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Work performance analysis of university graduates from their own perspective. Studies in Hispanic Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education and Languages of UNAN-Managua

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ABSTRACT

assessment obtained from a section of the study entitled: *Performance and work satisfaction of graduates from the program of Hispanic language and literature of the Faculty of education and languages at Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Nicaragua, Managua from 2009-2013*. The object of the study, at a general level, is to address the assessment and analysis that graduates and employers are showing on three major factors: satisfaction, work performance and professional profile of graduates. In this study, since it is one of the most important components of the research, it will offer the results referred to the work performance of the population in study. The sample consist of 174 graduates who were applied a questionnaire designed in Likert scale, using exclusive, nominal categories and items of scale, where they are

asked to value your satisfaction regarding their training and work, their work performance and the essential features of their professional profile. The instrument was self-administered and both responded via e-mail as well as in a direct way. According to the results obtained in the analysis of statistical data through the program SPSS v.21, a very high percentage (90%) of the graduates surveyed is used in the area for which they were formed (teaching in different levels of education), graduates value their work performance in a positive way, however they also considered that certain skills that enable them to better perform at their profession should be strengthened.

1. INTRODUCTION

The research that follows is presented in the interest of knowing the problems of Spanish Language and Literature graduates of the Department of Spanish of the Faculty of Education and Languages at UNAN-Managua. The studies of the subject at the international level, Bedoya (2011), Campos (2010), Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (CSUCA, (2004)), Domínguez (2010), Justiniano (2006), Latorre (2010), among others, consider the graduate student as a relevant source of information for Institutional improvement purposes and, in particular, a fundamental input for institutional self-evaluation and for the accreditation processes. Now, they provide those responsible for higher education institutions with the opportunity to analyze the characteristics of the professional performance of their graduates, with the possibility of having tools to reorient study programs in terms of relevance to the guarantee to opt for better opportunities in the labor market of those who graduate with that university institution or higher education.

The follow up subject to graduates is broad. The work performance of graduates of the career of Hispanic Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education and Languages at UNAN will be characterized in detail.

The interest for universities declines to be eminently professional bodies and institutions that are inserted in a specific field of work, which in turn demands from them, not only the constant updating of the knowledge learned, but also the application of competencies, skills and abilities. The competency level (knowledge, skills and abilities ...) must be evaluated both by the employer and the university that graduated them in order to verify if the graduated professionals respond to the needs of society and efficiently perform their function and this way to check the coherence between the graduation profile of graduates and their professional practice. We hope that this research will potentiate a new field of study before the scientific-educational and business community.

Another important aspect of this study is related to the introduction of Law 704 (Law creating the National System for the assurance of the quality of education and regulatory of

the National Council for Evaluation and Accreditation). The regulations allow Nicaraguan universities to pay attention more than they have traditionally been doing, to quality assurance to meet the needs of both students and society regarding the labor market, and a way to measure the quality of these institutions depends on identifying the type of professional performance of their graduates in relation to the employment situation and work satisfaction. This law, in its article 11, establishes that the "Institutions of Higher Education, public and private legally established in the country, will develop processes of institutional self-evaluation in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses …"

This reasoning has a horizon that goes beyond national borders, being valid not only for Nicaragua but also for several years internationally strengthening the tendency of evaluation of university activity, as a form of accountability to society and governments. In this context of evaluation, the follow-up of graduates is a matter of vital importance for universities, since the professional and personal performance of graduates allows to establish indicators regarding the quality and efficiency of institutions of higher education (Asociación COLUMBUS, cited by Vega et al., 2012, 31).

These accreditation processes are demanding the generation and demanding the execution of follow-up studies of graduates by specific majors, therefore, higher education institutions will require expert staff in the area of development for graduates to have a referent of the quality of the Education provided to them, in aspects such as the unreliable operating conditions, processes, products and results.

These investigations also allow the evaluation of the needs of the graduates during their professional practice and first employment in order to improve their preparation through the permanent offer of university training through the promotion of postgraduate courses, masters, and Doctorates. Finally, it is shared with Lucio-Villegas and Cruz (1999), when ratifying in his study that from this perspective of joint training action, the improvement in communication processes between the higher institution, the graduates and the employers is encouraged.

According to the review of the scientific reading consulted and reviewed in previous lines, follow-up studies of graduates have undoubtedly benefited higher education institutions that have carried them out. Among others they emphasize:

 Development of programs based on the demands of the socio-economic context in which their graduates will develop, so that they respond to current socio-economic needs.

