

CONDUCTING SURVEY AMONG GRADUATES: RECENT EXPERIENCE

N. Mushketova

Volgograd state university, Volgograd, Russian Federation

The research of higher education quality was carried out from June to December of 2005 by survey among Volgograd graduates within the framework of the international contract about cooperation between Volgograd state university and Research institute of sociology and economy of education (Burgundian university, France).

Volgograd state university and Research Institute of sociology and economy of education implemented the research within the framework of program ECO-NET «Transition of higher education graduates into the labor market in European countries».

Target population was 2000 Volgograd university graduates who graduated university between 2000 and 2002. It was also the sample because research was carried out like census.

The survey purpose was gathering of the information concerning the assessment of the education quality by university graduates.

Research problems:

- definition of sample frame;
- writing of the covering letter to the questionnaire;
- specification of questions in the questionnaire;
- dispatch of questionnaires with a return address envelopes;
- reception and the preliminary analysis of answers;
- definition of educational process perfection;
- drawing up the report of research results;

Registration of results was made in the report on the research according to the contract. It consists of the experiment description, the statistical analyzing of the information received during questioning and the definition of education improvement.

According to the contract the faculty of the Marketing Department sent out 3500 questionnaires to graduates. The content of the covering letter was written by the faculty of the Marketing Department. According to the methodology of the Research institute the dispatch of questionnaires was carried out in 3 stages:

- 1) dispatch of 2000 questionnaires to 2000 addresses;
- 2) repeated dispatch of 1000 questionnaires to the same addresses, excepting answered (or left from corresponding addresses);
- 3) repeated dispatch of 500 questionnaires to the address from which there were no replies.

The tool of research was the questionnaire consisting of questions blocks, devoted: to education (including extended) before entering university and to the received qualification, major; to problems of employment; to the first work after finishing of university; situations with the work developed at present; the organizations in which the graduate works today; to self evaluation of professional qualities and their

correspondence to job requirements; to opinion of education quality; to the personal data.

Stages of work:

1. June, 2005 - a preparatory stage:
 - 1.1. Work in the university archive resulted in the list of 2000 addresses of graduates 2000 - 2002 (all departments and branches of VolSU, all forms of education).
 - 1.2. Phone calls to graduates according to the list of addresses. During communication graduate relatives agreed to transfer the questionnaire to former graduates. If there was no answer, new telephone numbers of graduates were specified through automatic telephone station. We could specify 2 - 3 % of addresses and received agreement of former graduates to act as respondents.
2. July, 2005. Dispatch of 2000 letters with questionnaires and with return address envelopes. The first answers from graduates were received at the end of August.
3. September, 2005. Dispatch of 1000 letters to those graduates who have not answered.
4. November, 2005. Repeated dispatch of 500 letters to those graduates who did not answer at the previous stages.

So 286 questionnaires has been received by 6 of December 2005, 100 letters have returned because of wrong addresses. Table №1 describes results of questionnaires dispatch and reception of answers.

From the data of Table №1, we can draw a conclusion, that the greatest activity of respondents was observed at the first stage of dispatch (10,2%). At the second stage it is lower, but for repeated dispatch is high enough. A good result of the second stage was determined by following. Respondents who have changed the address nevertheless have sent the letter by means of their relatives.

Table №1

Post dispatch

Stage of work	Quantity of sent letters	Received answers				Return of the questionnaire without the answer	
		Quantity	% of returned answered questionnaires at the given stage	% of return as a whole	The relation of % of return with answers to total dispatch	Quantity	% of return without answers
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
June 2005	2000	204	10,2%	10,2%	10,2%	86	4,3%

(first dispatch)							
September 2005 (second dispatch)	1000	69	6,9%	17,1%	9,1%	12	1,2%
November 2005 (third dispatch)	500	10	5%	8,1%	8,1%	0	0%
Total	3500	283	-	8,1%	8,1%	100	2,8%

Analyzing Table №1, we can draw the following conclusion. It is better to carry out survey within one stage, than within three stages with the same quantity of the dispatched questionnaires. Dispatch efficiency of the 1-st stage was 10,2%. If all 3500 questionnaires were dispatched in the 1-st stage than we could expect 357 returned questionnaires (10,2% from 3500). Thus, in the Russian research practice, if sample can be increased, repeated dispatch to the same addresses is inexpedient because of low efficiency.