

PERCEPTIONS OF PAKISTANI STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN AND IN THE UK

Identity, values and aspirations

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REMU (Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Unit)

April 2015



FOREWORD

The four factors that are predicted to accelerate global growth by 2030, are; expanding middle classes, improved educational attainment, massification of communication and technologies, and progress in health care and science. (National Intelligence Council, 2014) These elements are internationalising people's perceptions and opportunities, and as a result an increasing number of young Pakistanis are looking abroad to complete their higher education. In 2014, Pakistan was amongst the top ten countries whose students were studying at UK universities as international students (HESA, 2014), which is in addition to the existing mass of British-Pakistani students in UK universities.

'Student perceptions' is a cross cultural study which explores employability through the lived experiences of Pakistani and Pakistani heritage students who are currently studying at universities across Pakistan and the UK. In Pakistan, 65% of the generation is under the age of twenty-five, and graduate unemployment is estimated at 28% (Economist Intelligence Unit 2014). Pakistan must approach this demographic dividend opportunistically. The country cannot afford to underestimate the economic gains which could be sought from its progressively educated, urbanised and globally aware student population.

The overarching finding which emerged from the report is how 'career savvy' the students in both countries are. The majority are choosing their university, based on its ranking, and making course decisions by its job prospects. They are also aware of what skills employers are looking for, and will secure their own work experience if it is not provided through the university.

Unfortunately universities do not always reach their high expectations and both the UK and Pakistan still struggle to equip its graduates for the workplace. Many students are taking the responsibility of their future into their own hands - few reported to have used university career services, and the second highest response in this category by those surveyed, selected 'themselves' as the most significant influence in decisions relating to their education and employment.

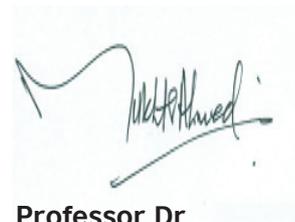
This report also debunks a common misconception that Pakistanis who live in the UK rely on strong family connections. We found that most Pakistani and British-Pakistani students at universities across the UK chose not to live near their relatives, 47% obtained a student loan, and many found work experience or part-time work independently - not through family contacts. Furthermore it emerged that Pakistani students at universities in Pakistan appeared to be more reliant on their family - 95% lived with their parents whilst studying, and 69% of degrees were funded by their parents.

We discovered many similarities and some surprising differences between the populations. For example, students in Pakistan had a narrower variety of degree topics, with the majority choosing business, finance, or management disciplines. Pakistani universities offered more opportunities for placements or to acquire work experience as part of the degree programme. Also a startling number of UK scholarships were awarded to Pakistani students who described themselves as upper-middle or upper class. Despite these country-differences, in many cases there

is more variation within the populations than between them. One question asked the students to priorities what is most important in their life - we found that the men from both locations rank work and success higher than women, and women rank religion and friends higher than men.

We believe that the individual empowerment of young Pakistanis in both Pakistan and in the UK is a crucial determining element in the future of Pakistan. The British Council's 'Next Generation' research series supported this claim, and appealed for Pakistan to harnesses the potential of its young people. To guarantee that universities and policy makers correctly invest in the future of young Pakistanis we must have a better understanding of what motivates them, and what influences their decisions.

'Student Perceptions' and its surrounding discussion will help young people upgrade their life-skills and improve their chances for employability. It will also assist universities and policy makers to better understand and thus engage more deeply with students of Pakistani origin and their surrounding communities. This scoping report uncovers notions of their values (past), identity (present), and aspirations (future), we hope it will be used to inform stakeholder initiatives that support the wellbeing of Pakistani students in both countries.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was commissioned by the Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (REMU) at British Council Pakistan. The aim is to explore employability through the perceptions and experiences of Pakistani and Pakistani heritage students at higher education institutions in Pakistan and in the UK. It arose from a wider research initiative Perceptions of young Pakistanis in the UK and Pakistan which looks at increasing understanding of students' values, identities and aspirations in the context of employability. The primary concern is the role of culture in education and employment for students studying at university. Culture is explored by asking students in an online survey about their experiences and perceptions of HE within the wider context of their lives including the different influences on their decision-making and the impact of studying in different locations. The study brings together evidence from a cross-section of stakeholders including academic and administrative staff in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the world and employers in the UK in order to understand the relationship between universities and the working world. To aid interpretation of the data in this way, the overall respondent population has been divided into six sub-populations. These are:

1. Pakistan nationals studying for a first degree at a Pakistan university
2. Pakistan nationals studying for a post-graduate degree at a Pakistan university
3. Pakistan nationals studying for a first degree at a UK university
4. Pakistan nationals studying for a post-graduate degree at a UK university
5. UK nationals of Pakistan origin studying

- for a first degree at a UK university
6. UK nationals of Pakistan origin studying for a post-graduate degree at a UK university.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The total number of respondents for the online survey was 673. 56% of respondents were male and 44% were female. Of the respondents taking the survey in Pakistan, 69% were male while 31% were female. In contrast, of the respondents taking the survey while studying in the UK, 61% were female while 39% were male. Gender imbalances emerged relating to highest level of school completed by the parents of the respondents. In the UK data, 69% of mothers achieved a high school level of education or above. For fathers, 44% achieved a high school qualification and 17% achieved a degree but a higher proportion than mothers, 12%, achieved a post-graduate qualification. For fathers, the slightly higher proportion of 73% achieved a high school level of education or above. This level of gender equity cannot be seen in the data from Pakistan.

EDUCATION

By far the majority of Pakistani nationals were influenced most by the prestige of the university when choosing where and what to study. 'Course content' then 'cost of the course' were also significant influences for many respondents. However, what was striking was the difference in the significance in the influence of family members being nearby respondents when they were choosing their university course.



For both of the sub-populations in Pakistan, family being close by was a significant influence. Family being close by was also significant for UK nationals (23%). However, for Pakistani nationals studying in the UK neither sub-population felt family being close by was a significant influence. This suggests that the Pakistani students in the survey studying in the UK do not prioritise living close to relatives though many said that they had family members in the UK.

The findings suggest a marked difference between the most significant influence helping respondents decide to study and in helping them choose the course/university. Parents were always the most significant influence for all of the sub-populations when choosing to study followed by the respondent themselves. However, the respondent themselves was always the most significant influence when choosing the course and when choosing the university. This is an important finding when considering the targeting of promotional material by university admissions.

SKILLS AND WORK EXPERIENCE

When choosing which skills respondents felt they had developed proficiency in, the 'ability to apply knowledge' and 'logical thinking' skills were consistently scored within the highly proficient or proficient categories. 'Research skills' and 'critical analysis' were found to be skills in which most respondents felt they had developed some degree of proficiency. Strikingly, 'entrepreneurial and enterprise skills' was selected as the lowest skills in terms of proficiency developed. Recent research in Pakistan suggests that it is a lack of entrepreneurial skills which is preventing the current generation from building businesses (EIU 2014). 'Ability to use numerical data' was the next lowest

scoring category in the development of proficiency.

When asked about which skills respondents felt employers were looking for, 'numeracy' consistently came out as the lowest ranking. Hence, numeracy is not perceived by respondents as an important skill to employers nor is it a skill which respondents felt they were developing. 'Interpersonal skills' and 'self-reliance' were selected as skills which respondents felt that they had developed. In this question, 'time management' was consistently chosen by lower proportions of respondents as 'proficient'. 'Analytical skills' were only seen as fairly important in terms of skills that employers were looking for and 'interpersonal skills' which had scored highly in the respondents' perception of their own proficiency development was also low down on respondents' choice of skills which they felt employers wanted. Conversely, 'communication skills' was seen as the most important set of skills in each sub-population other than SP4 in which it was the second most important. Also perceived as important to employers by respondents was 'knowledge' and then 'teamwork skills'. 'Commercial awareness' was given little importance by respondents in all sub-populations.

Work experience in the survey includes placement, internship and year in industry. The findings here suggest that around half of all of the women in the whole survey had had work experience that was not part of their course. By far the majority of these women were finding the work experience independently and very few were using family contacts or the university systems to find work.

STAYING OR LEAVING AND WELL-BEING

When answering the question ‘what would be the most significant influence in helping you to decide to remain in the UK or come to the UK to study’ the first three sub-populations chose responses related to education while sub-populations 4 and 5 chose responses related to employment. In SP1-3 ‘better education opportunities’ was the most popular reason for remaining/coming to the UK. For SP4 and SP5 ‘more interesting jobs’ was the most popular response. In SP5 ‘to be closer to family’ was the second most popular reason though only 1% less than ‘more interesting jobs’.

Thus education and employment are bigger influences than family for the majority of Pakistani nationals in the data set. However, in the following question ‘who would be the most significant influence in helping you decide to remain in the UK or come to the UK after your studies’, ‘parents’ was the most popular choice followed by teacher or spouse. These findings suggest that family provides support in making decisions but are not the main reason for remaining or staying in the UK. In the final section of the survey respondents were asked to rank parents, religion, work, friends, success, wider family, money, and leisure time in order of importance. What was striking in the responses was that parents ranked consistently highest and religion ranked second highest.



INTRODUCTION

This study was commissioned by the Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (REMU) at British Council Pakistan. The overall aim is to explore employability through the perceptions and experiences of Pakistani and Pakistani heritage students in higher education in Pakistan and the UK.

This study arose from a wider research initiative Perceptions of young Pakistanis in the UK and Pakistan which looks at increasing understanding of students' values, identities and aspirations in the context of employability. The primary concern of the initiative is the role of culture in education and employment for students studying at universities in Pakistan and the UK. In this study, culture is explored by asking students in an online survey about their experiences and perceptions of different subject disciplines, in different locations and at different points in their learning journeys. The study also aims to bring together evidence from a cross-section of stakeholders including academic and administrative staff in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the world and employers in the UK in order to understand the relationship between universities and the working world.

The anticipated audience for this report is British Council partners in the university sector in Pakistan and the UK, international organisations, as well as British Council internal staff in the Strategic Business Units within the organisation. As a scoping study which aims at identifying future directions for the British Council and its partners, the report raises several critical questions about researching employability in the Pakistan/UK context as well as making recommendations about the design of

future research initiatives if perceptions of young Pakistani heritage students are to be fully understood in the context of employability.

The report concludes that a significant challenge facing employability programme and policy decisions is the need for robust research on which to base programmes. Reviews of the impact of higher education on employability discussed below identify a lack of research which can inform best practice within universities and colleges. This study seeks to begin to address this gap in knowledge in the Pakistan/UK HE context. Research suggests that for many countries there is a lack of basic statistical information relating to higher education enrolment as well as data relating to learning and teaching quality and outcomes. This lack of background data from censuses and surveys makes it particularly difficult to understand the fine-grained detail of what is happening in students' and graduates' lives regarding employability. Furthermore, this evidence deficit is not constrained to the developing world but includes countries such as the UK who have under-developed data sets in employability (McCowan 2014). This scoping study aims to identify key research in this area and to link this to the findings from the online survey in order to understand what is happening in students' lives in Pakistan and in the UK as they carry out their studies and make plans for their future careers.

