

Schools, Families and Inequality. Choice of Secondary Education in Contemporary Czech Society

The dissertation work is concerned with the choice of secondary education in families, the influence of family and school on the choice of pupils born in the 1st half of 90s. A special importance of this phase is in that high schools in the Czech Republic are highly differentiated so the choice belongs to the crucial points of the school carrier. The type of the studied high school significantly influences learning aspirations and chances of the graduates to be accepted to further education, structures the field of possibilities in the life way of young people.

The analysis is based on data obtained from two qualitative studies: 1. Focus groups with mothers of children in the ninth year of the compulsory education: students of (selective) multi-year grammar schools; pupils from basic schools (the main education stream); 2. Case studies carried out in two Prague schools focused on two classes in the eight and ninth year (2008-2010). The aim of both the studies was to map subjective perspectives of the participating actors – parents, pupils and teachers, to show different interests, attributed meanings, values in upbringing, education, abilities to distinguish types of high schools due to prospects of the new generation in the contemporary society. The central research question is what mechanisms contribute to differentiation of education ways of Czech pupils between primary and secondary school and which ways the institutions of school and family are involved in the process of choosing the secondary education. Special attention is paid to educational background and family cultural resources, which help pupils to fulfil school demands and progress in the education system in the context of actual prevailing increasing learning mobility in compare to the parental generation when only in the last few years the offer of places in the tertiary education has been significantly widen.

The choice of high school in current liberal environment that prefers free individual choice and in the differentiated secondary level allows the active parents to aim the learning ways of their children (reproductive or in ascending order movable) through socialization focused on supporting child's interest in education, will, aspiration and projects of future. No less principal is the knowledge of the changing Czech education system and abilities to orient in it, which can be considered to be family cultural resource.

Key words: education, educational inequalities, school ethnography, focus group, cultural resources, social categorisation, school success/failure, Czech Republic