

Professional identity, social recognition and entering the workforce of the university student with hybrid education

Identidad profesional, reconocimiento social e inserción laboral del universitario con formación híbrida

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Notas

Progress of the research called “Factors that favor and hinder the labor insertion of graduates from hybrid programs. The case of the Bachelor's degree in Business Sciences from Universidad del Papaloapan” is submitted to obtain the Ph.D in Higher Education.

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Summary

This article shows progress of a research which aims to describe the factors that facilitate and hinder labor insertion of graduates with hybrid university education, since according to those responsible for the education policy, this type of training facilitates graduates to enter in the labor market. Through a qualitative approach we studied the graduates from the Business Sciences Degree Program from an Oaxaca public university, since it mixes three traditional careers causing a hybrid university program. Preliminary results point out two factors that limit the labor insertion of graduates: the lack of professional identity in the graduates, discouraging them to carry out actions that promote their insertion, and the lack of social recognition of the profession by employers, for which reason graduates are not required in the local labor market; contradicting both situations –at least in the case study– the alleged advantages attributed to hybrid university courses.

Key words: University, graduates, hybrid education, labor market, labor insertion.

Resumen

Se presentan avances de una investigación cuyo objetivo es describir los factores que facilitan y obstaculizan la inserción laboral de los egresados con formación universitaria híbrida pues, según los responsables de la política educativa, este tipo de formación facilita a los egresados incorporarse al mercado de trabajo. Se estudia mediante un enfoque cualitativo a los egresados de la Licenciatura en Ciencias Empresariales de una universidad pública oaxaqueña pues en dicha licenciatura se mezclan tres carreras tradicionales originando un programa universitario híbrido. Los resultados preliminares señalan a dos factores que limitan la inserción laboral del egresado: la ausencia de identidad profesional en el egresado desmotivándolo de llevar a cabo acciones que contribuyan a su inserción, y la falta de reconocimiento social de la profesión por los empleadores por lo cual los egresados no son demandados en el mercado de trabajo local; ambas situaciones contradicen –al menos– en el estudio de caso las supuestas ventajas atribuidas a las carreras universitarias híbridas.

Palabras clave: Universidad, egresados, educación híbrida, mercado de trabajo, inserción laboral.

Introduction

Integration and globalization processes originated evident changes in the economic, social, educational and labor contexts and, as a result of educational projects imposed on our country by international bodies, it is stated that all employers require university graduates with an all-purpose and flexible education (De Ibarrola, 2007; Dahrendorf, 1986), which enable them to acquire and use knowledge, capacities and abilities common to several areas with sufficient versatility to allow adjustment to new technologies and occupational transition in new ways of work within the level of competence of a professional and, at the same time, that individuals can in the economic life and labor market, be able to stop their habits and adjust to new circumstances. As a response to the foregoing and based on recommendations of persons in charge of national educational planning, in Mexico several sub-systems of tertiary education have created and are currently promoting professional careers articulating two or more traditional courses (careers) thus originating a hybrid university educational program (DGEST, 2009; CUP, 2009; Barrón & Gómez, 2004), but without being sure of the real existence of demand of those professionals at least in the local or micro context where most universities and tertiary educational institutions are located in the country (Psacharopoulos, 2005; Planas, 2014).

As an example regarding the professionals of the economic-administrative area, most Technology Institutes both federal and decentralized since August 2009 are no longer offering the Administration course by replacing it with *Business Management Engineering*, Technology Universities change Business Administration by *Business Innovation and Development Engineering* and Poly-technical Universities offer *Financial and Project Management Engineer*. The fact that calls our attention is that these three tertiary education sub-systems with presence in the whole national territory, offering those educational programs seem to obey to a unilateral education given from national regulating bodies (General Directorate of Technology Institutes and General Coordination of Technology and Poly-technology Universities) instead of a serious study or diagnosis about the labor market situation since evidence of the real needs of the companies or demand of this kind of university professionals were not presented publicly (Damián, 2014; Planas, 2014), therefore the following questions are in the air: What is the real justification to stop offering the Course of Administration in these three

sub-systems and change it by an administrative type engineering education?, Why did this increase and impulse of university careers of hybrid nature occur? And does hybrid university education actually offer more advantages than traditional university careers?

People in charge of educational policy in the country justify creating and promoting hybrid professional careers by stating that their purpose is to re-functionalize professions towards more flexible schemes that allow graduates to incorporate with more advantages and facilities into the labor market because this education – they said – responds to demands of new job schemes characterized by its versatility, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity (Dahrendorf, 1986; Psacharopoulos, 2005); however, ironically the few studies to this date on hybrid university graduates have found inherent problems in this type of careers, such as rare social recognition of the career by employers, and the lack of professional identity among graduates with hybrid education (Jiménez, 2009). These situations make us assume hybrid university education is based on a weak ground regarding needs for human resources presented by the majority of employers and far from facilitating labor insertion, it means an obstacle for this. Based on the previous assumption, there was an interest in studying factors facilitating and hindering labor insertion of graduates from the Business Sciences program (LCE) of Universidad de Papaloapan (UNPA), who received hybrid education.

LCE began activities in August 2005, and to date 11 generations finished studies from which the first five cohorts graduated. During university education, students follow two professional stages (practices in companies) at the end of sixth and eighth semester to strengthen theoretical knowledge and approach them to labor practice (IEEPO, 2005). In these practices in companies there is a huge problem under investigation at present because students express employers or immediate heads are not aware of the career name and characteristics of their professional exercise; the same situation was experienced by some graduates who comment that during their job search, employers confused Business Sciences by Business Administration so that they had to explain the employer or recruiter of what their university education consists. However, they state they are not aware of the exact professional delimitation and the difference with graduates from traditional

economic-administrative careers. From this point of view, this situation places them in an unfavorable condition in interviews when compared with other job applicants. These situations experienced by students and graduates from LCE in the labor market make us assume that in the local context they are facing a discriminatory labor market and thus the research question about this work is: What role plays the professional identity and social recognition in labor insertion of graduates from hybrid university careers within a local labor market context? The general purpose of the research is to study and describe the process of labor insertion in a context of local labor market of graduates from Business Sciences, in order to identify factors facilitating or making difficult this process by taking into consideration their hybrid professional profile.

