WHY DO HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS CHOOSE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM?

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ABSTRACT

Considering teaching as a vocation we set off to investigate the factors affecting students' choice of teacher education program as a field of study at higher education level and cost-benefit analysis in this choice. Rational choice theory helps understand whys and wherefores in such a choice of students at the time of enrollment. In labor market it is rational that people estimate anticipated costs and projected benefits of any deed before taking a decision and the go for the best available option in order to maximize likelihood of their benefits. There is a dearth of studies regarding youth's choice of teacher education as a study program and present study fills the gap in literature. The researchers enquire through questionnaire 350 alumni of teacher education program at one conveniently selected university, about their socio-biographical background, study paths, transition from study to work, early career, link between study and employment, job satisfaction, cost and benefit and their views on teacher education program retrospectively. Results revealed that choice of teacher education is affected by perceived interest, likely employability and previous grades. We found that teacher education as a study program is believed by the professionals to offer a very decent foundation for personal development along with future career success.

Keyword: *Teacher education, Employability, Cost-benefit analysis, Satisfaction, Young*

INTRODUCTION

Quality of education is of paramount importance for economic and social development. It is determined mainly by the quality of teachers, which in turn is determined by academic quality of entrants to teacher education program. The decision to adopt teaching profession can be explained by rational choice theory. Teacher Education in Pakistan is developing in terms of quality as well as quantity. Nevertheless there is mismatch between demand and supply of teaching workforce in terms of relevance, excellence and number of teachers. For social

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and economic growth the importance of well managed and tuned higher education to the needs of society cannot be denied (Government of Pakistan, 1998). Institutions of higher education have main responsibility for equipping the individuals with the advance knowledge and skills required for positions and responsibilities in government, business and professions (Higher Education, 1994) as per needs of society.

During the last three decades, there has been an incomparable increase in the number of people enrolling in higher education, a decision that is becoming increasingly common amongst young people throughout the world (Bennett, 2004). Investment in education is a toll for economic and social development (Acemoglu, 2012). Career choice is a matter serious concern all over the world. In the words of (Bennett, 2004) "Career choice is a complex decision for students since it determines the kind of profession that they intend to pursue in life" (p-8). Parsons (1909) reported three factors which contribute in rational choice of career: clear understanding one's own self, knowledge of required profession and rational decision making.

Like other parts of the world higher education in Pakistan is also developing in terms of quality as well as quantity (Mian, Corona, & Doutriaux, 2010). But there is mismatch between demand and supply in terms of relevance, excellence and number of graduates (Panth, 2013). This mismatch can be rectified by knowing the reason behind students' decision making regarding getting enrolled in different programs (Nawaz, 2013). These reasons can be explained by rational choice theory, which is an effort to comprehend human behavior regarding decision making. People estimate the expected costs and benefits of any deed before taking decision and choose the best available option to maximize benefits. The students' enrolment in any program is dictated by the rational choice theory. There is dearth of studies regarding students' choice of higher education.

Higher education is considered and recognized as capital investment all over the world. So after making the decision to join higher education students also have to decide which field of study they have to join. To decide a field of study is an important step in the life of an individual because the future of that individual depends upon the choice he makes at that specific moment. To decide about a field of study is not a decision which is taken on immediate basis but students have to concentrate on that field of study for a number of years before selecting it for higher education (Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013). Educational decision-making

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is an intricate process (Desai, Bidanda, & Lovell, 2012). There are many factors which affect students' choice for a specific field and those factors can be social as well as economical (Frey & Stutzer, 2010). Educational decisions are the result of a complex relationship between following factors: changing social structure, changing employment patterns and changing skill requirements (Davies, 2003; Tyler, 1998).

When students opt for any field of study definitely there are factors responsible for it. But the major factor is to get a good job because higher education is actually a bridge between student life and practical life. Higher education plays a key role in poverty reduction, by increasing the productivity of labor. So it is assumed that after getting higher education the individuals will be able to get reasonable jobs. As higher education is considered the best investment in human capital so accumulation in human capital is a key to sustained economic growth and increasing incomes (King, 2011).

