

Stakeholder Summary

Resilience skills could be assessed as postsecondary learning outcomes

Whether it be the ability to cope, bounce back from adversity or navigate challenge, resilience in students could increase the chances of their academic success. A new study from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), *Measuring Resilience as an Education Outcome*, finds that resilience, as with other transferable skills such as initiative and teamwork, could be acquired or enhanced as part of educational programs.

Project description

Aligned with HEQCO's extensive work in [learning outcomes](#) and skills development, the study's authors from the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) examined ways of assessing resilience as an outcome of postsecondary education. In addition to a comprehensive literature review, they analyzed SRDC's own longitudinal data from two recent demonstration projects: Future to Discover and the British Columbia Advancement Via Individual Determination pilot project, both of which included a resilience measure.

The authors reviewed 17 measures, all self-report scales that captured subjective or perceived resilience targeting older adolescents, young adults and adults. Of those, they identified five measures as the most promising for further consideration in the context of higher education.

Findings

The understanding of resilience has changed over the years and continues to evolve today. Broadly defined, it often includes a mix of external factors, personal assets and coping processes. The authors note that despite some innate predispositions for resilience, there is also the potential for interventions or teaching practices that help students develop more adaptive thought and behaviour patterns, which ultimately would increase their chances of academic success.

The authors say that it may be neither realistic nor desirable to capture the many resilience dimensions in one measure to assess postsecondary outcomes. "Breaking down the different dimensions into specific skills that are most relevant and assessing those skills rather than a global index of resilience may be wiser and more appropriate," they say.

Resilience research is still evolving and little has been done to develop tools specifically designed for use with students at the postsecondary level. "More research is needed in this area," the authors note, "but we can look to 'learning skills and work habits' assessed in Ontario's elementary and secondary schools for inspiration. Working from the experience in this sector, it may be advisable to try to align language and learning outcomes not only across postsecondary institutions, but also along the continuum of education spanning the elementary, secondary and postsecondary levels."

Authors of *Measuring Resilience as an Education Outcome* are Danielle Patry and Reuben Ford, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.