

## Graduates of New University Careers: Unequal Competition on the Labour Market

Egresados de nuevas carreras universitarias: Competir desigualmente en el mercado de trabajo

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## Summary

The purpose of the study is to describe the process of job insertion in a context of the local labour market of the graduates to identify traits of discrimination originated by their hybrid professional profile<sup>1</sup>. A case study and a qualitative approach were used to investigate the graduates of the first two generations of the Business Sciences Degree of a small Mexican public university. The results contradict the advantages attributed to hybrid university careers, far from facilitating the incorporation to the work, it found that hybrid graduates compete of unequal way for job offers due to two situations: lack of social knowledge of their profession by all employers that originates the absence of demand of these professionals, and lack of professional identity of graduates that causes they are unable to justify and defend the usefulness of their hybrid training.

**Keywords:** Higher education, university, graduates, employment, education, job insertion.

## Resumen

El objetivo del trabajo es describir el proceso de inserción laboral en un contexto de mercado de trabajo local de los egresados para identificar rasgos de discriminación originados por su perfil profesional híbrido<sup>2</sup>; mediante un estudio de caso y un enfoque cualitativo se investigó a los egresados de las dos primeras generaciones de la Licenciatura en Ciencias Empresariales de una pequeña universidad pública mexicana. Los resultados contradicen las ventajas atribuidas a las carreras universitarias híbridas, pues lejos de facilitar la incorporación al trabajo se encontró que los egresados híbridos compiten de manera desigual por las ofertas de trabajo debido a dos situaciones: la falta de conocimiento social de su profesión por el conjunto de empleadores que origina la ausencia de demanda de dichos profesionistas y, la falta de

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1 In Mexican higher education there are tendencies of transversal specialties that allude to polyfunctionality and multidisciplinary, they have given rise to a supply of “new” university careers. In this study, according to specialists and without any desire to give it a pejorative meaning, they are called hybrid careers.

identidad profesional de los egresados que ocasiona que no sean capaces de justificar y defender la utilidad de su formación híbrida.

**Palabras clave:** Educación superior, universidad, egresados, educación y empleo, inserción laboral.

## Introduction

### Contextualization and problematization of the theme.

According to diagnoses made by international organizations that allude to new demands of the labour market and the recommendations of those responsible for national educational planning, the Mexican higher education system has undertaken actions such as revising university *curriculum*, adaptation of professional profiles, creation and offer of university careers that mix two or more traditional disciplines resulting in hybrid careers (DGEST, 2009; CUP, 2009; Barrón & Gómez, 2004). For example, from the year 2009 the subsystem of the National Technological of Mexico offers “Engineering Business Management”, technological universities offer “Engineering on Development and Business Innovation” and “Engineering Administration”, while Polytechnic universities offer “Financial Engineering and Project Management”. In these three cases, the new educational options replace the traditional and well-known Degree in Business Administration. The justification is that hybrid professional training re-funtions professions into more flexible schemes and allows graduates to join to job with greater advantages and facilities because this responds to the demands of the current labour market characterized by being multipurpose, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary (Dahrendorf, 1986; Psacharopoulos, 2005).

The few studies carried out in Mexico on hybrid university graduates have found two problems: the low social recognition<sup>3</sup> of the profession originated by the ignorance of the profile of hybrid graduate and the absence of professional identity among the individuals who hold that career (Jiménez, 2009; Damián, 2015). This problem represents an emerging field in educational research because this career is little known and therefore it opens great possibilities to generate knowledge that respond to new questions on professional development processes, as well as social and labour situations

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3 The literature refers to the category “social recognition” of the profession, for obtaining this category it requires to elapse some time after job insertion and to be able to evaluate the grade of contribution of the profession to the needs of society. In this study, due to the period of time that has elapsed is very short, the term “social knowledge” of the profession is used throughout the text.

that live this type of graduates when entering the labour market and in this case it is necessary to point out or show the follies of offering this type of professions. From the previous situations, it was necessary to carry out a study on the conditions in which the graduate with hybrid training of the Business Science Degree (BSD) has to compete for his job insertion, in front of the graduates of administrative careers well known by the set of employers, because from his experience the graduate faces a discriminatory labour market and with disadvantages compared to the graduates of traditional careers. In order for the reader to be placed in the context of the problem studied, the situation is described a little more.

The BSD started activities in October 2005 and for the 2016 school year has received eleven generations of which have already graduated the first seven. According to informal talks with some graduates, they mentioned that, in their job search, the companies or the employers do not have information on the labour field of the profession and they do not know the figure of the BSD, situation that from their own imaginary causes that they have to compete for jobs of unequal way with the professionals of related areas such as administrators and accountants, because these traditional careers enjoy social recognition from employers. In other words, they are facing a discriminatory labour market by competing unequally in the professional area. Studying this emerging research is important because it will contribute to the generation of information bases on an empirical research to know the situation of discrimination that graduates with hybrid university education face during the process of job insertion in a poorly industrialized region of the state of Oaxaca. Higher Education Institutions (HEI) have two objectives to offer hybrid educational programs: 1) respond to the current demands of the labour market by forming flexible and multipurpose professionals, and 2) increase job opportunities for hybrid graduates in contrast to those coming from traditional careers (Damián, 2015a). For that reason, there is an interest to carry out a study that allows to evaluate in the BSD these basic objectives and the congruence between the hybrid university *curriculum* and

the new demands of the labour market (Barrón & Gómez, 2004). For all that, the principal purpose of the research was to describe the process of job insertion in a local labour market context of the BSD graduates, with the aim of identifying features of discrimination originated by their hybrid professional profile.

