Access to higher education: Social impact of admission systems in comparative perspective

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Agenda

- Research question & previous findings
- Methodology
- Findings
- Discussion
Agenda

- Research question & previous findings
Research questions, purpose

Can we expect, that new selection procedures at universities -- in addition to the prevailing system of entitlements based on school completion requirements ("Matura"-examination) -- might increase social selectivity?

Are there different effects on social selectivity from different selection/admission procedures?

Purpose: The present Austrian system of so called “open access” is under hot discussion, and the Rectors’ Conference wanted to initiate a debate about admission procedures and the development of alternatives (commissioned project)
Background

Weak H.E.

Strong VET
APPR + FT-School
Lower - upper Level

Early Tracking
Previous findings

- **No comparative studies** found about the social impact of different selection/admission systems (this aspect more or less neglected; comparative research looks at broader characteristics of systems - the „educational pipeline“ - only)

- Some research on **country level** available, however, not very conclusive because of differing perspectives and differing variables

- Selection/admission systems are **complex**, build up from a set of differently combined elements
Framework of admission system
Framework of admission system
Framework of admission system

- Investment
- Admission
- Procedures
- Interventions
- Returns

Educational pipeline
Framework of admission system

- Investment
- Admission
- Procedures
- Interventions
- Educational pipeline
- Returns
- Politics, policy
Framework of admission system
Agenda

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- Methodology
Methodology

Comparative approach

Literature review, different kinds of studies:
- broad comparative studies
- studies about small selections of countries
- single countries

Case studies of five countries/systems
in addition to Austria, selected on the purpose of
- variety of systems and
- availability of research:

Australia, Finland, Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom
Measurement

Data-Source: Usher/Cervenan 2005
Measurement

Data

Source: Usher/Cervenan 2005

% univ.degree. men 45-64 population

R² = 0.5912

% students' fathers univ.degree

Universitätsabschlüsse unter 45-64j. Männern

% Väter mit Univabschluss

Data-Source: Usher/Cervenan 2005
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- Findings
Framework of admission system

INVESTMENT HE
+ fees
  - no fees (S, FIN)
  - part.fees (G, A)
  - variable fees (U.K., AU)
+ low (A, G, U.K.) high (AU, FIN, S)
+ support
  - overall support (A, G)
  - grants/loans (most)
  - loans (AU)

PIPELINE
+ selectivity
  - tracked (A, G)
  - social: low (FIN, S)
    med. (A), high (G, AU, U.K.)
  + second chance
    - S, AU, U.K.

ADMISSION-PROCEDURES
+ „Pipeline“-criteria (Grades, Exam)
  - sufficient (A, S, G)
  - minimum (AU, U.K., FIN)
+ Central/institutional admiss.
  - central (S, A)
  - mixed (G)
  - institutional (U.K., AU, FIN)

ACCESSIBILITY
+ high (FIN, U.K., AU)
+ low (S, G, A)

ACCESS-POLICY
+ U.K.: widening access
  - multiple measures
+ AU: Loans + target gr.
+ S: support measures for adults

SYSTEMIC CONTEXT
+ elite / mass system
  - elite (A, G)
  - intermed. (FIN, S)
  - mass (AU, U.K.)
+ gender difference Sci/Te
  - high (A)
  - medium (D, FIN)
  - low (AU, S, U.K.)
Stylized traits of analysed systems

**Austria:** „open access“ (right to study, based on Matriculation exam); selection by institutions in few univ-studies, in all polytechnics (fees stop-go-policy; overall support, means-tested grants)

**Germany:** Some NC-studies; in several studies selection procedures; shift to institutional mechanisms (no overall fees; overall support; 50% loan)

**Finland:** Matriculation examination; very selective autonomous institutional selection process at universities; less selective polytechnics (no fees)

**Sweden:** Central admission system; mixed mechanisms: secondary school grades or tests in adult education/second chance for pupils (no fees)

**United Kingdom:** Selection by institutions; some minimal criteria (A-levels) + “widening access” programme (variable fees; grants & loans)

