

Measuring skill needs through employers' surveys: problems and methods

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- It is difficult to measure skills directly. Skill needs are generally assessed indirectly

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 - Skills that are necessary for a given occupation change over time.

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 - 2 Indirect costs: not directly related to the survey (i.e. costs borne by entrepreneurs in answering the survey).

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 - 2 Future vacancies: (generally within 1 year). Look at the future but introduces subjectivism (entrepreneurs' expectations).
Examples "Excelsior" in Italy and "Panel enterprises forecasts" in France.

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- *Limitation* they may not allow to have a clear assessment of structural problems.

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 - Necessary to estimate these factors: sector of production, firms' organisation and innovations, relevance of foreign trade etc.

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- The major example is the OES conducted in the US, semi-annual mail survey that measures occupational employment and wages in 200 000 nonfarm establishments. 3-year window for a total of 1 200 000. It collects information on occupation and on associated earnings.

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- *Degree of subjectivism*: rather objective. If skill gaps are assessed then a certain degree of subjectivism is included.
- *Coverage* Low National level (UK and Germany). At European level there is the “Structure of earning survey (2002 and 2006)”. It is focussed on earning but also has detailed information on earnings

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 - Direct costs. Necessary much and detailed information; however low frequency helps costs, also no need of short lags between data collection and processing. Postal surveys are cheap but low response rates.
 - Indirect costs. Heavy burden on employers. Mainly on small firms that do not have a personnel dept. Moreover in small firms classification distinction is often vague. In the US employers are “helped” by sector specific surveys that provide specific examples of each occupation.

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- *Coverage* National level, several countries (Germany, Italy, UK etc.). At European level this issue is well covered by European Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) .

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- *Limitations*: difficult to distinguish between the need for new skills and the simple updating of existing skills.