1.1 THE PAKISTAN CONTEXT

A major challenge for Pakistan is creating enough jobs for its growing population. Estimated graduate unemployment for Pakistan is 28% compared with the total country unemployment in 2012 at 6% (Economist Intelligence Unit 2014). These figures highlight a significant disconnect between HE provision and labour market needs in a country where, despite more graduates, employers are struggling to find suitable employees. The major challenge is the work-readiness of graduates.

At independence in 1947, there were only two universities in Pakistan. Today there are 75 public universities and 63 private sector universities (HEC n.d.). By the year 2000, only 2.9% of the 21 million people between the age of 17 and 23 in Pakistan had access to higher education. According to the Higher Education Commission (HEC), enrolment in universities in Pakistan had risen by 16% by 2011/2012 during which time 45% of students were female, though the Academy of Educational Planning and Management in Islamabad puts female participation at 33% and suggests that the HE sector represents only 0.5% of Pakistan's education system (2013). Until recently, only a very small proportion of Pakistan's national budget was spent on education and within this an even smaller amount was allocated to higher education. A change occurred between 1998 and 2010 as the Government allocated a higher percentage of the national budget to education generally, 4% of GDP, with a shift from primary to tertiary though only 15% of this increase was allocated for HE (HEC n.d.). Alongside these shifts in finances some universities, such as the University of Karachi, had by 2012 more

female students enrolled than male (EIU 2014).

Unfortunately, these increases in gender equity and graduate enrolments more generally have not had a corresponding fit with the needs of industry. A long-standing focus on management as a choice of study has not resulted in skilled managers entering the job market just as high levels of graduates in the social sciences does not impact the economy in essential sectors such as financial services, telecommunications, IT, oil, and gas (EIU 2014).

This mismatch between graduate skills and employers' needs is compounded by the difficulties new graduates face when jobs continue to go to those individuals who are known to the employer. It has been estimated that approximately half of businesses recruit employees through informal networks of family and friends (World Bank 2011). However, smaller scale studies of the influence of family on employment opportunities have demonstrated positive outcomes in other areas such as women in education. Rab (2010), for example, found that family support plays an important role in women's career development in higher education even though their professional experiences were framed by patriarchal cultures. What makes universities different to other education providers is that most schooling prior to HE is segregated by sex. Understanding how family life and students' wider social networks influence their decisions about study is central here. Employers in Pakistan argue that education quality is low in universities as the curriculum is outdated and work skills are missing (Economist Intelligence Unit 2014). They identify shortages in specialised skills in growth sectors and, when graduates have these skills, employers suggest



that they are not employable because computer skills, English language skills and 'soft' skills such as problem-solving and communication are lacking (McCowan 2014).

1.2 THE UK CONTEXT

The disconnect between higher education provision and labour market needs is also a significant theme in UK debates about employability. Evidence taken from the British Chamber of Commerce Workforce Survey, Developing the Talents of the Next Generation, demonstrates that the majority of businesses feel that young people leaving the education system are still not adequately prepared for the workplace (BCC 2014). Findings from the survey, which received 2,885 responses from businesses, show that 76% of respondents felt that a lack of work experience was one of the main reasons that young people are unprepared for work. 57% of respondents said that young people lack basic 'soft' skills, including team working and communication, to progress in the world of work.

Despite recent studies such as these, there is still a lack of evidence to support the claim that the mismatch between the skills that graduates have and those that are needed in the job market is the result of a linear causal relationship between the input of university study, the attributes that graduates take into the job market, and their success in obtaining work (BIS 2011). For this reason, employability and its relationship with HE has become a more pressing issue in the past ten years in the UK. One of the reasons for this, the Department for Innovation, Skills and Business claims, is that the global economic context means that graduates are no longer restricted to national borders in their pursuit of employment. The strong

ties between Pakistan and the UK and the transnational context within which many British Pakistani families live mean that employability and migration in the two countries converge in ways that are unprecedented. As a result many students from Pakistan choose the UK as a place to study in addition to the many British students of Pakistani-heritage who take up a university place in the UK. Immigration is central to the Pakistani student experience. Understanding immigration within the context of employability is therefore central to students' decision-making when it comes to choice of university, course and career plans and how these decisions are influenced by concerns about livelihood.

METHODOLOGY

2.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this research project is to explore the perceptions and experiences, related to employability, of Pakistani and Pakistani heritage students in the context of higher education in Pakistan and the UK. An online survey was used to meet this aim. A second research aim is to understand these perceptions and experiences within the wider context of international research on employability and migration. This was achieved by carrying out a review of the literature.

The objectives of the online survey were to:

- Collect quantitative data on a 'big-picture' macro scale to be able to understand the perceptions of young people of Pakistani origin in Pakistan and the UK
- Uncover notions of identity and values for a better understanding of the texture and meaning of their experiences
- Identify and understand the aspirations of young people in both locations, within the context of employability
- Inform policy and stakeholders on the emerging themes of the research.

The secondary objectives of the study were to:

- Collect information about employability activities and research in UK and international institutions relating to providing students with employability skills
- Provide recommendations for the British Council REMU in terms of next steps for understanding students' perceptions

of employability with a view to British Council REMU carrying out a larger survey in collaboration with its university partners as well as setting up research initiatives which are built on qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups discussions.

2.2 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

2.2.1 Phases of the research

The research project was conducted across four phases. Given the breadth of information which currently exists on graduate employability internationally, this research project was initiated by identifying key research and reviewing this literature before moving towards project design and analysis. The first phase of the project was made up of a review of the existing Pakistan, UK, and international literature. This desk-based phase set the context of the pilot study which was then carried out (phase two) before the final research instrument, the online survey (phase three) was run using Survey Monkey online software. Given the much lower response rate than was expected (discussed below), a further literature review was carried out alongside the analysis of the online data (phase four) in order to identify key research themes with the goal of applying these themes to a series of recommendations for follow-up studies. These four phases were then written up as the research report presented here.



2.2.2 Phase One: Desk-based research

Desk-based research about Pakistan, the UK as well as international research was carried out and included in the literature review of employability. The main focus of this was Pakistani heritage students studying in the UK and Pakistani students studying in Pakistan and the UK. The following six key themes were identified for the survey instrument design:

1. Demographics
2. Cultural links
3. Employment
4. Well-being
5. Feeling at home
6. Staying and leaving

The following surveys were reviewed in order to construct a bank of questions for the specific themes identified during the desk-based literature review:

- The British Attitudes survey (<http://www.britsocat.com>)
- Citizenship survey (<http://www.ons.gov.uk>)
- World Values survey (<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>)
- National Student survey (<http://www.thestudentsurvey.com>)
- UNISTATS student survey (<https://unistats.direct.gov.uk>)

2.2.3 Phase Two: Instrument design

After drafting questions based on the six themes identified above the questions were shared with Pakistani student societies at the University of Manchester and Lancaster University in the UK. The questions were adjusted based on the feedback from the students and then forwarded to British Council REMU who carried out a pilot study at Fatimah Jinnah Women University

(FJWU) and shared the questions with colleagues at British Council Pakistan. Based on feedback from these focus group discussions (FGDs) and discussion with REMU the questions were finalised and an online survey on the Survey Monkey website went live on November 26 2014. A link to the survey website and details of the project's aims were sent to British Council university partners and Pakistan societies in Pakistan and the UK including details of prizes (a trip to Pakistan/trip to UK for two winners). The initial aim was to reach 5,000 students in HEIs in both countries before the end of the calendar year. This was extended due to very low levels of response and the survey was finally closed on February 16 2015.

2.2.4 Phases Three and Four: Analysis and additional literature review

When the survey was closed on February 19 2015, 673 respondents had taken part. However, there was a striking decline in numbers as respondents progressed through the survey. The number of responses stabilised around 430 to 440 though this is unevenly distributed throughout different sections of the survey. It can be assumed that this decline in responses was caused by fatigue though it is important to find out from respondents whether this was the case or whether other factors were involved which could be avoided in future studies.

As the unevenness of the responses and the decline in numbers meant that there was significant variation across the sub-populations, an additional literature review was carried out in order to cross-reference findings from the online survey with larger scale studies.

2.3 RESEARCH SEMINARS

Two research seminars were held in the UK at the end of March to discuss the findings of the study. On 30th March the University of Manchester hosted a seminar at the Manchester Museum made up of academics, students, British Council Manchester members of staff, local councillors of Pakistani heritage and staff from the Consulate General of Pakistan in Manchester. A similar seminar was held the following day at the University of Bradford where the audience was made up largely of students, academics and university administrative staff including the international office.

The programme for both days involved a 30-minute presentation of the main findings from the study by Tony Capstick followed by a one-hour discussion with the audience. The main aim of the discussion was to give audience members the opportunity to respond to the themes covered in the presentation. However, as this stage of the research was focused on providing recommendations for follow-up research initiatives and next steps for the British Council and its partners, the discussions were open-ended and provided the opportunity for audience members to raise issues beyond those directly related to employability and the student experience. The main themes which emerged from these discussions are summarized in the text boxes at the end of each section of the findings.

2.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE ONLINE SURVEY

Possible reasons for the low response rate from students:

- On 16 December 2014 Pakistan experienced one of its most shocking terrorist attacks on school children and their teachers in the north western city

of Peshawar. This shock was felt across the whole country and many schools and universities closed as a security measure and out of respect for those who died.

- Distributing the survey through student societies rather than formal university mechanisms may have meant that the survey did not reach the required number of respondents. Also, this lack of formal endorsement by the university may have been a factor in the lack of motivation to complete the survey from those respondents who skipped questions
- December and January is a busy time for students due to examinations, assignment deadlines and holidays
- Two prizes may not be attractive enough to motivate 5,000 students to respond
- Too many survey questions for young people to commit to answering

Recommendations for design and delivery of future online surveys:

- The survey should be distributed using formal university mechanisms and procedures such as admissions and student registry to target specific students and to enhance the credibility of the survey and the research project. Students could be contacted individually and invited to take part in the survey
- Run the survey during term time having identified when the target groups are able to commit to completing it thoroughly. This may be different times of the year in Pakistan and the UK. A note at the beginning of the survey explaining that students can complete the survey in stages may also be worthwhile
- Readjustment of the survey questions based on FGD's feedback must be carefully considered as any changes to



the wording will result in loss of ability to cross-reference to other surveys on which the original wording was based

- Incentives to complete the survey must be commensurate with the time required by respondents to complete the survey thoroughly
- Divide the skills questions into hard skills and soft skills based on research from current studies related to employability and cross-reference these with the survey findings

3. RESEARCHING IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND PAKISTAN

3.1 UNIVERSITIES AND PREVENT

The study was carried out at a time when Pakistan continues to face many threats to its security and stability. In addition, Pakistani-heritage students in the UK face increased levels of surveillance due to the perceived threat of anti-Western attacks carried out by young Muslim men and women. University campuses are not exempt from this close scrutiny of Pakistani Muslim students.