**Australia:** Selection by institutions (HE-rank.sc.); min.cритерия (variable fees; loans)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staat</th>
<th>Zugangssystem</th>
<th>Studiengebühren und -förderungen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Deutschland              | - Sekundarschulabschluss (Abitur)  
- 6 bundesweite NC-Fächer (WS 05/06), weitere regionale und institutionelle Zulassungsbeschränkungen für viele Fächer (versch. Aufnahmeverfahren)  
- Shift von bundesweiten zu institutionellen Zulassungs-verfahren (Studienplatzbewirtschaftung)                                                    | - Keine allgemeinen Studiengebühren (WS 05/06), Einführung in sechs Bundesländern in Höhe von 500 EUR beschlossen  
- Bundeseinheitliche Förderung nach sozialen Kriterien (zu 50% als Kredit)                                                                                     |
| Finnland                 | - "Matriculation Examination": spezielle Prüfung, die zwei Mal jährlich an Sekundarschulen abgehalten wird  
- Zugangsbeschränkungen in allen Studienrichtungen (Studienplatzbewirtschaftung)  
- unterschiedliche institutionelle Auswahlkriterien (Noten, Aufnahmetests)                                                                                         | - Keine Studiengebühren  
- Einheitliche Studienbeihilfen nach sozialen Kriterien  
- Kredite                                                                                                                                                           |
| Schweden                 | - Sekundarabschluss, Abschluss Erwachsenenbildung oder Berufserfahrung  
- Zentrales Auswahlsystem, Mischung aus Schulnoten, externem Studierfähigkeitstest, Berufserfahrung bei Erw.  
- Institutionen dürfen bei der Auswahl geringfügig mitbestimmen                                                                                                       | - Keine Studiengebühren  
- Einheitliche Studienbeihilfen nach sozialen Kriterien  
- Kredite                                                                                                                                                           |
| Vereinigtes Königreich / England | - Institutionen legen ihre Aufnahmekriterien eigenständig fest  
- Minimalvoraussetzungen (je nach Prestige der Institution unterschiedlich) müssen erfüllt sein (v.a. GCE/VCE-A Levels)                                                                 | - Studiengebühren seit 1998, ab 2006 variabel (max. 3.000 GBP/STJ. in England, max. 1.200 GBP in Wales im STJ 2006/07)  
- Einheitliche Studienbeihilfen nach sozialen Kriterien  
- Kredite (seit 1990 einkommensabhängig und rückzahlbar über das Steuersystem)  
- Reform des Kredit- und Förderwesens 2006                                                                                                                        |
| Australien               | - Institutionen legen ihre Aufnahmekriterien eigenständig fest (meist aufgrund des individuellen "Higher Education Ranking"-Score basiert auf Schulnoten)  
- Minimalvoraussetzungen müssen erfüllt sein ( Sekundarabschluss)                                                                                                   | - Studiengebühren abhängig vom Status (Commonwealth-gefördeter Studienplatz oder nicht)  
- Höhe der Gebühren können seit 2005 von den Institutionen innerhalb eines Limits festgelegt werden  
- Staatliches Kreditsystem (einkommensabhängig rückzahlbar über das Steuersystem)                                                                               |
### Stylized Findings

#### Systemic Context
- **System-shape**
  - Elite vs. Universal vs. Mass Systems
- **ST-Gender-Difference**
  - Results in High vs. Medium vs. Low impact achievement

#### Pipeline
- **System-shape**
  - Track vs. Comprehensive
- **Soc. impact achievem.**
  - Results in Centralisation vs. Centralised/mixed

#### Investment HE
- **Level**
- **Fees**
- **Support**
  - Affordability vs. Elite vs. Universal vs. Mass Systems

#### Admission Procedures
- **pipeline-Results centralisation**
  - Sufficient vs. Minimum

#### Accessibility
- **Low**
  - Austria, Germany, Finland, Sweden
- **High**
  - United Kingdom, Australia

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**Accessibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Comprehensive Systems</th>
<th>Fees</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Low       / HIGH</td>
<td>Part. fees</td>
<td>Centralised/mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>LOW               / HIGH</td>
<td>No fees</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>Grants + loans</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>Low / High</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>Low / High</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Stylized Findings

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<tr>
<th>SYSTEMIC CONTEXT</th>
<th>PIPELINE</th>
<th>INVESTMENT HE</th>
<th>ADMISSION-PROCEDURES</th>
<th>ACCESSIBILITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>System-shape ST-Gender-Difference</td>
<td>System-shape Soc.impact achievem.</td>
<td>Level Fees Support „Affordability “</td>
<td>pipeline-Results centralisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35/36%; 8/14% 3,3/2,5</td>
<td>Tracked-Systems 14/22%</td>
<td>Low Part.fees Overall support 6./7.</td>
<td>Sufficient Centralised/mixed</td>
<td>LOW Austria (13.) Germany (11.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80/73%; 24/23% 1,7/2,1</td>
<td>Compreh. Systems 11/9%</td>
<td>High No fees Grants+loans 1./2.</td>
<td>DIFFERING Sufficient / Minimum Central. / Institut.</td>
<td>LOW / HIGH Finland (2.) Sweden (9.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48/68%; 24/25% 1,5/1,7</td>
<td>Compreh. Systems 19/17%</td>
<td>Low/High Fees Grants-Loans 13./11.</td>
<td>Minimum Institutional</td>
<td>HIGH Unit. Kingd. (3.) Australia (6.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selection/admission systems

