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Investigating the factors affecting students' decision making process in post-secondary education: A case of Madrasa schools in Albania

1 Abstract

This study investigates the factors that influence student's choice of university in admission process in Albania. A questionnaire methodology was utilised in the study to find out data in relation with decision making process of the students.

A qualitative was used to get reliable data through using secondary data. This study helps students to understand which factors are more important than others when selecting a university.

Some factors such as friends and teachers of students at a high school that play very important role for this decision. And, the abilities and competence of students are the most influential factors that affect choice of branches or departments as well. Further, socio-economic status of family and individual-level background characteristics are basic impacts on student's choices. The present study will be beneficial to give guidance for students who are on trail of the best choice of university along with branches.

It reveals that negative elements are also playing key roles in their choices to make sound decision, such as; bad habits, wrong choice of friends, unorganized ways of studies, unawareness of the importance of decision making for post-secondary education.

Key words: *post-secondary education, choice of university, decision making, branches.*

1. Introduction

This study aims to show that environmental issues, different talents, variety of the goals, and most importantly family and socio-economic status are some of the factors that affect decision making about branches and university. The purpose of this study is to identify the reasons for types of choices for high school students about university.

Particularly, in the schools I have been working, these elements or factors are quite visible through real time experiences and observations. First of all, the economic models that are associated with the econometric assumptions through which prospective university students consider reasonably when choosing their respective faculty (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Secondly, with the help of the status-attainment models, the students consider their utility in decision-making process and through keeping in mind their social and individual elements that open ways for occupational and educational considerations, the respective students chose their university (Jackson, 1982).

Thirdly, the combinations; the first includes reasonable considerations in terms of economic models and the latter involves in individual and social factors, so that the respective students consider their utility in decision making model (Jackson, 1982).

2. Literature review

A child`s education starts in the family, thus it is the first school of each individual in a society. A good relation between father, mother, and children would help the student to achieve satisfactory results in his\her life. One of the main problems of today`s world is the neglecting of the education of parents before and after marriage.

The search for unknown throughout history brought us to the interrelation between school, teacher, and students; as it has always been a need for human beings to quench their thirst for learning more and more. Among above mentioned elements, school as an institutional factor helps today`s world to involve the whole society and families of the students into education of the students.

In particular, a handful of recent papers appear to show broad agreement that disruptive peer behavior has negative effects on individual achievement (Figlio 2007; Carrell and Hoekstra 2010; Aizer 2008; and Neidell and Waldfogel 2010).

On the other hand, a best friend may be your worst choice when it comes to decision making. Because, the good relation you have with friends doesn`t necessarily lead you to the paths you may wish to take to achieve academic success, yet it is up to the student to find the equilibrium between a good friend and academic choices.

However, by the large, the professionals tend to enter late in the decision making process, typically during the choice stage (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper 1999). For most students, these professional resources provide advice primarily in the 11th and 12th grades (Johnson, Stewart, and Eberly 1991). Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) found that low SES students who regularly consulted with a counselor were

more likely to attend college. Some students turn to college admissions counselors when they make school visits or attend college fairs (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper 1999).

While research and meta-analytic studies have investigated goal orientations, there exists a need for a more comprehensive integration of goal orientation theory with other theories of self-regulation and corresponding variables as it may provide answers to the important questions regarding achievement in the workplace (e.g., DeShon and Gillespie 2005; Diefendorff and Lord 2008).

Here decision making is the key role as they have chosen a path that goes together with their talents and skills on the branch they choose. For high school students it is more vital as they may not have the chance to change their goals after a certain time. Bean and Bradley (1986) reported that students' satisfaction with the institution of their choice had a greater impact on academic performance than academic performance had on student satisfaction.

Perna (2006) presumes that an individual's college choice is influenced by academic preparation, the availability of financial aid, and family resources to pay for college, which are nested within multiple contextual layers including school and community context, the higher education context, and the broader social, economic, and policy context.

