

Perceptual Assessment of the Communication Sciences Graduates from Universidad del Mar (UMAR) and their Professional Profile. Professional Competences

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— Abstract—

The evolution of communication due to the convergence of media and digitalization makes it necessary to review the role and competencies of the communication professional to adapt university studies. At this juncture, and with the theoretical assumption that the curriculum not only has intrinsic value in knowledge (Díaz and Barrón, 2023) but that it is important for students to develop problem-solving skills and strategies (Gil-Galván, 2018) and that from practical rationality, we reflect on the profile of the communicator to whom the current curriculum at the Universidad del Mar is oriented through a survey of its graduates, with open and closed questions, in Google form format sent through social networks. The objective is to know, from these communicators, the imaginary of this profession and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes demanded in the social field, as a source in the development of the curriculum in "specific know-how" (Casarini Ratto, 1997).

This article presents the partial results of that survey. Among these, the work skills obtained at the University are positively evaluated. The positive perception of UMAR by the participants is evident through the survey of its graduates (mentioned). As a complementary part, conversations with students are collected on social networks (Brito et al., 2015) such as Facebook and WhatsApp (Bordas-Beltrán et al., 2021), as well as some other oral sources that have participated in the graduate monitoring area and the Communication Sciences career department.

Keywords:

Educational relevance; higher education; professional competence; communication Sciences; Curriculum; practical rationality; social networks

The results of higher education graduates in the Mexican labor market, based on information provided by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2019), indicate that "there is no comprehensive information available to evaluate the skills of adults in Mexico, although the country recently joined the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)." In addition, the public information on the subject is not comprehensive or representative concerning the specific competencies of specific programs of university graduates. On the other hand, "employers argue that higher education graduates lack the skills they require, both in terms of specific knowledge of a discipline and transversal skills" (OECD, 2019).

In the particular case of Communication Sciences programs, even though "subjects for digital media have been included, employers consider that theoretical and practical teaching in the field of new media is not being efficiently covered" (CONEICC, 2014, as cited in Chamosa & Herrera, 2018). Moreover, with the rise of digital media (in a broad sense) and the changes in the communication sector linked to ICT, "there is a need to compensate the knowledge acquired in academia with the skills and abilities demanded in the digital labor sector" (Ventura et al., 2018, p. 333).

Studies of higher-level curricular theory have had an extensive scenario (Álvarez et al., 2023; Turbí et al., 2023; Espejo et al., 2020) and allow the analysis of various aspects of the educational space in an interconnected way, such as the curriculum itself, the individuals who are the ones who receive that instruction or education materialized in the curricular network and a social context.

In graduates, the role their university education has played in the workplace is fundamental. In this framework, it is understood that "curricular intentions and the development and practical application of the curriculum feed into each other" (Casarini, 1997, p. 22), as well as being modeled in curricular design and supporting the pedagogical model. Other authors such as Díaz Barriga and Barrón (2023) have studied the role of the curriculum to explore various aspects where forms of social representations, pedagogical practices, and the stories of each of the actors involved in these processes (institution, teachers, students) are located. We can say that from different perspectives the interest in understanding the curriculum has increased.

For this study, the integrative approach theory by Díaz Barriga (Ramírez, et al., 2009) was used, in which the curricular design methodology is framed, which is based on the social, psychoeducational, epistemological, and technical dimensions. That is a vision that recovers a holistic aspect that can help to explore different scenarios in the conformation of the curriculum (Díaz Barriga & Barrón, 2023). From this perspective "the purpose of training competent subjects, is to enhance in new societies the bases to face situa-

tions of a professional nature or of everyday life and solve them forcefully" (Arrieta & Acosta, 2014, p. 176).

In particular, in the curricular design process, it is necessary to have a mechanism to ensure contact between the university and society (Weiss, 2015) is culturally, socially, and economically relevant (Malagón, 2006), to collect, observe, select, and operationalize generic and specific competences to review (or redefine) the graduate's professional profile and "the curriculum, understood as processes of selection, organization, production, reproduction, and distribution of culture" (Malagón, 2006, p. 89).

In this sense, although educational institutions are a continuous system and the construction of indicators to monitor students' knowledge and skills are included and analyzed at different times in the process, a tool to guide educational practices is the analysis of graduates' indicators (their evaluation and opinion). Thus, as can be seen in the following:

When professional culture is expressed as one of the integrative references of the curriculum, the knowledge, skills, motives, values, and personal resources of the students that give meaning and print an authentic personal and social value to the mode of action of the university graduate are considered. (Lena & Reinoso, 2022, p. 165)

Strategies to collect evidence from graduates vary according to the institution (resources) and objectives, therefore, they can be long-term or temporary, and the actors also change.

However, one of the factors that must be taken into account is the following:

"Educational institutions by their nature require the permanent impulse of curricular changes, to achieve and/or maintain leadership in their substantive functions; however, Sánchez (1995) argues that updating the contents of educational programs, as a single action, is insufficient to face the challenges of the accelerated advancement of knowledge." (Ramirez et al., 2009, p.6)

That is, educational institutions depend on a cultural, social, political, and economic context (Arrieta & Acosta, 2014), but strategic planning also reflects the internal context of the institution, the general plans of the organization, and its model (vision, philosophy, mission, objectives, policies, strategies, programs, budgets).

In this context, this research report analyzes the professional perception of the Graduates of Communication Sciences (ECC) at the Universidad del Mar (UMAR), analyzing their performance and professional development through the observation of the professional trajectory considering the areas of performance integrating activities related or not with their education.

