

Should higher
education be free



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16 December Should higher education be free? For a long time, the higher education has been unaffordable for a lot of capable students (Reed and Szymanski). Accommodating the financial requirements of the education sector to provide the students with free higher education requires a lot of funding. There is a debate between the vice-chancellors and the National Union of Students (NUS) regarding the source of this funding, in which the former consider the students as the supposed source whereas the latter emphasize upon the rich public as the source (Ullmann). The best ethical solution to the problem is limiting the opportunity of free education only to the deserving yet poor students.

It is not right from an ethical perspective to retrieve the money from the general taxpayers for the higher education of all students irrespective of their ability to afford. " In a period when the state cannot afford to keep police on the streets, the NHS functioning, and our armed forces properly equipped, it is right and proper that undergraduates should be asked to pay for some of the costs of their higher education to ensure that government money is spent fairly" (Holden). Considering the benefits students gain from the degree, it is ethically justified to make the students bear the cost of education. The extent to which students should be required to bear the cost of education is debatable, yet it is very dutiful of the students to give their input for something they would get output from in the future.

There are numerous challenges that surface if the students are required to bear the cost of their higher education. There are a lot of students who are quite capable in the studies, but cannot afford any cost of education. For such students, the access to higher education should be based on the students' tendency to achieve rather than their tendency to pay because

“[i]t is the poor and middle class who are unable to afford the very thing that enables their children to seek a better life” (Peters). Government should provide the funds to the colleges but only for the education of the students who are capable but not in the position to afford the expenses.

Supporters of the free higher education consider it the only fair means of advancing the academic career of the individuals since free education opens the gates to high education for all. However, if the higher education is made free for the capable yet poor students and not for the rest, the objective of making the higher education attainable for all is achieved. “ From each according to his ability, to each according to his (or her!) need’ provides for a system that is fair but also properly funded” (Ullmann).

Concluding, providing students with free higher education requires arrangement of extra income. Following the conventional formula, the government has to retrieve the money from public in the form of tax. This is ethically unjustified. Higher education should be made free only for the deserving students. Deserving students are those who are not only too poor to afford the cost of higher education, but also have a record of academic achievements in the past.

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