

GRADUATES FROM A BA PROGRAM IN ENGLISH TEACHING: A FIRST LOOK

José Luis Ramírez-Romero*

Translator: Pablo Contreras Fresán
E-mail: deepcolearning@gmail.com

* Doctor of Education from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), chair of the Research Network of Foreign Languages, teacher-researcher in the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Sonora, e-mail: jlrmrz@golfo.uson.mx. Collaborators in this paper: Sandra Smith Zamorano, Socorro del Río, Dina Yvette Ortega, Gabriela Munguía and René Tellechea, graduates and students of the BA program in English teaching at the University of Sonora.

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Resumen

Se describe el diseño metodológico y los resultados preliminares de un estudio en proceso de egresados de una licenciatura en enseñanza del inglés. El objetivo es caracterizar la trayectoria y desempeño laboral de los egresados y su relación con la formación recibida. Se utilizan cuestionarios que abarcan factores socioeconómicos, personales, familiares, educativos y laborales. Se encontró que la mayoría de las egresadas son mujeres, originarias del estado donde se ubica la institución, de familias de clase media, con un alto grado de satisfacción por la formación recibida y por la institución donde cursaron sus estudios así como una gran correspondencia entre la formación recibida y las demandas laborales.

Palabras clave:

- Egresados
- Enseñanza del inglés
- Educación superior
- Formación de profesores

Abstract

We describe the design methodology and preliminary results of an ongoing study of graduates from a b.a program in English teaching. The aim of this study is to characterize the backgrounds and job performance of graduates and its relationship to their education. In order to collect data questionnaires were used to assess socioeconomic, personal, family, educational and job performance factors. It was found that the majority of graduates are women, coming from the state where the institution is located, from middle class families, who report a high degree of satisfaction with their education and the institution they studied at as well as a strong correlation between their training and job demands.

Key words:

- Graduates
- English teaching
- Higher education
- Teacher training

Introduction

In recent decades, Mexico's higher education system has faced economic, political, social, cultural and rapidly changing technology scenarios, characterized by an increasing demand for quantitative and qualitative educational services, with new demands and challenges for its graduates. In facing these issues educational institutions have generated a number of strategies that enable them to respond more efficiently to such scenarios. Studies of graduates have been a fundamental part of these strategies, as they provide information that feeds back to professional training programs, as well as evaluating the training offer and its educational services (Martinez, 2005; Muñoz Izquierdo, 1993, Valenti and Varela, 2003).

While in the seventies only a few institutions were conducting studies of graduates (Valenti and Varela, 2003: 10), at present, most higher education institutions in Mexico carry out such studies. Unfortunately, both methodological designs and the results of such studies are not socialized enough, thus wasting the opportunity to learn from the experience of others while making comparisons and generalizations at the national level about graduates' overall working conditions. This is particularly true in foreign language teaching, where at present with more than 100 degree programs in this area (ANUIES, 2007), there is a gap in the online information available to establish such comparisons.¹

The research on which this paper is based, is intended to contribute both to the formulation of a specific instrument to be used in gathering data from graduates of bachelor's degrees in foreign language teaching², as well as to provide data on graduates of a specific institution that will be comparable to other states and institutions.

Our work departs from and adds to the efforts of both ANUIES³, and the institution where the study was carried out: the University of Sonora, which periodically conducts this type of studies (Burgos, Lopez and Garcia, 2008, Lopez and others 2006, Lopez, Burgos and Ruiz, 2004). However, we also seek to contribute by designing a tool to more accurately portray the specifics of the field of foreign language teaching to generate a more detailed and broader reach than that achieved through institutional studies.

Due to space limitations, this article will refer briefly to the theoretical and methodological design implemented⁴, and focus on presenting the results obtained so far from three generations of graduates from the BA program in English teaching at the University of Sonora.

¹ In this regard it is worth mentioning the effort by a group of academics, members of the Academic Network of Foreign Languages to develop a methodology to enable such comparisons.

² Particularly in teaching English as a foreign language.

³ Especially the one materialized in the *basic outline for the study of graduates* from which a significant number of institutions and projects

⁴ Which are developed at length in Ramirez and Cota, 2007.

Study Context

One of the major triggers associated with growth and diversification in demand for graduates in English teaching was the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada, which entered into effect on January 1st 1994. While this growth and diversification in demand for English teachers has been nation wide, in border states such phenomena have been felt with greater force. One of those states is Sonora, where growth affected at least two areas: business or industry, and educational.

In regard to industry and business, although the number of *maquiladoras* in Sonora has dropped, it remains significant in numbers⁵. Due to their foreign origin these factories require trained personnel for translation purposes or for English language training for employees, especially senior and middle managers.

