

Education in the UK

Name: **Man Bahadur Khatri**

Teacher: Faculty Member of English Education Department, Tribhuvan University, Sanothimi Campus, Bhaktapur, Nepal

Student: PhD student, Kathmandu University, Nepal

Postal Address:

Man Bahadur Khatri

Neric Academy, Sankhamul, New-Baneshwor, Kathamndu

Contact: 9841345110

Email: meromana18@yahoo.com

Abstract

The UK is an advanced country in education. The oldest universities like; Cambridge, Oxford, Glasgow and Durham have been also shedding a type of impression even in present situation. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) also it has been investing a lot of money every year. As a developed country, its rate of education, employment and investment in education is very high. Thousands of students go to the UK for higher studies and earn valuable certificates each year. But, because of open access in higher education institutions since 1990s, a number of counterfeit higher education institutions were opened till 2010/12 and collected money from the abroad students. It degraded the life of students as well as the prestige of the United Kingdom. More than a systematic development in education, it brought a type of pollution in higher education so the government of UK started making amendments in higher education policies and foreign students since 2010. So, in this study, along with lots of appreciations, I have made some comments which would be useful for both the foreign students and the government of the United Kingdom in case of education.

Key Words: Higher studies; governance; employment; curriculum; amendment; education

Education in the UK

Introduction of the UK

UK, the abbreviated form of the United Kingdom consists of four states; England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. If we exclude Northern Ireland from the UK, it is called Great Britain. It is a well developed country which has a long history of civilization and linguistic development. It is located in the 49 degree north to 59 degree North latitudes and 8 degree west to 2 degree east longitudes. The total area of the UK is 243,610 square kilometer where the estimated population in 2014 is 64.1 million which represents the 1% of the world's population. From the literacy perspective, its literacy rate is 99% (United Kingdom, n.d.)

The UK has unitary system of government but the power is equally distributed to all the states. It has a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarch where a king or a queen is the head of the state and a prime minister is the head of the government. The UK doesn't have a written constitution but it doesn't mean it has no constitution. Its constitutional ideas are formed from various sources including state law, case law made by judges, and international treaties. "The most progressive powers are initiated directly exercised by the ministers, rather than the crown" (The Cabinet Manual, 2011).

Education in the UK

From the educational point of view, the schooling is compulsory for children between the ages 5-16. Pre-school, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is there for the children of 2 ½ to 4 years. There is no exact curriculum for this level but they have a set of desirable learning objectives which they need to fulfill during this stage.

Generally the school year starts in the UK from September and ends in July but a whole academic year is divided into 3 semesters (terms); September to Christmas (the Fall/Autumn

term), January to Easter (the Spring term) and April to July (the Summer term). Each term lasts approximately for twelve weeks where half term holidays are given in the middle of each term usually of a week's duration but the Christmas and Easter holidays are assigned for two weeks. Summer holidays are long holidays (6 weeks) in which the children can go for tours and educational exertions with their parents in a long distance. In each school, the school time starts from 8:45 am and ends in 3 pm generally. All schools are required to give religious education but it is not compulsory for all children. If any guardian doesn't like to include their children in such religious education, they can withdraw their children from that class (Department for Children and Families, 2014)

Primary education is there for the children of 4-11 years where two important evaluation schemes are incorporated in to two key stages (key stage 1 and key stage 2) with Standard Attainment Test (SAT) having compulsory core subjects; English, Math and Science. The subjects to be taught in primary level are specified by the National Curriculum which sets out SAT.

