Patterns of interaction between inclusion and fairness in access to higher education: theoretical distinctions and policy implications

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OUTLINE

• Introduction
• Theoretical considerations
• Research questions
• Previous studies and existing measures of equity
• Research methodology
• Results
• Discussion of the results
• Directions for further research
• Conclusions
• Practical and social implications
Background

• The issue of access to higher education (HE) occupies a central place in every HE system as far as it reflects the way HE is perceived as a public and private good and is directly related with how social justice in HE can be achieved.

• Social justice has become a constituent part of the EHEA through the social dimension in HE which is related with the aim that “the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations” (London Communiqué, 2007).

• Notwithstanding the efforts made within the Bologna Process, there are concerns that widening access to and participation in HE is only one step towards guaranteeing equal opportunities to all (Elias & Brennan, 2012).
INTRODUCTION (2)

Aims

1) to explore access to HE as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon by distinguishing two of its aspects: inclusion and fairness, &

2) to outline the policy sensitiveness of social justice perspective to HE.

Theses:

1) Social justice in HE is a complex phenomenon, which is context and time-specific.

2) Inclusion and fairness reflect two different aspects of social equity in HE and as such they should be studied separately for different social groups.
Like ‘equality of opportunity’ or ‘choice’, ‘social justice’ is one of those politically malleable and essentially contested phrases which can mean all things to all people” and it tends to suffer from “vagueness and oversimplification” (Thrupp & Tomlinson, 2005: 549).

There are different views about what is meant by social justice in (access to) HE, the direction of its change over time and the models to be used in measuring it.

To a great extent differences in understanding social justice in HE reflect the variety of views on the very essence of social justice and how it can and should be conceptualised.
Among the contemporary perspectives on justice there are two very prominent:

- the institutions-centred approach of John Rawls (1971) – it is concentrated on identifying perfectly-just institutions and, in its essence, is arrangement-focused.

- the human-centred approach of Amartya Sen (2009) – it adheres to the idea that justice may be achieved on the basis of making comparisons between different ways in which people’s lives may be led, and thus ascertaining which one is more or less just.
We conceptualise social justice in HE by differentiating two aspects of participation in it: inclusion and fairness (Marginson, 2011) and argue that they need to be analysed separately for different types of HE and different social groups.

**INCLUSION**
- Increase of the participation of one social group in HE regardless of the achievements of other social groups
- Growth in the absolute number of people

**FAIRNESS**
- Access to HE does not depend on circumstances like social status, gender or ethnic background
- Proportional distribution of student places between different social groups
• RQ1: Do countries differ with respect to the development of access to HE as inclusive and fair?

• RQ2: Does the inclusion in access to HE is associated with fairness in HE at country level?

• RQ3: What kind of patterns of interaction between inclusion and fairness in access to HE can be identified across European countries?
1) EEI (Educational Equity Index). It is developed by Usher (2004) and has been used for the construction of accessibility rankings among 14 countries (Usher & Medow, 2010).

\[
EEI \ = 100 \times \frac{\text{% of males aged 45-64 in the general population of a country with a HE degree}}{\text{% of the student body whose fathers have a HE degree}}
\]

EEI takes into account the representation only of one social group – that with HE degree thus neglecting the disadvantaged group with low level of education.

2) Typology of social inclusiveness of European HE systems proposed in the EUROSTUDENT IV report (Orr, Gwosć, & Netz 2011: 50–51). It reflects the degree of underrepresentation of students with low social background and of overrepresentation students with high social background.

- However, the values of measures go from below 1 to above 1 and have different interpretations – for students with low social background.
There are data on the social-make up of student with low and high social background from the EUROSTUDENT Survey (IV & V).

We present the data for the father’s educational level as a measure for the social background, which in both rounds of EUROSTUDENT Survey are collected with the question Q6.1

*What is the highest level of education your father and mother have obtained?*
SHARE OF STUDENTS (IN %) WITH LOW SOCIAL BACKGROUND IN TWO WAVES OF THE EUROSTUDENT SURVEY (IV & V)
SHARE OF STUDENTS (IN %) WITH HIGH SOCIAL BACKGROUND IN TWO WAVES OF THE EUROSTUDENT SURVEY (IV & V)
Research strategy: Secondary data analysis

Data:

- European Social Survey (ESS) - Rounds 4, 5, 6 and 7 implemented respectively in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014, &

Methods: Descriptive statistics, logistic regression and correlation analysis

Limitations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For the calculation of the inclusion index – IinclusHE</th>
<th>For the calculation of the fairness index – IfairHE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Data for all four rounds of the ESS – for 18 countries</td>
<td>✓ Data for both rounds of the EUROSTUDENT – for 18 countries</td>
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<td>✓ People aged 20-34</td>
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For both indexes – data for only 11 countries
Index of inclusion in HE (licluHE)

- Based on logistic regression
  - Dependent variable – whether a person has participated in HE or not
  - Independent variable – social background (father’s highest educational level)
  - Control variables – gender, age and ESS Round

- Ratio between the probabilities of a given social group to participate in HE between the two selected temporal periods

- 2 social groups: people with low and high social background

- Index values
  - > 1: indicates the increase of inclusion of the given social group within one and the same country within a given period of time
  - < 1: there is a decrease of inclusion in comparison to the previous time period tendency towards exclusion of this group over time
  - = 1: no change
Index of fairness in HE (IfairHE)

- Measures whether and to what extent a given social group has become better represented within HE
- For its calculation
  
  First, we calculate EEI scores for people with high social background for a given time point. For those with low social background we used the reversed formula. These scores vary between 0 and 1.
  