In education, from the mid-1990's to date, there has been substantial growth of bilingual and bicultural private schools and it is expected that in the coming years that number will increase somewhat rapidly. This growth has also resulted in a higher demand for English teachers who not only know the language, but above all, possess the necessary theoretical and methodological training for teaching and are able to work in bilingual and bicultural settings. Additionally, in 1992 the Ministry of Education and Culture of the State of Sonora, launched –first as a pilot program and then with a somewhat wider coverage– an English Program in elementary public schools, beginning with 286 in 10 municipalities in the first two grades, serving 29,446 children, until it reached the current coverage of 117,559 students in third through sixth grade (40% of total) in 688 schools in 29 cities, requiring more than 665 English teachers (English Program in Elementary, 2009).

As a response to this growing demand generated by the expansion of the above mentioned areas, in 1995 the University of Sonora created an English Teaching degree. From then to date 11 generations have graduated, turning out a total of approximately 250 graduates.

Study Objectives

General objective

To characterize the career and job performance of graduates of the English Teaching Bachelor's degree at the University of Sonora and its relationship with the training received.

⁵ According to Barceló (2007) at the end of 2007 there were some 200 *maquiladoras* in Sonora, which generated 89 000 jobs.

Specific objectives

- Determine personal and family characteristics of graduates.
- Document their employment status, their mechanisms for finding a job, their career paths and time from graduation to employment, internships and professional development as well as their self-actualization needs.
- Characterize their academic performance, extra-university trajectory and their perceptions about the institution and their program.
- Contribute to the development of a specific instrument for studying graduates of undergraduate programs related to teaching English as a foreign language.

Theoretical aspects and analytical dimensions

According to Navarro (1998: 1) although studies of graduates intend to describe characteristics associated with job insertion and the performance of graduates in order to generate information that contributes to the evaluation and restructuring of the educational programs studied, “it is necessary to consider some theoretical elements to support and interpret the relationships between categories and variables commonly used in this type of studies.” Whereas the studies in question fall within the field of complex relations between education and work, these elements should have to come from approaches that focus on the analysis of such relationships, which are many and although from different perspectives, may be summarized in two: human capital theory and emerging approaches.

Human capital theory originates in classical economics, with Theodore Schultz, Edward Denison and Gary Becker as its main representatives. According to this theory, income and unemployment are the result of differences in educational levels, which in turn depend on the decisions of individuals to invest in themselves. We hypothesize that the more education a worker has, the more skilled is his or her labor power, which in turn increases his or her productivity and wages, and consequently, results in better income distribution. Thus, within this theory education is viewed as a key factor in achieving a better distribution of opportunities, occupational mobility and social equality (Navarro, 1998).

However, again according to Navarro (1998), various studies from other theoretical perspectives provide evidence of the presence of additional factors that influence the relationship between education and work, such as the age and social status of workers, among others, and since the mid-sixties, but with greater impetus in the seventies, there emerged a set of theories where the axis of analysis focused on *institutional factors* and *socio-psychological factors* that impact individuals’ access to the job market, higher incomes and social status. This shift in theoretical and methodological approaches to human capital, if indeed it did not mean a radical departure from this theory, it marked the beginning of a gradual abandonment of its fundamental assumptions (Dettmer and Esteinou, 1983).

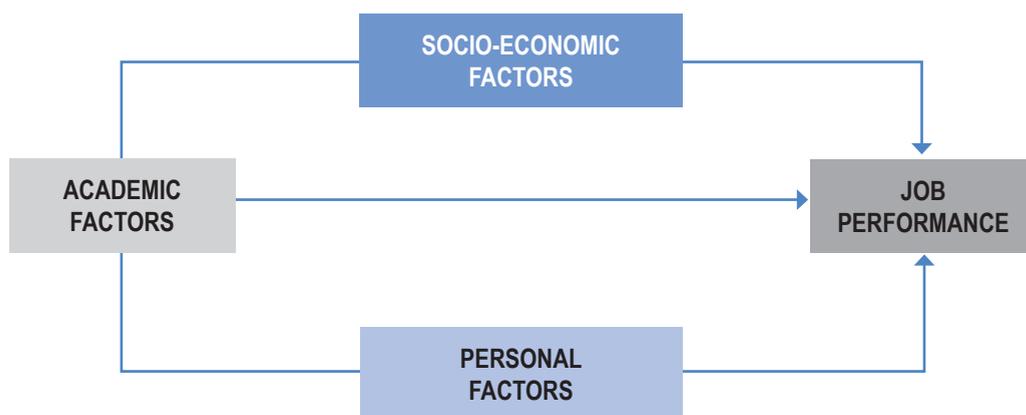
Among these emerging theoretical approaches three stand out: the queue, the credential inflation and the positional good theories⁶, all of which helped explain the relationship between education and work through the stratification of class, gender, race, and in some cases, educational institution of origin. Within these approaches, social mobility was studied in some by comparing children's occupations to that of their parents, while other approaches also considered variables such as levels of relative openness in educational and occupational structures, the occupational status according to the cultural context and the increasing displacement of labor by automated systems (Navarro, 1998).

