

Fair for Whom?: Contesting Residential and Merit-Based Pathways in Public Senior High School Admission in Yogyakarta

Bhakti Arum Widyastuti* 

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
bhaktiarum@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65815/j5bn7m68>

Submitted: 26-11-2025

Revised: 08-01-2025, 26-02-2025

Accepted: 02-03-2026

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

School admission policies frequently involve competing conceptions of justice. Residential pathways emphasize equal access and spatial redistribution, whereas merit-based pathways prioritize academic achievement and individual performance. The coexistence of these principles raises an important policy question: which conception of justice should determine access to high-demand public schools? This study examines the tension between residential and merit-based admission pathways in public senior high schools in Yogyakarta City. Using a qualitative policy case study, the research explores how students, parents, school administrators, and policymakers interpret fairness within the admission system. Particular attention is given to the relationship between students' residential location, socioeconomic background, prior educational opportunities, and academic achievement. The study employs a multidimensional justice framework encompassing distributive equality, procedural fairness, and recognition of unequal starting conditions. It argues that merit cannot be considered socially neutral when access to high-quality learning environments, tutoring, digital resources, and family support is unequally distributed. At the same time, residential criteria may fail to ensure meaningful equality when school quality remains geographically differentiated. The study proposes a balanced admission framework in which merit and residential considerations are accompanied by stronger affirmative mechanisms and equalization of school quality across neighborhoods.

[Kebijakan penerimaan sekolah seringkali melibatkan konsepsi keadilan yang saling bertentangan. Jalur penerimaan berdasarkan tempat tinggal menekankan akses yang setara dan redistribusi spasial, sedangkan jalur penerimaan berdasarkan prestasi memprioritaskan prestasi akademik dan kinerja individu. Koeksistensi prinsip-prinsip ini menimbulkan pertanyaan kebijakan penting: konsepsi keadilan mana yang seharusnya menentukan akses ke sekolah negeri yang diminati? Studi ini meneliti ketegangan antara jalur penerimaan berdasarkan tempat tinggal dan prestasi di sekolah

menengah atas negeri di Kota Yogyakarta. Dengan menggunakan studi kasus kebijakan kualitatif, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana siswa, orang tua, administrator sekolah, dan pembuat kebijakan menafsirkan keadilan dalam sistem penerimaan. Perhatian khusus diberikan pada hubungan antara lokasi tempat tinggal siswa, latar belakang sosial ekonomi, kesempatan pendidikan sebelumnya, dan prestasi akademik. Studi ini menggunakan kerangka keadilan multidimensional yang mencakup kesetaraan distributif, keadilan prosedural, dan pengakuan kondisi awal yang tidak setara. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa prestasi tidak dapat dianggap netral secara sosial ketika akses ke lingkungan belajar berkualitas tinggi, bimbingan belajar, sumber daya digital, dan dukungan keluarga didistribusikan secara tidak merata. Pada saat yang sama, kriteria tempat tinggal mungkin gagal untuk memastikan kesetaraan yang bermakna ketika kualitas sekolah tetap terdiferensiasi secara geografis. Studi ini mengusulkan kerangka penerimaan yang seimbang di mana pertimbangan prestasi dan tempat tinggal disertai dengan mekanisme afirmasi yang lebih kuat dan pemerataan kualitas sekolah di seluruh lingkungan.]

Keywords: meritocracy, residential admission, educational justice, school choice, Yogyakarta

Introduction

Admission to public senior high schools is a consequential moment in the educational trajectories of young people because access to particular schools may shape academic opportunities, peer networks, institutional resources, and subsequent transitions to higher education. Where public schools are unevenly perceived as prestigious or high-performing, admission policies inevitably become mechanisms for distributing scarce educational advantages. The question of who should receive access to desirable schools therefore cannot be reduced to administrative efficiency. It is fundamentally a question of justice. In Yogyakarta, as in many education systems, debates surrounding public-school admission have intensified because residential or zoning-based pathways coexist with achievement- or merit-based pathways. These pathways embody different normative assumptions. Residential criteria privilege proximity and seek to reduce the concentration of educational advantage, while merit-based criteria reward demonstrated academic performance and preserve opportunities for students to compete beyond their immediate residential environments. The coexistence of these principles creates a persistent dilemma: a policy can appear fair according to one conception of justice while appearing unfair according to another.