Critical design factors of admission systems:

- **Structure** of admission system (relation to pipeline, centralisation)
- kinds of **Tests/Examinations**
- degree of **autonomy of institutions** about decision
  - norm/criterion **referencing**
  - **ranking** mechanisms/criteria
- criteria for admission **decision**
- matching-mechanisms of applicants to institutions
Effects for social selectivity

- **Tests vs. examinations**: no clear effects, multiple opportunities positive

- **Centralisation**: mixed systems positive, transparency and accountability important

- **Criterion referencing** positive; the more norm-referencing, the more support necessary

- **Local, school level ranking** more positive than national ranking

- Matching mechanisms important (e.g., unfilled places)
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General points

Research basically driven by **competing views about social selectivity:**

(1) „Unexpected anomaly“ vs. (2) „expected status reproduction“

Kind of paradox: Social selectivity always expected to disappear, however, research always confirms its existence

**Measurement** covers very different aspects, and/or uses very different indicators

- comparative study, definition of affordability, accessibility
  - Sweden: Parents in population – parents of students
  - Finland: applicants from former years; accepted
  - Australia: Target groups compared to benchmarks
  - U.K.: complex view of access process
U.K. Model for widening access

Source: HEFCE 2005a, 12.
U.K. policy

**General measures**
- Monitoring at institution level (public)
- Laws in favour of equity and against discrimination (Sex, disability, race)

**Financing, Incentives**
- "Access agreement" in case of higher fees
- Financial means for widening access (pre-application 20%; post application 80%)
- Deferred fees
- Grants and loans

**Schools:**
- New curriculum 14-19
- Individualised
- 4 steps
- Mix vocational-academic
- Portfolio documentation

**FE colleges:**
- Graduate courses accredited by HEIs
- 12% der HE-Angebote
- 160 FECs direkt finanziert, weitere indirekt über HEIs

**Teaching/learning**
- Higher Education Academy, profess.std., subj. centre network
- Reward strategies
- Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

**Partnerships**
- Outreach (Aimhigher)
- LLL-Networks for vocational Routes (HEI – FEC)
- Collaborative provision FE-HE
- Foundation degree (partnership employers)

Important issues for policies

- Quantity-quality: Quasi-objectivity by measurement
  - „Open access“ at the end of the pipeline cannot compensate for early selectivity, however, is good for mobilising in favour of status-reproduction
- Any access regime cannot outrule status reproduction, there must be deliberate policies in favour of the disadvantaged
- There are more favorable and less favourable traits of access regimes
Conclusions

- Very little comparative knowledge about the social selectivity of admission systems
  - Every system still selective; predicted by hypothesis of status-reproduction
  - If social selectivity is high at the beginning of the pipeline, it cannot be reversed through “open admission” for upper secondary graduates
  - Rather support programmes at each level of action necessary for reduction of social selectivity than construction of admission system
The End

Thank you!
ANNEX
Definitions

Access
- Participation rate
- Attainment rate
- Educational equity index
- Gender parity

Affordability
- Education costs as % of ability to pay (GDP/capita)
- Total costs as % of ability to pay (GDP/capita)
- Net costs as % of ability to pay (GDP/capita)
- Net costs after tax as % of ability to pay (GDP/capita)
- Out-of-pocket cost as % of ability to pay (GDP/capita)
- Out-of-pocket cost after tax as % of ability to pay (GDP/capita)
Measurement Sweden

Source: Högskoleverket (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) (2005), 12.
Measurement Finland

Source: own picture based on Opetusministeriö 2005
Measurement Australia

Source: James et al. 2004, own compilation.
Austrian perspectives

- Selective admission „hot potato“ - European pressure - no open debate
- Selection procedures at individual universities in place as „demonstration projects“, will be evaluated
  - Rationality (comprehensive solution) vs. political opportunism (selection by individual universities)
  - The „hot-potato“-effect might lead to a worse solution because of political laissez-faire
