



How Does Poverty at Different Levels Create Risk and Consequently affect the Ability to Actively Engage with Education? A Case Study of the Access and Participation Plan

Afzal Sayed Munna

The University of Wales Trinity Saint David London (UWTSD), United Kingdom

*e-mail: a.munna@uwtsd.ac.uk

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ABSTRACT

The research purpose is to investigate and understand how poverty at different levels creates risk and consequently 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 taken into consideration during the research process to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, power, authority use. 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. College policy seeks to offer work-integrative classroom learning and a stable work placement. Based on case study research, the institution developed their five years strategic plan, which was submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), and also Office for Students (OFS) for their approval. The college also introduced the Employers' Forum, which will continue to be effectively utilized 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 chosen with a more significant data set.

INTRODUCTION

The line of poverty at the national level is defined as the level of purchase required to maintain a minimum level of calories (Fields, 1980). It was alternatively defined 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 goal, which considered the two-way process, including direct and indirect. The

direct approach was to increase income, which considered the access to food, water, and employment. On the other side, the indirect approach considered education and health services.

Noor (1980) stated that the fulfilments of the basic needs, including education, have a more significant relationship as they fuel each other, reinforcing achievement. It was also cited similarly by the World Bank (1994) that recognizes that poverty is not a problem of low income; instead, it is a multidimensional problem, which affects and denies access to various vital opportunities, including education. Sen (1999) redefined the human development approach and provided alternatives that identify the human capabilities; according to him, poverty is the deprivation of capabilities, and thus later in his findings, he distinguished the income poverty and capability poverty.

Sen (1999) provided the development cycle, and, in his view, development is seen 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 the 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 the capability of poverty.

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 authors to address the issue with the authors current employer, and the authors also believe 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 developed to tackle inequality across the educational lifecycle and beyond.

The college welcomes the continued emphasis on drafting an Access Agreement that 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 college continues to be committed to providing financial support and bursary arrangements for students with specific needs and requirements. The continued emphasis on data-driven approaches to providing support to students has enabled a more targeted approach to the development and delivery of interventions for students who face barriers to achieving in Higher Education. The Students' Engagement Team acknowledges the widening participation target groups set out in this Access Agreement are both relevant and supported by research the author has himself undertaken. We would therefore endorse the institutional priorities, particularly the emphasis on supporting mature, part-time, and BME students.

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

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. 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. 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.

METHODS

The research question aims to identify how does poverty at different levels creates risk and consequently affects the ability to engage with education actively? The authors have considered that case study methods remained a controversial approach to data collection; however, after considering its wide range of validity in many social science studies, especially when in-depth explanations of social behavior, the authors have decided to choose case study as research methods. The data was collected using the qualitative research approach, and 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 taken into consideration during the research process to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, power, authority use. 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 the value it can bring to their own academic and professional development.

Implementation

The study intended to address the need for a policy that promotes learning and teaching strategies by maximizing student performance. The proposal and the implementation of the widening participation policy will surely promote emerging student responsibilities for their learning gleaned from a wide range of learning methods. My proposal to introduce The Learning and Teaching Policy seeks to empower the student to act independently and to achieve greater self-awareness and responsibility. The college also acknowledges that individual students have different preferred styles of learning and assessment, and in this respect, it will seek to meet every student's needs through diverse learning methodologies. The college will continue to operate a student retention policy that is tied to the constant evaluation of the risk of students dropping out. This 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 college will continue to make its students a key part of its decision-making processes to utilize their experience in the local areas and to increase the outreach to the hard to reach sections. The involvement of students has proved effective in maintaining high retention levels. Student engagement will also continue to mean the involvement of students in quality assurance processes and deciding matters affecting the conditions of their learning environment. This will lead to a learning experience designed by the students. Further consideration of the student experience, which has been and will continue to be key to current developments in the college, has been the active promotion and celebration of diversity among students and staff. This tends to enrich the experience beyond just academic and skills development. The college will continuously develop and strengthen its current learning and teaching strategy to reflect the changes in the profile of the student and to support the needs of the diverse student population. These will include flexible timetabling and improving retention through the development of a sense of belonging among peers with similar backgrounds.

