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The influence of available bursaries on career choices of students from scarce-resourced backgrounds: a case study of Social Work and Education students

Ramutla, Magdeline

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ABSTRACT

Globally, the lack of funding for higher education has been identified as a major obstacle confronting young people in developed and developing countries. Post 1994, the South African government established a number of funding support programmes such as the Funza Lushaka for teaching qualification and Department of Social Development bursary for social work qualification to address the shortage of skills in specific fields such as public education and social welfare services. Higher education plays a vital role in the lives of the population that was historically disadvantaged in South Africa. The role that higher education plays assists as part of the means of getting a better life, equipping one with different skills to secure a job or start own business as a way of working towards escaping poverty. Access to higher education institutions ensures employment opportunities, social equality and justice, and economic progress. The general scarcity of higher education funding led to a phenomenon where young people chose fields of study based on the availability of bursary support programmes. This study was a qualitative study in nature and aimed to explore the limited funding for higher education and the influence of available bursaries on career choices of students from resource-scarce backgrounds who are the recipients of the Department of Social Development and Funza Lushaka bursaries. The case study design was used in the study and interviews were used as the method for data collection. The data was collected from 14 participants who were sampled using the quota sampling and analysed by using the thematic data analysis method which assisted to present the data in an organized manner as well as present the similarities and differences found from the data based on the student's experiences with regards to the influence of available bursaries on their career choices. It is anticipated that the findings may contribute to more funding being made available for students to fund for their higher education. This study aims to assist in encouraging the bursars and the government to introduce more bursaries for higher education that assist not only in funding for students tuition but also transport, books, food and accommodation where necessary as well as bursaries that are not career specific allowing students to pursue the career of their choice.

Key words: Bursaries, Career Choices, Disadvantaged background, Higher education funding