



## Professional Training and Job Performance of Sociology Graduates

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**Abstract:** *This work presents the results of the 2023 Graduate Study of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH), in Mexico, which allows institutional feedback through the opinions of its graduates on the quality of their professional training, its relevance to their job performance and suggestions for updating the study program based on their experiences in the labor market and the social environment they face (Aldana et al, 2008). The Study of Graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology was based on the survey provided by the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES), which was adapted to the specific context of the state of Chiapas carried out by the Institutional Graduate Monitoring Program (PISE) of UNACH and was applied to graduates of the 2022 generations, through the Institutional Graduate Monitoring System (SISE).*

**Keywords:** *vocational training, job performance, study of graduates, sociology.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the results of the Study of Graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, from the Faculty of Social Sciences of the UNACH, carried out in 2023 and represents an elementary factor for institutional feedback, taking into consideration the opinions of its graduates about the quality of their professional training, its relevance to their job performance and suggestions for updating the study program based on their experiences in the labor market and the social environment they face (Aldana et al, 2008). Specifically, action strategies are required to improve the quality situation of the Sociology program and also to facilitate the insertion of its graduates into the labor market, which from the perspective of Fernández (2016), involves the need to define what it means. refers to the job of the sociologist, reflecting and consolidating professional identity and the organization of university studies; in this last factor, the contributions made by graduate studies are of great relevance.

Higher educational institutions face the need to achieve and guarantee the quality of the services they offer, such as vocational training and in this trend, offer quality study programs that understand their relevance, feasibility and that are linked with the productive, service and social sectors.

A relevant strategy that allows assessing the relevance and quality of the educational programs taught in the academic unit is the Graduate Study, whose evaluation of the performance of graduates in the labor market is considered one of the most reliable indicators of the relevance of the educational programs that support their training (Fresán, 1998; Valencia, Alonzo and Moguel, 2015), self-assessment, accreditation through academic peers, among others, are also relevant.

In the processes of consolidating the quality and relevance of higher level educational programs, a central factor to consider is the institutional feedback provided by the studies and follow-up of graduates, which allow us to know the opinions of graduates about the quality of their training professional, the relevance of this in their work performance and the suggestions for updating the

study programs in the face of the demands of the labor market and the social environment they face (Aldana *et al*, 2008).

At the international level, the trend of the importance of evaluating the activities of universities is strengthened, which refers to the accountability of institutions both to society and to government agencies, for which the studies and monitoring of graduates constitute an aspect of vital importance (Red Gradua2 y Asociación Columbus, 2006; citados por Aldana *et al*, 2008).

Studies such as Graduate Monitoring acquire great relevance because they provide us with the opinions of graduates about the quality of their professional training, its relevance to their work performance and suggestions for updating study programs in response to the demands of the labor market and the social environment they face; both strategies allow institutional feedback, fundamental inputs for curricular updating, self-assessment and high-quality accreditation at the higher level (Lopera, 2005; Aldana *et al*, 2008).

### 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

At the international level, higher education institutions face the need to be accountable not only to government agencies, but also to society, which implies the need to strengthen institutional evaluation strategies within which are found the studies of graduates that already constitute an aspect of vital importance (Aldana *et al*, 2008): “The study of graduates allows us to describe the characteristics and conditions of insertion and job performance that help in updating the curricula of the educational programs in which they have been graduates trained” (UNACH, 2012, p.49).

In Mexico, ANUIES (1998) has developed relevant methodological proposals to carry out studies and follow-up of graduates, since they allow us to know the impact that the university educational offer has on the labor market, as well as establish the quality of teaching at the university, know the professional location of graduates, analyze the social impact of schools and faculties on the labor market and have relevant information for decision-making that guides the adaptation of the university educational offer to the existing demand.

It is important to consider that the accrediting and evaluating organizations that evaluate higher level study programs in the country, such as those related to the UNACH evaluation, raise the importance of the studies and monitoring of graduates as an indicator of quality.