### **Theoretical and conceptual framework.**

#### ***Background to the hybrid university professions.***

It is necessary to restructure the offer of higher education for three reasons: 1) greater flexibility, adaptability and relevance of professional training to respond to the current occupational context characterized by rapid changes in job qualification requirements; 2) unpredictability, indeterminacy, adaptability, learning ability and continuous training are characteristics of the world of work and which education must respond (Muñoz & Rodríguez 2004; Barrón 2005) and; 3) the emergence of new forms and tendencies of organization, differentiation, identity and delimitation of generation and appropriation of knowledge. Many traditional professions have clear definitions, limitations and identities of their area are also subject to tensions and questions arising from the emergence of new hybrid or transdisciplinary fields that offer new compositions, demarcations, limits and identities between diverse knowledge, fertile field for the offer of hybrid university careers which -in theory- form the human resources that respond to the demands of the new organization of work (Universia, 2009; DGEST, 2009; CUP, 2009).

#### ***Hybrid university professions: purposes and characteristics.***

Occupations are classified into three major groups: 1) new occupations, which did not exist some years ago, 2) occupations in transformation that although they maintain their traditional name have been transformed and incorporated new contents and functions and, 3) emerging occupations that represent responses to the emerging needs of individuals and enterprises.

Occupations in transformation include hybrid professional that they have a background in two or more fields of knowledge and use it to exercise an occupation that takes place on the border between two or more disciplines (Damián, 2014). According to Jiménez (2009a), a hybrid profession is characterized by its “*curriculum* was designed from the convergence of two recognized disciplines”, it is understood that each disciplines, that are mixed to give way to hybridization, have a clear and specific delimitation of their field of action; in addition the term of interdisciplinary profession is used to explain that it is a profession in which the “concepts and methods of two disciplines are articulated and subsumed in a common object and in a determined problematic” (p.59).

Holguín (2011) mentions that the hybrid university formation breaks the paradigm of specialization and at the same time provides a double opportunity to the graduate because in case of being employed in a company, by its hybrid formation can work in more than two areas, in other words, graduate can compete for various job options. Nevertheless, Paéz (2009) points out that hybrid university graduates are in an area of professional ambiguity because they move between the frontiers of the disciplines that they articulate without a marked limitation of their professional performance. In relation to the above, Damián (2015) found that these professionals generally tend to “invade” the field of action of traditional professionals or they become the “wild card” of companies, in other words, they have to do activities of an administrative nature that do not require specialized knowledge. Sáez (2007) mentions three characteristics of the hybrid professional: 1) his field of professional performance is more difficult than that of the professional specialist because in his beginnings the professional does not know what knowledge or works he covers or with what intensity; 2) the specialist professional chooses a field of knowledge and is limited to the technical complexity, but hybrid professional has a broader mission because his involvement will be for the solution of major problems requiring more complex and multidisciplinary approaches; and 3) the hybrid professional does not stop being a specialist

in something, but he has to be less specialist than the many specialists, although enough to have a fluid and operative dialogue with the specialists. For the hybrid professional, there is no point between much of nothing or little of much, in other words, he does not have a clear delimitation of his professional performance<sup>4</sup> (Jiménez, 2009b; Paéz, 2009).

### ***Professional identity and social recognition in hybrid professionals.***

According to an individual form and a subjective understanding of the professional career, it is important to ask how individuals give meaning to their careers, personal histories, abilities, attitudes and beliefs they have acquired (Arnold & Jackson, 1997; as quoted in Jenschke, 2004). The above matters because one of the factors that contribute to the diligence in the search for the first job is when the graduate is fully aware of the role that will play in the framework of the professional field. Therefore some approaches suggest that, during their professional training, individuals do not only have to worry about acquiring their own university career skills, but also building a career identity (Miejers, 1998), moreover the individual base models (cognitive-transactional theory, cognitive-behavioral theory and dissonance theory) and the integral models (Vitamin Model) mention that when analyzing the job insertion of an individual are related individual and contextual aspects that play a crucial role in that process.

According to Ávila & Cortés (2007, p.54), the professional identity is “that representation that is created around a specific field of work which is recognized in society and among a group of individuals who identify themselves as members of the same field, whose characteristic is to share this social representation of the profession and its sense of belonging”. Hatum & Rivarola (2007, p.27) define professional identity as the “set of habits that a person has developed in the scope of his work and potential projection of others to cultivate in the future”. Having a professional identity

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4 Colloquially and as a joke some graduates, according to their experience in the development of their work activities, call themselves “*hybrid transformer*” or “*thousand uses*”.



implies belonging to a certain group, identifying yourself as a professional in a specific field of action, with a high level of professional qualification and with institutional support and recognition; and this supposes the existence of social recognition in the collective imagination, existing a clear and defined idea of what it implies to belong to that profession. Currently, in the forms of work organization based on individualism, the central thing is personal fulfillment, in a context of strong competition there is a situation of permanent identity crisis (Dubar, 2000). For all that, is understood the reason why the hybrid professions lack of a referent in the social imaginary, which it means a lack of clarity about the field of work performance and lack of definition in the profile of the subject as a professional, this contributes to hinder the formation of their professional identity. Individuals that study hybrid professions have great difficulties in forming their professional identity, according to three reasons (Meijers 1998; Dubar 2000; Jenschke 2004):

- a. There is no representation in the social imaginary (employers/society) of the work of the hybrid professional. There is no frame of reference and this causes the graduate assimilates some model of profession that preceded to its hybrid formation, linking its professional practice to a traditional career and distorting the objective of the hybrid formation.
- b. Due to there is no practical reference framework, professional preparation is mostly theoretical, based on the needs and demands that those responsible for national educational planning “claim” to have detected according to the diagnoses of labour markets, without this means the actual existence of such needs.
- c. Teachers have traditional careers, causing a bias in the training process and making an indecisive interpretation of the professional field, in other words, students who have a hybrid profession lack an external reference of the professional in the discipline to which they are going to dedicate, a serious situation if one takes into account that the professional identity begins to be generated from the university classrooms. In the case of the educational program analyzed, there are no teachers with the BSD that serve as an external reference of the work practice for the students.

