



Youth Pioneer Society
Bahraini Youth College Survey
March 6, 2014

BACKGROUND

Thousands of studies across multiple disciplines have confirmed the societal benefits of college education. In Bahrain, as in most countries, the most important reason for going to college education is to help secure employment. As a result, many Bahrainis under the age of 30 have a bachelor's degree, and Bahrain has multiple universities offering degree courses.

A key determinant of success in college is the background training that high schools provide. Reading regular and social media suggests that the various stakeholders regard high school as inadequate preparation for college. This view is partially supported by the relatively high rate of youth unemployment compared to unemployment in the population in general. If we are to accept that there is room for improvement, then each of the college and high school system's stakeholders should be consulted, including the teaching faculty, the administrators, the students, the employers, and the main funders—the government, because of the unique perspective that they offer.

In Bahrain, the large stakeholders are regularly consulted either organically or because they are represented by strong centralized bodies. For example the government is represented by the Ministry of Education, the private sector has the Chamber of Commerce, and teaching faculty are unionized. However the students, who are a component of the Bahraini youth, are underrepresented. Social media suggests that Bahraini youth feel significant frustration at their inability to be an active participant in improving college education.

With this in mind, the Youth Pioneer Society decided to launch a survey with the aim of giving Bahraini youth a voice and making use of their unique perspective in solving a complicated problem. The survey wanted to focus on what kind of reforms could be made to the high school system to improve the college experience.

METHOD

YPS had the goals of maximizing survey participation and keeping data collection costs as low as possible. It was therefore determined that the best method would be a web-based, smartphone-compatible survey available in Arabic and English; however a paper version was also distributed at a YPS event. The questions were drawn from similar surveys used in other countries, and YPS tried to keep the survey short to minimize incomplete participation.

The questions were as follows; answers were generally multiple choice.

1. What is your year of birth?
2. Are you male or female?
3. Which city/village do you live in?
4. What stage of your college education are you at?
5. For each of the following, state how important it was in your decision to go to college
 - To make meaningful social relationships
 - To help me get a job after college
 - To prepare me for a master's degree or a PhD
 - To improve my skills and my intellectual ability
 - To develop a sense of life direction and purpose



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- To learn to do things on my own
6. For each of the following, state how important it was in your choice of college
- The quality of campus facilities
 - Campus location
 - Tuition fees
 - Financial aid available
 - The career success of graduates
 - Courses and majors offered
 - Class size
 - Reputation of faculty
 - Reputation of university with prospective employers
 - Recommendation from friends or family members
 - Parents and/or family wanted you to attend this college
 - You wanted to go there with your friends
7. For each of the following, state how important it was in your choice of major
- Interest in the subject
 - Availability of employment
 - Instructors
 - Starting pay of jobs that you can get with the major
 - Prestige or social standing of the major
 - Ability to maintain a high GPA
 - Expected ease of earning a degree
8. How did you fund your college education? Please check all that apply
- My own savings
 - I had a job while I was at college and I used my income to help me
 - Government scholarship / grant
 - Private sector scholarship / grant
 - Loan
 - Family
9. How useful was your high school curriculum to your progress in college?
10. How important are each of the following to improving the high school system?
- Improve the quality of the teachers
 - Improve the quality of the material taught
 - Increase the schooling hours
 - Decrease class sizes
 - Improve the quality of the teaching facilities

The link to the survey was disseminated using the YPS website and its social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), in addition to the social media tools of its members, during December 2013.

RESULTS

The question-by-question results are provided in the appendix. In this section, we highlight the most interesting results.



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Result 1: A satisfactory number of people participated in the survey, and the completion rate was respectable.

There were 142 surveys completed; 201 surveys were started, implying a completion rate of 71%.

Result 2: Most of the participants were members of the Bahraini youth.

Approximately 82% of the survey participants were born in 1983 or later, implying that they were 30 years old or younger, which is our definition of “youth.”

Result 3: The demographic coverage of the survey covered was reasonably wide.

All youth age groups were well represented, as were both genders, and almost all areas of Bahrain, though the capital governate was poorly represented.

