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## **Age of Selection Counts: a Cross-country Comparison of Educational Institutions**

### **Abstract**

In this paper I combine a theoretically developed construction of the school to work transition literature, namely the stratification and standardization dimensions of the education system, and the more data oriented inequality of opportunity research of the economics of education. I collect several possible indicators for both dimensions to compare the countries: utilizing the PISA 2003 data and some other OECD sources I run multilevel analysis to test the effect of the collected country level stratification and standardization indicators on the inequality and on the effectiveness of education. Inequality of opportunity is indicated by the size of the parental background effect on the PISA literacy scores, while effectiveness is the literacy score adjusted for parental background and other individual characteristics. The results show that stratification associates strongly and positively with the inequality of educational opportunity, while standardization in general seems to enhance equality. I reject that stratification would increase effectiveness, and the association between standardization and effectiveness is not straightforward. The most robust finding of the study is that the early age of selection links closely with high inequality of opportunity.