Current Developments of Tracer Studies – the Case in Germany

Plenary Presentation
University of Ljubljana, 27-28 September 2012
By Harald Schomburg, University of Kassel
Until 2007: 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: about 80% of all graduates in Germany

In the KOAB network about 50 % of all graduates from HE institutions in Germany are included
New Tracer Study Systems in Germany 2012
(Kind of systems and number of participating graduates of one cohort)

KOAB Tracer Study Network (n=35,000-70,000)

Rheinland-Pfalz Regional Tracer Study (n=2,500)

Saxon Regional Tracer Study (n=2,500)

Bavarian Regional Tracer Study (n=7,000)
National Graduate Surveys in Germany
Graduation Cohorts 2005 – 2013 (HIS and KOAB)

Number of respondents

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National Graduate Surveys in Germany – Graduation Cohorts
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
  - 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)
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.
KOAB: Key Aspects of Cooperation – Universities are Partner 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 – INCHER gives advice
  - 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
  - 1 conference per year
The KOAB Network Approach in Germany

- KOAB tries to include all regions in Germany (national monitor)
- KOAB was initiated by the universities with support from INCHER - NETWORK APPROACH
- Some regions have own systems like Bavaria, Rheinland-Pfalz and Saxonia
- KOAB is the largest decentralised tracer study system in the world (2009-2012 about 130,000 graduates participated in Germany; costs about 40 Mio US$)
The KOAB-Approach: 10 Key Methodological Aspects

1. Multipurpose surveys (broad scope; about 500 variables)
2. Regularity: Every year one cohort
3. Panel: 1.5 year after graduation + 4.5 years after graduation
4. Generation survey: all kind of degrees (BA + MA + PhD)
5. Census: all graduates, no sampling
6. Standardized online + paper questionnaire
7. Every university has an own questionnaire
8. Network approach, cooperation
9. Training for network members
10. Team of about 100 researchers in Germany
The Training Concept

1. March first year: Kick-off workshop
2. March first year: National conference
3. May first year: SPSS training for beginners
4. May first year: Questionnaire development workshop
5. September first year: Field phase preparation workshop
6. March second year: Data editing, coding and correction workshop
7. March second year: National conference
8. June second year: Advanced methods of data analysis
9. Ad hoc workshops: Special topics like development of Drop-Out surveys; student surveys; new modules of questions
Key Element: Regular Workshops and National as well as International Conferences

Project-coordinators from 35 universities and fachhochschulen during a workshop in Kassel; Sept. 2008
## Schedule of INCHER Tracer Studies 2008 – 2020 (KOAB)

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12.3.2012

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Finished

Schedule
Conceptual Framework for Graduate Surveys

Graduate Survey

**Input**
- Students’ bio data, experiences, motives
- Study conditions and provisions

**Process**
- Teaching and learning

**Output**
- Knowledge, skills, motivation, grades

**Outcomes**
- Transition, employment, work, professional success service to society

Context: Labour market – region – country; socio-economic development and personal development
Key Theoretical Problems of Graduate Surveys

1. Which indicators do we need?

2. How to measure the labour market signals?

3. Which factors are relevant to explain the success of the graduates besides higher education?

4. To what extent is the professional success/career caused by HE?

5. Which elements of HE (study conditions and provisions, etc) have an impact?
The Bridge Concept – Institutional Development and Research

- Quality assurance (accreditation)
- Alumni and career service
- Evaluation, information, marketing
- Vertical match – overreduction/undereducation
- Skills mismatch - study and work
- Study conditions and professional success

Institutional Tracer Study

Institutional Development

Research
Implementation of the New Network Approach of Institutional Tracer Studies

- Address database at the level of HE institution
- Update of addresses by HE institution
- Contacts by letters and/or email
- Combination of paper and online questionnaire
- Four contacts/send outs
- Response rate should be about 50%
Organisation of KOAB at University Level

- INCHER Team
- University Project-coordinator
- University leader
- Project Coordinator Faculty
- Task force
- Project Coordinator Faculty
- Task force
- Task force Career, Alumni, ...
Response Rate of the KOAB Survey 2009, by Higher Education Institution (%)

Source: INCHER, KOAB Graduate Survey 2009; cohort 2007

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The KOAB-Questionnaire: Many Sources

- INCHER graduate survey questionnaire (standard instrument from 1990)
- Other German questionnaires (national, regional and institutional surveys)
- International experiences (CHEERS and REFLEX)
- National and regional workshops 2007 and 2008
- Further comments and recommendations from universities 2010
Three Types of Questions

- Core questions
  - No change necessary

- Optional questions
  - Ready made modules (e.g. self-employment, international mobility)

- Special/individual questions
  - Institutional level
  - Faculty level
  - Study program level
  - Sector level
Main Findings (1)

- Very good employment conditions for graduates from HE institutions in Germany
- Very short job search duration
- Very low rate of unemployment
- No negative effect of economic crisis is visible
- High transition rate to further study of Bachelor graduates
- Often combination of study and employment
Main Findings (2)

- Stability of study conditions: the Bologna process seems NOT to have dramatic effects until now.
- The HE institution attended is not a very important factor for early labour market outcomes - only very small differences visible.
- Vocational orientation of the study programme seems to be the most relevant aspect of the study conditions especially for horizontal match.
Conclusion
Key Issues of Co-operation in the KOAB Network

- Every university has an individual questionnaire (2009: 160 surveys were administrated at the same time by INCHER-Kassel)
- Every university has a project coordinator (=researcher)
- At least 6 training workshops per survey
- Every university received the cleaned data and ready to print table reports of about 500 pages (for one survey about 25,000 pages delivered by INCHER-Kassel)
- Many universities published the results in the internet
- A lot of internal and external dissemination activities
- Dataset with feedback/answers from 130,000 graduates
- Scientific use file of the joint data base for different research objectives
Utilisation of the Results of Tracer Studies

- Benchmark without ranking
- Cooperation and competition
- International comparison
- Professionalisation of tracer study researchers
- Example Germany: network of about 300 persons (researchers and administrators) and joint research project KOAB with 100 researchers
- International network of graduate tracer studies (INGRADNET)
Greetings from the KOAB-Team (Workshop in Kassel March 2011)

Harald Schomburg: Current Developments of Tracer Studies – the Case in Germany
Indonesia: Experiences with Link and Match in Higher Education. Results of Tracer Studies Worldwide. (EXLIMA)

www.exlima2012.org
Etwa 100.000 Hochschulabsolventen werden im Winter 2011/12 befragt


Dienstag, 27 September 2011
Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmersamkeit

Thank you very much for your attention