Poverty's Effects on the Ability to Engage with Education Actively: A Case Study of the Access and Participation Plan

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ABSTRACT

The research investigates and understands how poverty creates risk and affects the ability to actively engage with education using a case study from an alternative provider's perspective—the research considered case study methods where data was collected using the qualitative research approach. The collection of data used data triangulation (focus groups and interviews of the students and senior staff members) using open-ended questions at the undergraduate level. The data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel to assess the impact poverty has on educational attainment. Different ethical aspects and challenges were considered during the research process to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, power, and authority. Based on the case study research, the institution developed their five years strategic plan, which submitting to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), and also Office for Students (OFS) for their approval. The institution also introduced the Employers' Forum, which will continue to be effectively utilizing to enhance the student experience and retention and progression rates. The research only considered one case study institution and thus was limited to the data set. The research could have produced a comparative study if more institutions were choosing with a more significant data set.

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to identify and assess the impact of poverty on the ability to engage in education. It is important to stress that the research does not necessarily focus on poverty as a variable; some studies focus on income, some on socioeconomic status, and some on social class. Some of the possible explanations for these differences are then examined, concerning the family, pre-school and school, and parental involvement. The research looked into various experiences and attitudes of learners (mainly adults) from different backgrounds. The research findings summarize and show clearly that socioeconomic differences are mainly linked and that many other factors have a broad impact on learning. This research's primary reason was to address the factors influencing social differences in education to help design a policy on widening participation for the case study institution. This research's findings emphasize a clear gap between the learners' educational experiences and classroom outcomes. Students mainly differ in achievement due to different backgrounds and relationships with teachers and other adults. At the national level, the poverty line defines the level of purchase required to maintain minimum calories (Fields, 1980). Alternatively, it defines at the international level with access to $1 or $2 per day per head. According to UNDP (2000), eradicating poverty was considered an important development objective, considered a two-way process, including direct and indirect. The direct

approach was to increase income, taking into account access to food, water, and employment. On the other hand, the indirect approach considered education and health services.

Noor (1980) argued that fulfilling basic needs, including education, has a more significant relationship as they fuel each other, enhancing achievement. Similarly, it was cited by the World Bank (1994) that it recognizes that poverty is not a low-income problem; instead, it is a multidimensional problem that affects and denies access to various vital opportunities, including education. Sen (1999) redefined the approach to human development and provided alternatives for identifying human capabilities; according to him, poverty is a deprivation of capacity, and thus, later on in his findings, he distinguished income poverty and capacity poverty.

Sen (1999) provided the development cycle, and, in his view, development as freedom, and freedom encompasses education, which later enhances the possibility of human capability. Sen also analyzed the relationship between low income and low capability. Accordingly, education is so powerful that it can significantly influence income poverty and capability poverty. He firmly believes that education deprivation is itself capability poverty, and access to education, including the investment, is responsible for reducing poverty capability.

The Office for Students (OfS) in England regulates universities' access and participation efforts. One of the critical roles they play is to ensure that the higher education providers, including the alternative providers, focus on developing bold, ambitious outcomes-based access and participation plans. They also ensure that there are right and appropriate regulatory incentives that are in place using which the higher education providers can continue working with younger learners. Through long-term and collaborative partnerships, they address any barriers they might encounter. These initiated the author to address the issue with the author's current employer, and the author also believes achieving transformational change in the life chances of people from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds and thus require a case study research to bring the need into the attention of the providers so that a new strategy can be developing to tackle inequality across the educational lifecycle and beyond.

The alternative provider welcomes the continued emphasis on drawing up an Access Agreement, which recognizes the importance of the entire student life cycle, rather than treating access and retention as two different entities. We are also encouraged that the alternative provider continues to commit itself to provide financial support and bursary arrangements for students with specific needs and requirements. Continued emphasis on data-driven approaches to providing student support has enabled a more targeted approach to develop and deliver interventions for students facing higher education attainment barriers. The Student Engagement Team recognizes that the broader participation target groups set out in this Access Agreement are relevant and supported by the author's research. Therefore, the research supports the institutional priorities, mainly supporting mature, part-time, and BME students.

As in previous years, the Student Engagement Team has been involved at multiple levels in the planning and developing this year's Access Agreement. As Module Leader for the BA Management Top-up program, the author has been involved in representing the views of students from the demographics identified, have had the opportunity to provide formal and informal feedback to students through discussions on the development of the Access Agreement, and have had the opportunity to engage in critical decisions. However, the author looks forward to developing a closer working arrangement with the alternative provider so that the Student Engagement Team can have more ownership of the document to enhance the support that the alternative provider can offer.