The work is an approach to the evaluation of the graduation profile and the diagnosis for the modification of the Communication Sciences curriculum in the UMAR that belongs to the University System of the State of Oaxaca (SUNEO).¹ It should be noted that the process of restructuring the curriculum has not been completed.

BACKGROUND

The degree of Communication Sciences in Mexico has been a research problem. María Antonieta Rebeil (as cited in Pérez & Torrescano, 2021) pointed out at the time that there were a variety of programs offered by Universities in Mexico where, according to the researcher, there are more than a thousand programs. The National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES, 2019), it is quoted verbatim: "reports the existence of 445 curricula offered in Mexico referring to Communication, Communication Sciences, Communication Sciences and Techniques, Communication and Digital Media, Digital Journalism, among others" (Pérez & Torrescano, 2021, p. 78).

In Oaxaca, according to information retrieved from the Catalogue of the Higher Education Offer in the state of Oaxaca from 2022 to 2023, as shown in Table 1, which has been the work of the Technical Secretariat of the State Commission for the Planning of Higher Education in the State of Oaxaca (COEPES) in collaboration with Higher Education Institutions (IES), 14 institutions offer variants in the area, such as Communication Sciences, Communication Sciences and Techniques, Audiovisual Communication, Graphic Communication, and Communication for Social Development, (State Commission for the Planning of Higher Education in the State of Oaxaca, 2022).

1 The University System of the State of Oaxaca (SUNEO) is aimed at decentralizing higher education services and obtaining a high academic quality in the development of its substantive functions: teaching, research, dissemination of culture, and advocacy for development.

Table 1
Bachelor's Degrees Educational Offer Related to the Area of Communication Sciences 2022-2023

1.	Bachelor's Degree in Audiovisual Communication (IESEAN)- INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS SUPERIORES EMPRENDEDORES ALFRED NOBEL CAMPUS TEHUANTEPEC
2.	Degree in Graphic Communication (UNIVAS)- UNIVERSIDAD JOSÉ VASCONCELOS DE OAXACA (OAXACA DE JUÁREZ)
3.	Degree in Communication Sciences and Techniques (IESO)- INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS SUPERIORES DE OAXACA (OAXACA DE JUÁREZ)
4.	Degree in Communication Sciences (IESPE)- REUS-INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS SUPERIORES DE PUERTO ESCONDIDO
5.	Degree in Communication Sciences (IMES)- INSTITUTO MIXTECO DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR (TE-ZOATLÁN, HUAJUAPAN)
6.	Degree in Communication for Social (ISIA)- INSTITUTO SUPERIOR INTERCULTURAL AYUUK (MAGDALENA JALTEPEC)
7.	Associate Professional in Social Communication (ISIA)- INSTITUTO SUPERIOR INTERCULTURAL AYUUK (MAGDALENA JALTEPEC)
8.	Degree in Communication (UAO)- UNIVERSIDAD ANÁHUAC DE OAXACA (SAN RAYMUNDO JALPAN)
9.	Degree in Communication and Digital Media (ULSAO)- UNIVERSIDAD LA SALLE DE OAXACA
10.	Degree in Communication Sciences (UMAR)- UNIVERSIDAD DEL MAR (CAMPUS HUATULCO)
11.	Degree in Communication Technical Sciences (UNID)- UNIVERSIDAD INTERAMERICANA PARA EL DESARROLLO (CAMPUS TUXTEPEC)
12.	Degree in Communication (UNIMESO)- UNIVERSIDAD MESOAMERICANA (OAXACA DE JUÁREZ)
13.	Degree in Communication Sciences (UNIVAS)- UNIVERSIDAD JOSÉ VASCONCELOS DE OAXACA (OAXACA DE JUÁREZ)
14.	Degree in Communication and Information Media (UNIP)- UNIVERSIDAD INTERNACIONAL DEL PACÍFICO (PUERTO ESCONDIDO)

Note. Own elaboration based on the Catalogue of the offer of higher education in the state of Oaxaca 2022-2023 (COEPES, 2022).

From the data presented, it is observed that the bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences of the UMAR is the only one in the Costa, Itsmo, and Sierra Sur regions of the state that belongs to a public institution.

The Universidad del Mar (UMAR) was born under the direct request of the then governor of Oaxaca, the founding director Modesto Seara Vázquez, and began its construction in 1991 in Puerto Ángel. In the beginning, the project considered maritime and tourism issues. In 2000, the Huatulco campus opened with degrees in Tourism Administration and International Relations (Seara, 2010). The Communication Sciences degree welcomed the first generation in 2002 with a total of 21 students, of whom 21 graduated in three generations: 6 in 2007, 3 in 2008, and 12 in 2009.

The bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences of the UMAR, in testimony with the teacher who was Head of the Communication Sciences Degree (JCCC) at that time, obtained the registration before the SEP of her curriculum between 2006 and 2007, and so far, it has not been modified or

updated. It is school-based and full-time, and consists of 10 semesters with 5 subjects each, in addition to languages.

The competencies of the graduation profile of the Communication Sciences student, according to the official website (UMAR, 2024), have to do with the ability to acquire theoretical and methodological knowledge applicable to social communication from the community to the world; it also includes mastery of foreign languages, professional ethical performance, as well as social responsibility, information management, project evaluation, in addition to the preparation of messages in different scenarios and media.

From the above, it should be noted that, in the profile of the graduate, around the competencies that they must have, there is their "analytical, critical, and proactive capacity", that is, cognitive skills (Shunk, 2012), since they were acquired in the classroom and that will be explained later in the exploratory work. Similarly, the planning and coordination work through the communication strategies that graduates must have to correspond to social skills (Alania, et al, 2019). Finally, the values that are in the first instance in the competencies are to be able to work with ethics, professionalism, and social responsibility, which should have been acquired in the classroom (Cevallos, 2012).

