



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Labor Trajectories and Studies Abroad

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Abstract

The objective of our research, of which we give partial account in this article, was to characterize the social, economic and political conditions of Mexicans' academic international mobility: migration flows, scholar and labor trajectories. The characteristics of the Higher Education System, as well as the migration policies of each country, established the contextual frame for the career paths of people who study abroad. In the labor trajectories, it is important to highlight the way each career develops and changes according to certain work conditions, either in the destination country or in Mexico. We reconstructed three separate moments in each individual's labor trajectory: before studying abroad, during, and after finishing their studies. The impact of studying abroad in the individual's professional development also varies by generational group and areas of expertise. Finally, we address how having studied abroad has an impact on acquiring better job posts or elite positions in Mexico and abroad.

Keywords: Scholars Trajectories, Labor Trajectories, Study Abroad, Mexicans Academics, Migration Policies

Introduction

To study abroad has been an increasing trend especially in the last years. According to the OECD the flow of students for "studying abroad has become a key differentiating experience for young adults enrolled in tertiary education..." [1]. Our hypothesis is that getting a certificate in a prestigious international program would provide better opportunities to succeed in obtaining specialized, prestigious and well-paid positions in home countries, and significantly increase the possibility of further professional international mobility. We will take the Mexican case to explore this hypothesis.

The studies on higher education internationalization and globalization often focus on students' mobility and their economic relevance for countries and higher education systems [2], flows of knowledge [3, 4], research founding and academic networks [5, 6], curriculum internationalization and higher education institutions cooperation. It is less frequent, to find empirical studies adopting a labor trajectory perspective as an important dimension of the internationalization process and the students' mobility. Cost and benefits for students' international mobility in different levels (socially, scientifically, economic and democratic aspects) should be described in more detail [7-9].

The main objective of the research project, of which we only will give partial account in this article, was to study and characterize the social, economic and political conditions of Mexican students and academics as they moved to six developed countries in North America and Europe. This paper seeks to report some of the results from the application of an

online survey (2228 cases) and 273 interviews, conducted to those who are studying or had studied in the 6 main destination countries of Mexican beneficiaries from CONACYT international scholarships (Germany, Canada, The United States, Spain, France and the United Kingdom). This paper reports the analysis of factors in diverse levels of analysis associated with the job destiny of people who completed their diplomas abroad. We will present some results in the findings about their labor trajectories in Mexico or other countries.

We want to focus on how the labor trajectory of Mexicans who studied abroad is shaped by previous or parallel work experiences, as well as by the context in which these experiences happened. By this we mean not only the work conditions provided by each country, but also their migration policies and their higher education system characteristics and recognition, which establish guidelines for each individual's scholarly process.

Conceptual Elements

The labor trajectory concept refers to the more general theoretical orientation of life course as proposed by Elder [10]. This theory allows "understanding social pathways, their developmental effects, and their relation to personal and social-historical conditions" [7, 11]. It points out the relevance

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of age (in terms of contextual changes over time), agency (individual choice and decision making), socio-historical context (time and place), timing events in role changes and network of relationships to understand lives over time and across changing social contexts [11].

On the other hand, three concepts drawn from the life course theory clarify the interaction between socio-historic context and personal history and identity: trajectory as “sequences of roles and experiences,” “made up of transitions, or changes in state or role,” and turning points which comprise “substantial change in the direction of one’s life” [8, 11].

Our understanding of labor trajectory allows us to better comprehend the impact of historical, economic, political and social changes upon the diverse generations included in our study. It is important to point out that such trajectories do not depend exclusively on scholarly characteristics, degrees obtained, or cumulative merits, but imply aspects on different levels of analysis: the evolution of the higher education system, changes of the labor market, higher education grades recognition, etc. In consequence, we assume that “...a professional trajectory may be defined as the path followed by an individual in the socio-professional space which describes the successive positions that he or she has held over time, from his or her first insertion into the job market until a designated time (partial trajectory), or until the moment in which such individual voluntarily or involuntarily stops working [12].”

This concept seeks to articulate the relationship between structural and institutional aspects of employment/study, family and personal expectations about work and social mobility, and other influential factors (such as social and symbolic capital) in the opportunities perceived by the individual to access employment [13]. It also allows not dismissing the relationship between workplace conditions and other contextual characteristics at the country level. The relevance of this conceptual tool is greater still as far as it emphasizes the fluctuating job market conditions in the later years, in which flexibility, instability, uncertainty, devaluation of obtained degrees, and virtualization of jobs prevail thanks to the development of IT [14]. In general terms, the falling barriers among countries and increasing migration movements and flows of investments are impacting the work conditions, migration policies and higher education systems.

A corollary of such structural conditions of the labor market is that there is a greater demand for professionals with international expertise [15]. This international profile means the ability to speak other languages, especially English, knowledge of other cultures, and studies leading to diplomas or degrees from institutions of international prestige.

Drawing on that concept of labor trajectory, we also point out to how the socio-demographic characteristics may “... impact on individuals’ career patterns because individuals in various demographic groups face different opportunities and structural barriers which open up (or constrain) job entry and job mobility [16]”.

An Outline of the Methodological Strategy Used in This Project

The importance of the proposed research on the characteristics and effects of the international mobility of both Mexican students and academics, directed the project to address two methodological paths that would allow for the complementary nature of the results: quantitative information, gathered through an online questionnaire (applied from May 2013 to March 2015), and qualitative information obtained through in-depth interviews (done in 2013 and 2014 in Mexico and the six countries under study) which allowed us to expand the analysis and triangulate results. The present paper will only present part of the quantitative data, which will provide a general idea of the labor trajectories of those who studied abroad, but keeping in mind the information obtained through the interviews to construct the analytical categories, but they will have to be addressed in detail in future articles.

Using data available from CONACYT for the scholarship recipients for studying abroad, current in 2012, and CVU’s (Résumés) of SNI (National Researchers System) members in 2010, we narrowed down the countries which historically were the most sought after by Mexican students. These were: Canada, France, Germany, Spain, USA, and UK.

A methodological resource that allowed us to tackle the analysis was to discriminate between two populations by considering the stage of the individual’s scholar and labor trajectories when the questionnaire was applied, separating those who were studying or doing post-doc stays abroad from the ones who had finished their studies and were working or looking for employment in Mexico or abroad.

Similarly, to contextualize the information within the job market transformation, it was necessary to construct generational cohorts that would consider the internal variety of the populations [17], stemming from the analysis of the conglomerates with the variables of highest degree obtained, year of graduation and individual’s age in 2016. This resulted in three defined generations: a) Founders, in which the vast majority had obtained a PhD or had done postdoctoral research before 1984, and whose average age was 63; b) Heirs, who mainly obtained their PhD between 1985 and 2002, with an average age of 50; and c) New Generation, in which PhD is also the highest degree, but either graduated or were still studying for completion between 2002 and the moment they answered the survey, with an average age of 31.

