

Career Entry for Bachelor of Engineering Graduates in Canada: a feminist quantitative analysis*

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Summary The problem of unemployed university graduates has increased in Canada since the expansion of the higher education system in 1999, leading to higher unemployment for graduates including Bachelor Degree in engineering graduates. More often than not, the labour market outcomes for these graduates included a long job search time and employment in short term contract jobs or jobs unrelated to their engineering education, as it has been reported in public media and academia. Such a situation is puzzling and concerning especially in the context of the knowledge economy and Canada's call for a highly educated labour force in technological sector.

1. Relevance

The high unemployment rate among recent graduates raises questions about access to top-occupations such as engineering, exclusion, and professional inequality based on graduates' personal characteristic and socioeconomic status in contemporary Canada.

2. Aims & Objectives

This study investigates the determinants of the transition from university to the work force for engineering bachelor degree graduates in Canada in 2009/2010. The objectives of the study were: first, to estimate the duration of the job search for a first job for these graduates. Second, to identify factors that were affecting the duration of the job search for Canadian BEng graduates in 2009/2010 and third, determine if the duration of the job search was affected by the gender, race and socioeconomic status of the graduates, and if yes, to what extent.

3. Methods

Human capital, signaling theory, feminist concepts of gendered organizations, and intersectionality were theoretical foundations for the study. A quantitative methodology and various specifications of duration models were used to answer the question to what extent the duration of the job search for a first job, first job characteristics, and annual income of these graduates were determined by their personal characteristics. The data from Statistics Canada National Graduate Survey 2013 was used in the analysis.

4. Results

The results point out that gender, visible minority status, and socioeconomic background were significant predictors to the probability of finding a first engineering job that pays an average income for these graduates in 2009/2010 in Canada.

5. Conclusions

The study results demonstrated that the engineering occupation to the large extent was stratified along gender and racial lines that in some cases shaped labour market outcomes for BEng graduates in 2009/2010 in Canada.

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