Reasons justifying this research are several but three are highlighted: 1) Interest in addressing a phenomenon poorly studied in Mexico because at present only Jiménez (2009) has conducted a study about hybrid university education taking as case study the graduates from the Agrobiology course at the Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala, therefore this research shall provide relevant information to continue consolidating this line of emergent research; 2) From the premise that educational research besides generating knowledge is also useful to show successes and errors of educational policies, we are interested in proving that under certain conditions advantages attributed to hybrid university education are questioned and they cannot be applied for the whole national territory, and 3) since the research line we have is fallen within the area of graduates and university students, we believe we have the responsibility to “grant a voice” to hybrid graduates so that they can share with interested parties many situations experienced in the labor insertion process because of having opted for this type of university education and from their daily experiences can provide us with guidelines to evaluate statements from officers who are promoting hybrid university education.

Theoretical Framework.

Below we can briefly see some theoretical findings supporting this work, for which the concept of labor insertion is analyzed, as well as characteristics of hybrid professions and the role played by the professional Identity and social recognition in labor insertion of university students with hybrid education.

Labor Insertion.

As a starting point it is important to define the concept of labor insertion or professional insertion because it is a mandatory referent point and subject matter of analysis in this research; in specialized literature there are several definitions on the issue, thus for Barrón (2005) labor insertion is defined as the achievement and performance of a job within an area and sector according to the education received. De Miguel (1998) defines labor insertion as the process followed by graduates from they finish their studies until they get a stable work, stating also that the duration of this process, work modalities and labor experiences to which graduates have submitted during this stage, provide significant analysis elements to understand and reflect about interrelations between tertiary education and job; on his side García and Gutiérrez (1996) state that labor insertion is the process of incorporation to economic activities of individuals or, the set of actions of the so-called *job search*, for these researchers, the insertion process used to be characterized by being conducted in the youth stage and represents a social transition that goes from a position of an individual in the educational system and family of origin to positions on the labor market and family independency. Likewise, they state that quality of exploration of first jobs, that is, the level and type of information about salary and non-salary characteristics help the exploratory phase to be shorter in the insertion process and; finally Vernières (1997) uses the term of professional insertion as a synonym of labor insertion by defining the first one as a process whereby inactive individuals have access to a stable position in the employment system, therefore this definition points out a certain process beginning with a special type of inactivity (university studies), and then an action to look for a place in the labor market which enables to make real labor expectations created during the educational process.

As may be seen, a feature characterizing the concept of labor insertion in the aforementioned definitions is the fact that said process begins with and is marked by the time when the individual finishes his university education and plans to look for a place in the labor market and the end of the process is marked by the holding of a job according to received university education and stable status. Labor insertion should not be seen as a fact produced immediately but a change in state leading the change from a situation to another through a process involving an initial state and its final state. Two

main events to mark the starting point of labor insertion are the exit from university and manifest desire of the graduate to enter a labor life. The new university graduate perception of the labor market depends on situations and personal circumstances that in some cases are very disappointing for a series of considerations that may be comprised in three groups: 1) lack of competences to perform a position, 2) labor inexperience and 3) failure to know basic functioning of labor market.

The process of labor insertion involves several variables which study or analysis is complex (Ginés, Carot & Conchado, 2010; Mora, Badillo, Carot & Vila, 2008), therefore several models explaining labor insertion from the point of view of the employer and new graduate were generated. Since in this work we are dealing with recovering “the voice” of graduates about circumstances experienced in the process of labor insertion, the three models we used to explain labor insertion of new graduates in the context of an imperfect labor market deal with the relation existing among three variables: cost of search, characteristics of individuals and efficiency in the process of finding a job or vacancy; those models are as follow: Optimal Search Strategy Model (Stigler, 1962), Sequential Salary Search Model (Mortensen, 1986) and Model of Optimal Number of Contacts (Hamermesh & Rees, 1984), the same that due to reasons of space are not described but readers are invited to make a deep reading thereof.

Hybrid University Professions.

Regarding professions, they used to be classified into three categories: new occupations which did not exist some years ago, occupations in transformation that keeping their traditional name have incorporated new contents and functions and emerging occupations in response to emerging needs of people and companies. Within the category of occupations in transformation we can include hybrid professionals that are the ones with education and training in two or more fields of knowledge and exercise an occupation developed between two or more disciplines. According to Jiménez (2009a), a hybrid profession is that characterized because its “study plan was designed from the convergence of two recognized courses”, which implicitly involves that each course is mixed to get a hybridization and thus have a clear and specific delimitation of its action field³; likewise, the term

³ A profession is recognized (social recognition) when it is accepted by many employers and the society itself because

of interdisciplinary profession is used to explicit that it is a profession where “concepts and methods of two disciplines are articulated and subsume in a common object and a certain problem” (p.59). Holguín (2011) says that that a hybrid university education when breaking down the paradigm of specialization gives a double opportunity to the graduate because it can be used in the labor market or self-used and, if desired to be employed in a company, work opportunities are doubled since, thanks to hybrid education he can develop in more than two areas therefore he can compete to several labor options; besides from the difference of traditional careers, hybrid options are offered and updated from the labor market requirements being characterized by a high degree of belonging.