These cohorts lead the analysis to appreciate that the dynamics of the job market imposes different conditions which impact the occupational structure and the degree of employability of the graduates upon the completion of their studies (regardless of whether or not they returned to Mexico). Similarly, it was important to contrast the social class of the individuals¹ with the field of study, institution, and country where they studied, to isolate the possible effect that social origin and family relations could have had in the individual’s labor trajectory.

¹This aspect is tangentially touched in this paper.

Another relevant factor was the impact that scholarly trajectories had on the labor trajectories of the individuals, whether they preceded them or happened simultaneously, which marked their occupational profile and professional identity. With the afore mentioned conceptual premises and methodological basis, this paper presents the analysis of the labor trajectories of Mexicans who are studying, studied or did academic research abroad, and who are working or looking for work either in Mexico or abroad. These trajectories are reconstructed in terms of how, when and where they happened, previous, simultaneous or posterior to their studies abroad. We also studied how the scholarly trajectories impacted the labor ones, depending on which generation the individuals belonged to, as well as their fields of study.

Four key moments in labor trajectories

To analyze the labor trajectories as a dynamic process, we singled out four key moments:

1. *Labor situation of the individual before doing their studies abroad:* In this phase we wanted to explore how the accumulation of work experience gave the individual certain level of emotional, economic and career security, which allowed for an easier transition between Mexico and the destination country.
2. *Working while studying in Mexico and abroad:* In this phase we focused on whether the individual's job constituted a place of socialization and formation of their professional identity, which also allowed for establishing relationships that could play an important role in their future job opportunities.
3. *First job after finishing their studies abroad:* In this phase, employment could have happened either in the country of origin or abroad, which impacted the decision on whether to return to Mexico or to stay in other country for the individual's professional development.
4. *Current employment:* Finally, we were interested in characterizing the work conditions, income, and status of the individual's occupation when answering the questionnaire. The main interest was to assess the relevance that the scholarly trajectory abroad had in order to access such position, contrasting this to the general profile of other Mexican professionals. It is important to emphasize that for the analysis of the individual's previous work experience, and the work situation parallel to their studies, we considered all 2228 responses to the online questionnaire. This means we compared all four discriminated populations according to each individual's phase during their scholar and labor trajectories. In the case of the individual's first employment upon completion of their studies abroad and their current employment, we only used the information of those who had finished their scholar trajectory, whether they had returned to Mexico or not, allowing us to work with 1383 individuals,

which represent about three-fifths of the questionnaires (62.2%). Of these, about less than a fifth lived and worked abroad (254 cases (18.4%) and when weighted² became 137 cases) and 1129 (957 weighted) had initiated or continued their labor trajectories in Mexico, which meant about four-fifths (81.6%) of the analyzed population.

The Mexican Context

Bearing in mind the three generational cohorts classifying the population of this study, we can reconstruct the socio-historical context in which their scholar and labor trajectories happened. We defined our timeframe from the second half of the 20th century to the point in which the survey was applied (2015). During this period, successive economic crises generally followed by inflation and devaluation of the national currency, and changes in the labor market in Mexico, resulted in conditions which impacted both the decision to study abroad or the resolution to return or not to Mexico to develop professionally.

We can identify some of these conditions. First, we want to emphasize the primary role played by the Mexican State in the second half of the 20th century, especially from the 50's to the 80's. During that time, the State's direct intervention in the labor market, and the co-optation of the union's leaders favored certain professional sectors at the expense of others. Second, the higher education expansion that happened after the second half of last century allowed for an increase of highly qualified human resources, in an occupational market which growth and dynamics were not in line with the expansion rate of higher education. After the 80's crisis there was subsequent job market insecurity, a growth of the informal sector and an increase in the unemployment rate. An important feature of Mexico's higher education growth was also the emergence and strengthening of graduate programs.

Finally, new geopolitics of knowledge established conditions in which borders started to dissolve and the migration of highly qualified human resources increased, which translated into a flow of knowledge between countries and regions. This was a win-win situation in which the countries involved – in this case Mexico – and the several international destinations which attracted Mexican students, were equally benefitted through promoting the international mobility of both people and knowledge by establishing networks.

All these factors created a context that influenced not only the decision to study abroad, but also on whether or not to return to Mexico upon graduation [19]. As we will present later, these decisions mark the labor trajectories followed by each individual.

Scholar and Labor Trajectories before Going Abroad

One of the factors for the analysis of the labor trajectories was the stage of each individual's scholar trajectory. We asked

²The survey responses were weighted to adjust the acquired answers by country according to the general information provided by the UNESCO [18].

whether the individual was employed or performed any labor activity previous to their studies abroad. To this question, about more than half (52.9%) answered affirmatively. This information reveals that a significant amount of people who answered the survey already had work experience before starting their studies abroad, which meant an important guarantee for the individual's expected success, both in the scholar as well as in future labor trajectories.

Among those who worked before studying abroad, we found that two-thirds had a previous bachelor's degree (64.7%) or master's degree (62.3%) and almost half of them had finished a Ph.D. (48.9%). This number contrasts significantly with the 68.7% of the population who didn't have any work experience and had only graduated High School before studying abroad.

If this information is discriminated by generational cohort, we observe that almost two thirds of those who belong to the second generation (61.50%) stated to have had work experience before studying abroad, while only about more than a third part of the first generation (37.2%) and around half of the third generation (55.1%) were in this situation (Figure 1 & 2). These results show the impact of the Mexican context in the labor trajectory. The surveyed belonging to the second generations (61.5%) profited by the expansion of the HES, but the New Generation (55.1%) probably must have encountered more precarious socioeconomic conditions, not only in the family context, but also in terms of possibility to access financial aid through scholarships or grants to help with their studies abroad.

There is a wide range of reasons for acquiring work experience before studying abroad (Figure 1). From economic, need due to family or personal conditions, to the interest in applying the attained knowledge or earning professional experience as a valuable asset for their studies abroad. However, another significant finding is that the majority of those who were not working before studying abroad were because they were devoted to their studies. The Founders stated as another reason that they didn't need to work (33.3%), which again indicates favorable socioeconomic conditions in the country-context and their families at the time of their studies. Of those who did not have any previous labor experience, more than half of the first and second generation, and two-fifths of the third were fully devoted to their studies (Figure 2).

Political stability, higher rates of income growth per capita, growing urbanization and better indicators of education and health gains were the main characteristics of sustained socio-economic development during four decades since 1940, post-revolutionary Mexico. That was a period of modernization and industrialization based on social consensus and political coalition that allow the steady expansion of the Mexican economy [20] which could explain why one third part of the Founders didn't need to work and could be dedicated to their studies.

