

Aspects of Transition and Professional Success. Some Findings from Austrian Graduate Surveys

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Content of presentation

- Research on graduates
 - transnational surveys: CHEERS, REFLEX
 - Austrian survey: ARUFA
- Some findings
 - transition
 - professional success
 - „employability“
- Why carry out graduate surveys ?
- Some perspectives

CHEERS: data basis

	CHEERS
	Higher Education and Graduate Employment in Europe
Term	1997-2000
Year of graduation	1994/95
Field phase	1999
Teams involved	12
Variables	600
Cases total	40,000
Cases Austria	Ca. 2,300 (universities)
Guggenberger et al 2001; Schomburg, Teichler 2006; Teichler 2011	

REFLEX: data basis

	REFLEX
	The Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society
Term	2004-2007
Year of graduation	1999/2000
Field phase	2004
Teams involved	14+
Variables	400
Cases total	36,000
Cases Austria	1,800 (univ.; some <i>Fachhochschul-Studiengänge</i>)
Allen, van der Velden eds. 2007; Guggenberger et al 2007; Teichler 2011	

ARUFA: design and data basis

The Working Situation of Graduates from Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences

Contracting entity	Federal Ministry of Science and Research, Vienna	
Contractor, coordination	INCHER-Kassel (project leader: Harald Schomburg)	
Subcontractor	Department of Sociology (Helmut Guggenberger)	
Term	01.11.2009 to 31.08.2010 (final report presented 16.05.2011)	
Design	full population survey; internet-based, online questionnaire	
Field phase	12/2009 – 02/2010	
Population	Years of graduation 2003/04 – 2007/08	
	21 Universities, 15 <i>Fachhochschulen</i>	ca. 116,000
Return rate	Cases to be analyzed	ca. 23,800
	Return rate (net)	23 %

Schomburg et al 2010; Guggenberger et al 2011

Professional success

- The following can be considered indicators of “professional success” (cf. Schomburg et al 2010, 9-32):
 - transition types: gainful occupation - vocational training - further study - unemployment / seeking employment - children, family etc.
 - success of the search: length of time spent seeking employment
 - income
 - work characteristics: temporary/permanent
 - work characteristics: part time/full time
 - vertical fit (match)
 - horizontal fit (match)
 - job satisfaction

Transition and professional success (ARUFA data)

	First degree						total
	B-FH	B-U	Mag-FH	Mag-Uni	DI-FH	DI-Uni	
Duration of job search (month; mean)	3.4	5.2	4.2	6.0	3.2	3.7	5.3
Full time employment - first employment (%)	76	54	88	67	94	87	72
Employed for an unlimited period - f.e. (%)	74	61	78	55	82	68	60
Gross income per month - f.e. (€, all; mean)	2,000	1,501	2,321	1,634	2,508	2,229	1,830
Employed for an unlimited period - at time of survey (%)	85	70	91	76	91	81	76
Gross income per month - a.t.o.s. (€, all; mean)	2,347	1,909	2,992	2,388	3,124	2,967	2,544
Use of qualifications - a.t.o.s. (1+2, %)	54	51	54	48	58	55	51
Vertical fit (%)	59	61	74	70	73	75	70
Adequacy (1+2, %)	60	57	70	60	70	71	62
Equivalency (1+2, %)	49	46	55	47	52	48	48
Job satisfaction (1+2, %)	71	70	77	72	81	76	73

Employability

- **“employability”**: Bologna keyword # 1/2
- meanings and definitions
 - fit for labour market
 - fit to meet challenges of profession
 - “a vague term which might be better named ‘professional relevance’” (Teichler 2010)
- **improving employability as a goal**
 - how to measure ?
 - traditional versus new degree programmes ?
- ARUFA data
 - some indicators for “professional success”
 - horizontal and vertical fit
 - job satisfaction, situation meeting expectations

Selected findings

- On the whole, the Austrian university graduates involved in the ARUFA study - astonishingly similar to their predecessors from CHEERS and REFLEX - appear satisfied with their study programmes and with the associated conditions.
- The job satisfaction also appears to be very high - however, we are not in a position to establish a truly “objective” picture based on a survey of students or graduates, and we should therefore not be too certain based only on these results.
- As far as horizontal (use of qualification) and vertical (adequacy of degree) fit are concerned, no really significant problems were revealed; Bachelor graduates are only worse off to a limited extent here, as with regard to other criteria relating to (emerging) professional success.

- The Austrian graduates from the years 2004-2008 reported very positive conditions of employment:
 - high level of job satisfaction,
 - fit of degree level and occupation very high,
 - there is a dominance of occupations in fields that are closely related to the discipline studied.
 - There is no „*Generation Praktikum*“ in sight.
- A more detailed differentiation by gender (level of initial salary ...), field of study and type of degree reveals a number of significant differences.

Current assumptions

- public concern
 - precarious occupation
 - unemployment
 - *Generation Praktikum*
- impacts of the Bologna Process
- Reactions to the presentation of the ARUFA study in May 2011 showed that the question about the extent and significance of internships at the intersections of university system / labour market / system of organised employment remains contentious.
- Generally, some consideration should be given to looking more closely at the reception and the subsequent “fortunes” of graduate studies:
 - effectiveness, (“long-term”) virtue;
 - societal relevance of graduate surveys.

Use of graduate surveys

Graduate studies can lend support to quality management and the steering of universities (cf. Jaeger, Kerst 2010).

- possible fields of action
 - quality development in teaching
 - Career Service
- graduate studies offer
 - information providing a retrospective assessment of the degree courses studied
 - the range and conditions of degrees courses on offer
 - career entry and career path
- design and implementation
 - timing, appropriate address management, expected effort
 - individual university surveys (decentral) / general, representative (centrally implemented) surveys

Perspectives

Design

- periodical graduate surveys
 - to be established in Austria
 - coordination by experts
- improving return rate
 - willingness to participate
- decentralisation or centralisation ?
- etc.

Comparison

- comparability
- different cultures - „Asking the same question?“
 - indicators
 - Wording
- etc.

Much remains to be done in (comparative) Higher Education research!

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