Studies such as graduate monitoring constitute central institutional evaluation strategies, based on the opinions of its graduates; especially UNACH states in its Curricular Model (UNACH, 2020) that both strategies allow it to be linked to the labor market, provide updated and reliable information on the professional performance of its graduates in various work fields such as public, private and social, which they account for the relevance, effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses of the study programs offered.

UNACH, committed to strengthening its educational quality, creates the Institutional Graduate Monitoring Program (PISE) (UNACH, 2012), which will enable it to have updated information on its graduates about their working and professional conditions, as well as the evaluation of its study programs and institutional services, with which it will be able to make informed decisions to ensure the quality and relevance of the educational programs it offers, a fundamental aspect of its Mission as an educational institution.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

The 2023 Graduate Study of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology of the Faculty of Social Sciences was directed by the transversal quantitative methodological design proposed by the Institutional Graduate Monitoring System (SISE) of the UNACH.

The study considered as participants the graduates of the generation who completed the curriculum implemented in 2010 and graduated in 2022. The selection of the sample, initially, adhered to the delimitation developed by the SISE, which a total of 22 graduates of the Bachelor's degree in both school cycles (January-June, August-December), a census was indicated because it was a generational cohort of less than 40 graduates, but the final sample that could be counted was graduates, equivalent to 36% of the graduates of that generation.

Information from graduates was obtained through a Survey (designed by PISE) and the questionnaire was applied online. The instrument is made up of six variables: 1) Socioeconomic data of the graduates, 2) Characteristics of their undergraduate studies, 3) Continuous training, 4) Experience and location in the labor market, 5) Graduate profile and 6) Opinion about institutional services.

### 3.1. General Characteristics of the Graduates

The study plan for the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology at UNACH consists of 256 credits, with a duration of 8 semesters, and is face-to-face; It was approved by the University Council in the Session of May 21, 2010 (in minutes 23) and was applied as of August 2, 2010 (Study Plan for the Degree in Sociology, 2010), it is still in force.

The Graduate Study presented here refers to the graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, of the Faculty of Social Sciences, of the UNACH, who took the 2010 study plan that is still in force. According to the data provided by the PISE Statistical Data Module (UNACH, 2023a), the generation of graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, 2022, is made up of 54.55% women and 45.45% men.

Regarding age groups, 54.55% of graduates are in the age range of 20 to 23 years; 36.36% are between 24 and 26 years of age, 4.55% are between 27 and 29 years of age and 4.55% are over 30 years old (UNACH, 2023a).

Regarding the place of origin, the majority (95.4%) of graduates of the Lic. in Sociology, of the 2022 generation, come from the state of Chiapas, mainly from Region V Altos Tsotsil Tseltal, with 61.9% and from the municipalities of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Oxchuc and Zinacantán; followed by Region V Comiteca Tojolabal Plateau, with 14.2%, specifically from the municipalities of Comitán de Domínguez and La Trinitaria; in a smaller proportion, 4.7%, come from Region IV De Los Llanos, Region VI Frailesca, Region X Soconusco, Region XII Selva Lacandona, Region XIV Tulijá Tseltal Chol, respectively. Likewise, 4.5% of graduates come from another entity such as Mexico City (UNACH, 2023a).

Regarding qualifications, 31.8% of this generation of graduates have degrees: 71.43% women and 28.57% men; who, in their entirety, opted for the professional examination through thesis as a degree modality (UNACH, 2023b).

## 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.1. Socioeconomic Data

Regarding the main sources of financing that the graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology had during the development of their bachelor's studies, two factors stand out: the support of parents, 47%, and the support of study scholarships, 40%; likewise, 7% mentioned income from work performed and support from a spouse or partner, respectively (UNACH, 2023c).