- Access to the process of transition from the university to the labor market to assess the quality of such insertion and what are the factors that favor or hinder such insertion and thus feedback the training processes.
- Evaluation of training plans for higher education.
- · Analysis and categorization of the work reality of its graduates, which will, in turn, allow: To know information about professional performance, opinions and suggestions about the quality of the education received and the new demands of the labor market and the social environment; Identify the extent to which education is being achieved and institutional and curricular objectives are met.
- Establishment of smooth relations between the university and the labor market and improvement of the quality in the educational offer to equip the student with better and greater resources when facing the work life and becoming professional agents of change in the society.
- Development of continuous and systematic evaluation proposals of the university institution in order to promote innovation, promote new models and teaching-learning methods and favor the optimization of institutional resources.
- · Categorization and agreements that help to unify the perspectives from which followup studies are conducted to graduates.
- Finally, through these studies, there is access to a structured content on the process and result of the social and economic investment that the country makes when training professionals.

As can be seen, the follow-up study of graduates and their work satisfaction points to three broad conceptual and methodological centers focused on the management, organization and institutional evaluation of the university itself and, on the other hand, on the structures, Characteristics, work performance and communication exchange, company-university.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

This research is framed in a multi-method approach, ascribed within the socio critical paradigm, because it does not only adhere to the reductionism of data of the positivist current (Cobos, 2007) nor is it methodologically approached as a mere collection of data to verify preconceived theories, since Ricoy says (2006), "we aspire from the critical paradigm to the union between theory and practice, using the former as a foundation and guide of the latter, with a mutual interaction" (p.18).

According to the depth or objective, this research is of a correlational type, according to Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, correlational studies "... have the purpose of knowing the relationship or degree of association that exists between two or more concepts, categories or variables in a Particular context" (2010, page 81). Relationships between variables will be established to identify a sense of causality: significant or not, range of interaction between variables. This relationship between variables will make it possible to describe the characteristics of the target population in greater depth.

According to the temporary scope, this study is transversal (sectional or synchronous) because it will study the graduated population of the Hispanic Language and Literature career during the years 2009-2013. According to Beltrán, del Rincón and Arnal, "this type of research studies a developmental aspect of the subjects at a given moment" (2003, 44).

2.1. Subjects

The universe of the study consists of all graduates between 2009-2013 in the major of Hispanic Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education and Languages at UNAN-Managua that, according to data from the Directorate of Academic, Statistical and Student Records, are 174. Figure 1 shows the characteristics of the population in study.

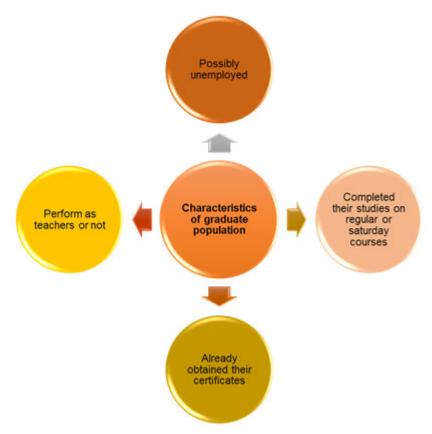


Figure 1: Characteristics of the population in study. Own elaboration.

A stratified probabilistic sample was selected (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010) by graduation year (2009-2013), where graduates from different years were represented, so that it was proportional. To that end, the data were provided by the Academic, Statistical and Student Registry Office and the Academic Secretariat of the Faculty of Education and Languages. It is considered that the sample of this study is representative of the population because it is a reflection of it, that is, it reunites the main characteristics of the population in relation to the variable under study. In addition, the elements of N were divided into several strata, so that, as Ludewing (s.f.) asserts, each stratum formed is internally homogeneous because its members closely resemble each other as regards the variable to be studied, whereas the strata differ from one another.

As a result of the application of the statistical formula, the sample of the study was conformed by 120 graduates.

$$\mathbf{n} = \frac{Z^{2^*} p^* q^* N}{N^* e^2 + Z^{2^*} p^* q}$$

Where: Z^2 = confidence level (3.84 normal distribution table for 95% reliability); N = Population; p = probability in favor (0.5); q = probability against (0.5); n = sample size; e = margin of error 5%; N = population size.