The UK government's Prevent strategy takes the view that universities and colleges have a role to play in reducing the risk of terrorism. The government's hope is that HEIs work in partnership with other institutions, such as the police, to support those students who they see as vulnerable to being 'radicalised'. However, Prevent has not been fully endorsed by universities or students. For example, the National Union of Students finds the language of Prevent problematic and in conflict with the promotion of free speech within universities. Moreover, Professor Ted Cante, executive chair of the Institute of Community Cohesion, has warned that the government's Prevent policy risked stigmatising Muslims. Such views must be taken into account when considering Pakistani students' perceptions of university life as well as when accounting for the role universities are encouraged to take in the work of Prevent.¹

¹ • Keeping Britain Safe: An assessment of UK Homeland Security Strategy (April 2011)

• NUS Briefing: The Prevent Strategy and Students' Unions (August 2011)

• The Guardian (Monday 29 August 2011)

3.2 DEFINING THE TERMS OF THE PROJECT

Cross-cultural

The study is cross-cultural as it sought to understand perceptions of Pakistani students studying in their home country and link what they said about their studies to wider influences in their lives such as family, friends and livelihoods. The study was also cross-cultural in the sense that the same questions were asked to students who grew up in Pakistan but have chosen to study in the UK. Their perceptions are influenced by growing up in Pakistan, a different cultural context to that of the country of their studies. For these students there will also be continuities in their cultural experiences as they sustain ties with their families at home and possibly develop ties with relatives in the UK while at the same time building new ties with the people around them on their courses. Further to this, the study was cross-cultural as the questions described above were asked to students of Pakistani heritage in the UK. These students' perceptions provide a further lens through which to see the influence of family and friends, and culture, in the context of employability.

Due to the limitations of the study discussed in the previous section, no attempt is made to draw conclusions about cultural differences across these heterogeneous groups as they are by no means representative of wider identity categories. Instead, the survey data is analysed by looking at what the specific groups of students who responded to the



survey said about their student experience and how these experiences fit into their lives and shape their perceptions. To aid interpretation of the data in this way, the overall respondent population has been divided into six sub-populations. These are:

1. Pakistan nationals studying for a first degree at a Pakistan university
2. Pakistan nationals studying for a post-graduate degree at a Pakistan university
3. Pakistan nationals studying for a first degree at a UK university
4. Pakistan nationals studying for a post-graduate degree at a UK university
5. UK nationals of Pakistan origin studying for a first degree at a UK university
6. UK nationals of Pakistan origin studying for a post-graduate degree at a UK university.

Although the responses by all of the sub-populations listed above vary in number, the sixth sub-population had a maximum of only 9 respondents, far fewer than the other five sub-populations, and was therefore not included in the analysis.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 DESK-BASED RESEARCH

This section of the report explores all of the relevant literature which was reviewed in the different phases of the project.

4.1.1 What is employability?

The definition of employability in this study focuses on the relationship between higher education and employment. Knight and Yorke (2002; 2004) relate employability to understanding, beliefs and personal skills. However, explaining the relationship between employability and higher education involves more than identifying transferable skills as it encompasses the value and relevance of teaching and learning alongside the engagement of students with activities on and off campus.

Pool and Sewell (2007) suggest that there is more to employability than gaining employment, hence the absence of first destination statistics for graduates in this study as statistics do not take into account the fact that some graduates may take lower level jobs in order to deal with financial pressures. Employability must capture notions of longer term, relevant employment. Hillage and Pollard (1998: 2) suggest that in simple terms employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work.

For the purposes of this research project which has as its primary focus students' perceptions, Stephenson's (1998) definition is useful as it foregrounds students' agency in understanding how they:

1. Take effective and appropriate action

2. Explain what they are seeking to achieve
3. Live and work effectively with others
4. Continue to learn from their experiences both as individuals and in association with others in a diverse and changing society.

These four principles are foundational to the approach to employability taken in this study.

4.2 STAKEHOLDERS

4.2.1 Higher Education Institutions

When looking at research which seeks to bridge the divide between research from inside universities and research from the working world a study carried out for the UK's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is particularly successful at integrating UK and international experience. The report draws on research conducted with 414 career advisory staff in institutions in 25 countries to identify examples of best practice from HEIs around the world. The findings from the research show that UK practice is advanced in several areas including extra-curricular activities which lead to certification and work placements in specific subject areas as well as addressing the tendency in the UK to provide more centralized support (for example through Higher Education Funding Council for England) than other countries. The study identifies a set of recommendations highlighting areas for improvement in the UK. These recommendations will be explored alongside the analysis of the online survey in Section 5. The aim will be to prioritise those recommendations and action points from the BIS study of most



relevance to the stakeholders described in section 4.

Further to the BIS research, in 2013 the British Council commissioned a three-year research and advocacy study to enhance the development of higher education provision in four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The research project took a comparative approach by exploring higher education and employability in the four African contexts as well as the UK. This was collaboration between the UK's Institute of Education and HEIs in Africa. The aim of the collaboration was to deliver "a strong knowledge base to support universities in enhancing the quality of their provision, particularly in relation to graduate employability" (2014: 9). The project team aimed to achieve this by analysing trends at the policy level alongside trends in access and employment nationally. This macro-level analysis also took into account in-depth case studies of diverse higher education institutions at the micro-level. These institutions included academic and technical colleges and universities as well as private and public institutions. Of note was the approach that was taken to integrate UK HE into the project. To this end the study sought to embed established initiatives related to employability in the UK. Moreover, the project evaluated evidence related to the effectiveness of these interventions and identified potential partnerships between UK and African institutions.

Recommendation: Future British Council Pakistan research projects may want to expand their research aims along the lines of the Sub-Saharan Africa project by exploring perceptions of employers, policy makers and academic staff through university collaborations. Administrative staff in HE institutions may be included as they often have in-depth knowledge of

the student experience as well access to relevant data. In taking this approach, British Council Pakistan can then hope to extend the current scoping project to engage potential stakeholders, such as employers, to develop university partnerships which together initiate institutional development to enhance the employability of graduates.

Recommendation: A research agenda which prioritises evidence related to the kinds of responses that universities make to employability challenges for students from specific backgrounds (e.g. international students from Pakistan) could be drafted with the input of university staff and employers working together. Employers have shared responsibility for the preparation of graduates for the working world and can be called upon to provide their insights by working with university staff. For example, research in eight universities in the UK has found a positive effect on employment outcomes of work placements and employer engagement in course design and delivery. This form of research could be explored in future studies in different university and employment settings in order to develop understanding of the relationship between student learning, the university classroom and on-the-job experience.

4.2.2 Employability skills

University graduates are likely to have higher career expectations on completion of their studies than their peers who did not enter higher education. Many will feel that their degrees should be a route to opening up employment opportunities particularly when they compare their qualifications to their peers who did not access university. Employers, on the other hand, may feel differently as employing graduates can require on-the-job training before they are proficient in a range of job-related skills. Hence it is important to look at what graduates have to offer and

what they can realistically be expected to contribute in their first jobs given their limited experiential training (Pauw, Oosthuizen and Van Der Westhuizen 2008: 56).

Regardless of how students perceive their skills development, the reality for many graduates is that they come equipped with theoretical knowledge which is not always supported by relevant practical work experience.

Recommendation: Future studies would need to establish the different types of skills which are most attractive to specific employers in specific sectors. Research questions could be formulated with specific reference to employment sectors such as engineering or finance rather than generic skills. For example, which skills are essential to enhance the employability of engineering graduates? Which skills are essential to enhance the employability of finance graduates?

Recommendation: The research design, approach and method of the future studies described above need to draw on qualitative research methods to collect data using interviews with open ended questions to provide fine-grained accounts of different working worlds.

Identifying hard and soft skills

When working with British Council university partners to write the research questions of future studies, evidence from the British Chamber of Commerce (2014) can be drawn on. In the section of the BCC study 'Teaching Employability' respondents in the BIS study's online survey were asked to comment on the provision of a diverse set of employability teaching themes and topics. They were then asked to explain how these themes and topics were provided by the university

and to whom they were provided. The findings of the study showed consensus from the respondents about the type of activities that were provided to develop university students' employability. The types of activities mentioned were aimed at developing what the study refers to as both 'hard' and 'soft' skills.

In the BIS report hard skills are described as job searching techniques; providing help with job searches; CV writing; contacts with employers; help with finding and securing work placements or internships; careers events and fairs; computer skills; research skills; time management; literacy; and provision of temporary and vacation work. The BIS study then described the following as soft skills: career identification and planning; interview practice; understanding of career and how it works; communication skills' decision-making skills; presentation skills; and team working skills.

The authors of the study argued that the separation of hard and soft skills as described above was an arbitrary process but they defend this separation in relation to the employability literature where employers are consistently shown to look for both types of skills in graduate employees. The authors suggest that:

One way of separating hard and soft skills is to consider that hard skills are those primarily requiring mastery and practice of a body of knowledge, whereas soft skills require development of largely inter- (and intra-) personal skills. It is recognised that in practice skill areas overlap and the balance of skills required is highly context-dependent both within subject disciplines and occupations aimed for. (2011: 63)

In coming to this conclusion, the BIS team drew on literature taken from the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination team (ESECT). ESECT work



suggests that the teaching of employability skills should be the same as for other HE subject disciplines. For ESCT employability teaching should include themes such as ensuring student-centred learning and autonomous learning as well as providing constructive feedback.

Recommendation: Narrow down questions to ask respondents in future studies by focusing on how important hard and soft skills are in identifying employment and in keeping employment. For example, the soft skills of career identification & planning, communication skills and contact with employers in the BCC study were seen as important skills for seeking and keeping employment. Development of skills in these areas could be explored through qualitative interviews with Pakistani and Pakistani heritage students.

student exchanges and internships, students' experiential learning focuses on global citizenship and cross-cultural understanding.

Recommendation: Future studies should explore the 'Innovative practice' case study sections of the Going Global (2014) and BIS (2011) reports and identify areas of common interest across the SBUs. For example, British Council's Society work in Active Citizens and its emphasis on women and girls' empowerment share the same focus on ethical integrity and cross-cultural understanding as initiatives such as the Macquarie University Global Leadership programme.

4.2.3 Internal stakeholders: British Council Strategic Business Units

Addressing the graduate unemployment problem should not be something that is restricted to British Council's Higher Education work alone. Meeting the challenge should involve coordinated efforts between the diverse work of each of the British Council's Strategic Business Units, as enhanced employability brings benefits to wider society by improving individual life chances as well as strengthening citizenship and democracy. Graduates must be well prepared for obtaining work, but also for making a positive contribution to their workplace and to society as a whole.