Among the follow-up and evaluation actions of the curriculum of the Bachelor of Communication Sciences at the UMAR are different projects and works whose objectives vary between those recognized by Stenhouse (1998): "improvement of the course; decisions about individuals; and administrative regulation" (p. 144). These include the exercise for evaluation by the Interinstitutional Committees for the Evaluation of Higher Education (CIEES, 2010), the annual reports of the Coordination of the Academic Tutoring Program (PITA), and research on the subject (Dzul & López, 2015, as cited in Romero & Vázquez, 2017) that include data supporting learning and labor insertion; the annual reports of the institutional program of Professional Internships "compulsory academic activity to be carried out by the student at the end of the sixth and eighth semesters" (UMAR, 2016), with quantitative and qualitative data on "skills, knowledge, standards, and abilities" recorded in the final evaluation prepared by the immediate heads or directors of each location where the students were, being students from the sixth to the tenth semester, and some graduates.

It is necessary to clarify that there are barriers to accessing the aforementioned information to manage it, which deserves another analysis and is not the subject of this work. In particular, in the area of graduate monitoring, according to testimony from the JCCC on duty in 2019, the Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca (UTM), of the System of State Universities of Oaxaca (SUNEO), presented to the UMAR a digital platform for Graduate Monitoring to retrieve current information from young people, publish-

ing job offers, validating companies, and generating databases with salary statistics adapted to the needs of graduates (Martínez et al., 2019). That same year, the person in charge of the area of graduates of the Degree of Communication Sciences interviewed 6 graduates of the 2018 class about the importance of an institutional platform. The results of both processes in the case of the bachelor's degree in Communication UMAR are unknown.

Likewise, on January 5, 2023, the Academic Vice-Principal's Office of the UMAR sent a survey to graduates of all degrees at the University to announce the creation of an institutional Graduate Monitoring site and collect information from this group. These results are not public at this time.

It should be noted that currently, the degree in Communication Sciences at the UMAR is in the process of curriculum review, which includes different procedures such as the preparation of the mission, vision, objective, and admission profile by the university authorities (UMAR, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This research was part of a Graduate Monitoring project, to update a directory of graduates and know the career path of professionals trained in the degree of Communication Sciences (CS). Thus, at the time of data collection, the total number of graduates was 257. The work is exploratory with variables focused on the perception of the graduate, regarding the effectiveness of using the intellectual and cognitive skills obtained in the University to solve problems in their employment; as well as the management of social relationships.

The total number of graduates was summoned (as there is no directory of alumni), the data reported are from the 31 generational cohorts with more than five years in the labor market, which corresponds to the group of people who began their studies in the same period or can also be defined as a temporary situation that marks cycles and/or processes (ANUIES, 2018). It also takes into account that Fresán Orozco (ANUIES, 2018) points out that for this type of study, "it is required that the generational cohorts correspond to graduates who have five years in the labor market" (p. 29).

The instrument was developed with the Google Forms tool to improve information processing and access for graduates. We first contacted them through social networks (Facebook and WhatsApp) based on horizontal communication, as a strategy to convince participants (Brito et al., 2015). This addressed one of the problems of trajectory studies related to the graduates' location and their disposition, which increases their complexity and restricts randomness. (Sánchez-Olavarría, 2014, p. 45).

The population was made up of 257 graduates of the UMAR² CS degree, who make up 13 classes (2002-2019). The questionnaire was inboxed

from the alumni Facebook page and collected continuously for over seven months. 65 questionnaires were retrieved, but 47 were considered for this work (a sample of 18.21% of total alumni). Those without identification of the graduate's year of admission were excluded.

The reagents (open and closed) were designed (2019) based mainly on the Manual of Instruments and Recommendations on the Monitoring of Graduates of the GRADUA2/GRADUA2/Asociación Columbus Network (2006), an instrument discussed in committee of teachers and adapted to the needs and particular context. For this report, six items out of a total of 26 (which includes personal, school, and competence data) are taken up, which addresses its exploratory nature, given that there is no precise background of the case and for subsequent analysis of the information of the open questions.

Regarding the testimonies on social networks between the graduates and the JCCC, those that occurred in May 2019, were contemplated, and they had opinions of their employers and work skills. A total of 26 conversations were recorded on Facebook and WhatsApp from the JCCC personal accounts, and six are included in this work; WhatsApp and Facebook audios and texts are presented, and there is explicit authorization for their use since the objective is to complement the information (López, 2017; Brito et al., 2015). Each participation is identified in the text as: "Graduate 1", "Graduate 2", etc.

As a technique, the unstructured interview was used for an informal dialogue, it was a tool in which they had a free conversation (Sagastizabal, 2006). The questions of interest are: *How are you doing at work? How do your employers feel about your performance? What did you learn from college? And what do you gain from work?*

It should be noted that in this scenario, before the pandemic, the use of networks allowed them to be tools that, as Agostini et al. (2003) point out, generated virtual dialogues that brought graduates closer, thus networks facilitated the link (Angulo-Armenta et al., 2021) between young people and the JCCC (who is also a teacher) at that time.

The study notes that social networks "have become one of the main communication channels for higher education institutions -IES-" (Segura-Mariño et al., 2020, p. 131), in particular Facebook, and as Esquivel and Rojas (2014) point out, it became a means to achieve an institutional objective: to contact graduates and follow up on them. With an emphasis on providing information and taking advantage of the platform effectively (Brito et al., 2015), these testimonies from graduates (*key informants*) contribute data to this research (Baez, 2009).