Another variable that influences in the job insertion of graduates is the social recognition of the profession, referred to as “the valuation of certain professions according to different socioeconomic strata. This includes the social assessment of the professional’s word (recognition of professional and/or intellectual authority) and acceptance of certain professions in certain social circles” (Bobadilla & Torres, 2002:98). Thus the recognition, by the community, of the importance of the service provided by professionals is constituted in its main source of prestige, it is also associated fundamentally both to the social utility of the profession and to the impossibility of being exercised by persons not qualified for it (Caso & Calonge, 2001). Juárez (1993) mentions that for a profession to be officially recognized and accepted must meet at least three conditions: have an official recognition of the field of their knowledge that can be transmitted and certified, have an area of activity defined and legitimized by the scientific community, and have an ethical code that regulates the exercise of the profession.

Regarding the problem of the low social recognition of the hybrid professions, De Ibarrola (2007) affirms that the school system has oriented young people to new types of professions, however, this intention of change has not been the result of a harmonious development between the education system and the productive system, but rather of political decisions derived from recommendations of international organisms to overcome the arrears of our country. This shows a marked contradiction between international and national context, between globalization and local development situation of our country. However, in our country it continue to design and offer hybrid university careers without taking into account the very particular needs of each region in which universities are inserted (Planas, 2014). These three large subsystems mentioned at the beginning offer in all their campuses no matter they are located in urban and industrialized areas or in rural areas with an incipient or null development of the business fabric.

### ***Business Science Degree (BSD).***

To contextualize the problem studied, a historical outline of the educational program that the graduates who participated in the research were presented. BSD has its antecedents in the Technological University of the Mixteca (TUM) located in the city of Huajuapán of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, Mexico, it was the first university that offered this career in the year 1994 with the purpose of training high-level professionals for their incorporation into productive processes (Paz & Herrera, 2010). In 1998 was offered at the University of the South Sierra (UNSOS) located in Mihuatlán of Porfirio Díaz city, Oaxaca; in 2002 was offered at the University of the Isthmus (UNISTHMUS) campus Ixtepec, Oaxaca; and in August 2005 was offered at the University of Papaloapan (UNPA) campus Tuxtepec, Oaxaca. These four universities are part of the System of State Universities of Oaxaca (SSUO), an educational project whose objective is to offer higher education to groups of young people with marked socioeconomic disadvantages, for that the institutions are located in geographical areas where they can attract this type of young people<sup>5</sup>.

The current *curriculum* of the career was elaborated in the TUM and transferred in full to the other three universities, without taking into account the characteristics of each region. There is no information about the group of specialists who carried out the curricular design, reasons for its denomination, or that it has responded to the results of a feasibility study (Damián, 2015). In other words, in practice TUM serves as the governing body where vertically dictate the guidelines and changes that will be carried out in the *curriculum* of the educational program, these orders have to comply with the other institutions of the system. Regarding the professional profile and field of action of the BSD, attending the characteristics of a hybrid university formation that results to be multipurpose and multidisciplinary, it pretends

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5 Currently, SSUO does not have a legal figure to support it, authorities mentions that is in the process of registration and legal recognition.

that at the end of his university education the graduate enters a wide range of labour sectors or do it independently, such a described below:

Profile of the graduate: The BSD will be a professional of the scientific administration for his incorporation in the productive processes of the State and the region, will be a professional satisfied in his needs of personal improvement and interested in investigation, *will fully cover the needs generated by the business activity*. [Cursives ours implicitly show the hybrid formation]. His principal activity is in the private sector in specific areas such as administration, finance, purchasing, marketing, industrial relations, logistics and industrial and commercial sector planning. The graduate also has broad labour prospects in state-owned enterprises and cooperatives, he can act as an independent agent for the promotion and consultancy on organization, management and control.

Action field: The BSD has broad professional development opportunities in public and private organizations, national or foreign, performing at managerial and decision-making levels in areas such as administration, finance, marketing, human resources and logistics; or the graduated can perform independently as consultant in subjects such as organization and management of company, development and evaluation of investment projects, among others.

Synthesizing this section of theoretical framework, it can say that everything seems to indicate that the BSD is the answer to the exigencies of professional formation that the organizations demand, according to the new forms of work organization that privilege multidisciplinary rather than specialization. Thus, with profile of the graduate (which goes beyond specialization) and action field (which lacks a specific delimitation), the graduate is expected to attend to the diverse needs and requirements of the business environment. For this reason it emphasizes that their work performance will be in four specific areas: administration, finance, marketing and human resources (industrial relationships), being easy to identify the hybridization process of the BSD because the four areas that have been

integrated in this program correspond independently to university careers that traditionally and for decades have been offered in most HEI in Mexico under the denominations of Degree in Administration, Degree in Finance, Degree in Marketing and Degree in Industrial Relationships, which have their own egress profile and a delimited field of action, offer specific, technical or specialized training. Situation that is intended to overcome with the merger of these giving rise to a hybrid university education as BSD, where hardly the graduate can develop a professional identity that makes him feel part of a community of professionals and that causes little social knowledge of the profession by all employers.

### **Method**

The research was exploratory and descriptive with a qualitative approach, it worked with phenomenology because it studies a phenomenon and how it is perceived, experienced and lived by a person (Husserl, 1986; Creswell, 1998), provides the inter-subjectivity and intuition to understand socio-educational phenomena and to describe the reality lived by others (Gurdián, 2007; Patton, 2002). It used the study of cases because our interest was a particular situation: know the detail of the interaction of the case with its contexts (Stake, 2010) and the complexity of the job insertion process of the graduates of the BSD as hybrid professionals to obtain evidences and to understand the situations of discrimination that lived in that process.