In the same way Dunn (n. d.) writes, the secondary school is for the children of 11-16. It includes key stage 3 (14 years) and key stage 4 (16 years). Secondary schools must follow the National Curriculum. Here also the evaluation of the students takes place at the key stage 3 and 4. Up to the key stage 3 all students learn the same subjects but after this they choose usually 10 subjects where English, Math and Science are compulsory. At the end of year 11 (key stage 4) or after General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), students may leave school if they wish or move on to technical or training colleges. Otherwise they can pass to the sixth form. Sixth form is also divided into two; Lower Sixth (16-17) it also called AS Level which have 5 subjects, and upper sixth called A Level which have 3 subjects. At the end of sixth form, Students leave

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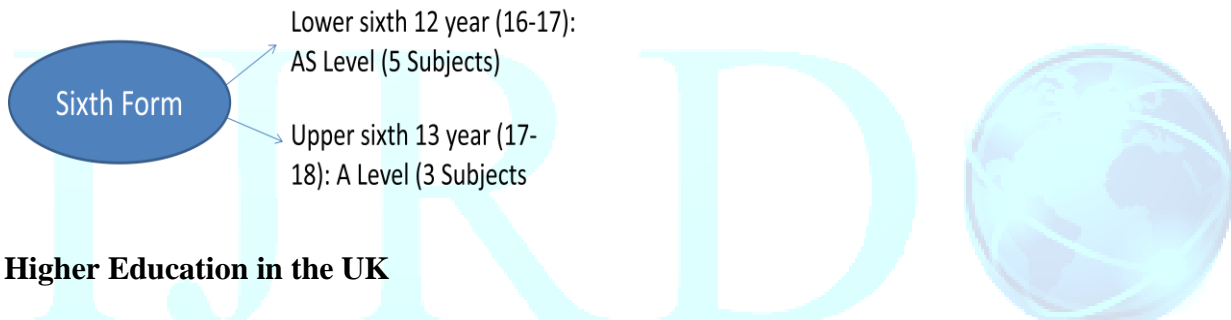
school but can more to the university system. Most university courses are of 3-4 years and students usually specialized in one subject in the universities. Here is a detail chart/figure of education system of the UK:

Primary school: 4-11 Years children

- Key Stage 1: 4-7 years
- Key Stage 2: 7-11 years

Secondary school: 11-16 years children

- Key stage 3: 14 years
- Key stage 4: 16 years



Higher Education in the UK

National Qualification Framework	Framework for Higher Education Qualification	Cycle/Credit
8 Specialist Award	D (Doctoral) PhD and M Phil	3 rd Cycle 540
7 Level 7 Diploma	M (Masters) Masters/Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate	2 nd Cycle 180/60
6 Level 6 Diploma	H (Honours) Bachelor’s Degrees/Graduate Diplomas and	1 st Cycle 360

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	Certificates (Foundation Degrees)	
5 Level 5 Higher National Diploma	I (Intermediate) Diploma of Higher Education(Vocational), Foundation Degrees	Short Cycle 240
4 Level 4 Certificate	C (Certificate) Certificates of Higher Education	120

Governance of Higher Education

Higher education in the UK is more opened to school education in the sense that it is not compulsory for all but there is no right to entry to university for everybody in Britain. Universities select students on the basis of A-Level results and interviews. After sixth form students are opened to go to the universities or Higher Education (HE) institutions. The HE institutions are independent, self governing bodies active in teaching, research and scholarship. However some institutions are eligible to receive support from funds administrated by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

Generally HE institutes are of three types; Universities (160), University colleges (700) and Alternative Providers. Universities are the high level organizations which can give high levels of education like Masters, M Phil and PhD courses along with Bachelors. They can provide degree awards to their students once they complete their programs. The University Colleges also collect students from their own nation and abroad but they do not have their own

degree awards. They are associated to the universities. These university colleges are similar to the affiliated colleges of our country, Nepal. At the same time the independent private institutions are there as alternative providers for higher education. These institutions do not have good career in Britain after 2010 (Universities UK, 2010) since they started business on abroad students. A number of students went to study in Britain in such institutions but they were not found equal in quality, management and infrastructures so students are finally bound to drop their money and career and back to their countries. To evaluate the quality of each college, there is a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), independent UK-wide body to monitor the standard of Higher education provision, established in 1997. “The institutions have the autonomy to design and develop their own programmes of study. The Quality Assurance Agency provides subject benchmark statements explaining the core competencies...the QAA also provides guidance on programme design and approval for higher education institutions with its quality code for higher education” (England Higher Education System, 2015)

Similarly, to maintain the quality and governance in HI, there are some agencies like; Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA), National Qualification Framework (NQF), Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) and Framework for National Guidelines (FNG, 2008). To see the number of students in higher education sector and maintain quality education, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is also there. Although the last one works for England, similar types of organizations are there in all the states of the UK for the governance of Higher Education.

