The Experience of Conducting Tracer Studies – The Case of the Association of African Universities (AAU) Project

by

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Outline of Presentation

• The AAU Tracer study Project
• The University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Tracer study under the AAU project
• Experience, Challenges and Problems faced through the AAU project
• Impact of the project to UDSM policies Subsequent UDSM Tracer studies
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• Impact on policy:
  – Introduction of new programmes and programme reviews should be preceded by tracer studies

• Subsequent tracer studies:
  – Tracer Studies in a quest for academic improvement (conducted between 2002 and 2004)
  – Several others thereafter.
The AAU Tracer study Project

• The project for African researchers was initiated in Sept. 1996 (about 17 years ago)

• A total of 11 tracer studies from 6 African countries were funded by AAU – 4 studies for Nigeria, 2 studies each for Kenya and Ghana, 1 study each for Uganda, Malawi and Tanzania.

• AAU provided technical guidance in terms of formulating questionnaires, preparation of code books, collecting of data; analysing data using SPSS programme, generating tables and report writing.
The AAU Tracer study Project (cont)

- Technical guidance was provided by experts from Kassel University (Professors Ulrich Teichler and Harald Schomburg) through workshops (three); computer programmes; and reading materials as well as direct consultations.
- “Standard Instrument for Graduate and Employer Surveys” by Harald Schomburg
- A similar conceptual framework and a standard instrument were used.
The AAU Tracer study Project (cont)

- Each country project was based on a particular University and it focussed on graduates and their employers of a given faculty/school of that University.
- The Tanzania project it was based at the University of Dar es Salaam, and it focussed on graduates of the then Faculty of Commerce and Management.
- In the case of the University of Dar es Salaam study in addition to AAU’s financial support, additional funding was obtained from Local Business Institutions.
The UDSM - Tanzania Tracer study under the AAU project

• Captured 15 and 13 B.Com (undergraduates) and MBA (graduate) cohorts, respectively.
• Characteristics of graduates surveyed were related to:-
  – type of degree programme pursued,
  – employment situation
  – personal attributes.
  – etc
• Employers were characterised in terms of:-
  – size of their work force,
  – location,
  – economic sector,
  – number of graduates employed and
  – profile of the respondent.
  – etc
The UDSM - Tanzania Tracer study under the AAU project (cont)

• Graduates were asked to assess programmes wrt: -
  – factors influencing their enrolment,
  – sources of funding their studies,
  – quality of curricula,
  – proposed change to the content of the curricula,
  – adequacy of the programmes in preparing them for self employment,
  – Self assessment
  – etc.
The UDSM - Tanzania Tracer study under the AAU project (cont)

• Graduates were asked to assess their employment situation wrt :-
  – Employment situation after graduation
  – How they got jobs
  – On the job training
  – Job turnover rates
  – Positions held
  – Economic sectors employed in
  – Major areas of job assignments
  – Income levels
  – What they thought they should be earning
  – Employment procedures by their employers
  – Job requirements from graduates point of view
  – Extent to which abilities and attitudes were expected of them
  – etc
The UDSM - Tanzania Tracer study under the AAU project (cont)

- Employers were asked questions regarding
- Their expectations from graduations,
- Evaluation of graduates,
- Evaluation of graduates vis a vis graduates from other IHE,
- On the job training.
Several publications culminated out of the project. These include:


Experience, Challenges and Problems faced through the AAU project

• Facilitators of the project were very useful and they made us learn a lot from the process.
• Working as a team of researchers.
• Data analysis and generation of tables using SPSS software was quite challenging, but a very useful experience.
• The UDSM management gave me full support.
• There had been previous Tracer studies at the University of Dar es Salaam conducted by the then Faculty of Engineering.
• Funding by AAU was inadequate – had to look for supplementary funding.
• Tracing graduates was very difficult – lack of a data bank.
• Some employers were not as cooperative.
• Difficulty in interpreting results – some were contradictory.
Impact of the project to UDSM policies Subsequent UDSM Tracer studies

• Impact on policy:
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Thank you for listening