



Students perception towards Higher education a case of northwest Karnataka.

KEYWORDS

Students Aspirations, Higher education, Marketing.

Ashok P. Utagi

Research Scholar & Associate Professor B.V.V.S Institute of Management Studies Vidyagiri, Bagalkot – 587102 Karnataka

Dr. M. S. Subhas

Vice Chancellor Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University Jnana Sagara Campus, Vinayaka Nagar, Cantonment, Bellary 583104 Karnataka

ABSTRACT *The paper attempts to identify the student's aspirations when they are making their choice of the course and college for Higher education (HE). The factors that aspiring students consider while making their choice in HE is an area which HE institutions should not neglect. For the research, sample consists of students studying in final year under graduate (UG) course. The study shows that most of the respondents choose their post graduate (PG) HE course mainly looking at the Job opportunities that it offers and the reputation of the university under which it is offered. Students pursue facilities available at the institutes and base their choice of on the same rather on the other factors viz. location. Relatives and friends do influence the decision of choosing the higher education, although students are the decision makers. So, the HE institutes needs to formulate their marketing strategies based on the aspirations of students.*

Introduction to higher education in India

Education for the development of excellence, expertise and knowledge are some of the motives which necessitate a sound strategy for the development of HE in almost all countries of the world. Establishing leadership on the world is possible when we have a well developed system for the HE (Jha, Services Marketing, 2002). Continuing growth of middle class in India (approximately 250 million) and greater proportion of the population being young (less than 25 years of age) (career360, Aug 2011) has led to increased demand for many social services like education.

The tertiary education participation rate in India is steadily increasing (National knowledge commission of, 2007). Indian government is also planning to establish new universities and colleges in near future (Feith, July 2008). According to a World Bank report there are more than 7,40,000 formal schools; more than 3.6 million teachers are working on full time basis; there are more than 436 Universities offering UG and post graduate courses and about 8000 colleges affiliated to these universities (World Bank Report). The 11th five year plan required an additional sixteen million new places in higher education by 2020. There are already many private higher education institutions in India, such as Azim Premji University, Manipal University, NIIT, Birla etc, and many wealthy business groups are investing in education. Political and business classes, with significant overlap between the two, see higher education as a source of lucrative private returns on investment (Shyam, 2010).

Literature review

Reforms for India's higher education will have to be found within India. Outside Solutions are not acceptable to a proud society, nor are they likely to work. (Shyam, 2010). There is evidence that the top policy makers in India recognize the urgency and importance of reforming the higher education system in India. The Yash Pal Committee Report and legislation to open India to universities from abroad are indicative of a change in the thinking of the policy makers.

With the increase in number of universities and colleges there is increase in competition among colleges and Universities of Higher Education. This opens up an opportunity to think on the line of branding. Jitchaya (2005) stated that the brand acts as a credible guarantee for the product or service, allowing the consumer clearly to identify and specify products or services, which genuinely offer added value.

We talk in favour of marketing of higher education which according to holistic marketing principles attempts to enrich the efficacy of these higher education centres vis-a-vis offer quality services even to the poor persons having an outstanding educational background (Jha, Should we market Education ?, 1997). We do not find anything wrong in promoting the educational institution to the students (Jha, Services Marketing, 2002).

Problem definition

India's reputation for the high quality of its educated workforce is built on the few hundred thousand graduates of its elite institutions who have excelled in India and abroad. A significant part of this reputation arises from the screening function of the clean, competitive processes used to select a small number of the brightest candidates (Shyam, 2010). Colleges with well-established reputation or strong brand images enjoyed a superior market position. For newer colleges, the need to find a market and develop this as a platform for future competitive advantage (Tim Mazzarol, 2012). It is in this light that the colleges have to identify their students and their aspiration. The colleges that understand their student's aspiration well will be in a position to offer the courses that are more suitable. It is only when the colleges offer relevant courses that they can strive to establish the facilities to augment learning. This makes the entire package attractive. But how many colleges put their resources in understanding the student's aspirations while they are making their choice of course and college? The paper strives to achieve the objective of understanding the factors that aspiring students consider while making their choice in Higher education.

Objectives

- Identify the influence of gender in the choice of the Higher education course.
- To find out the most influencing factor in the decision of a course in Higher education.

Identify factors that students give most importance in their choice of college.

- To know how many students feel capable of taking their own decision.
- Determine the strongest influencer in the decision of Higher Education.

