Market Pressure and Arizona Public School Leaders:

"That Package is Like a Brand New Cadillac!"

Amanda U. Potterton

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, USA

Abstract	Article Info
In the United States, long-standing school choice policies and practices in Arizona have developed into a market-based system of schooling for many residents in the state, especially in the larger cities. In this study, I analyze qualitative data gathered from school leaders and parents in one Arizona district public school who discussed marketing pressures and various notions of accountability and whose perceptions related to rapidly growing school choice reforms and increasing testing demands. I also describe the ways in which many members of the school team (e.g., school administrators, teachers, staff) were affected by ever-increasing competitive expectations. By examining market pressures experienced by parents and other stakeholders, we can understand better some consequences of expanding school choice policies and programs on those experiencing educational reforms in local settings.	

Introduction

In the United States, long-standing school choice policies and practices in Arizona have developed into a market-based system of schooling for many residents in the state, especially in the larger cities. For example, in Maricopa County, which includes the Phoenix and surrounding metropolitan area, approximately 37% of students open enroll, which means that they attend schools outside of their designated district school. When including enrollment data of charter schools, which in the United States are publicly funded schools that are chartered by various authorities such as universities, charter boards, or public school districts, nearly one in two students participate in school choice because they attend schools outside of their assigned neighborhood (Powell & Laczko-Kerr, 2017). Powell and Laczko-Kerr (2017) even suggest that district attendance zones are indeed becoming obsolete in some parts of Arizona due to these revealing figures.

Shifting enrollment numbers have a direct impact on district schools that are faced with maintaining enrollment in ways that are different from more traditional public school systems in the United States and beyond. For Arizona public school leaders, decreasing student enrollment in a school means that the school receives less government funding, which can become problematic since per-pupil financial allocations follow students to the schools where they choose to attend. The school choice enrollment numbers also necessarily influence perceptions and actions of school and district leaders and their team leadership approaches, since competition-based school systems are often dependent upon successful marketing and popularity for sustainability. The responsibility to recruit students is placed on schools and, therefore, school leaders.

This article expands upon earlier research that I conducted at one Arizona district school and in its surrounding community, where I observed the ways in which parents, teachers, school leaders, and community members made sense of school choice policies and practices and studied how they made decisions and choices for their children and families (Powers, Topper, & Potterton, in press). In the community where I conducted this research, there were a number of high-profile education management organization (EMO) charter schools located around them, and school choice options were continually increasing. School choice policy and program options included but were not limited to charter schools, tax credits for private schools, and open enrollment--all policies that were commonly practiced.

Arizona is a leader in the United States school choice movement and was one of the first states to open charter schools. In 1994, the state's legislature approved charter schools and open enrollment for all students as a means to generate a public school market (Powers, 2009; Potterton, in press). Due to open enrollment, there was perceived enrollment instability. Parents could change schools where their children attended relatively easily and freely, provided they had access to transportation since most schools do not provide open enrollment transportation.

Below, I focus specifically on the district school leaders and parents at the district school who discussed marketing pressures, not only due to rapidly growing school choice reforms but also due to increasing performance accountability demands. I also describe the ways in which many members of the school team (composed of school administrators, teachers, and staff members), were affected by ever-increasing competitive expectations. By examining these market pressures, it was possible to identify some unintended but real

consequences of expanding school choice policies and programs on team leadership at schools and in districts as well as those impacting stakeholders in communities who are experiencing educational reforms in local settings.

Theoretical Framework

Parents can take action as agents by leaving traditional public schools or charter schools, especially when choice options are profuse. School leaders thus must respond to this competition and take part in the school choice environments where they are employed. Leaders' responses to market-based reforms have been examined in numerous settings, and researchers have found that overall local contexts of choice policies matter greatly and that leaders do indeed respond to competition (see Potterton, in press; Holme, Carkhum, & Rangel, 2013; Jabbar, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). Jabbar (2015b) reported how in New Orleans, where the entire school district was turned over to charter schools after Hurricane Katrina devastated the area, one leader expressed that "every kid is money" (p. 6).

Whilst leaders work to maintain sustainable school environments for students in settings like these, parents who have the resources make choices as consumers to stay or leave in times of disagreement, disaster, change, or turnover at schools. Regarding changing schools, Hirschman (1970) describes this consumer-based type of exit as a withdrawal of voice. On the other hand, some authors such as Garcia (2010) argue that the freedom to make choices in a market is more complicated. According to other researcher perspectives, a market-based system can empower families (Robinson, 2015; Stewart & Wolf, 2014).