Result 4: Most participants had already graduated.

Of the participants, 64% had graduated. The remaining participants were approximately evenly distributed across the four years of college.

Result 5: Bahrain youth saw college primarily as a means for improving their abilities and helping them to get a job rather than a leisurely pursuit.

The most important reason for going to college was to help in getting a job; the least important was seeking to make meaningful social relationships.

Result 6: Bahraini youth evaluated colleges primarily in terms of their ability to help the student advance professionally.

The most important factors in choosing a college were the courses offered, the university’s reputation with employers and the career success of graduates. Shorter-term considerations, such as location, friends going to the college or tuition fees were of limited importance.

Result 7: Bahraini youth balanced both labor market consideration and their interest in the subject when choosing a major.

The two most important factors in choosing majors were interest in the subject and the availability of employment associated with the major. The instructors and the ease of the subject were relatively unimportant.

Result 8: Most Bahrain youth could not support themselves through college, requiring assistance from either family or government.

Of the participants, 35% indicated that they needed family assistance, and 25% indicated that they had a government scholarship (note that the two are not mutually exclusive); 15% supported themselves at least partially based on a job that they had while studying.



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Result 9: Bahrain youth regard high school curricula as being of limited value for college progress.

Of the participants, 61% indicated that high school curricula were either not at all useful or somewhat useful to progress in college.

Result 10: Bahrain youth believe that the high school system is in need of wide-ranging reform. While some of the proposed reforms are quite expensive, Bahrain youth also think that some of the relatively costly policies that have been proposed would be relatively ineffective and that they should therefore be avoided.

Improving the quality of the teachers, of the materials taught, and of the teaching facilities were all listed as being extremely important to improving the high school system. In contrast, decreasing class sizes and increasing schooling hours, both of which are potentially very expensive, were regarded by Bahrain youth as being relatively unimportant.