BIS (2011) reports on the Macquarie University Global Leadership programme in Australia, which was established to help students prepare for the global workplace. By giving students the opportunity to earn credits through international volunteering,

THE ONLINE SURVEY

5.1 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The analysis combines a statistical account of how students responded to the survey questions with interpretation which draws on the review of literature to explain more complex relationships within the data. The questions used to examine the data were:

- How does one set of respondents answer the survey?
- How do perceptions across a series of topics vary across respondents?
- Is there a relationship between different sub-populations and do these relationships still exist when additional filters are added?

5.2 SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey went live on 24 November 2014 on was closed on 16 February 2015 which is a total of 12 weeks.

The total number of respondents for the online survey was 673. Almost half (312) of responses had been made by the end of the third week of the survey going live (22 December 2014). There was a further spike in responses in the first week of the new year followed by low level engagement with the survey until the second week of February when there was a final rise by 63 responses just before the survey closed on 16 February 2015.

5.2.1 Demographics Part 1: Age, gender, national identity and class

Age

There was a fairly even distribution of ages from 17 years old to the over 25 age group. Significantly, the largest number of responses came from the over 25

category. This is significant because this category was not in the original target audience for the study and suggests older respondents were either more likely to complete the survey or that there is a higher number of students aged 25 and over in the six sub-populations.

It is worth noting that by this question (Q4) 40 respondents had already started to skip answering questions which is high for such an early stage in a survey.

What is your age?

AGE GROUPS	PERCENTAGE RESPONSE	RESPONSE COUNT
17	1.1%	7
18	5.7%	36
19	11.8%	75
20	13.7%	87
21	14.7%	93
22	10.9%	69
23	10.3%	65
24	7.9%	50
25	4.4%	28
25+	19.4%	123
Respondents who answered question about age: 633		
Respondents who skipped question about age: 40		

Gender

56% of respondents were male and 44% were female. Of the respondents taking the survey in Pakistan, 69% were male while 31% were female. In contrast, of the respondents taking the survey while studying in the UK, 61% were female while 39% were male.

Looking at the sub-populations in the overall student population shows that the highest proportion of male respondents were studying at undergraduate and postgraduate level in Pakistan. The balance shifts when looking at responses from



the UK where, of the Pakistani nationals studying for a first degree, 60% were male and 40% were female. The difference narrows again in sub-population 4 where 53% of Pakistani nationals studying for a post-graduate degree at a UK university were male and 47% were female. However, the gender balance is reversed among UK nationals of Pakistani heritage as 72% of respondents in this sub-population were female and only 28% were male.

National identity

Respondents were asked ‘How would you describe your nationality?’ and were given three categories to choose from: Pakistani; British Pakistani and British. 72% of respondents described themselves as Pakistani; 22% described themselves as British Pakistani; and 6% described themselves as British.

Class

Respondents were asked ‘People sometimes describe themselves as belonging to a class. Which category would you describe yourself as belonging to?’

CLASS CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE RESPONSE
Upper class	3%
Upper middle class	15%
Middle class	48%
Lower middle class	14%
Working class	9%
Don't know/prefer not to say	10%

Unsurprisingly a high number of respondents who chose the ‘upper class’ category also said that they had a sibling who had studied or worked abroad. Strikingly, the highest number of respondents with scholarships (38 respondents) described themselves as ‘middle class’ or ‘upper middle class’ while only 2 respondents with scholarships described themselves as ‘working class’.

Issues of gender, identity, class, and culture in the context of Pakistan and the UK have been explored in a collection of studies edited by Bolognani and Lyon (2011) whose work focuses on Pakistani identity inside and outside the nation state and

Comments from the Manchester seminar

National identity:

- *British Pakistani students in the UK are more similar to British students than they are similar to Pakistani students in Pakistan*
- *It is possible to understand Pakistani identity without looking at it through a religious frame*
- *The Pakistani diaspora in the UK is not a homogenous group. There are significant internal differences which are often ignored. It is dangerous to talk about a diverse set of people as a whole*
- *Looking at ‘cultural consumption’ practices (for example dress and TV) is a good way to understand changing identity*
- *Visiting intimate spaces and seeing how identity and values differ in public and private life captures changes in communities.*

Socio-economic class and identity:

- *This study does not capture the lower and lower middle classes. They would not normally go to university or they would go to different universities*
- *Lots of Pakistanis will study at UK colleges/vocational schools not university*
- *Socio-economic class influences every aspect of life*
- *Class means something very different in Pakistan particularly regarding access to education*

Comments from the Bradford seminar

National identity:

- *The Pakistani diaspora is not a replication of Pakistan*
- *It is important not to ignore the complexities of internal conflicts between different groups*
- *Individuals have different ‘measures’ and different definitions of what ‘conservative’ means*

Socio-economic class and identity:

- *Does trying to identify a student’s class create uneven ‘starting points’ when exploring what happens at university and in an individual’s career?*

can therefore be of help when examining the experiences and perceptions of international and transnational students. The editors of the collection argue that Pakistan can no longer be studied as a national territorial identity but instead sites in which to explore the construction of identity should be sought as a means of capturing multiple spaces of production.

Recommendation: British Council Pakistan has the organizational reach to provide access to these multiple spaces by bringing together both public and private sector organizations as well as supporting global dialogue 'inside and outside the national state'.

5.2.2 Demographics Part 2: Family

Gender imbalances can also be seen in the responses related to highest level of school completed by the parents of the respondents in the survey. However, if the data is approached from the UK perspective to begin with, there is a comparable gender balance in the numbers of respondents' parents who achieved a high school qualification. 47% of mothers' highest qualification was high

school while a further 19% achieved a degree and 3% achieved a post-graduate qualification. This means that 69% of mothers achieved a high school level of education or above. For fathers, 44% achieved a high school qualification and 17% achieved a degree but a higher proportion than mothers, 12%, achieved a post-graduate qualification. For fathers, the slightly higher proportion of 73% achieved a high school level of education or above (4% higher than mothers).

This level of gender equity cannot be seen in the data from Pakistan. The closest gap between the mothers and fathers of respondents achieving a high school level education or above is in sub population 4: 82% for mothers and 91% for fathers, though this includes 26% of mothers gaining a post-graduate qualification. This number rises to 31% (the highest for mothers across all the sub-populations) in the category of Pakistani nationals studying for a first degree at a UK university. Strikingly, this is more mothers than fathers achieving a post-graduate qualification among this sub-population with 29% of fathers gaining a qualification at this level. However, when high school,

		DIDN'T ATTEND OR COMPLETE SCHOOL	COMPLETED PRIMARY SCHOOL	ACHIEVED HIGH SCHOOL QUALIFICATION	ACHIEVED A DEGREE	ACHIEVED A POST-GRADUATE QUALIFICATION	DON'T KNOW / PREFER NOT TO SAY
SP1	Mother	20	23	35	15	4	3
	Father	9	11	33	32	13	1
SP2	Mother	28	23	26	12	4	6
	Father	8	9	32	25	25	1
SP3	Mother	17	14	5	29	31	5
	Father	0	10	24	32	29	5
SP4	Mother	6	12	18	38	26	0
	Father	3	6	6	32	53	0
SP5	Mother	11	15	47	19	3	5
	Father	9	10	44	17	12	8



degree and post-graduate qualifications are combined, 85% of fathers compared to 65% of mothers achieved a high school qualification or above.

The proportions shift towards the majority of mothers and fathers gaining lower level qualifications for sub-populations 2 and 1. For the former, the majority of mothers did not attend or complete school (28%) while a significant number achieved a high school qualification (26%) and 23% completed primary school. For fathers among the same sub-population of Pakistani nationals studying for a post-graduate degree at a Pakistani university, 31% achieved a high school qualification but significantly more fathers achieved a degree (25%) and a post-graduate qualification (also 25%). Similar figures were seen in sub-population 1.

Understanding chain migration in Pakistan and the UK: language, education and gender (excerpt from Capstick 2014)

This section looks briefly at the chain migration that has developed between Mirpur and the industrial cities in the UK over the past 50 years. After the Second World War, there was very high demand for labour in the foundries of the West Midlands and the textile mills of the Pennine region (Ballard 2003). To meet the labour shortages which the country was facing and to encourage immigration from the Commonwealth, the UK government passed the 1948 British Nationality Act, which essentially established an open borders policy between the UK and Commonwealth countries (Raco 2007). From the 1960's onwards the pioneer male labour migrants began to call over the female members of their family to join them in the UK, and so the second, family-reunion, phase of chain migration began to take over from the initial male-labour

phase. This second phase, family reunion, represented:

...a shift in orientation towards Britain as a place of temporary residence, where they would work and earn money for their families back home, to one in which they are sufficiently rooted to settle.
(Harriss and Shaw 2008: 119)

Unlike their husbands, the first-generation Pakistani female migrants to the UK rarely worked outside the home. The reasons for this low level of economic activity among first-generation female Pakistani migrants included lack of qualifications and fluency in English, as well as cultural norms which expected women to take responsibility for domestic life whilst men provided financially for the family (Dale et al. 2002). Cooke and Simpson (2008) argue that these domestic responsibilities and cultural demands and traditions also often meant women's English language learning happened in a piecemeal way over much longer periods of time, in contrast to men who worked outside the home. This replication of cultural norms occurred as families from Mirpur who settled in the UK tended to live in close proximity to each other, forming 'ethnic colonies, within which all the most significant social, cultural and religious institutions of their homeland began to reappear' (Ballard 2008: 41). Ballard describes how these close-knit communities enabled migrants to offer support to each other through 'networks of mutual reciprocity' (Ballard 2008: 45), which were initially based on 'ideologies of kinship' (ibid.) amongst early settlers and then became rooted in actual kinship as chain migration led to growing communities of Mirpuris in UK inner cities in North West England and the Midlands. These communities were based on ideologies which place importance on extended family ties in the form of 'links

of mutuality which bind parents, patrilineal offspring and offspring's offspring into all-consuming corporate networks' (ibid.: 50) and were in contrast to the assumptions of the indigenous population that migrants would quickly give up their social and cultural differences in favour of assimilation into surrounding communities (Ballard 2008).

This family-reunion phase of chain migration was effectively brought to an end with the 1971 Immigration Act which placed restrictions on family reunification (Demireva 2011). As a result of these immigration controls, the second phase in the chain migration transitioned to a third phase, known as marriage migration, in which spouses and dependent children became some of the few remaining groups eligible for entry to the UK. This tightening of immigration controls, it has been argued, 'strikes at the very roots of British Pakistanis' deepest loyalties: to close kinsmen, dependents and in relation to unquestionable family obligations' (Werbner 2008: 6).

