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Social mobility is still deliverable despite higher education access gap, says ABE

Disadvantaged students and educational bodies should consider alternative learning pathways to gain key business and workplace skills

Despite recently released [figures](#) revealing that several of the UK's top universities are admitting declining numbers of students from deprived backgrounds, social mobility is still possible to all if pursued through the right channels. This is according to global non-profit organisation The Association of Business Executives (ABE).

The figures, from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, show that student admissions from poorer backgrounds have declined at seven of the country's prestigious Russell Group Universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. While this represents an issue for the higher education sector to address, it is important for students and educational organisations to realise that social mobility is not exclusively tied to university access.

Gareth Robinson, CEO of ABE, said: "University provides a fantastic opportunity for academic development for those who can access it, but this isn't always a possibility for young people looking to define their futures. Instead, there are other routes for those at a financial or academic disadvantage, which can yield the same levels of professional success, financial gain and personal fulfilment."

Vocational qualifications, including courses in business management and helping young entrepreneurs to start, grow and run their own business, provide a highly viable pathway to a successful career. In addition, these courses can go a long way towards addressing chronic skills shortages that permeate the UK employment market, by providing a blend of both academic tuition and real work experience, at a time when having a full range of skills is more crucial than ever.

Robinson added: "There is a vibrant, growing market for vocational business qualifications that provide young people with essential skills to ensure not just success in the workplace in a variety of disciplines, but also the ability to set up their own companies and become entrepreneurs. These carry a significant amount of

weight, with higher levels being equivalent to a full bachelors degree, and present an affordable alternative for young people to bypass student debt and the congested university admissions process.”

Robinson concluded: “The issues with university admissions are certainly something that need to be tackled in the long term, but the current situation should not be reason to panic about a lack of social mobility. The opportunities for advancement are there; it’s just a matter of bearing in mind that there might be better routes to success if the traditional paths are blocked.”

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About The Association of Business Executives (ABE)

ABE is a not-for-profit awarding body accredited by Ofqual. Established in 1973, it has an international footprint with key markets in the UK, Africa, the Caribbean, SE Asia and China. ABE develops business and management Diploma qualifications at QCF Levels 4-7. Its qualifications provide progression routes to Bachelors degree and Masters programmes worldwide.

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