Education is now acknowledged as a form of investment in human capital that provides economic benefits and adds country's future income by raising the productive capacity of its people all over the world (Khan, Amjad, & Din, 2005; Mittelman, 1996). Hence expenditures on education are defensible in terms of the likely contribution of education to economic development. However many questions come to our mind. How can education be compared with other forms of national investment? To future economic growth which contributes greater: investment in human capital or investment in physical capital? Are all types of education equally fruitful? Is education a cost-effective type of investment for the individual and for the society? And if so, do students, or their families, bear it in mind while making educational and occupational choices? All of these questions rotate round one basic theme: the relationship between the costs and benefits of education (Bevc & Uršič, 2008; Psacharopoulos, 1994).

The term 'cost-benefit analysis' involves an organized evaluation of the degree of the costs and benefits in a form of investment in order to judge its economic effectiveness (Smith, 1986). In order to get future benefits, a sacrifice of present consumption is required in all types of assessment (Rayapudi, 1990). The purpose of the analysis is to give a measure of the probable yield of the investment as a guide to rational distribution of assets (Robinson, 1990).
Whenever any project is started the costs and rewards are always kept in mind (Williams, 1997). Even the rational calculations of an exchange of rewards and

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costs guide our social behavior (Rayapudi, 1990). Investment in higher education is also a major investment and before deciding for it students make economic calculations through which it is determined whether the reward of investment for a study program is worth of its cost (Paulsen, 2001). Rational choice theory is that individuals behaving rationally try to take full advantage of usefulness (e.g., happiness, satisfaction, and worth) in all choice situations (Archer & Tritter, 2000).

When we talk about subject choice usually there are researches on selection of science, mathematics, and technical subjects but very few tried to find out the reasons for selection of teacher education programs (Thomas, 1990). Teaching is usually considered low paying job in our country but besides this a great number of students opt for this field of study every year (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). To enroll in teacher education program is actually to get a professional degree and when we decide to take a professional degree it is assumed that we want to get some reasonable job after attaining that degree(Atiq-ur-Rehman, Anis, & Khan, 2009). In order to understand the true value of any decision, a decision-maker does a cost-benefit analysis (Muriel de Ganahl, 2013).

Subject choice research has received relatively little attention in higher education, and there has been very little research designed to examine the effectiveness of the study program. As far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, no such effort is made in Pakistan to evaluate the study program and to find out the relationship between costs incurred on study program and the relative earnings after getting that degree. This study helped us to evaluate the effectiveness of the study program also. This study attempted to find out the reasons to opt for teacher education program. It also tried to investigate that after receiving degree in teacher education program what is the position of alumni in the labour market and what is the status of their earnings. It also investigated that if given them the chance to choose the study program and study institute again what will they do? This helped us in evaluating the effectiveness of the study program. Cost-benefit analysis will be done by asking about students expenditures on the study program and their current earnings after getting that specific degree.

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METHOD

The study was descriptive in nature. Descriptive research deals with present day conditions, settings and events. This study involved minimal interference as events, facts are recorded as they occurred and no manipulation was involved. Manipulation means researcher decides nature of treatment, which group will get treatment, to what extent (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993; Shami & Hussain, 2008). Cross- Sectional survey was adopted for the purpose. Cross-sectional designs are effective for providing a snapshot of the current behaviors, attitudes and beliefs in a population.

The department of Education university of Sargodha was established in 2002 and first batch of graduates was passed out in 2004. The researchers decided to collect data from all graduates from 2004 to 2010. Almost 850 students have completed their studies from this department since 2004 to 2010. Majority of the students were female. The addresses and contact numbers of Alumni were collected from the department with permission of the Chairman. There researchers contacted the alumni telephonically briefed them about the purpose and nature of study asked for permission to send questionnaire. Only 350 alumni were traced out and were sent questionnaires with their permission. Only 146 participants returned back the questionnaire.

Research Instrument

For the purpose of the study master questionnaire of Reflex Project was used. The project's full title was 'The flexible professionals in the knowledge society new demands on higher education in Europe'. From autumn 1998 to 2000, a study was conducted in European countries. About 3,000 graduates each from nine countries in the European Union (Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and United Kingdom), one EFTA country (Norway) technically EFTA countries are non-European Union countries, one of the central and eastern European countries in transition (the Czech Republic) and one economically advanced country outside Europe (Japan) provided through a written questionnaire on the relationship between higher education and employment three to four years after graduation. Almost 40,000 graduates participated in the study. The items of the questionnaire were about socio-biographical background of the graduates, study paths, transition from study to work, early career, links between study and employment, job satisfaction and their retrospective views on higher education.