METHODS

The research question aims to identify how poverty at different levels creates risk and, consequently, affects the ability to actively engage with education. For this research, the author has considered case study methods though it remained a controversial data collection approach. The author realized that the case study's role is quite complicated and requires to study a particular case of its interest by using multiple sources of data, after considering its wide range of validity in many social science studies, mostly when in-depth explanations of social behavior, the author has finally decided to choose case study as research methods. The data was collected using the qualitative research approach, and the collection of data used triangulation (focus groups and interviews of the students and senior staff members) using open-ended questions at the undergraduate level. Primarily the author used semi-

structured interview questions to the undergraduate students and staff members to gather the research-informed literature. There were a total of 57 randomly selected samples used in this research.

The data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel to assess the impact poverty has on educational attainment. The researcher used traditional four-step methods to analyze the case study data where the collected data was repositioning using rational database theory and later created codes to identify the respective data segmentation. The author then gathered various published reports to support the findings from the primary data collection. Finally, the created codes were linked to the research's aim to generate the appropriate research propositions.

Different ethical aspects and challenges were considered during the research process to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, power, and authority. Therefore, the research has maintained very transparent communication based on informed consent from all participants and also ensured that participants were part of the process as volunteers with the full right to withdraw at any stage. Furthermore, the research outcomes will be shared with the involved participants, considering its value to their own academic and professional development.

Implementation

The study has designed to address the need for a policy that promotes learning and teaching strategies by maximizing student performance. The proposal and implementation of a broader participation policy will likely support emerging student responsibilities for learning from various learning methods. The proposal to introduce *The Learning and Teaching Policy* seeks to empower students to act independently and increase self-awareness and responsibility. The alternative provider also recognizes that individual students have different preferred learning and assessment styles and will seek to meet each student's needs through various learning methodologies.

The alternative provider will continue to pursue a policy of student retention linked to the ongoing assessment of students' risk of falling out. It will continue to be closely linking to student engagement, in which students will be involved in establishing the conditions for attendance and the level of contact with teaching and support staff. The alternative provider will continue to make its students a crucial part of its decision-making processes, use their experience in the local areas, and increase outreach to sections that are difficult to reach. The involvement of students has proved effective in maintaining a high level of retention. Student engagement will also involve students in quality assurance processes and decision-making issues affecting their learning environment conditions. It will result in a learning experience designed by students.

Further consideration of the student experience, which has been and will continue to be essential to current developments in the alternative provider, has been the active promotion and celebration of students' and staff's diversity. It tends to enrich experience beyond academic and skills development. The alternative provider will continuously develop and strengthen its current learning and teaching strategy to reflect changes in the student profile and support the diverse student population's needs. These will include flexible timing and improved retention by developing a sense of belonging among peers with similar backgrounds.

The alternative provider is committed to promoting learning and teaching strategies that will maximize student performance. It will achieve a dynamic learning approach that will provide students with a range of knowledge and skills development in the programs and will be strengthening and evaluated through a managed work placement system. Alternative provider policy aims at providing work-integrative classroom learning and sound work placement. Therefore, the Employers' Forum will continue to be using effectively to enhance the student experience and retention and progression rates. It will be coupled with the use of practitioners to teach students and run masterclasses. Simultaneously, through its learning policy, the alternative provider will promote emerging student responsibilities for their learning based on a wide range of learning methods. The Learning and Teaching Policy seeks to empower the student to act independently and increase self-awareness and responsibility.

RESULTS

Widening participation represents the alternative provider's partnership working with students and local communities in bringing onto its program the hard-to-reach sections of the community. Student involves the promotion of accountability through transparent relationships with the students

and other external stakeholders. Enhancement reflects a relentless commitment to quality enhancement, and employability encourages the creation of employment opportunities for students relevant to the skills needs of local communities.

Table 1 below provides an analysis of the percentage of students recruited onto the HND program using postcodes from the students' residential addresses over the three years 2014/15 to 2016/17. The shaded area shows the percentage of students in the EU compared to those in the UK during the same period, including the academic year 2013/14. . These statistics show that most students enrolled in the program were primarily (59%) from postcodes E within the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney, and Newham.