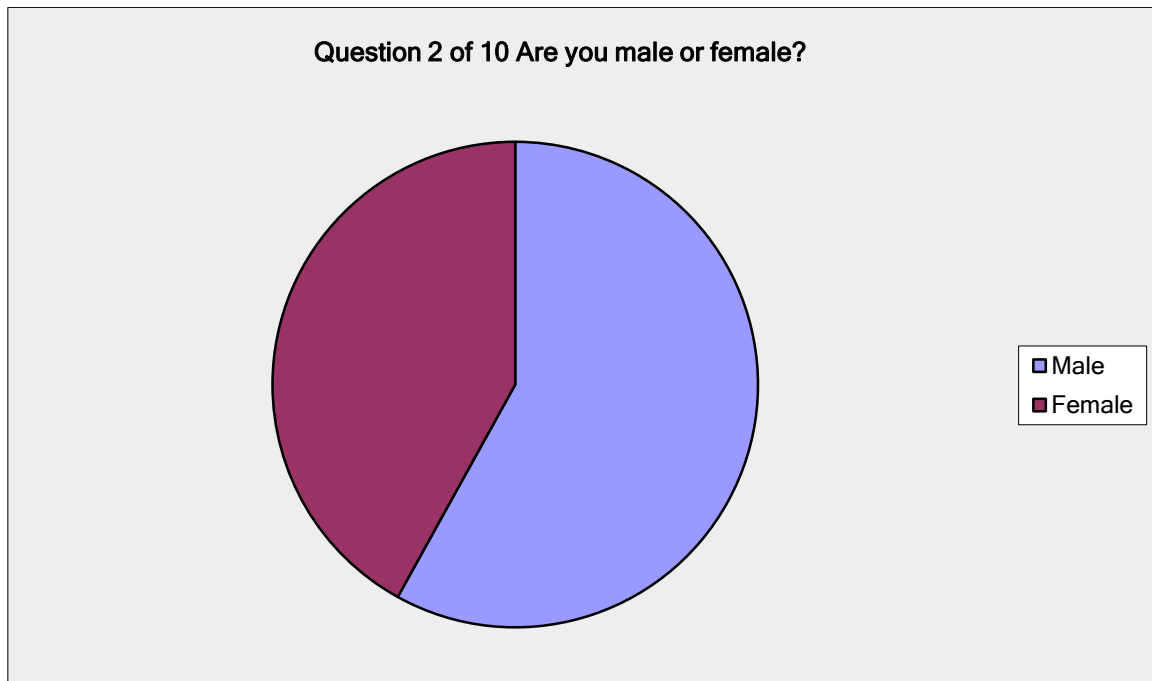
SUMMARY

This survey demonstrates that Bahraini youth are generally going to college for the right reasons, i.e., for professional advancement, and they have a serious attitude toward their studies. This confirms that there is value in consulting them when reforming education.

The survey suggests that there is significant room for improvement in the high school system as a stepping stone for college. The government has multiple options for implementing reform, most of which are expensive and will take a long time to bear fruit, such as, improving teacher quality and revising curricula.

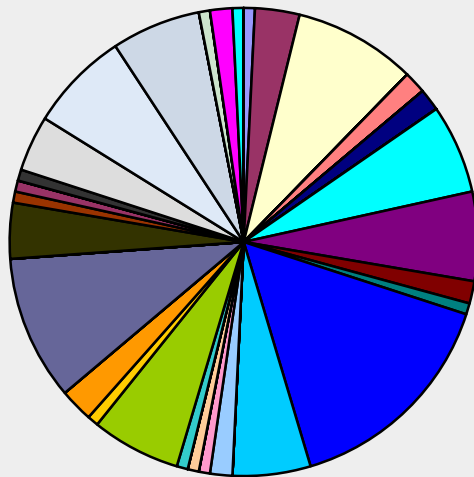
This survey demonstrates that some of the expensive proposed policies are likely to be ineffective, specifically increasing schooling hours and decreasing class sizes, and that as a result, reform should focus more on teacher quality, curricula, and the quality of the teaching facilities.

APPENDIX: FULL RESPONSES



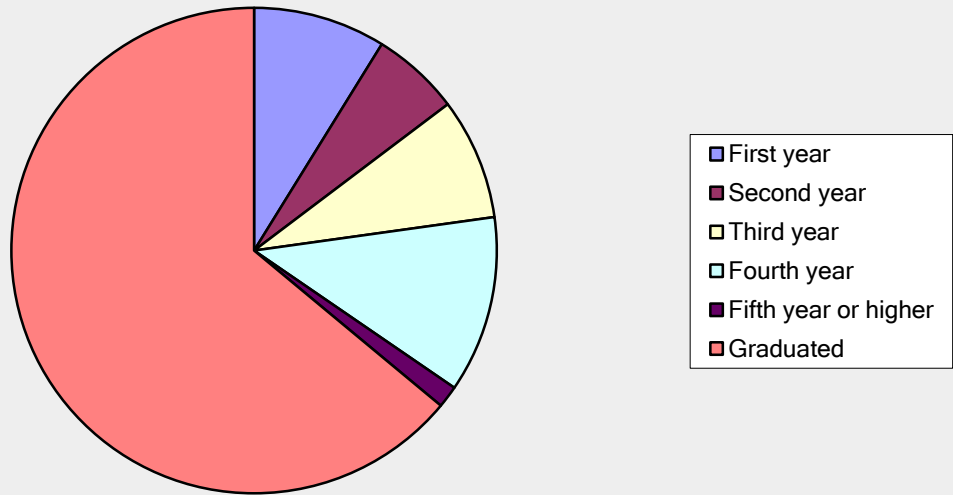
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Question 3 of 10 Which city/village do you