Thus, emerging approaches highlighted the fact that the relationship between the world of education and the workplace is complex and affected by educational as well as non-educational factors. However, according to Navarro (1998: 10) quoting Karabel and Halsey, there is yet no "theory of education and labor markets that can encompass all of the elements that affect them, therefore studies of graduates should consider arguments, categories and variables from different perspectives." In this sense, "the theoretical development will depend on the construction of middle-range conceptual propositions to lay the foundation for further discussion" (Covarrubias and Estévez, 2002: 5).

In the context of previous ideas, in our study the central conceptual proposition, as shown in Graphic 1, is that training has a central role in the position and job performance of individuals, coupled with other factors such as personal and socioeconomic traits.

Graphic 1

Synthetic graphic scheme of the theoretical study model



⁶ For a more detailed description of each approach, see Navarro (1998).

Within the above scheme⁷, the *job performance* dimension describes the ways in which graduates are inserted and move through the labor system, the activities and job functions they perform as well as their professional development.

Socioeconomic factors refer to the socioeconomic context that frames the professional performance of graduates and the characteristics and labor market dynamics in a particular profession.

Personal factors allude to the family and individual characteristics of graduates, as well as their socioeconomic status, both: while they were studying and at present.

Educational factors relate to the educational trajectory of graduates before, during and after university, as well as their perceptions and views on the university education they received and the institution where they studied⁸.

Methodological design

In order to have a more accurate and detailed picture of graduates, it was decided to work with whole populations of graduates from different generations who had completed their studies. In order to include everyone, the data collection and analysis was carried out by thesis students, each in charge of a specific generation, usually their own, so that it would be easier to locate each subject and invite them to participate⁹.

To collect data we used a standard questionnaire survey, designed by Ramirez and Cota (2007), adapted in turn, from the one prepared by ANUIES (1998). The questionnaire consists of 99 closed-ended or semi-structured questions that mainly include variables related to job performance and educational factors, but also include some questions about personal and family factors as well as the socioeconomic context.

To apply the instrument, each thesis student, based on existing information in the Department of Foreign Languages directory as well as their own personal contacts, located the graduates of the particular generation, and after getting them to agree to participate in the study, the questionnaire was applied in person (either individually or in a group setting at department events which graduates already attended) or in some cases via email or telephone.

Once the data was collected, it was compiled into a table in Excel, designed specifically for this research. This procedure was performed in two phases: first, each thesis student captured and analyzed the data from the cohort they were responsible for. In the second stage, the data from the various cohorts was fed into a comprehensive database where it was to be analyzed once the data for all graduates had been captured. Then it was compared with what was found in other similar studies and with theoretical references.

⁷ Some of the items listed here were taken from Valenti and Varela (1998) but adapted and developed in different ways.

⁸ For a more detailed description of each dimension or factor and its variables, see Smith (2009).

⁹ However, as later will be documented, it was not always possible to locate all graduates.

Presentation and discussion of key results

In this section we present the main findings obtained from graduates' generations or cohorts 2002, 2007 and 2008¹⁰. The total number of graduates from these three groups consisted of 60 subjects. However, it was only possible to gather information from 46 of them (77% of total).

Main features of the graduates

Personal traits

All respondents were born in the country and the majority (89%) in the state of Sonora. The remaining 11% were born in Sinaloa, Jalisco, Michoacan and Baja California. Of those born in Sonora, most are from Hermosillo (73%). The others are from the following municipalities: Cananea (10%) Obregon and Guaymas (5% each), and Navojoa, Nogales and Caborca (2% each). Regarding their place of residence, currently all the respondents reside in the state of Sonora, particularly in the municipality of Hermosillo (94%). The remainder live in Caborca (4%) and Cananea (2%). Most graduates (83%) are female.

Family traits

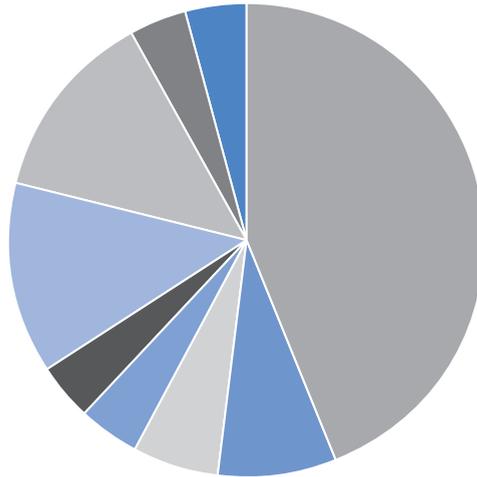
As the for the head of the household's level of education (father, mother or other) where the graduates surveyed lived while studying, we found that the majority (59%) had a university education (BA or MA), 11% had 12th grade education, 19% 9th grade education, and the remaining 11% had only 6th grade education (see Figure 2).

¹⁰ As previously mentioned, the study covers all graduates, but to date we only have data from those who finished their studies in those years.

