

Student Engagement towards Higher Education: A Case Study of UK

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Abstract

Sustainable participation of people in higher education system is an utmost concern of many countries. Since higher education is a fundamental pillar of any state, it is crucial for them to improve their educational standards. The research proposal initially starts with the brief introduction of the topic that explains the main theme, problem statement and research questions. After that, the research comprises literature review of the higher education system particularly in the context of United Kingdom. Subsequently, some factors have identified that influence the participation of international and local students in higher education. These factors include expensive fee structure, low social background, ineffective government policies, and dissimilar student interests. Ultimately, the proposal concludes that seriousness of UK administration towards higher education is highly needed for sustainable participation of international and local students in higher education.

Key Words: Higher Education, Participation, International and Local students, and Development.

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1. Introduction

1.1. An Overview of the Research

States around the world have seen educational development at all stages, principally to the globalisation of tertiary training and education. Tertiary education has become a key element of economic competitiveness in a progressively science-oriented international economy and a major response to modifications in domestic labour markets (Sterling 2010). The research proposal incorporates the introduction regarding the participation rates of national and international students in the arena of UK higher education, literature review from existed secondary data, methodology and the conclusion. This approach increases the credentials of the research study.

1.2. Problem Statement

Though participation of foreign students in UK higher education is much higher as compared to local students of England but it has been constantly changing with the passage of time (Gil 2014). Beyond the numerous advantages of higher education for youngsters, the UK government must review its recent progress in which local students are less prone to get higher education whereas the international students have been coming to UK for getting higher education since a long time.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The research proposal incorporates the imbalance of local student participation in UK higher education sector due to several reasons such as expensive fee structure and lack of awareness. Since the increased extent of tertiary educated people impacts positively over the

development of country, it is crucial for the researchers and scholars to explore this area more. This research proposal will be informative for upcoming researchers as well as state's administration that are willing to perform research on UK higher education participation.

1.4. Research Questions

The research proposal comprises following questions:

- What is the role of local student's participation in UK higher education?
- What are the reasons of lower participation of domestic students as compared to foreign students in UK higher education?
- Is there a significant correlation between international student's participation and local student's participation in higher education of UK?

2. Literature Review

Although, international human rights instruments give right of access to tertiary education to everyone in the world, but still several countries are being failed to sustain their higher education system (Shelton 2015). In other words, the significance of higher education has been evolving day by day and the participation of people in it is highly substantial for the development of any country. However, higher education plays a vital role in the development of societies and its people (Carson et al. 2012: 19). Similarly, the conceptual research study of Baum Ma and Payea (2010) indicates the essentiality of higher education participation for country economic, social and personal lifelong advantages. Moreover, society and taxpayers as a whole originate a multitude of indirect and direct advantages when residents have entrance to postsecondary education.

The positive aspect of UK higher education has highlighted by Coughlan (2013) that depicts the up-to-date figures of young people participation in higher education. The research further illustrates that 49% young people of UK are more prone to get a higher education. However, Coughlan (2013) differentiates these stats on the basis of gender. Women are more likely to get higher education as compared to men in England. The author also compares the latest figures of higher education participation with the previous statistics and found that the former labour government of UK wanted to pursue 50% participation of young people in higher education. Though the government was successfully achieved the target but women majority over men has established some concerns. On the other hand, Hartley-Brewer (2015) finds the optimistic view of former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair as he wanted to educate young people more so that the future of the country would be prospered and constructive.

The theoretical framework of social learning and constructivism emphasise the importance of higher education for all individuals because it amplifies the creative skills, innovativeness, and personal attributes of people.

2.1. Factors Influencing Higher Education Participation

The perspective of higher education systems and distinct organisations in the international knowledge economy is identified by both subjective and objective factors. Likewise, the aftermath is formed by the hand of cards that structures have been dealt and how proficiently that they manage those cards (Marginson 2011: 587). In another research of van Dinther, Dochy and Segers (2011: 95), several factors have discussed that influence higher education participation rates. Some of them are as follows.

2.1.1 Increased Tuition Fees

Wilkins Shams and Huisman (2013: 125) describe the consequences of expensive fee structures of England and its significant relationship with participation rates of people in tertiary education. Throughout the last few decades, the administration of various countries in the world has altered the cost of higher education from the government to the student. However, Miller (2010: 85) described the education system of United Kingdom in which government is not offering subsidies to higher education. The local students can participate in higher education courses by paying the full amount to the university. Therefore, tertiary education is usually considered as the private good in UK. Furthermore, the commercialization of educational institutions across the England is one of the most important factors that increase educational expenses of higher education.

2.1.2 Low Social Background

According to IES (2017), students from poorer social background have been facing more complex situations regarding the participation rates in higher education as compared to those who belong to a higher social background. These students do not have enough resources to utilise it appropriately for higher education. However, most of them want to get higher education in order to transform themselves as well as the country in a productive manner. In addition, the study also demonstrates various aspects of low social background students, particularly in third world countries. These students are usually seeking for public funded universities that offer higher education free of costs. Conversely, the higher social background students can easily participate in higher education (Boliver 2011: 229).