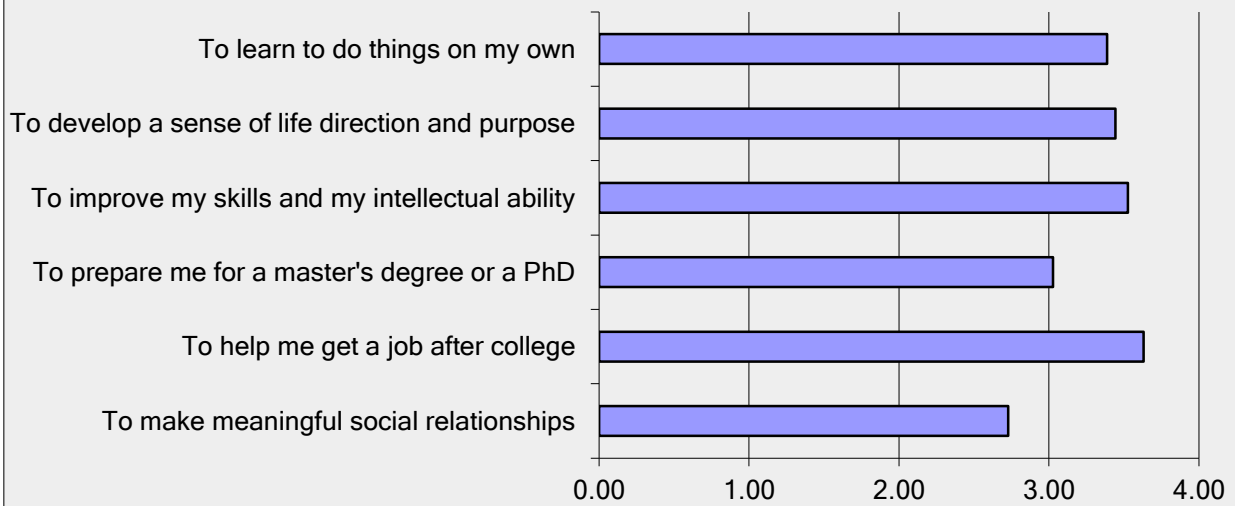


- Adliya (Capital)
- Ali (Central)
- Arad (Muharraq)
- Askar (Southern)
- Awali (Southern)
- Bani Jamra (Northern)
- Bilad Al-Qadim (Capital)
- Budayi (Northern)
- Busaytin (Muharraq)
- Central Manama (Capital)
- Diraz (Northern)
- Dumistan (Northern)
- East Rifa (Southern)
- Galali (Muharraq)
- Gudaybiyya (Capital)
- Hamala (Northern)
- Hidd (Muharraq)
- Janabiyya (Northern)
- Jasra (Northern)
- Jaw (Southern)
- Jid Hafs (Northern)
- Jufayr (Capital)
- Karbabad (Capital)
- Karrana (Northern)
- Karzakan (Northern)
- Khamis (Northern)
- Madinat Hamad (Northern)
- Madinat Zayid (Central)
- Mahuz (Capital)
- Malkiyya (Northern)
- Muharraq (Muharraq)
- Muqsha (Northern)
- Nabih Salih (Capital)
- Nuwaydarat (Central)
- Quful (Capital)
- Sakhir (Southern)
- Salmabad (Central)
- Salmaniyya (Capital)
- Samahij (Muharraq)
- Sanabis (Capital)
- Sanad (Central)
- Sar (Northern)
- Shakhura (Northern)
- Sihla (Northern)
- Tubli (Central)
- Um Al-Hasam (Capital)
- West Rifa (Southern)
- Zallaq (Southern)
- Zinj (Capital)