Still other researchers offer notions of alternative public spaces, called *counter publics* (Wilson, 2016), wherein school teams work to

meet unique needs for students with specific visions and practices. These might include district schools or charter schools that serve the public in ways that support certain cultures, learning interests, and abilities via centric schools (Eckes, 2015; Fox & Buchanan, 2014). In other instances, schools may assume a role in positively supporting students who may not feel welcome elsewhere (Bloom, 2013).

In a progressively competitive environment where leaders in traditional and other public schools must work to maintain justifiable student enrollments, they must also follow rules that are mandated by their district leadership teams. Public schools, aiming to serve the public equitably, may not cap enrollment for students who live in a specific neighborhood zone but rather accept all students. Charter schools, though, may cap enrollment, and they may very strongly encourage (but are not allowed to require) criteria for students to stay enrolled in the school, such as completion of specific standards of work or contracted volunteer hours for parents. District school leaders ultimately face tensions in this type of environment while supporting stakeholder teams that include teachers, school leaders, staff members, and parents or other family members. Team members may perceive themselves at times as customers *of their organizations* due to their keen awareness of the new business ontology of competing schools (Wilkins, 2016). School leaders know that parents have relatively easy potential to stay or go.

Marketing Schools

While promoting their schools, leaders in a competitive school choice environment must also consider the importance of school team collaboration and parental voice. How a school is marketed thus matters? For example, leaders could use promotional strategies that highlight the spirit of team collaboration and decision making, such as

prioritized academic rankings, or they could promote specific, niche offerings that their school has compared to others. Leaders may also spotlight school details through commercial-style materials and websites, with the support of marketing teams (Lubienski, 2007; Lubienski, Linick, & York, 2012; Olson Beal & Beal, 2016; Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012; Wilson & Carlsen, 2016). In the school choice literature, the newly coined term *edvertizing* (DiMartino & Jessen 2018; Jessen & DiMartino, 2018) describes the new ways in which school teams must function in an increasingly competitive school choice education environment within the United States. A difference between district schools and charter schools is that the latter have autonomy to hire staff members in whatever way best fits the school. District schools do not often have the economic, social, or political resources to market in the same ways that business-oriented organizations do. Nonetheless, district schools in Arizona are held to similar standards of accountability and sustainability as competitors who function in much more clearly defined, market-oriented ways.

Accountability and School Choice

Notions of accountability are embedded in the school choice movement and a foundational concept for educational reforms (Garn & Cobb, 2001, 2008), yet, little research has specifically examined stakeholders' experiences with school choice in an increasingly complex accountability environment. Complicating matters further, individuals perceive accountability and school choice policies in different ways, and their interpretations are patterned by both personal and collective concerns (e.g., Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1996; Jennings, 2010). Garn and Cobb (2008) identified four models of accountability embedded in the school choice movement: bureaucratic, performance, market, and professional. Their models

also sometimes overlap as individuals attempt to make meaning of school choice policies and programs, interpret competitive pressures, and make choices (Garn & Cobb, 2008).

Bureaucratic accountability refers to compliance and monitoring systems that support the regulations and rules governing education systems. It includes a set of rules and norms aimed at ensuring that public functions are performed in a way that is democratic and legal. Under *performance accountability systems*, states, districts, or schools are ranked based on the results of standardized tests. Outcome measurements of student learning (e.g., school report cards, statewide assessments, National Assessment of Educational Progress) provide data used for statistical interpretation. *Market accountability* is the process whereby consumers or customers choose between schools; when schools are no longer viable, they eventually close. Under market accountability, government regulations could also be used to proactively prevent monopolies in a market and to require schools to provide accurate and complete information to families. Finally, *professional accountability* refers to the idea that experts in practice assume responsibility for their work, and thus, they are involved in decision making and monitoring of their progress and standards.

The complicated processes of school choice in local contexts may result in individuals and groups interpreting notions of accountability in different ways. Such interpretations can be affected by competition-oriented school choice rhetoric from individuals and groups, such as EMOs or leaders at high-performing traditional public schools, and can shape the ways in which individuals and groups think about and act upon their school choices.

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Method

I conducted a secondary analysis of data collected during a larger qualitative study that used ethnographic methods to explore experiences with school choice policies and practices from the perspectives of stakeholders at a district school, Southwest Learning Site (SLS), and in its surrounding community. I conducted fieldwork between 2014 and 2016 and wrote fieldnotes during participant observation at the school during informal conversations throughout the community, at school and community meetings, and in homes where and when I was invited. I created analytic memos throughout diverse stages of data collection and when it was helpful to gather findings and insights. Although I conducted 37 interviews with 35 stakeholders, Table 1 displays information about the 17 interviewees from whom data were analyzed for this study.

