

Introduction

The Rise of Education Marketization and the Enduring Enigma of School Segregation

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Abstract

The problem of school segregation has garnered considerable attention due to its adverse effects on learning opportunities and outcomes throughout the history of mass education, and increasingly in the marketized and privatized education landscapes worldwide. In this introductory article to the special issue of the *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership* (IJEPL), “The Rise of Education Marketization and the Enduring Enigma of School Segregation,” we provide a brief overview of the articles included in this issue, as well as four major aspects of school segregation in the marketization of education. In doing so, we engage with existing theories of school segregation while outlining an emerging theory of the marketization of education and school segregation.

Résumé

Le problème de la ségrégation scolaire a suscité une attention considérable en raison de ses effets néfastes sur les possibilités et les résultats d'apprentissage tout au long de l'histoire de l'éducation de masse, et de plus en plus dans les paysages éducatifs commercialisés et privatisés du monde entier. Dans cet article d'introduction au numéro spécial de *l'International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership* (IJEPL) intitulé « Lessor de la marchandisation de l'éducation et l'énigme persistante de la ségrégation scolaire », nous présentons un bref aperçu des articles inclus dans ce numéro, ainsi

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que quatre aspects majeurs de la ségrégation scolaire dans le cadre de la marchandisation de l'éducation. Ce faisant, nous nous penchons sur les théories existantes de la ségrégation scolaire tout en esquissant une théorie émergente de la marchandisation de l'éducation et de la ségrégation scolaire.

Keywords / Mots clés : school segregation, education marketization, education privatization, school choice, educational inequity / ségrégation scolaire, marchandisation de l'éducation, privatisation de l'éducation, choix de l'école, inégalité en matière d'éducation

Introduction

School segregation, whether by policy, residential patterns, or individual choice, cannot be ignored as a significant aspect of mass education worldwide. This history of school segregation is a painful one for those on the receiving end of discriminatory segregation. Particularly notable are the situations in which prejudice and biases segregate children by race, gender, social class, and (dis)ability. In the United States, as noted in a widely cited report by Coleman, Kelly, and Moore (1975), Black and White children have attended segregated schools because of racism, manifested in different attendance zones drawn for those children. In Canada, Indigenous children were segregated from non-Indigenous children in residential schools and subjected to violence, death, and cultural genocide (Daniels, 2016). Children with disabilities have also been subject to segregation (Moore & Thomas, 2022). Women have been excluded from male-dominant (often elite) educational institutions to different degrees and in different contexts (Hussénus, 2020). Also insidious is socio-economic school segregation. Such segregation is often normalized through the private (non-state) sector; the segregation in the public (state) sector is often hidden by residential segregation and entrenched across countries with historical inequalities (Yoon, Grima, Barrett DeWiele, & Skelton, 2023). In recent decades, school desegregation has become part of the school restructuring being advocated by inclusivity-minded and anti-racist policymakers, educators, and communities who continue to advance the inclusive ideals of education systems (Wells, Keener, Cabral, & Cordova-Cobo, 2019).

In the United States, the school desegregation movement has focused on eliminating racially segregated attendance zones. In Canada, residential schools have all been closed. The inclusion of all students, regardless of ability and gender, has become a more mainstream approach (Airton, DesRochers, Kirkup, & Herriot, 2022). During these progressive changes, school choice policies have emerged, including approaches such as school vouchers, choice across public sector schools, funding for non-state schools, and the emergence of hybrid models such as charter schools. Some choice advocates claim that school choice allows families to attend schools in areas where they cannot afford to live (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Lubienski, Perry, Kim, & Canbolat, 2022). However, in the rise of education marketization, the possibility of segregation based on individual choice remains, while school segregation persists. According to a recent special issue, co-edited by Perry, Rowe, and Lubienski (2022), various reasons and factors continue to account for school segregation in different

regions around the world. There is a growing body of research on this issue (Bonal & Bellei, 2018; Boterman, Musterd, Pacchi, & Ranci, 2019; Dupriez, Valenzuela, Verhoeven, & Corvalán, 2023).

