

ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

And

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON TRACER STUDIES OF PAST UNIVERSITY STUDENTS University of Namibia, 7-11 January 2002

REPORT

Participants from several universities in the SADC region attended a *Workshop on Tracer Studies of Past University Students* at the University of Namibia January 7 -11 2002. (List of Participants attached)

Tracer studies constitute one form of empirical study, which can be considered an appropriate means of evaluating the results of the education and training provided at a given institution. Results of such studies can often demonstrate the success of education and training relating to the graduates, labour market, and employers. The information acquired by means of tracer surveys can also indicate possible deficits in a given educational programme and serve as a basis for future planning activities, such that academic programmes might be brought more closely into line with the needs of the country in question.

The purpose of the workshop was to provide the participants with the theory and methodology of tracer studies as well as the practical skills of how to conduct tracer studies, including development of a master questionnaire, application of the questionnaire; strategies for data analysis and interpretation of the findings; and report writing.

Under the joint-sponsorship of the University of Namibia and the Study Programme of the Association of African Universities (AAU), the workshop was facilitated by Dr. Harald Schomburg of Kassel University, Germany, and Dr. Gerald Kimani of the University of Nairobi, Kenya, and coordinated by Professor Barnabas Otaala, Coordinator of the UNAM Improvement and Learning Unit.

First Day, 7 January 2002

The workshop began with the registration of participants from Universities across the Southern African Region. Members later introduced themselves. Participants indicated their expectations from the workshop. These included: sharpening their skills on the conduct of tracer studies; getting acquainted with procedures for beginning and executing tracer studies; analysis of data from such studies, etc.

There were altogether four plenary sessions facilitated by Harald Schomburg and Gerald. Kimani. The sessions covered:

- Theory and Methodology of Tracer Studies - An Overview
- Experiences with Tracer Studies in Africa
- Tracer Studies in the SADC Region and
- The Approach of the AAU Core Questionnaire.

The sessions dealt with objectives, key theoretical problems encountered, variables that could be measured, models for the analysis of tracer studies in higher education; framework for the studies, data sources and research fields and some methodological problems that surround the execution of tracer studies. Illustrations from the most currently completed tracer study researches in the African continent were used in driving home the above issues.

Second Day- 8 January 2002

The theme for the second day was Development of Master Questionnaire by Participants. The key issues centred on the selection of tasks for the various groups, definition of objectives and building up of the questionnaire. The questions were to be adapted from the Core AAU questionnaire.

The participants were divided into three groups. The first group was to work on: Knowledge, Work and Curriculum Relevance; the second group on Employment Transition and Professional Career; and the third group on Biodata, Course of Study, and Content Connected to a University.

Both the morning and afternoon sessions were spent on the development of the questionnaire and definitions of the objectives under the various groups' areas of study. The questionnaires were later distributed to the participants to role-play the respondents in a tracer study with these themes.

Third Day - 9 January 2002

The facilitators discussed the various tools that could be available for data entry and analysis. These included Basic Method, Use of SPSS, Use of Existing Data Entry Programme and Automatic Data Capture Using Scanner.

Each group concentrated on data entry and analysis of the data from the questionnaires completed by the participants

Fourth Day - 10 January 2002

Group work on data entry and analysis continued on the fourth day under the guidance and supervision of the facilitators. Interested participants were also taken on tour of some areas within Windhoek in the later part of the afternoon.

Final Day - 11 January 2002

The day started with an agreement on an amended programme, namely:

- Data Analysis and Reporting;
- Interpretation of Data and Reporting;
- Organisation and Strategies for Conducting Tracer Studies;
- Evaluation, Further Cooperation and Closing.

Group Reporting: Each group reported on the objectives, procedures adopted in their data entry, programmes used and difficulties encountered. Each group emphasized the active involvement of every member of the group during the process. As some groups had not started analysing their data, the facilitators took the participants through the analysis and interpretation of data using the master data from a tracer study.

Quality Control Measures: The methods of quality control in the entry of data were discussed. These included:

- pre-testing the questionnaires before data collection;
- using the code book and rechecking completed questionnaires;
- ensuring that the data entry clerks were conversant with the structure of the questionnaire; and
- taking a sample of the questionnaire and re-entering the data.

Strategies for Data Analysis: The use of SPSS and the Statistical package developed by Mr Schomburg were illustrated.

Organisation and Strategies for Conducting Tracer Studies: Included definitions of the objectives; development of survey instruments - selection of survey groups, decision on types of evaluation; field research and data analysis; work plan and costing of each phase of the study.

Report Writing: An in-depth discussion on the various phases of writing the report, which is the final stage of the study, was done. The phases were: presentation of facts, figures and other forms of information; interpretation and discussion; and summaries.

Views of Participants: The participants expressed appreciation to the organizers and sponsors of the workshop, and were satisfied with the content of the entire workshop. The general consensus was that:

- there was need for collaborative tracer study of graduates of individual universities within the region;
- the AAU be asked to fund tracer studies within the region;
- participants were to report the outcome of the workshop to the heads of their institutions;
- universities were to come up with clear statements of their areas of interest for the tracer studies, e.g., tracer study of all graduates of the university, or only of graduates of specific faculties or schools in the institution; and
- The Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia was to be informed that the workshop has been completed and that the participants would appreciate if he could take up the matter with the committee of Vice Chancellors of SADC and the AAU.

Closing: The Vice Chancellor, University of Namibia, Professor Peter H. Katjavivi, who was present at the closing ceremony, assured the participants of his preparedness to follow up the outcome of the workshop with discussions at the various committees and ensure that positive results, with regards to funding, are obtained.

The workshop ended with a reception.

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