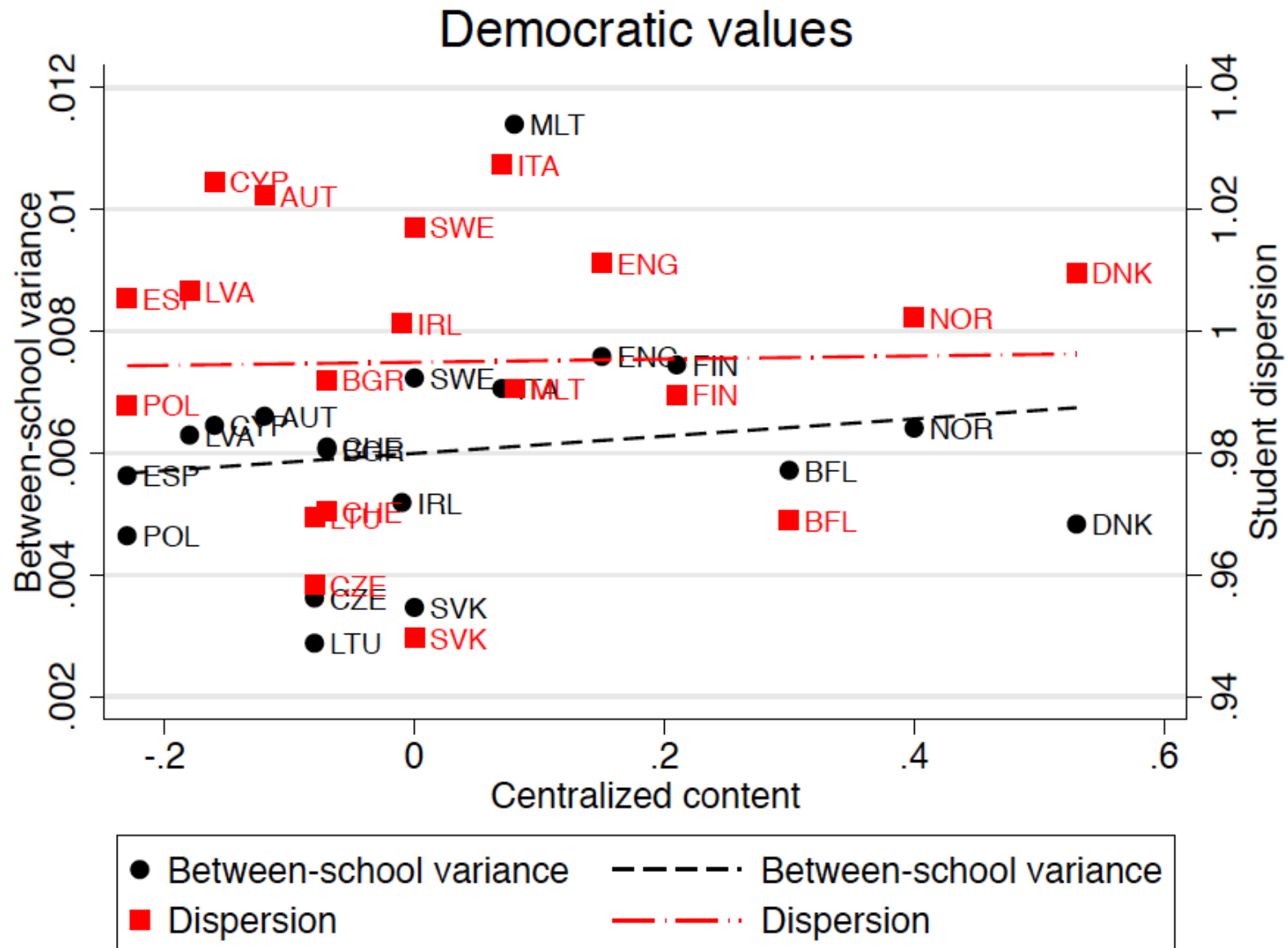
Interest in political/social issues

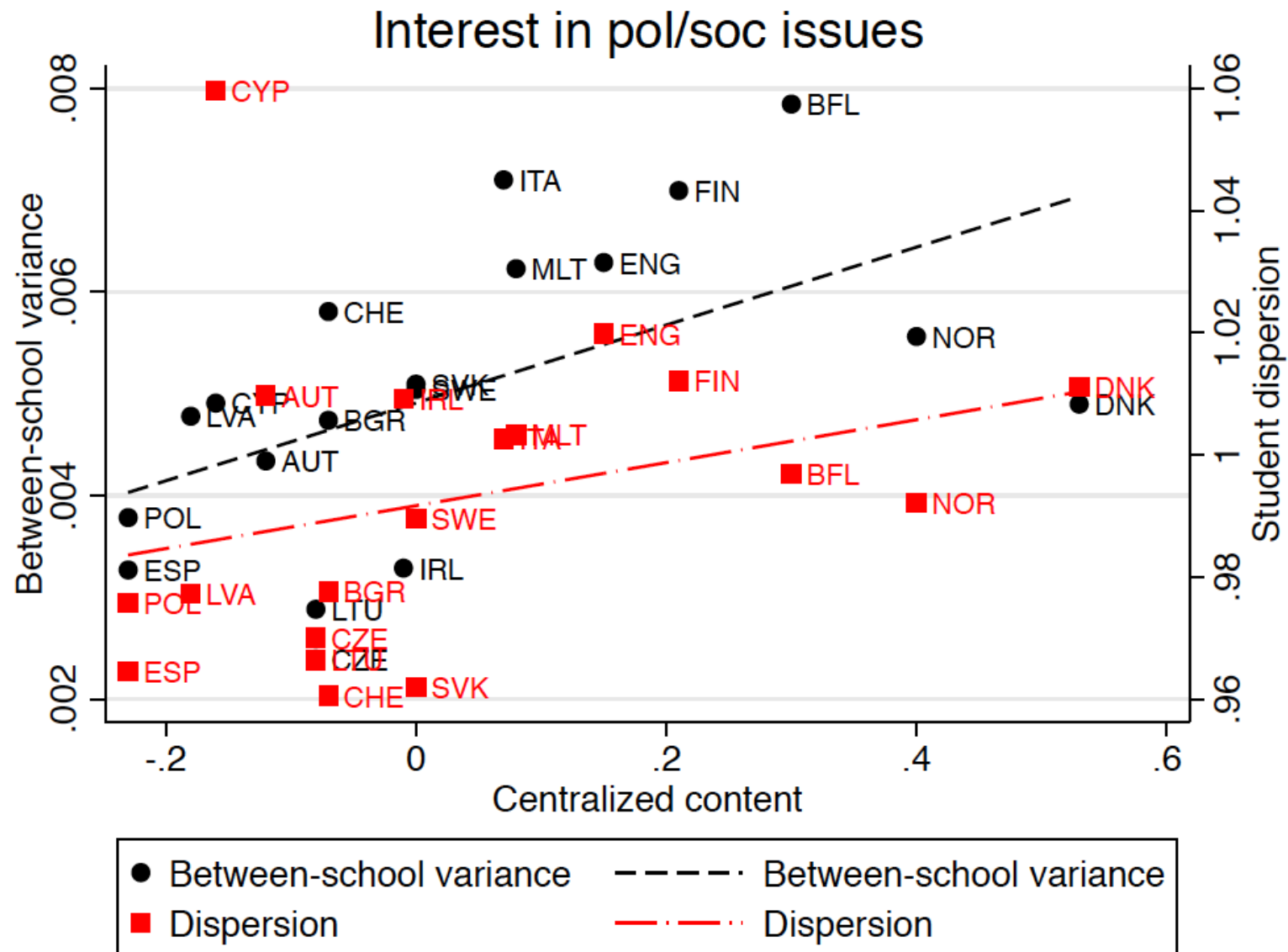


no relation with inequality or efficiency

Two other measures of inequality: Between-school variance and dispersion among students







What can we conclude?

- It seems that centralization and accountability are (modestly) **positively related to civic outcomes**. (mostly centralization, and esp. civic knowledge).
- Importantly, while centralization is often related to higher averages in civic and citizenship outcomes of students (i.e. more efficiency), centralization is also related to **higher levels of inequality** between families, and between schools.
- **Is focused attention of central bodies more beneficial for students and schools who would have done well without this attention anyway?**