The articles in this special issue build on recent research while further advancing knowledge of the field of school segregation by drawing on a fresh set of data and critically oriented research approaches that have been underutilized in studying school segregation. Specifically, we aim to provide new perspectives on the emerging patterns, practices, and processes of school segregation concerning the “choice” of schools in the era of education marketization.

In referring to the era of education marketization, we mean the intensification of market-based reforms of the public education systems that have taken place around the world since the 1980s, with reforms such as de-regulation, open-enrollment, charter schools, and school vouchers (Lundahl, Arreman, Holm, & Lundström, 2013; Whitty & Power, 2000). Marketization is simply the creation of market-like institutional environments for schools. These are typically characterized by more consumer-style choice of schools for students and their families, increased autonomy for schools to innovate and find ways of attracting students, and competition between schools for those students’ choices (Lubienski & Malin, 2025). A related concept, privatization, involves the transfer of public sector entities, functions, or responsibilities to private hands (Lubienski & Malin, 2025). But while the specifics of those three elements of marketization can vary across policies in different contexts, a key element is the use of incentives to encourage individuals and organizations to pursue their own self-interest in the hopes that the “invisible hand” will then lead to socially desirable outcomes, including equitable educational opportunity reflected in school integration (Gordon & Whitty, 1997; e.g., Moe, 2008). While some choice proponents argue that marketization can lead to more equitable educational opportunities as less affluent students, concentrated in poorer schools, are enabled to choose other options (and those schools are incentivized to pursue them), skeptics are concerned that marketization can exacerbate segregation (Lubienski, Lee, & Gordon, 2013).

In the era of education marketization, the issue of school segregation continues to be important for several reasons, including the possibility of improved academic outcomes from market-style reforms, as parents can choose the option that they think best fits their child’s learning needs (Dupriez et al., 2023; Zancajo & Bonal, 2022). However, research also points to the academic importance of integration, with more segregated systems correlated with lower academic outcomes (Perry, Yoon, Sciffer, & Lubienski, 2024). While much attention has been paid to measuring the impact of market-based education reforms on academic outcomes, it is important to remember that academic achievement is only one of the goals of education and schools. Indeed, schools are institutions where students learn to socialize with others who have different experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds. Schools are often seen as common goods and should be non-excludable public spaces where students can learn how to live together and contribute to an increasingly diverse society, where they learn to include each other in meaningful ways (Moore, Yoon, & Janzen, 2024). Therefore, in this proposed special issue, we shed light on how the rise of education

marketization (encompassing school choice and education privatization) shapes and interacts with school segregation.

This introduction is organized as follows. First, we provide a brief overview of the four articles included in this special issue. Next, we discuss major takeaways and themes that the articles make to the field of school segregation scholarship. Then, building on these takeaways, we outline an emerging theory of the marketization of education and school segregation.

Finally, we conclude this article by synthesizing the key contributions to this issue, providing suggestions for future research, and emphasizing the importance of educational (rather than school) leaders paying attention to the topic and continuing their advocacy work for creating inclusive education systems.

A summary of the articles

Each study in this special issue provides unparalleled insight into how school segregation is linked to education marketization, drawing on carefully selected sets of data that facilitate layered understandings. The studies delve into complex market processes and practices that influence school segregation in particular times and spaces. In doing so, they shed light on the growing institutional, demographic, spatial, and discursive linkages between marketization and segregation. Specifically, they point to the significance of understanding curriculum differentiation, spatial segregation, school mediatization, and social cohesion.

To start with, Maire and Molina (2025) seek to understand high school segregation in France's major cities. Drawing broadly on the international and national literature on school segregation, which emphasizes the importance of contextual issues in addition to major factors (such as residential segregation, school policies, selection, program differentiation, and social factors), their study focuses on how curriculum differentiation has contributed to school segregation since France introduced the school choice policy in 2007. Applying a multi-dimensional comparative analysis of school segregation across 17 selected major cities in France, Maire and Molina examine differentiated programs across schools operating in the private and public sectors, while comparing policies aimed at reducing school segregation across the cities. They conclude that the rise of a differentiated curriculum in the context of school choice contributes significantly to school segregation. Private schools contribute to school segregation when they are associated with curriculum differentiation that reinforces social group segregation.