2 By 2022 there will be 287 graduates.

DEVELOPMENT

The Río Arcotete ejido is located in the municipality of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas (Figure 1). It is located 4 kilometers northwest of the city's urban layout (Montoya & Hernández, 2013). According to the farmers, it is argued that the ejido was founded by 45 people from other communities surrounding the municipality such as El Aguaje, Agua de Pajarito, Carmen Arcotete, Las Ollas, and Yut-osil II. The latter two correspond to the municipality of San Juan Chamula (Fieldwork, 2019). Many indigenous people were expelled or displaced for having opposed the religious beliefs and "traditional" policies in their communities. Particularly, in Chamula thousands of indigenous people were expelled due to religious and agrarian problems (Cortéz & Velasco, 2012), and the nearest point of refuge and settlement for the displaced population was San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

The next aspect to consider in the research approach is practical rationality, which is a line of thought focused on meaning human action, as opposed to the dichotomy between theory and practice and bringing together thinking and doing. This approach is more attached to a reflective moral practice than to the exercise of a technique in which one chooses between several alternatives (Márquez, 2015, p. 21). Pila Martínez (2022) alludes to the balance that must exist between the human perception of reality about its technical manipulation. In this sense, this rationality in the *curriculum* is conceived as an instrument to organize educational practice.

For Schwab (as cited in Márquez, 2015,) the opportunity for the *curriculum* field to be reborn "is to reorient its universal and decontextualized theoretical principles, towards new methods of action based on the deliberation of unique problematic situations" (p. 28).

In this sense, one stage of the curricular design work is the investigation of specific situations, and a specific one is the relationship of society with the discipline considering the labor development of the graduates, to obtain a map of the areas and activities that the graduate will carry out. However, defining the field of professional development of graduates of the curriculum requires observing the growth of the employability environment in global, national, and regional contexts, among others.

A performance study of graduates is useful for "self-knowledge and for the planning of processes of improvement and consolidation of educational institutions" (ANUIES, 2018, p. 19). This does not mean depending on the dynamics of the market, because they can be temporary, but neither can it be alien to the demands because it loses validity.

In addition, the graduate studies show that with the training received, they can develop in the chosen area of knowledge or if they require training for professional work. Likewise, the information allows us to analyze the

"paths" that professionals follow when joining the labor market and whether they can climb into complex positions. They also "indirectly contribute to highlighting the quality of the academic staff of educational institutions, the relevance and timeliness of their curricula and programs, and the suitability of their pedagogical strategies" (Cano, 2008, p. 23).

As Sánchez (2017) points out, graduate studies at the IES are an important part of evaluation and certification programs such as the Evaluation of Higher Education (CIEES) or the Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education (COPAES).

The term of *graduate* for this research is defined as: "Student who, having passed all the subjects and established requirements of a study program during the immediately preceding school year, is entitled to the respective certificate of studies". Said term was published in the Ministry of Economics (2024) on current aspects of the Universidad del Mar.

Therefore, this work considered its graduates to identify the skills demanded when they enter the labor market. This research considers skills for which the graduate must be competent when using strategies, actions, and diverse didactics that come from their university studies. Other skills added by Alania et al. (2019) are the social ones that, through behavior, allow the graduate to perform effectively in their interpersonal relationships, in a satisfactory way.

For cognitive skills, since the students surveyed indicated their experience in the classroom, it is based on social cognitive theory. These are given in a classroom learning where the teacher explains and demonstrates the skills that students must learn, to subsequently perform the corresponding directed practice and be evaluated. Finally, if instruction is learned at the teacher's discretion, students engage in independent, teacher-supervised practice (Shunk, 2012).

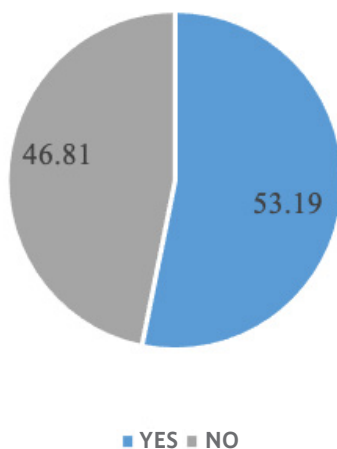
Hence, León et al. (2018) emphasize the role that universities (public and private) have in the generation of skills and knowledge specific to each discipline, with the aim of "raising, describing, understanding, interpreting, and explaining the phenomenon of education as an intercultural and subjective expression" (p. 124). In this process, Pinilla and Moreno (2015) point out that those who interact, in addition to the institution, are the teacher and the student, to ultimately articulate knowledge and innovation in social practices that allow for the transformation and construction of equitable policies (Alvarado, et al, 2016).

In short, the students acquire knowledge granted by the career curriculum, and obtain professional skills after applying said knowledge in specific situations.

RESULTS

The educational process cannot be oblivious to social needs and the changing labor market with the advent of new information technologies. Understanding the reality in which IES graduates are inserted implies an adequate diagnosis of these social demands.

The results of the research indicate, as shown in Figure 1, that the graduates of the UMAR chose their career as the first option. This, as Pérez and Torrescano (2021) point out, is a way in which the student aspires to an integrated whole and in which he is projected in the future towards concrete actions.



Note. Information retrieved from the JCC Graduate Monitoring Area (2019).

Figure 1. Was the degree you studied your first choice?

On the other hand, vocational choice can allow the student to discover interests, attitudes, and skills related to it (Hermosillo 2008, as cited in Alarcón 2019). Similarly, as expressed by D'Angelo (2000):

The life project, precisely, is the general structure that would channel the directions of the personality in the different areas of activity and social life, flexibly and consistently, in a temporal perspective that organizes the main aspirations and current and future achievements of the person (p. 272).