2.2. Instrument

This research contains, among others, documentary research techniques and techniques for obtaining information in the field, which formed the basis of the theoretical and methodological basis for the study. In regards to the first, the bibliographic review was done in both direct and indirect sources, physically, databases, theses, journal articles, and electronic sources located in the Web network.

In obtaining information in the field, the survey technique was used and also as a tool, a questionnaire was designed, piloted and implemented. Surveys are considered to be an adequate technique because "they provide rapid and inexpensive means to determine the reality of people's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, expectations and behaviors" (Beher, 2008, p. 62). In order to ensure that the data obtained during the data collection process were of quality, the instruments applied were clearly drafted so that "all responding subjects understood them in the same way. In order to avoid ambiguities in the writing of the items, two fundamental questions must be taken into account: Avoid negative expressions and include a single idea in each item" (Behar, 2008, p. 78).

To measure the attitude of the graduates to their work situation, a questionnaire was designed with closed questions (Likert scale), using exclusive categories, nominal and scale items, where they are asked to assess their degree of satisfaction and work performance, as well as their professional training in the university.

Finally, in the elaboration of the questionnaire, the first step was to design the table of specifications or conceptual definition of the variables, whose structure is presented in table 1.

In this table the dimensions were established from which the categories were defined and subcategories that allowed the writing of the items that as a whole answered each of the specific objectives which was based on the previous bibliographic review.

Table 1. Table of specifications

DIMENSION: WORK SATISFACTION							
Definition: The group of general attitudes in each individual towards their job.							
Objectives Specific	Category	Sub-category	Items	Definition	Informant	Technique	

Once the questionnaire was designed, it was evaluated by three judges who were given the list of items and an observation guide to present their points of view and suggestions in relation to their assessment of quality in the writing of the items, their content and correspondence with what is being investigated. As a result of this process, some adjustments were made to the questionnaire, which initially consisted of 51 closed questions and one open. After the different expert reviews, an analysis was carried out, which led to a reduction of 49 closed questions and one open question.

Following the evaluation of the judges, a sample of eleven participants from the target population was selected for the pilot application via e-mail. As a result of this application, the NA (not applicable) scale was added, since not all respondents work in activities directly related to teaching or are unemployed, so that they could not answer some questions. Table 2 presents the scale for each dimension of the study.

Table 2. Final scale for each dimension of analysis

The next step was to measure the reliability of the questionnaire for such purpose Cronbach's Alpha formula was applied because, as Corral (2009) states, it is used to:

Assess the reliability or homogeneity of the questions or items [...] when dealing with alternatives of polycyclic responses, such as Likert scales; which can take values between 0 and 1, where: 0 means null reliability and 1 represents total reliability (p. 241).

The results of this process indicate that the questionnaire is highly reliable since the result is greater than .60. Table 3 shows the results.

DIMENSION	CRONBACH 'S ALPHA	ELEMENTS	
Work satisfaction	.831	16	
Work performance	. 935	9	
Work satisfaction	. 818	11	

Table 3. Reliability Statistics for each dimension of the study

The decision of designing a closed question structure questionnaire offers various advantages:

- Surveyed people make less effort.
- The answers are more specific.
- It is easy to fill up.
- It is reasonably objective.
- It is easy to classify and analyze. (Behar, 2008, p. 65)

2.3. Procedures

In order to proceed with the application of the survey, graduates were informed by telephone about the study that was being carried out and were asked to collaborate in the process $\frac{1}{2}$

of completing the survey. Those who had an email address were sent the survey and those who did not, were visited at home.

Once the questionnaires were collected, data were emptied and their analysis and discussion of the results were carried out with the help of SPSS v.21, whereby descriptive statistics were calculated as absolute frequencies of each category to rule out the presence of foreign values to the original values of each variable. Data analysis was then performed with the elaboration of graphs, which allowed a descriptive analysis of the sample, taking into account the different sections in which the questionnaire was structured (satisfaction, work performance and professional profile).

3. RESULTS

In this article the results corresponding to the study dimension are presented: labor performance, which allowed to know how the graduates value their work performance. This section of the research is addressed, because it is considered that the professional training of the individual has an impact on their work performance and to the extent that their training is solid, so will their performance, which is why professional training institutions take as an improvement reference the results of follow-up studies for graduates, because it will allow them to train competent professionals for the institutions that employ the graduates, since the work performance is the fundamental basis for the development of any institution. For Palaci (quoted by Pedraza, Amaya and Conde, 2010):

Work performance is the value that is expected to contribute to the organization of the different behavioral episodes that an individual performs over a period of time. These behaviors, of the same or several individuals (s) at different time points at the same time, will contribute to organizational efficiency (page 493).

