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## La percepción laboral de los egresados del modelo de la universidad intercultural en México, el caso de la UNICH y la UIEM

### *Occupational perception of the alumni of the Intercultural University model in Mexico, situation at the UNICH and the UIEM*

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### Resumen

Los licenciados interculturales son jóvenes procedentes de variados ámbitos socioculturales que se forman en el marco del modelo educativo llamado universidad intercultural, gestionado por la Secretaría de Educación Pública de México. En este trabajo se analiza la disyuntiva existente entre el discurso interculturalista plasmado en los perfiles de ingreso y egreso que soportan a la educación superior de este tipo, y la situación imperante para sus egresados toda vez que buscan insertarse en el mercado laboral. El cuestionamiento inicial al que se hace referencia para ubicar el problema es: ¿qué sucede una vez concluida la formación universitaria intercultural? Aunque la percepción sobre la educación intercultural es positiva para sus autoridades y egresados, se ha identificado una



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profunda incomprensión o desconocimiento de la propuesta intercultural y del papel que los licenciados interculturales deben desempeñar en la sociedad, específicamente en el mercado de trabajo. Los egresados deben enfrentar problemas relacionados con la discriminación, los bajos niveles salariales y la falta de eficientes oportunidades de desarrollo personal. Mediante un proceso cualitativo, aplicado en los diferentes actores, se ha obtenido la percepción que se tiene sobre el desempeño de los egresados interculturales para dos contextos geográficos y socioculturales: la Universidad Intercultural del Estado de México y la Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas.

## Palabras clave

Educación intercultural, egresado intercultural, mercado laboral, Universidad intercultural, UNICH, UIEM

## Abstract

The intercultural bachelor is a term that refers to the young people from diverse sociocultural environments who took their degree in the framework of the recently founded educational model called Intercultural University, administered by the Mexican Ministry of Education. In this paper we analyze the uneasy position of intercultural discourse incorporated in the admission and graduation profiles, which give support to superior education, and the real situation in the labor market. The initial question, and key issue, is: what happens after the completion of the intercultural university education? The perception about of this Intercultural discourse is positive from authorities and students, but the situation outside the Intercultural Universities (above all in the labor market) which is marked by a deep miscomprehension or ignorance of given of the role that the intercultural bachelors should carry in the society. They have many problems as discrimination, low salary levels and inefficient programs of individual development. Through a qualitative process we obtain the perception from several actors about of the role of the intercultural bachelors. The research was carried out in two geographical and sociocultural contexts, the states of México: Intercultural University of State of Mexico and Intercultural University of Chiapas.

## Keywords

Intercultural university, intercultural education, intercultural bachelor, labor market, UNICH, UIEM

## 1. Introduction

The structural changes that Mexico has undergone, which reflect the constant constitutional reforms, with ways to consolidate openness, privatization and deregulation, have caused economic and social pressure in local contexts. It is not hidden that for certain groups of the population, work performance is marginalised and precarious, as is the case with the indigenous population. In this regard, ethnic groups have had to participate in strong migratory waves (Cárdenas, 2014, Granados and Quezada, 2018) or have had to adjust their lifestyles within their own localities with ways of raising their levels of competitiveness and thus obtaining the economic resources for subsistence. Whether in the urban or rural context, the indigenous population has the highest rates of marginalization, poverty and exclusion in the country, as shown in various official documents and reports (Coneval, 2018a; CDI, 2018; INEGI, 2018; INEGI 2020).