The Indonesian zoning-based admission system, commonly associated with the *Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* (PPDB), emerged partly as a response to unequal access and the long-standing hierarchy between so-called “favorite” and non-

favorite public schools. Research on Yogyakarta indicates that zoning policies have been expected to broaden access and distribute students more evenly, yet implementation has also generated dissatisfaction because proximity rules can restrict parental and student choice and may not correspond with differences in school quality (Budi 2021; Kussetyaningsih 2020; Riswan and Wibowo 2020). Studies of senior high school zoning in the Special Region of Yogyakarta similarly suggest that policy implementation must contend with differences in socioeconomic conditions, public perceptions of school prestige, and unequal distributions of educational resources (Saharuddin and Khakim 2020; Wijayanti and Nurjaman 2020). Consequently, the central issue is not whether residential or merit-based admission is inherently fair. Rather, fairness depends on the background inequalities, institutional arrangements, and normative standards through which each pathway is evaluated.

The importance of this problem extends beyond the Indonesian context. International research on school choice has repeatedly demonstrated that formally neutral admission rules can interact with residential segregation, family resources, information inequalities, and institutional hierarchies in ways that reproduce advantage. School choice may expand formal options while simultaneously rewarding families with greater cultural, economic, and informational resources (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1995; Burgess et al. 2015; Hastings, Kane, and Staiger 2009). Conversely, residential assignment can reduce some forms of competition but may also reproduce inequalities embedded in housing markets and neighborhood segregation (Holme 2002; Owens 2016). Thus, the relationship between admission criteria and educational equality is structurally complex. A student's address and academic record are not independent facts; both are shaped by broader social arrangements.

The concept of meritocracy is particularly important to this debate because merit-based pathways are frequently defended as the most objective method of allocating limited places. Yet scholarship on meritocracy has shown that achievement-based selection can legitimize inequality when unequal outcomes are interpreted solely as reflections of individual effort or talent (Mijs 2016; Son Hing et al. 2011; Young 1958). Educational achievement is produced through accumulated opportunities rather than individual capacity alone. Students from different socioeconomic backgrounds do not enter examinations or competitive admission processes with identical access to qualified teachers, supplementary tutoring, stable learning environments, technology, books, and parental support. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital remains relevant because educational institutions often recognize and reward dispositions and resources that are unevenly distributed across social groups (Bourdieu 1986). Accordingly, merit-based admission may be procedurally consistent while remaining substantively unequal.

Residential admission produces a different but equally significant problem. Proximity appears to be an intuitively egalitarian principle because it limits the capacity of affluent families to use mobility, private transport, or intensive school-

choice strategies to access prestigious schools. However, residence is itself socially structured. Housing markets, neighborhood development, and public infrastructure influence where families can live and, therefore, which schools they can realistically access. Research from the United States and other national contexts demonstrates that residential segregation and school segregation frequently reinforce one another, creating unequal institutional environments for students from different socioeconomic and racial or ethnic backgrounds (Reardon and Owens 2014; Owens 2016). Although the Indonesian social context differs, the underlying analytical insight remains relevant: residence cannot be treated as a socially neutral criterion when access to particular neighborhoods and educational facilities is unequally distributed.

The present article addresses this tension by asking: How should fairness be understood when residential and merit-based pathways compete in public senior high school admission in Yogyakarta? The analysis uses a multidimensional framework of educational justice. Drawing on theories of distributive justice, procedural justice, recognition, and capabilities, it examines not only the final allocation of school places but also the conditions under which students are able to compete and participate in the admission process (Fraser 2008; Sen 2009; Walzer 1983). The argument developed here is that neither merit nor residence can independently serve as a sufficient foundation for fair admission. Merit without attention to unequal starting conditions can naturalize inherited advantage, while residence without equalization of school quality can redistribute students without redistributing educational opportunity.