Below are the results corresponding to the 9 items aimed at measuring the labor performance of the respondents.

Item 1: I select, develop and use relevant teaching materials with students' social and political context.

An adequate selection of teaching materials leads to an efficient learning process on the part of the student. As shown in figure 2, the 89% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that they select, elaborate and use relevant teaching materials with the social and political context of the students, a very high percentage. Only 1% disagree and 10% do not apply, the latter percentage corresponds to respondents who do not work directly in teaching or are unemployed.

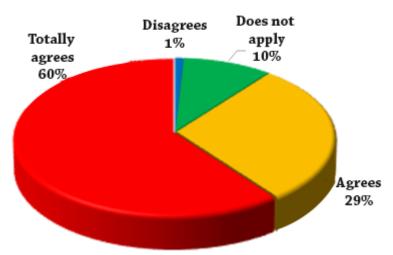


Figure 2. Didactic materials pertinence. Own Elaboration

Item 2: The didactic materials selected and elaborated support the learning and teaching processes.

The teaching materials are fundamental in the teaching-learning process, because as long as the student identifies with them and achieves their appropriation, it will facilitate their understanding and apprehension. The results on the question of whether the teaching materials the respondents select and elaborate favor the teaching-learning processes, are exactly the same as the previous question: 89% agree, 1% disagree and 10% do not apply, which can be seen in figure 3.

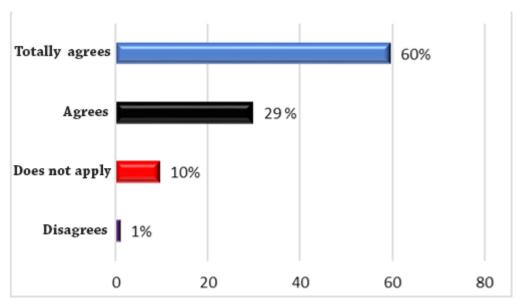


Figure 3. The didactic materials selected and elaborated support the learning and teaching processes. Own elaboration.

Item 3: I am aware of the progress and academic performance of the students.

One of the functions of the teacher is to follow the performance of the students in charge to ensure optimal academic performance. Figure 4 shows that 68% of respondents strongly agree

that they are aware of their students' progress and academic performance. 21% agree, 9% do not apply and 2% do not respond. In the case of the percentage that responded that does not apply, it is related to the unemployed percentage and to those that are not directly related to teaching.

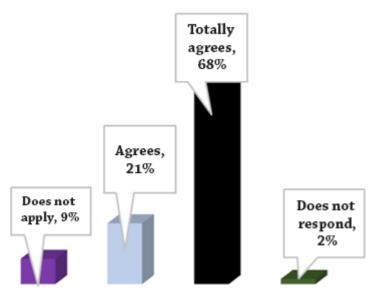


Figure 4. I am aware of the progress and academic performance of the students. Own elaboration.

Item 4: I apply adequate techniques to evaluate my students' knowledge.

The evaluations in the teaching-learning process are relevant because they allow to measure the degree of knowledge and competences acquired by the students. Figure 5 shows that 62% and 28% of respondents strongly agree and agree, respectively, that they apply adequate techniques to evaluate the knowledge of their students, the remaining 10% respond that does not apply.

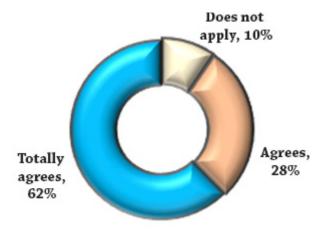


Figure 5. Proper evaluation techniques. Own elaboration

Item 5: I contribute to the strengthening of the ethical values of my students.

The formation of an individual goes beyond the acquisition of scientific knowledge, much of the development of desirable skills will develop them to the extent that their ethical values

are strengthened. Figure 6 shows that 77% of the respondents strongly agree that it contributes to the strengthening of students' ethical values, 14% agree and 9% do not apply.

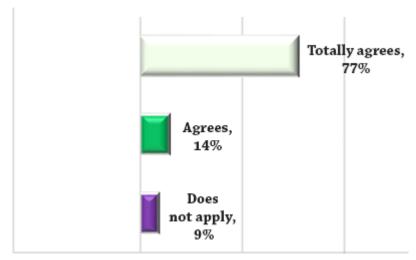


Figure 6. Ethical values formation. Own elaboration.

