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CALL FOR PAPERS

Thematic issue

Sense of justice and students' selection in higher education

Scientific coordination

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Topics

Since the 1980s, the student population has experienced unprecedented growth. In France, the number of students has doubled over the period. Beyond the demographic shock, the social characteristics of the student population have also changed (Blöss and Erlich, 2000), as working class students gained access to higher education (Poullaouec, 2010). Paradoxically, the share of selective tracks in higher education has increased with the democratization of higher education: it represented 27.3% of the student population in 1980 compared to 37.8% nowadays (MESRI-DGESIP, 2018).

In addition to the growing number of students in higher education, institutions experience an increasing competition, linked to their higher degree of autonomy and the fact that their funding is more conditioned by performance indicators. Based on scientific excellence, the proliferation of these national and international indicators has instilled a logic of selection in higher education, considered as a guarantee of the quality of the training (Chauvel and Moulin, 2014) and creating elitist dynamics among selected students (Menger and Marchika, 2014), based on a customer-input-technology principle (Winston and Zimmerman, 2004).

In this context marked both by a growth in the student population and an increased competition between higher education institutions, the use of institutionalized forms of selection is becoming widespread, extending to segments that were still formally accessible to all graduates. Formal selection is then presented as an opportunity to allocate available places more effectively in a meritocratic system and to "avoid" the errors of orientation, i.e. to prevent dropouts. This has at least been a justification for implementing the French law "Orientation et réussite des étudiants" on March 8, 2018. However, among all forms of selection in higher education institutions (University, IUT, STS, CPGE), there is a great diversity of modalities, criteria and justifications within national spaces and between different countries (Charles, 2015).

This special issue of *l'Année sociologique* aims at analysing how selection – in its different forms – is justified from a social justice point of view, following three main topics. The first topic will focus on the sense of justice in public action: how is selection organized, what are the criteria and what do they tell us about the conception of justice in education policy, in different national contexts? The second topic will focus on concrete social practices to make and implement the selection. Finally, the third topic will focus on the selection from the students' point of view and their representations of social justice.

Topic 1: The sense of justice from the point of view of public action

In terms of selection in higher education, the political solutions are diverse. Above all, we observe a great variety of selection criteria chosen according to contexts (excellence, motivation, merit, chance, waiting

time, registration in a quota ...). It is therefore relevant to examine the specificities of selection in the different fields of higher education, and/or, between the different national systems. The selection also takes a wide variety of forms, depending on the selection mechanism used, depending on the nature of the procedure at work (centralized or not, algorithmic assignment, individual examination of the files, competition, drawing of lots, etc.). Criteria and selection procedures are not neutral, they actually rely on a "theory" of social justice, more or less explicit. The type of selection instruments and their properties could be analysed here as revealing a philosophy of social justice. Without restricting it, we particularly encourage works with an international dimension, that highlight a national case or show the differences between different national models.

Topic 2: The actors and actresses of the selection

In this topic, papers that question the sense of justice of the actors who make the selection are encouraged. They can be based on the evaluation practices not only in the explicit procedures like those of the "Grandes Ecoles" (Darmon, 2012), but also in more implicit practices of other tracks (Fernández-Vavrik, Pirone, van Zanten, 2018). Who are the actors, tools and criteria used to evaluate students? The evaluation activity can lead to moral dilemmas among the actors, as it has been showed among teachers who participate in student orientation at the end of the french "collège" (Chauvel, 2014). Thus, this topic could deal with the sense of justice, the conflicts and controversies related to the student evaluation activity, taking into account the systems in which they operate and the constraints that the actors face according to different national contexts. International comparisons are welcome to identify the "normative repertoires" (Dodier and Barbot, 2016) specific to each educational system

Topic 3: Selection of the point of view of students and their representations of social justice

Selection affects the trajectories of students, both in terms of student profiles (with possible self-selection phenomena) and their experience, and more precisely their sense of justice. For this third topic, we would like to encourage works on this latter dimension. Several works have shown that the sense of justice of students varies according to their social characteristics, whether it refers to their representations of meritocracy (Oberti, Sanselme, Voisin, 2009, Tenret, 2011), their experience of discrimination (Dubet et al., 2013) or their perception of inequality of opportunity (Forsé and Galland, 2011). Do recent changes in the field of higher education and application procedures transform the sense of justice for students? If yes, in which way? What principles of justice do students mobilize to question these procedures? How do these procedures challenge equality (of opportunity, of treatment), according to the students? Does the sense of justice depend on the characteristics of the students, and particularly their academic experience? Studies linking micro justice (justice perceived by the students concerning their own orientation) and macro justice (justice perceived by the students concerning the education system as a whole) are also encouraged

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Submission of the articles

The synopsis (between 1000 and 1500 words maximum, bibliography not included), in French or English, should be sent to Delphine Renard (delphine.renard@paris-sorbonne.fr) before March 15, 2019. They will be examined and selected by the coordinators of the journal issue. The notification of acceptance will be issued before May 4, 2019. Authors whose proposal has been selected must submit their article before November 15, 2019. The length must not exceed 65,000 characters (spaces, bibliography and figures included). Each article will then be evaluated, anonymously, by the editorial board of *L'Année sociologique*. We invite interested authors to consult the rules of submission on the page of the sociological year on the PUF website: http://www.puf.com/The_Sociological_Year. The publication of the issue is scheduled for autumn 2020.

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