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Abstract

The internal processes of higher education have implications for the cohesion and shape of societies as well as for the quality of life of individuals. The comparison of the historical evolution of access to higher education in the American and European/Romanian contrasted countries reveals the presence of several norms successively constraining the organization of access. These norms will reflect the transformation of both a legitimated social order, and the role of the higher education systems within societies. This article examines several aspects of higher education's role in relation to social equity and the related notion of meritocracy, especially as it relates to admission. Since the role of higher education is measured in terms of its contribution to achieving a fair and just society, questions on the impact of higher education are considered alongside issue(s) of access, equal opportunity and widening participation.

Signature

To preview our argument, we argue that the development of a national standardized entrance exam in

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Romania would promote greater access and equity to higher education. Relying on comparison with the US context we show how the construction of merit especia