Following Maire and Molina's study, Yoon and Barrett DeWiele's (2025) article in this issue expands the analytical scope of school segregation research from a sociological to a spatial lens. In this study of school segregation in Montréal, the largest French speaking city in Canada, Yoon and Barrett DeWiele examine the impact of school choice on school segregation spatially. Building on a critical spatial research approach in emerging school segregation research in recent years, Yoon and Barrett DeWiele find that different programs and schools of choice in the district not only contribute to social reproduction but also exacerbate the separation of students across socioeconomically, ethnically and racially polarized neighbourhoods. They explain how some of the most prestigious academic programs are in wealthier neighbour-

hoods, serving privileged students while deepening segregation. This study thus discusses that while Canada's education systems have been recognized internationally for their equitable and inclusive approaches, they also have a history of school segregation and exclusion based on race and socioeconomic status. Understanding spatially segregated urban geographies can illuminate the ongoing segregation through school marketization.

In Australia, Windle (2025) attempts a rare examination of school mediatization to deconstruct the discursive linkage between segregation and marketization. Windle conducts a critical examination of local media reporting on school improvements. His analysis indicates not only biased reporting of schools but also how reporting may be linked to school segregation, as the media discourse shapes parental choice. Windle finds that media tend to report "successful" schools as those championed by heroic individual school administrators (and staff) to improve their schools, while further noting school staff, including teachers, for achieving their school's rising reputation in the marketplace. However, after analyzing the newspaper's analysis of data, Windle concludes that the data analysis was highly selective, while masking the prized schools' practice of social exclusion and selectivity, which more likely explains the performance improvement of the schools as portrayed in the media.

The last article in this issue, Molina and Cordoba's (2025) study, examines the broad societal impact of school segregation while analyzing the relationships between school segregation and education marketization. Indeed, their study attempts to answer the big question of global competencies facing education systems in an increasingly globalized world. Drawing on data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), they define global competence as the ability to socialize and engage with people from diverse countries, who possess different and at times opposing views and values. The authors delve into a data set encompassing 69 countries from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). They examine the impact of school segregation (as a result of education marketization, including privatization) on the broader and potentially long-lasting effects of social and intercultural competencies. By skillfully utilizing the globally comparative nature of PISA data, Molina and Cordoba ask how school segregation linked to marketization further shapes students' social and cultural attitudes toward people unlike them regarding values, cultures, languages, and viewpoints. One key finding is that the national capacity to develop global competencies in all its students declines when school socioeconomic segregation increases, as the share of education marketization in a country increases. They conclude this finding should be of concern not only for students but also for educators who are tasked with educating the next generation to be able to navigate across different parts of the globe, as well as live and work together in countries with increasing diversity of people from various countries.

Together, the studies in this special issue present a critical opportunity to examine school segregation in the context of the rise of education marketization. Each study provides fresh insights into the phenomenon of school segregation linked to the politically constructed and socially reproductive nature and processes of education marketization, including school choice and privatization, in particular geogra-

phies. The studies spark new ways of thinking about the patterns, processes, and practices of school segregation in their contexts. Based on the articles from this issue, we discuss key converging themes and divergent perspectives on understanding school segregation in the era of education marketization.

Four major aspects of school segregation in the marketization of education

Curriculum differentiation

Across several articles in this issue, a common thread emerges regarding the function of curriculum differentiation in school segregation. The extent to which schools differentiate their curriculum matters to various types of families enrolling in their schools, contributing to school segregation. Maire and Molina's study in France, for instance, suggests that private schools, through their differentiated curriculum, generally contribute to the accumulation of distinction and advantage. Their social composition tends to be homogeneous, mainly catering to higher social and economic groups. Private schools thus contribute to school segregation. Furthermore, their fine-grained multi-comparative analysis demonstrates that private schools increase school segregation; however, they alone do not explain all school segregation. Instead, their investigation indicates that public schools contribute to a high degree of school segregation in some French cities, when they offer a curriculum appealing to families of higher income, contributing to school segregation.