However, few studies conducted question advantages attributed to this type of education because they show a series of characteristics limiting the actions performed by a professional graduate with a hybrid university education (Damián, 2014). Coinciding with the foregoing, Paéz (2009) states that hybrid professionals are characterized by failing to know the specific field of professional action because his hybrid, multi-disciplinary and non specialized university education originates an encounter in an area of professional ambiguity since they move in a *continuum* between frontiers of courses articulating without a marked delimitation of professional actions. Then, if hybrid education is characterized by poly-functionality, multi-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity, we could believe a profession hybridization is an utopian concept because specialization terms (inherent to a traditional career) and generalization (inherent to a hybrid career) are incompatible, the foregoing is reinforced by Sáez (2007) who states regarding hybrid training or education as follows:

- The field of professional action is more difficult than that of the specialist professional because hybridization is an indefinite category since, unlike the specialist professional, in the beginning a hybrid professional does not know what knowledge or works are covered or their intensity⁴.

of high degree of specialization, a characteristic shown by traditional professions or careers.

4 Similar situation experienced by the Technical Tertiary Education Institute graduates who receive a preparation for middle positions (between baccalaureate and undergraduate course), however, their field of action is very ambiguous therefore graduates try to explain their position in the company resorting to the illustration of a sandwich where the loaf of bread above represents the position requiring a degree, the loaf of bread below, a baccalaureate and they, as TSU, are represented by the ham (Ruiz, 2007).

- The specialist professional selects a field of knowledge and specific work and always attempts to know everything about it, that is, limits to technical complexity of the field chosen. In contrast, hybrid professional carried implicitly a broader mission since he is not limited to exercise domain over a specialized field because he knows these problems are solved by specialists, that is, he should convince himself [which involves a certain dosage of professional identity] that his involvement shall be very useful in solving significant problems requiring more complex and multi-disciplinary approaches.
- The purpose of a hybrid education is not to stop being a specialist in something but less specialist than many specialists, however sufficient to have a fluid and operational dialogue with specialists. Sáez (2007) states that for a hybrid professional there is no certain point between much of anything or a bit of a lot, but the point that every individual wants or is able to reach between sufficient and basic of something and, sufficient and basic of many more things.

Considerations of Sáez (2007) are being corroborated by the results obtained in few studies about the same issue that show that hybrid university professions lack social recognition and historical legitimacy including lack of professional identity in the imaginary of graduate, causing confusion and professional uncertainty regarding the roles and functions to be performed both from university graduates and employers as a whole (Jiménez, 2009b; Páez, 2009). Since this work states professional identity and social recognition are variables intervening and influencing in labor insertion of hybrid graduates, those concepts are addressed below.

Professional Identity and Social Recognition in Labor Insertion of Hybrid Professionals.

One of the factors contributing to a rapid search of first job is that the graduate is fully aware of the role to be played in the professional field, then some approaches or models for labor insertion suggest that during professional education individuals not only should be concerned about acquiring capacities inherent to university career, but constructing a career identity (Miejers, 1998); in the same manner, when selecting and developing work personal,

concept should be considered and grant the individual a significant social identity which enables to develop productively within the community and therefore become a self-sufficient, successful, satisfied, stable and health individual in the personal scope (Savickas, 2000; cited by Jenschke, 2004). Assuming a professional identity is important for labor insertion since several imperfect labor market models (Optimal Search Strategy Model, Sequential Salary Search Model and Model of Optimal Number of Contacts) and others of individual base (Cognitive-Transactional Theory, Cognitive-Behavioral Theory and Dissonance Theory), consider that in the labor insertion process the individual is the main responsible and, therefore, his active participation is a key in this process success; likewise, comprehensive models such as Vitamin Model use to be grounded on the assumption that at the time of analyzing insertion and achievements in work of an individual, individual and contextual aspects are related, the same that play a crucial role in labor insertion.

To understand how lack of professional identity and social recognition in hybrid university graduates are a limiting factor for labor insertion, thereafter we have a brief theoretical understanding of this issue. For Ávila and Cortés (2007) professional identity is that representation created around a specific field of labor which is recognized in the society, and between a group of individuals identified as members thereof, whose characteristic is to share this social representation of profession and sense of belonging. Hatum and Rivarola (2007) define professional identity as a set of habits developed by a person within his scope of work and potential projection of others to be grown in the future. From the foregoing concepts, we can conclude that in professional identity there are some implicit variables: Certain degree of belonging to a specific group, that is, the graduate identified himself as a professional in the delimited and specific field of actions, with a high level of qualification in the profession and with institutional support and recognition; and social recognition, a concept that means that in the social imaginary of employers and society in general there is a clear and defined idea of what belonging to a specific profession means.

Professional identity involves a real negotiation between the person possessing disciplinary education and his environment through a complex communications process based on the quality of relations with others (Soto, 2008); according to Berger and Luckmann (2001) socialization is the process

whereby the individual is constructed and developed as a part of the society, and professional socialization is made through daily exchanges with different individuals developing specific and particular duties of his professional field, leading new professionals to construct values and meanings as a result of concrete actions performed in several places, contexts and life situations, beginning to think as a professional and to have a position regarding the mission and social function. Then, the significance of professional identity lies on the fact that by means of this the individual can identify what are his professional preferences for developing the career and, upon becoming aware of those preferences, he can work at to enhance appropriate competences and develop those preferences in talents and valued abilities in the labor market. From that we have the significance that individuals upon following and ending a university career are able to answer two questions: What does working at and for my life means? And what do I want to tell others through my work? (Meijers, 1998). The answer to the first question refers to personal imagination of the individual, that is, perception of himself as a professional in relation to his work, that is, professional identity. The second question generally refers to the social and collective imaginary (social recognition of his profession) that the society and in particular the group of employers have about abilities, competences and values of interest for organization and that can establish a direction for labor life. Counting on a professional identity means belonging to a certain group, identifying himself as a professional in a specific field of action, with high professional level and with institutional support and recognition and; means the existence of social recognition in collective imagination –above all of employers who will require the profession– existing a clear and defined idea of what belong to this profession means.