Characteristics and conditions of work previous to study abroad

To have a more complete picture of the development of the labor trajectories of the surveyed, and how these respond to

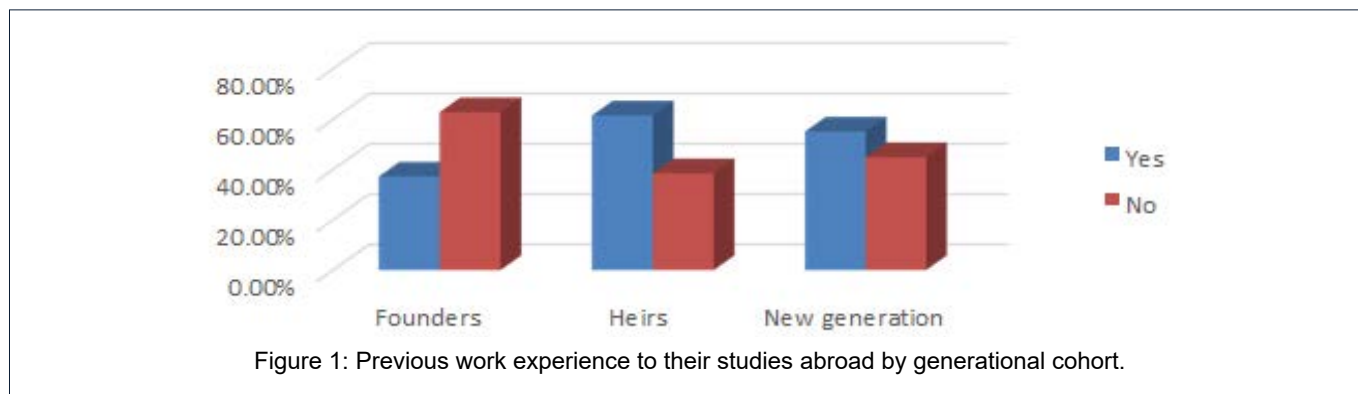


Figure 1: Previous work experience to their studies abroad by generational cohort.

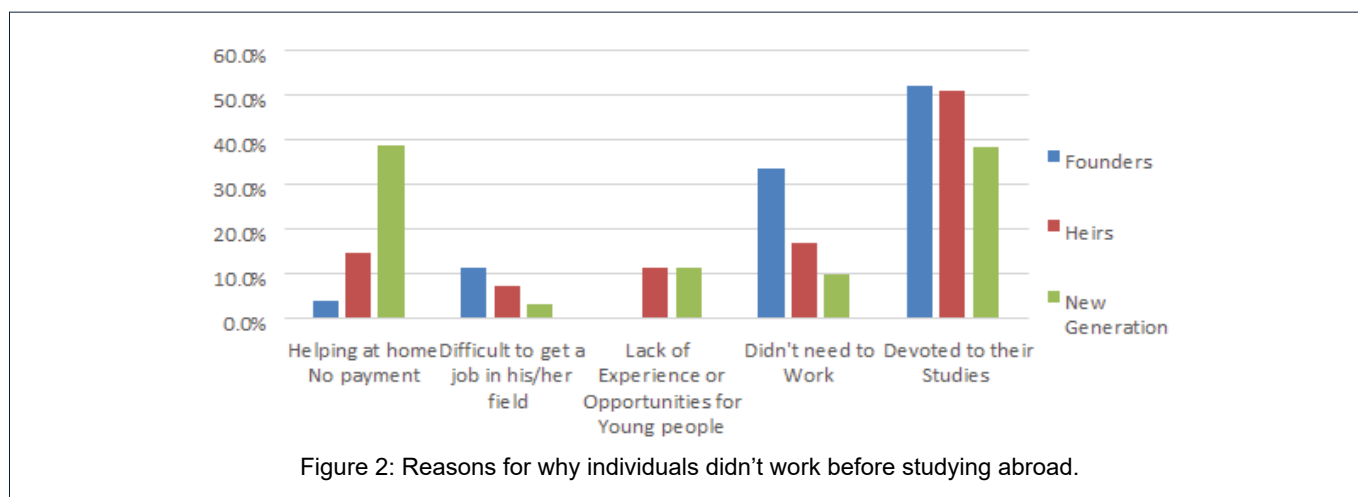


Figure 2: Reasons for why individuals didn't work before studying abroad.

certain characteristics that condition and mark such trajectories according to the generational cohort and the degree obtained, we also analyzed the sectors of their previous work experience. This means we looked into their type of occupation, level of salary earned, time dedication and capability to holding on to their previous employment upon returning from studying abroad.

These are the main trends in our findings: First, there are important differences between the generations. One of these differences has to do with the imprint that the Mexican context bears in some of the work conditions of the Founders and the second cohort, especially when it comes to type of sector, occupation and job stability.

These characteristics suggest that the expansion of higher education in Mexico and the growth of the academic market [21] had an important role, as 66.7% of the Founders and 55% of the Heirs indicated being academics or scientists as their employment previous to studying abroad. In regard to their dedication to the job, both cohorts indicated that in the majority of cases they worked full time (81.3% and 82.4% respectively); finally, 43.8% of Founders and 54.8% of Heirs said that they kept their jobs upon returning from studying abroad.

These characteristics contrast with the third cohort, especially

in respect to the sector in which they worked (37.6% in the public or semi-public sectors) and also to their occupation (only 20.3% said to be academics). Another difference is their earned salary; only 4% of the third cohort earned more than 20,000 pesos, against 22.9% of the Founders and 17% of the Heirs. This suggests that members of this generation, due to their youth, their early stage in the scholarly trajectory, and transformation of the labor market, had less favorable conditions (Table 1).

The analysis can be complemented with information about the characteristics of their employment before studying abroad, according to their obtained degree. In Table 2, we can observe that the greater the degree obtained, the better the work conditions are. Several studies have found that although there are differences associated with specific majors or with gender on the obtained benefits, those who complete higher grades have relevant better economic and social benefits in their jobs [22, 23].

So, those who indicated having a higher degree - either with specialization, master or doctoral degrees - had jobs in the public or semi-public sectors or were academics with full time jobs and kept their jobs upon returning from their studies abroad. This contrasts with those who had only obtained High School or Technical degrees. Almost two-fifths of them (38.2%) earned a salary higher than 20,000 pesos, and half

Table 1: Formal characteristics of employment before studying abroad

Generational Cohort	% Worked in the Public or Semi-Public Sector*	% Worked in the Academic Market	% With More Than 20000 pesos Monthly Income	% Full Time Jobs	% Will Retain Work Position Back When Finishing their Studies
Founders	37	32	11	39	21
	77.10%	66.70%	22.90%	81.30%	43.80%
Heirs	400	278	86	416	287
	71.00%	55.00%	17.00%	82.40%	54.80%
New Generation	242	127	25	373	140
	37.60%	20.30%	4.00%	59.50%	22.30%
Total	679	437	122	828	448
	56.80%	37.00%	10.30%	70.20%	38.00%

Note: Each column represents a different variable. The percentage shows the characteristics of the employment mentioned on the header. Data refers only to those who had been working before studies abroad.