It is against this background chain migration entered its third and current phase, marriage migration. The largest component of migration from Pakistan during the third phase has been young second- or third-generation British Pakistanis who marry 'back home', that is in Mirpur, and who, on their return to Britain, bring brides or bridegrooms, particularly cousins, with them (Shaw 2000). It is not uncommon for young British Pakistanis to marry into Mirpuri families, particularly if their parents have rural origins and have not excelled in the British school system (Harriss and Shaw 2008). In a previous study, Shaw argues that for these young British men and women, transnational marriage allows for a diversification of assets through the consolidation of links

to property in Pakistan as well as the UK (Shaw 2000). In his study of migration and the local economy in Mirpur, Ballard (2008) argues that it is migrants' remittances that have had the greatest impact on Mirpuri society, given the many millions of pounds that have been remitted to the area over the last 60 years. This has, however, not led to significant economic development of what is a predominantly agricultural area. Rather, Ballard argues, after the boom in building prestigious houses in Mirpur by migrants in the UK in the 1970s, there was little interest in investing in agriculture due to the lack of status associated with the sector, low prices and little development of infrastructure by the state. The result is that Mirpur is now heavily dependent on those remittances. Given the significance of this in the household finances of Mirpuris, the status of transnational marriages means that they touch most Mirpuris' lives in some way.

Comments from Manchester seminar:

- *It is unclear who would be included in the category of 'other' when thinking about who influences students' choice to study when family/friend/teacher are accounted for. Who could the 'other' influencers be in choice of university/course?*
- *There was a general feeling that this would not be religious leaders/teachers/imams though some respondents who had lived in both Pakistan and the UK felt that religious leaders did have more influence in the UK than in Pakistan.*

Comments from Bradford seminar:

- *It is important to identify what support networks students develop and how individuals draw on these networks*
 - *Whether friends or family have studied similar courses or at the same university can influence the wider network. Conversely, if family and friends have not studied can also have impact*
-



Recommendation: Future studies should take into account the fact that in Pakistan university students come from a much narrower social class background which will impact on responses. For example, differences that emerge between Pakistan and the UK maybe due to social class background rather than the fact that they live in one country or another.

5.2.3 Demographics Part 3: Education

Students from the following universities responded to the online survey.

Pakistan

The three universities at which most of the respondents in the survey study are Fatimah Jinnah Women University (FJWU), COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, and Gujrat University (GU) which are all comparatively new universities. FJWU is a single-sex university based in Rawalpindi, Islamabad's twin city, and includes approximately 1000 women who board out of a total student population of 5500. This means that its student population is drawn from across Pakistan. 13% (40 students) of the respondents in Pakistan said they studied here.

COMSATS has its main campus in Islamabad but also has several satellite campuses. Its mission is to have gained a place in the world's top 500 universities by 2020. 10% of the respondents in Pakistan said they studied here.

Gujrat University is also not far from the capital Islamabad but does not have the national reach of the other two universities though the majority of respondents who selected a university, 27%, studied here.

What is most striking in this section is that of all the respondents in Pakistan, 45%, selected the 'other' university category

thus we cannot say where nearly half of the respondents in Pakistan were studying.

It is important to note that these three universities cannot be said to be representative of HEIs across the country when interpreting the findings from the survey.

United Kingdom

Responses from the UK come from slightly more HEIs than the Pakistan responses. Six universities provide the majority of responses. The University of Bradford dominates the data set (38% of UK responses) with the University of Glasgow second (21% of UK responses). Other universities include Kings College London and the University of Leicester. It would be problematic to assume that these universities were representative of UK HE.

Figures provided by the HESA for 2012/2013 show that of the University of Bradford's 10,980 students 3,330 were 'Asian or Asian British – Pakistani'. At the University of Glasgow, of a total of 21,140 students, 260 could be classified in this way. These figures describe domiciled students and therefore do not include international students.

Comments from Bradford seminar:

- *It is important to remember that surveys which ask students about employability are based on students assumptions about what they think their university experience may lead to and what their employment options may be*
 - *University staff and lecturers should receive training in how to work in inter-cultural classrooms*
-

5.2.4 Education and employment

Subjects studied by respondents in the survey

Looking at the subjects studied by respondents, a difference between UK nationals of Pakistani-heritage respondents (sub-population 5) and the other sub-populations of Pakistani students emerges. In SP5, the highest proportion of respondents studied physical and biological sciences (18%), followed by social sciences (12%) and then medicine and dentistry (9%). In the other sub-populations business, finance, management and engineering were the most popular subjects.

Influences when choosing a university and course in the survey

By far the majority of Pakistani nationals were influenced most by the prestige of the university when choosing where and what to study. Over a quarter of SP1, one fifth of SB2, over half of SP3, almost three quarters of SP4, and one quarter of SP5 selected the university's ranking as the most significant influence. 'Course content' then 'cost of the course'

were also significant influences for many respondents.

However, what was striking was the difference in the significance in the influence of family members being nearby respondents when they were choosing their university course.

For both of the sub-populations in Pakistan, family being close by was a significant influence (20% for undergraduates and 14% for postgraduates). Family being close by was also significant for UK nationals (23%). However, for Pakistani nationals studying in the UK (undergraduate and postgraduate), neither sub-population felt family being close by was a significant influence. In fact, 0% of both sub-populations 3 and 4 felt this way. This suggests that the Pakistani students in the survey studying in the UK do not prioritise living close to relations even though many said that they had family members in the UK.

Responses to the subsequent question about who was the most significant influence in helping respondents decide to study/the course/the university suggest a striking difference between choosing to

What was the most significant influence when choosing your university and course?

	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5
Course content	23%	20%	32%	21%	34%
University ranking/prestige	26%	20%	58%	68%	25%
Faculty members	1%	9%	3%	6%	0%
Cost of degree	15%	22%	5%	0%	6%
Family members nearby	20%	14%	0%	0%	23%
Family member studied same subject	4%	1%	3%	3%	2%
Wish to settle in country	4%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Other	7%	6%	0%	3%	10%



study and choosing the course/university. Parents were always the most significant influence for all of the sub-populations when choosing to study followed by the respondent themselves being the second most important 'influence'. However, the respondent themselves was always the most significant influence when choosing the course and when choosing the university. This suggests that universities need to make the students themselves the focus of marketing and promotion rather than the parents even though currently there is an increasing shift towards trying to pitch promotional material at students' parents (as they are often assumed to be picking up the increased cost in fees).

Recommendation: Future studies would need to look in depth, through interviews, at the decision-making process of selecting course and institutions in specific families of Pakistani heritage to establish if students were ultimately choosing for themselves. The following data can be drawn on in the design of research questions about courses:

Unistats

The Unistats website draws on official data on higher education courses. It enables the comparison of data and information on university and college courses from across the UK. The site is made up of comparable information on areas that students themselves have identified as important in making decisions about what and where to study.

The site draws on the following official data on higher education courses:

- National Student Survey
- Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey
- How the course is taught and study patterns
- How the course is assessed

- Course accreditation
- Course costs

The data come from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the Skills Funding Agency, universities and colleges and Ipsos MORI (National Student Survey). In addition to finding out about the kind of jobs students went on to find, Unistats can be used to find out what previous students thought about their course.

The National Student Survey

For students who are primarily in their final year, the annual National Student survey gives university and college students the chance to comment on what they liked and what they did not like about their student learning experience during their time in HE.

Comments from Bradford seminar:

- *It is important to remember that surveys which ask students about employability are based on students assumptions about what they think their university experience may lead to and what their employment options may be*
 - *University staff and lecturers should receive training in how to work in inter-cultural classrooms*
-

5.2.5 Skills

The following charts show the responses of the five sub-populations to the question 'which of the following skills do you think employers are looking for when recruiting for the kinds of jobs you want? (Please choose up to five)'.

When choosing which skills respondents felt they had developed proficiency in the 'ability to apply knowledge' and 'logical thinking' skills was consistently scored within the highly proficient or proficient categories across the sub-populations. 'Research skills' and 'critical analysis' were found to be skills in which most respondents felt they had developed some degree of proficiency. What is significant

for a research project aimed at exploring employability is that in all five of the sub-populations, 'entrepreneurial and enterprise skills' was selected as the lowest skill in terms of proficiency developed. In this skill, the category of 'not proficient' was selected by 19% of SP1 and SP2, 29% of SP3; 37% of SP4 and 34% of SP5. Recent research in Pakistan suggests that it is a lack of entrepreneurial skills which is preventing the current generation from building businesses (EIU 2014).

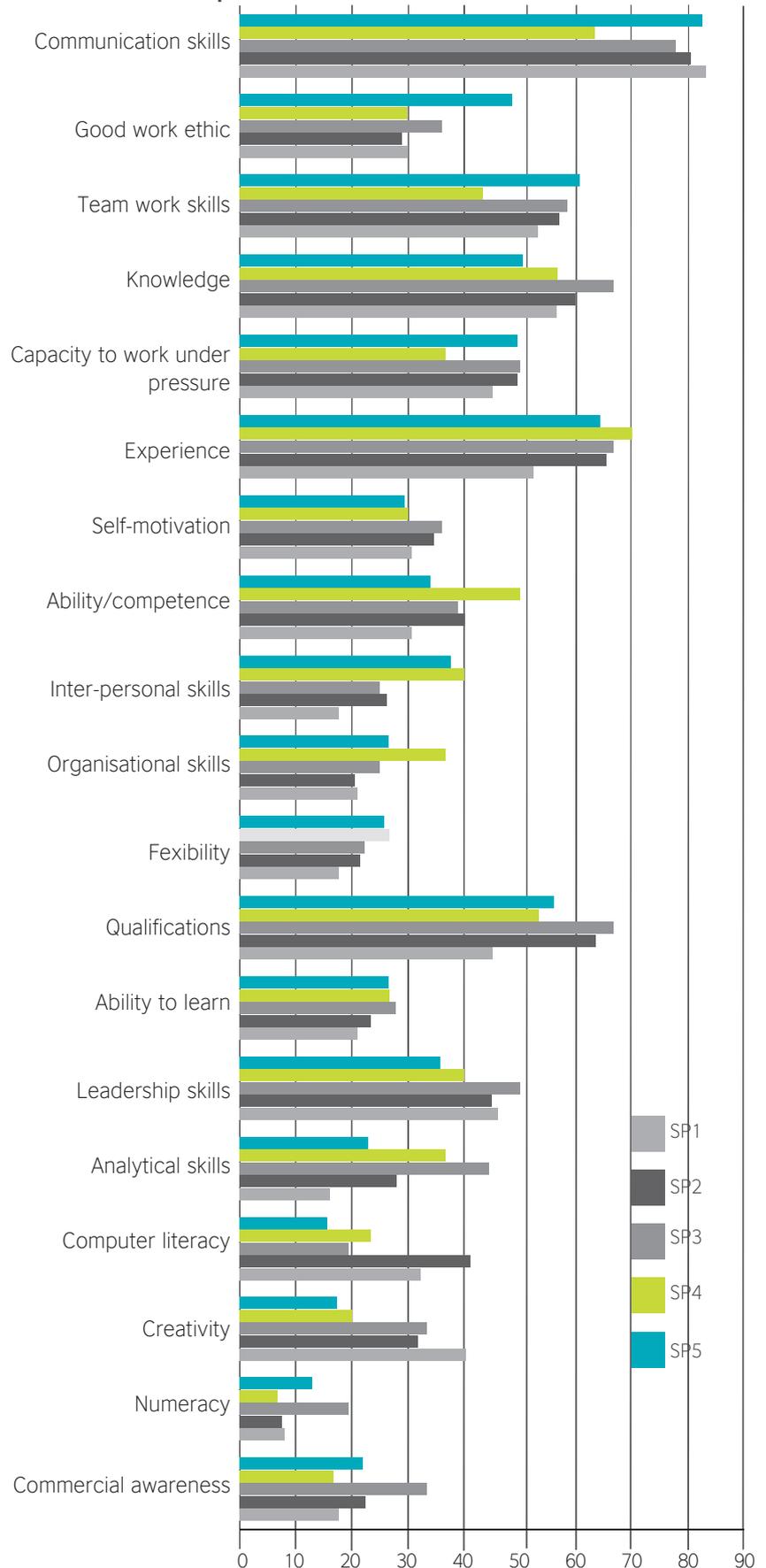
'Ability to use numerical data' was the next lowest scoring category in the development of proficiency by the respondents in all of the sub-populations. In looking across the data to the question about which skills respondents felt employers were looking for, 'numeracy' came out as one of those skills lowest in the ranking in all of the sub-populations. Hence, numeracy is not perceived by respondents as an important skill to employers nor is it a skill which respondents felt they were developing.