Financing in Higher Education

Students themselves are responsible to contribute to the cost of their degrees in higher education in the UK. Government has maintained the rules to manage the income contingent

loans to the students in higher education but that loan directly goes to the university administration than to the students so, in a positive sense, they say students get their higher education free- it is graduates who make re-payments to meet part of the cost (Barr, 2003).

Central planning is there in higher education. Fees are introduced and set by the central government (Barr, 2005) where he believes the grants are vital to widen participation of local students and eradicate the two causes of exclusion; financial poverty and information poverty. For this the UK government is very serious so it has passed a rule to help for people with low earning after graduation – any loan not repaid after 25 years will be written off (Barr, 2005).

Total fund for education from the government is £11.1 billion in 2013/14. More than 80% fund is allocated in school level education so the higher education enjoys just with 20% but the higher education focuses more on research studies. They can also get funds from Deans Excellence Scholarship, worth up to 50% off in masters and higher studies (Scholarship & bursaries, n.d.). Similarly, they get some alumni fund from the former students, industries, universities, colleges and other organizations.

Average Cost in Higher Education

The cost to study in the UK is dependent on many factors like institution, courses, location and funding opportunities. Good students may receive some funding in the universities from the professors, deans, universities and organizations but others must pay their cost on their own either from parents or jobs or from the loans. The costs are different in different states for different students. In England and Wales £9000 per annum but in Northern Ireland it is £3,575 and in Scotland it is £ 6,630 to 9,000 for home students in undergraduate programs. For abroad students the same cost ranges from £7,550 to £10,000 in average. But in medical courses it is charged £36,600 for abroad students.

In post graduation also the tuition fees differ depending on the university and the subject. Home students may be able to receive some funding from one of the UK's research councils, the university itself or via career sponsorship scheme (UK Tuition Fees, 2013). But in case of abroad students some excellent students may receive some scholarship programs but other students should pay £10,000 to £12,000 per annum for common or lecture based subjects but for Medical courses it charges £38,532. It becomes a high amount for the people belong to the similar countries like Nepal.

Teacher Management

School years are counted in number in the UK. Year 7 is the first year at a secondary school and 13 is the last year. At the age of 16 the children pass General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) with A to G grades. In case of teacher management in the UK, a standard set of teacher management is developed in response to the Government White Paper, Higher Education Academy with support in Universities of the UK (UUK). In one intends to teach pupils aged 3/4 to 11 s/he must have a standard equivalent to grade "C" or above GCSE. Not only the academic certificates, one needs to have passed the professional skill tests along with strong understanding of the subject s/he wants to teach. If her/his degree subject doesn't link closely to the chosen teaching subject, s/he would advise to take a Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) course before starting teaching career. In the same way the non-UK Qualifications also need a statement of comparability from NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) to get entry in teaching career (Entry Requirements, 2014).

According to the Full Report – Graduates in the UK Labour (2013) primary teachers work 60 hours a week in schools but the teachers of HE, their time is not limited. It depends on their terms and conditions. Part time teachers are also appointed in the UK Universities. The first

12 months of the employment is a probationary period in schools and colleges. And, the average salary for HE teachers ranges from £33,000 to £56,000 per annum (Graduate Prospects Ltd., 2015). According to the University of Portsmouth (2012) the teacher management in the UK offers:

- A wide range of management and staff development
- Introducing new staff to the university
- Enhancing personal effectiveness and communication skills
- Conducting and participating effectively in the performance development review
- Access to tailor made activities to meet local expectations
- Leadership and management skills etc.