The population studied were the first two generations of graduates of the BSD, because they were the first graduates with a hybrid university formation in the area of influence of the university to want entering in the labour market. It considered that they would face greater challenges and difficulties for their insertion in the work in spite of the prestige of the university, because according to a study of Ranking Web of the 68 public and private HEI established in the state of Oaxaca, the University of Papaloapan (UNPA) occupied the 4th place. This ranking is based on four evaluation criteria: presence, openness, excellence and impact (Arellano & Solar, 2016). The sample was not statistic because qualitative research and case studies

do not pursue generalization, but rather particularization and understand the case in depth. The inclusion criteria for the selection of graduates were two: level of job insertion (early and late incorporation) and career path (number of jobs held). Through the “snowball” sampling technique, other informants were added to key initial informants, stopping sampling according to the saturation principle. Some graduates refused to participate in the study mentioning that “*they were disillusioned of the University and that they did not want to know anything of it*”. These comments and their refusal to provide information were not an obstacle to the investigation, this constituted clear evidence of a problem that deserved to be investigated. The most representative characteristics of the ten students who participated in the research are shown in Table 1. It is important to note that three students out of ten came from the middle socioeconomic level and the other low strata; of the five graduates, four did so in an average of one-and-a-half years after completing university training and one in two years.

**Table 1.**

*General data of the graduates who participated in the study.*

<b>Name*</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Career path</b>	<b>Current job</b>	<b>Reason to study BSD</b>
<b>Maria (MA1GE1)</b>	No	2 jobs	Yes	Due to economic problems and the BSD was the only option.
<b>Rosa (RO2GE2)</b>	Yes	2 jobs	Yes	The name sounded “cool” and different from the ones she knew.
<b>Tamara (TA1GE3)</b>	No	2 jobs	Yes	By proximity to home and her parents do not allow to go to another city.
<b>Lourdes (LO1GE4)</b>	Yes	3 jobs	Yes	Parents wanted “to move in the business world”.
<b>Amanda (AM1GE5)</b>	No	1 job	Yes	Unique option apart from the Technological of Tuxtepec.
<b>Jonas (JO2GE6)</b>	Yes	3 jobs	No	Near home and recommendation of acquaintances studying here.
<b>Gina (GI1GE7)</b>	No	1 job	Yes	Another option aside from the Technological and because it was “a new career”.
<b>Antony (AN2GE8)</b>	Yes	1 job	No	He did not want to go to of the Technological and was struck by the name of the career.
<b>Leonel (LE1GE9)</b>	No	None	No	He wanted to study Civil Engineering or Architecture, because of limited financial resources he chose the BSD.
<b>Jerry (JE2GE10)</b>	Yes	2 jobs	Yes	He wanted to study a different career than those offered by other schools.

\*According to the criterion of confidentiality, the real names were changed.

Own elaboration with data obtained in the interviews to the participating.

According to the review of the literature on the subject, an interview guide was designed that included five variables with their corresponding dimensions: previous work before graduating, search for the first job, characteristics of the first job, current employment and hybrid training. It used the corresponding guide and ten graduates were interviewed, who provided information to analyze and describe their employment insertion as hybrid university professionals. In order to obtain the information, it was initially requested the participation of two graduates, then they recommended other colleagues who thought they might be able to collaborate with the study. The context of the interview development was varied because in some cases were

carried out at the university facilities (teacher's cubicles), taking advantage of the occasion in which graduates came to request reports on their university degree, in the work centers of the graduates and other public places such as cafes, restaurants and libraries. In all cases, interviews were recorded on an audio system and later they were transcribed for their respective analysis and obtaining of the diverse categories.

For the analysis of the information, content analysis was used given the amount of data obtained in the interviews, this technique was adequate to be a "procedure for the categorization of verbal or behavioral data, for classification, summary and tabulation purposes" (Fox, 1981, p. 709). In order for the content analysis to allow a rich interpretation of the information, this was carried out to manifest level and latent level (Espín, 2002). In other words, firstly reference was made to the literal meanings of what graduates said, using the direct transcription of their answers according to a determined code, and limiting us to the classification and counting of the terms used (categories); secondly it tried to go further than what was said literally, trying to reconstruct what the graduate said through the action of carrying out an inference of the results obtained (Álvarez-Gayou, 2005; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). A simple language described the process of job insertion in a comprehensible way, with narratives and broad descriptions, trying not to be so technical and giving the opportunity to readers to make their own interpretations of the case.

## **Results**

The most important results that were obtained are presented in three sections. First, it describes the situations that the graduates lived in the interviews to obtain the first job. Second, their views are presented after the interview about the role played by their hybrid career in the attainment of employment. Finally, the situation of the BSD with regard to accountants and administrators in the field of work is described.



## **During the interview to get the first job.**

According to the information provided on the situations that the graduates lived during the interview to get the first job, two categories emerged that describe the difficulties or forms of unfair competition faced by graduates of the BSD with graduates of traditional university careers.

### ***Category 1. Lack of social knowledge of the profession.***

The social recognition of a profession is the valuation that society grants to it or recognition for the importance of service provided by professionals (Bobadilla & Torres 2002; Casado & Calonge, 2001), and that is a profession officially recognized and accepted in its objectives, functions, activities, tasks and areas with professional identity (Juárez, 1993). Therefore there is a correlation between the level of social recognition of a profession with the demand of the respective professional, if profession is unknown to employers so its demand in the labour market will be null or low. This first category represented a factor of unfair competition or discrimination for the job insertion of the graduates according to their own imaginary, because as they did not find job offers where BSD was specifically requested they had to go to interviews issued for graduates of traditional careers and positioned in the collective imagination of the employers of local companies. Maria commented:

“They interviewed me, everything was fine, only that the licensee told me that they preferred for the position a person who had studied Accounting. He asked me about how many accounting subjects I had taken in the career and on other subjects. Next week, they called me and i got the job. However, all the colleagues told me accountant, at first I told them: ‘I am not accountant’. But I was always the accountant for them (MA1GE1)”.