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This questionnaire was taken from the study of SHAH (2009) with his kind permission.

Actual questionnaire of REFLEX Project was too long so it was shortened by eliminating the part regarding competences. Actual questionnaire had 11 parts while the researcher used 10 parts for the purpose of the study. Besides this many questions which were irrelevant to our research were eliminated and some questions were added according to the demand of the research. Terminology of some questions has also been changed after pilot testing according to the requirement of our situation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All computations were made by utilizing SPSS 15 software package and Microsoft Excel. According to the requirement of the study only frequencies and descriptive statistics was required. Chi square was used to find out the difference between different factors. To do cost-benefit analysis MS Excel was used. With the help of MS Excel differences between expenditures and earnings was observed. Data was presented in table and graphically with the help of line graph.

Table 1: Frequency distribution with regard to options in study program

Factors	Frequency	%age
Personal interest	85	58
Employability	35	24
Previous grades left no other choice	26	88

Majority of the respondents 58% described personal interest a reason to opt for this study program followed by employability 24% and previous grades left no other choice 18%. Edwards & Quinter (2011), (Akpan, 1986) & Hin Ko et al. (2007) also highlighted the same reasons.

Cost Benefit Analysis of the Study Program

Table 2: Year of study program and benefit from 1st job and current job

No.	Year of Study Program	No. of Respondents	Benefit of 1st Job	Benefit of Current Job in 2012
1	2004	16	-151000	1460000
2	2005	31	-327952	5875132
3	2006	17	-53600	2474400

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4	2007	24	-1087000	1473400
5	2008	21	-921000	-1029000
6	2009	21	-592200	271488
7	2010	16	-1212600	-1191600
Total		**146**	**-4345352**	**9333820**

Table 2 gives us the combine picture of benefits from first job and benefits from current job. It clearly shows that expenditures on study program were greater than the benefits received through first employment but as far as the current job is concerned its earnings are greater than the expenditures made on study program beside two years (2008 and 2010).

Table 3: Per month average cost and earnings of students at study program

Year of Study Program	Average Cost on study program	Average earnings of 1st Job	Average benefit of 1st Job	Average earnings of current job	Average benefit of current job
2004	6208	5421	-786	13812	7604
2005	5794	4913	-881	21587	15793
2006	6921	6658	-262	19050	12129
2007	7565	3791	-3774	12681	5115
2008	8940	5285	-3654	4857	-4083
2009	8988	6638	-2350	10065	1077
2010	8500	2184	-6315	2293	-6206

Table 3 indicates per month average expenditure on study program and average earnings from 1st job and current job respectively. If we closely observe it becomes clear that 1st job of the respondents was not paying them much and they were earning less than their expenditures on study program. But earnings of the current job are much higher than the expenditures they made on study program except the year 2008 and 2010. The respondents who have completed their study program in 2008, 2009 and 2010 are still in their first job, so the possibility of their less earnings may be their first job. As the years will pass like other respondents they may earn more than their expenditures.

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CONCLUSIONS

This study reports *employability* next to *personal interest* to be the most significant factor among young higher education graduates in making decision for the choice of teacher education as a study program. It is in harmony with that of many of the researchers around the world. According to Hin Ko et al. (2007) *personal interest* was considered the most influential factor in subject choice. Another researcher (Akpan, 1986) also discovered that *personal interest* is the most dominant factor in selection of study program. Findings of the study of Edwards & Quinter (2011) agreed that availability of jobs and personal interest are the most influential factors in subject choice. Garrat and Linda (1985) also supported the idea that most influential factors in British college students' choice of subject were personal interest, career values and previous performance. However previous grades were reported to be the least considered factor in our study.

Cost-benefit analysis of the study program indicated that per annum expenditures of young professional teachers on study program were more than the per annum income from their work in the beginning. But per annum income from current job was more than the per annum expenditure except for the years 2008 and 2010. Hipple (1998) also considered higher education as the best investment which has potential higher financial benefits. Coopers LLP (2005), & Lewis (1998) also have the same study findings.

Study program was considered to be a very decent foundation for personal development and for future careers. Large number of young professional teachers observed that if given them a chance again they will choose the same study program at the same institute. This shows their satisfaction level about study program and about the institute.

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