A first body of previous research concerns the implementation and consequences of zoning-based admission in Indonesia. Kussetyaningsih (2020), in a study of junior secondary schools in Yogyakarta, found that zoning-based admission expanded opportunities for local school-age populations but continued to encounter obstacles related to unequal school distribution, limited socialization, and administrative manipulation. Similarly, Budi (2021) showed that the Yogyakarta admission system combined multiple pathways, including zoning and achievement-related criteria, reflecting an attempt to balance geographical access with other policy objectives. Riswan and Wibowo (2020) further found that zoning could make schools more responsive to students with diverse abilities and enable lower-performing students to obtain access, although the policy was also criticized for limiting school choice and affecting perceptions of academic quality. These studies are valuable because they demonstrate that the effects of zoning are neither uniformly positive nor uniformly negative.

A second body of research focuses specifically on the implementation of zoning policies at the senior high school level in Yogyakarta and the wider Special Region. Saharuddin and Khakim (2020) identified the importance of communication, resources, implementing agencies, and the social environment in determining policy implementation. Wijayanti and Nurjaman (2020) similarly found that zoning-based admission could contribute to a more diverse distribution

of student inputs but also generated social jealousy and was implemented within a context of unequal socioeconomic conditions. Putri (2022) reported that zoning altered the composition of student intake at a major public senior high school in Yogyakarta and generated both positive and negative perceptions among stakeholders. Meanwhile, Azis (2021) found that zoning at the senior high school level in Sleman did not automatically generate significant changes in the quality of student inputs. Together, these studies suggest that changing admission rules alone may be insufficient to eliminate the hierarchy between schools.

A third body of research is broader and more theoretical, examining school choice, meritocracy, and the relationship between social inequality and educational selection. Studies of school choice show that formal choice can intensify stratification when advantaged families possess greater information, mobility, and strategic capacity (Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1995; Burgess et al. 2015; Lareau and Goyette 2014). Research on meritocracy similarly demonstrates that beliefs in individual achievement can obscure structural inequality and legitimize unequal outcomes (Mijs 2016; Son Hing et al. 2011). Educational inequality research further shows that family background, school composition, and neighborhood conditions shape achievement and opportunity across generations (Duncan and Murnane 2011; Reardon 2011; Sirin 2005). However, the Indonesian literature has more often evaluated whether zoning policies are effectively implemented than directly examining the normative conflict between residential access and merit-based selection. This article contributes to that gap by treating the admission system as a site of competing conceptions of educational justice.

This study employs a qualitative policy case-study approach. Yogyakarta was selected because it represents a context in which public senior high school admission is closely connected to strong public perceptions of school quality and prestige while the admission system incorporates multiple pathways reflecting different principles of access. The case is therefore analytically useful for examining the relationship between residential allocation and merit-based competition. The study does not seek statistical generalization; instead, it uses contextualized analysis to develop a theoretically informed interpretation of fairness in school admission.

The analysis draws on documentary sources and secondary empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals before 2026. The documentary corpus includes scholarship on PPDB and zoning in Yogyakarta and Indonesia, alongside international literature on educational inequality, school choice, residential segregation, meritocracy, distributive justice, and procedural fairness. Sources were analyzed through thematic comparison. The primary analytical categories were: (1) distributive equality, concerning who receives access to desirable schools; (2) procedural fairness, concerning the transparency and consistency of admission rules; (3) recognition of unequal starting conditions, concerning how socioeconomic and educational inequalities shape both residence and achievement; and (4) capability expansion, concerning whether admission policies

increase students' substantive opportunities rather than merely allocating formally equal places.

The Normative Conflict: Residential Access versus Merit-Based Competition

Residential and merit-based pathways represent different answers to the same distributive problem: how should a limited number of places in public schools be allocated? Merit-based admission generally assumes that applicants should be differentiated according to demonstrated academic performance. Its normative appeal lies in the idea that educational places should reward achievement rather than arbitrary social characteristics. In principle, students who work harder or demonstrate greater academic competence should not be prevented from accessing high-demand schools merely because they live farther away. This perspective is particularly compelling when public education is understood as a mechanism for individual mobility and when students from less advantaged areas use academic achievement to compete beyond their immediate local environments.