In relation to the level of schooling that the fathers and mothers of the graduates had, at the time they were completing their bachelor's studies, according to the data obtained, it can be mentioned that 13% of the parents of the graduates had completed primary school, 13% with incomplete primary education, 50% with high school studies or complete equivalent and 25% have completed bachelor's degrees (UNACH, 2023c).

Regarding the educational level of the mothers of the graduates, we can mention that 38% of them only have incomplete primary education, 13% have completed primary education, 25% have incomplete secondary education, 13% have completed completed secondary school and 13% have completed bachelor's degrees (UNACH, 2023c).

The data express a difference in the level of education between fathers and mothers of the graduates surveyed, where fathers have a higher level of education than mothers.

### 4.2. Work Experience

Regarding the characteristics of the graduates' work experience, it stands out that the majority, 75%, declared that they did not work during the development of their bachelor's studies; in such a way that

only a quarter of the graduates worked during the period of completing their higher studies (UNACH, 2023c).

In relation to the level of coincidence of the work activity carried out with the degree studies carried out, all of these graduates mentioned that their work did not have any coincidence with their studies (UNACH, 2023c).

Upon completing their bachelor's studies, only a minority of 12.5% of the graduates mentioned that they found employment according to the professional profile of the completed degree and the vast majority, 87.5%, indicated that they did not find employment related to their professional profile (UNACH, 2023c).

Regarding the time it took for graduates to obtain their first job upon completing their studies, all of them mentioned that it took them from six months to a year (UNACH, 2023c).

Regarding the factors that had the greatest influence in the event that they had obtained their first job after graduating from the bachelor's degree, all of the graduates surveyed mentioned the Professional Profile associated with the needs of the company or institution (UNACH, 2023c).

Regarding the aspects that graduates consider influenced the delay or difficulties in obtaining employment, they stand out: unattractive salaries, unattractive working conditions, gender discrimination, cultural discrimination and sexual preference. Likewise, 87.5% of the graduates mentioned, respectively, the age limit and other aspects. Likewise, 75% considered aspects such as saturation of the professional market and the employer's lack of knowledge of professional profiles. Also, 62.5% of those surveyed considered the lack of a professional degree, lack of professional experience and the low offer of employment associated with the professional profile as factors that influenced the delay in obtaining employment, respectively.

### 4.3. Institutional Services

Regarding the interest expressed by graduates in studying a postgraduate degree at UNACH, the vast majority of graduates, 75%, responded affirmatively (UNACH, 2023c).

Regarding the opinion of the graduates about their teachers and their academic activity in the Bachelor of Sociology, the following stands out (UNACH, 2023c):

- Teachers who had extensive knowledge of the subject:
  - 50% responded that they complied from 76 to 100%
  - 50% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 0% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 0% responded from 0 to 25%
- Teachers who complied with expository clarity:
  - 37.5% responded that they met 76 to 100%
  - 50% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 12.5% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 0% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Teachers who provided care outside of class:
  - 25% responded that they complied from 76 to 100%
  - 37.5% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 37.5% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 0% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Professors who fulfilled a plurality of theoretical and methodological approaches:

- 37.5% responded that they met 76 to 100%
- 37.5% responded from 51 to 75%
- 25% responded from 26 to 50%
- 0% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Teachers who complied with objective evaluation of works and exams:
  - 37.5% responded that they met 76 to 100%
  - 50% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 12.5% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 0% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Teachers who were motivated to access new knowledge:
  - 12.5% responded that they met 76 to 100%
  - 50% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 37.5% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 0% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Teachers who motivated student participation in class:
  - 0% responded that they complied from 76 to 100%
  - 62.5% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 37.5% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 0% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Teachers who complied with Respect for the student:
  - 50% responded that they complied from 76 to 100%
  - 50% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 0% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 0% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Teachers who met class attendance:
  - 37.5% responded that they met 76 to 100%
  - 50% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 12.5% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 0% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Teachers who complied with Punctuality:
  - 37.5% responded that they met 76 to 100%
  - 37.5% responded from 51 to 75%
  - 12.5% responded from 26 to 50%
  - 12.5% responded from 0 to 25%.
- Teachers who complied with the use of information and communication technologies to promote learning:
  - 25% responded that they complied from 76 to 100%
  - 37.5% responded from 51 to 75%

- 25% responded from 26 to 50%
- 12.5% responded from 0 to 25%.