Regarding obtaining a university degree after graduation, at the time of the survey application, more than 50% indicated that they do not have a degree yet. The graduation types are presenting a thesis or taking the General Graduate Examination (EGEL) (Universidad del Mar, 2016), the latter, according to León et al. (2018), has a close link with the professional field, since it identifies skills for the "country's professional career" (p. 47).

Some students pointed out about the degree process the following: "Finishing the English language course should not be a requirement." However as stated by Montero et al. (2019), mastering another language is important because it is demanded by companies and by the advancement of science. In addition, this aspect is part of the institutional spirit, which was part of the foundation of the UMAR and SUNEIO by Mr. Seara (2010). On the other hand, according to Edel et al. (2005, as cited in Rodríguez, 2014):

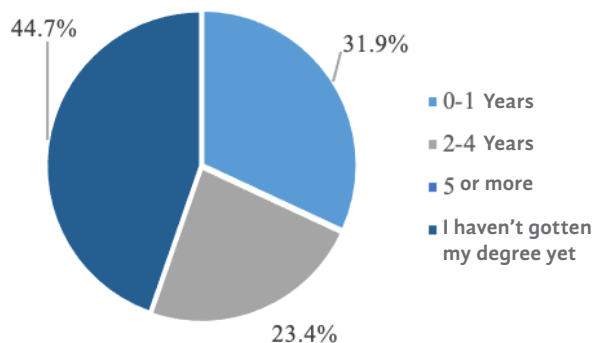
Quality indicators in higher education determine that terminal efficiency represents one of the ways to achieve productivity and social objectives [...] Having a university degree is essential, not only for access to better jobs, better salary, and greater professional status but also for the level of economic and cultural development of a country. (p. 118)

In this regard, the results of this study, as shown in Figure 2, reveal that only a third of students graduate in less than a year, it is necessary to analyze the reasons for the delay, since they can be (by geographical area) for economic reasons (if the process is expensive or the graduate is required to enter the labor market to support the family), or for long or complicated administrative procedures.

About this topic, a testimony pointed out that to improve the possibility of graduating through the thesis modality, it should be taken into account: "to teach classes or a workshop on how to research since it would help those students who wanted to do a thesis". Likewise, according to Rodríguez (2014):

Determine if the fact that the institution does not offer students within its curricula subjects that support them in carrying out their thesis work throughout their professional career is another factor that influences the low degree rate of its students. (p. 121).

Therefore, the subject must be deeply reflected in the updating of the curriculum.



Note. Information retrieved from the JCC Graduate Monitoring Area (2019).

Figure 2. How long did it take you to get your college degree once you graduated?

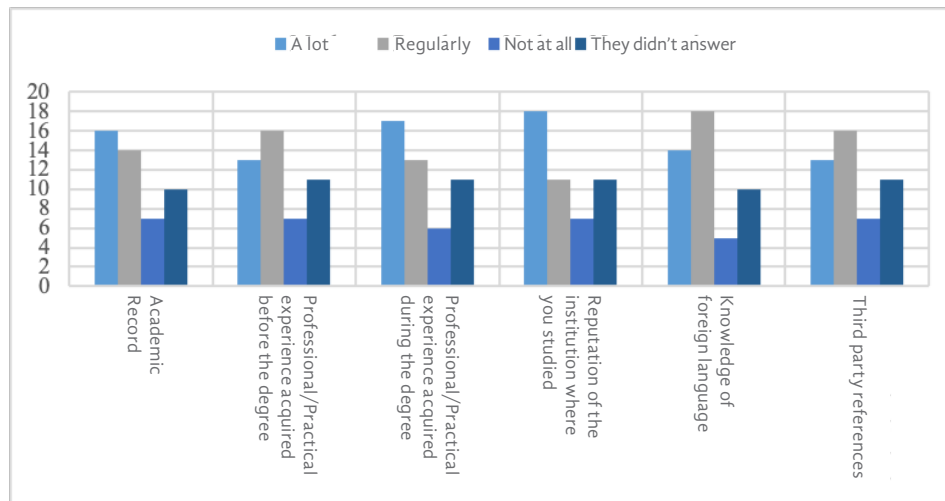
This was assessed following the graduation profile of the student of the Communication Sciences degree at the UMAR, who obtains the following:

Theoretical-methodological skills to participate in social communication processes within their community and at a global level with mastery of foreign languages based on their analytical, critical, and proactive capacity. They will be able to: perform with an ethical-professional foundation and social responsibility; create and organize working groups in the field of communication; plan, coordinate, and evaluate projects and communication strategies; manage information and elaborate and produce messages in different areas and media. (UMAR, 2024, Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences)

Thus, Table 2, presents the results of the graduate's perception of the employer:

Table 2

In your opinion, how were the following aspects assessed by your first employer after you graduated?



Note. Information retrieved from the JCC Graduate Monitoring Area (2019).

About question *H1* *In your opinion, how were the following aspects assessed by your first employer after you graduated?* The aspects to consider were the following: academic record, professional experience/practice acquired before the degree, professional experience/practice acquired during the degree, reputation of the institution where you studied, knowledge of foreign languages, and recommendations/references of third parties.

Below are some testimonials:

My boss says that I am a responsible person with a focus on details. That I am very human, and my way of leadership is effective. (Graduate 1).

The feedback I have been given on my work has been that I am a good leader, responsible, a person who can be trusted, and who likes to continue learning new things. (Graduate 2).