In the subsequent question, 'interpersonal skills' and 'self-reliance' were selected as skills which respondents from all five sub-populations felt that they had developed (combined) high/proficiency in. However, many in SP1 (91%), SP2 (92%), SP3 (97%), SP4 (96%) and SP5 (98%) felt that they had developed (combined) high/proficiency in 'independence'. In this question, 'time management' was consistently chosen by lower proportions of respondents as 'proficient'.

Several trends emerge when comparing the findings above with the findings on similar skills in the question about which skills respondents felt employers were looking for.

Firstly, 'analytical skills' were only seen as fairly important in terms of skills that employers were looking for by all of

Figure 1 Which of the following skills do you think employers are looking for when recruiting for the kind of jobs you want? (Please choose up to 5).





the sub-populations and ‘interpersonal skills’ which had scored highly in the respondents’ perception of their own proficiency development was also low down on respondents’ choice of skills which they felt employers wanted.

Conversely, ‘communication skills’ was seen as the most important set of skills in each sub-population other than SP4 in which it was the second most important. Also perceived as important to employers by respondents was ‘knowledge’ and then ‘teamwork skills’. ‘Commercial awareness’ was given little importance by respondents in all sub-populations though 33% of SP3 felt that employers were looking for this skill.

In the British Chamber of Commerce study (2014), more than half of businesses (57%) said a lack of soft skills, such as communication and team working, were reasons why young people were not ‘work ready’. This suggests that the students in the survey recognise the importance of the skills which employers feel are lacking. In the Going Global review of employability, McCowan makes the link between these skills, teaching and learning on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and employability: ‘There is little point in providing tailored initiatives if the basic building blocks are not in place. Analytical, problem solving and written communication skills, for example, depend on high quality teaching and learning provision’ (2014: 10)

Similarly, the BIS (2011) research with university staff found that career identification and planning and communication skills attracted the greatest number of ‘very important’ ratings.

IT skills and research skills attracted fewer ratings of ‘very important’ though these were skills that survey respondents said they were developing proficiency in.

Recommendation: These findings would be worth exploring in both the UK and Pakistan contexts as research and IT skills could be said to be academic in nature, whilst the other two skill areas could be said to be learned interpersonally.

Recommendation: A future study drawing on qualitative methods would need to explore respondents’ individual understanding of what aspect of each skill they were developing. For example: which communication skills (written/spoken) and which research skills (reading academic texts/critically evaluating journal articles) are students developing?

Recommendation: In order to bridge the divide between student/employer/academic, future studies need to draw on innovation in universities with particularly high enrolment from the target population (students from Pakistan and students of Pakistani-heritage in the UK) to identify which of the above skills Pakistani students are developing proficiency in. For example, the following case study gives an overview of a new initiative at London South Bank University which has high enrolment rates for students of Pakistani origin in the UK. These students and their teachers could be approached to take part in interviews and FGDs to find out about their specific skills development.

PG Certificate in Lifelong learning:

- Block delivery (intensive non-traditional over one term)
- 30 hours in three weeks rather than the traditional 10-week course across a whole term
- Focus: Skill building sessions not lectures as they are seen Continuing Professional Development
- Six hours of face-to-face skills transfer which covers project management

- Four hours of workshops which are linked to how to utilise skills in case studies
- Project management is learner directed not teacher directed. The direction for skill-building is elicited from the students in the first lecture then teaching is directed towards these skills while the teacher adds relevant content
- After three weeks students carry out an internship where they put their new skills into practice e.g. business project management or science

5.2.6 Work experience

Work experience, internships and volunteering

Work experience in the survey includes placement, internship and year in industry. The respondents were first asked whether they had had work experience as part of their course and in the following question they were asked whether they had had work experience which was not part of their course. 469 respondents answered the first question (204 skipped) and 471 answered the second question (202 skipped). See Figures 2 and 3.

The analysis was then broken down into female and male respondents in Pakistan and the same for the UK to identify any similarities or differences in opportunities for work experience in both countries. Of the 77 women in Pakistan who responded to the first question, 42% had had work experience as part of their course and 58% had not. Of the 77 women in Pakistan who responded to the second question, 40% had had work experience which was not part of their course and 60% had not.

Similar filters were applied to look at the gender disparity in the UK data. Of the 121 women who answered the first question in the UK, 25% had had work experience as part of their course while 75% had

Comments from Manchester seminar:

- *Arabic language skills are increasingly seen as important for employability among mobile Pakistani nationals*
-

not. However, of the 122 women who answered the second question, 51% had had work experience that was not part of their course and 49% had not had work experience outside their course.

Moreover, of the women in the UK who had found paid work and/or work experience, 46% had applied independently while only 13% had found the work through their university. Strikingly, only 5% had found work through family contacts and just 2% had found it through a job seeker service. Within this sub-population of women studying in the UK, 32% had been involved in education groups, a further 32% had been involved in youth and children's groups, 28% had been involved in religious groups, and 27% had been involved in groups related to health, the elderly, disability and social welfare.

Of the women in Pakistan who had found paid work and/or work experience, 30% had applied independently while only 12% had found the work through their university. Only 7% had found the work through family contacts and just 3% had found it through a job seeker service. Of the women studying in Pakistan, 48% had been involved in education groups, 31% had been involved in youth and children's groups, 17% (11% lower than the UK) had been involved in religious groups, and 18% (9% lower than the UK) had been involved in groups related to health, the elderly, disability and social welfare.

The findings here suggest that around half of all of the women in the whole survey had had work experience that was not part of their course. By far the majority of these women were finding the work experience

independently and very few were using family contacts or the university systems to find work.

These women are very much in tune with employers on the need for work experience even though employers felt that overall graduates lacked work experience. In a survey of 2,855 employers in the UK, the British Chamber of Commerce found that more than three-quarters of firms (76%) reported a lack of work experience as one of the key reasons that young people were, they felt, unprepared for work. However, in the same survey, more than half of the firms (52%) said that they did not offer work experience placements. The reasons that they gave for this included the cost and time involved in setting the placements up (25% of firms). Moreover, 60% of businesses in the survey said that offer work experience said 'preparing the future workforce' was a key motivation (BCC 2014).

Returning to the five main sub-populations described earlier, there was a significant difference in responses to a question about applying for unpaid jobs or graduate internships to obtain experience. In sub-populations 1, 2, 3 and 5 the majority of respondents said that they would be making an application of this sort. However, for sub-population 4 (Pakistani nationals studying for a postgraduate degree at a UK university) the reverse was true with a clear majority of 63% stating that they would not be applying for unpaid jobs or graduate internships to obtain experience.

McCowan draws on research from South Africa which shows that students' experiences off campus are crucial in enhancing their employability. The report illustrates this with reference to research carried out in the Western Cape where the students' previous engagement outside the

Figure 2: Have you had work experience (placement, internship, year in industry) as part of your course?

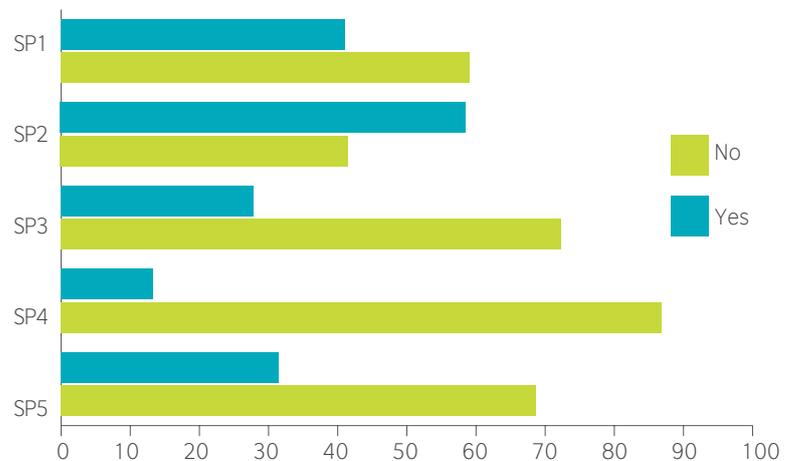
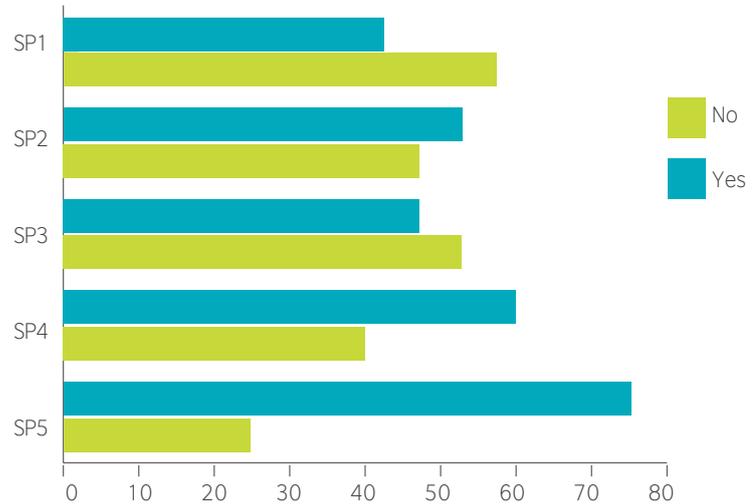


Figure 3: Have you completed work experience which was not part of your course?