Perna's model indicates that the college choice process is influenced not only by individual factors but also by broader social, economic, and policy contexts such as state higher education policy as well as social and economic conditions.

3. Discussion

3.1. Family factor

When it comes to vital decisions on the student side some parents seem to be quite uninterested as they think financially supported student should always be successful. In other studies, social capital is also manifested through parents' and/or students' behavior in seeking information and knowledge available through social relationships in the college choice process, and evidence on the significant effects of access to postsecondary information on college enrollment has been found (Engberg and Wolniak 2010; O'Connor et al 2010). And some seem to reflect overwhelming insistence on his\her success that causes boredom and depression on student.

School, on the other hand, should successfully involve parental support into students' decision making affairs. Academic level of parents is another factor that affects students. Successful siblings could play good role models for the students' perspectives and prospects.

College enrollment rates vary considerably with parents' educational attainment, with first-generation students, especially those whose parents did not graduate from high school having the lowest levels of college enrollment. While confounded by racial and economic variables, these data demonstrate the powerful role college-educated parents, particularly educated fathers (cf. Avery and Hoxby, 2004), play in determining their students' likelihood of participating in postsecondary education.

3.2. School

Technological improvements also brought up new facilities included into education, yet having students attached to the school is getting a bit more difficult as they like to have more and more freedom. The role of school is one of the key components in providing a better setting for learning and teaching, a sense of attachment to the school on the student side would bring fruitful results; when students feel connected to or have strong bonds to their schools, they are more likely to experience academic success.

They stay in school longer and attend school regularly (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2009b). Yet only about 50% of the youth in schools report feeling connected to or engaged in school (Blum, 2005) (Bryan, et. al, 2011). A setting of student oriented without financial purposes could provide a more trusted atmosphere as economic chasings would stain the good will on the subject.

3.3. Friends

The school provides an atmosphere that can help students get acquainted with one another, and they have the chance of being socialized as they make new friends some of whom maintain friends for a life long time. Thus, it is quite vital to create a peaceful atmosphere for students' psychological and physical well-being.

Although there is an extensive body of work that estimates peer effects of various stripes in academic settings, the findings vary widely across these studies, and consistent policy implications are hard to extract. As is well known, steep challenges are involved in identifying peer effects, due to issues such as endogenous peer selection, simultaneity of outcomes, and the presence of correlated inputs within peer groups.

Yet in recent years significant progress has been made as researchers have made clever use of available data. Teranishi et al. (2004) specifically examined the role peers play among Asian American students. The authors found that Chinese and Koreans who took advice from friends tended to choose less selective colleges. In a different study by Johnson, Stewart, and Eberly (1991, p. 86) a sample of students representing several racial/ethnic groups did not rate "friends' preferences for college" as even moderately important and, indeed, ranked them as the least important factor they considered.

The surprisingly limited role of friends is reconfirmed in the literature on sources of college information, examined later in this review. Friends that would lead the student to astray are friends only for their own profits as the proverb suggests; "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

3.4. Teachers

Teachers are the pillars of educational system as they hold the whole burden on their shoulders. They are the ones who sacrifice their lives for the salvation of the mankind and the ones who are willing to drop tears to make the others smile. Numbers of professionals, including guidance counselors, teachers, college recruiters, and college admission officers, guide students through the college search and choice process.

One of key factors that could bring success in academic career or even life itself is without doubt the teacher whose role is quite essential in shaping students' character together with moral values, future mindedness, openness to new developments, decision making, and many other elements that effect the students life directly or indirectly.

In a good teacher's hand talents may bloom in the bosom of fertile fields where needed receives his\her needs, and the addresser finds fertile grounds to sow his\her seeds. Thus, vast areas of deserts may turn into heavenly gardens in teachers' hands.