According to the data provided by the surveyed graduates about the assessment of the academic activities of their professors of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, we can point out that in none of the evaluation categories did a majority of graduates express themselves, considering that from 76 to 100% of the academics had complied with the indicated aspects and only in two aspects did half of the graduates mention that their professors fulfilled extensive knowledge of the subject and respect for the student. It is also notable that the majority, 62.5%, reported that 51 to 75% of their teachers motivated their students to participate in class. It is worth mentioning that, although it is a minority, 12.5% of graduates mentioned that from 0% to 25% of their teachers complied with the use of information and communication technologies to promote learning and punctuality.

#### 4.4. Quality of Academic Organization and University Services

In relation to the opinion of the graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology on aspects concerning the quality of the academic organization and university services, the following stands out (UNACH, 2023c):

- Organization of continuing education activities (workshops, courses, seminars, etc.):
  - 0% answered very good
  - 87.5% responded that it was good
  - 12.5% responded that regular
  - 0% responded that it was bad.
- Guidance and direction of terminal work and dissertations:
  - 0% answered very good
  - 75% responded that it was good
  - 25% responded that regular
  - 0% responded that it was bad.
- Attention of the person responsible for the degree to the academic needs of the students:
  - 12.5% responded that it was very good
  - 62.5% responded that it was good
  - 25% responded that regular
  - 0% responded that it was bad.
- Support and guidance for carrying out social service:
  - 25% responded that it was very good
  - 50% responded that it was good
  - 25% responded that regular
  - 0% responded that it was bad.
- Delivery of subject programs to students:
  - 25% responded that it was very good
  - 37.5% responded that it was good
  - 37.5% responded that regular
  - 0% responded that it was bad.

According to the data presented above from the graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, in terms of the most valued aspects, with good quality of the academic organization and university services, it stands out that the highest proportion, 87.5% of the graduates mentioned the organization of educational activities keep going; likewise, 75% considered the orientation and conduct of terminal works and dissertations (UNACH, 2023c).

It is important to state that only a quarter of graduates rated positively as “Very Good” quality aspects such as: delivery of the subject programs to students by their teachers, as well as support and guidance for carrying out social service (UNACH, 2023c).

It is relevant to note that no graduate rated any aspect that comprises the academic organization of the Sociology study program with the most negative category of “Poor” (UNACH, 2023c). It is also worth noting that all of the graduates surveyed mentioned that if they had to take their degree again, they would choose UNACH (UNACH, 2023c).

### 4.5. Graduation Profile

The opinion of the graduates on the most important aspects that should be updated in the curriculum of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, raises the following (UNACH, 2023c):

- Theoretical contents:
  - 62.5% expand
  - 37.5% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.
- Methodological-technical contents:
  - 50% expand
  - 50% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.
- Attitudinal, values and humanistic contents:
  - 62.5% expand
  - 37.5% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.
- Knowledge that promotes mathematical reasoning:
  - 37.5% expand
  - 62.5% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.
- Contents that promote sustainable development:
  - 62.5% expand
  - 12.5% maintain
  - 12.5% reduce
  - 12.5% include.
- Contents or activities on cultural diversity and multiculturalism:

- 62.5% expand
- 25% keep
- 0% reduce
- 12.5% include.
- Contents that promote entrepreneurship and self-employment:
  - 87.5% expand
  - 0% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 12.5% include.
- Implementation of theoretical and practical knowledge in real situations through professional practice:
  - 100% expand
  - 0% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.