Table 2: Formal characteristics of previous employment by degree obtained before their studies abroad

Maximum Degree Obtained	% Worked in the Public or Semi-Public Sectors*	% Worked in the Academic Market	% Earning More Than 20000 Pesos Monthly	% Full Time Job	% Will Have Their Work Position Back When Finishing Their Studies
Up to High School or Technical studies	49	32	13	72	36
	34.00%	22.20%	38.20%	50.00%	25.00%
Up to Bachelor's degree	304	163	50	427	182
	49.30%	26.40%	24.80%	69.10%	29.40%
Up to Specialization or Master's Degrees	266	207	50	281	193
	73.90%	57.50%	25.60%	78.10%	53.60%
Up to PhD	43	32	7	40	31
	89.60%	66.70%	25.00%	83.30%	64.60%
Total	662	410	122	828	448
	56.80%	34.80%	26.20%	70.20%	38.00%

Note: Each column represents a different variable. The percentage shows the characteristics of the employment mentioned on the header. Data refers only to those who had been working before studying abroad. The totals' differences with the previous table correspond to level of studies' missing values when they went to study abroad.

(50.0%) had a full-time contract, but this trend is not the norm among this group. This refers to conditions unrelated to the scholarly process, like the individual’s social capital or family influence, of which we can’t present consistent derivatives in this analysis. Moreover, the information obtained in regard to income earned is very limited, as not everyone fully responded to these questions (Table 2).

Work and Study in Parallel

Ever since the higher education expansion of the last century, studying and working in parallel has been a reality in the university, especially in times of economic crisis or as a consequence of belonging to a certain social class. The employment among the students has been increased as the costs of higher education are moved to the students and their parents as several studies have found [24-27]. However, even when these conditions are not present, the experience of working and studying simultaneously contributes to the individual’s maturity and strengthens their education. As some studies refer [28] working is “beneficial to students in the enhancement of skills and confidence, and an increased understanding of how businesses are run” [29].

For these reasons, to better understand the labor trajectory of Mexican students, it was important to dig deeper in this aspect, verifying if the individuals worked, and their type of

employment at any point during their education. We assumed that socioeconomic conditions were a relevant aspect when the individual decided whether or not to study and work in parallel. Under this assumption, students with low or medium incomes would have had to work in any field in order to support themselves. However, if the work performed was related to their studies, it probably meant there were other motives behind working, like earning work experience or applying acquired knowledge.

It was important to observe the sequence of employment bearing in mind the disciplinary line, which would influence whether the trajectories were continuous or not, either in linear time, or by area of knowledge. We assumed that there would be a relationship between study and work if the education process was clearly defined in one disciplinary field and the work activities were related to the studies done during this time. This premise allowed us to separate those who never worked from those who performed some sort of work during their education, and among those who did, to establish the intensity and type of work they performed in parallel to their studies.

About the phase of their educational trajectory at the moment of answering the survey, the data obtained revealed that 34.8% were still studying abroad, 3.4% were doing research stays, 50.4% had finished their studies abroad and worked or studied

Table 3: Individual's trajectory stage when they answered the survey by work intensity parallel to their educational trajectory

Generational Cohort	Stage in the Trajectory	Never Worked in Parallel to their Studies	Almost Never Worked While Studying	Worked Half the Time While Studying	Almost Always Worked While Studying	Always Worked While Studying	Total
Founders	Studying Abroad						0
	Doing postdoctoral research or exchange stays abroad	42.86%	7.14%	21.43%	21.43%	7.14%	14
	Finished their studies, working or looking for job in México	44.70%	32.00%	8.70%	8.70%	5.80%	103
	Finished their studies, working or looking for job abroad	33.30%	16.70%	33.30%	16.70%	0.00%	6
	Total	43.90%	28.50%	11.40%	10.60%	5.70%	123
Heirs	Studying Abroad	46.60%	13.60%	18.60%	9.30%	11.90%	118
	Doing postdoctoral research or exchange stays abroad	35.30%	26.50%	14.70%	14.70%	8.80%	34
	Finished their studies, working or looking for job in México	23.30%	28.80%	19.80%	20.70%	7.30%	600
	Finished their studies, working or looking for job abroad	14.10%	32.10%	25.60%	19.20%	9.00%	78
	Total	26.30%	26.90%	20.00%	18.70%	8.20%	830
New Generation	Studying Abroad	52.80%	17.80%	14.00%	5.70%	9.70%	650
	Doing postdoctoral research or exchange stays abroad	30.60%	30.60%	11.10%	22.20%	5.60%	36
	Finished their studies, working or looking for job in México	43.20%	23.60%	17.90%	9.30%	6.00%	419
	Finished their studies, working or looking for job abroad	42.90%	17.60%	15.30%	16.50%	7.60%	170
	Total	47.70%	20.10%	15.40%	8.80%	8.10%	1275
		39.50%	23.10%	16.90%	12.60%	8.00%	2228

in Mexico, and 11.4% had finished their studies and were living and working abroad.

When we combine this data with the characteristics and intensity of work performed, we observe that an important proportion of all these subpopulations reported not working during their studies (39.5%). When the intensity of the parallel work is controlled by generation (Table 3), it is important to observe that more than two-thirds of the people belonging to the first and third cohorts did not work or almost never worked during their educational trajectory (72.4% and 67.8%, respectively), while only a little over half of the second cohort (53.2%) indicated to have been in this situation.

On the other hand, the members of the second cohort answered in a smaller proportion to not having worked or almost never having worked during their studies. However, it is interesting to emphasize that almost a third of them who had concluded their studies (working or looking for work in Mexico (28.0%) or working or looking for work abroad (28.2%)) indicated greater intensity in parallel work to their studies. This data suggests that the impact of the diverse economic crises, as well as the changes in the occupational market, may have been greater among the members of this cohort whose temporal definition puts them around a period comprised between 1985 and 2002.

Even though working and studying in parallel is not a new phenomenon, nor uncommon among the college student population of the last few decades, the reasons for why doing so may be varied. Therefore, bearing in mind the intensity of

the work in parallel, as well as the type of works performed (and the characteristics of the job), these factors may indicate whether a person works out of necessity or as a way to earn experience. The hypothesis was that if the intensity of the parallel work was linked to conditions of economic need, those who always or almost always worked would have done so in any field, not necessarily related to their studies.

The data on Table 4 indicates that for those who almost always worked (42.1%), the type of work performed was always related to their studies, but 30.4% indicated their studies were not related to their first job. On the other hand, 33.1% of those who always worked indicated that in the beginning their job was not linked to their studies, while 28.1% of these individuals did perform work related to their studies. However, bearing in mind that two-thirds of the surveyed never or almost never worked during their studies, the question that emerged was how they financed their studies abroad.

