

A survey on critical factors on educational failure: A case study of private universities in Iran

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ABSTRACT

One of the primary issues on many developing countries is educational failure associated with schoolchildren or university students. Many students cannot continue their educations for different reasons such as lack of family support either financially or emotionally. In this paper, we study the effects of family background characteristics on educational participation in one of Iranian cities. We select 40 students who have the history of educational failure and distribute some questionnaire among them. Our survey is mainly based on relationship between family characteristics such as age, educational level, etc. The results indicate that different family characteristics could highly influence educational failure. Some of the most important factors that all students agreed on are family dispute, lack of interest and support on behalf of their parents, disregarding students' creativity, university professors with weak performance and high living expenses as well as high tuitions. There are other issues, which could impact educational failure such as having a university with good discipline and studying in overcrowded classes.

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1. Introduction

Education plays an important role on sustainable economic growth and there are many reasons to help young people receive good education. In terms of microeconomic terms, one may find it reasonable to gain higher educational skills for different reasons. First, there are many reports, which indicate that college graduates make relatively higher pay than high school ones. Second, increased school educations develop verbal skills, which are important in general especially in managerial positions. Third, attending university programs helps one execute different tasks such as locating the right doctor and searching for a good investment more effectively. Finally, education leads to more job opportunities and a wider choice of jobs, which means more job satisfaction. In terms of macroeconomic terms, a highly educated community could create more value for the society.

Strayer (1911) is believed to be the first one who argued that there must a standard for measuring educational progress and we must prevent any possible failure in educational systems.

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There are several studies trying to find the facts and reasons behind the educational failure. Smits & Gündüz-Hoşgör (2006) performed a survey in primary and secondary education children in Turkey to find the effects of family background on school participation. They reported that many female students still could not take part in schools especially in the countryside and the eastern part of the country. They reported parental education, number of siblings, household income, occupation of the father, traditionality of the mother and the mother's ability to speak Turkish as major factors affecting participation. For primary participation of girls, having a mother who has completed primary education and who can speak Turkish is most significant.

According to Smits & Gündüz-Hoşgör (2006) traditional gender role attitudes of the mother decrease the girl's chances to get secondary education but the economic situation of the household is the major reason for participation of boys. They also blamed mostly the mothers of the children who are out of school and mostly illiterate and traditional women. There are other studies to confirm that the children with uneducated mothers have less chance to continue their education in Turkey. For instance, Sahin and Gulmez (2000) reported that around year 2000, more than half of the married women in the towns and countryside of the East of Turkey had not completed primary education. They also could not speak the official Turkish language, which means that the ones who did not go to school also missed the opportunity to learn the Turkish language, the lack of which constitutes a major obstacle for preventing their access to the resources and positions available in Turkish society.

Educational failure has been a major concern in many African countries as well. In 2009, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) published the results of a survey for English and Mathematics where it shows an overall poor performance with only 26% percent obtaining a credit pass in these two courses. At the same time, there were other exams showed up to 98% failing to clinch five credits, including English and Mathematics in Nigeria high schools and only 1.8% got five credits. It was the poorest result in the history of the examination body in that country. At primary school level, the rate of educational failure was not much better. In an international study reported by the World Bank in which learning achievements in 22 countries in sub-Saharan and North Africa are compared, the learning achievements of students in Nigeria's primary schools were the lowest with national mean scores of 30% compared with 70% in Tunisia and 51% in Mali. There were series of factors that could cause the economic failure in Nigeria such as financial mismanagement, corruption and bureaucratic complexity. There are some evidences to believe that the funds are not utilized in educational level, properly. Although many people in Nigeria suffer from poverty and it could add to educational failure but educational failure does not limit to developing counties.

Finland has been one of the successful European counties for educational system called the world leader in kindergarten through 12th grade education, according to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA conducts a worldwide examination of the scholastic performance of 15-year-old schoolchildren under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (OECD, 2009). According to PISA report published in 2010, U.S. students were ranked passable for science and literacy and below average in mathematics.

As of 2008, the medium Finish family income was \$21,010 compared to \$26,990 for the United States. OECD data from 2009 comparing K-12 education expenditures shows that the US spends about \$92,000 per pupil per year, while Finland spends \$65,000. Obviously, these two countries are good examples of developed countries and the problem is not just funding. Teachers in Finland are held in high esteem and those who graduate at the top of their class are the only ones who can consider a career in education. Besides, to become a high school teacher, one needs to hold master's degree where this does not necessarily hold in US schools.

There are some other studies on the relationship between financial failure and math scores. Ilott & Murphy (1999) investigated the success and failure in professional education by assessing the

evidences. They discussed the difficulties associated with failure and all possible issues contributing to failure to fail and provided guidance to help reduce educational failure. St. John et al. (2010) argued that there must be some more restricted regulation on awarding governmental grants to university students by raising the minimum math requirement courses with higher level of success. Tillyer and Richard (2010) blamed race as one of the reasons behind the educational failure and discussed that progress in racial profiling research could be achieved by implementing similar theoretical frameworks and suitable quantitative and qualitative approaches.

In this paper, we study the most important factors influencing educational failure in Iranian private universities. The case study of this paper selects 40 undergraduate university students who had a history of poor educational performance. We then distribute some questionnaire among them asking to answer some questions on Likert scale (Likert, 1959) from very low to very high. We then analyze the data in terms of different questions. The organization of this paper presents the details of our survey in section 2 and the results are analyzed in section 3. Finally, concluding remarks are given in the last to summarize the contribution of this paper.

2. The proposed framework

The proposed study of this paper considers two internal and external factors influencing educational failure.