My employers have described me as a creative and talented person who always seeks to innovate and achieve set goals. In addition, they highlight my commitment and my effort to give more than what is expected of me. (Graduate 4)

The highest percentage corresponds to *the reputation of the institution where you studied*, which indicates that the perception of the educational center where students have received their training is a fundamental pillar. However, also the items best valued by the employer (according to the graduate) are knowledge and practical and language skills: "Really, my strength is having good English skills". (Graduate 1).

On the other hand, the student's own opinion of his work performance suggests a positive assessment of the institution for offering necessary work skills.

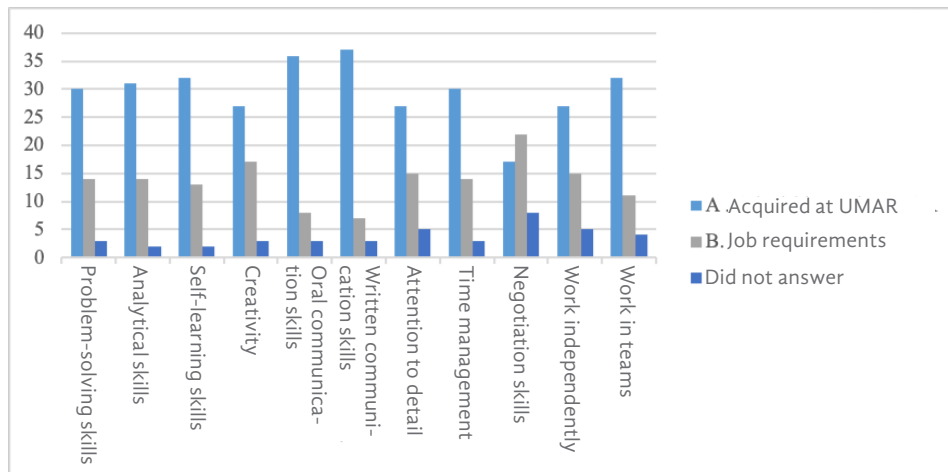
One of the questions of the questionnaire corresponded to *indicate to what extent you possessed the following skills at the time of your graduation and which of them are necessary for your current work*, here the variables to consider were: the ability to solve problems, analyzing skills, ability for autonomous learning, creativity, oral communication skills, written communication skills, accuracy, attention to detail; time management, negotiation skills, working independently, working in a team.

Since I left UMAR, I am still disciplined and a team player. (Graduate 2).

Although I do not consider myself an expert in these fields, I have been able to do a good job. Even concepts that I learned in subjects such as organizational communication, despite not being my favorite, have been very helpful to me. (Graduate 4)

Table 3

To what extent did you possess the following skills at the time of your graduation and which of them are necessary for your current job? If you are not working, please just answer column A



Note. Information retrieved from the JCC Graduate Monitoring Area (2019).

The above aspects correspond to skills at the end of the degree, although not necessarily acquired in the UMAR, but as requirements in employment. It is considered that these skills should be transversal to the different areas of the curriculum. However, this has a direct relationship with teaching practice, since "teachers start from their work to link it with different aspects of social reality, to build the representation of their exercise" (Evangelista, 2015, as cited in Villalpando et al., 2020, p. 232). In this sense, there are elements to observe the role of the teacher in their daily work. Below are the following testimonials:

I don't know whether to take it as a value or skill, but the love and passion with which teachers exercise. (Graduate 2).

I dedicate a lot of time to work not because they ask me to, but because I also have that availability that is taught to us at school, and as much as it could be counterproductive because "they never overwork, they are not paying you more, no one is going to recognize it", and maybe it is true, but I think that we learned that you are not doing it for someone to reward you, but for personal satisfaction and I like that a lot, because they have recognized it: "We can count on you (name of graduate 5), we can trust you, we can assign more responsibility", and I believe that this was instilled in me a lot by the school. (Graduate 5)

In the first instance, the skill with the highest percentage they expressed when graduating was *written communication*. It should be noted that students take subjects to learn how to write, they are subjects related, mainly to journalism, since in this area a student in the role of the journalist is allowed to approach reading, inquiry, analysis, and critical thinking, in addition to contributing to the improvement of their language skills (Domínguez & Rivero, 2018). Below are some testimonials retrieved from WhatsApp:

I mostly developed writing skills. (Graduate 1).

The presentation is important and the content even more, so one of my strengths has been written communication, and that has given me a lot of recognition. They ask me to write certain things and they give me total freedom. (Graduate 5)

The second skill required in current employment (as they are also skills at the end of university) is *negotiation*, and to a lesser extent *written communication*. In this sense, it can be said that technological aspects could have greater inference because ICTs are part of the scenarios of socialization and learning of new forms of communication involving the use of smartphones, digital platforms, and book readers (Casillas, 2016) that have reduced the use of written communication, which has been occurring in the forms of socialization. In addition to this group of evaluated items, graduates recognize knowledge and skills that are not mentioned in the applied instrument. Some of these are entrepreneurship, personal character, and ICT. Topic comments are: *Putting theory into practice. Work with companies, institutions, or in real situations, so that what is seen in class is part of an impact in some area of professional development/ Professionalism among teachers, a staff of teachers appropriate to the degree, and an updated curriculum. /Be picky about spelling. Working under pressure Forge character and leadership/ Use more technology tools.*

Two testimonials retrieved from Facebook noted the following:

As for the skills that have been useful to me at work, my technical skills in photography, video, and design have played a crucial role. (Graduate 4).

I have tried to teach my classmates new things about what I know, such as program management, and the use of some technologies. I work with people who are older than me and are not very familiar with it and I have been recognized as being very self-taught and good at teaching. That's what they say (laughs). (Graduate 5)

According to the testimonies, young people consider, as stated by Cevallos (2012), that in the achievement of objectives in higher education, there must

be comprehensive training that can incorporate theory and practice, as well as aspects related to attitudes, procedures, and the generation of values in the pedagogical process within the university environment.