Table 1. Alternative provider Recruitment Area over three years

Student intake for the Academic year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
% of Students from EU	66	18	13	1
% of Students from the UK	34	82	87	99
% of students from Post Code E		53	56	69
% from Post Code N and NW		14	9	11
% from postcodes IG and RM		12	12	8
% from Post Codes SE		5	7	2
% from Greater and outside London		17	16	10

Source: doogal.co.uk (2020) and londonmap360.com (2020)

Statistics also show that in 2013/14, the SLC's first year of teaching funded students, EU students (66% vs. 34% from the UK), were mainly in the HND program. In the second year (2014/15 Academic Year), the alternative provider carried out its key and, indeed, most strategic policy review: it decided to redefine its market to increase the number of UK students admitted to the program, initially with Tower Hamlets as the target market.

This decision took into account that, as shown in Table 2, Tower Hamlets had seen an unprecedented population growth of 37.8% over the last ten years since 2006. It was also projecting to continue to be London's fastest-growing district in the next ten years from 2016, at 26 percent compared to 10 percent for Greater London and 7 percent for England. It would significantly reduce the number of EU nationals admitted to the program and reflect the local area's correct demographics. As Table 1 shows, the alternative provider was immediately on the course and met the target of significantly reducing the number of EU students in the 2016/17 academic year: statistics show that the percentage of EU students dropped from the academic year to 1% in 2016/17. As shown in Table 2 (which contains population statistics in the alternative provider's target market, based on 2016 estimates and growth trends over the ten years to 2016), demographic profiles in the boroughs constituting the target market for alternative providers are mixed. These provide the alternative provider with both challenges and opportunities in planning how to widen access to and increase participation in higher education of disadvantaged groups within the market.

Table 2. Demographics in the Target market area

Area/Borough	Population Size and trend (Total)		Population Aged 16 to 64		
	Size (Thousand)	Growth Rate (10 years to 2016)	Total	Male	Female
UK	63, 786	8.0	63.1	49.9	50.1
London	8,770	15.4	67.9	50.3	49.7
Tower Hamlets	300	37.8	73.8	53.1	46.9

Area/Borough	Population Size and trend (Total)		Population Aged 16 to 64		
	Size (Thousand)	Growth Rate (10 years to 2016)	Total	Male	Female
Newham	345	33.5	70.5	54.1	45.9
Hackney	273	24.1	71.9	49.9	50.1
Barking and Dagenham	208	24.5	63.3	49.1	50.9
Camden and Islington	689	38.4	72.3	51.0	49.0

Source: nomisweb.co.uk (2020)

Table 2 shows that the target market for alternative providers is in the area of significantly higher population growth rates, ranging from 24.1 percent to 38.4 percent over ten years, compared to 15.4 percent in London and 8 percent in the rest of the country. The percentage of the population aged 16 to 64, representing the current and future student profile of alternative providers ranging from 63.3 to 73.8, is generally higher than in London (67.9 percent) and the country (63.1 percent). Of the districts that make up the primary alternative provider market, Newham has the largest population, followed by Tower Hamlets. However, Tower Hamlets has the fastest population growth rate and the highest percentage of 16-64 years of age in its population. Though currently contributing much less to the number of alternative provider students, Camden and Islington have the largest population size and growth rate on the market.

However, in the area, in London, and the country, the ratio of males to females, varies. The male population in Newham and Tower Hamlets is also much higher than the female population at 54.1% and 53.1%. In the other districts, the number of males to females between the ages of 16 and 64 is almost equal.

In its 2011 statistics, Tower Hamlets reported having one of the most diverse populations, including its largest Bangladeshi community. Based on January 2018 statistics, Hackney is London's 6th most diverse borough. According to the mid-2017 projection of the GLA ethnic group, 81.9 percent of Newham's population was Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities (BAEM) or mixed race. The statistic confirmed by the figures in Table 3 shows that Newham had the highest foreign-born population of 54% in 2015 and the highest BAEM percentage of 73.1% in 2015.

These minority groups are now in the majority of the borough. It was the case for BAEM in Tower Hamlets (54% in 2015). The rest of the target market reflected typical London demographics, with a much higher proportion of the national average BAEM (35.8% to 41.4% compared to the national average of 13.3% in 2015) born abroad and a significant BAEM population (over 40% compared to the national average of 14.0% in 2011).

