

# [Problems with access to higher education research paper sample](https://assignbuster.com/problems-with-access-to-higher-education-research-paper-sample/)

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Higher education is education acquired after one has completed courses in institutions offering secondary education like high schools. It is acquired in universities and institutions of technical training. Normally, completion of courses in higher learning leads to award of a degree or professional certifications. In the international convention on human rights, access to higher education has been enlisted as a right and many nations have been urged to ensure it is treated as such. Indeed, many nations have attempted making it available to all though they have not fully succeeded. Depending on individual nations, there are various criteria for selecting those to join institutions of higher learning. Some of the students joining institutions of higher learning are the bright students from poor families who passed in their high school education and their respective governments offers to support them. This is the cheaper way of getting access to higher education. Another group of students are sponsored to go for higher education. In other nations they are called parallel students while in others they are called self-sponsored students. This group normally the students’ fee is paid either by their parents, guardians, non-governmental institutions or well-wishers. To ensure there is an equitable distribution in the number of students in institutions of higher learning, many nations practice the quota system so as to make sure that at least there is a student from every administrative region (say a ward) who is government sponsored to go for higher education. Despite all this effort, there are still a lot of challenges with access to higher education.
Everybody is generally agreed on the fact that it is only education which can bring about equality; prompting others to term it the universal equalizer. It may be thought that since academic prowess depends on the intellect of the individual, it is unlikely that external factors will affect his performance, which on the other hand will determine the kind of he or she lives. This is where the problem starts. Many bright children from not well of backgrounds fail to achieve their academic goals because of financial constraints while even average students from the middle class and the upper economic classes have access to the best education that can be offered in the land. Statistically, the number of students from poor backgrounds who attend institutions of higher learning has been always low compared to the number of students from well to do homes. The problem is not an intellectual difference but rather a financial difference. It can therefore be said safely that the rich get richer and the poor become poorer just from the onset.
This problem of funding is further compounded by the fact that the respective governments and other stake holders are mum, despite the ever increasing demand for higher education. It should be kept in mind that in the current economic state and the job market, having a higher education certificate is quietly becoming mandatory, though nobody dare say that in public. In a survey done in the United States, a college graduate averagely earns 75 per cent more than a worker who does not have a college certificate. It may look surprising, but that is the reality. Thus, getting higher education has become one of the guarantees of the individual ever achieving his dreams; the American Dream which our fore fathers so enjoyed. But how shall it ever be achieved if the people who enjoy the best fruits in the land (the best education) are the have while the not-haves remain languishing in poverty?
The non-Profit College Board indicates that public universities raised the tuition fees by 8. 3% in 2012. This cost has been increasing with every period of inflation, and currently the amount the federal government lends to students has increased by 56%. This means that a student leaves college with an average debt of about $25, 000. The government has failed to find a solution to the increasing cost of higher education. The college administration has tried by increasing the funding for grants and making the process of loan payment easier.
The government, in an attempt to promote equity in higher education acquisition came up with a program for funding the needy but gifted students. Already this means that if the student is not very gifted, he or she will never hope to get government sponsorship to college. The criteria and the program become counterproductive from the onset. To make it worse, the same government went ahead to propose a new criteria for these few bright students to get the funding; the merit based funding system. This added another huddle in the path of the needy student since many of the ‘ qualified’ students for these state funding turned out to be those from families that could have afforded paying the fees. Is it not injustice by the government to its own people who it ought to help attain their dreams? The best criteria would have been awarding the sponsorship based on the level of financial neediness. It is surprising that when the poor students fail to get the funding, the government says that the few funds for the sponsorship were fairly distributed and that those who did not ‘ get lucky’ lost in the race fairly. So the rich keep getting their way.
On top of the government failing in the free government sponsorship program, it has also failed to expand the number of institutions of higher learning to be able to accommodate the ever increasing population of people demanding higher education. Many may think that the law of demand and supply applies in any business transaction and the government ought to be at least aware of existence of such a law, but the truth is such a law has either not been talked of by the leaders or they blatantly decide not to honor it. The numbers of institutions of higher learning have remained constant over a long time despite the nations watching an ever increasing human population. They are more aware of the need for more roads to ease traffic jams in cities hence build flyovers and bypasses but are oblivious of the need to reduce the human traffic in the queue of those hungry for higher education. Government invest heavily in military gadgets, allowances and pensions for state workers but become less aggressive when it comes to the need to increase the number of universities for instance. A possible remedy came up with the advent of privately run and owned universities but they again compounded the problem. It is unimaginable that a student who is not able to pay his or her fees in a state university will ever dream of being able to fund himself in a private university. In another way, these universities only helped to ease the trouble face by the rich class because for them the funding is not a problem, what they need is a university with a place for them. Thus, the rich keep educating their children who end up getting the best jobs in both private and public sector while the poor students who never get a chance remain poor and the chain continues. To ever hope that under such circumstances the poor will ever be able to compete favorable with their rich peers is to hope that a poor African state like Mali will become the super power.