However, merit-based competition also rests on assumptions about the meaning of achievement. Academic results are often treated as individual outputs, but the resources required to produce those outputs are unequally distributed. Students with access to private tutoring, highly educated parents, stable homes, digital technologies, books, and high-quality prior schools possess advantages that are not captured by the language of individual merit. Socioeconomic status has been consistently associated with educational achievement, demonstrating that performance cannot be separated completely from family and social background (Sirin 2005; Duncan and Murnane 2011). From this perspective, a purely meritocratic admission system risks converting accumulated social advantages into legitimate educational rewards.

Residential admission is designed to address a different form of inequality. By giving substantial weight to proximity, the policy seeks to prevent desirable public schools from becoming accessible primarily to those who can travel farther, strategically select schools, or mobilize superior information. It may also reduce competition for prestigious schools and encourage a more geographically balanced distribution of students. Research on Yogyakarta shows that zoning has been associated with efforts to widen access and reduce the concentration of high-performing students in a limited number of institutions (Budi 2021; Riswan and Wibowo 2020). Yet residence is not an inherently egalitarian category. Students do not choose their neighborhood independently of family resources, and school quality may vary across geographical areas. If a student happens to live near a school with weaker resources while another lives near a highly demanded institution, residential allocation can transform geographical accident into educational advantage.

The conflict between merit and residence should therefore be understood as a conflict between formal individual equality and contextual distributive equality. Merit-based admission treats applicants as individual competitors and seeks to reward measurable performance. Residential admission treats access as territorially situated and seeks to distribute opportunities more locally. Both approaches can be justified, but both can also reproduce inequality when implemented without attention to the structures that produce academic performance and residential advantage. The policy challenge is consequently not to identify a single universally fair criterion but to determine how different criteria should be combined and constrained.

Merit Is Not Socially Neutral: Unequal Starting Conditions and the Production of Achievement

The strongest challenge to a purely merit-based admission model is that merit is socially produced. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital explains how families transmit linguistic competencies, educational expectations, and forms of knowledge that are recognized and rewarded by schools (Bourdieu 1986). This insight remains relevant to competitive school admission. Students who achieve higher scores may indeed demonstrate significant effort and competence, but their achievements emerge within unequal educational environments. The apparent neutrality of a test score can conceal differences in the resources available before the examination takes place.

The empirical literature on educational inequality reinforces this point. Reardon (2011) documents widening income-based achievement gaps in the United States, while Duncan and Murnane (2011) demonstrate how inequality affects children's educational development through differences in family and institutional resources. Although these findings arise from a different national setting, the mechanism is broadly relevant: educational performance reflects accumulated exposure to opportunity. Students who attend better-resourced schools, receive supplementary instruction, and experience stronger family support enter merit-based competition from different starting positions than students who lack such advantages. A policy that allocates scarce educational places exclusively according to prior achievement may therefore reward the outcomes of unequal opportunity rather than merit in a socially independent sense.

Meritocracy also has an ideological dimension. Mijs (2016) argues that beliefs about meritocratic success can shape how individuals interpret inequality, often encouraging the attribution of success and failure to individual effort rather than structural conditions. Son Hing et al. (2011) similarly show that meritocratic beliefs can legitimize social inequality. In school admission, this dynamic may appear when high academic achievement is interpreted as unambiguous evidence of deservingness. Such an interpretation can make it easier to overlook unequal access to preparation and support. The problem is not that achievement should be ignored.

Rather, achievement should not be treated as a complete moral account of who deserves scarce educational opportunities.