Figure 2

Head of the household's educational level

Bachelor's Degree incomplete	4%
Bachelor's Degree completed	44%
Master's Degree completed	8%
Elementary School incomplete	6%
Elementary School completed	4%
Junior High School or equivalent incomplete	4%
Junior High School or equivalent completed	13%
Senior High School or equivalent incomplete	13%
Senior High School or equivalent completed	4%

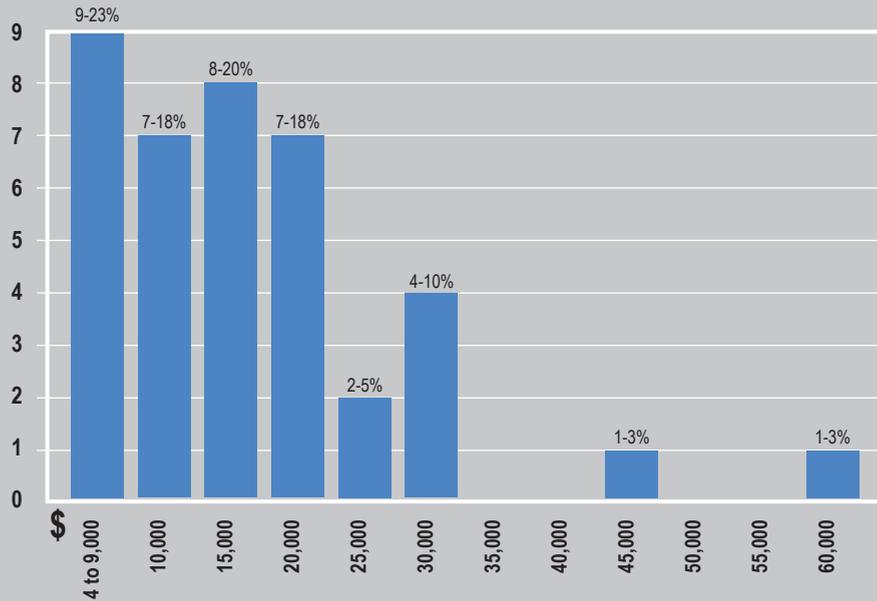


41% of respondents reported that the head of the household at the time they were studying, were either workers, employees or non-professional workers, 26% were employed or freelance professionals, 21% business owners or partners, 6% managers or directors, and the remaining 6% were retired.

Household income while they were studying ranged between 4.000 to 60.000 pesos, yet most (61%) reported their household income to be in the range of 10.000 to 30.000 pesos (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Household Income



In short, most graduates of the three generations studied are characterized by the following features: being from and residing in the state of Sonora, currently living in the city where they completed their studies, being female and coming from small, middle-class families whose parents have university degrees.

The above data suggest that we have a group of alumni whose social and cultural status is above average in comparison to the rest of their schoolmates from other programs at the same university¹¹, which would explain their higher level of English at the time of entering their program.

The data also suggests that graduates from these generations are less mobile internationally and nationally, but those who leave their home towns (as students from outside the city), tend not to return and instead settle where they studied; this trend could possibly be due to, as Burgos noted (2008), the economic dynamism of the locations where graduates studied and work compared to their places of origin.

In relation to gender, previous data is consistent with similar research findings, such as Lopez, Burgos and Ruiz (2004), who found that humanities tend to attract a higher proportion of female enrollment.

¹¹ According to González and López (2004), most students at the University of Sonora come from low income families (whose wages are below 6,000 pesos a month for 4 to 6 member families), whose parents have a lower level of schooling.

