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You've got what it takes? – Educational transitions in Switzerland and Germany

Abstract:

Transitions within stratified school systems are important rites of passage revealing interesting data that needs to be critically interpreted and set into wider social and political context. Indeed, transitions are crucial events affecting the students' identity and personal geographies telling stories about multiple inclusions/exclusions with respect to class, gender, intellectual and "peer" performance.

In a study comparing educational transitions from Primary Education to Gymnasium (Higher Secondary Schools) in Germany (Bayern) and Switzerland (Kanton Zürich) I approach the "geographies of educational transition" from two perspectives:

First, by considering schools as institutional materializations of the discursive representations that legitimize and give form to selective higher education systems, I intend to show the different histories, logics and procedural routines of the selection process. Second, I concentrate on the personal geographies of students in the process of educational transition. With the help of individual stories I try to outline how children negotiate the challenges of their new competitive educational environment.

The paper closes with a summary of the most important ideas with respect to transitions in education and the implications for the field of "geographies of education" more generally. (Itta Bauer)