The problems caused by the complacency of the government continue to be seen when the students tutor ratio is analyzed. In the ideal university, one lecturer or tutor is expected to attend to 25 students, meaning that for every 25 students admitted, one lecturer should be hired. The problem comes in when the budget allocated to state owned universities becomes inadequate to hire and pay more lecturers. This trickle down to the number of students that university can admit per academic year which means that many of the students qualified to join these institutions of higher learning will miss admission. Such a crisis has not been seen in the budgets for roads, government expenditure and military for instance which prompts one to wonder if the education sector is not as important in the view of the government compared to other sectors. Furthermore, since the student lecturer ratio is very high, the quality of education is lowered since these lecturers have a heavy workload and less time to have personal consultations with the students which means that the system is teacher centered with the students only passively participating in the teaching learning process. This makes the graduates half backed with the effects being felt in the job market.
The number of people who are admitted per year in institutions of higher learning to take competitive courses like engineering, medicine, pharmacy, architecture and the likes are very few for those who are government sponsored. Even those who are government sponsored, the journey they take is very painful, having to score very high grades in high school education and still having to face the gambling to see if they can qualify. On the other hand, those who are self-sponsored can get admission to such courses with far lower grades that the lowest grade for admission for a government sponsored student just because they can pay their way through. In such cases, it is clear that admission has changed from being based on academic merit in secondary education to whether you can be able to foot your way through college.
It is apparent that the world is headed for the worst if the educational equality is not achieved for all. Thus, the first step towards getting a long term solution is having everybody involved in the process of getting the solution. On the issue of government funding, it will be appropriate to have the system of awarding the sponsorship based on neediness instead of ‘ merit’. This will help the children from poor homes get a chance of learning and those from well to do homes can pay their school fees which does not look like injustice. Also, there is need for the governments to increase budgetary allocations to higher learning sponsorship programs so that more students from poor homes can get the sponsorship. Also, the government should work on increasing the number of state universities. This will go a long way in easing the pressure on the existing universities and will allow more students both from poor and from well to do families to get access to higher education. Also, another option is establishment of middle level colleges where the fees is subsidized by the government so that those students from not well off families who miss university admission can still get access to higher education through the middle level colleges. The number of state paid lecturers in public universities is another issue the governments should work on increasing so that the lecturer student ratio is lower to allow more direct contact between the students and their lecturer or tutor. This will go a long way in increasing the quality of education since the lecturers will have less workload meaning they can get time for one on one consultation with the students.
Another possible remedy is having partnerships between non-governmental institutions and the public universities to help pay school fees for those who are financially needy. Such bodies like the World Bank can be called upon to help in funding those needy students who the government cannot be able to fund due to ‘ lack’ of funds. Also, other well-wishers and philanthropists can help pay for a few students and like this one or two more poor students who would not have gotten a chance will get on to go for higher learning.
The institutions of higher learning themselves can help in creating awareness on the possible ways of getting state admission or on any other way that students can look for financial help. This can be done through outreach programs done by some of the already admitted government sponsored students to those eligible to join college but are still on with their secondary education or have already finished their secondary education. This will enable them be prepared adequately financially before joining college.
Equally, religious institutions should be involved in helping their members who are in the financial crisis by sponsoring a few students. They can also urge their members, some of whom are affluent, to help the others who are financially needy. This will even increase the spirit of brotherhood and will go a long way in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor.
The number of people seeking for university education is increasing constantly, but the supply (institutions of higher learning) is not increasing proportionally. These calls for urgent action from the education stake holder to ensure that those who want higher education can get it so that they can achieve their dreams. The main problem facing many of the poor students is funding which is not the case for the rich, and even the various systems that have been put in place to bridge this gap tend to widen it. The government has been shown to contribute to the problems facing those yearning for higher education. The good news is that the governments and society as a whole can easily solve the problem if they put the issue of self aside and work for the common good. Increasing funding in these institutions of higher learning will go a long way in solving the issue, and this can be done by the government itself, individual people who stand for the common good and are ardent believers in the American dream, non-governmental institutions and other bodies like the World Bank. The heart of the matter is, the problem can either be solved now, or it will continue to haunt us and even the next generations.

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