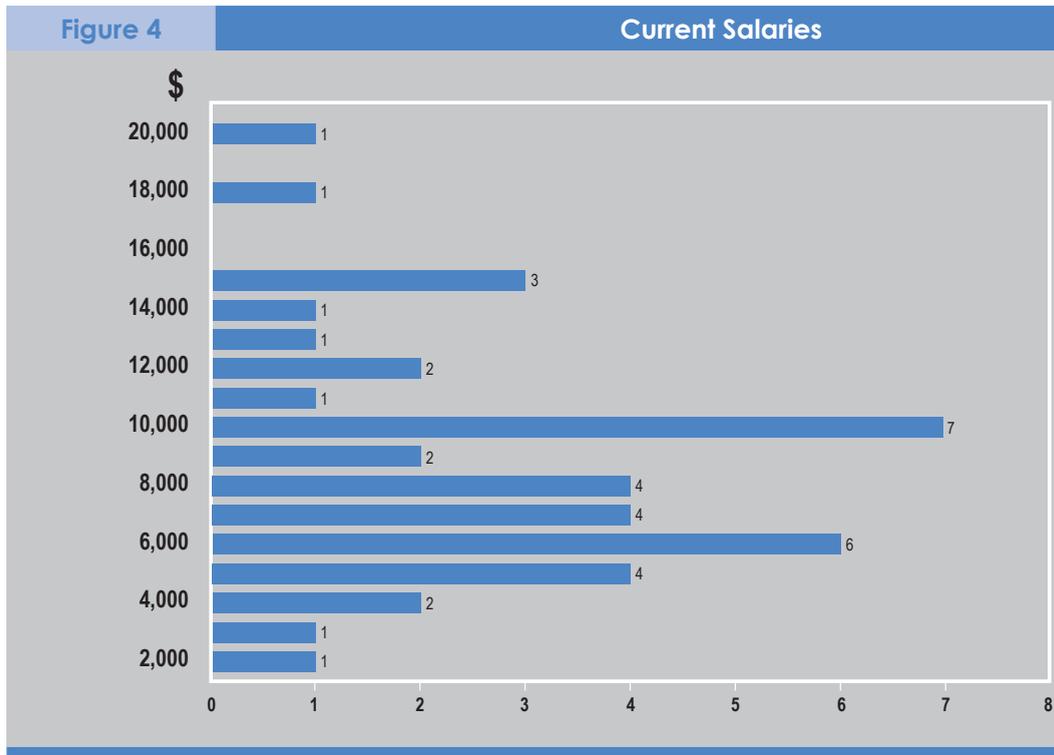
The family homestead for the majority of graduates surveyed (96%) before finishing their studies was family owned and the rest lived in dwellings that were rented or on loan to their families (2% each). Currently, 49% of the graduates live in their own homes, 16% in a rented dwelling, 4% in houses on loan to them and the remaining 31% live at home with their parents. The increase in the percentage of graduates currently living in rented homes now, appears to be related to the fact that while they were studying they lived with their parents, while currently they live by themselves or with their partners and their income so far has not allowed them to buy their own homes. Gil Antón (1994) detected a similar situation in his study of Mexican academics finding that in the early years after graduation, their economic status was lower than that of their parents.

Graduates employment status, job finding mechanisms, insertion rates, job experience, internships and professional development

Employment status

Currently 96% of respondents are working in an area related to teaching English, 2% are dedicated to sales and the other 2% do not work. 90% of those working in the area of education are teachers, 7% are in managerial or coordination positions and the remaining 3% are consultants.

Graduates net monthly income at present, including bonuses and benefits, ranges between 2.000 and 20.000 pesos, depending on the institution, position and years of seniority, although the majority (59%) earn between 5,000 and 10,000 pesos (see Figure 4).



As for the workplace it was found that the majority of graduates are working in private institutions (57%) had full-time contracts (52%), and six months to 3 years seniority (51%).

Most of the graduates surveyed (55%) work at the preschool and elementary education level, 17% at high school level, 20% in higher education and 6% at various levels. The remaining 2% did not answer the question (see Figure 5).

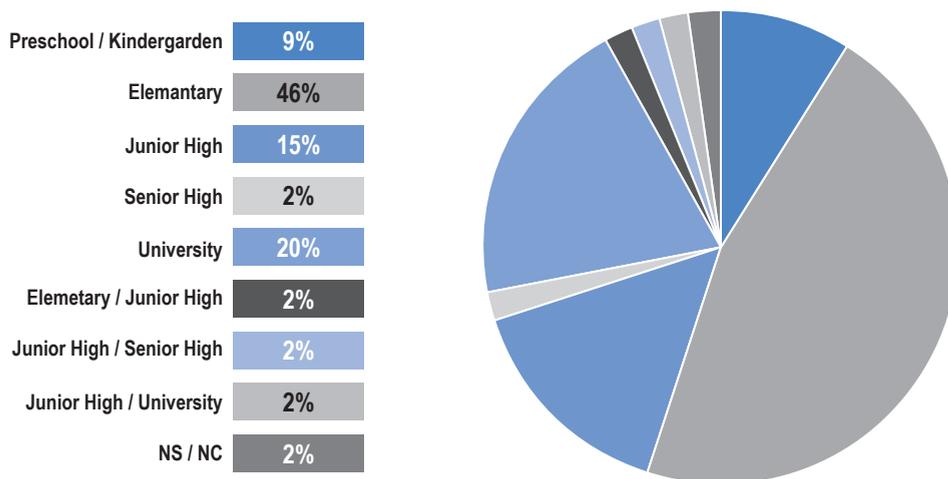
56% work in regular institutions, 28% in bilingual and 6% in bicultural schools; 5% work in both regular and bilingual institutions, and the remaining 5% did not respond. 54% teach English, 28% English and other subjects, 11% various subjects and 7% did not respond. 61% reported using 80 to 100% English in their classes and 30% used English during 50 to 70% of class time (the remaining 9% did not respond).

In short, today almost all of the BA graduates are working in an area related to teaching, for most their monthly income ranges between 5.000 and 10.000 pesos per month depending on the institution, position and seniority. Most work in preschool education in private institutions or regular elementary schools¹² (although a significant percentage work in other levels

¹² The results coincide with those from Burgos, Lopez and Garcia (2008) who found that 80% of graduates from an English teaching degree that they surveyed, worked in private institutions and 20% in the public system.

Figure 5

Education Level



or some in more than one at a time), have full time contracts, 6 months to 3 years seniority, and use English in their classes more than 80% of the time.