The university teachers and college teachers are also called Fellows. The fellows are responsible for research works, mentoring and leading. So they are always kept in fellowship category to mention into the chart. Here is a chart/table to reflect a small picture of teacher management in higher education in the UK.

Descriptor	H . E. A Fellowship Category	Target Group
D1	Associate Fellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Staff who support learning •Teaching Staff with limited portfolio
D2	Fellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Early career teaching staff •Teaching staff without significant academic leadership responsibilities
D3	Senior Fellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Experienced teaching staff •Who can impact through academic leadership and mentoring
D4	Principal fellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Senior academic staff responsible for leadership role

Employability of Higher Education Graduates

According to the Full report- Graduates in the UK Labours (2013) the estimated graduates are 12 million in the UK. Nearly 25% of companies have unfilled positions in their offices due to graduates having a lack of skills in the professions (Royal College of Surgeons, 2015). At the same time only 50-60% of graduates indicated that their study programs clearly succeed in providing a good basis for enhancing the labour market and for developing new skills on the jobs (McCreary University, 2013). The Students Employability Index 2014 shows that 92% of university students want access to work experience during university studies but only 50% could get such access. So these days the universities are under pressure to increase the employability of their students to remain competitive and increase students' survey feedback.

Even though the job market is well competitive in the UK, 87% of graduates are employed in the UK. Out of these all, over 40% are busy in public administration, education and

health industries. In comparison to non-graduates, graduates are more likely to work in high skilled posts whose annual earning is also getting higher than non-graduates. In such graduates also it is found that top UK universities students can earn more than other universities. And, male graduates are more likely to have high skilled jobs than female graduates (Full Report-Graduates in the UK Labour Market, 2013). In total just 4% graduates are found unemployed in the market.

My Opinion/Critique

The UK can be a good destination for the students and researchers who want to flourish their career in higher studies. A number of universities and higher education colleges are there who have legal power to develop their own courses and award degrees. They can decide themselves which students to admit and which staff to appoint.

Despite its quality, British education is not far from criticism as well. The critics are blaming the teachers and researchers that the education and research are not straightforward to consumer services. Unlike a haircut, their quality is not simply an issue of personal taste, and consequences for the individual and broader society will not grow out in six weeks (Priestland, 2013). A British cite 'Education in England, 2014' writes one half of British universities have lost confidence in the 'A' grades these days. Similarly the British Chamber of Commerce and British industries are also complaining for failing standards of the university students in the markets. At the same time, the Youth Employment Challenge and Solution (2012) writes, employers often experience difficulty in finding young people having basic employability skills as literacy, numeracy, problem solving, team working and time management. So either employers have to pay for employees' remedial education or they must hire foreign candidates.

The human development report of UNDP (2013) shows the total HDI of the UK is 0.892 where the life expectancy at birth is 80.5. It is an advanced country in education but I doubt there

are some loop holes in policy making so that the fraud colleges are enjoying in the UK (Educational International, 2014). While talking about education system also, I found different education institutions in different pages; Academy Schools, Community Schools, Free Schools, Foundation schools, Voluntary Added Schools and Voluntary Control Schools are some examples of schools. Similarly, Oxbridge Universities, the Old Scottish Universities, the Early 19th Century English Universities, Redbrick Universities, the Newer Civic Universities/ Sandwich Courses and the Campus Universities are the examples of universities. Besides these types there are other types as well like Type A and Type B, Level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. 6. 7 and 8 etc. Because of this the abroad students can be confused while selecting the schools and colleges in the UK. Return of Nepali students from the UK in these latest years is one burning issue/criticism in UK's education system.

Finally in the conclusion, appreciating the education policy of the UK I recommend the authority to make it clear to the abroad students where they can crystallize their specialization area and academic career, and glorify their standard life as British people live.

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