

Digital Access Survey Report Summer 2025

Survey Reception

The main success of the survey revolves around how the students received it. The reception of the survey, both by school administrators and students was highly positive.

Administrators

Administrators were highly receptive to the surveys, at every type of school that we visited. Although this isn't a high sample group, all of the administrators that we spoke with were excited about the opportunity to speak with us. This gave us the opportunity to ask more about language use in the school, typical school pedagogy, and more. The administrators were often very excited about the prospect of connecting with "American students" or individuals who they believed could connect them both personally and professionally to the United States, which should be taken into consideration for future encounters with these schools and interactions with other administrators who may not fully understand (either intentionally or unintentionally) that the focus of our project is primarily on the students as an anonymous body rather than focusing on the individual school (although that can often occur, and potential resources could be brought there through out work sometime in the far future).

Students

The best way to determine student engagement and satisfaction with the survey was through the post-survey question asking if the students had any question or additional comments to add to our final notes.

The post-survey notes were varied. There were four potential classes of responses: non-response, gratitude responses, wishlist responses, and info responses. Non-responses are self-explanatory, in the sense that students either wrote a plain No, Nothing to Add, or left the final answer blank. The gratitude responses typically said something along the lines of thanking us for visiting the school and were sometimes in conjunction with the wishlist or informative responses. The wishlist responses and informative responses were both very infrequent. The wishlist response was often individual students at a school requesting something such as a bike to play with, a phone, more free time at school, etc. The informative responses sometimes overlapped, but were generally from older students, who let us know how their school divided time for subjects, treated students outside of the classroom, and other opinions related to how time and funding should be allocated in their particular school environment. Again, the informative responses were by far the rarest, but show that students not only understood the survey, but were comfortable enough in the survey environment to add additional detail.

All in all, the responses in sum indicate the the survey was generally a highly positive experience for all of the students who took it in spite of their questions or any potential confusion while working on it.

Survey Issues

The main issue with the survey was student confusion. Students had a significant number of questions relating to almost every aspect of the survey. Questions, depending on the age group of the class, ranged from how to fill out the survey itself (many students didn't recognize multiple check boxes from any previous academic encounters) to what the questions themselves

were trying to ask. Some of the main issues revolved around asking questions such as “Do you know what an online book PDF is”, where students who know what it is may say yes and students who didn’t were unable to fully understand the question without asking a significant number of questions. Not only did this frustrate administrators and lead to the survey taking a longer amount of time, but it also frustrated the students, who, by the end of such a long survey at ages 11-12, might not have had as positive of an experience as they could have had. Additionally, students were confused by many of the Yes/No questions, and there is uncertainty in the survey for students who claim to have their own cell phones or laptops, but only use them for 30 mins at a time, and there isn’t a clear way to indicate parental/personal restriction versus direct restriction of access.

Potential Solutions

The survey itself should be reviewed for length—some questions can be combined or otherwise made significantly more efficient—as well as altered for clarity.

One potential way to help with clarity would be making different surveys for different grade levels. This would mean that the survey could be more targeted, even asking additional information for older students regarding how they’re getting information about post-graduation plans and how they’re using the internet in terms of education and opportunities available to them, or if they’re using it in that way at all. It might also help streamline the length of the survey for all groups.

Another solution is making sure that the survey is more up-to-date. For example, very few students across all schools knew what a cybercafe was, and other things like that, which could’ve been written down in the “Other:___” section, but rather lengthened the amount of time students took and caused significant confusion.

My final solution suggestion is giving students more spaces to write in their own answers, as this might actually provide us more clarity when asking about additional devices at home, rather than encouraging students to focus on what they don’t have, or, as many students did, tell us later in the survey what they “would do” if they had that device, causing students to list things they did with a device they also stated in their survey that they didn’t have.

Survey Failure - Systemic Issue

As I said earlier, the data collection overall went very well, and the first steps of this survey can generally be categorized as a success. The project itself didn’t have any glaring systemic failures to be addressed outside of our limited sample base. The survey has its own issues to be resolved, but the most apparent problem that must be solved in the next survey administrations is the unequal survey administration itself—our surveys almost solely reflect the experiences of private/boarding school students rather than government schools, which have significantly more students and historically have significantly fewer resources.

In direct terms of the survey, the private school/boarding school students consistently tended to have their own cell phones, consistent reliable internet access, ability to use laptops, tablets etc. However, at the government school we visited in central KTM had no students who owned a personal phone, many students who only had internet access through the self-built computer lab at the school, etc.

If IRD works off of the survey and continues it without controlling for this difference in school types, it will be aiding people who are already privileged or providing aid to government schools that may not be useful to the students because it is based off of data that ended up excluding them. Government schools may be harder to reach and connect with, but that is exactly why it is of the utmost important to go the extra mile to do the research there: so that connection in the future becomes easier and these students have equitable opportunity to their private/boarding school counterparts.

Final Thoughts

Overall, the survey was highly successful in my opinion, and I believe that IRD has a solid jumping off point from it for future work, alongside a better idea of next steps regarding how to collect more information and use it to benefit students across Nepal.