Table 1

Semi-Structured Interview Participants Included in Analysis for Study

Participant		Parent	Parents' Children at SLS, Current or Previous	Administrator, Teacher, or Staff in or near the District
1	Eleanor	X	X	X
2	Ellie	X	X	
3	Grace	X	X	X
4	Joan	X	X	
5	Joy	X	X	X
6	Marcus	X	X	
7	Marie	X	X	
8	Marsha	X	X	X
9	Megan	X	X	
10	Mike	X	X	

11	Monica	X	X	X
12	Nadia	X	X	
13	Robert	X	X	
14	Ron	X	X	X
15	Samuel	X	X	X
16	Sarah	X	X	
17	Tom	X	X	

For data analysis, I first focused on information that was connected to the initial codes (i.e., *market behavior*, *accountability*, *agency*, *process of choosing*, *reasons to move schools*). Then, I conducted qualitative data analyses through a reflective process of reading and re-reading field notes, analytic memos, and interviews transcripts and through later cycles of coding that resulted in themes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I triangulated the data throughout the analysis period in order to validate findings and to get a full picture of experiences in the community (Creswell, 1998).

Community Unit of Analysis

For the larger ethnographic project, the school and its surrounding community was my unit of analysis. I defined *community* as the individuals who were attached to SLS because they were parents with children at the school, teachers or leaders at the school, or somehow involved with the school due to previous affiliations (e.g., parents of children who attended the school in the past) or because they were active in the neighborhood. Although I rely extensively on interviews with parents, teachers, and school leaders at SLS for this study, I also draw on my larger observational data to provide rich descriptions and fuller context in the reported findings.

School and surrounding area. SLS was a district public school and identified distinctly as a *school of choice*. It was started in 1990 and

described on its website during the time of my original data collection study as a demonstrative project for the Desert Public School System (DPSS) to provide alternative methods for learning that relied on innovative educational research that was developing at the time. In practice, stakeholders and foundational staff members at the school shared with me, and I observed, that the school was largely run as a Montessori-type or school that served students in multi-age classrooms from Kindergarten through Grade 8. During my time in the field (many years after the 1990 opening when school choice policies and practices had not yet influenced the area), there was a fragile working definition about the school's purpose. Many community members blamed both accountability pressures and charter schools for the discord amongst stakeholders concerning what the school should prioritize, how it should serve the students and community, and how the school should and should not be run.

It is important to note that although SLS was a school of choice for students, it was not a charter school. It was supported by the district and governed alongside the other public schools. Nonetheless, the school faced identity tensions, especially when student test scores significantly dropped one year alongside gradual changes whereupon more diverse student populations enrolled. Around this time, the district leaders carefully watched for improvements to the test scores, which in turn, affected how teachers spent their days and prepared lessons. These changes generated disagreements between the multi-grade teams and some families, which created a period of unrest before the principal resigned during my time collecting data. Concurrently, a district superintendent change occurred. This period of transitions is contextual to the perceptions and experiences described in the findings section.

City. The city in which SLS was located is a popular retirement location and a well-known area for its relatively high-income neighborhoods in many sections. Although the city has approximately 250,000 residents, they had not passed the previous two school bond overrides to provide much-needed local funding to the district's public schools. Demographics varied within the city limits, with the northern part being home to many high-income residents. The areas to the east, west, and south of the city were known for their diverse populations, both racially and socioeconomically. During the period data were gathered for the larger study, SLS was located in a high-income neighborhood with a diverse population around it to the east, west, and south.

High-Profile Charter Schools

A growing number of high-profile, "high-performing" EMOs were opening around SLS. These schools were located either in or adjacent to high-income areas, and over time a number of families left SLS to attend the charter schools. I had previously written a commentary (Potterton, 2013) that described how the charter schools in the area served a majority of students who were White, had few if any identified learning disabilities, or were English language learners; no students at the charter schools received free or reduced price lunches. The students attending the new charter schools did not reflect Arizona's population of public school students.