The previous situation is corroborated by Antony who faced the obstacle of competing for a job that from the point of view of the employer

corresponded to a graduate of the Degree in Accounting. However, he mentioned that for unknown reasons he was chosen to fill the vacancy:

“I went to the accounting office because it had requested staff through the State Employment Service. I did well in the interview, only they mentioned me that they wanted someone from the Accounting career to have faster training, but that they would give me the opportunity and call me later. They called me to start working the third day (AN2GE8)”.

In the two previous cases, the graduates report that their hybrid university career was unknown to employers, this meant that they had to compete unequally with other candidates who held university credentials well-known in companies. Thus, others faced serious questions about their university career that did nothing to get the first job:

“I have not got a job until now but to the two interviews I was almost always the same. They know the UNPA but they do not know anything about the business career. So, they ask you many questions and that has been difficult for me (LE1GE9)”.

To the lack of social knowledge of the profession is added the lack of professional identity of graduates, so the graduates in a limited way try to “sell and convince” employers about the usefulness of their vocational training, in other words, in practice the university has transferred the graduates the responsibility to make known the relevance of their professional training to companies in the region as they referred it:

“They almost always told me or asked me in the interview: What is that career? What does it consist of? Those who interview us do not know where to find us or if we are really going to be able to work. So, we have to convince them that we are prepared to do administrative, accounting, financial and sales work (TA1GE3)”.

Lourdes lived the same situation of labour discrimination due to the lack of social knowledge of the BSD, she competed with two candidates in the final stage of the selection interview: a Bachelor in Economics and another in Accounting. She said that she felt very overwhelmed and questioned by the type of training she held unlike the other two candidates who were never asked about their university career:

“When the boss of human resources interviewed me, she told me that she had read the job application and my CV but that she had to ask me some questions. She “bombardeó” me with many questions about the career: What was the career of Business Sciences? What subjects were the strongest in the career? Whether they had been matters of administration, accounting, finance. She told me: ‘I’m sorry but this is the first time I’ve heard of this career and it’s not clear to me what they are preparing for you’. So, I continue explaining to her about Business Sciences (LO1GE4)”.

It is striking that in some cases graduates directly indicated that having a university career unknown to the employers caused that they had not been hired. This happened to Jonas who looked for work in the city of Veracruz and commented:

“Was in TELMEX where they requested staff for administrative areas, there I began to have difficulties. I remember that in the interview the lady of human resources took care of me very kindly, everything was fine until she read the request and told me: ‘You say that you studied Business Sciences, and what is this? I have never heard of that career’. So, in general I explained to her that it is a career very similar to Business Administration and that we can almost do the same as them. The girl took notes and finally told me that I was fine but that the requirement that I did not meet was to be titled. I think she said it as an exit because I consider that not knowing the career made it difficult for her to process the selection (JO2GE6)”.

Unequally competing with graduates of traditional careers is a situation that is repeated and not limited only to the experiences of those like Lourdes

and Jonas who looked for job in cities outside the state of Oaxaca, but also in those who looked for the first job in companies located in the city where the university is established, as expressed by Amanda who attended an interview in a self-service store:

“It was in Chedraui, they needed a Human Resources Assistant and I went to the interview although the requested profile was of Degree in Administration or related areas, we were 20 candidates. The licentiate was surprised by the business career because he was not from here, he asked me if that career had time and I explained to him that no, that in fact I was of the first generation. So, he asked me about the HR issues I had seen in the career, he told me that he would evaluate my request and that if they were interested they would call me, that never happened. I really felt very bad, sad (AM1GE5)”.

The unfair competition for the jobs and the discrimination of the graduate of the BSD with other professionals by the lack of social knowledge of the career originated that in some cases, although the employers did not know the career of Business Sciences, they decided to give graduates the opportunity to join the company to work in order to “test them” and “know what they could do” or how they performed in their assigned work, as happened to Gina who commented:

“In COMPARTAMOS they treated me well. The personal of human resources told me that I was the first with the business career they were hired and that would be pending of my performance for future hires. After a year, I realized that in another branch had hired a graduate of the second generation so I think I have done well (GI1GE7)”.

Other cases like Jerry’s, the interviewees attribute to having obtained their first job due to the prestige that the university has gained in the city due to its very demanding work system and not because the employers knew its university career, so he commented:

“I have always been treated well even though I agree with most of the colleagues that interviewers even ask me questions about the career, because the career is not known unlike the Accountants and Administrators [graduates] of the Technological (JE2GE10)”.

In Rosa’s case there were no difficulties finding the first job because she joined a company owned by a relative, however, she mentioned that the general administrator of this company had many doubts about her professional profile and to assign her activities or functions that could develop:

“Even though the owner of the business is my uncle, he introduced me to a gentleman who is something like his manager and told him to explain to me about the job. There was no interview to get the job, the purpose of this presentation was that the administrator wanted to know what I had studied, what I knew how to do, etc. to assign me the works or to help him in things he was doing (RO2GE2)”.