2.1.3 Unemployment

The comprehensive study of Van Broekhuizen (2016: 16) depicts the competitive advantage of higher education for both international and national students because better higher education participation minimises the risk of unemployment. The higher the quality of education in a country, the more employment opportunities will be created for the people. Likewise, Mirica (2014: 64) portrays that higher education is the key solution to eradicate unemployment from a country because it produces creative workers, thinkers and managers that may play a constructive role in the development of the country. Thus, unemployment is one of the major factors of higher education participation rates.

2.1.4 Low Literacy Rate

Though the UK is one of the foremost countries of the first world, Hardman (2016) identifies the nightmare for the UK government regarding its literacy rate. It is not just because of expensive fees, low social backgrounds and low opportunities but the traditional educational system of England. Most of the graduate students in the UK are not that much competent to work in the certain area because their trainers just focused on English and Math. Additionally, the OECD report ranked England locals between 16 to 19 years as the worst literate population among 23 other developed countries (OECD 2016). Therefore, low literacy rate also influences the participation of domestic students in higher education.

2.1.5 Ineffective Education Policies

According to OECD (2016), the UK government is failed to manage higher education participation rates due to ineffective policies and decision-making. Similarly, in other countries,

the seriousness of government towards higher education plays a crucial role in producing talented professionals. The countries like India, Pakistan and Nigeria need lots of improvement in their higher educational system since their literacy rate is constantly decreasing due to ineffective government policies (Ali 2006: 1). Hence, this factor also reduces the intentions of people to enter in the higher education world.

3. Research Methodology

The research proposal explains the notion of participation of people in higher education and what are the factors that influence the rate of participation. Since the literature review, part of the research proposal has defined higher education perspective in detail; this section explains the criteria of executing research in an adequate manner.

3.1. Research Design

The research design of this proposal is qualitative due to the nature of topic i.e. participation rates in higher education. Secondary data has been taken for content analysis that includes different journals, articles and books regarding the higher education system of UK and other countries (Tavallaei and Talib 2010: 11). The reason behind the selection of qualitative research design is to develop new insights and opinions about the problem statement of the research proposal. However, the entire proposal is based on the viewpoint of social constructivism since the key intention of research proposal was to collect varied data of higher education participation of different countries.

3.2.Data Collection Method

Due to qualitative nature of research proposal, secondary data has been used throughout the research that comprises various opinions and research extracts of diversified authors and researchers. Secondary data incorporates articles, studies and books that are published earlier (Palinkas et al. 2015: 533). This method helps the researcher to derive effective conclusion regarding the participation rates of people in Higher Education. The data collection method has done by using online libraries, search engines, online scholars, and existed secondary data. The researcher has specifically gathered data that is related to higher education perspective of both developing and developed countries. Therefore, this method gives strengths to derive effective ultimate results that would be useful for future researchers as well as states administration to conserve their higher education system.

3.3.Methods of Analysis

Due to the qualitative nature of research proposal, content analysis and thematic analysis of different studies have done by using efficient reviewing skills (Palinkas et al. 2015: 533). Various studies including published articles, journals and books related to participation rates in higher education have taken for content analysis. This approach helps the researcher to derive productive conclusion for upcoming researchers and professionals that are willing to explore new insights of higher education perspective. Furthermore, different case studies, field research and scholarly opinions have reviewed in order to extract relevant material and information regarding the topic. Apart from that, the viewpoints of numerous people, focus groups and students have been analysed through bibliographic researches. The reason for selecting content analysis is to

understand diversified opinions and theories of different policy makers of higher education system. It will strengthen the final outcomes of the research.

3.4. Research Limitations

Despite the relevance of this proposal, there are some limitations that have been faced during the research. It includes an inadequate time frame, the impact of self-reporting, lack of questionnaire survey and individual interviews, and deficiency of data related to the certain topic (Ritchie 2013). However, these limitations have partially affected on the final outcomes of the research but overall, the researcher has successfully achieved the defined research questions that comprise the influencing factors, challenges in pursuing sustainable higher education participation rates.

4. Conclusion

After analysing different thoughts and theories regarding the participation of people in higher education, it is established that numerous first world countries are still failed to achieve the targeted aims and objectives for higher education prevalence. The people includes both local and international students of United Kingdom. The reasons behind this lacking are ineffective government educational policies, low social background, less financial resources, increased the extent of the unemployment rate, social discrimination and non-seriousness of the government. On the contrary, international students are more interested to get admission in UK for their higher education but the local students cannot afford the high amount of fees.

The people are less interested in acquiring higher education due to expensive fee structures, commercialization of educational institutions, and wrong decisions of government.

Furthermore, the research proposal has found a significant relationship between higher education and unemployment. If the higher education system is more proactive and operational, then the unemployment rate will gradually decrease and more people will be provoked to get admission in higher education. Therefore, the UK along with other countries are needed to improve their higher education system that may perhaps lead to higher participation rates of students because higher education plays a constructive role for the development of the country.

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