

Maria Manuel Vieira, Ana Sofia Ribeiro, Ana Nunes de Almeida (ICS-ULisboa) | *Including and excluding. Schools' reputation: students, families and choices*

The sociological study of the phenomena of reputation has been traditionally associated with the world of the arts, culture and its industries (Becker, 1982). Reputation, understood as a social process, integrates several components, among which both “recognition” (concerning the competence exhibited under a commonly shared convention) and the “renown” (referring to the public visibility obtained) stand out. Hence, applying "reputation" conceptually under a sociological perspective implies considering elements such as the relative character of reputations; the "reputational work" developed to obtain and maintain it; the criteria for assessing the competence to which a reputation is associated with; the times and spaces of circulation of a given reputation; the reputation dynamics associated with a given name and its possible transferability (Chauvin, 2013).

The centrality of education in contemporary societies justifies extending the analysis of reputational processes to the school universe itself. In the Portuguese context, where the educational system displays a certain liberalization of selection and admission procedures, and particularly in territories where there is an effective "school market", competition among educational establishments emphasizes the importance of reputational phenomena (Lima & Melo, 2016) as potential inclusion/exclusion devices.

Our chapter discusses this issue by exploring some of the arguments invoked by school users. Contrasting the voices of pupils (collected through focus groups with 9th and 11th grade students of several public and private schools) with those of parents (members of parents' associations in the mentioned institutions), we intend to analyze in depth one of the above-mentioned elements of the theoretical construct “reputation”: the election criteria that each population group underlines as being behind their school choice. Are they based on the same reputational referents? Or are they anchored to distinct priorities, revealing divergent reputational criteria?

References:

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