### ***Category 2. Lack of professional identity.***

Professional identity implies belonging to a certain group, identifying oneself as a professional in a delimited or specific field, with a high level of professional qualification, enjoy institutional support and recognition, have a clear and defined idea of what it means to belong to that profession (Ávila & Cortés, 2007; Hatum & Rivarola, 2007). Throughout their training, the university graduate develops a professional identity that gives him a certain level of security and confidence in job interviews because he knows the delimitation of his professional act and can give reasons on the areas of the company where he can perform. Nevertheless, this second category contributed –according to the imaginary of the interviewees– to a certain extent to discrimination and to hinder their early labour insertion because when the employers questioned them about their university career, professional profile and the functions they could perform, graduates could hardly give reason or defense of the same. This coincides with the theory that hybrid professionals develop a low professional identity and have

problems to delimit their professional performance. This is corroborated by the interviewees who mentioned:

“Who study Business Sciences we have problems to know exactly what to dedicate ourselves in comparison with others, for example, my first job was in a small publishing company as an accounting assistant, although I know that I am not an accountant but there we carry it (TA1GE3)”.

In other cases, graduates recognize that they were questioned by employers in job interviews about their hybrid career, they were not able to explain or half-do a “good defense” of it and they never imagined that they had to face this problem. This puts them at a disadvantage compared to graduates of careers already positioned in the set of employers:

“Almost in all the interviews that I was always asked about the career and I “half explain” what it consists of and I say half explain because it is the truth. I was not prepared for it, I never thought they did not know the business career and I had to “sell” it or convince of how good the career in interviews is (JO2GE6)”.

### **After the interview to get the first job.**

Completed job interview and according to the result of the same, graduates expressed their opinion about the role played by their hybrid university education for their labor insertion. As in the previous section, the interviewees refer constantly to the lack of knowledge of their university career in companies as a negative factor and as a factor of discrimination in order to find the first job, as described below.

### ***Category: Lack of social knowledge of the profession.***

This category corroborated the lack of social knowledge of BSD for employers, who did not have a clear delimitation of the professional

performance of the graduates had confusion and difficulties to identify the various jobs that they can carry out and to offer them jobs. Repeatedly, graduates report that the lack of social knowledge places them at a disadvantage compared to university graduates who enjoy wide recognition from employers:

“They asked me many times: What does someone who studied your career do? What are they good at? It is difficult to be saying that we know a little of everything. I noticed that I was not convinced with that answer to the interviewer. I had the impression that he imagined that I was not clear on what kind of work I was good (MA1GE1)”.

Ignorance of the career by employers caused discouragement in some interviewees although at the beginning they were lively. This situation is serious because theorists claim that having a positive attitude is a very important individual factor to successfully confront the process of finding the first job. Tamara described this situation very well:

“It’s a little complicated to say about this because it is everything. ¡Wow! [Colloquial expression in the region] How to explain. For example, the career is good, they prepare us well, so one goes with much encouragement to the interviews and ¡oh! you find a barrier: they do not know what is a Business Science Degree and that discourages you, you feel like a rare being compared to other people who have well-known careers (TA1GE3)”.

Implicitly, the majority of interviewees make yours one of the objectives of hybrid careers and they affirm that their career is good because of the multidisciplinary training they received and that this should make it easier for them to get a job. However, they consider that the ignorance of the career by the employers causes discrimination or unfair competition for jobs, making difficult its rapid job insertion:

“The career should facilitate to get job because they teach us many things, but the problem is that companies do not know the career. I think if they knew it so we would be hired quickly because we can

be in many areas or departments. However, always in the interviews I had to explain about it. It was like an interrogation unlike other graduates of other careers who know to be hired (LE1GE9)”.

The problem of lack of social knowledge of the BSD does not only occur in the city where the university is located, this also occur in other cities of the state of Oaxaca, where some graduates traveled with the objective of obtaining the first job with better working conditions, as was the case of Lourdes who commented:

“The career is good and this qualifies us for many things, however the lack of knowledge about it [by employers] makes difficult to find a job. It strikes me that in the capital, in Oaxaca, they do not know the career and although the TUM [university system] has more than 15 years offering it, moreover tell us that the career of Business Sciences is the one that has had the best places [CENEVAL] at the national level. So, as they do not know the career, in the interviews they ask you about it. If you are unwrapped so you know to explain well what this consists, but if you are shy or you are nervous so the matter gets worse and entrepreneurs will say that not even one who studied that career knows what we are good for (LO1GE4)”.

Lourdes shows the need for graduates develop a professional identity so that they can successfully “realize or sell” to employers their knowledge, abilities and skills they acquired as hybrid professionals, because when they can not do it, from their perception, this constitutes an obstacle to their job insertion such as Amanda said, she recognized her inability to explain her professional profile:

“Not knowing exactly where the career aims was a barrier or obstacle. Many times when they asked me in interviews what a Licentiate in Business Studies can do, I always said that ‘a little of everything’ and I noticed that the interviewer was not convinced by the answer. I had the impression that he imagined that I did not even know what I could do specifically or in which area I was good. However, they were not so wrong because it is the truth. In the career they teach us many



things to do the job well, but in our case that precisely represents a weakness to find a job (AM1GE5)”.

In other cases, graduates refer that being of the first generations are not known and for that they face a very marked discrimination in the labour field and employers prefer to opt for options already tried, in other words, employers first hire career graduates highly positioned in their collective imagination:

“The business career helps you and also makes it difficult to find employment. I think that with the passage of time maybe everything is more favorable, but as we are still new, from the first generation, so in companies do not know us and that subtracts points in the interviews, in addition they never ask someone from Business Science. So, from the beginning there is a separation or discrimination towards us (JO2GE6)”.

In the same line, some interviewees directly “point out, accuse” or attribute that they can not be easily inserted to the labour field due to the ignorance that the employers have of their hybrid university career, and that graduates have to be “begging” to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to work. This situation causes them discontent as it shows in the following comment:

“It is true that with the career it is difficult to find job, although we are very well prepared and we have training in many areas. But that does not help us because only we know it and companies do not. Apparently, they always prefer the options already known and tested. We have no other option than to be asking for the opportunity to show them that we can do the job (AN2GE8)”.