3.5. Goals

A well determined individual with strong ties of commitment can overcome obstacles; even deepest oceans would be lakes in front of such a will. To achieve success motivation, hardworking, organized ways of studying are some of the needed elements.

According to DeShon and Gillespie (2005), this construct has spurred such interest because of its roots in the achievement motivation literature and, given its theoretical foundation, the potential to provide insights into important questions such as why some people set higher goals, persist longer in the face of adversity, or conversely why some people tend to avoid achievement situations.

College choice research (Hossler 1984; Vellella and Hu 1990) has revealed that a weak, inaccurate search increases the risk of choosing the wrong institution to attend, becoming dissatisfied with the institution, and withdrawing before graduation.

These findings suggest that some of the seeds of college retention are sown prior to enrollment, during the search and decision making phase. Once they start the university, they may think that they have made a bad decision by choosing that branch, but changing the mind at that point would be quite difficult in terms of finance, time, motivation, loss of determination for the new change of the course.

3.6. Socio-Economic Status

One may think education is a basic human need which should be free to all individuals, and all people may equally receive the same level of education. However, in today's world this would be a utopic vision. Recent researchers have enriched the theory of college choice by suggesting a multilevel framework of a college enrollment model.

On the other hand, students in the same school have different socio-economic backgrounds and regions. Job openings for the chosen branch is also important as the students of today's world should seriously consider job opportunities after graduation. The significant factors used to choose among in-state, out-of-state and international students might not be the same. Tuition and financial aid are different for each of these groups.

In some states there are more scholarships available for in-state applicants to encourage attracting more high achieving students. Job opportunities during and after graduation are not the same. Also, the reputation or recognition of a

college might be different internationally than domestically. This could affect job opportunities for students in their own countries.

Therefore, it is assumed that the significance of the various factors is not the same among these three groups of these students. (So Jung lee—the analysis of ...) Students from poor backgrounds are mostly inclined to choose branches that would bring them economic welfare. The financial dimensions of college cannot be completely separated from social and family factors.

For example, findings from a student survey of 11th- and 12th-graders in low-income high schools illustrate that low-income students make sense of college and financial aid information through the filters of their school culture, perceptions of college affordability, and family backgrounds (De La Rosa 2006). Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997, p. 33, cited in Hemsley-Brown 1999, p. 87) drew a similar conclusion, stating that “decision-making could not be separated from family background, culture, or life histories of the pupils.” These researchers claimed that student decisions were only partially rational and were influenced strongly by feelings, emotions, and preconceptions. Even in socio-economically developed countries like Canada, financial problems may occur;” Will my child go to university? And can I afford it?’ These are important questions for most families across Canada, as postsecondary education becomes increasingly critical in determining individuals’ career (and, consequently, socio-economic) success.

While access to postsecondary education in Canada has increased over the past decade, a number of studies demonstrate that youth from disadvantage socioeconomic backgrounds experience some level of exclusion in our postsecondary educational system. These studies tend to emphasize the cost of tuition and students’ financial aid as the main source of this vulnerability.

Research involving access to postsecondary education is often based on the assumption that financial constraints are the predominant impediments to post-secondary education, and that, loans, grants, and students’ debt relief programs are the main antidote to the problem.”(George Frempong • Xin Ma • Joseph Mensah, 2011) Students from rich backgrounds are more idealists in their choices and free of economic obstacles for their decisions.

4. Conclusion

The most significant result of the so far studies in general reflect that the factors on students decision makings are quite related with each other that even the missing of one of them could cause serious handicaps in front of the student.

However, among them some seem to be more vital as they have more effect on students and their determination; student`s own talents, school bonding and setting, choice of friends etc. the observations and experiences obtained from real school settings reveals the fact that a final choice at the end of the high school is quite important as it shapes the whole future of the student and it is a cornerstone to student`s psychological and physiological well-being in avoiding depressive outcomes.

If the process of choice for post-secondary education can be managed in good hands the factors studied in this article would bring fruitful outcomes.

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