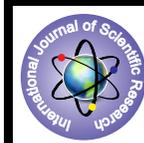


An Enquiry On The Disadvantaged Background Affecting Students Of Higher And Further Education In Tiruchirappalli District Of Tamilnadu



EDU-MANAGEMENT

KEYWORDS : Higher Education, Further Education, Disadvantaged Background

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ABSTRACT

This study done on a simple enquiry of interaction done among the students of higher education institutions in Tiruchirappalli district of Tamilnadu, sampling hundred, identifies what affects the experiences of the minority of disadvantaged young people who do enter higher education. Tracking a group of qualified but socio-economically disadvantaged young people, the enquiry identifies factors that hinder their progress as well as the ways in which they overcome barriers. This enquiry follows on from a related statistics available in the internet sources of the district.

THE QUIARY

Despite the recent expansion and innovations in higher education, levels of participation and chances of academic success are still lower among young people from deprived neighborhoods. This study done on a simple enquiry of interaction done among the students of higher education institutions in Tiruchirappalli district of Tamilnadu, sampling hundred, identifies what affects the experiences of the minority of disadvantaged young people who do enter higher education. While there has been much recent debate on the obstacles to widening access, this enquiry follow a group of disadvantaged students through higher education. Tracking a group of qualified but socio-economically disadvantaged young people, the enquiry identifies factors that hinder their progress as well as the ways in which they overcome barriers. This enquiry follows on from a related statistics available in the internet sources of the district. Although there has been an increase in the numbers of university entrants from more disadvantaged backgrounds in recent years, such young people have been enjoying less success within higher education. This paper details the barriers to success within higher education faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Tiruchirappalli district of Tamilnadu.

Table 1: Respondents enquired

Sl.No	Category	No. Respondents	of %
1	Clear Respondents	80	80
2	Vague Respondents	20	20
	Total	100	100

Total respondents encountered= 100

THE IMPLICATIONS

- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to prematurely reduce their level of participation within higher education, by dropping out of courses or by foregoing the opportunity to progress to more advanced courses.
- They were also more likely to follow complicated paths within higher education, including deferred enrolment, gap-years and switching, repeating or restarting their courses for non-academic reasons.
- A number of factors seem to lie behind these difficulties: i). Background ii). The disproportionate number of students from disadvantaged family backgrounds who prematurely discontinue their careers in higher education has become an important issue in recent years. Despite the expansion of higher education during the past two decades, representation, level of participation and likelihood of success all remain greatest amongst young people from affluent areas and lowest amongst those from deprived neighborhoods.
- School qualifications, which were strongly associated with social disadvantage, primarily determined whether the young people accessed post-school education and if so at what level of participation (e.g. degree, diploma or further education courses). School qualifications also predicted likely future success within higher education - particularly in non-degree students.
- Continued success in higher education was measured by seeing which of the young people had continued within post-school education two to three years after they had left school. As expected, many had reduced their level of participation, by dropping out or by completing a course and foregoing the opportunity to advance to another course. Others had reduced their level of participation in less obvious ways, including repeating a year of study, restarting from the first year in another new course and deferring entry to higher education in the first place.
- At the other end of the spectrum, around one-third of the young people in this enquiry could be described as being on the direct route towards success in higher education, having enrolled in a degree course after leaving school and having advanced directly to their degree (i.e. third) year of study by the end of this research.
- Many of the young people who participated in this enquiry were the first in their families to have entered post-school education. As such, these young people were unfamiliar with the mechanisms of higher education including institutions, courses, subjects, study methods and student finance policies. Additionally, some in this situation felt that they had been poorly advised at school by teachers, guidance staff and the careers service. Much of this poor advice was put down to high-achieving pupils at schools in areas of disadvantage being viewed as 'success stories', who, unlike the majority of non-achievers attending their school, did not need help.
- In addition, many of the young people in this research spoke of low aspirations operating both within their schools and within their local communities in general, which could push potential students towards more vocational courses or non-academic careers.
- As might be expected, many of the disadvantaged students in this research felt that the length of their student career would be limited by their finances, rather than by their academic ability.
- Students from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds could often find themselves at odds with certain aspects of their non-academic background. In some cases, particularly males, an anti-education ethos seemed to be operating against participation in higher education. Such pressures could also emanate from friends and family, to whom higher education may be an alien concept.
- Similarly, disadvantaged students, particularly those who enrolled in more prestigious courses, could feel at odds with

their new environment and had trouble fitting in at their chosen institution.

CONCLUSION

This enquiry done on interaction, confirms that disadvantaged young people are not enjoying an equal level of success within higher education as their more advantaged peers. Not only are such young people less likely to reach degree status, but even those who do are likely to have suffered from a number of barriers which may have hindered their progress and deterred them from continuing any further. The enquiry concludes that two sets of measures could increase participation within higher education by disadvantaged groups:

- There was clearly a need to raise aspirations and achievement in schools serving disadvantaged areas. However, this has to be combined with a greater level of advice and information targeted at those disadvantaged school pupils who are already aspiring towards higher education. Mechanisms need to be put in place to familiarize potential students, from schools where few leavers enter higher education, with all aspects of academic life, to ensure that these young people are able to manage their study time, budget their finances and 'fit in' to their ideal courses.
- Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are often deterred from both entering full-time education in the first place and from continuing within higher education long enough to reach their full academic potential because of the economic hardships they suffer, in particular debt. More financial help, especially non-repayable bursaries, would aid such people, particularly those enrolled in longer, more prestigious courses.

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