The first internal factor is the lack of interest on the content of the program. The second internal factor is associated with insufficient university equipment with university students. The inappropriate administration rules and regulations are blamed to be the third important factor. Using unqualified university professors are the fourth internal factor and finally, implementing inappropriate methods of evaluating university students are considered the fifth item.

There were four important external factors considered for the study of this paper. The first one is the lack of good living facilities such as housing and healthcare. The second influencing item is the discriminative image female student face in their environment. The third one is associated with the low level of parental education and finally the last item is the location of the city and the infrastructure.

Based on the above questions, a questionnaire is designed and distributed among students and feedbacks are collected. Next section, we analyze the questions in details.

3. The results

In this section, we analyze the details of the implementation of our proposed study based on different detailed questions. The first question measures the average educational studies of 40 female students' fathers who took part in our survey. Our survey indicates that the fathers of, at least, 90% of surveyed people were either graduated from high school or maintained university education. Therefore, it seems that their fathers somehow care about their children education since they have some previous experiences. On the contrary, the educational background of the mother of these students were not very promising since 47.5% of them did not even start high school and about 52.5% could finish high school education.

The survey students mostly believed that a low level of education significantly influence their education. In addition, over 88% of these students' parents were not even interested in the program they were studying. In other words, the students mostly believed since their parents are not interested in their education they had lost their motivation.

The next question we asked from students was how much they were interested in studying in the program. Surprisingly, only 2 students representing 5% were interested in studying at university and the rest of the people were not interested in learning educational skills at university level for the program they were accepted. In next question, we asked student as to how much learning skills they had on their education program and over 85% of the students believed they had good learning skills and this could not cause the shortcoming on their educations. In fact, over 90% of the survey students had high level of self-confidence to continue their education program.

One of the main questions of this research study was the effect of family dispute on students' education. While only 50% of the survey students believed residential problem is a major cause of educational failure, as expected, all the students believed that family dispute could impact their educations either significantly or very significantly. In addition, about 80% of the people who took part in our survey believed that a friendly and united family environment could create better motivation for them to study.

University equipment was one of the questions of this survey and the results of our survey indicated that 70% of the students believed this could be a major issue on education failure and some of the students did not think of university equipment as a cause of educational failure. Recreational facilities often could increase people's motivation and their focus on education. While 25% of the surveyed people stated that having good recreational facilities had no or little impact on their studies, 75% were strongly interested in using such facilities and blaming the lack of such equipment as a major educational failure.

There is no doubt that people need to spend some of their times on leisure and entertainment in order to refresh their bodies. Entertainment activities could create motivation for people to learn more but over half of the people who participated in our survey did not believe that entertainment could significantly contribute to their educational level. Note that many Iranian students are financially dependent to their parents to continue their education and 80% of these people believed that this dependency had negative impact on their education.

Creativity plays an important role on today's growing science and 95% of the students who participated in our survey believed that the education system did not pay much attention to their creativity.

The recent economic recession have different impacts worldwide in various ways. People all over the world may lose their jobs and face with some difficulties. In our survey, over 90% of the students considered the current economic turmoil as a major problem in their educational failure.

There is always a proverb among people, which says people never have the second chance the change the first impression. Over 70% of the students who took part in our survey believed that they had some bad experience when they started their education and that was one of the main reasons to blame for educational failure. Another disadvantage that could affect people's education was the lack of a good communication between instructors and students. In our survey over 80% of the surveyed people believed that lack of a good communication could impact their abilities to learn more. However, when we asked students whether any instructor's encouragement could influence their success, most of them did not believe such a plan could substantially increase their performance.

One of the most important issues, which could significantly impact students' performance, is the lack of a good attention on students' educational performance. In our survey, 100% of the participants were blaming their parents for not paying enough attention to their academic performances.

One of the major parameters for the success of any educational program is the talent that people have towards the learning program. In our survey, students mostly believed that they did not have a good talent in the educational program they were enrolled and they blamed it as a major reason for their education failure.

The other reason, which may have a close relationship with lack of talent, is students' interest on the educational program. Our survey indicates that most of the students who had difficulties on passing their courses were not interested in the program they were enrolled. We asked another relative question as how much they intended to continue their education after they finished their studies and almost all students indicated that since they did not intend to continue their education they were not very much motivated to study well. They also did not predict a good future for their lives and this could add another negative impact on their educations. In fact, 95% of the survey people believed there would not be a good outlook on their future, which reduce their motivation on learning skills well.

One of the necessary requirements of an education program is to have good discipline. A punctual student may have a better understanding of the lectures, which could help finish the program, successfully. In our survey, only half of the students agreed that attending the courses could help them get better credits and the other students believed participating in courses did not resolve their education failure.

Note that students have already complained about poor performance of their teachers. Therefore, had they served with better instructors, they could have participated in the classes with better discipline leading them to get better credit from their courses. In one of our questions, all students agreed that weak university professors are likely to be one of the main reasons for educational failure.

Finally, this study was performed in one of private universities where students must pay for tuition as well as other living expenses. All students blamed educational expenses as some of the most important issues for their educational failure.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented a survey on educational failure in one of private universities in Iran. The survey selected 40 female students who had weak educational performance and distributed some questionnaire among them. The purpose of this survey was to find the main causes of educational failure. The results of our survey clearly determined many important factors influencing education failure. Some of the most important factors that all students agreed on were family dispute, lack of interest and support on behalf of their parents, disregarding students' creativity, university professors with weak performance and high living expenses as well as high tuitions. There were other issues which could impact educational failure such as having a university with good discipline and studying in classes where the number of students is higher than standard.

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