From the opinions of the graduates surveyed about the contents of the Bachelor of Sociology curriculum that they consider should be modified, the following stands out: mainly, all of the graduates mentioned that it is necessary to expand what is related to the implementation of theoretical knowledge and practical in real situations through professional practice; followed by 87.5% of graduates who mentioned expanding content that promotes entrepreneurship and self-employment; likewise, 62.5% of graduates consider it necessary to expand content or activities on cultural diversity and multiculturalism, theoretical knowledge, content that promotes sustainable development, mathematical reasoning; attitudinal contents, values and humanistic, respectively. También destaca que una mayoría de egresados, 62.5%, consideran que deben mantenerse conocimientos que promuevan el razonamiento matemático (UNACH, 2023c). It is worth mentioning and although it is a minority of graduates who mention it, 12.5%, they consider the need to include content that promotes entrepreneurship and self-employment, content or activities on cultural diversity and multiculturalism, and content that promotes sustainable development (UNACH, 2023c ).

Regarding the suggested modifications to the study plan in relation to the competencies, the graduates surveyed proposed the following (UNACH, 2023c):

- Personal development activities (cultural, sports and artistic):
  - 87.5% expand
  - 0% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 12.5% include.
- Competence to manage learning:
  - 87.5% expand
  - 12.5% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - % include.
- Competence to solve problems:
  - 87.5% expand
  - 12.5% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.



- Competence to reflect, understand and participate actively and purposefully in society:
  - 75% expand
  - 12.5% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 12.5% include.
- Competence to identify and explain environmental problems in a systematized and methodological way:
  - 50% expand
  - 50% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.
- Competence in the use of information and communication technologies:
  - 62.5% expand
  - 37.5% maintain
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.
- Competence to establish and maintain cordial relationships or contact networks:
  - 75% expand
  - 25% keep
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.
- Skills to communicate in a second language:
  - 75% expand
  - 25% keep
  - 0% reduce
  - 0% include.

According to the opinion expressed by the graduates, the vast majority of the competencies, 7 out of 8 evaluated for the Bachelor of Sociology curriculum, require reinforcement through their expansion, in order of importance, 87.5% of the graduates considered: skills to solve problems, skills to manage learning and personal development activities; likewise, 75% of graduates considered expanding the skills to communicate in a second language, skills to establish and maintain cordial relationships or contact networks and skills to reflect, understand and participate actively and purposefully in society; Likewise, 62.5% of graduates planned to expand their skills for the use of information and communication technologies. Es importante mencionar que los egresados, aunque sea una minoría de 12.5%, sugieren incluir competencias para reflexionar, comprender y participar de manera activa y propositiva en la sociedad, así como actividades de desarrollo personal.

### 5. ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT

*Curricular Development:* it is suggested to consider the proposals that the majority of graduates expressed should be expanded in terms of contents of the Bachelor of Sociology study plan, such as the following:

- Theoretical and practical knowledge in real situations through professional practice.
- Content that promotes entrepreneurship and self-employment.

- Contents or activities on cultural diversity and multiculturalism.
- Theoretical knowledge.
- Content that promotes sustainable development.
- Content that promotes mathematical reasoning.
- Attitudinal, values and humanistic contents.

Regarding the competencies that graduates highlight to strengthen within the study plan through its expansion, there are:

- Problem-solving skills.
- Competencies to manage learning.
- Personal development activities.
- Skills to communicate in a second language.
- Skills to establish and maintain cordial relationships or contact networks.
- Skills to reflect, understand and participate actively and purposefully in society.
- Skills for the use of information and communication technologies.

*Academic Administration/Academy of the Lic. in Sociology/Teachers:* Design institutional strategies that allow addressing the negative aspects in which the graduates evaluated the teachers, such as the following aspects:

- Use of information and communication technologies to promote learning.
- The punctuality of the teachers.
- Motivation for student participation in class.
- Motivation to access new knowledge.
- Attention outside of classes.
- Delivery of subject programs to students at the beginning of the school year.