Comments from Bradford seminar:

- We need to know more about why there is greater importance on work experience from the respondents in Pakistan
- There is a need to be very clear about what 'work experience' means: this may not be perceived as formal paid employment. However, it all helps develop skills
- Postgraduate programmes focus increasingly on placements but undergraduates are pushed more towards volunteering
- Some placement schemes are linked to certain courses and are not used in the wider university network
- Many graduates work for years after their undergraduate programmes before starting postgraduate courses: what skills do these students bring to their individual employability?

classroom was the second most influential factor in securing successful employment after field of study. The report claims that “Experiential learning in the community – service learning, volunteering etc. – as well as on-campus, through student societies and other extra-curricular activities should be facilitated. Employers increasingly value global perspectives and understanding diversity, qualities which can be developed through these forms of engagement on campus and beyond.” (2014: 11).

5.2.7 Career aspirations

Recommendation: The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey could be mined for detailed data related to specific graduates from specific subject areas working in specific sectors. The DLHE survey asks individuals who have recently completed HE courses about their current activity. This can include work and study as well as looking for work or travelling. Those respondents who are employed are asked for a description of their role and the kind of organization they work for in order to establish the nature of their employment so that it can be classified. Respondents are also asked how much they are paid. What is particularly useful is that respondents’ current activity can be explored to see how destinations differ across subject areas. The data is presented on the Unistats website which also provides a link to employability statements on university and college websites. The employability statement is usually a short summary of how individual universities or colleges supports students’ employability and what each institution does to enable students’ transition to the working world.

Comments from Bradford seminar:

- In order to identify the career aspirations of students it is important to understand the links between education, interests and jobs
- Young people normally have a clear idea of what course and career they would like prior to university though this may change during the course of their studies
- When students are in university they tend to focus on their studies leaving career plans as a ‘problem’ for their final year
- More students need to get advice early on from their peers in student societies or sports clubs, careers advice fairs or employers’ fairs, as well as registering with potential employers
- Current students should be recruited as career sector ambassadors to pass on their knowledge and experience to less experienced students

Figure 4: What are your main plans for the year after graduation?

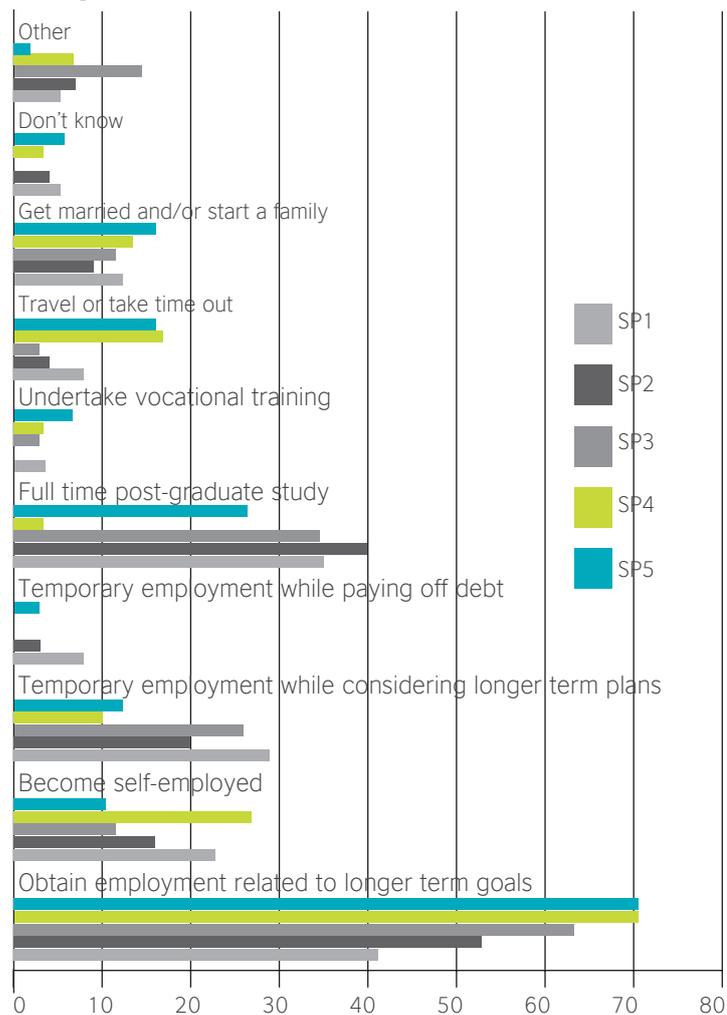




Figure 5: Which of the following have you used for career advice?

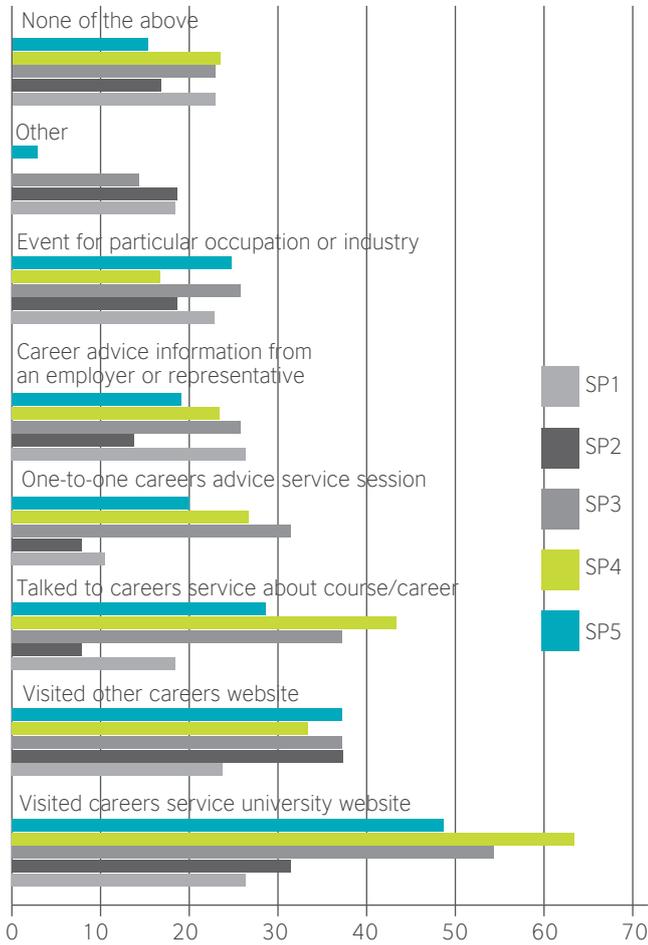
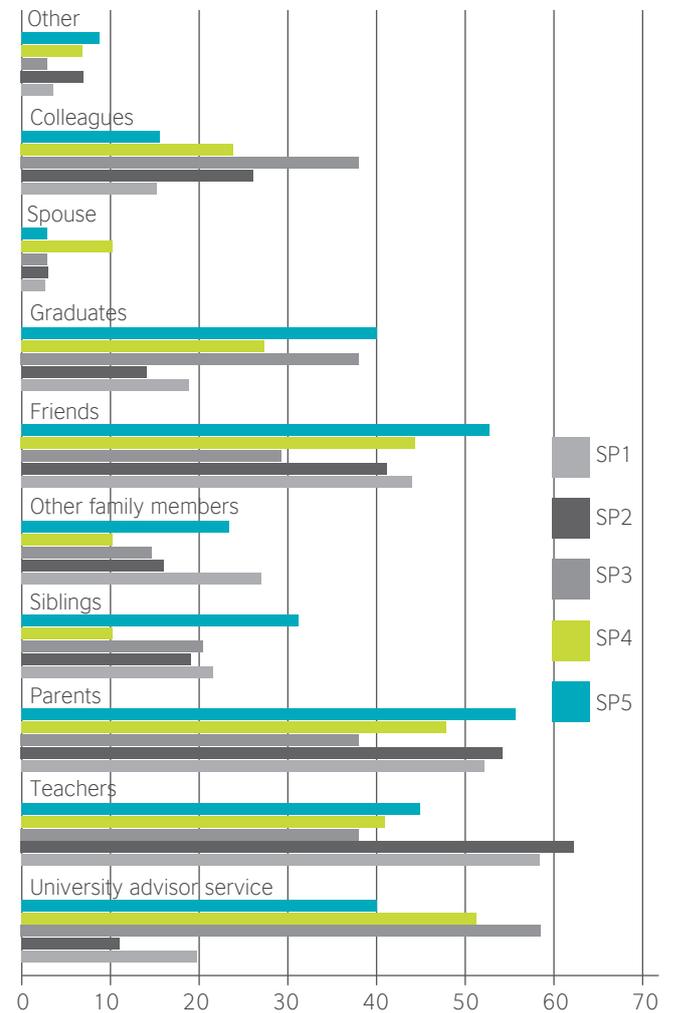


Figure 6: Who has provided you with the most useful career advice?



5.2.8 Staying or leaving

When answering the question ‘what would be the most significant influence in helping you to decide to remain in the UK or come to the UK to study’ the first three sub-populations chose responses related to education while sub-populations 4 and 5 chose responses related to employment.

In SP1, SP2 and SP3 ‘better education opportunities’ was the most popular reason for remaining/coming to the UK. For SP4 and SP5 ‘more interesting jobs’ was the most popular response. In SP5 ‘to be closer to family’ was the second most popular reason though only 1% less than

‘more interesting jobs’. Thus education and employment are bigger influences than family for the majority of Pakistani nationals in the data set.

However, in the following question ‘who would be the most significant influence in helping you decide to remain in the UK or come to the UK after your studies’, parents was the most popular choice in all five sub-populations followed by teacher or spouse.

These findings suggest that family provides support in making decisions but are not the main reason for remaining or staying in the UK.

Recommendation: Follow-up studies could use interviews with target students to explore how their extended family networks are drawn on when moving to the UK or moving around the UK and whether on-going chain migration has a role to play here.

Recommendation: Follow-up studies could explore the impact of changes to the visa system for students regarding opportunities to work and whether media reports of abuses in the student visa system (e.g. the BBC's Panorama show about 'bogus' English language colleges) have impacted negatively on student perceptions of staying on in/choosing the UK as a destination for study. These issues were not raised in the online survey.

In April 2012, the government closed the Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) immigration route, which allowed all international graduates to remain in the UK labour market for two years after graduation and to have unrestricted access to the labour market during that period. In closing this route, the government's intentions were to restrict foreign students to temporary migration instead of permanent settlement by ensuring that non-European Economic Authority nationals moved into skilled rather than low-skilled occupations. Preventing open access to the UK labour market at this time was a response to high unemployment amongst UK resident graduates.

The changes mean that international students graduating from UK universities with a recognised degree at undergraduate level or above (PGCE/PGDE) can switch to Tier 2, for skilled workers, before the expiry of their student visa, if they have an offer of employment from an employer who is licensed to sponsor Tier 2 workers and they meet the requirements of Tier 2 visas (the job must be at graduate level and the salary must be at least £20,000).