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Findings

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An individual who was deeply invested in and committed to the school poignantly described SLS's future as "earth-quaky." As I was completing data collection there, stakeholders remained quite unsure about how the district might organize or re-organize the school under

the leadership of a new principal and a new district superintendent. The mounting pressures faced by stakeholders were, in part, a direct consequence of accountability policies. Stakeholders at SLS and in the surrounding community had different perspectives about how the new "accountability" policies that affected their choices, which I discuss below.

Bureaucratic Accountability

Bureaucratic processes, such as increasing rules and regulations at the school, proved to be a point of serious consideration for individuals at SLS, and their assessments influenced how they made decisions about choosing schools. Some school members were angered by the bureaucracy that seemed to interfere with what was perceived to be best for students at SLS. Some stakeholders felt that there was an unnecessary preoccupation with the rules and regulations at the school, which were impeding the school's unique opportunities to support children. In one case, stakeholders described how they were upset that a dog, who was owned by a staff member and accompanied her to school every day, had to suddenly be barred from the school upon direction from the district. Many SLS stakeholders loved the dog because students were rewarded for making good choices by having time to play or brush the dog. Although some stakeholders were not overly concerned about the recently implemented rule concerning pets at school, others were offended that district personnel did not seem to appreciate or honor the dog's beneficial presence at the school. That is, for some, adhering to new rules and regulations appeared to be more important than considering the benefits to students.

Performance Accountability

A number of teachers felt increasing pressures from the standardized testing and high-stakes teacher evaluation systems that seemed to be inconsistent with the Montessori-styled, multi-age methods and collaborative team efforts that had always been paramount to their school. Many teachers at SLS wanted to work with the DPSS to be a flagship and distinctive school for the district, but they did not want to lose the vision of their school that was unique and important for them. For example, a local school leader talked about the difficulty of maintaining parents' support of the school in the face of increasing "performance accountability" models. This leader spoke about the community's long-standing shared philosophy:

> *You have a philosophy that does not mesh with the demands of testing and curriculum and policies and rules, and you have a philosophy that's just kind of like, "We will teach our kids and when they leave here they will be self-advocating, self-directed, self-motivated learners, and they will be okay, just okay. Some of them will go to college and some of them will not but they will be okay, they'll be good members of society." That was our philosophy. When you put all of these other things there becomes this huge battle of trying to maintain your philosophy under all these rules. And so when they said, "You have to start doing this curriculum," and so then they start splitting by the grade, because that's the only way we can figure it out. . . . When you have to do all this testing and you have to do this mandatory, "They must focus and learn this even when they're ready or not," there's an internal struggle because some things you shake your head and you say, "This is not what's in the best interest of this child! It might be in the best interest of that child, but it's not what's in the best interest of this child.". . . But you don't have a choice. You have to do it because that's what the rules, policies, and regulations state. So… your ground becomes very earth-quaky and you have to either mold with what's happening or you sink. And we have to change… [like] the year that Arizona said, "We're testing everyone and it's all about performance." And, I think, was that the year*

*that the No Child Left Behind came into play? It's all about performance. . . .
And then the one year we got the C, the hammer came down. . . .We can't do
this, we're [DPSS's city]… I do have to say this . . . if you're teaching kids right,
they should be able to perform. So, this philosophy that we have is supposed to
work, experiential learning. So the kids should be getting B+, A, I mean basically
they should be getting it.*

Ellie, a mother with a young son, felt the same way. She had an
extensive educational research background and was planning to enroll
her young son into Kindergarten the following year. Ellie knew that
while assessments did not provide a complete picture of student
learning, and, although she was looking forward to sending her child
to SLS because many aspects of the school were attractive to her, she
still planned to keep a close eye on the quality of opportunities for
learning provided to her son.

Other families saw past singular viewpoints on testing and
accountability, especially in terms of students' performance on
standardized tests. Megan was a relatively new mother to SLS with
young children who was contemplating whether or not to keep her
children at SLS. During her interview, she mentioned the conflicts that
had occurred during the school year related to district pressures to
raise test scores and then explained why she resisted evaluating
schools only on students' test performance. According to Megan,

*it was a choice that was good not just for our kids but also for our family. We
wanted a sense of community. We wanted to know about the space and place
where our children were going to be spending a portion of their waking hours.
It was not just teaching them their math facts. It was teaching them how to be
good, healthy people, and that was more important to us than a test score.*

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Market Pressures and Accountability

An administrator working at another district school in the area shared with me the way she was encouraged to think about ways of increasing enrollment and potential problems that would occur if the schools did not maintain sustainable numbers. With increasing charter school options in the area, the district school leader worked hard and took very seriously her responsibility to provide tours for potential parents and to give them brochures that boasted her school's many instructional strengths and proud diversity amongst the student population.

