

# School segregation: social and political challenges



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# Structure

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1. What is the problem? Segregation or inequality?
2. Influence of segregation and the school effect: analysis
3. Origins of school segregation
4. Conclusion

# 1. What is the problem ? Segregation or inequality?

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**Segregation: unequal distribution of individuals in terms of a specific characteristic, with negative effects for certain categories of individuals**

**In education: social, academic or ethnic segregation**

- In Europe, viewing school segregation as a problem is a recent phenomenon
- In many studies, segregation is researched because it seems to be **the cause** of other phenomena (e.g. inequality of opportunities)
- Research into the *peer effect*, *compositional effect* and *school mix effect*
- A common element: the problem is **the effect** of population differences among schools
- This effect can be measured in reference to different variables: learning, well-being, etc.

- **I believe it is important to debate the nature of the problem of segregation:**
  - **A problem in itself: because in a democratic, pluralist society, school is where we learn to live with different individuals and groups**
  - **A problem because it creates different types of inequality**

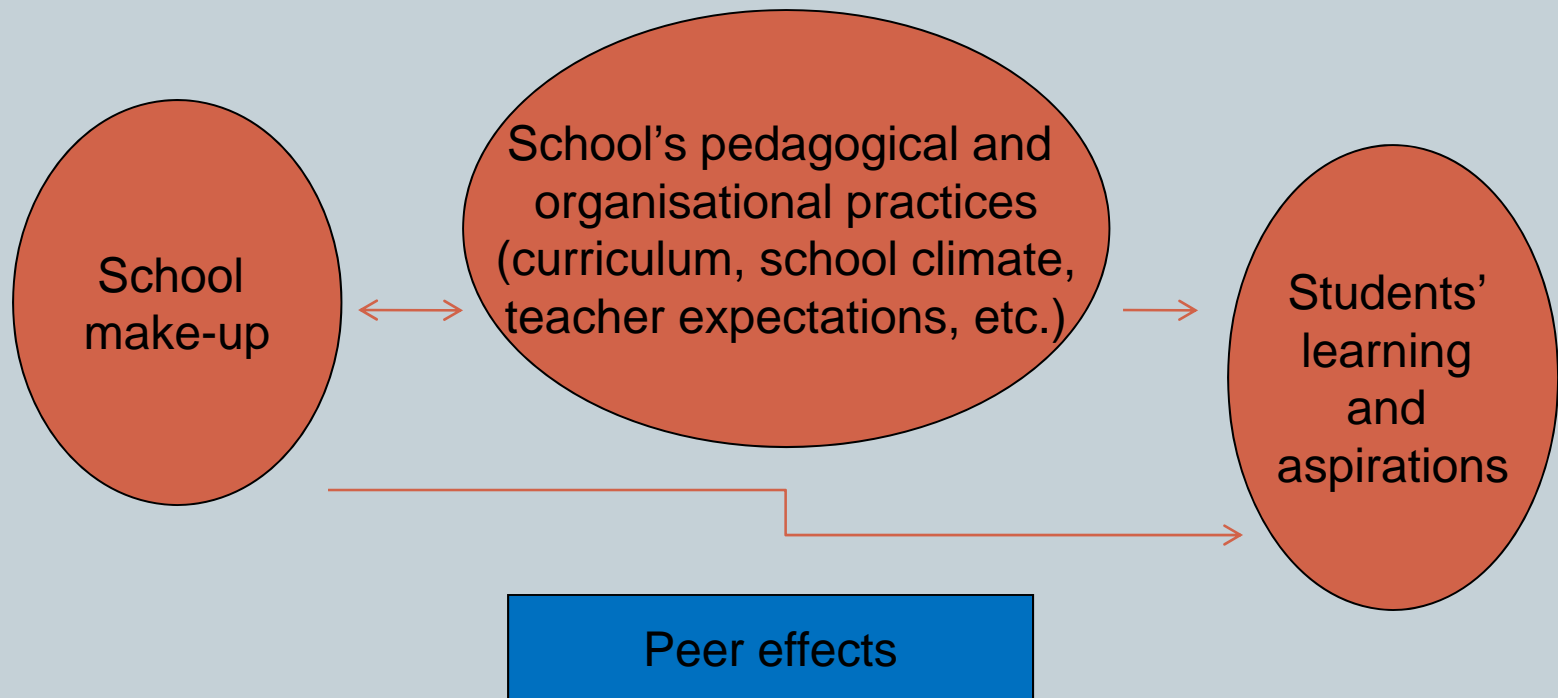
## 2. The school effect and the influence of segregation:

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1. **International analyses**
2. **National analyses (Belgium, Netherlands, UK)**
  - Are there differences in results between schools?
  - What is the specific influence of segregation (or of the composition of the school) on these differences?

# Direct and indirect influence of the composition

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# 4. Origins of school segregation

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- Residential segregation
- Early differentiation in the curriculum (tracking), which has a noticeable effect on segregation (academic and social), inequality of results and also social inequality of results (Dupriez & Dumay, 2006; Dupriez, et al., 2008)
- ‘Free choice’ and school (quasi -)market

- **New hypothesis: if ‘free choice’ increases segregation, the effect on inequality is stronger in an autonomous teaching context in schools, as it favours *reciprocal adaptation* processes between schools and their public**

# Conclusions

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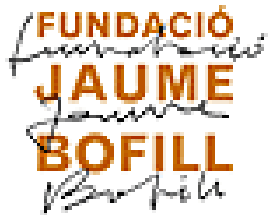
- In countries where there are significant differences in composition between schools, this difference has an effect on schooling (learning)
- This effect is probably wider when segregation is accompanied by significant autonomy for schools
- With all the evidence, segregation (academic and social) is affected by the presence of curricular differentiation (*tracking*); and also, but in a more complex form, by 'free choice'

- **Fighting segregation is a highly complex process. The following points need to be considered:**
  - Participation in other areas (housing, health, employment)
  - Regulation of registrations in state schools (and private schools, cf. debates in Belgium)
  - Regulation of the curriculum and external assessment of learning
  - Additional resources to ensure equal opportunities and quality of education at schools with less favoured populations (direct effect on inequality and possible indirect effect on segregation)



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