Before discriminating data by cohorts, in general terms, Table 5 shows that two-thirds of those who answered the survey did not have or almost never had any type of scholarship during their educational trajectory (34.6% and 32.9% respectively); while only 14.8% indicated they had support of a scholarship or grant during their entire educational process. Two-fifths of the first and third cohorts (38.2% and 38.9%, respectively) did not have this type of aid at any point in their studies, which suggests that the members of these cohorts must belong to economically favorable social classes which allowed them,

Table 4: Relationship between the intensity of parallel work and its link to the educational trajectory

Work Intensity Parallel to the Educational Trajectory	Never Worked While Studying	Work Not Related to Studies	Some Related and Some Unrelated to Studies	Not Related to Studies at First but Then Related as Studies Progressed	Always Related to the Studies	Total
Never Worked While Studying	880	0	0	0	0	880
	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Almost Never Worked While Studying	0	164	2	7	341	514
	0.00%	31.90%	0.40%	1.40%	66.30%	100.00%
Worked Half the Time While Studying	0	88	17	62	209	376
	0.00%	23.40%	4.50%	16.50%	55.60%	100.00%
Almost Always Worked While Studying	0	33	44	85	118	280
	0.00%	11.80%	15.70%	30.40%	42.10%	100.00%
Always Worked While Studying	0	50	19	59	50	178
	0.00%	28.10%	10.70%	33.10%	28.10%	100.00%
Total	885	330	82	213	718	2228
	39.70%	14.80%	3.70%	9.60%	32.20%	100.00%

Table 5: Support to the Educational trajectory by generational cohort index

Generational Cohort	Never Had A Scholarship	Scholarship At Some Point of their Studies	Scholarship For Half of the Educational Trajectory	Scholarship For the Entire Educational Trajectory	Stated with Scholarship, But Did Not Specify Type of Support	Total
Founders	38.2	35.8	21.1	4.9	----	123
Heirs	22.9	43.0	26.0	8.1	----	830
New Generation	38.9	29.0	10.7	20.2	1.3	1275
Total	733	771	378	330	16	2228
%	32.9	34.6	17.0	14.8	0.7	

either because of personal or family resources, to support themselves while studying abroad.

Only 22.9% of the Heirs did not have any scholarship, which coincides with data that it is in this group where we find the lowest proportion of those who did not work in parallel with their educational trajectory. As we pointed out before, this might be explained by the characteristics of the historical period when they studied abroad. The majority of the students who answered the survey did not work during their educational trajectory. The numbers are especially high in UK (68.8%), France (66.8%) and Canada (66.0%). However, as an important number of them did, we wanted to find out what the distribution of this population is according to their destination country (Figure 3).

About a fourth of those who studied in Germany (24.3%) or Spain (26.3%), always or almost always worked in parallel, while in “Other countries” (not analyzed separately in this project) only a third (32.8%) worked during their studies. In the US (23.2%), Canada (17.3%) and France (16.6%) is where we find the largest number of those who worked during half of their education.

The Dilemma on Whether Or Not to Come Back

The popular belief in underdeveloped or emergent countries is that those who study abroad tend to not come back to their home country. Therefore, it was important to know what was decided among those who had finished their studies abroad (only two of the subpopulations who answered the survey) when confronted with whether or not to return to Mexico.

Our data shows that the majority of the population in all generations returned to Mexico; however, it is important to point out that this proportion diminishes when generations are constituted by younger people: while 98.3% of the Founders and 88.7% of the Heirs came back, only 57.1% of the New Generation did. If we analyze this information considering the highest degree obtained, we observe that this tendency prevails in that 100% of the first and second generation who had a bachelor’s degree or less, and 38.5% of the third, came back to Mexico. Those with

specialization or master’s degrees from the second and third generations usually tend to work abroad. But the proportion of people staying abroad decreases among those with Ph.D. degrees: 100% of the Founders, 96.2% of the Heirs and 84.5% of the New Generation returned to Mexico upon finishing their studies. These proportions diminish again in the case of people with postdoc or research stays, as can be observed in Figure 4.

Data by type of geographic trajectory abroad reveals that the differences among returning rates is not only present by generation, but also by destination country. However, even if the tendencies between generations remain, Spain stands out as atypical in this trend. Spain was the country with the highest number of people who returned to Mexico, even among members of the New Generation (90.7%), a higher proportion than both the Founders (85.7%) and Heirs (87.4%). The destination countries that kept Mexican students in bigger numbers were Canada (78.9% of the Heirs and 69.2% New Generation), France and Germany (69.9% and 66.7% of the New Generation respectively) (Table 6).

The most likely reason to return or not to Mexico is probably the nature and specific weight of each study field in terms of demand, both in Mexico and abroad. On the other hand, for some areas of knowledge, like Law or Medicine, tight migratory regulations prevent graduates from those disciplines from establishing themselves abroad. The knowledge areas where we observed the largest proportions of those who stayed abroad are Economic Sciences (37.8%), Political Sciences (26.3%), and Arts and the Humanities (23.3%). In all other fields, more than four-fifths came back to work in Mexico.

In brief, those results may be related to the millennials tendency to not identify them as patriotic and detached from traditional values [30] and it could also be for those who do not come back to Mexico that “continuing disparities in working conditions between richer and poorer countries offer a greater ‘pull’ towards the more developed countries” [31].

First employment upon finishing the educational trajectory abroad

In this case, we analyzed some of the elements that allowed

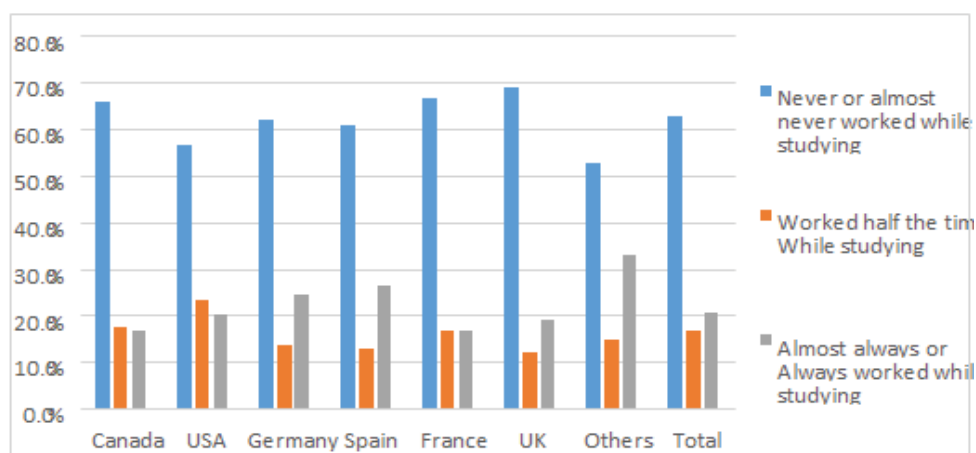


Figure 3: Work parallel to studies during educational trajectory by destination country

