Tracer Studies: Opportunities of Inter-University Cooperation. Experiences from Germany

Kenyatta University, Nairobi, 11th February 2013

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The Tracer Study Revolution in Germany

- Hugh growth of tracer studies in Germany in recent years
- Growth of studies on institutional level
- Until 2007: national sample for purposes of national policy makers, only a few institutions of HE conducted regular tracer studies
- Since 2008/2009 almost all relevant institutions of HE are partners in different regional or national systems of regular tracer studies
- Coverage of TS: about 80% of all graduates in Germany
- In the KOAB network about 50% of all graduates from HE institutions in Germany are included
The Bridge Concept – Institutional Development and Research

Institutional Development
- Quality assurance (e.g. accreditation)
- Alumni and career service
- Evaluation, information, marketing

Research
- Vertical match – overeducation/undereducation
- Skills mismatch - study and work
- Study conditions and professional success

Tracer Studies
Old and New Type of Graduate Surveys

- **Old type** – representative sample survey to inform the Ministry of HE and other key stakeholders
  - Since more than 30 years
  - France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland
  - Irrelevant for individual institution

- **New type** – institutional graduate surveys (all graduates from one institution of higher education)
  - (France), Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Balkan region
  - Combination of a National Monitor and a feedback instrument for HE institutions
  - Relevant for individual institutions (reports for individual institutions, program level breakdown of results)
The Old Type of National Tracer Studies: the University Delivers Data (e.g. addresses)

Research institute

Ministry of HE

Data

University A

University B

University C

Researcher

Researcher

Researcher

Flöther: Opportunities of Inter-University Cooperation

2/27/2013
2012: About 80 institutions of HE in Germany are cooperating in conducting regular tracer studies.
### Internal and external motives to GCTS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>External</strong></th>
<th><strong>Internal</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act on Higher Education: &quot;Higher</td>
<td>training and service development:</td>
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<tr>
<td>education institutions shall fulfil</td>
<td>labour market feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the tasks in career tracking, in</td>
<td>marketing: competitive advantage in</td>
</tr>
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<td>which they shall monitor the labour</td>
<td>entrance exam competition</td>
</tr>
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<td>market situation of graduates.&quot;</td>
<td>part of quality assurance</td>
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<td>institutional accreditation</td>
<td>information for career orientation (&quot;what is the value of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-year financing agreement with</td>
<td>degree like?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>government</td>
<td>alumni programmes, labour market connections (sponsorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external application sources</td>
<td>opportunities later).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Graduate Career Tracking System*

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Source: Educatio, Tracking graduate careers in Hungary; presentation March 2010 in The Haag
CONGRAD

EU Partners
UNIBI | DE
CUNI | CZ
UPV | ES
UJC | FI

External Experts
INCHER | DE
APM Project | RO
...

CONRAD Analytical Unit
UBG & CEP

USGD
VTSSU
VTSNI
HBTSU

UNS
UBG

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA
MONTENEGRO

UNTZ
UBL
UOM
The New Type of Graduate Surveys: the Network Approach (KOAB)

2012: About 80 institutions of HE in Germany are cooperating in conducting regular tracer studies.
Members of the KOAB-Project
(Annual meeting, Kassel March 2011)
KOAB: Universities are Partners in a Joint Research Project

- **Joint research**
  - Universities and INCHER-Kassel are developing the core questionnaire and the methodology together
  - Every university has its own questionnaire
  - Every university is publishing the results of its own tracer study

- **Service**
  - Central data processing by INCHER – joint database
  - Every university gets customized tables reports (about 500 pages)
  - Benchmarking according to the needs of the universities – no ranking

- **Workshops**
  - INCHER provides training for university staff
  - 4 workshops per year (kick-off, questionnaire development, field phase preparation, data analysis)
  - 1 conference per year
Professionalisation of tracer study researchers

- Training provided by INCHER
- Learning from cooperation partners:
  - Good practice / bad practice
  - Different institutional backgrounds (Researchers, administrative staff, quality management, etc.)
  - Dissemination strategies
  - Methodological testing (e.g. E-mail contacts, address updating)
  - Discussion on questionnaire (e.g. new modules on graduates’ social background; ‘dual’ study programs)
  - Ph.D. theses by project partners
- Annual conference: ‘Day of the universities’ → program planned independently by cooperation partners
Experiences during dissemination process

- Topic with most ‘open questions’
  - 2011: main topic of ‘Day of the universities’
  - Why still so many questions?
  - Difficulty to generalise dissemination
    - Different target groups – different reports
    - Different structures and ‘cultures’ within university administration, e.g. quality assurance units
    - Dedication of people in charge...

\[\textit{[they] are much more useful for the questions that it raises than for the answers it provides (Ewell 1983; p. 62)}\]
Examples of reports

- Local newspaper
  - E.g. on regional mobility of graduates (Kassel, Berlin)
    [http://www.hna.de/lokales/uni/uni-kassel/meisten-bleiben-hier-599014.html](http://www.hna.de/lokales/uni/uni-kassel/meisten-bleiben-hier-599014.html)

- Reports (internal/public)
  - [http://www.uni-muenster.de/absolventenbefragung/ergebnisse.html](http://www.uni-muenster.de/absolventenbefragung/ergebnisse.html)
  - [Absolvierendenbericht PJ 2009_web Copy_goettingen.pdf](AbsolvierendenberichtPJ2009_webCopy_goettingen.pdf)
83% der FOM-Absolventen sind mit dem Studium an der FOM zufrieden bzw. sehr zufrieden. Die FOM erzielt mit Blick auf die Vergleichshochschulen überdurchschnittlich gute Bewertungen.
„Lucky academics!“

26.10.2011

Akademiker im Glück

Absolventen gelingt Traumstart in den Job

Von Frauke Lüpke-Narberhaus

Studium – und dann? Absolventen können mit dem Start ins Berufsleben zufrieden sein

(Source: Spiegel online)
Summary

- Network approach?
  - Not applicable everywhere
  - Goal for the future?

- Networking!
  - Share your experiences (regional network, international network, scientific community)
  - Comparability (e.g. core questions)
  - Good practices
  - Don’t repeat mistakes others made before
  - Promotion of tracer studies