

Expectations and Transitions to Postsecondary Education: Survey of Grade 12 Maritime High School Students

Collaboration MPHEC – NB – NS – PEI

Project Description

Introduction

In the context of its Graduate Outcomes (GO) Survey Program, the Commission is working toward initiatives in addition to its cycle of graduate surveys that will help meet the Program's research objectives. The first would be collaboration with the three provinces to survey high school students in grade 12. The information gathered (among those intending to enroll) on expectations for postsecondary education, and the value placed on postsecondary education, would be compared to graduate outcomes to determine the extent to which expectations are met. Other initiatives are also being explored to gather information on expectations, such as using data from Maritime universities that participate in the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) surveys.

Research Objectives

The Commission's research objectives for a survey of high school students are:

- A. What proportion of students intend to enroll in postsecondary education? Of those intending to enroll, what do students expect from postsecondary education, and university education in particular? (through the graduate survey this could be linked to determining the extent to which expectations are met).
- B. Of those intending to enroll, how do they think of quality/value when it comes to postsecondary education and what importance do they attach to it? What role if any does it play in their decision-making?
- C. To what extent does cost play a role in decisions to enroll and persist in PSE?

Proposed Detailed information objectives (goal is maximum survey time of 20 minutes):

1. Intentions for Post-Secondary Education (PSE) studies

- Likelihood of pursuing post-secondary studies following high school (extent likely)
 - Reasons likely to do PSE studies (e.g. increase chances of getting a (better) job, need degree to get a job or a specific job, want to learn/intellectual challenge, personal growth, interested in a specific area, experience university life, meet new people, to earn a good salary, get a good paying job, earn more money, earn a decent living, parents wanted me to go, etc.) [NOTE: This could be a simple list of reasons to select from, or could rate importance of each reason]
 - Reasons not likely to do PSE studies (e.g. want to take a break from school, not sure of what want to do, can't afford to go, not good enough HS marks, want to travel, want to work/earn some money, etc.) [NOTE: This could be a simple list of reasons to select from, or could rate importance of each reason]
- Degree to which people influenced your decision regarding PSE studies (e.g. parents, HS guidance counselor, HS teacher, friends, etc.)

If "NOT LIKELY"

- Likelihood of pursuing PSE studies at some time in future



“LIKELY”

- Area of study interested in studying (e.g. major disciplines – 1st, 2nd, 3rd choice)
- Does student have prerequisites/grades needed for admission?
- Applied already?
 - If “YES”: Accepted? Which institution?
 - If “NO”: Type of PSE institution want to attend (i.e. public/private university, college, etc.)
- Intend to study full-time or part-time.

If “PART-TIME”

- Reasons part-time (e.g. can’t afford full-time, want/need to work, don’t want to go into debt, not ready to do full-time-need a break, want to find out if I like it, not sure what I want to do yet, etc.)
- Importance of factors in making decision about which PSE institution will/want to attend (e.g. reputation of institution, availability of program of study, quality of teaching, quality of facilities/equipment, campus environment, recommendation by friends/family, friends attending same institution, location, cost, availability of financial assistance from institution, availability/type of extra-curricular activities, reputation/availability of athletics, faculty known for specific expertise, quality of academics, etc.)
- Degree of influence people/factors have on choice of PSE institution (e.g. parents, guidance counselor, teacher, friends, institution rankings, etc.)

2. Expectations (Outcomes) from Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Studies

Related to Learning

- During PSE First Degree, degree to which you expect your education to: give you in-depth knowledge of your field of study, prepare you for graduate studies/further studies/life-long learning, provide you skills/knowledge that prepares you for a job/specific job, provide you with specific life skills/knowledge (e.g. math, writing, critical thinking, social responsibility, etc.), contribute to personal growth (i.e. character), offer challenging intellectual experience, offer rich socio-cultural experience (i.e. meeting people, making friends, fun, etc.)
- Expected time (number of years) to complete program
- Likelihood of undertaking further studies after First Degree

Related to Employment

- Degree to which expect to work during studies (want vs. need)
- Upon completion of PSE First Degree, degree to which expect to: find full-time employment (within certain time frame? within region?), need to move to find full-time employment, find a job directly related to your studies, find a job where you’re directly using the skills/knowledge you learned, need to learn skills on the job to build upon skills/knowledge acquired in PSE studies. [NOTE: This question could be framed in terms of “value”, i.e. what PSE must deliver upon in order for students to feel they got “good value” out of their education; i.e., that it was worth the investment of time and money]
- Level of earnings (annual) expect to make in first job upon completing your PSE studies.

Related to Financing Education

- How much expect first year of PSE studies to cost (tuition, books, student fees; excluding living costs).