The college is keen to promote learning and teaching strategies that will maximize student performance. This will be achieved through a dynamic approach to learning that will offer students a range of knowledge and skills development on the programs and reinforced by and evaluated through a managed system of work placements. College policy seeks to offer work-integrative classroom learning and a solid work placement. The Employers' Forum will, therefore, continue to be effectively utilized to enhance the student experience and, therefore, retention and progression rates. This will be coupled with the use of practitioners to teach the students and to run masterclasses. At the same time, the college will, through its learning policy, promote emerging student responsibilities for their learning gleaned from a wide range of learning methods. The Learning and Teaching Policy seeks to empower the student to act independently and to achieve greater self-awareness and responsibility.

RESULTS

Widening participation represents the college'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 the number 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 from the EU compared to those from the UK, over the same period and including the academic year 2013/14. These statistics show that the majority of students enrolled in the program were largely (59%) from postcodes E within the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney, and Newham.

Table 1. College 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)

The statistics also show that in 2013/14, the college's first year of teaching SLC funded students, there were mainly EU students (66% compared to 34% from the UK) on the HND program. In the second year (2014/15 Academic Year), the college made what became its key and certainly most strategic policy review: it decided to redefine its market to increase the number of UK students admitted into the program, initially with Tower Hamlets as the target market. This decision took into consideration the fact that, as shown in Table 2, Tower Hamlets had seen unprecedented growth in its population of 37.8% over the ten years since 2006. It was also projected to continue to be the fastest-growing borough in London over the next ten years from 2016, at 26% compared to 10% for Greater London and 7% for England. This would significantly reduce; the number of EU nationals admitted to the program and reflected the correct demographics of the local area. As Table 1 shows, the college was immediately on the course and met the target to significantly reduce the number of EU students in the 2016/17 academic year: the statistics show that the percentage of EU students dropped from Academic Year to 1% in 2016/17.

As shown in Table 2 (which contains population statistics in the college'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 college are mixed. These provide the college 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
Newham	345	33.5	70.5	54.1	45.9

Area/Borough	Population Size and trend (Total)		Population Aged 16 to 64		
	Size (Thousand)	Growth Rate (10 years to 2016)	Total	Male	Female
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 college's target market is within an area of significantly higher population growth rates, ranging from 24.1% to 38.4% over the ten years compared to London at 15.4% and the rest of the country at 8%. The percentage of the population within the 16 to 64 age-range, which represents college's current and future student profile ranging from 63.3 to 73.8, is also generally higher than in London (67.9%) and the country (63.1%). Of the boroughs that make up the primary market for College, Newham has the largest population, followed by Tower Hamlets. Tower Hamlets has, however, the fastest population growth rate, and the greatest percentage of the 16-64 age range within its population. Camden and Islington, although currently contributing much less to the number of students studying at college, together have the largest population size and growth rate within the market. However, the ratio of males to females is variable in the area, in London, and in the country. The male population in Newham and Tower Hamlets is also much higher than the female population, at 54.1% and 53.1%, respectively. In the other boroughs, there are almost equal numbers of males to females aged between 16 and 64.

In its 2011 statistics, Tower Hamlets reported that it had one of the most diverse populations, including the largest Bangladeshi community in the country. Based on January 2018 statistics, Hackney is the 6th most diverse borough in London. According to the mid-year 2017 GLA ethnic group projection, 81.9% of Newham's population were of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities (BAEM) or mixed race. This statistic is confirmed by the values in Table 3, which show that Newham had the highest population who were born abroad at 54% in 2015, and the highest percentage of BAEM at 73.1% in 2015. These minority groups are now in the majority within the borough. This was the case for BAEM in Tower Hamlets (54% in 2015). The rest of the target market reflected typical London demographics, with much higher than national average BAEM proportion (35.8% to 41.4% compared to the national average of 13.3% in 2015) born abroad and 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
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 who are experiencing income deprivation, Tower Hamlets was ranked the 6th most deprived borough in England and the most deprived in London. The 2015 Average Rank and Concentration Measures ranked Tower Hamlets the third most deprived in London. Both Hackney and Newham, which is no longer in the top 20 deprived boroughs, have become significantly less deprived in recent years, although in Table 4 shows unemployment (Model-based estimates) and workless household statistics for 2017. Tower Hamlets had the highest unemployment figures as well as the highest economic inactivity within the college's target market, London and nationally. However, it had the least number of workless households and youth unemployment (3.2%) in the area, which was also lower than the national and London. Newham had the least number of workless households, at 14.9%. Barking and Dagenham has the second-largest percentage unemployment. Unemployment statistics for Newham and Hackney, which are below the national value and that of London, reflect the general improvement in deprivation within these boroughs.

