Abstract

The EDUMIGROM research analyzed school education as a set of institutional and individual actors, practices and experiences embedded into their broader social environment while functioning according to its internal logic. The latter is developed as a reaction to the challenges of the outer world, both in the sense of reproducing and transforming its major forces (including the formation of inequalities, and the tendencies of integration and separation between and among majorities and minorities of different kinds). Consequently, mechanisms of social differentiation and cultural distinctions structuring the current realities of the new and old member states of the European Union are also shaping the access to school education of children perceived as belonging to ethnicized and/or racialized ‘others’ (like Roma and immigrants). While addressing the issue of access, we are referring to the way in which these children’s schooling and life carriers are shaped by their proximate home environments, by educational systems and units, but as well as by their strategies to deal with these. Based on the country and comparative reports resulted from the EDUMIGROM research, my paper aims to identify common patterns and variations on ethnic selection in education. The paper describes the phenomenon of ethnic selection in education (or that of integration/separation on ethnic lines) as a consequence of the constitution and ethnicization of the socially excluded/deprived spaces of living (like Roma colonies and ghettos, or like immigrant neighborhoods), reinforced by the differentiations between and within schools, and ameliorated or strengthened by educational policies. Furthermore, the paper explores the children’s, parents’ and teachers’ needs and strategies to integrate and/or to separate, while demonstrating how the choice for one or for the other direction (or for a balance between the two) is an individual option shaped by structural and cultural forces. Last, but not least, the paper underlines the consequences of school integration and separation regarding children’s performances and future aspirations, and broadly speaking the reinforcement or transformation of the predominant patterns of ethnic, gender and social classifications, or ways of thinking about cultural diversity and social differences.