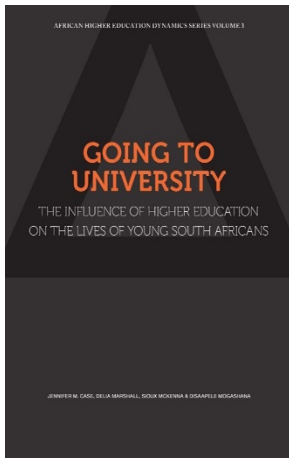


Going to University: The Influence of Higher Education on the Lives of Young South Africans

Case, J. M., McKenna, S., Marshall, D., & Mogashana, D. (2018). *African Minds*. ISBN-978-1-928331-69-8 (paper)

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Going to University: The Influence of Higher Education on the Lives of Young South Africans is a great book written very well by the authors. The use of the narratives gives the book an engaging and readable quality. The authors interviewed and narrated the stories of 73 young people six years after they enrolled at one of the urban schools in South Africa. As the book progresses, the authors further introduced us to 20 young people whose stories were narrated in detail.

The beginning of the book included different stories of two people who give another perspective on how success and failure are viewed when it comes to college students. The first person got his degree and eventually got funding to pursue his Ph.D. while the second person had to go back home because he could not complete his degree. The first person is society's definition of success, while the second person who could not complete his degree represents society's view of failure.

Each chapter in the book introduces the reader to different narrative used to demonstrate and expatiate on an evolving argument about how young

people of South Africa, despite the personal, environmental, and socio conditions, navigate their way through university to make the best out of their lives and give themselves the best type of life they want to live. Chapter by chapter, the authors explained how institutions of higher learning set up its structure, especially in the area of undergraduate curriculum and student fees, which are factors that goes beyond the control of the students.

These factors have the power to limit or enable college student's ability to persist. The chapters look at how these structures can prove a hindrance to the choices made by college students and the decisions which these young people must make on their college choice and the program of study. The chapters further considered the broader college student experience at higher education institutions, the negative effects of not completing one's degree of first choice just as the story of the young person that was narrated at the beginning. The authors also looked at the overall goal and mission of higher education in young people's lives.

Among the young people that were interviewed who, despite the financial limitations imposed on them, still found a way to succeed in their academics, realized that financial aid was not as easy as it seemed. There was pressure to complete the degree on time still so students could get into the workforce to provide financial support for themselves and their families. No doubt that financial stress for young people and their families can be a waking nightmare, and it can be a considerable factor in talented students not completing their degrees. On the other hand, students that got funding enjoyed a greater sense of freedom to appreciate university without any financial stress.

Another factor linked to the first is the importance of young people's access to networks and powerful connections. These connections can be people from family or the student's connection who can link them up with obtaining funds and other career opportunities. Family members with in-depth knowledge of higher education would tend to give young people advice that will help them succeed college and help them make a great decision on their college choices. The lack of this kind of advice makes it hard for students to navigate through college successfully.

A key insight that emerged from the book is that there are far deeper challenges, such as the absence of required resources necessary for success that can include the lack of adequate funding to study the desired program choice, maladjustment, social circumstances, lack of family support, guidance and counseling, and lack of access to important networks that connect young people to jobs. These key issues can limit young people's drive

and motivation to push through university and into the workplace. The most goal-driven students can be hindered by these conditions.

This eloquent book appeals to higher education scholars who are in the field and also higher education leaders and administrators such as faculty and staff, administrators, and higher education policymakers. Although the authors of the book only highlighted the higher education issues in South Africa, the message is not limited to South Africa. Its reach will most definitely go beyond the local boundaries of the country. The stories in the book speak to much broader issues centered around class, gender, race, and how college student manages to thrive despite all the challenges. The stories are relatable as they highlight prominent issues facing higher education all over the world.

Finally, the authors of this book did an excellent job of providing a great reminder that higher education institution leaders have a purpose in the lives of young people. One of the most important roles higher education has to accomplish is to ensure that university leaders create an enabling environment that young people get the best opportunity to build lives in which they can grow and, to a large extent, contribute to the development of the society in which they live

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