Hypothesis

- Opting for PG education is more among female than male.
- Job opportunity is more important than the course fees.
- Facilities available at the college are more important than the location of the college.
- Parents influence is the strongest of all the influencing factors.

Methodology

The research is conducted with the help of primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire while secondary data is collected through Journals, Magazines, websites and Books. A representative sample of 280 respondents studying in final year is collected from UG colleges situated in Bagalkot, Vijaypur and Belagavi districts of northwest karnataka. Data analysis softwares like SPSS and MS Excel are used.

Scope

Although HE represents all courses after secondary education, in this research only PG education is considered for the study. The sample is collected from UG colleges of different streams like Management, Commerce, Science and arts. The data analysis is restricted only to understand those factors in the choice of HE that has major influence.

Analysis

The following analysis is done by entering the data in SPSS version 16.

When it is asked for the respondents about their plan after graduation most of them (78.6%) have told that they want to pursue their PG. Interesting thing that comes out in further analysis is that more number of female (80%) wants to go for PG than male (72.2%).

Table 1 - Cross tabulation: Gender * Admission to course

			Admission to course					
			MBA	MCA	MSc	MA	M.Com	Others
Gender	Male	% within Gender	60.1%	10.1%	5.2%	4.4%	10.1%	10.1%
	Female	% within Gender	59.0%	9.0%	9.0%	4.0%	10.0%	9.0%
Total		% within Gender	59.7%	10.1%	7.6%	4.2%	10.1%	9.1%

When we look at the analysis regarding the choice of the course we find that out of all the students who want to pursue HE, there looks to be an inclination towards management education (MBA) in comparison with other courses. The least preferred is Arts (MA).

The frequency analysis of data shows the importance of the course fees and job opportunity considered while selecting a particular course. The analyses reveals that students give more importance to job opportunity (cumulative percentage 92.9%) when we compare it with course fees (cumulative percentage 67.9%)

Table 2 - Comparative analysis of Facilities and location of the college

	How important is Facilities in college		How important is College Location	
	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Most Important	70.4	70.4	60.7	60.7
Important	18.5	88.9	21.4	82.1
Neutral	7.4	96.3	7.1	89.3
Less Important	0	0	7.1	96.4
Least Important	3.7	100	3.6	100
Total	100		100	

The comparative analysis shows that students are ready to go to any location as long as they are made assured of the facilities in the college. The respondents who told facilities in the college are more important amounts to 88.9% (cumulative percentage) where as those who told location is important amounts to 82.1 % (cumulative percentage).

When we see whether the respondents themselves take the decision regarding their higher education we come to know that majority (71.4%) do take their decision. If we look at the analysis in-detail we could see out of all the male respondents 66.7% take their own decision where as surprisingly 80% of the female respondents take their own decision.

Table 3- Who will be influencer of the decision

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Parents	75.0	75.0	75.0
Friends	14.3	14.3	89.3
Income	10.7	10.7	100.0
Advertisements	0.0	0.0	
Total	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows out of all the influencing factors we considered while taking decision, it is evident that Parents are the highest influencer followed by friends and income.

Findings

Through the analysis of the data it is very evident that most of the respondents want to pursue HE over other choices like job, self employment, family business and marriage. It is also interesting to know that female respondents are more attracted towards PG education than their male counter parts. When it comes in choosing the course most of the respondents have shown their interest in joining MBA. This is due to the wide variety and attractive jobs offered after MBA. This fact is confirmed by the respondents when they have given their majority choice as job opportunity when asked about the factors in choosing a course.

Respondents' prominent choice among the factors considered while choosing their PG course were, job opportunity and reputation of university. These were followed by other factors like family background, course fees and locally available. When it comes to choice of the college they have given prime importance to facilities available in the

college. Respondents have given more weightage to the facilities in the college over and above the location of the college.

Increase in the knowledge available to the students through Information and communication technology has not only made them self confident but also decisive. Majority of respondents said they will take their own decisions regarding the choice of the course and college. Respondents also said they will be seeking the advice from their relatives and friend before making their choice. So the major influencer that has emerged in the study is parents, followed by friends and budgetary constraints.

Conclusion

In this modern era where higher education is becoming more and more necessary the students are in a position to take conscious decision by the use of information available at their disposal. The colleges imparting higher education have to offer the courses and facilities keeping in mind the aspiration of the students. No doubt that it is the student who undergoes the education but his choice is influenced by his well wishers – mostly parents and his own knowledge of priorities. As a provider of higher education one must knit a suitable marketing strategy to keep themselves attractive.

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