This school administrator reported that a large amount of her time was spent comparing her students' rankings on tests to those of other students at other schools. She was very proud to say that her school's numbers were strong and, upon considering the diverse set of students they served, she realized her students actually performed very well on learning assessments administered within the district. Indeed, the brochures she created highlighted for parents how competitors' scores were not always better in order to dispel myths.

> *When I tour, I show our competitors' scores compared to ours [on brochures she creates]… We're constantly sharing such things with even our own parents because that idea that charter schools are better, at least with two main competitors which would be the [charter] schools and the [charter] schools, is not always the case.*

Other leaders at the public schools felt that they had to please parents to keep their children and that they were increasingly working to add new programs at the district schools to mirror curricular choices available at the charter schools in the area. Continuous tinkering with the curriculum at the school proved to be damaging because teachers felt pressured to change their instructional strategies. Ultimately,

implementation of too many changes caused significant tension among the teaching staff.

Professional Pressures and Accountability

One district school leader talked about a perceived general awareness in the area that education was being treated like a commodity and that leaders needed to cater to the next "trendy" products in education. These types of pressures were felt by administrators at the same time that teachers were feeling pressured to change how the school was run to make in order to make it more competitive within the district and wider area.

I felt that for some stakeholders the term "professional accountability" meant that teachers should automatically trust the curricular programs provided by professionals to whom they were accountable (e.g., teachers were accountable to principals, principals were accountable to superintendents). This perspective did not sit well with some teachers and parents who were attracted to SLS because of its vision to encourage students' creativity and self-direction; thus, some challenges to the current ways of "doing things" felt like a threat to experienced teachers' professional and team-leadership capabilities. One teacher, however, reported that there were other experienced teachers who did not feel as threatened and thus were willing to work within new frameworks so long as the process felt collaborative and mutually respectful. Joy, a well-respected veteran teacher at SLS, perceived that the school was unique and valued within the district and that, despite recent conflicts, the DPSS wanted to see the school succeed. She defended some of the newer changes in the school.

> *The district says, "I want you to be [a particular subject] academy. That's how they were going to save SLS, I guess." So anyway, we went through some difficult times with that because there were some things that were just too rigid.*

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Forced. And some of the things that the parents complained about worked in my classroom. And there [was] some common language that was used that I thought was very powerful for the school. Some parents thought it was an overkill. Well, when you're having difficulties in your class and you have a common language [that] everybody understands, there's some value to that. And not every classroom has to look different. So there was some stuff going on with that. And [some new curricular programs] just seemed to be kind of forced down upon us and that created some difficulties.

Joy referred to the new principal's suggestion to try a different way of organizing her classroom for a year, which was based on the principal's leadership experiences at other schools. Joy respected the new principal's demeanor and her apparent respect for the SLS teachers' existing practices. According to Joy, her new principal gently suggested that the teachers might be open to see how things could go if they experimented with other ways. Joy then said,

And the new principal came in and said, "I want you to try it for a year. Just try it for a year for me, please?" And there's something to be said about that. So they all agreed to do that. And we did it not by any pressure from anyone, we just said we think we'd like to try . . . but that will be the only time during the day. The rest of the day [we] decide how [we're] going to cut that pie [i.e., organize] . . . which is really free.

Joy's comment shows that some of the committed veteran teachers at SLS were open to how the school might be developing differently, yet were willing to work together as professionals to see how new ideas impacted student learning. As parents saw the respected teachers' responses to the new principal (who was likely facing pressures from the district to sustain and increase student enrollment and produce high test scores) and as relationships began to "heal,"

some were influenced to keep their children at SLS despite the conflicts that had occurred over the year.

Selling a New Thing: "The Cadillac Effect"

How schools were or were not marketed affected families' choices significantly as did the school's state-assigned grade, the students' performance on standardized tests, and the teachers' unique teaching methods. Some stakeholders were aware that SLS did not market itself in the same ways that other district and charter schools did. Therefore, SLS' performance results tended to stand out as a defining characteristic. Some stakeholders, however, wanted to change this because they realized the role of marketing in the district might be important for sustaining the school's unique vision and teaching styles. Some parents, both long-timers and newcomers to the school, supported efforts to increase marketing throughout the community to maintain the school's relevance in the district, especially because SLS was often misunderstood due to its uniqueness. Others parents, however, rejected the notion of marketing because they felt that it contradicted the school's non-competitive approach to education.