Another significant part corresponds to the question: *To what extent did you possess the following competencies at the time of your graduation and which of them are necessary for your current job*, in this topic the variables to consider were: adaptability, determination, resolution, and persistence; the power of concentration, predisposition to be personally involved in the work, critical thinking, tolerance, and leadership skills. Three testimonials retrieved from WhatsApp and Facebook:

The guys I manage in my current job say that I am organized and that I give them confidence in that part because I can handle situations without any risk. (Graduate 3).

My employers have told me that I need to work on improving my ability to deal with frustration and react more positively when things don't go as expected. (Graduate 4).

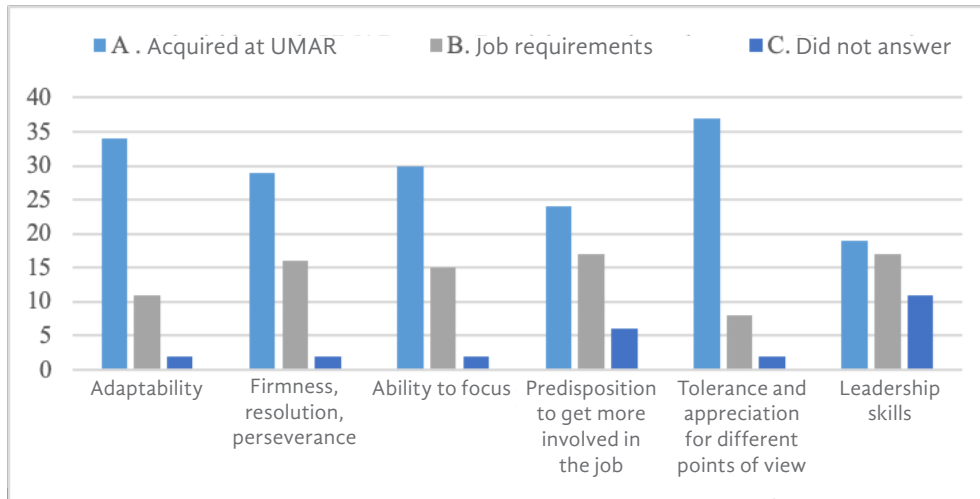
What they have told me when they recognize my work is my ability to make decisions for myself to solve certain things. Certain procedures were performed in a certain way and I have tried to suggest how to do it better and in less time. (Graduate 5)

The variables acquired at the UMAR that had a high percentage are adaptability, determination, resolution, persistence, power of concentration, and tolerance as part of the work requirements. The role of social skills (Alania, 2019) has contributed to their ways of interacting in the workplace. A WhatsApp testimonial: "When handling personal issues, I generate trust" (Graduate 3).

It is significant that during university life, students adapt to the system full time (Seara, 2010), while young people face the climatic conditions of the Oaxacan coast where the UMAR is located. Hence, as Arón and Milicic (2004) reflect, in terms of infrastructure and also an external element in education such as the climate factor can affect performance. In this regard, the following results are presented in Table 4

Table 4

To what extent did you possess the following competencies at the time of your graduation and which of them are necessary for your current job? If you are not working, please just answer column A



Note. Information retrieved from the JCC Graduate Monitoring Area (2019).

On the other hand, the opinion of graduates regarding their training and its impact on their lives (in a broad sense of existing) positively values the institution. In the case of the question: *To what extent have the degree you graduated from been useful in preparing you for professional tasks?* More than 50 answered a lot. The university environment impacted the graduates and in the related areas for *other spheres of life*, in the same way, and they responded that *a lot*. What they expressed in Facebook messages was about their ethical performance and work well done:

Another aspect that I put a lot of emphasis on is working ethically. I especially remember one of my teachers telling us that what starts well, ends well. Therefore, I try to do each task efficiently and responsibly, knowing that skipping ethical values, even though it may involve a shortcut to reach goals, can have negative consequences for both my employers and myself in the long term. (Graduate 4).

The thing that the university taught me was to give a little more than what is asked of me. So, I try to put extra effort into things. They never give you a job when you are lacking, they didn't teach me that at school either. They taught me to deliver things well done, and very well developed. (Graduate 5).

Ethics in the workplace is a value, it is a responsibility as a person. It helps to be empathetic in situations that are not within reach, especially because society generates changes, it helps to have empathy and an organized climate

in employment. A value I acquired in school is punctuality, speaking truthfully, and loyalty. Now I owe it to an institution that is now my workplace. I learned those values from my teachers. (Graduate 6)

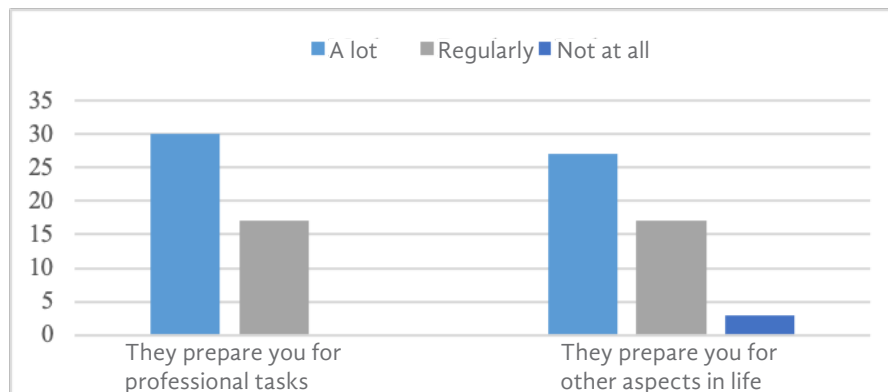
These testimonies show the experience gained at the school that has allowed them to carry out their work with ethics and professionalism. As noted by Salvatierra (2019):