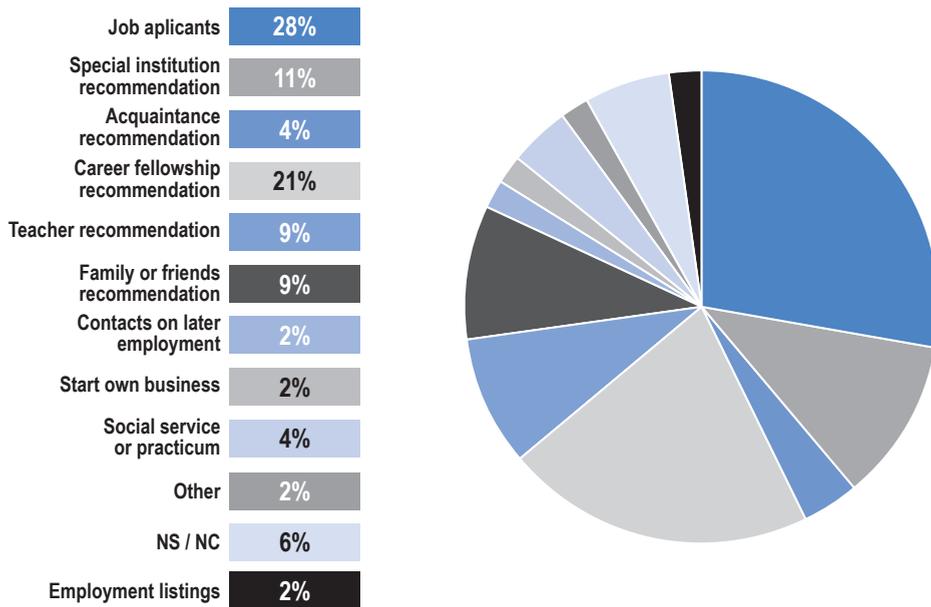
These results suggest that there is a high demand for graduates from this program in the state and local labor market, that the commitment to teaching and teacher training for all levels of education is appropriate, but should be strengthened in the elementary level, providing them with a solid education in both English and Spanish. Also it would be desirable to provide them with some training that would enable them to open their own schools so they could increase their incomes.

Insertion mechanisms

The mechanisms by which surveyed graduates obtained their first job in a area related to English teaching have been diverse, they include those who obtained jobs through informal networks (which represent 55% of total), such as recommendations from friends, (especially from the degree program), relatives, teachers or acquaintances (which all together coalesce to form 42% of responses) and, those indirectly related as would be jobs linked to previous employment (2%) or an invitation from an institution (11%), which would also originate from networks of relationships. In Figure 6 all mechanisms used by graduates are shown.

Figure 6

Insertion mechanisms



The main formal requirement to get their first job in an area associated with teaching English was to have an English teaching degree, as mentioned by 49% of respondents, followed by the command of the English language mentioned by 27%. Other factors were to pass a selection test (6%), prior knowledge of the institution (6%), previous experience (4%) and letters of recommendation (2%)¹³.

In short, social networks and their English teaching degree were the most important factors and requirements, according to respondents, for finding employment in an area associated with their studies.

The results related to insertion mechanisms are consistent with those reported in other studies, where the principal mechanism for entering the labor market has been the so-called *relational capital*, understood as the set of links or relationships that facilitate or reduce costs in access to employment or otherwise (Jiménez, 2009: 5). Regarding formal entry requirements, our findings partially coincide with those of Burgos, Lopez and Garcia (2008) who found that 80% of respondents stated that a requirement for their current job was to have a university degree. However, in the case of English teaching most of the graduates, as will be shown in the following paragraph, enter the labor market before finishing their studies, and some of them before even starting, which seems to weaken the weight of this requirement.

¹³ The remaining percentage did not answer the question.

Insertion rates

The time taken by graduates to get a job in an area related to their studies varies, but in most cases (85%) it was before completing their program. Thus, 15% got their first job associated with English teaching before their program started, 11% at the beginning of the program, 20% during the program and 39% by the end. Only 11% waited to finish their studies to enter the world of work. The remaining percentages are for those who have never worked in the field or did not answer the question.

Careers

As for the number of jobs that graduates have had in an area associated with English teaching, only 31% have had one job, while the majority (59%) have had from 2 to 4 jobs, and 8% have had from 5 to 7 different jobs. The remainder did not answer the question.

In regard to the position of first employment, the category with the highest percentage was teaching with 72%, while the remaining 18% of surveyed graduates obtained positions as coordinators, trainers, consultants and/or translators and interpreters. 8% worked as a clerk or receptionist, and the remainder did not respond.

Comparing graduate's perception of salary and position before and after completing their degree, we have that the majority of respondents believe that it improved their wages (66%) and position (63%), while some think that the salary (13%) and the position (20%) remained the same, while 4% felt it worsened both areas. The rest did not answer the question or answered that it did not apply to them.

