

How do grads fare in matching diplomas with jobs?

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Jake Murdoch spends much of his time examining how deftly graduates can match their degrees to eventual jobs. In the process, this professor at the Université de Montréal Faculty of Education has uncovered startling cultural and job market differences around the world.

Diplomas from elite universities can practically guarantee employment and salary conditions. For instance, graduates from the University of Tokyo or Hiroshima University in Japan, or the École des Hautes Études Commerciales or the École Polytechnique in France are assured employment based on their alma mater.

"The reputation of certain universities can be sufficient to land an interesting and well-paid job. But that's not the case everywhere. In Germany, the alma mater plays practically no role in the selection process. This is called the establishment effect," says Murdoch.

Murdoch participated in two large pan-European studies addressing the relationship between higher education and employment: the Careers after higher Education: A European Research Survey, which surveyed 36,000 graduates from 12 European countries and the Research into Employment Professional Flexibility (REFLEX). Murdoch now wants to conduct a similar study in North America.

"I'm already in contact with Statistics Canada, while other organizations are interested in collaborating on such a project," says Murdoch. "If all goes well we'll be sending out questionnaires in 2012."

Although the North American survey has yet to begin, Murdoch has observed differences in education practices in one region versus another, notably in Quebec and the rest of Canada. In Quebec, says critical thinking and the ability to synthesize sometimes lack. Graduates struggle when asked to summarize their expertise in just a few words, for instance, although the question is routinely asked of PhD students.

Another Quebec phenomenon to affect [education](#) is the feminization of the student body. "With a classroom of young women, we must often push harder to spark debates and exchange opinions," says Murdoch. Compare that to Finland, where dynamics are different. "Classes also include many women yet are more animated and lively."

Murdoch also found Quebec students get high marks compared to students from around the world. "Quebec university students who get C's are rare as compared to their European peers," says Murdoch.

Provided by University of Montreal

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