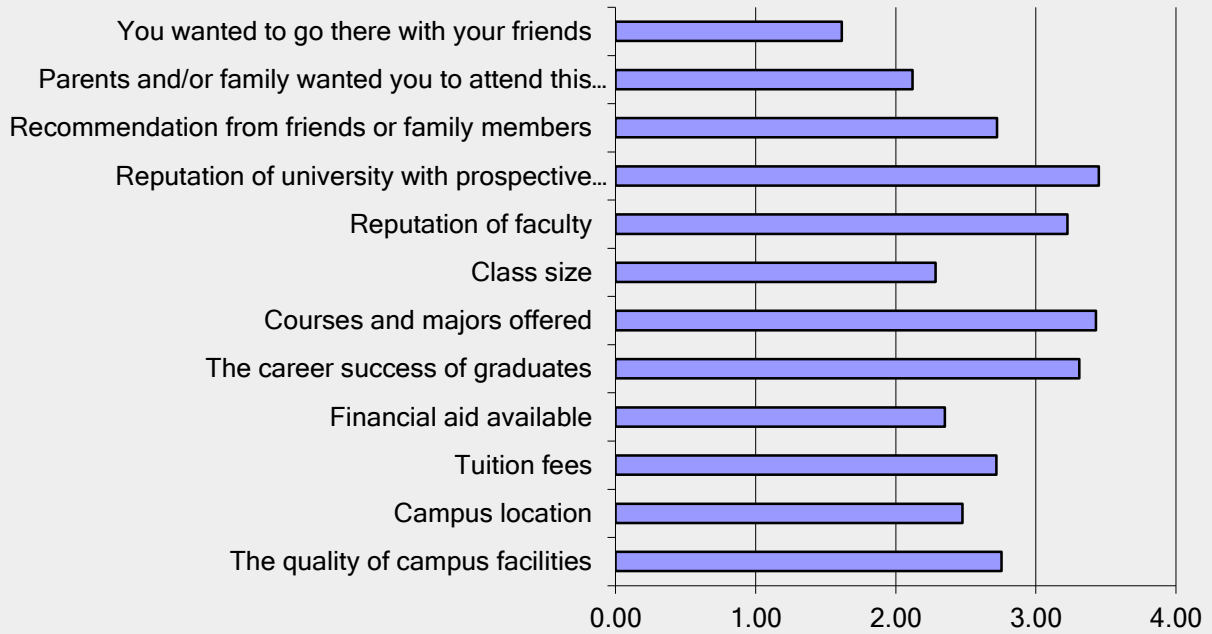
Question 4 of 10 What stage of your college education are you at?



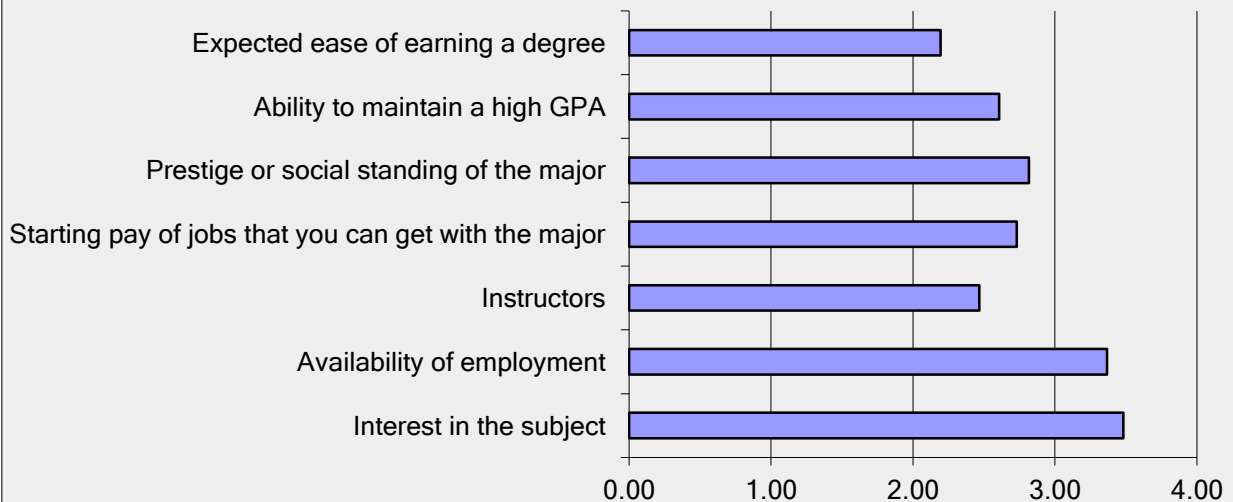
Question 5 of 10 For each of the following, state how important it was in your decision to go to college



Question 6 of 10 For each of the following, state how important it was in your choice of college



Question 7 of 10 For each of the following, state how important it was in your choice of major



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