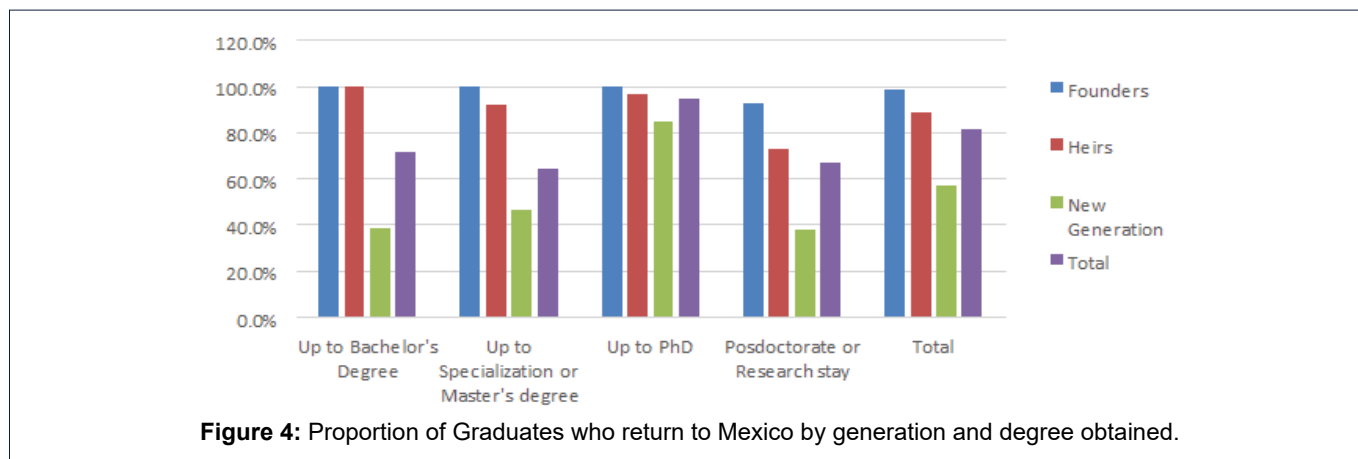


Figure 4: Proportion of Graduates who return to Mexico by generation and degree obtained.

Table 6: Who returned according to the destination country?

Country of Studies Abroad	% Founders who Returned to Mexico after Graduating	% Heirs who returned to Mexico after Graduating	% New Generation who Returned to Mexico After Graduating
Canada	0	30	9
	0.00%	78.90%	69.20%
United States	39	160	64
	97.50%	86.00%	78.00%
Germany	7	26	10
	87.50%	89.70%	66.70%
Spain	6	83	39
	85.70%	87.40%	90.70%
France	15	82	221
	88.20%	89.10%	69.90%
UK	12	68	19
	92.30%	94.40%	52.80%
Others	9	73	24
	100.00%	94.80%	70.60%
More than one country	15	78	33
	100.00%	87.60%	66.00%
Total	103	600	419
	94.50%	88.50%	71.10%

Note: In each column we're only presenting the proportion of those who returned to work in Mexico, the remainder would be 100% minus the established value.

us to better understand the effects that studying abroad could have had in each individual's labor trajectory. Therefore, using the type of employment the individual had before their studies as a control, we wanted to compare against their immediate job upon returning, and whether their employment conditions had changed.

Even though the gathered data suggested multiple considerations (Table 6), we will only point out some of the most relevant aspects. First, it is worth noting that almost half the population who had had employment before leaving were academics (46%), and 55% of the returning graduates were employed as academics as their first job. Second, of those who indicated previous employment as mid-level technical staff (28.6%) or entrepreneurs (38.7%), also got academic positions when they finished their studies abroad, as well as about half (45.5%) of professionals, artists and intellectuals, and half (50%) of public servants at government offices. Also, less than a twentieth of the population, except for academics

(only 1.3%), did not find any paid work upon returning from studying abroad. Finally, there are cases of people who had not worked previously, or who were academics, professionals or artists before studying abroad, that upon returning to Mexico obtained leadership positions, both in the public and private sectors (Table 7).

Most of the people who studied abroad and finished their scholar trajectory found a new job or returned to their previous one; this is the case for both those who returned to Mexico as well as for those who stayed abroad. So, we wondered which mechanisms they used to look for employment upon graduating, according to the generational cohort, comparing whether or not they returned to Mexico.

We assumed that as the job market is changing, the tactics used to find a job should be shifting. The old way to find a job has been fading and job seekers are utilizing new strategies in advancing their careers. Figure 5 data indicates that 100% of the Founders, 51.8% of the Heirs and 40.3% of the New

Table 7: Immediate occupation upon returning to Mexico by former occupation previous to international studies (For people with previous employment history)

First Employment After Graduation							
Type of Work Previous to Studying Abroad	Specialized or midlevel Work	Professional Artists, and Intellectuals	Academic, Scientists, Researchers	Directors, Managers and Entrepreneurs	Executive, Legislative, Judicial or Diplomatic, Public Servants	House Work With No Pay or Retired	Total
Specialized or Mid-Level Work	41	7	30	17	3	7	105
	39.00%	6.70%	28.60%	16.20%	2.90%	6.70%	100.00%
	65.10%	8.50%	7.90%	14.20%	13.00%	31.80%	15.20%
Professionals, Artists and Intellectuals	13	46	92	40	3	8	202
	6.40%	22.80%	45.50%	19.80%	1.50%	4.00%	100.00%
	20.60%	56.10%	24.30%	33.30%	13.00%	36.40%	29.30%
Academics, Scientists and Researchers	5	24	228	46	10	4	317
	1.60%	7.60%	71.90%	14.50%	3.20%	1.30%	100.00%
	7.90%	29.30%	60.20%	38.30%	43.50%	18.20%	46.00%
Directors, Managers, and Entrepreneurs	3	2	12	12	1	1	31
	9.70%	6.50%	38.70%	38.70%	3.20%	3.20%	100.00%
	4.80%	2.40%	3.20%	10.00%	4.30%	4.50%	4.50%
Executive, Legislative, Judicial or Diplomatic Public Servants	1	3	17	5	6	2	34
	2.90%	8.80%	50.00%	14.70%	17.60%	5.90%	100.00%
	1.60%	3.70%	4.50%	4.20%	26.10%	9.10%	4.90%
Total	63	82	379	120	23	22	689
	9.10%	11.90%	55.00%	17.40%	3.30%	3.20%	100.00%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Generation who worked abroad got their first job through personal research, headhunters or other agencies. The main mechanism to find employment for the Founders (40.2%) who returned to Mexico was their social capital. In contrast, the main way for Heirs (40.6%) and New Generation (50.0%) to find employment was personal search, headhunters or other agencies. More meritocratic mechanisms, such as public calls or opposition contests, were not predominant in graduates' search for employment, neither in Mexico nor abroad.