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 in the market and higher than the national and London averages. The number of young Tower Hamlets residents undertaking Higher Education studies has been steadily increasing over the years, from 1443 in 2012/13 to 1795 in 2014/15. Seventy percent of these young residents were from BAEM groups. This suggests there is a demand for Higher Education among young Tower Hamlets residents, especially among BAEM groups, despite apparent year-on-year fluctuations in student numbers starting HE programs. In Tower Hamlets, 42.9 percent of carers are Bangladeshi, and 32.8 percent are White British. Only 48 percent of carers in the borough are in employment compared to 56 percent in London. Four thousand one hundred twenty carers in the borough receive the Carers Allowance (CA), of which 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

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)
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 compared to 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 of the 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%). This 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 compared to male unemployment, whilst the rest of the market shows much fewer women in work than men.

DISCUSSION

The College will continue to make its students a key part of its decision-making processes in order to utilize their experience in the local areas and to increase the outreach to the hard to reach sections. 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 further friendships and strong peer support mechanism, to stay on the course.

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

To comply with the student's requirements and also with the recommendation from the employer's forum major adjustments were introduced in 2015, which saw class sizes reduced, improving student access to staff and participation in class. The College will continuously develop and strengthen its current learning and teaching strategy to reflect the changes the profile of the student and to support the needs of the diverse student population. These will include flexible timetabling and improving retention through the development of a sense of belonging among peers with similar backgrounds.

The College is keen to promote learning and teaching strategies that will maximize student performance. This will be achieved through a dynamic approach to learning that will offer students a range of knowledge and skills development on the programmes and reinforced by and evaluated through, a managed system of work placements. College policy seeks to offer work-integrative classroom learning and a solid work placement. The Employers' forum will therefore continue to be effectively utilized to enhance the student experience and therefore retention and progression rates. This will be coupled with the use of practitioners to teach the students and to run master classes.

The college will continue to operate a student retention policy that is tied to the constant evaluation of the risk of students to drop out. This 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 College is mindful of the possible costs of this strategy, 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 College intends to work with external partners that offer counselling and other methods of support for its students.

CONCLUSION

The college continues to recognize that entry into the college through enrolment on a program of study, the retention of students for the duration of their study, and progression on to successive phases of a program needs to culminate in the achievement of an academic award. The College Access and Achievement framework extends this pathway beyond degree attainment into consideration of how students exit their program, either through successful progression into graduate-level employment or further study and training, including postgraduate study. The Access and Achievement whole lifecycle approach is, therefore, a continuum, which extends from outreach and re-entry to the University through to progression into employment or postgraduate education.

The study provides evidence that human poverty, which includes education poverty and is linked to capacity poverty. Few characteristics identified from research indicate that education poverty includes low school attainment rate, high rate of dropouts and failure, low rate of contribution, which also reflected on low academic performance and achievement. Sen (1999) explained that every aspect of education poverty is positively interrelated with income poverty. He strongly believes that the poverty of education is the principal factor responsible for income poverty and income poverty, in turn, does not allow people access to education. The researcher believes and agrees with the phenomenal development of the concept that the improvement in 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 considered 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 level education of the population, the lower the proportion of poor people, as education imparts knowledge and skill development, which positively correlated with the higher income earners.

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