Nomads of Educational System
Multiple Case Study of School Mobility of Pupils

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Abstract

The thesis explores school mobility – "students making nonpromotional school changes" (Rumberger, 2003), in the Czech Republic through qualitative multiple case study. It begins with a review of the most significant empirical studies in school mobility (1991–2016), highlighting a gap in research into the causes and processes of pupils' transitions and the need for qualitative research. To contribute to filling this gap, two cases of transfers following the transition from primary to lower secondary school and one case of attempts to integrate a child with cerebral palsy into mainstream schooling were explored as a "social and relational construction" (Zamora & Moforte, 2013, p. 59). The core of the thesis is an analysis of data based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with parents, pupils, teachers, school principals and external experts, field notes and documents providing three analytical narrations of these transitions. Rich use of data segments allows naturalistic generalisation. The analysis features the role of communication between school and family, the role of engaged parents, school tracking, school climate, social stigmatization of pupils and families, and stress on academic outcomes during the process of changing schools. The cases were then analysed according to the theories of social practice proposed by P. Bourdieu and the theory of social capital by J. Coleman. Intended originally as rival theories, integrating them provided a useful analytical tool. School mobility is viewed as the result of a process where the weak ontological complicity of a child or parent in the school environment causes a reaction in the social field that manifests as stigma and aggression. Parents receptive to the ethical quality of the environment evaluate the social capital of the school and attempt to improve it, starting a game for rules for which they lack sufficient capital. They resolve the escalated exclusion dynamic in the school environment by transferring the child to another school, combining reactive and strategic aspects of the choice. The study also reveals other topics, such as school rivalry, tracking in education, the role of school principals, foster care and the role of school counselling facilities.