Current Employment

Our initial question was about the characteristics and conditions of the educational and labor trajectories of those individuals who studied abroad. In the labor trajectories, the hypothesis was that the higher the degree obtained, the higher the impact studying abroad would have in the individual's conditions and characteristics of employment. In this sense, we were not only interested in the type of employment obtained after graduation,

but also to contrast it with their current employment, regardless of whether they had returned to Mexico or not.

The majority of those in the group of academics, scientists and researchers (91.3%), or in higher management, directors and entrepreneurs (89.6%), reported staying in the same type of job from the moment they finished their studies until the moment when they answered the survey. Around two-fifths of those who indicated currently holding positions as public servants (45.2%), manual laborers, specialized technicians and medium-level workers (40.4%), and professionals or artists (40.7%) had the same type of work since graduation. This suggests that the nature of the job performed, and the sector in which this job happens, represents certain stability and continuity in the labor trajectories.

As we divided the total data of those who finished their studies abroad and were working or looking for work, taking in consideration whether they returned to Mexico or not upon

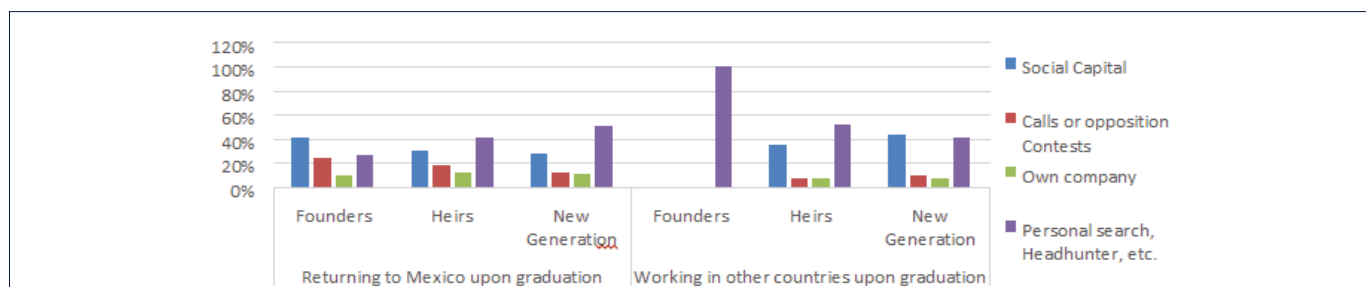


Figure 5: Mechanisms to find employment after graduation by generation, and whether they returned to Mexico or are working abroad.

finishing their studies, we found some important characteristics among those who decided to work in other countries (Table 8).

Almost a third of those who currently reside outside of Mexico have upper-management positions or have businesses in the productive sector (29.3%), which contrasts with the 22.1% working in Mexico who reported this type of employment upon graduation.

On the other hand, 89.7% of academics and 88.6% of those who held directorial positions and are now working abroad did not indicate they had changed from the type of job they were performing upon graduating and the one they held at the time they answered the survey. Of the professionals, artists and intellectuals surveyed, 66.7% continue to carry on with the same type of activity. Even though 28.6% of those who did unpaid housework, or any other activity without pay, remained in the same situation, the same amount obtained work in the academic sector, and 42.9% of this population obtained directorial positions in the productive sector. We observe something similar among those who did manual labor, specialized technicians or mid-level workers, of which 25% had taken academic or scientific positions at the time they answered the survey.

In general, among those who currently work abroad, the proportion of those who were in academic and scientific posts went up (from 39.4% at graduating to 44.9% at the time of answering the survey). This was also the case among those with directorial or managerial positions in the productive

sector, which went from 22.2% upon graduating to 29.3% as their current job (Table 9).

The information of those who finished their studies and returned to Mexico suggests the same tendency. Similarly, 92.2% of the academics and scientists, and 89.1% of those in management positions did the same kind of job upon graduating and returning to Mexico, and at the time of answering the survey. The largest proportion of those who returned to Mexico and changed occupations from the time they graduated to their current employment are the professionals, of which 35.8% moved into the academic or scientific sector, and almost a fifth (17.4%) are in managerial positions in the productive sector.

A relevant aspect on this topic, first job after graduating, was the way they actually found employment. When we analyze the characteristics and conditions of their current employment, it is necessary to consider in which way they followed the same strategies. The data in Figure 6 indicates that 92.0% of those who found employment through calls or tenders, institutionalized mechanisms of today’s job market, found their current employment in the same way. However, these mechanisms did not increase their share as a way to get employment. While for 21.8% of those surveyed this mechanism was their way to find their current job, only 15.4% used it as their means to find first employment after graduating. In summary, we observe that the use of social capital, networks and personal relationships worked for the vast majority for finding their current employment. It also bears to mention that, in no small number, these mechanisms are complementary. To

Table 8: Current occupation (at the time of the survey) compared to first job upon graduation (Working abroad)

Manual Labor, Specialized or Midlevel Work		Professionals, Artists and Intellectuals	Executive, Directors, Managers and Researchers	Legislative, Judicial, Higher Posts and Entrepreneurs	Academics, or Scientists Diplomatic and Public Servants	Unpaid House Work or Retired	Total
Manual labor specialized or midlevel work.	20	0	8	4	0	0	32
	62.50%	0.00%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
	87.00%	0.00%	9.00%	6.90%	0.00%	0.00%	16.20%
Professionals, artists and intellectuals	0	20	4	6	0	0	30
	0.00%	66.70%	13.30%	20.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
	0.00%	95.20%	4.50%	10.30%	0.00%	0.00%	15.20%
Academics, scientists and researchers	1	1	70	5	1	0	78
	1.30%	1.30%	89.70%	6.40%	1.30%	0.00%	100.00%
	4.30%	4.80%	78.70%	8.60%	20.00%	0.00%	39.40%
Directors, managers, higher posts and entrepreneurs	2	0	3	39	0	0	44
	4.50%	0.00%	6.80%	88.60%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
	8.70%	0.00%	3.40%	67.20%	0.00%	0.00%	22.20%
Executive, legislative, judicial or diplomatic public servants	0	0	2	1	4	0	7
	0.00%	0.00%	28.60%	14.30%	57.10%	0.00%	100.00%
	0.00%	0.00%	2.20%	1.70%	80.00%	0.00%	3.50%
Unpaid House Work or Retired	0	0	2	3	0	2	7
	0.00%	0.00%	28.60%	42.90%	0.00%	28.60%	100.00%
	0.00%	0.00%	2.20%	5.20%	0.00%	100.00%	3.50%
Total	23	21	89	58	5	2	198
	11.60%	10.60%	44.90%	29.30%	2.50%	1.00%	100.00%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 9: Current occupation [at the time of the survey] compared to first job upon graduation [Working in Mexico]