Similarly, in the Montréal study, Yoon and Barrett DeWiele indicate that public schools lead to school segregation when they provide academically advanced or elite programs that attract students from socioeconomically privileged backgrounds. Molina and Cordoba also indicate that private schools tend to provide more exclusive programs that focus on global competencies, considered global business and leadership skills, reinforcing school segregation. Likewise, Windle's study recognizes that specialized programs popular among middle-class families were introduced to schools that saw performance improvement. This, in turn, increases social restriction, leading to the segregation of students by their socioeconomic background. These findings provide insights into the relationship between education marketization and school segregation by recognizing the importance of the curriculum offered and what demographics then enroll in the different types of schools, which contributes to school segregation.

Spatial context

The spatial context of education marketization significantly shapes school segregation, as schools continue to be located in particular neighbourhoods and regions, influencing where certain programs are found and who enjoys the resources and (dis)positions to choose (Yoon & Daniels, 2021). The spatial arrangement of schools has been shaped by historical and present social group dynamics and exclusion due to socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, racial, and other group classifications. Spatial configurations, especially residential segregation, have been identified as a key factor in school segregation (see discussion in Molina and Cordoba in this issue). Further, as noted in Maire and Molina's French study in this issue, the different city contexts

matter when understanding the specifics of school segregation. Even in a single country with a national school choice policy, not all regions have a uniform pattern or process of segregation. This is not only due to political differences but also to how politics has played out in local and regional contexts. To some degree, curriculum differentiation has been used to separate students from different backgrounds because of the changing spatial dynamics of residents, including gentrification (Candipan, 2020; Robson & Butler, 2001). The articles in this special issue highlight that spatial contexts are key to understanding school segregation in the expansion of education marketization.

Zooming in on the neighbourhood level in the Canadian city of Montréal, Yoon and Barrett DeWiele's study highlights this emphasis on spatial contexts of school segregation in the era of education marketization. Their study traces not only residential segregation but also school market segregation by analyzing how schools of choice, schools that offer specialized programs, are unequally distributed in the city according to the existing residential segregation, which in turn further attracts more homogeneous groups of students. In illuminating this dynamic, Yoon and Barrett DeWiele note that Montréal's neighbourhoods have been divided along economic, social, racial, and ethnic lines throughout the city's history, particularly after the city was founded as a French missionary colony in the seventeenth century. Academically enriched programs, often desired by middle- and upper-middle-class families, are located in high-status neighbourhoods, and these schools further attract students from similar backgrounds. These spatial patterns indicate that school choice further reinforces school segregation by segregating students by residence (social class and associated ethnic and racial identities) and program differentiation. In the school choice context, how families and students choose schools tends to be spatially further segregated, as those with more resources and dispositions tend to attend the same schools. However, they may reside in disparate residential areas. Their study reveals that these patterns are spatial, and the costs incurred (financial, temporal, and social) are possibly greater, especially for those living in lower-income areas. Understanding this spatial duality—residential segregation and school choice mobility—is crucial for assessing school choice inequity and segregation. In other words, education marketization via schools of choice tends to generate socio-spatial segregation of schools. This study thus indicates that school market segregation is a spatial phenomenon that differs slightly from residential and school segregation.

School mediatization

The level and degree of school segregation in the era of education marketization are further linked to parents' and students' access to information through mainstream and/or social media (Lubienski & Weitzel, 2009). Parents and students may hear about different programs through various ever-expanding channels of informal and formal communication. Informal communication may be further shaped and conditioned by residential locations. While there are a variety of ways of obtaining information and insights into different schools, when parents choose a school, the media plays a key role in disseminating information and “moral panic” about schools, influencing parental and high school students' choice of schools (Yoon, 2015). In

this era of social media and online platforms for information exchange, how schools are portrayed and recognized in the media is an important consideration for school marketization linked to segregation. In this issue, Windle's article offers an opportunity to consider how the marketized context of education involves the increased mediatization of schooling that reinforces or naturalizes school segregation by creating schools that appeal to certain socioeconomic groups. In other words, understanding school segregation in the era of marketization involves conducting critically oriented qualitative research on the discursive moments and microprocesses of school marketization and improvements that help explain school segregation.