It is significant to mention that foregoing variables are not present in university education of hybrid nature and some theoreticians have concluded that individuals studying emerging professions have big difficulties to define their professional identity and obtain social recognition of their profession at least for three reasons (Meijers 1998; Dubar 2000; Jenschke 2004):

- a) In the social imaginary (employers /society) there is no representation of professional work in the hybrid area or an external framework being present a lack of social recognition of the profession.

- b) Since there is no practical framework hybrid professional education of the individual is generally based on goals, needs and requirements that people in charge of national educational planning say labor markets have, however, the foregoing does not involve the existence of a perception of need by the social collective to be answered by the professional, a situation extremely evident in the micro-scope.
- c) Since there are no hybrid professionals because of being an emerging area, professors participating in education generally belong to another disciplinary field by skewing the process of education and professional field in which they will be engaged, a serious situation since professional identity begins to grow from the university classroom.

Based on the foregoing situations, some scholars mention one of the conditioning factors of the school system in the context of globalization is the lack of cultural substrate for hybrid professions, caused by lack of professional associations improving the contents and identity of those professions or careers (Jenschke, 2004; Dubar, 2004; Meijers, 2004); thus even though persons in charge of educational policies of tertiary education justify in writing the need of hybrid professions actually there are no clearly identified labor positions in the labor market (Planas, 2014), there are no duly educated professors in this new courses or manuals or textbooks addressing hybrid contents (Clark, 1991).

Method

Since the topic about hybrid university graduates was not studied in full the research work is exploratory, descriptive, uses a qualitative approach and is worked at with phenomena because a phenomenon is studied as perceived, experienced and lived by a person (Hurrserl, 1986), meaning of experiences received by a person or group of people is described (Creswell, 1998) and gives intersubjectivity and intuition to understand socio-educational phenomena and describes reality experienced by others (Gurdián, 2007; Patton, 2002). An educational program was selected as a case study because this technique is a valuable resource when relates to a particular subject matter of research and it is purported to become aware of the details of interaction of the case with contexts (Stake, 2010). Population subject matter

of the study are graduates from the first two generations of Business Sciences courses of the Universidad de Papaloapan, based on the qualitative nature of the study and since a case study is not purported to generalize the statistical sampling but a particularity thereof thus it was decided to use a sampling by convenience for which ten graduates were selected by using the “*snowball*” sampling techniques which enabled to add to initial key informants other informants associated therewith and stop sampling according to the principle of saturation for not to have a bias in results for which students were selected according to certain characteristics offering rich information for which graduates, either men or women, with a degree or not, employed or unemployed, with different academic average, of different socio-economic levels, among others, were included; thus a deepen interview was conducted for which the corresponding guide was designed from a series of main problems about the process of labor insertion originated from the review of literature supporting the research.

For the information analysis and interpretation, contents analysis was used since it is a procedure for categorization of verbal data and conduct, with classification, summary and tabulation purposes (Fox, 1981), the same that, for a rich interpretation two levels were considered (Espín, 2002): manifest level, directly related to what was said by graduates, their perceptions, ideas, for which direct transcript of answers based on certain code was used, limiting ourselves to classification and count of terms (categories), while latent level went beyond a simple literal transcript by trying to deduce what the graduate attempted to say or mean while intervening in results obtained (Álvarez-Gayou, 2005; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). It was tried to use a simple language by faithfully using segments of magazines in order to “give a voice” to interviewees and trying to explain the argumentative basis giving sense to multiple events forming experiences of the insertion process and describing problems experienced in a comprehensive way, with narrative and broad but not technical descriptions. There is a preliminary analysis of information obtained from 10 exhaustive interviews to graduates, information that begins generating possible answers to problems under study.

Results

Results obtained are shown in this document in three paragraphs. The first one is a general description of interviewed graduates in order that this

information is used as a reference or contextual framework for interpreting information. The second and third paragraphs described variables of professional identity and social recognition seeking, to the possible extent, “to give a voice” to interviewees about the role that these variables play in the labor insertion process. It should be mentioned that we recognize that several factors influence the difficulty to find a new job and that labor insertion is a phenomenon depending of geographic, social, economic, market, political contexts and others (ANECA, 2009; Ginés, Carot & Conchado, 2010; Mora, Badillo, Carot & Vila, 2008), however, we only report the most representative preliminary results in reports which are originated from the research in relation to social recognition and professional identity of the hybrid career under study.

Graduates, Some Socio-Educational Characteristics.

María (MA1GE1)⁵ obtained an academic performance of less than 80/100 (scale from 0 to 100 used in the university), but she has always characterized by animosity and good sense of humor; during her studies, she went through many difficult economic periods and she had to work on weekends for the 5-year career duration in areas unrelated to what she studies. She tried to obtain a degree via General Entry Course Exam (EGEL) option of the National Evaluation Center (CENEVAL) but she got an unsatisfactory performance so that to date she has not obtained any university degree and states she is not interested in obtaining a degree. She comes from a lower class family and has two jobs in her work biography. At first, she studied Public Accounting at Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca in the city of Oaxaca but, due to economic issues, she returned to Tuxtpec and the only university education option existing in that city, which “*was more or less adjusted to what she wanted*” was Business Sciences.