In short, most graduates have had from 2 to 4 jobs as English teachers, which indicates a field with a high demand, but also high mobility, at least in the early years of employment. Wages and positions obtained after completion of their studies were higher compared to those they had while they were studying and working. These findings are slightly higher than those found in the study of Lopez Burgos and Ruiz (2004) who reported that 49% felt that they had no changes in employment status, 43% had improved substantially with respect to the first job and 8% stated that their situation had worsened.

Professional Development

Most alumni included in this study were satisfied (43%) or very satisfied (24%) with the position reached, but only 22% of them plan to continue working in the same business, institution and with the same income level, while 35% hope to change to another institution that will pay them higher incomes, 20% want to start their own business, 9% are thinking about a change of activities, 6% plan to continue with the same activities but in another institution, and the remaining 8% have no expectations.

Thus, although it was found that the majority reported feeling satisfied or very satisfied with their professional development, most graduates think of changing institutions, activities, or perhaps start a business, which seems contradictory, however what this seems to reflect in not really dissatisfaction with their professional development, but an ambition for greater remuneration for their work, which partly explains the high job turnover mentioned in previous sections.

Educational trajectory after commencement and graduates' perceptions about the institution and their program

Educational trajectory after graduation

The vast majority (78%) of the graduates surveyed had further training after graduation. The frequency they report participating in updating or further training activities related to their career are as follows: 17% attend monthly, 48% participate semiannually at a training event, 13% participate annually, 2% did not respond and the remaining 20% have never participated in any self-actualization activity.

As for the type of event and the level of training or education received, it was found that over half (56%) of the graduates have participated in training events, courses, workshops or seminars; (5%) in diplomas, certificates and specializations; 3% have taken courses not related to the area, 30% did not respond, and only 6% have completed postgraduate studies (Masters degree).

In short: the majority of respondents continued their training after graduation from the degree program, which points to a concern for increasing their cultural capital and remaining more competitive in the job market. Strikingly, however, only 6% have completed postgraduate studies. One possible explanation is the absence of specialized graduate programs on English teaching in the region and the short supply nationwide.

Perceptions of graduates about the institution and the program studied

The overall assessment of the training received by the English Teaching degree graduates is generally positive: 31% assessed it as excellent and the remaining 67% assessed it as good¹⁴.

As for the extent of coincidence of their undergraduate studies and work, 46% felt that it was total, 50% said it was a good match and only 2% felt that there was little coincidence.

¹⁴ In all cases, the missing percentages unless otherwise stated, correspond to those subjects who did not answer the questions under each item.

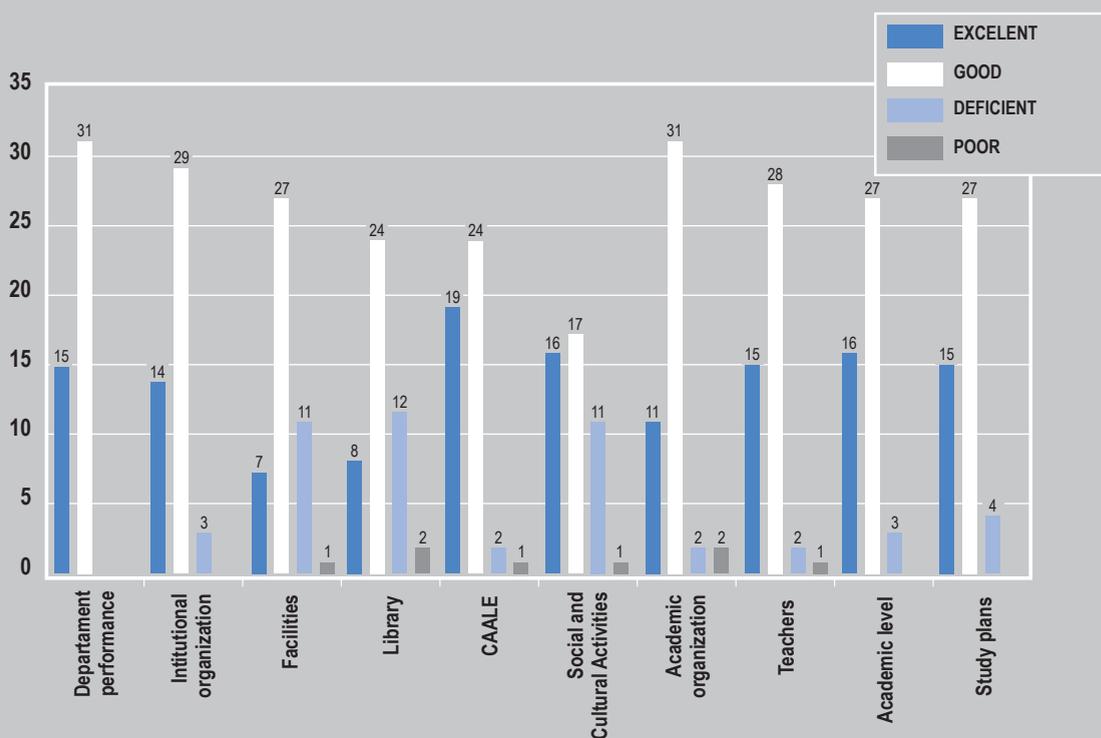
72% of respondents considered the knowledge learned in their program as very relevant to the work they now do, while 24% considered it only relevant. Only 2% responded that what they learned was not relevant.