These policy changes, Migrants' Rights Network (MRN) argues, have made it more difficult for visa applicants as well as academic sponsors to steer their way through the immigration system. MRN suggests that universities and colleges are under increased pressure to scrutinise international students in the UK. This scrutiny includes checking immigration documents and reporting their whereabouts to the Home Office which they suggest has resulted in some students feeling intimidated by immigration checks and singled out for different treatment from fellow students. Moreover, MRN have argued that the rights of individuals studying in the UK to support themselves through paid employment have been restricted as have opportunities to engage in post-study employment as students must find employment with a Tier 2 licensed employer within three months of completing their degree or leave the UK. Of particular relevance to any future studies in this area is that MRN argue that this situation has resulted in some international students feeling that the UK is unable to provide them with longer term opportunities related to employability.

Comments from Manchester seminar:

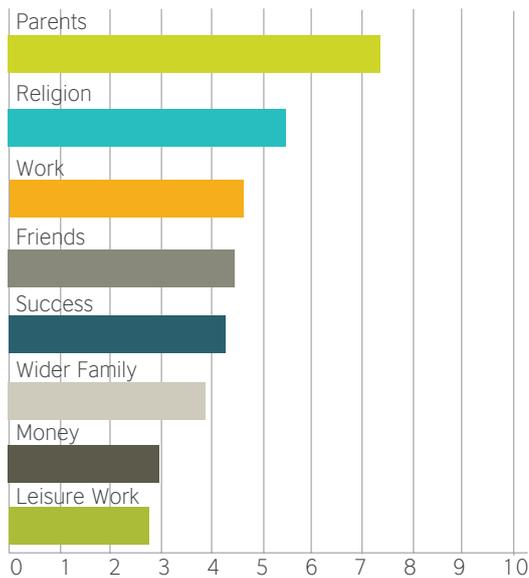
- *We are experiencing a new and different wave of migration from European Pakistanis who are coming to the UK to study. For example, it is now easier for a Spanish born student of Pakistani origin to get a place in a UK university than it is for a Pakistani national to come from Pakistan*
 - *Pakistani nationals are now looking to the Gulf states, the US and Canada as a place to study*
-

5.2.9 Well-being

In the final section of the survey respondents were asked to rank parents, religion, work, friends, success, wider family, money and leisure time in order of importance.



Figure 7: Please list the following in order of how important they are in your life.



What was striking in the responses above was that parents ranked highest and religion ranked second highest in all of the sub-populations.

Recommendation: Follow-up studies could explore these rankings with qualitative data collection such as interviews with university students to provide fine-grained accounts of how parents and religion fit into their lives. Research questions should draw on research which explores religion and ethnicity in the context of employability (see below).

Research carried out at the University of Oxford looks at religion and ethnicity in the context of employment in the UK. The Oxford studies suggest that most other published research looks primarily at ethnicity but, the authors argue, religion may also be important in affecting labour market outcomes (Heath et al 2010). They suggest that this could be due to discrimination about religion rather than ethnicity, which would be more marked since 9/11 and increasing 'Islamaphobia'. The authors of the study suggest that Muslims may be experiencing what was

referred to as the 'chill factor' in Northern Ireland: a feeling of being unwelcome in various institutions to the extent that individuals would be put off from applying for jobs. They also explore the alternative scenarios where membership of religious institutions (such as the mosque) influences patterns of social relationships and what the authors call 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital.

Recommendation: What would be of particular relevance to future British Council Pakistan research initiatives would be the significance attached to traditional family or other values that influence whether religious believers were more likely to prefer to be in the labour market and the kinds of occupations they were likely to choose.

The Oxford study would be particularly relevant when drawing up research questions for future studies as the authors identify the following ways in which religion and ethnicity may affect labour market experiences:

- Religious group members may feel unwelcome when looking for work in organisations where they feel they have few co-religionists and thus may be deterred from applying because of the 'chill factor'
- Religious group members may have shared practices or values related to their religion that influence their prioritising of family responsibilities over paid employment or that may conflict with alternative methods of organisation of paid labour, for example mixed gender workplaces
- Religious institutions may foster social networks based on co-religionists. The result may be limitations to 'bridging' social capital, that is bridging social capital is expected to bring benefits

such as access to job information and job opportunities

- Religious group members may be subject to discrimination¹

For students not staying in the UK for work or further studies, this section deals with how reverse culture shock may impact on employability and well-being.

Prior to completion of their university studies in addition to examinations and dissertation deadlines, international students will be thinking about returning home. According to the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) for some students this can be a stressful time due to reverse culture shock (the period of re-adjustment when they return home). Returning to relationships and patterns of behaviour can be stressful and settling back into work may take time. Family relationships and relationships with friends will have changed as will individuals, particularly students, who may feel they have developed different ideas and attitudes compared with before they left home.

Recommendation: Well worth exploring in follow-up studies would be the extent to which returning students feel that their family, friends and work colleagues do not, perhaps, appreciate the returning graduate's achievements and whether this leads to problems at work.

For those returning to a previous employer it would be interesting to find out how graduates reconnect with their surroundings and colleagues. For example, what skills do graduates need to contribute back at work? How do graduates deal with colleagues who do not appreciate new ideas or who are resistant to different ways

of doing things? What do graduates do to share their new skills and knowledge with colleagues?

British Council Pakistan has the resources to be able to connect alumni with other graduates and provide information on alumni networks.

As with the other themes related to migration and diasporic links between Pakistan and the UK, findings and literature from the former British Council project Connecting Mirpur should be consulted when planning future research collaborations.

Comments from Manchester seminar:

Values:

- *Pakistani students in the UK are more liberal and less 'extreme' than British-Pakistani students because they are less fearful of losing their identity*
- *Values in general are challenged in the UK by the temptations of modern society so students make more of an effort to protect their identity*
- *British-Pakistanis have complex relations to manage between their UK home and UK family connections, their home and connections in Pakistan, their school and university life and their mosque and its connections*

Discrimination:

- *Audiences felt that there were different types of discrimination experienced by different groups. For example, some audience members felt that British-Pakistanis face discrimination when they are in Pakistan while others felt that there are barriers to enrolling and succeeding in UK universities for Pakistani diaspora*
- *By asking about values and identities this research project could be seen to support the Prevent agenda and the way that surveillance of Pakistanis*

Religion

- *The influence of religion was felt to reduce once students were in higher education. Moreover, audience members believed that the importance of religion is often misunderstood. Furthermore, religion is very different in the lives of Pakistani and British Pakistani students.*
-

¹ (Source: Is ethnicity or religion more important in explaining inequalities in the labour market? Martin, J.Heath, A.Bosveld, K.Sociology Working papers Paper Number 2010-02)

Returning home and employability: Pakistani students returning to Pakistan from the UK (www.ukcisa.org.uk)



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- *Mention was made of madrassah education where some audience members felt that Pakistani students who graduated from madrassahs follow a different education and career path in that they would not normally go to university.*

Comments from Bradford seminar:

Values:

- *As part of the OFTED inspection process, schools are now evaluated on how they teach 'British values'. How are universities responding to this?*
- *How do values and identity link to class?*

Discrimination:

- *Lots of students choose research topics which are of meaning to them and relate to their experience of discrimination. For example, in the Sociology department at the University of Bradford, there has been an increase in the number of students choosing dissertation topics which explore counter extremism*
 - *Do not underestimate students. They have very sophisticated understandings of the wider discourses which affect them and shape their experiences*
 - *The Prevent campaign has changed the role of the university and its relationship with its students for the worse*
 - *University support services are dominated by white, middle class, female staff. Some male Pakistanis may be put off from using them*
 - *Bradford University has a buddy system which tries to be open to difference*
 - *Peer learning provides opportunities to learn from students with similar backgrounds and with similar goals. It allows less experienced students to see how others succeeded and failed*
 - *Student societies have an important role to play in helping students from different courses and years of study meet up and share experiences (Bradford University Islamic Society is made up of a mix of two thirds international students and one third home students)*
-

CONCLUSION

All the studies reviewed for this report agree that in order for universities to improve their approach to preparing students for the working world, they must work with employers to combine on-campus and off-campus experiences to enhance a broad range of skills which at the moment many graduates are not able to demonstrate. However, the findings which have emerged from the online survey suggest that students are well aware of the skills they need to develop and that these skills must be combined with off-campus work experience which they suggest they are well able to identify and engage in independently of family. Family is at the centre of decision-making about studying though not so central when it comes to choosing courses and institutions.

Addressing the challenge of combining these efforts being made by students with interventions by university staff and employers has traditionally been assumed to lie with the university. However, current thinking suggests that off-campus work experience gained with employers, whether it is paid employment or internships, must be embedded in on-campus programmes and skills development. For this reason, McCowan suggests that universities focus on three areas simultaneously: (1) improving the quality of taught courses; (2) enabling a broader learning experience for students (3) providing targeted employability. McCowan adopts a model which combines classroom, campus and community. Classroom represents formal learning whereas campus includes the learning spaces in the wider university environment by engaging with the student

and staff body, student societies and skills workshops. Thirdly, community embraces local, national and global levels as well as work attachments and voluntary placements off campus. The key element here is the interaction between the three different levels. The recommendations in this study are designed to facilitate this interaction.

Comments from Manchester and Bradford seminars about future studies:

- *The purpose of the study needs to be better explained*
 - *Fewer questions would mean more respondents completing the survey*
 - *Need to make survey more attractive to students and cutting the data*
 - *All the findings should be sent to the respondents when the analysis is complete*
 - *The research should be more participatory: involve students in the design, data collection and analysis*
 - *What happens to students' priorities throughout their years of study or throughout their university 'journey'?*
 - *Is there a reason it was easier to get responses from Pakistan than from the UK?*
 - *It would be useful to know how Pakistani students adapt to different ways of working and assessment when they are studying at UK universities*
 - *It could be interesting to look at the findings in relation to the geographical spread of universities*
 - *It is important to look at regional links and the ties between different parts of Pakistan and different parts of the UK. For example, Mirpuri students might stay with Mirpuri relations in Britain. However, other members of the audience with relatives in northern Punjab said that they did not believe that they would invite family members from Pakistan to stay with them for lengthy periods such as the duration of a course of study*
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- *In terms of thinking about students' integration, it would be useful to look at how workload and free time differ for the six sub-populations. Do international students have less free time and therefore fewer opportunities to integrate?*
 - *British Council needs to be honest about its research objectives. British Pakistanis rightly have trust issues and research fatigue*
 - *Allow respondents to own the data, share all findings, allow spaces for comment and be explicit about respondents rights*
 - *If there isn't capacity for a longitudinal study, could questions be asked which try to account for longer term responses such as 'how do you see yourself in the next five years?'*
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