Rosa (RO2GE2) is characterized by being a middle performance student (80/100) during her study years. She is very sociable and with many abilities for personal and group communication. She got a degree by EGEL option of CENEVAL. She comes from a middle class family where many close relatives such as uncles, cousins and others, have university level. Some of them own small companies. She began working as an administrative assistant

⁵ Names were changed to keep interviewees anonymous. The following nomenclature is used in the work: MA: Name; 1G: Generation number; E1: Interview number.

in a business of her relatives, after that she quit the company and, at present, she has a second job. She comments she did not know about the name and meaning of the Business Sciences career but she decided to study it because *“the name sounds great and it was different from what she knew”*.

Tamara (TA1GE3) her academic performance was lower than 80/100 and she is characterized by being individualist, with poor group work abilities. She does not have university degree since she never tried to obtain it by any of the degree grating option offered by the university. She states she will pay another university to re-validate her studies and thus she will obtain her university degree because she does not want to know anything about UNPA⁶. She comes from a middle class family where her father owns a furniture manufacturing micro-company. At present, she has two jobs in her curriculum. She states she wanted to study at the Universidad de Golfo de México located in the city of Tierra Blanca, Veracruz, however, during the last year of baccalaureate the University was just being constructed and when she concluded the baccalaureate it just began operations and since it was close to her parents' house they told her: *“why are you going too far, it is better than you stay here to study in this new university”*, therefore she had no other chance to study Business Sciences.

Lourdes (LO1GE4) was a student with high academic performance who showed to be a leader during her university education, she was granted a degree through EGEL of CENEVAL. She comes from a middle class family and she never worked while she was studying. To date she has a work backgrounds consisted of three jobs in different companies. At present she works in the capital of state, city of Oaxaca in a company engaged in business consulting. She states she did not want to study Business Sciences but Fashion Design, however her parents did not support her to do this since they wanted her to *“move by the business world”*.

Amanda (AM1GE5) like her colleague María, obtained an academic performance of less than 80%. She is funny and sociable with people she already know but she uses to have problems to begin new friendships. She does not have a university degree because she has never tried to take the EGEL exam of CENEVAL nor she has applied for the option to prepare a

⁶ Information was provided for two reasons: because it was not requested by the university but for the thesis and, because of referring to a professor with whom had no problem during her study time.

thesis. She comes from a lower class monoparental family led by her father because her mother died more than ten years ago. From all interviewees, she is the one who took a long time to get a first job, approximately two years and a half, and therefore she attended more than 10 job interviews. She states she decided to study Business Sciences because it “*was the only option besides the Technology Institute of the city, an institution she did not want to go because of the permanent problems it faces*”; at present she works as an administrative assistant in one of the oldest and more known self-service in the city, at least before the it was established in Chedraui and Aurrera square.

Jonás (JO2GE6) had an academic performance of 80/100. He is characterized by being a responsible student. A very formal person with proper language and lexicon. He is respectful and attentive maybe because of her Christian family grounds. He comes from the rural zone but from a middle class family engaged in sowing, harvesting and marketing of citric fruits and *chiles verdes*. He was granted a university degree via CENEVAL option and he has three jobs as work backgrounds. At present he is unemployed because his 6-month contract expired and it was not renewed. He chose the business sciences career because of his close location to his domicile and some familiar people who studied in the university told him about it.

Gina (GI1GE7) with an academic performance below 80%, is a little shy with low abilities for verbal communication but she enjoys working in group; she tried to obtain a degree via EGEL of CENEVAL at the end of the career (November 2010) but results were unsatisfactory therefore, to date, she has not university degree. However, at present she is preparing her thesis protocol. She comes from a low middle class family engaged in manufacturing and marketing furniture. Since she got her first job as a credit manager in a micro-finance company for women she is still there. She states that she has been always looking for other opportunities but she has not found them. Regarding the career of Business Sciences, she chose it because the place was close to her house, because of the scholarship offered and the lower cost than that of the Tuxtepec Technology Institute.

Antony (AN2GE8) characterized by his academic performance (80/100), he is very sociable, with many abilities for verbal communication and team work; recently (September 2013) he was granted a degree through the thesis

development and defense option. He comes from a low middle class, monoparental family led by his mother because his father just died. Regarding his work backgrounds, he has two very different jobs because the first was as an accounting assistant in an accounting and administrative consulting company and, at present, he works as a baccalaureate and university professor in a private educational institution of the city. He states he chose to study Business Sciences because he thought *“since it was a new career I was not going to have many competitors to find a job but things are not the way I thought”* and *“if I went back in time, I would not study the career and better chose Administration”*.

Leonel (LE1GE9) had an academic performance of less than 80%. He is sociable and funny but less formal and organized to carry out school activities. He has no degree because to date he has not provided social service or studied the levels of English, which are necessary requirements to continue the degree granting process. He comes from a low class family, from a rural zone engaged in the cultivation of sugarcane and corn; more than three years of having concluded the university career, he has no formal employment in any organization since he attended several interviews with no satisfactory results; therefore, for the time being he is helping his father and brothers with farming works. He states he never wanted to study Business Sciences, he always dreamed about being a civil engineer or architect because *“I like mathematics a lot, I also know it a lot”*, but since they are expensive careers and he is a low income person he had to study Business Sciences.

Jerry (JE2GE10) had an academic performance slightly below 80/100, however she showed to have leadership and communication and group management abilities; he was granted a degree by EGEL of CENEVAL. He comes from a low middle class family living in a rural village. According to his work backgrounds, he has had two jobs and at present he is responsible for the area of marketing of a local journal. Regarding his career, he states that since he studied baccalaureate he had heard of the university and Business Sciences career and it called his attention, that is why he decided in advance to study it.

Professional Identity and Labor Insertion.