From a conception, the principles of general ethics applied to the ethics of the professions must contemplate respect for dignity, freedom, equality, and human rights. Always proceed following social justice, autonomy of exercise, and full use of their skills, knowledge, and abilities. (p. 41)

It should be noted that in testimony with the JCCC at the time of the investigation, many graduates have been awarded recognition for their good work performance. That is, graduates consider that the UMAR teaches them relevant aspects, as noted, and recognize the impact of studies on their university life and, subsequently, on their professional lives. The intellectual skills (Acosta, 2019) that they have acquired in their university education acquire a priority role.

Table 5

To what extent have the studies you graduated from been useful in preparing you for other spheres of life?



Note. Information retrieved from the JCC Graduate Monitoring Area (2019).

Finally, as Fresán Orozco (ANUIES, 2003) indicates, the speed of technological innovation has caused the educational system to resort to strategies to know the impact it has had. The cited author points out the lack of diagnoses in which strengths and weaknesses can be identified to contribute to under-

mining the educational lag, hence this approach to the graduates' perception regarding the skills acquired to be applied in the professional field is important. For the bachelor's degree in CC, Fresán Orozco pointed out:

The knowledge of the performance of its graduates constitutes a way of approaching the professional fields that, together with prospective studies on economic and social trends at the local or regional level, are very useful for dimensioning educational work. (ANUIES, 2003, p. 20)

Therefore, the value of this type of study exceeds the institutional scope and contributes to the knowledge of the region in which the university is located.

CONCLUSIONS

The "low acceptance of professionals whose training does not meet their needs, constitute inputs of great relevance for planning and its most reliable origin are also graduate studies" (ANUIES, 2003, p.23). In other words, this process starts from the fact that there is a very large gap between what is learned in the university environment and what the labor field demands. (Blanco & Ruiz, 2022). Therefore, public IES are not only evaluated through their scientific production or the relevance of actions to disseminate culture but also through the training of professionals that evidences the performance of their graduates, which reflects the training received and university values.

There is a lack of knowledge of the universities' training process that guarantees the improvement of their educational programs. There are no contextualized studies in the regions and neither is there a constant activity that has deficiencies such as a lack of experts in the area, scarce databases of graduates, and few assigned resources, since "most of the research on graduates are studies of a transversal and specific nature that are not taken up again to verify their evolution in stages after the completion of the study" (ANUIES, 2003, p. 24).

In line with the ANUIES recommendations, the result of this study is that graduate studies should be institutionalized to support academic decisions in the process of training professionals; create information banks on graduates; and carry out periodic studies and share the information obtained.

Social networks allowed a link with graduates since there was an immediacy to collect feedback and that allowed a more direct approach, hence the functions of the use of web 2.0 are ratified (Agostini, et al., 2013).

There is still work to be done in the CC and UMAR Graduate Monitoring Area to know where the young people are working and how they have adapted to the demands of the work scenario. The challenge is that students.

Must graduate with solid foundations and be willing to keep learning throughout their professional life to be able to perform with solvency in jobs that do not yet exist, use technologies that have not been invented, solve unprecedented problems, and learn to work collaboratively in multicultural and multidisciplinary environments. (ANUIES, 2018, p. 42)

However, the Covid-19 pandemic that impacted the world educational scenario also had consequences on the environment of the UMAR³. In an interview with some graduates, on January 27, 2023, they mentioned that during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic they did not receive information about it from the Graduates Monitoring Area on duty, although they indicated that in 2023 the JCC was using the Facebook social network with another Graduates Monitoring account to publish information. In addition, the UMAR is going through a transitional stage regarding the change of principal for the Universities System the State of Oaxaca (SUNEO)⁴.

In conclusion, the government of Mexico in the National Higher Education Program (2023-2024), among its strategies to promote a stable graduation scenario for young people at the higher level is to generate the working conditions to which graduates of the "different subsystems of higher education" can access (p. 39).

Thus, showing this exploratory work of the various skills that young people have been able to develop in the workplace, also leads to assessing the skills already offered by the degree, and rethinking the adequacy of the curriculum to meet the needs demanded by the labor market.

In addition, it allows us to reflect on the creation of a platform for monitoring graduates, which allows us to identify where graduates are, not only from the Communication Sciences Career but also from the different university formations that host the UMAR.

It should be noted that this work allows reflection on the ways of relating the institution and the graduates of the UMAR in a post-pandemic

3 The UMAR was adapted to safeguard the health of academic and university staff (UNESCO & IESALC, 2020). The institutional email of the Deputy Head of School Services (SSE) on duty in 2020 was used to communicate with students, the topics in 2021 were: vaccination campaigns, school scholarships, and reincorporation into face-to-face mode. The JCC used *WhatsApp* to communicate issues about the use of *Classroom* and general news.

4 Mr. Modesto Seara Vázquez, founder and Principal of the Universities System of the State of Oaxaca, passed away on December 28, 2022.

context in which it is necessary to influence to generate and sustain a university identity. The use of technology brought young people closer, but it is necessary to have a systematization and strategies that are part of the indicators demanded by government institutions.

Thus, the monitoring of graduates must be understood and work continuously within the evaluation processes of a study program, its relevance, and its impact. It must, as an activity, generate indicators, analyze data, and disseminate them, so that decision-making is relevant to the functions of the University and its context.

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