Market-making discourses circulate in the media by reporters and journalists, shaping local debates about the marketization of education (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2023). For scholarship on school segregation, it is time to pay greater attention to how the media can trigger and perpetuate school segregation, as some schools are reported to get better results than others without a thorough investigation into the socioeconomic composition of student backgrounds. As illustrated in Windle's study in this issue, it is essential to critique how media discourses of school excellence and improvement may influence parental choices, with the potential to segregate schools further by race, ability, and socioeconomic status. Indeed, Anyon (2009) wrote that one crucial distinction between journalism and scholarly research is that media reporting tends to maintain the status quo, reproducing existing power differentials, while appearing to be neutral and objective. In other words, news media can maintain a socially reproductive framework that maintains the status quo by reporting school outcomes in ways that can undo much of the inclusion and integration efforts that the education systems have tried to accomplish. The media has indeed functioned in ways to create and maintain sensational stories that can pique their readers' interests while maintaining the status quo of social group segregation. The media have also provided a platform for much-criticized school league tables, which have become a more common practice in the name of school choice, further marginalizing schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, contributing to school segregation. Therefore, the extent to which the media serve the public with critical insights and information needs to be questioned and intervened by critical scholarship (Yoon, Winton, & El Masri, 2024).

Social cohesion

Another theme running through the articles in this issue is the adverse effects of school segregation on the social fabric of society and the degree to which social inclusion and cohesion can be realized. In other words, school segregation is not a problem only for educators because of the immediate consequences on opportunity/resource gaps due to segregation (Holme & Finnigan, 2018; Perry, 2018). School segregation has far-reaching and long-term negative impacts on the broader society. In this special issue, Molina and Cordoba find that school segregation is most notable in the separation between private and public schools. Private schools increase segregation through financial and social barriers that limit access for students, especially from economically disadvantaged or minoritized backgrounds. Often overlooked in school segregation research, Molina and Cordoba highlight that

school segregation limits the opportunities to develop cross-cultural competencies and understandings that are important to cement cohesive societies (Guo, Yang, Xiao, & Xie, 2024; Mikulyuk & Braddock, 2018). They argue that the rise of education marketization further increases school segregation, polarizing different social and ethnic groups, leading to stereotypes and biases. This type of polarization can be particularly devastating in countries where many educators have fought for equality, equity, inclusion, and justice (Chmielewski & Maharaj, 2022; Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003). Emphasis on individual choice of schools via marketization tends to erode collective efforts toward building students' skills and dispositions of working and collaborating across students from various backgrounds in the increasingly multiethnic and multiracial society in the era of globalization (Mickelson & Nkomo, 2012). Especially in wealthier countries that attract immigrants and migrants from comparatively lower-wealth countries, educators and education policymakers need to be concerned with this type of emerging research, which highlights how education marketization further fragments school systems, undermining inclusive educational opportunities for students from different and conflicting cultures, values, and norms.

Indeed, in Australia, where populations are becoming more diverse even in the context of settler-colonial racial tensions and residential segregation, Windle's analysis of media reporting of school performance and improvement indicates the ongoing struggle between groups by wealth as well as cultural status. In highly diverse Canadian cities, such as Montréal, where neighbourhood public schools already enroll culturally and linguistically diverse students, fit for globally expansive education, Yoon and Barrett DeWiele question the value of programs such as the International Baccalaureate (IB), designed to educate students in a more globally aware curriculum, while often excluding neighbourhood students who are diverse yet from disadvantaged backgrounds. They argue that IB programs are paradoxical because they tend to enroll homogeneous groups of students while teaching them about diversity. Maire and Molina's article also discusses the societal concerns over school segregation in France. While the Ministry of Education implemented policies to promote social mixing, especially in primary and middle schools, Maire and Molina raise important questions about how these policies targeting social mixing, including the introduction of enriched curricula in disadvantaged schools, could counteract school segregation that results from education marketization. The authors in this issue thus note that achieving social mixing in schools needs to be approached more proactively rather than left to seemingly "rational" parents or policymakers. These studies offer new insights for rethinking how we may theorize the impact of education marketization on school segregation. Next, we discuss an emerging theory of education marketization and school segregation.