Within the characteristics of hybrid university education there are some

limiting factors for the student to develop over the professional education his professional identity, understood as that representation created around a specific work field which is recognized in the society, and among a group of individual identified as member thereof, which characteristic is to share this social representation of profession and sense of belonging Ávila y Cortés (2007). However, this case study repetitively establish that graduates from LCE have not developed professional identity because in job interviews they have difficulties to explain the specific field of university career as expressed by graduates themselves:

When in interviews they ask me what a Business Sciences graduate can do I always say “*a little bit of everything*” and I realize who interview me is not convinced with my answer, I perceive he imagines not even me know what specific duty I have... and they are not far from reality (MA1GE1).

In fact, it was complicated to explain what my career is, in three job interviews it seems that human resources agree with asking the question “*explain me about your career; what did they prepare you for; what do you know to do, how are you specialized*”, and in fact I think all colleagues have difficulties to explain or answer with conviction because the university never told us what our preparation was for, they only taught us a little o everything ...(AM1GE5).

Foregoing comments confirm the statement rendered by Sáez (2007) in the sense that a hybrid professional at the beginning does not know to identify with accuracy what knowledge or works he has in the company or the level of intensity. That is, unlike the specialist professional, who has a field of knowledge and a specific work, the hybrid professional has to be sure his actions lie on solving important issues requiring more complex approaches. Jointly with the foregoing, graduates express or perceive that since they cannot give a justification of their professional profile, which leads to a lack of professional identity, this is one of many factors limiting his labor insertion since it is considered that the employer in work interviews take into account the fact they do not know what activities can be specifically performed in the companies:

The truth is that I am spending a lot of time looking for a job with

negative results, I attended almost 10 interviews and nothing... I have always difficulties to explain in interviews the type of career I studied, actually I do not know clearly what are the duties I can perform in a company (AM1GE5).

The ones who studied Business Sciences have problems to explain exactly what our duties in comparison with others are, I am at present in a small company as an accounting assistant, even though I know I am not an accountant but there we go. The colleague... works in COMPARTAMOS [Microfinance for women] as a credit manager and we have talked that we were not prepared for this in our career, however since we know a little bit of everything, with enthusiasm and dedication a person ends learning about the task assigned (RO2GE2).

We are in the case of the phrase: "*we are not from here or there*", for example, we know about accounting but not a lot like an accountant, we know about administration but we are not specialist, we studied merchandising in the career but we are not in the position of a merchandiser. Maybe in some companies we have to turn into specialist assistants and we can be used as a joker when we are assigned several administrative type activities (LO1GE4).

Theory states that the presence of a professional identity in university graduates plays a significant role in rapidly searching a first job, that is, when the graduate is fully aware of or knows about the role to be played with his professional education in the professional field, this will transmit certainty in the job search process because it is evident that he knows what several activities he can develop and in what positions or areas can be placed in the companies (Miejers, 1998); nevertheless, in this specific case, the lack or absence of said professional identity in Business Sciences graduates has become an obstacle for the graduate because his safety and self-confidence were weakened when facing several interviews in the job search process as commented by our interviewers:

At first, I was afraid of going to a company to apply for a job because a graduate from Business Sciences was never requested, but I said: "*if they need an accountant I know about accounting and if they need an*

administrator I also know a little. I think with a little of training in the company we can carry out the work performed by accountants and administrators” (AM1GE5).

I got this current job because of my merits, I attended many interviews and nobody called me, but I did not feel discouraged, once I saw an accounting assistant was needed and said to me: *“let’s go, finally if they tell you are not an accountant you do not lose anything”*, they interviewed me and told me then they will call me, I thought nothing was going to occur but they called me and I got the job, salary is good, however all colleagues tell me accountant, at first I told them: *“I am not an accountant”*, but today I continue being an accountant for them (MA1GE1).

Since I had no recommendations for a job, I had to do it by myself, offers are rare and in newspapers from here Tux[tepec] there are some vacancies, but in more than one year I have never found that they need a Business Sciences graduate, they always need accountants, administrators and sometimes merchandisers.... I think companies do not know about our existence which is making difficult the possibility to hire us (AM1GE5).

Graduates comment that unlike other professionals with a university education with traditional careers recognized by employers and, therefore, with a strong professional identity, they have to deal with the problem of being able to explain what their university education consists of and that situation places them in disadvantage at the time of competing for job positions:

I was very lucky... they were requiring personnel for administrative activities at COPPEL and I attended the interview. From all applicants I was the only one who studied Business Sciences at UNPA, the other were from the Technology, Administration, Accounting and Information System schools. When the Human Resources Manager interviewed me he told me he did not know about the career of Business Sciences, when he told me that I thought: *“I will have no chance to get the job”*, however, he told me: *“ok, tell me about the areas and main subjects you study in*

this career”, I told him: accounting, administration, merchandising and finance, finally he told me: “*ok, we will give you an opportunity and we hope this career helps you to have good performance in this position* “ (MA1GE1).

It is worth mentioning that these limiting factors for labor insertion are not only experienced by graduates in an immediate geographic context, that is, the city of Tuxtepec, Oaxaca where the university offering the career of Business Sciences is located, some interviewees who moved to find new work opportunities in other cities of the neighboring state of Veracruz tell us they have always faced similar situations:

As soon as I graduated, I took courage and went to the port of Veracruz to find a job, there I began to face some difficulties... I remember I attended an interview with TELMEX, the person in charge received me with cordiality, everything was going well until she read the application and told me: “*Wait, you say you studied Business Sciences, What is it? I have never heard of that career* “, so I explained her this is a career very similar to Business Administration and both professionals can do also the same thing, but I recognize I go a little nervous because it is a little bit difficult to explain what the university taught me (JO2GE6).