	Manual Labor, Specialized Mid- Level Work	Professionals, Artists and Intellectuals	Academic Scientists, Researchers	Directors, Managers, Higher Posts and Entrepreneurs	Executive, Legislative, Judicial or Diplomatic Public Servants	Unpaid House Work or Retired	Total
Manual labor, Specialized or Mid-Level Work	54	10	24	26	0	0	114
	47.40%	8.80%	21.10%	22.80%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
	72.00%	16.10%	4.10%	11.70%	0.00%	0.00%	11.30%
Professionals, Artists and Intellectuals	1	39	39	19	11	0	109
	0.90%	35.80%	35.80%	17.40%	10.10%	0.00%	100.00%
	1.30%	62.90%	6.70%	8.50%	25.00%	0.00%	10.80%
Academics, Scientists and Researchers	7	8	488	15	10	1	529
	1.30%	1.50%	92.20%	2.80%	1.90%	0.20%	100.00%
	9.30%	12.90%	83.60%	6.70%	22.70%	4.50%	52.40%
Directors, Managers, Higher Posts and Entrepreneurs	2	2	12	147	2	0	165
	1.20%	1.20%	7.30%	89.10%	1.20%	0.00%	100.00%
	2.70%	3.20%	2.10%	65.90%	4.50%	0.00%	16.30%
Executive, Legislative, Judicial or Diplomatic Public Servants	0	0	11	7	20	0	38
	0.00%	0.00%	28.90%	18.40%	52.60%	0.00%	100.00%
	0.00%	0.00%	1.90%	3.10%	45.50%	0.00%	3.80%
Unpaid House Work or Retired	11	3	10	9	1	21	55
	20.00%	5.50%	18.20%	16.40%	1.80%	38.20%	100.00%
	14.70%	4.80%	1.70%	4.00%	2.30%	95.50%	5.40%
Total	75	62	584	223	44	22	1010
	7.40%	6.10%	57.80%	22.10%	4.40%	2.20%	100.00%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

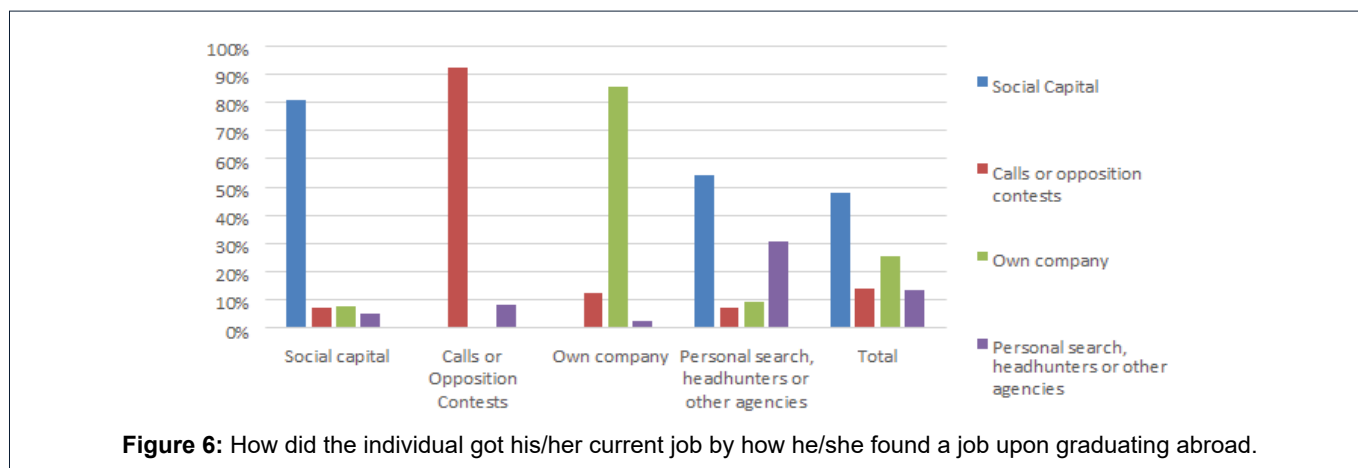


Figure 6: How did the individual get his/her current job by how he/she found a job upon graduating abroad.

have knowledge of the opening of a call or tender to access a particular job post may rest on the relationships and networks the individual has gathered as his or her social capital.

Conclusion

The analysis of labor trajectories of Mexicans studying abroad in the six developed countries chosen suggests the following conclusions:

The conditions of the labor market, as well as the socio-economic characteristics of the Mexican context, suggest that

there is a real impact on the labor trajectories of the studied population. This was most evident as the data reflected a wide variety of trajectories, depending on the generational cohort analyzed.

The members of the Founders cohort lived what we could consider a “golden time” from the economic and labor development point of view, not only in Mexico but worldwide. Jobs were stable, continuous and ascending, there were certain levels of social security and benefits. Therefore, as this generation started their labor trajectories during or upon

finishing their studies, they did not have to confront situations of labor shortage and economic crisis, neither in Mexico nor the world. These have been ever present in the labor trajectories of the two younger generations, especially the third cohort, but also during part of the second one. It is important to point out that the predominant labor trajectory among the first and second generation is as academics, while for the third, the predominant trajectory is as professionals. The decline in labor opportunities in the academic and public sectors, as well as difference of work conditions in the private sector which had a growth rate expansion after the 80's crisis, explains to a certain extent the impact the contextual characteristics impose on the labor opportunities.

In relation to the previous point, it is necessary to indicate that almost one out of every five of the surveyed who finished his/her degree, decided not to return to Mexico. This suggests that the conditions of the Mexican job market, as well as the job market situation, migration policies and the socio-economic context of their destination countries, heavily influence the decision on whether or not to return to Mexico. The answer to this situation is also different for all generations, which emphasizes what we pointed out before about each cohort's characteristics and the general impact that age and socio-historic context play in their labor trajectories. The data also indicated that among those who had previous work experience predominates just one line of work in one specific field, which implies that for this group, regardless of the mentioned changes in the labor market, the conditions and characteristics of their work offer a certain stability and continuity.

On the other hand, the data showed the growing importance that social capital has [inherited or gathered through their education and labor trajectories), to access employment and build networks that would allow occupational mobility. In that sense, international experience and knowledge are essential to the constitution and strengthening of such social capital. In response to the question posed on the advantages that studying abroad has, the evidence suggests that the majority of the surveyed hold leadership positions in the academic, professional and governmental sectors, and only an insignificant portion has current jobs in the manual sector or are performing unpaid work.

These more relevant conclusions confirm that age had a significative impact on the labor trajectories of the generations considered in the study, from the point of view of contextual changes over time that defined the different generations, as it is proposed by the life course theory. The decision to whether or not to return to Mexico suggests that this could be considered as a timing event that impact the labor trajectory of the Mexicans students. The use of networks of relationships to access employment confirms the interdependency of life that is expressed in shared relationships. Finally, but not least important, the results highlight the impact of time and space that define the socio-historic context in which labor trajectories develop as the life course theory proposes.

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