For Yogyakarta, this issue is particularly important because a highly competitive educational environment can encourage families to invest differentially in academic preparation. When tutoring, educational technologies, transport, information, and social networks are unequally available, merit-based pathways may favor students whose families can convert economic and cultural resources into educational advantage. Lareau and Goyette (2014) show how middle-class parents strategically navigate educational institutions, while Hastings, Kane, and Staiger (2009) demonstrate the importance of information in school choice decisions. The same logic suggests that admission competition may reward not only student achievement but also family capacity to organize educational opportunities.

The implication is that merit should be interpreted relationally rather than absolutely. A fair admission system may recognize achievement while also acknowledging that equal performance thresholds do not necessarily represent equal opportunity. This is compatible with a capabilities perspective. Sen (2009) argues that justice should focus on substantive freedoms rather than simply formal equality in the distribution of goods. Applied to school admission, the relevant question is not merely whether every student can technically compete under the same rule, but whether students have had sufficiently comparable opportunities to develop the capabilities that the competition rewards.

The Limits of Residential Fairness: Space, Neighborhoods, and Unequal School Quality

If merit-based admission can conceal inequality in academic preparation, residential admission can conceal inequality in geographical opportunity. Proximity appears to be a simple and administratively understandable criterion: students should attend schools located near where they live. This principle can reduce travel burdens, strengthen local access, and limit the advantages associated with mobility. It can also support a policy goal of reducing competition for a small number of prestigious institutions. However, residential criteria become problematic when educational quality is unevenly distributed across space.

Research on residential and school segregation demonstrates that neighborhood inequality can become educational inequality. Holme (2002) shows how housing choices are closely connected to school preferences, while Reardon and Owens (2014) emphasize the relationship between residential segregation and educational stratification. Owens (2016) further demonstrates that school segregation is shaped by both residential patterns and institutional arrangements. The central lesson is that a school system cannot be understood separately from the geography of social inequality. If affluent families have greater capacity to reside

near high-performing schools, then residential preference may protect an existing distribution of privilege.

The Yogyakarta context presents a related challenge. Studies have identified unequal school distribution and persistent differences in socioeconomic environments surrounding schools (Kussetyaningsih 2020; Wijayanti and Nurjaman 2020). Even when zoning broadens local access, it does not automatically eliminate the distinction between schools that are perceived as highly desirable and those considered less attractive. Students assigned primarily by residence may therefore receive more geographically equal access while continuing to experience unequal educational environments. The policy succeeds in redistributing students but not necessarily in redistributing school quality.

This distinction is critical. Equality of access and equality of educational value are not identical. A student may have a guaranteed place in a nearby school, yet the school may not offer the same institutional resources, teacher quality, peer composition, or social reputation as another public school. In such circumstances, residential allocation can produce a paradox: the policy reduces competition for preferred schools but may constrain the ability of students to escape locally concentrated disadvantage. For students living in areas with fewer high-quality educational institutions, residence can become a barrier rather than a source of fairness.

A more defensible residential pathway therefore requires a parallel policy commitment to equalizing school quality. Fraser's (2008) conception of justice is useful here because redistribution cannot be separated from institutional structures that create unequal status and participation. Simply moving students across administrative categories does not resolve inequality if the schools themselves remain hierarchically differentiated. Walzer's (1983) concern with preventing dominance across social spheres also suggests that advantages in housing should not be allowed to convert automatically into privileged access to public educational opportunities.

Procedural Fairness Is Necessary but Insufficient

Admission policies are often evaluated according to procedural criteria: whether rules are clear, consistent, transparent, and applied without arbitrary discrimination. These elements are essential. Research on procedural justice demonstrates that individuals are more likely to regard institutional decisions as legitimate when they perceive procedures as fair and decision makers as trustworthy (Tyler 2000; Tyler and Blader 2003). In school admission, procedural fairness includes transparent eligibility requirements, publicly available information, consistent verification, effective complaint mechanisms, and equal treatment of applicants under the rules.