Table 3. Diversity Statistics

Area/Borough	% of the resident population born abroad (2015)	% of the population from BAEM groups (2015)	% working-age with a disability (2015)
UK	13.3	14.0	19.2
London	36.6	42.1	16.1
Tower Hamlets	38.6	54.0	15.4
Newham	54.1	73.1	12.7
Hackney	35.8	43.6	17.9
Barking and Dagenham	37.8	49.5	17.2

Area/Borough	% of the resident population born abroad (2015)	% of the population from BAEM groups (2015)	% working-age with a disability (2015)
Camden and Islington	41.4/36.6	34.6/32.0	21.3/14.6

Source: towerhamlets.gov.uk (2020)

In 2016, based on the Income Domain Measure, the proportion of residents in an area with income deprivation, Tower Hamlets was rank as the 6th most deprived district in England and the most deprived district in London. The 2015 Average Rank and Concentration Measures ranked Tower Hamlets as the third most deprived in London.

Both Hackney and Newham, which are no longer among the top 20 deprived boroughs, have become significantly less deprived in recent years, although the unemployment figures (model estimates) and jobless household statistics for 2017 are showing in Table 4. Tower Hamlets had the highest unemployment figures and the highest economic inactivity in the target alternative provider market, both London and nationally. However, it had the least number of unemployed households and youth unemployment (3.2 percent) in the area, which was also below the national and London levels. Newham had the least number of unemployed households, at 14.9 percent.

Barking and Dagenham have the second-largest unemployment rate. The unemployment statistics for Newham and Hackney, below national and London levels, reflect the general improvement in these districts' deprivation.

Table 4. Unemployment and Economic Inactivity

Area/Borough	Unemployment Based on 2017 Data	Economic Inactivity Based on 2017 Data	Households that are workless as a percentage of total	Youth Unemployment (the claimant) rate 18-24 (Dec-15)
UK	4.7	21.6	15.1	3.1
London	5.9	21.8	12.8	3.6
Tower Hamlets	8.1	31.2	14.9	3.2
Newham	5.7	26.7	9.2	4.1
Hackney	4.7	25.0	21.6	4.8
Barking and Dagenham	7.7	24.7	15.6	4.5
Camden and Islington	4.9	24.6	17.9	3.6/4.5

Source: nomisweb.co.uk (2020)

However, Hackney's youth unemployment is the highest on the market and higher than the national and London averages. Over the years, the number of young residents of Tower Hamlets undertaking higher education studies has steadily increased from 1443 in 2012/13 to 1795 in 2014/15. Seventy percent of these young residents were from the BAEM group. It suggests demand for higher education among young Tower Hamlets, particularly among BAEM groups, despite apparent year-on-year fluctuations in the number of students starting HE programs.

In Tower Hamlets, 42.9 percent of carers are Bangladeshi, while 32.8 percent are White British. Only 48 percent of carers in the borough are employed compared to 56 percent in London. Four thousand and one hundred and twenty carers in the borough receive the Carers Allowance (CA), 74 percent are female.

Table 5. Education

Area/Borough	The proportion of working-age people with no qualifications (%) 2015	The proportion of working-age with degree or equivalent and above (%) 2015	% of pupils whose first language is not English (2015)
UK	8.8	36.9	15.7
London	7.3	49.9	29.3
Tower Hamlets	10.0	45.7	51.1
Newham	11.0	43.4	58.8
Hackney	10.8	49.2	44.2
Barking and Dagenham	11.3	32.2	41.7
Camden and Islington	6.2	62.7	25.2/57.6

Source: towerhamlets.gov.uk (2020)

All the boroughs in the target market except the combined proportion of Camden and Islington, which show the opposite trend, have significantly higher portions of the working-age population with no qualifications than the national and London average. (Table 5). However, interestingly, though slightly lower than London (note that the combined proportion for Camden and Islington is much higher than the rest of the market and London), the target market has significantly higher than the national average proportion working-age population with a degree or equivalent and above.

The target market also had very high proportions of pupils whose first language is not English, topped by Newham at 58.8%, compared to London (29%) and the UK (15.7%). It reflects the diversity of the population in these areas.

Table 6: Widening participation in Work (Unemployment Statistics)

Area/Borough	Female vs. Male		White vs. BAEM	
	Female	Male	White	BAM
UK	4.2	4.5	4.4	8.4
London	5.8	4.9	3.9	8.7
Tower Hamlets	10.7	9.1	4.0	17.1
Newham	7.4	5.5	2.1	7.2
Hackney	N/A	N/A	5.0	12.9
Barking and Dagenham	8.6	10.4	7.5	6.6
Camden and Islington	5.1	5.9	3.9	10.2

Source: HESA (2018)

Table 6 shows that despite the higher proportion of BAEM's in the target market, unemployment within the BAEM's is very high, showing a much worse performance than in London and in the UK. Tower, Hamlets, has the highest BAEM unemployment at 17.1%, followed by Camden. However, Barking and Dagenham have lower unemployment within the BAEM population compared to the white population.