The career of BSD is so unknown in the area of influence of the university that Gina commented that during a year of searching to find the first job she never saw or heard of a job offer where they asked someone with her university career. So, she had to go to job interviews that were for graduates

of related careers, denoting unfair competition and discrimination in the field of work:

“The career does not help you much to get a job. In more than a year of reading newspaper jobs almost daily I never, but never, found that they asked for a graduate in Business Science. They always asked for graduates of Administration and Accountants and finally or related areas, where I think we enter, but that is the last. That means that if there are no administrators and accountants, so it does not matter to choose one of business. Then our career is not known and we are not taken into account in job offers (GI1GE7)”.

In this situation, some interviewees consider that this situation needs to be reversed by two actions: taking advantage of the prestige that is gaining the university by the exigency of its educational system, and through the good performance in the job of those graduates who are already inserted in the labour market such as Jerry suggests:

“I recognize that most have had problems [to find a job] for being a new or unknown career. However, we must put our part and little by little reverse this. For example, in my case when I went to the interview, the fact that the brewer has requested students or graduates of the career speaks well because they know that the UNPA has a good training and that should be used. So, when we are hired we have to do a good job, perform well and with that we will open the doors so that other partners are accepted quickly (JE2GE10)”.

### **The struggle in the “professional field”: the BSD against other professionals in the administrative economic area.**

To show the unequal or disadvantageous position of the BSD graduates in the labour field vis-a-vis the Accountants and Administrators, it describes the perceptions of the same<sup>6</sup>. All interviewees report that no employer and/

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6 The unequal and discriminatory position of the graduates of the BSD in relation to other professionals in related areas refers to the process of job insertion, because according to the preliminary results of an investigation in progress once they are able to insert their first job, there are no differences in the labour activities developed, the level occupied (administrative assistants) and the salary received.

or person in charge of Human Resources had knowledge of the existence of the career and of its graduates, this represents an obstacle to their rapid job insertion because employers generally hire professionals from traditional administrative economic careers as Maria expressed it:

“The owners of companies or those responsible for HR do not know about the career of companies or their type of training. I think that for that reason I have never seen in the newspapers that they request to Graduates in Business Sciences and that is a barrier to find a job. They hire accountants and administrators because they are very old careers and also the Technological has always offered (MA1GE1)”.

To the above, some interviewees, such as Jonah, report that although they may carry out various activities in the accounting area because of their general university education they are at a disadvantage, because employers quickly locate in these areas the graduates of Accounting, presenting a labour discrimination towards them:

“The most do not know about us, because they would not ask us so much in interviews about our career and what they prepared us for in college, that includes not even knowing our professional profile. I can go to apply for the position of accounting assistant or comptroller because I know that my career enabled me to do it, but the employer is surprised because he already has in mind that corresponds to the profile of a graduate in Accounting and not the [Bachelor in] Business Science so that puts us at a disadvantage (JO2GE6)”.

Such is the ignorance of the BSD that in the city where the university is located the employers believe that the graduates who hold this university degree were formed in HEI of other states of the republic, and they require graduates to explain or give reasons why they believe they can do work related to the accounting area. The previous situation was well illustrated by Tamara:

“There is no knowledge because in my first job they did not know the career or what is a business graduate. Then, they told me that if I was not accounting why I thought I could do the job. So, I had to explain that unlike the administrators we took more accounting subjects in the career and that considered that for the position of accounting assistant I could do the job. When I came to the interview for this [actual] job, the interviewer was surprised by the name of the career and he asked me in what state [of the republic] I did study because he had never heard of this career. So, I had to explain about it again. But I am not the only, I think all my colleagues have been through this to be explaining what is a Bachelor of Science in Business (TA1GE3)”.

The lack of social knowledge of the profession leads the interviewees to face a process of discriminatory job insertion because employers by giving them a job, they do so that the graduates “demonstrate” what they can do with their unknown university education and that they will be tested about their performance as Gine expressed:

“That is a big problem that most of us have faced because they do not know us. Here in COMPARTAMOS I was the first hired and I had to compete with other that wanted the job. I noticed that the recruiter did not convince the career because several times he told me that he did not know what it was, that he had not heard of it, although in the end he told me that if it was a career in the administrative economic area he could give me the opportunity to prove what is what I knew to do and that I would be tested for three months (GI1GE7)”.

Employers do not know the BSD but they identify the University by offering a career with a name “rare” that causes them uncertainty and that resemble the Bachelor in Administration. Situation that the graduates consider as a disadvantage as Amanda y Rosa commented:

“In the majority of the interviews that I had the career of [Sciences] Business was not known, they only knew or had heard of the UNPA but that not only I have found because we commented with other colleagues who also

found that in companies do not know the career and what can be dedicated or where you can place a graduate of this career (AM1GE5)”.

“Companies do not know the business career. My uncle always asked me to explain what the career was about because he had never heard of it. In my second job, when they asked me if I was from UNPA, who interviewed me said that the school was the only one that gave that career with a rare name, but for him it was administration but with another name. So, you see that there are many doubts out there about the career what we are and that is something like a stain [laughs], as a disadvantage (RO2GE2)”.

The situation was no different for those who sought work in other cities as was the case of Lourdes who believed that in the City of Oaxaca and the port of Salina Cruz would not have the same problem, because these are cities close to other SSUO universities that for years offer the BSD<sup>7</sup>, however, this university career is unknown in these cities:

“In the three jobs did not know the career of Business [Sciences] and that I have had jobs outside of Tuxtepec. In CEMEX and in this consultancy in the city of Oaxaca, when I arrived I think that they would know about the career because according to the TUM [Technological University of Mixteca] has more than 10 years of offering the career and because of its proximity I believed that there were many graduates working here in the capital. But that is not like that. The same situation happens in Salina Cruz because the UNISTHMUS is near [University of the Isthmus] and offers the business career but the career is not known. We are unknown [in companies] and we have to explain in the interviews we exist and that we know how to do things right (LO1GE4)”.