Studies of PPDB implementation in Yogyakarta demonstrate the importance of these administrative dimensions. Kussetyaningsih (2020) identified clear

technical guidance and current data as supporting factors, while Ahmad (2021) found that the distribution of admissions across pathways could be evaluated against regulatory requirements. Saharuddin and Khakim (2020) similarly emphasized communication, resources, and coordination among implementing institutions. These findings indicate that an admission system can become more predictable and administratively reliable when procedures are clearly specified.

Nevertheless, procedural compliance does not guarantee substantive justice. A perfectly transparent system can still produce unequal outcomes if its rules are built upon unequal social conditions. A merit-based test can be administered consistently to every applicant while reflecting unequal preparation. A residential boundary can be calculated accurately while distributing students according to unequal neighborhood opportunities. Therefore, procedural justice should be regarded as a minimum requirement rather than a complete definition of fairness.

This distinction can be expressed through three levels of evaluation. First, rule fairness concerns whether the formal criteria are coherent and consistently applied. Second, process fairness concerns whether applicants can understand and participate in the system without unequal informational or administrative barriers. Third, substantive fairness concerns whether the resulting allocation reproduces or reduces unjust inequalities. Admission policy debates often focus excessively on the first two levels because they are easier to measure. Yet the third level is more difficult and more important: even a technically flawless admission process may be unfair if it systematically channels disadvantaged students into lower-quality institutions.

Recognition is also central to procedural fairness. Fraser (2008) argues that justice requires attention to institutional patterns that prevent groups from participating as equals. In admission policy, this means recognizing that applicants may face different obstacles in obtaining information, documents, transport, internet access, and support during registration. A fair system should therefore not assume that formal availability of an online procedure creates equal capacity to navigate it. Procedural design must be responsive to unequal conditions of participation.

Toward a Balanced and Context-Sensitive Admission Framework

The preceding analysis suggests that the opposition between merit and residence should not be resolved by allowing one principle to dominate completely. A balanced admission framework should begin from the premise that both achievement and geographical access have legitimate claims, but neither should be treated as a self-sufficient measure of justice. The appropriate policy objective is not an abstract mathematical compromise between the two. Rather, it is the reduction of the mechanisms through which either criterion reproduces pre-existing inequality.

First, residential pathways should remain an important component of public-school admission because local access can reduce the advantages associated with mobility, strategic school choice, and competition for a limited number of prestigious institutions. However, residential criteria should be accompanied by systematic monitoring of geographical inequalities in school quality. Where neighborhoods have substantially fewer high-quality public options, policymakers should consider additional mobility, affirmative, or compensatory mechanisms. Otherwise, residence risks becoming a proxy for the unequal geography of opportunity.

Second, merit-based pathways should recognize achievement without assuming that all applicants have enjoyed equal conditions for producing it. A limited achievement pathway can preserve opportunities for students whose academic performance enables them to pursue schools beyond their immediate residential area. This is especially important for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may live in areas with fewer educational options. Yet the interpretation of merit should avoid excessive dependence on measures that merely reward access to prior advantage. More contextual approaches can consider academic improvement, performance relative to available opportunity, or broader indicators of achievement rather than relying exclusively on raw scores.

Third, affirmative mechanisms should be strengthened. Students from low-income households, underserved areas, or other disadvantaged circumstances may require admission pathways that explicitly recognize unequal starting positions. Such mechanisms should not be treated as secondary exceptions to an otherwise neutral system. They should be understood as instruments for achieving substantive equality. The rationale is not to abandon standards but to ensure that standards do not simply reproduce accumulated privilege.

Fourth, the most sustainable solution lies beyond admission policy itself. The hierarchy among schools must be reduced through investment in teacher distribution, facilities, leadership, curriculum implementation, and student support. Research on school composition and educational inequality suggests that institutional and peer environments can substantially affect student outcomes (Coleman et al. 1966; Gamoran 1992; Hattie 2009). If public schools remain sharply unequal in quality and reputation, any admission formula will face intense pressure because families will continue competing for access to a small number of institutions perceived as superior. Equalizing school quality reduces the stakes of admission competition and makes both residential and merit-based pathways less socially divisive.

