

Summary

Education for social success. Private primary education from the perspective of middle-class parents

The book deals with the issue of private primary education in the context of determining social success among middle-class children. Nowadays, it is assumed that education is one of the key factors which places individuals in a social structure; thus, it is possible to notice diverse results in achieving educational goals among students from different social backgrounds.

Although contemporary societies provide an open and equal access to education, there are numerous mechanisms which hinder fair educational start for all children. One of these mechanisms which counteract the process of equalizing the education system is diversifying educational institutions in terms of prestige, quality of teaching, and results of teaching. These institutions and their different level of schooling, as a result, create disparities between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. In that sense, private schools and their educational offer dominate other institutions already at the primary education level.

Middle-class families and their active engagement in the education market play a key role in this phenomenon. This is primarily associated with their cultural and financial resources which give them greater possibilities to choose schools. At the same time, it can be claimed that for middle-class families education is an autotelic value, a value in itself. The prospect of a long-term gratification is foremost in the minds and educational vision of parents from this social class. Their awareness of dominant rules, good work and economic situation, and active approach give middle-class parents an advantage in terms of their children's education.

This book comprises two parts. The first one describes theoretical analyses of the relation between education and social success; it is divided into four chapters. Chapter One seeks to describe concepts that explain the relation between education and social success. Apart from the analysis of the category of social success, this chapter aims to present selected theories from the sociology of education as a context for interpreting the role of schooling in shaping an individual's success in education.

Chapter Two attempts to analyze the notion of a middle class starting with the concept of a middle class itself and class society. This is followed by the analysis of

the place the middle class takes in the social structure, with several criteria of class affiliation being distinguished. The chapter closes with brief reflections on the structure of a Polish society.

The next chapter focuses on the role of middle-class parents in their children's education. The author attempts to analyze the phenomenon of 'parentocracy' in terms of its definition and the areas of education where it is expressed. The author also reflects on the factors underlying middle-class parents' choice of school during educational market changes. Finally, the chapter analyzes the phenomenon of intense parental care, which is observed in middle-class families.

Chapter Four reflects on the development of non-state schools in Poland. This includes a brief summary of the development of the Polish education system up to 1989, and selected contexts of the development of private education from the transformation in 1989 up to the present day. The legal status and funding of non-state schools are presented. The analysis in Chapter Four is complemented by a discussion on selected contexts related to how private education functions in Poland.

The second part of the book comprises the analysis of the qualitative research on the significance middle-class parents attach to their children's education. The research sought an answer to the question of how these parents perceive the importance of private primary education to their children's social and professional lives. The narratives by middle-class parents regarding educational paths are of key importance. This analysis concerns the choice of a school, its functioning, its social environment, and expectations towards children. The background of these narratives is formed by certain expectations parents have because of choosing a particular school.