- Means by which will finance/cover the costs of PSE studies (e.g. personal/family RESP savings, borrow, work during studies, scholarship/bursaries, combination)

If “BORROW”:

- Expected sources of borrowing (e.g. Government Student Loans, financial institutions, parents, etc.)
- Expected overall amount of borrowing for first year, for total cost of education.

If “FAMILY”

- Discussed financing with parents?
- Family pay whole/part of PSE studies (proportion?)

- Perceived ease/difficulty in paying off money borrowed to finance PSE
- Level of awareness of government programs to assist repayment of student loans

3. Quality-Value from Post-Secondary Education (PSE) Studies

- Rate specific attributes that PSE “must have” in order for students to feel they’re getting a high quality education (e.g. good teachers - teaching methods, excellent facilities (and equipment), provides knowledge related to your career, flexible program schedules, programs connected to labour market/employers, etc.)
- Rate perceived value of credential received from different types of PSE institutions (e.g. university, college, community college, polytechnic, etc.) in terms of getting a job, pursuing graduate studies.

Methodology / Data Collection

The survey would be conducted online and would not exceed 20-25 minutes. The survey would be anonymous and student responses kept confidential. Data collection is to be completed in May 2014.

Sample

The sample is to be drawn from 2014 high school graduating class. The sample distribution by province is outlined below. Individual provinces may add extra sample to meet their own policy needs; the cost of any such extra sample is the responsibility of each province.

| Province | Number of grade 12 Students (March 2014) | Sample | % |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------|--------|----|
| NOVA SCOTIA | 10,642 | 2,500 | 23 |
| NEW BRUNSWICK | 8,614 | 2,000 | 23 |
| PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND | 1,823 | 1,000 | 55 |

Role of MPHEC

The MPHEC will provide project management, the analytical framework, questionnaire, and analysis/reporting at the regional level.

Role of Provinces

The feasibility of the project depends on the in-kind support of each participating province. This support would include:

- Participation in a steering committee (chaired by MPHEC staff and with representation from each participating province) for the duration of the project
- Coordination with the schools in their jurisdiction:
 - Communicating to the schools about the project
 - Coordinating logistics / facilitation of student access to the online survey
 - Ensuring the survey is executed
- Obtaining student/parents' consent to participate in the survey if needed
- Preparation of contact list of students based on the sampling design (to be determined with input of steering committee), including email addresses if needed. The list should have key identifiers for measuring representativeness of final sample – e.g. province, school district, school, gender, language.

Opportunities for participating provinces

The advantage offered in a survey of high school students is that it would provide a broad scope of analysis with regard to potential students' expectations with regard to postsecondary in general and university or college education specifically. The role costs play in decision-making (enrolling in PSE or not; and choice of institution type) would also be explored with a broader scope.

The regional level analysis and reporting will contribute to knowledge about students' transitions and their expectations for postsecondary education. Each province will have access to the responses of its own students through a data sharing agreement with the Commission (in the case of New Brunswick, the data collected by the province would be shared with the Commission) following the protocol established under the MPHEC's Standard for Maintaining Confidentiality which is available on the MPHEC's website.

There is an opportunity to address provinces' own policy questions through the addition of modules to the core questionnaire that address the MPHEC's objectives.

The Commission has in the past conducted surveys of high school students as part of its Accessibility to Post-Secondary Education in the Maritimes project (Report published in 1997 – the introduction section is available on the Commission's website <http://www.mphec.ca/research/Accessibility.aspx>); A complete copy of the Report and the survey instrument is available on request.



Project Timelines

| TASKS | PROPOSED TIMELINE |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| HS Student Survey Roadmap | |
| Develop methodological framework (i.e. data collection, etc.) | September – December 2013 |
| Develop data analysis plan | September – December 2013 |
| Develop question areas/questions | September – December 2013 |
| Determine/Confirm provinces' participation | Fall 2013 |
| Official communication from MPHEC CEO to DMs, ADMs to launch HS Survey project | Fall 2013 |
| Official launch meeting MPHEC and provincial representatives | November 14, 2013 |
| RFP Process (for conducting surveys) | |
| Send out RFP(MPHEC, with provincial consultation) | January 2014 |
| Deadline for submissions | February 2014 |
| Selection of supplier | February 2014 |
| Meet with supplier | March 2014 |
| Questionnaire Design | |
| Prepare final draft questionnaire | September – December 2013 |
| Finalize questionnaire | September – December 2013 |
| Data Collection | |
| Implementation of survey | May 5, 2014 |
| Data processing and cleaning | May – June 2014 |
| Data Analysis & Reporting | |
| Conduct analysis of trends | July-August 2014 |
| Presentation of findings | TBD |

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