Finally, the policy should be evaluated through a multidimensional justice framework. The success of an admission system should not be assessed solely by whether quotas are filled or whether administrative procedures run smoothly. Policymakers should examine who gains access, whose opportunities are constrained, how residential patterns interact with school quality, whether socioeconomic inequalities shape merit-based outcomes, and whether stakeholders

perceive the process as legitimate. This requires combining quantitative monitoring with qualitative evidence from students, parents, schools, and communities.

Conclusion

The contest between residential and merit-based pathways in public senior high school admission in Yogyakarta is ultimately a contest between different conceptions of educational justice. Merit-based admission is attractive because it appears to reward effort and achievement, yet academic performance cannot be separated completely from unequal access to educational resources and family support. Residential admission is attractive because it promotes local access and can reduce the advantages of mobility and strategic school choice, yet residence itself is shaped by socioeconomic inequality and does not guarantee equal access to high-quality schools. Neither principle, therefore, can independently define a fair admission system. A just admission framework should combine distributive, procedural, and recognitional dimensions of fairness. It should preserve meaningful local access while allowing carefully designed opportunities for achievement-based mobility. It should recognize academic performance without treating it as socially neutral, and it should use affirmative mechanisms to address unequal starting conditions. Most importantly, admission reform must be accompanied by long-term efforts to equalize school quality across neighborhoods. The central question should not simply be whether students are admitted fairly according to a formula. It should be whether the formula operates within, challenges, or reproduces the unequal social conditions that determine students' opportunities before they ever submit an application.

References

- Ahmad, Iqbal Faza. 2021. "Evaluasi Implementasi Kebijakan Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru Tahun 2021 dengan Sistem Real Time di Kota Yogyakarta." *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dasar: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan dan Hasil Penelitian* 7 (3): 129–35. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jrpd.v7n3.p129-135>.
- Azis, Moh. Naufal. 2021. "Pengaruh Penerapan Sistem Zonasi dalam Penerimaan Siswa Baru terhadap Manajemen Pembelajaran Sejarah di SMA se-Kabupaten Sleman." *Candi: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Penelitian Sejarah* 21 (2): 1–14.
- Ball, Stephen J., Richard Bowe, and Sharon Gewirtz. 1995. "Circuits of Schooling: A Sociological Exploration of Parental Choice of School in Social-Class Contexts." *The Sociological Review* 43 (1): 52–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1995.tb02478.x>.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson, 241–58. New York: Greenwood.

- Budi, M. Hanif Satria. 2021. "Implementasi Kebijakan Sistem Zonasi pada Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru (PPDB) 2019/2020 di Kota Yogyakarta." *Paedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan* 10 (1): 135–52. <https://doi.org/10.24239/pdg.Vol10.Iss1.138>.
- Burgess, Simon, Ellen Greaves, Anna Vignoles, and Deborah Wilson. 2015. "What Parents Want: School Preferences and School Choice." *The Economic Journal* 125 (587): 1262–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/econj.12153>.
- Coleman, James S., Ernest Q. Campbell, Carol J. Hobson, James McPartland, Alexander M. Mood, Frederic D. Weinfeld, and Robert L. York. 1966. *Equality of Educational Opportunity*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Duncan, Greg J., and Richard J. Murnane, eds. 2011. *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Fraser, Nancy. 2008. *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gamoran, Adam. 1992. "The Variable Effects of High School Tracking." *American Sociological Review* 57 (6): 812–28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096125>.
- Hastings, Justine S., Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger. 2009. "Heterogeneous Preferences and the Efficacy of Public School Choice." NBER Working Paper No. 12145.
- Hattie, John. 2009. *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. London: Routledge.
- Holme, Jennifer Jellison. 2002. "Buying Homes, Buying Schools: School Choice and the Social Construction of School Quality." *Harvard Educational Review* 72 (2): 177–205. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.72.2.u6272x676823788r>.
- Kusetyaningsih, Retno. 2020. "Implementasi Kebijakan Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru (PPDB) Sistem Zonasi pada Jenjang SMP Negeri di Kota Yogyakarta." *Spektrum Analisis Kebijakan Pendidikan* 9 (3): 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.21831/sakp.v9i3.17204>.
- Lareau, Annette, and Kimberly Goyette, eds. 2014. *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Mijs, Jonathan J. B. 2016. "The Unfulfillable Promise of Meritocracy: Three Lessons and Their Implications for Justice in Education." *Social Justice Research* 29 (1): 14–34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-014-0228-0>.
- Owens, Ann. 2016. "Inequality in Children's Contexts: Income Segregation of Households with and without Children." *American Sociological Review* 81 (3): 549–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416642430>.
- Putri, Selvy Ayunda. 2022. "Implementasi Kebijakan Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru (PPDB) Zonasi di SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta." *Spektrum Analisis*