Whereas many parents spoke of trying to gather as much information about schools that they could prior to making decisions, others stressed that it was important to use a critical eye through which to view marketing as a requirement of public education. Some teachers were concerned about how marketing to attract families could result in clashes of visions for SLS, whereas the administrators understood that marketing and attracting new families was a necessary part of their professional roles and responsibilities.

Robert, a father who was drawn to SLS when the principal gave him a tour of the campus, provided a fantastic metaphor for the tricky

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process of school choice in Arizona. He talked about what he called "The Cadillac Effect" with confidence and concern.

> *When you're buying a car, you go look at, we all have this vision of what kind of car we want. We want a nice sporty luxury car [or] whatever. . . . [such as] a Cadillac. So schools are kind of like that for parents. We want our children to be in the best academic learning environment that we can put them in. And [charter schools] and some of the other schools . . . have marketing teams, and they have a budget to design their schools a certain way. And a lot of the newer charter schools [have] architecture [that] is just phenomenal. But the way that they design their schools to look, and I haven't really been to too many inside of them, I hear stories from other parents. . . . it's all this glitz, all the pomp and circumstance, the package. . . . my impression is that . . . [the charter school organizations] do a really good job of making this package so that it looks really, really appealing to parents. . . . that package is like a brand new Cadillac.*

School leaders, both at district schools and charter schools in the area, were aware of the importance of this "packaging." Although others did not describe the process as selling a Cadillac, one district school leader did say that she felt like her job was to sell education as a salesperson might sell a car.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this secondary analysis of data highlight the complex ways in which market pressures affected public school leaders in Arizona and how stakeholders interpreted leaders' actions. Robert articulated it well in his notion about marketing schools and charter schools' potential advantages when he said, "That package is like a brand new Cadillac." Although DiMartino and Jessen (2018) discuss *advertising* inequities amongst charter school management organizations (or EMOs), I argue that the same can be said for the

competition both between and across sectors within the deregulated district public school system in Arizona. This is due to its mature education market, expected outcomes, and potential consequences for failing to compete well. Teachers at SLS were faced with ever-changing demands that were certainly influenced by the expansion of school choice around them.

DiMartino and Jessen (2018) further discuss how EMOs have an advantage because they have built up their marketing campaigns and departments in ways that can overpower smaller, less-resourced schools.

> *Within the market-driven framework, organizations employ a variety of edvertising tactics to increase their market share. . . . Larger and nationally oriented [EMOs] are at a distinct advantage in this system because they have strategically built up their marketing and branding departments to support large-scale recruitment and outreach efforts. . . . These organizations' use of highly glossified branded materials from direct mailers to brochures . . . allows them to craft campaigns to targeted communities. (p. 42)*

The school leader who was working hard to promote her school in comparison to the EMO charter schools that had marketing teams and were high performing and located nearby provides an example of the new ways in which public school leaders in Arizona must place their efforts towards gaining "customers" while simultaneously competing for financial resources. The EMO's sharp focus on touring and branding was obvious to many SLS stakeholders, and there were concerns within the district and its public schools about how much energy leaders should place on marketing efforts since their financial resources were thinly spread already.

School choice policies and programs are expanding not only in the United States but also across the globe. In the United Kingdom, for

example, academy schools, which are publicly funded schools that are independent of any local authorities (and therefore similar in some ways to charter schools in the United States), taught nearly 69% of secondary-age pupils and approximately 24% of primary-age pupils (Department for Education, 2017). Specialty offerings are a major part of promoting schools and programs in academies and free schools, which are similar to academies but can be started by groups of teachers, parents, charities, and others. How these schools are promoted changes the ways in which leaders must function and schools must sustain. Indeed, Wilkins (2016) reasoned that contemporary schools in the United Kingdom are changing so much that they must to be understood through a business ontology. This description can be said for privatization efforts globally as school choice programs continue to grow.

Many questions need to be considered and hopefully answered. For example, how will these pressures among schools to compete for resources affect neighborhoods and traditional notions of public schooling? What will this competition mean for leaders as they prepare their teams for envisioning and running schools? As further research closely examines school choice educational reform in local contexts, scholars must focus on the ways in which leaders can move forward with supporting students and teachers amid these newly organized learning environments.

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About the Author.

Amanda U. Potterton, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership Studies at the University of Kentucky. Her research and teaching interests include politics of school choice, charter schools, privatization and public education, and justice-related implications of these policies for students, parents, families, and communities. Email: amanda.potterson@uky.edu