  The closer the ratio is to 1, the fairer is the system with regard to this social group and in the respective time and vice versa.

  Second, we calculated the ratio between these scores for two temporal points.

- Index values
  
  > 1: indicates the increase of fairness of the given social group within one and the same country within the above-described period of time,
  
  <1: shows a tendency towards less fairness of this group over time.
  
  =1: indicates that no change in the fairness was made by this group.
INDEX OF INCLUSION IN PARTICIPATION IN HE FOR THE PERIOD 2009 AND 2013 BY COUNTRY

Source: ESS 2008-2010 & ESS 2012-2014 (own calculations)
SCORES OF FAIRNESS IN REPRESENTATION IN HE AS OF 2009 BY COUNTRY

INDEX OF FAIRNESS IN PARTICIPATION IN HE FOR THE PERIOD 2009 AND 2013 BY COUNTRY

Indexes of inclusion and fairness for people with high social background

Two criteria for identifying patterns of interaction between inclusion and fairness in access to HE which account for the correspondence between the directions of the changes in the indexes over time:

1) between the two aspects of social justice - inclusion and fairness &
2) for both social groups: with low and high social background.

The correspondence between the directions of the changes in the two indexes for the two social groups over time could take the form of:

- **synergy** (increase in both inclusion and fairness for both social groups),
- **diversion** (different tendencies in inclusion and fairness for both groups which are plausible), &
- **contradiction** (different tendencies in inclusion and fairness for both groups which are hardly explicable).
TENDENCIES OF INTERACTION BETWEEN INCLUSION AND FAIRNESS IN HE FOR PEOPLE WITH LOW AND HIGH SOCIAL BACKGROUND IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN 2009 & 2013 (1)

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**Logical synergy - Estonia, Germany & France**

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**Contradictory partial synergy - Switzerland**

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**Contradictory partial synergy - Ireland**

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**Contradictory partial synergy - Poland**

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TENDENCIES OF INTERACTION BETWEEN INCLUSION AND FAIRNESS IN HE FOR PEOPLE WITH LOW AND HIGH SOCIAL BACKGROUND IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN 2009 & 2013 (2)

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<th>Logical diversion - Norway &amp; Denmark</th>
<th>Contradictory diversion - Finland</th>
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**Contradictory partial diversion - The Netherlands**

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PATTERNS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE INDEXES OF FAIRNESS AND INCLUSION IN 10 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The present paper:

- demonstrates that equity is an indispensable dimension of the widening of access to HE for both research and policy-making in the sphere of HE;
- allows us to answer the formulated three research questions. More specifically,
  - We found that most of the countries studied differ considerably with respect to the development of access to HE as inclusive and fair (RQ1). However, in 3 of the studied countries we observed identical trends in the development of access to HE in them as inclusive and fair.
  - The results showed that inclusion in access to HE is not always associated with fairness in HE at country level (RQ2).
  - As for the patterns of interaction between inclusion and fairness in access to HE (RQ3) we identified several patterns and designated them as logical synergy, contradictory partial synergy, logical diversion, contradictory diversion and contradictory partial diversion.
DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

• Continuing the theoretical reflection on the understanding of social justice in HE and how it relates to other issues in HE, for example quality and effectiveness.

• Developing a comprehensive understanding of social justice in access to HE, which – applying for example the capability approach – recognizes the vital importance of freedom and opportunity aspects of human life.

• Identifying the factors at both macro and micro level, which could explain differences between countries with regard to inclusion and fairness aspects of social justice in HE.

• Taking into consideration both the directions and the magnitude of the changes in the indexes.

• Exploring how the two indexes look like for different HE institutions and programmes (differentiated by type of degree – Bachelor, Master and PhD – and field of study).
CONCLUSION

Our paper contributes to previous research by:

- bridging 2 of the main contemporary lines of reasoning about justice: the institutions-centred one and the human-centred one and considering their application to HE by Marginson (2011);
- developing and applying 2 indicators –for measuring how the inclusion and fairness aspects of social justice in access to HE change over time; &
- suggesting that correspondence between the directions of the changes in the 2 indexes over time could take the form of synergy, diversion, and contradiction.

The analysis undertaken:

1) allowed us to identify different patterns of relationship between inclusion and fairness for the groups with low and high social background across 10 European countries and to assess them as logical or contradictory.

2) demonstrated that the widened access to HE, which has been brought by massification and expansion of HE, was not sufficient for reducing the inequalities in access to HE over time.
PRACTICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

• The developed indexes can be calculated for other social groups based on other characteristics, such as gender, place of residence or ethnic origin and different time periods.

• The results and the indexes can be used to monitor the social justice in HE. In this regards, the regular data collection of such kind of data is crucial for this process.

• These indexes can be applied as a tool by policy-makers for designing adequate and justified policies for access to HE.
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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