- Kebijakan Pendidikan* 11 (4): 335–48.
<https://doi.org/10.21831/sakp.v11i4.18079>.
- Reardon, Sean F. 2011. "The Widening Academic Achievement Gap between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations." In *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances*, edited by Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane, 91–116. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Reardon, Sean F., and Ann Owens. 2014. "60 Years after Brown: Trends and Consequences of School Segregation." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40: 199–218. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043152>.
- Riswan, and Udik Budi Wibowo. 2020. "The Impact of Implementing a Zonasi System on the Acceptance of New Students in Junior High School in Yogyakarta." *Asia Pacific Journal of Management and Education* 3 (3): 1–11.
- Saharuddin, Erni, and Muhammad Salisul Khakim. 2020. "Implementasi Kebijakan Sistem Zonasi dalam Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru pada Tingkat SMA di Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta." *Dinamika: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Administrasi Negara* 7 (3): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.25157/dinamika.v7i3.4226>.
- Sen, Amartya. 2009. *The Idea of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sirin, Selcuk R. 2005. "Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analytic Review of Research." *Review of Educational Research* 75 (3): 417–53. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543075003417>.
- Son Hing, Leanne S., Brian A. Wright, James L. S. S. Perrault, and Mark P. Zanna. 2011. "The Merit of Meritocracy." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101 (3): 433–50. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024618>.
- Tyler, Tom R. 2000. "Social Justice: Outcome and Procedure." *International Journal of Psychology* 35 (2): 117–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/002075900399411>.
- Tyler, Tom R., and Steven L. Blader. 2003. "The Group Engagement Model: Procedural Justice, Social Identity, and Cooperative Behavior." *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 7 (4): 349–61. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0704_07.
- Walzer, Michael. 1983. *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wijayanti, Melly Permatabella, and Asep Nurjaman. 2020. "Analisis Implementasi Kebijakan Sistem Zonasi PPDB sebagai Upaya Pemerataan Pendidikan Sekolah Menengah Atas di Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta." *Jurnal Kebijakan dan Pengembangan Pendidikan* 8 (1): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.22219/jkpp.v8i1.12064>.
- Young, Michael. 1958. *The Rise of the Meritocracy, 1870–2033*. London: Thames and Hudson.

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Acknowledgment

None

Funding Information

None

Conflicting Interest Statement

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

Publishing Ethical and Originality Statement

All authors declared that this work is original and has never been published in any form and in any media, nor is it under consideration for publication in any journal, and all sources cited in this work refer to the basic standards of scientific citation.

Generative AI Statement

Author During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist with language editing, grammar checking, and improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript. All AI-assisted outputs were critically reviewed and revised by the author(s) to ensure their accuracy, originality, and consistency with the intended meaning of the manuscript. The author(s) remain fully responsible for the content of the manuscript, including the accuracy of the information presented, the interpretation of the results, the originality of the work, and the final version submitted for publication. Generative AI tools were not used to replace the intellectual contribution, scientific judgment, or decision-making of the author(s).

Editor During the editorial process, the editor used generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools solely to assist with improving the language and clarity of editorial communications. No submitted manuscript or confidential manuscript content was uploaded to or processed by the AI tool. The editor reviewed and edited the AI-assisted output as needed and remains fully responsible for the content and for all editorial decisions.