I remember that in an ADO group in Córdoba, three applicants of a total of 12 were finalist in an interview, one of them was an Administrator and the other one an Accountant. Finally, when the human resources person in charge interviewed me she asked me a lot of questions about the career, for example, what it was about, what subjects were more important in the career, like administration, accounting or finance. She told me: “*it is the first time I have heard of that career and it is not clear for me what they teach you*”, so I understood it was necessary to explain at what we are good, in which areas we can develop and, above all to make people know about and identify us as professionals (LO1GE4).

Results obtained show that in the case of hybrid university professions, it is necessary to foster mechanisms facilitating the acquisition of professional identity and in agreement with the theory suggesting that during professional education, student do not have to be concerned about acquiring capacities

inherent to the university career, but also a career identity (Miejers, 1998), because thus graduates can assume, with motivation, the process of search of the first job when identifying with a delimited professional practice and with their profession peers or “colleagues”.

Social Recognition and Labor Insertion.

The studies on labor insertion recognize the significant role performed by social recognition of a professional, which means the level of recognition, acceptance and valuation of a profession by several socioeconomic strata of a society, above all by the employers as a whole. In this study case, the lack of social recognition of LCE for employers was corroborated since there was no clear delimitation of professional action of graduates since they get confused and have difficulties to identify several jobs that may be performed in the company and, therefore, offer job positions. Repetitively graduates state that the lack of social recognition is a disadvantage in comparison with graduates from university careers who enjoy broad recognition from employers:

“many times they asked me: well, what do you know to do according to your career? What are you good at?, and it is difficult to say we know a little bit of everything, because I realized my interviewer was not convinced with the answer I gave, I felt the interviewer thought it was unclear to me in what type of work I was good at (MA1GE1)”.

Uncertainty about the career by employers caused a discouragement in some interviewees despite at first they felt interested, a situation that is serious since theoreticians state that a positive attitude is a very important individual factor to face the process of search of the first job with success; this situation was described by Tamara:

“It is a little bit complicated to have an opinion on this because there are many things to talk about... wow! [Colloquial expression in the region] how to explain it, for example the career is good, we are well educated, thus we go with bell on to interviews and gee whiz! You find a barrier: they do not know that a Business Sciences graduate is and this discourages us, you feel strange in comparison with others with well-known careers (TA1GE3)”.

It is interesting that implicitly many interviewees consider one of the objectives of hybrid careers belongs to them when they state that their university career is good because of their multi-disciplinary education and how much they should feel satisfied for getting a job, however, they considered employers' failure to know about this creates discrimination or unfair competition for job positions making labor insertion difficult:

“the career should make easy to find a job because we learn a lot, but since companies do not know about this career this is a problem, I think if companies knew we could find a job easily because we can occupy many areas or departments, but in all interviews I was asked to explain about it, it was like an interrogatory very different from other graduates from other careers who know then they will be hired (LE1GE9)”.

In other cases, graduates state that because of being first generations, they are unknown in companies and for this reason they face a very marked discrimination in labor field where employers choose to select already proven options, that is, hiring graduates from very positioned careers in the collective imaginary thereof, showing what Caso and Calonge (2001) say, in the sense that social recognition of a profession is a synonym of social usefulness thereof and impossibility to be exercised by unqualified people for this:

“a business career helps you and also makes you difficult to get a job, I think that while time goes by everything becomes more favorable, but since we are still new, companies do not know about first generations and that means less points in interviews, together with the fact that nobody requires a graduate from Business Sciences, so since the very beginning we feel separation or discrimination (JO2GE6)”.

In the same order of ideas, some interviewees directly “point out, accuse” or attribute the fact of being unable to insert easily in the labor field to the fact that employers fail to know about this hybrid university career and they have to “beg” to receive an opportunity to show in work they are able to do many things, a situation which causes discomfort as shown in this comment:

“so it is clear that this career makes us difficult to find a job, despite we are well prepared and have a lot of knowledge in different areas, but this is not helpful because we only know about this, it seems that employers prefer already known options and we just have to ask for an opportunity to show them how we can work (AN2GE8)”.

LCE career in the area of influence of the university is so unknown that regarding this issue Gina said that during a year of looking for her first job, she never saw or became aware of a job offer requesting a graduate from this career, so she was forced to attend interviews for graduates from other related careers, evidencing an unfair competition in this field of work:

“the truth is that the career does not help you to find a job, more than one year of reading the newspaper almost every day I never found companies that required a Business Sciences graduate, they always asked for Administrators and Accountants and finally they requested graduates from related areas where we are included, but that was the last thing, which means that since there are no administrators or accountants they will require business people, so our career is unknown because we are not considered in job offers (GI1GE7)”.

Based on the foregoing, some interviewees like Jonás states that despite performing several activities of the accounting area due to general university education they are at disadvantage, because employers rapidly prefer to hire for these areas graduates from Accounting, thereby causing work discrimination:

“many people do not know about us, otherwise they would not ask us in interviews for our career and for what the university trained us, besides they do not know about our professional profile, I can apply for a job of accounting assistant or comptroller because I know I was educated to do this duty but the employer gets surprised because he has in mind that corresponds to the profile of an Accounting graduate not a Business Sciences [graduate] therefore we are at disadvantage (JO2GE6)”.

Lack of information about this LCE career is such that in the city where

the university is located, employers believe graduates with this university degree studied at IES from other states of the country or require graduates to explain or give reasons for which they believe they can carry out tasks related to the area of accounting, this situation was clearly illustrated as expressed by Tamara:

“information is null because in my first job my career was unknown even people did not know about my tasks, then they told me if I was not an accountant for which reason I believed I could perform this job, so I had to explain that we, different from administrators, take more courses in accounting and I considered I could develop well as an accounting assistant, apart from that when I attended the interview for this [present] job, the interviewer got surprised at hearing the career’s name and asked me in which state [of the country] I had studied because he had never heard of this career, so again I had to explain everything about this, but I am not the only one, I think all my partners went through this, that is, explaining what a Business Sciences graduate is (TA1GE3)”.