Barking and Dagenham and Camden and Islington have lower female unemployment than male unemployment, while the rest of the market shows much fewer women in work than men.

DISCUSSION

Analyzing the results presented above, the alternative provider decided to continue making its students a crucial part of its decision-making processes to utilize their experience in the local areas and increase outreach to the hard-to-reach sections. The involvement of students has proved effective in maintaining high retention levels. First, the students tend to share their experience with their friends and relatives and recommend them to study and secondly, through the establishment of other friendships and robust peer support mechanisms, to stay on the course.

Student engagement will also mean students' involvement in quality assurance processes and deciding matters affecting their learning environment conditions. It will lead to a learning experience designed by the students. Further consideration of the student experience, which has been and will continue to be essential to current developments in the alternative provider, has been the active promotion and celebration of diversity among students and staff. It tends to enrich the experience beyond just academic and skills development.

Significant adjustments were introducing to comply with the Employer forum's student requirements and recommendations in 2015, which reduced classroom size, improved student access, and classroom participation. The alternative provider will continue developing and strengthening its current learning and teaching strategy to reflect changes in the student profile and support the diverse student population's needs. These will include flexible timing and improved retention by developing a sense of belonging between peers with similar backgrounds.

The alternative provider is keen to promote learning and teaching strategies that will maximize student performance. A dynamic approach to learning will offer students a range of knowledge and skills development on the programs and reinforced by and evaluated through a managed work placements system. Alternative provider policy seeks to offer work-integrative classroom learning and a stable work placement. Therefore, the Employers' Forum will continue to be effectively utilizing to enhance the student experience and retention and progression rates. It will be a couple with the use of practitioners to teach the students and to run masterclasses.

The alternative provider will continue to operate a student retention policy tied to the constant evaluation of students' risk of dropping out. It will continue to be closely related to student engagement, in which students participate in establishing the conditions of their attendance and the level of contact with teaching and support staff. The alternative provider is mindful of this strategy's possible costs, as it implies extensive levels of support and constant interaction with students. It is also a challenge to be collecting all the personal and pastoral issues the students are likely to face and developing appropriate responses. To this end, the alternative provider intends to work with external partners that offer counseling and other methods of support for its students.

CONCLUSION

The research findings suggest that policy will help raise the learners' attainment, aiming to reduce the significant differences between the rich and poor and create contribution by preventing a gap in social class and closing the gap. The possible solution factors for higher education could be increasing access to learning resources, including technical and technological access to everyone.

The Alternative provider recognizes that entry to alternative providers through enrollment in the program of study, retention of students for the duration of their studies, and progress towards the program's successive phases must culminate in the academic achievement award. The Alternative provider Access and Achievement Framework broadens this path beyond graduation, considering how students exit their program through successful graduate employment progression or further study and training, including post-graduate studies. Therefore, the Access and Achievement approach for the entire life cycle is a continuum that extends from outreach and re-entry to the university to progress towards employment or post-graduate education.

The study provides evidence that human poverty, which includes education poverty and link to capacity poverty. Few characteristics identified from research indicate that education poverty includes low school attainment rate, high rate of dropouts and failure, and low rate of contribution, which also reflected low academic performance and achievement. Sen (1999) explained that every aspect of education poverty is positively interrelated with income poverty. He firmly believes that education

poverty is the principal factor responsible for income poverty and income poverty, which does not allow people access to education.

The researcher believes and agrees with the phenomenal development of the concept that improving education poverty can help reduce income poverty and mutually reinforce each other. It also was found from the fundamental research that poverty and education were considering as a human capital dimension and thus always tried to prove the strong relationship between them. Field (1980) clearly stated that education and poverty are inversely related, which accepts that, higher the population's level of education, the lower the proportion of poor people, as education imparts knowledge and skill development, positively correlated with the higher income earners.

The study recommended to design and develop a policy that will promote the opportunity of learning and teaching and will maximize student performance. Thus, the research proposed introducing The Learning and Teaching Policy that will empower students to act independently and increase self-awareness and responsibility. The policy itself will safeguard the learners by reducing the gap in both attainments and drop out and will continue to create a close link to student engagement. However, the research limits the selection of cases as it is considered only one case study institution. The research could have produced a comparative study if more institutions were choosing with a more significant data set.

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