Adding to Lourdes’ commentary, Antony who traveled to the state of Tabasco looking for job opportunities refers to companies in that state do not

7 It is important to clarify that the BSD enrollment in the SSUO universities is very low and approximately 60% of it deserted during the career due to the system’s demanding. So, despite the time that has elapsed, very few graduates are in the labour field (Damián, 2017).

know the BSD, when he returned to his home city just like his colleagues faced this problem because the local employers know the careers of Accounting, Administration, Marketing and Business Management offered by other universities:

“In Villahermosa [Tabasco] I went to several interviews and I found that the career was unknown but I thought it was because of the distance and because it was another state of the Republic but it was not so. When I returned to Tuxtepec the matter was no different because in the companies they know the UNPA but not the career, and therefore they do not know in which posts they can specifically put us in contrast to the graduates of Technological, UMAD [Universidad Madero] and IAUD [Inter-American University for Development] who have well-known and recognized careers in companies (AN2GE8)”.

The lack of social recognition of the BSD as a hybrid university career represents an obstacle to their job insertion and it constitutes a challenge for them in order that through their performance in companies they can open spaces for the new generations:

“The graduates of Business [Sciences] have a great challenge that consists of opening the doors and spaces in the companies for the future generations, because although our career prepares us very well in the companies we are unknown. They are not aware of what we do or our training in several areas. This makes that effectively the majority of the companions have had difficulty to be placed or to find a job fast (JE2GE10)”.

## Discussion and Conclusions.

This exploratory approach on unfair competition and the discriminatory situation faced by hybrid university graduates in the process of job insertion. This exploratory approach brings many elements to the debate and opens interesting lines of research in this emerging field of educational research as reported by Jiménez (2009) & Damián (2014), who have addressed this issue in the country. It recognizes that much ink has run on the subject of studies and follow-up of graduates, but little has been investigated under the context and the requirements of current educational policies, about the impact of the supply and training of new professional cadres in the demand of these in the market of work (Barrón & Gómez, 2004) and according to Planas (2014) to know the degree of correspondence between the new university careers and the current demands according to the current form of work organization. In consequence, it is necessary to address this issue because educational research apart from producing scientific knowledge should also contribute to pointing out the successes and misconceptions of current educational policies (Damián, 2014).

Although it is true that the literature refers to the existence of several factors to mark, point out and segregate graduates at the time of their incorporation into the labour market, such as the socioeconomic background, sex, age, prestige of the university that formed them, among others (ANECA, 2009), the empirical evidences obtained in this case study indicate that the hybrid university careers are giving rise to a new form of exclusion and labour discrimination originated by the type of university credentialing that the individual choose (Damián, 2015), in other words, its beginning in the world of work will be conditioned to a certain extent by having decided to study a traditional university career or a multidisciplinary or hybrid (Diamant, 2009; Díaz, 2005; Quiróz, 2014).

The difficulties that the BSD graduates face in the process of job insertion contradict the advantages attributed to the hybrid careers in

the sense of facilitating the insertion in the work (Holguín, 2011; Sáez, 2007). Barrón (2005) and Barrón & Gómez (20024) point out that these educational programs prepare professional cadres or human resources that are “nonexistent” in the occupational pyramid of organizations, causing employers to ignore the new offer of hybrid professionals do not offer jobs for these, leaving them in a disadvantageous position against the graduates who hold a traditional university degree with a high grade of acceptance or social recognition.

When hybrid graduates are questioned about their type of university education, they unable to give good reasons or make a good defense of their hybrid formation originated by the lack of professional identity that was not developed because they lack an external referent of the professional even during their training in the classroom (Paéz, 2009; Dubar, 2000). So, the search for the first job presents the situation of exclusion, signaling and unequal competition for job offers with those individuals who opted for traditional university options and who are favored in the process of recruitment and selection of personnel (Diamant, 2009).

The case study analyzed discrimination, unfair competition and exclusion of the hybrid professional. It is clear that graduates not finding job offers, in the state of Oaxaca, Veracruz and Tabasco where they request staff with the title of BSD in both print and electronic media and the need to join the work, had to go to interviews where companies asked for traditional career professionals as proven options and that employers prefer in the hiring process. Only in the case that these job vacancies are left, employers give them the opportunity to enter temporarily under certain “reservations or conditions”, in order to demonstrate what they know how to do at work as individuals who hold an unknown university career.

Although it recognized that this work reports results of an exploratory and descriptive case study and that it is applicable in the particular or institutional context where it was carried out, currently the public HEIs of Mexico as a whole are being subjected to various demands from the government level to



offer new university careers among which stand out those that offer trans, inter and multidisciplinary training. Then it can say that these measures are the answer to the new national educational policy of higher education (Planas, 2014; De Ibarrola, 2007; Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2004). Because of the above, by way of closure and in the form of a prospective conclusion, to open the debate for those interested in investigating this issue, it would be well to make three major questions to those responsible for university education policy in the country: Why employers do not know the hybrid careers and discriminate against the graduates who hold this training? Are not these hybrid careers driven by a serious diagnosis of the needs of the labor market? Will there really be differences in the curriculum content of hybrid careers compared to traditional careers, or will it be only an educational marketing strategy granting different names or denominations that are attractive to get enrolled in?

We consider that it is important to monitor the situation of the hybrid professionals in the field of work, generating knowledge through research, because everything seems to indicate that the hybrid university formation, far from contributing to the rapid insertion in the labour market, constitutes a new element of signaling or discrimination, resulting in “professional field” a struggle or competition in conditions of disadvantages with respect to the professionals with a traditional formation.

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