Lack of social recognition of the profession causes interviewees consider that they face a discriminatory labor insertion process because employers, upon giving them a job position, they try to give them an opportunity to “prove” what they can do with unknown university education and they will be under evaluation regarding their performance as expressed by Gina:

“it is a big problem that many of us had to face because we are unknown, here in COMPARTAMOS I was the first one to be hired and I had to compete with others who wanted to get the position, but I realized the recruiter was not convinced about my career since many times he told me that he did not know what it was, he had not heard of this career, but at the end he told me if it was an economic-administrative career he could give me an opportunity to show him what I knew and I was going to be under evaluation for three months (GI1GE7)”.

This situation was not different for those interviewees who looked for a job in other cities as in the case of Lourdes who believed that in the City of Oaxaca and in the port of Salina Cruz she would have no problem due to lack of social recognition of the career because they are cities close to

other universities of the system offering LCE for many years and with many generations of graduates, however, despite the foregoing, this university career is still unknown in these cities:

“in three jobs they did not know about the career of Business [Sciences] and I worked outside Tuxtepec, at CEMEX and when I arrived in that consulting company in the city of Oaxaca I thought they already knew about my career because according to UTM [Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca] this institution has more than 10 years offering the career and due to its proximity I thought many graduates were working here in the capital, but it was not like this; the same occurred in Salina Cruz because of being close to UNITSMO [Universidad de Istmo] which offers business sciences courses and also this career is unknown, then we are ignored [for companies] and we have to explain in interviews about our existence and that we know to do things well (LO1GE4)”.

According to comments made by many interviewees, lack of social recognition of LCE as a hybrid university career represents a big obstacle for labor insertion and constitutes a challenge for them so that through performance in companies they can open vacant posts for new generations of graduates:

“graduates from Business [Sciences] have a big challenge to open doors and spaces in companies for future generations because, despite our career prepares us very well in companies, we are ignored, nobody knows about us or about what we do or education, therefore many colleagues worked very hard to position themselves and find a job rapidly (JE2GE10)”.

Then, according to experiences lived by interviewees, it is easy to understand the serious situation faced by university graduates with a hybrid education due to lack of social recognition of their profession because to date they do not have an area of professional activity defined and legitimated by the scientific community and, have no code of ethics regulating the exercise of the profession (Juárez, 1993).

Discussion and Conclusions

Preliminary results of research show that in the labor insertion of the graduate with hybrid education there are circumstances which allow questioning the supposed advantages attributed to this type of university education: facilitate labor insertion for preparing all-purpose and flexible professionals and, because this education meet the requirements of the labor market. Thus, in view of the preliminary results obtained, it is possible to envisage some possible answers to the question about the research: *What role is played by professional identity in labor insertion of graduates from hybrid university careers in a context of local labor market?* , among which we can list four roles:

1. Empiric evidence to this point of the research development allows concluding that in this case study under analysis, all graduates lack a profession identity, feel confused and ignore the main duties a Business Sciences graduate should perform in developing his work in companies.
2. Lack of professional identity is originating difficulties to facilitate labor insertion of graduates since, generally they have to deal with broad interrogatories during job interviews about their professional education by recruiters and graduates stated that they are rarely able to explain or expose with conviction how important their university education is.
3. Based on the foregoing situation, from the point of view of graduates, it is considered that in the job search process they have to compete on unequal conditions with professionals from traditional careers such as administrators and accountants and, they are at disadvantage in comparison with the latter because they do know how to identify specific tasks and/or activities of their university education while they, as graduates from LCE, lack professional identity.
4. Then, it is certain that people responsible for tertiary educational policy state that studying a hybrid university career facilitates labor insertion of graduates, at least in the local context or area of influence of the university, which was taken as case study. Preliminary results are

contradictory to this assumption because there is lack of information about this career by employers; therefore they request graduates to explain or describe their professional profile because since there is no professional identity, there are no referents to explain with certainty and self-confidence about main activities of LCE.

It is concluded that together with general variables generally used to mark, appoint and segregate graduates for their incorporation into labor market (socio-economic level, gender, age, among others), in the case of hybrid careers, particularly in LCE, everything is related to a new form of exclusion and labor discrimination originated by type or nature of university credential for which the individual opts, that is, his start in the labor world shall be subject, to a certain extent, to the fact of having decided to study a traditional university career or a career characterized by being multidisciplinary or hybrid. This situation was originated by decision makers due to fostering hybrid educational programs without a real diagnosis of the needs of employers forming human resources or professional organizations deemed “inexistent” in the occupational pyramid of organization as a result of the null or almost inexistent social recognition of the new profession, causing thus that employers upon ignoring the new offer of hybrid professional do not offer specific vacancies for them so they are in at disadvantage versus graduates with a traditional university career with a high level of acceptance or social recognition, who are privileged and less questioned about their education in job interviews. It should be mentioned that in Mexico, studying labor insertion of hybrid university students is an emerging issue of educational research and, therefore, there is insufficient evidence which allows comparing results obtained with other studies, however, coincidentally preliminary results are similar to the ones reported by Jiménez (2009), in his doctoral dissertation.

By way of conclusion, it is necessary to make question to the people responsible for university educational policy of the countries: Why employers are ignorant of new hybrid careers and discriminate university graduates with this type of education? Aren't these new professional options fostered –in your opinion- as a result of a serious diagnosis of labor market needs? With no doubt, answers to these questions open a broad range of possibilities for education researchers, so we deem significant to generate knowledge of this

issue through a research because it seems that hybrid university careers (at least in our case study) have not be able to overcome originating problems, since far from facilitating rapid labor insertion of graduates, it causes serious obstacles to achieve it.

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