Theory of the marketization of education and school segregation

School segregation has been theorized extensively across different countries, regions, and cities (Bonal & Bellei, 2018; Perry et al., 2022; Wilson & Bridge, 2019). One of the prominent factors has been residential segregation, where the places people reside differ by their social class, ethnicity, race, and other backgrounds. As a result, schools tend to be segregated if they enroll students from their local area. Another important

factor contributing to school segregation has been identified as institutionalized features, including policies at the state and school levels, including admission criteria and specific (selective) programming (e.g., streaming or tracking), which lead to student sorting and, consequently, school segregation (Pensiero & Brede, 2024; Dräger, Schneider, Olczyk, Solaz, Sheridan, Washbrook et al., 2023; Oakes, 1995; Steinmann, Strello, & Strietholt, 2023). In the fee-paying private and independent sectors, financial constraints have led to the segregation of schools. Lastly, social class and, more broadly, social contexts, including racism and stigma associated with certain groups at particular times and places, have been important. Existing research has thus examined some of these different factors explaining school segregation. In this issue, we have given particular attention to the above-mentioned four aspects of school segregation in the context of the rise of education marketization as part of neoliberal education reforms. Indeed, a growing body of research has indicated the need to pay special attention to the relationship between the marketization of education and school segregation in various contexts (Boterman et al., 2019; Dupriez et al., 2023; Yoon et al., 2023; Zancajo & Bonal, 2022). Therefore, our intention here is to expand upon the existing explanations of school segregation in the era of education marketization by building on the special issue's collection. We refer to this emerging framework as a theory of the marketization of education and school segregation.

First, the effect of residential segregation on school segregation has become amplified in complex ways through the marketization of education. We observe an amplified impact of residential segregation on school segregation when education marketization increases. In part, education marketization leads to the creation of more schools and/or programs of choice in affluent residential areas. Furthermore, these programs or schools attract students from more privileged backgrounds. In this way, schooling may become increasingly central to the geographies of choice and opportunity.

Second, we note that education marketization strengthens school segregation by socioeconomic status through stratified curriculum differentiation. This is partly due to education marketization, which tends to increase program and curriculum differentiation. Indeed, the expansion of school choice as part of marketization tends to lead to greater separation of groups based on their backgrounds. Socioeconomic segregation intensifies due to the programs that correspond to the hierarchies of occupation in the highly globalizing economies and associated tiered migration populations. Hence, while elite private schools specialize in leadership-style education pertinent to global citizenship, their counterparts focus more on lower-end service sector jobs that take into consideration diversity in local businesses and commercial sectors (Anyon, 2005; Lipman, 2011). Perhaps what is harder to quantify is non-academic programming differentiation that is poised to further segregate students not only by school class but also by ethnic groups, especially concerning language and religion. The results of increasing education marketization are likely to be long-term, affecting the whole society.

Lastly, one overlooked yet important factor in understanding the relationship between school segregation and education marketization is the type and quality of information shared about schools (Lubienski, 2007). With the expanding range of choices,

parents and students may rely more on the information available in the media. It may be almost impossible for parents and students to understand all the options that are available and increasing. The public's perception of schools can become more subject to the potential (mis)information circulating in the media (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). The role of media, thus, may become more critical in shaping the level and degree of school segregation in the marketized school environment.

Indeed, understanding the impact of education marketization on school segregation underscores the significance of geography, place, and space. In the general theory of school segregation, it is common to use school segregation indices to identify the degree of segregation in schools. In our emerging theory of the marketization of education and school segregation, we suggest that the relationship between the two requires an understanding of where school segregation occurs and how such segregation can be examined spatially in specific geographies. Urban spatial arrangements and associated (dis)advantages exacerbate school segregation because education marketization disrupts the traditional linkage between schools and student residential areas. It is essential to continue analyzing how space and place matter to school segregation in the era of education marketization.

