Abstract

Based on the Cost-Sharing theory (Johnstone, 1986, 1991, 1992, 2002, 2003), the research on student costs in higher education (HE) plays an important role in the educational policy, namely concerning the equity in cost distribution among students, the State and stakeholders. This study is focused on the socioeconomic characterization of Portuguese HE students and on the research of the costs these students support, as well as the remaining stakeholders (families, governments/taxpayers and others), according to Johnstone's cost-sharing theory and mobilized the analysis of the results of three nationwide surveys in the academic years of 1994-1995 (Cabrito, 2000); 2004-2005 (Cerdeira, 2009) and 2010/2011 (Cerdeira, Cabrito, Patrocínio, Machado & Brites, 2012) to three higher education's students representative samples (universities and polytechnics, public and private institutions). The study 1) discusses the contribution of Portuguese higher education students for the HE funding; 2) analyses the findings coming from a nationwide study concerning the student's role on HE funding, in Portugal; 3) places those results in a European perspective. From the comparison undergone between the data coming from the studies on the higher education costs in Portugal, it can be verified that on the period 1994-2010 there was a change on social strata recruitment to HE. In fact, it is possible to realize that the percentage of students coming from rich strata had increased along the period analyzed, fact that can allow us to question about the equity of the Portuguese HE System. On the other side, the studies also allow to conclude that the affordability of Portuguese HE students is minor that homologous indicators taking into account some of the EU and OECD members.

Published in Problems of Education in the 21st Century; 2012, Vol. 47, p16