

Students expect future employers to value their credentials, not what they learned at university

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Students expect future employers to value their credentials, not necessarily, what they learned at university, according to new research by the University of Cologne.

The study, conducted by Professor Pia Pinger, found that the main motivation for people to go to university in terms of later labour market rewards is to obtain credentials, rather than learn new skills, concepts and material.

Students expect substantial labour market returns from finishing their studies, which is largely driven by a graduation premium of 24.5%, which corresponds to 7,400 Euros a year extra salary.

“This might explain the common complaint among professors regarding their students’ limited willingness to study material beyond what is on the exam. Our findings further indicate that students believe that a university diploma helps them to get a foot-in-the-door at high paying jobs, to obtain more valuable work experience, and to follow an entirely different career trajectory.”

The data was collected by emailing students on a popular nationwide job board, asking them to complete a questionnaire with items related to future labour market expectations, current study experiences, university dropout, and a broad range of background characteristics.

The study also found that since the return of investment (ROI) of higher education was perceived as substantial, the introduction or increase of tuition fees are unlikely to have an impact on student numbers. This suggests why the temporary introduction of tuition fees in Germany, and the increase of fees in the UK in 2012, has had, and is likely to have, very little impact on enrolment – despite the political protests.

Professor Pinger suggests that governments should introduce policies focussed on measures aimed at reducing the considerable psychological costs of studying, in order to combat dropout rates.

The study titled ‘The Expected (Signalling) Value of Higher Education’ had 6,306 students participate.

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For more information, a copy of the report, or to speak to Professor Pinger, contact Katie Hurley at BlueSky Education on khurley@bluesky-pr.com or call +44 (0) 7538 412793.