In brief, while editing this special issue, we have come to understand that the relationship between education marketization and school segregation is inseparable from the existing factors and conditions that have contributed to the development of school segregation. However, the articles in this issue provide critical insights that education marketization introduces new forces and dynamics while augmenting some of the existing factors that already influence school segregation. Hence, in proposing an outline of a theory of the marketization of education and school segregation, we suggest that it is essential to build on the emerging and extensive theories of school segregation, while paying particular attention to the aforementioned aspects of school segregation. The marketization of education complicates the nature, processes, and consequences of school segregation, especially given the rising importance of studying the complexity of school segregation as education marketization may further advance across different and uneven geographies.

Concluding thoughts: time for educational (not just school) leadership

The studies in this issue revisit the perennial questions about the role of education and schooling in society in the rise of the marketization of education. They all ask the extent to which the value of individual choice should override the value of collective choice to school all children together whenever and wherever it is possible to build more inclusive, egalitarian, and cohesive societies. Of note is that education marketization has been reversing the goals of public or collective goods in education by emphasizing private interests and gains (Yoon, 2024). As market reforms spread through the ideology of neoliberalism, encouraging families (i.e., parents/guardians and students) to behave as consumers and schools (i.e., educators, leaders, and policymakers) as suppliers, researchers have shown that families tend to choose schools that maintain and/or advance their social class, racial, and ethnic positions, which have segregating effects (Yoon, 2020). These reforms have been the subject of consid-

erable criticism from those who advocate for public schools to be equipped to include all children (Keddie, MacDonald, Blackmore, Boyask, Fitzgerald, Gavin et al., 2022).

The ever-present global geopolitics is not a new challenge regarding how to teach and learn together to live, learn, and work with each other, especially in highly globalized regions around the globe. As the authors in this issue argue, and we concur, developing mutual understandings and respectful attitudes toward those from different or opposing views and backgrounds in educational organizations is more critical than ever. Hence, we hope this special issue brings attention to the significance of school segregation as one of the top challenges facing our schools and societies, which increasingly demand “choice” but with little understanding of its societal cost, including but not limited to discrimination, hate, and inequalities.

Building on existing theories of school segregation from around the globe, we have outlined an emerging theory of the marketization of education and school segregation. We highlighted the following key aspects of school segregation: curriculum differentiation, spatial context, school mediatization, and social cohesion. This theory is not intended to replace existing theories of school segregation, but rather to complement them. We are currently working on further developing this theory within the larger international project.

More research and richer data collection are needed in the future that focus on race and ethnicity. As we write this in the spring of 2025, we are aware of the challenges that the U.S. Department of Education is facing in terms of data collection, access, and analysis. More than ever, there is a need for data that can better inform education, providing every child, regardless of their background, with the opportunity to reach their full potential for the sake of themselves and society. Stemming from this special issue, we also recommend school segregation studies that interrogate the role of media in education marketization and school segregation, deconstructing and critiquing how the media report school performance in relation to parental school choice and subsequent school segregation. Furthermore, we recommend that studies of curriculum differentiation and social exclusion pay greater attention to spatial contexts to provide a richer understanding that school segregation is a significant part of the spatial processes in which education marketization unfolds. In other words, we suggest researchers pay more attention to various and changing geographies that are rarely captured in the school segregation index.

The studies in this issue provide timely insights to the education community, particularly the leadership and policy community, worldwide. These studies urge education leaders to pay attention to these emerging/resurfacing issues of school segregation in the era of increasing choice in the education system. One thing that neoliberalism has altered is that leaders have come to care about their individual schools rather than the education system. Hence, leaders tend to focus more on school leadership that stresses teaching and learning of students in their school buildings instead of educational leadership that would focus on the teaching and learning of all students. To address the rising levels and complexities of school segregation, we need leaders who think of themselves as educational leaders who are concerned with all learners. Segregated schools are less likely to create environments where students from different, diverse, and stratified backgrounds can engage with each other in curricular and ex-

tracurricular activities. Students will have fewer opportunities for peer group socialization, which can reduce prejudice while increasing cooperation, a much-needed quality in creating a world where we recognize our interconnectedness and the need for each other in addressing the many challenges facing humanity.

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