Another relevant aspect to consider and requires the design of collegiate strategies to increase the qualifications of graduates. Efficient academic organization for better guidance and conduct of terminal work and dissertations, which affect the increase in the degree.

Strengthen support and guidance for carrying out social service, preferably linked to programs more closely related to their professional profile.

Improve the attention of the Bachelor's Academy Coordinator to the academic needs of students.

Strengthen the importance of continuous training in students after graduation and design proposals for graduates taking into consideration the lines of specialization and themes proposed in this study, mainly disciplinary theoretical topics, aspects related to scientific advances, with the use of information and communication technologies, as well as pedagogical training.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The Study of graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology, from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Campus III, of the UNACH, is oriented towards compliance and/or strengthening of quality standards and relevance of the higher level educational program that we offer, since constitutes a continuous and systematic evaluation strategy, whose inputs allow the updating of study plans, their social relevance and the innovation of new teaching-learning methods, through the opinion of graduates about the quality of their professional training, the relevance of this in their work performance and the suggestions for updating the study programs in the face of the demands of the labor market and the social environment in which they are located, as well as the assessment of the quality of the organization of institutional services.

The characteristics of the living conditions of the graduates account for two income factors relevant to their survival, such as the support of their parents and institutional school scholarships; followed by income from your job and the support provided by your spouse or partner.

It is important to highlight the low proportion of graduates who have a bachelor's degree and that the fact of lacking it constitutes a relevant factor that hinders them from obtaining employment. Likewise, the low qualifications of men who graduate from the bachelor's degree stand out.

Regarding the educational levels of the fathers and mothers of the graduates, we can point out that the graduates increased the level of schooling (Bachelor's degree) by 87% in relation to the mothers and the level of schooling in relation to the fathers by 75%; which expresses a relevant improvement in intergenerational mobility (parents and children) of the graduates of the Bachelor's Degree in Sociology in relation to their parents.

It is worth mentioning the high value that the university institution has for Sociology graduates, since the total number of graduates expressed that they would return to carry out their undergraduate studies at the same institution, UNACH, which can have a positive impact on the development of their learning process and in the formation of a more solid university identity.

In relation to the work aspect of the graduates, it is important to note that only a quarter of the graduates worked during the development of their professional studies and this activity had no relationship with their studies.

Likewise, it is relevant to highlight that only a minority of graduates got a job upon completing their professional studies and in the majority of cases of these graduates, their work had no relationship with their degree studies. Among the main causes to which they attribute the delay in obtaining a job are: unattractive salaries, unattractive working conditions, gender discrimination, cultural discrimination and sexual preference, the age limit, saturation of the professional market, the employer's lack of knowledge of the professional profiles, the lack of a professional title, the lack of professional experience and the limited offer of employment associated with the professional profile, among others.

In this regard, it is important to take into account the need to reflect from the academy and with the students of the program on what refers to the profession of the sociologist, as part of a system of professions, with a multisectoral nature, since it should not be pigeonholed only to the work of the critical intellectual dedicated to academia and/or research, but the profile of the sociologist, given the diverse nature of the discipline, is inserted in various jurisdictions that involve the public, private and social sectors. According to Fernández (2016), the quality of the place that Sociology occupies in the system of professions will be influenced by “the quality of training in universities, the orientation of study programs, the excellence of research in centers public and private, the capacity and corporate strategy of professional associations and scientific societies when it comes to defending interests and providing social and cognitive resources to practitioners of the profession” (p.215). Working in these areas will have an impact on improving the quality of the sociologist's work, the visibility of the work and of the sociological discipline itself, as well as its social legitimacy (Fernández, 2016). It is necessary to (re)think, (re)define and reinvent what sociology is for, what a sociologist is for in societies with complex problems, which gives rise to their relevant and effective linkage.

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