The variety, relevance and appropriateness of the teaching methodologies and evaluation forms used by teachers were rated by most respondents as good or excellent in all areas.

As shown in Figure 7, the quality and performance of the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Sonora were also evaluated as excellent or good in all areas. However, aspects related to the facilities, library and cultural activities were evaluated as not good, encompassing among the three lowest percentage ratings.

Figure 7

Quality and performance evaluation of the Department



In regard to an evaluation of all teachers, most were given high ratings (from 76 to 100) in almost all areas (subject knowledge, clarity of presentation, objective evaluation, respect for students, and attendance and punctuality) except for attention outside of class, plurality of theoretical and methodological approaches, and motivation to access new knowledge where the majority were given grades below 75.

96% of graduates would recommend studying a degree in English teaching at the University of Sonora to a friend or relative. The main reasons being the presence of a good program and educational level, high demand for labor, qualified teachers, as well as for the experience, and personal and professional satisfaction.

In short: almost all of the graduates assessed the training received in their program as excellent or good and corresponding and relevant to the labor market. The quality and performance of the Department of Foreign Languages was also positively evaluated by most graduates. Where perhaps more attention should be paid is in cultural activities, facilities and the library. Teachers, as a whole were evaluated very positively by most respondents in all areas, except those related to attention outside of the classroom, a plurality of theoretical and methodological approaches, and motivation to access new knowledge. Finally, the vast majority would recommend studying a degree at the University of Sonora to a friend or relative.

The above data suggests graduates have a high degree of satisfaction with the University, the department, degree program, curriculum and faculty. These results coincide with those by Lopez Burgos and Ruiz (2004) who found that 95% of respondents said they were thoroughly satisfied with the University of Sonora and 80% would study the degree program again if they had to choose, as well Burgos, Lopez and Garcia (2008) found that 96% would study again at the institution and more than 50% reported a high level of satisfaction with the program.

Conclusions and recommendations

In this paper we have presented a first look at the graduates from the Bachelor's degree in English teaching at the University of Sonora and outlined some features related to their personal characteristics, professional performance, labor market and academic education received.

As for personal traits, one of the central findings was to provide elements to define more precisely the academic education of students who graduate from the BA program in English teaching, which in terms of social background, their parents educational level as well as their own English level, are well above graduates from other programs from the same institution. It would be important to analyze in future studies if precisely these traits (social background and English proficiency) better explain the reasons for admittance into the program, and in parallel, to implement compensatory

mechanisms that allow students from lower income households to enter and successfully complete the BA program.

In the same vein, the study provided data related to the low influx of students from cities other than the state capital, and its associated low rate of return of those students to their places of origin, these two elements show the need to create mechanisms that help both, to increase the influx from these populations and to encourage them to return to their places of origin and contribute to the improvement of the provision of education there.

The collected data allowed the profiling of a labor market focused strictly on teaching that although broad enough to allow students to find employment even before graduation, it is also one where wages and benefits are not sufficiently attractive to those working in it so as to facilitate them settling and building a career in the institutions where they started providing their services, which in conjunction with graduates' higher income social extraction, probably explain the high turnover and job instability, especially in their first jobs.

The obtained data also enabled us to know the graduates' assessment on both their education and the institution where they studied and thus to detect some aspects which would require changes or adjustments in order to provide a better training for new students.

It is important, however, to note that the data collected so far, as in many other emerging theoretical approaches, do not coincide with the human capital framework in that at least during the first few years after graduation, having more education (an undergraduate degree), appears not to be a central factor of social mobility, at least not in the case of graduates from higher income strata (such as graduates from the program here studied). In our case, low mobility (mainly expressed in equal or lower wages than those of their parents) seems more attributable to the lower status of the teaching profession, as argued by the emerging approaches.

Finally, the data collected so far seem not to reaffirm the central proposition of our research, which holds that education plays a central role in the position and job performance of graduates given that, as already mentioned, although most said that the most important formal factor in getting their first job was their education, most of them found jobs before even completing their degree, and some even before entering the program, which at least calls into question the importance of education at the time of entering their first job, in a profession where there is such high labor demand as the one studied¹⁵ here.

We hope this work contributes, along with the preceding body of work in the field, to a better understanding of both the English teaching bachelor's degree graduates as well as their assessment of their education and work

¹⁵ It should be noted, however, that at present due to requirements from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Sonora state government, English teaching degree applicants must present some evidence of formal education (completed or not) in the area or experience teaching the language.

environments and henceforth, to build educational approaches that can contribute to the development of better professionals and better citizens.

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