Item 6: I am able to solve problematic situations in my work environment.

Every worker, every day faces problematic situations to which he must give effective solution so that his performance is efficient. According to figure 7, 96% of the respondents agree and agree (60% and 36%) that they are able to solve problems in their area of work, regardless of whether they are not related to the teaching area. The remaining 4% responded that it does not apply, it coincides with the segment that is unemployed.

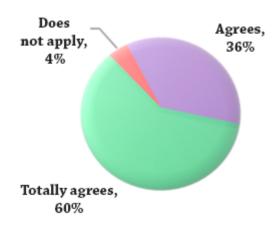


Figure 7. Resolves problematic situations in their area of work. Own elaboration.

Item 7: I am constantly innovating methods of working with students.

Innovation in teaching methods is considered fundamental in a society where changes in all areas are vertiginous, and education cannot be left behind. As shown in figure 8, the opinion of the respondents, as to whether they constantly innovate the methods of working with the

students is divided in totally agree and agree, with 46% each. The remaining 8% does not apply; a percentage, for being unemployed and another for not working directly in the classroom.

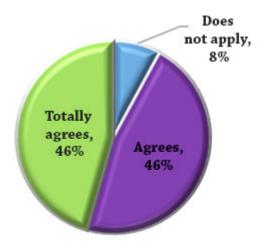


Figure 8. Innovation in working methodology. Own elaboration.

Item 8: I am disciplined and organized in my work.

Not only scientific, technical and methodological skills and knowledge guarantee a good professional performance, but also those values and attitudes that contribute to the effective application of the former. Figure 9 shows that 96% of the respondents considered that they are disciplined and organized in their work (68% strongly agree and 28% agree).

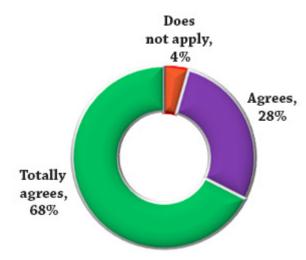


Figure 9. Discipline and organization at work. Own elaboration.

Item 9: I carry out my duties with responsibility.

Also favorable is the opinion that respondents are responsible for their work duties. Figure 10 shows that 76% totally agree and 20% agree.

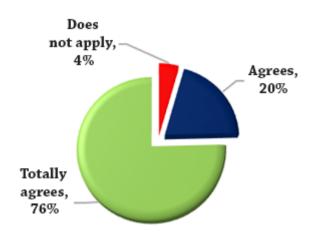


Figure 10. Responsibility at work. Own elaboration.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the conclusions brought to light from the results obtained, the most relevant aspects that could be useful for Higher Education Institutions are presented. It will attempt, through them, to respond to the research problem raised, on the work performance of graduates of Spanish Language and Literature of the Department of Spanish of the Faculty of Education and Languages at UNAN-Managua. The relevance of this research is that it is the first follow-up study on graduates in Nicaragua and therefore, the conclusions will contribute to improve those aspects that are relevant in the professional training of the graduate at the time of performing their profession.

The work performance dimension was valued taking into account skills, abilities, attitudes and skills that the graduate must put into practice to properly perform their work. The vast majority of graduates (92%) have a positive opinion on this. According to the survey applied, it was consulted on academic specific knowledge of the career and attitudes, aspects that are related to the individual factors of the employability (Oliván, s.f.). On the part of the employers, it was mentioned that the work performance of the graduates is due to internal factors of the employability as well: use of social networks, methodology, planning, punctuality, optimism, personal relations. These skills are identified in the graduates and correspond to the systemic competences valued in importance and development by the spanish students of the Universities of Huelva and the Complutense of Madrid (Alonso, Cruz and Hermosín, 2010).

Based on the results found, this research will allow the Spanish Department of the Faculty of Education and Languages at UNAN-Managua:

 To know information about professional performance, opinions and suggestions about the quality of the education received and the new demands of the labor market and the social environment.

- To analyze the extent to which educational purposes are being achieved and institutional and curricular objectives are met.
- To know the work reality of their graduates.
- To promote among the graduates of Spanish Language and Literature the postgraduate programs offered in this teaching department, so that they can specialize in an area and update the knowledge acquired during the major.

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