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Specifically, in Mexico, the educational gaps that place the population of native peoples in strong disadvantage are clearly perceived. According to data presented by the INPI (2010 and 2017), the average schooling for Mexico in 2005 was 8.8 years, but the indigenous population was below this indicator at 7.1 years. With data projected for 2015, it can be seen that the schooling panorama has not changed and that at all levels of formal education (except primary) it is the indigenous population that is least favoured. For example, the indigenous population in the group without any kind of education stood at 16.6 per cent (the national average was 6 per cent); at the level of primary education, the indigenous population had 18.2 per cent coverage (the national average was 15 per cent), but as progress is made at these levels, the problem is intensifying. Thus, at the secondary level, the indigenous population had access to 20.5 per cent (the national average was 23.7 per cent); and at the upper secondary level (high school) and above, the level of incorporation was 21.7 per cent for the indigenous population (the national average was 40.7 per cent).

Against this background, various public bodies have structured various educational programmes to serve as a channel for balancing inequalities among the Mexican population, particularly for the population representing indigenous peoples.

One of the challenges in the design of the new educational model and of public action as a whole is to promote better results for all students and, at the same time, to close the educational gaps that have historically prevailed between different school sectors. This dual task, however, requires adherence to the principle of equity in order for education to foster social equality (INEE, 2017a, p. 7).

These programmes have adjusted their proposals according to the education system in question, although most of them assume this population as a special attention group, or in a vulnerable condition, to which attention is generally of a welfare type. For example, the executive document on education policy of the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE, 2017b) refers to 29 programmes that are linked to basic indigenous education, whose justification is based on the right to education and as compensation for the historical debt owed to indigenous peoples.

The above, together with the significant heterogeneity and social and economic vulnerability of this population, make it necessary to build affirmative actions aimed at reversing the gaps on the basis of inclusive, cross-cutting policies that respect the particularities of indigenous children, to end a long history of discrimination, racism and exclusion (INEE, 2017a, p. 2).

With regard to higher education, intercultural university education emerged in Mexico with the discursive intention of promoting the inclusion of indigenous populations in the spheres of national development. At the same time, it was possible to create a more just and equitable environment, not only in access to higher education, but also to create a type of professional with the capacity to mediate between their communities of origin and the environment. However, the features and conceptual elements with which it was integrated, which can be perceived in the vision, mission and entry and exit profiles, could be considered not in accordance with reality. Vázquez-Parra, J. and Campos-Rivas, C. (2016) highlight the fact that:



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highlight the fact that, although in recent decades there has been an increase in public programmes to balance the educational and labour position of the indigenous population, in practice this population has to deal with the structural problems of unemployment, together with vices and discriminatory practices in the selection of posts and the allocation of salaries (p. 830)

This idea shows that intercultural education has been addressing one side of the problem for indigenous populations, by locating a number of universities in strategic locations to achieve greater access and expand educational coverage. But what happens to the graduates once they have completed their intercultural university education? In addition to being interesting, it has been necessary to approach intercultural educational institutions in order to observe and document the problems that recent generations of graduates are facing. Since there are no programs at the moment for their incorporation into the labor field in a direct and advantageous manner, there is an incongruence between the training profile and the subsequent lack of jobs. Thus, this group of professionals must compete with others who were trained in other university options in a labor market that does not know them.

Thus, the main questions that were raised to follow up the research, the results of which are presented here, are the following: with respect to the educational model of the intercultural university, has it been able to take shape in a solid formation of graduates "of another type" who consequently act in society according to intercultural values? How many graduates have really succeeded in establishing themselves in professional areas that are in tune with their intercultural formation, how probable it is that the former students (especially those who declare an intercultural vocation) will be able to fully practice this vocation outside their training institutions, how are the graduates perceived with regard to their training competencies, in relation to the opportunities that are offered in the current labor markets?

The purpose of the article is to present the existing discrepancy between the "politically correct" interculturalist discourse that, despite its deficiencies, in many cases manages to positively transform the opinions of students with respect to Mexican cultural diversity; and the situation that prevails outside the academic environments of the Intercultural Universities, specifically in the labor market. Two representative cases have been considered: the Intercultural University of the State of Mexico (UIEM) and the Intercultural University of Chiapas (UNICH).

The methodological approach was carried out with field work aimed at extracting the perception of the value of the intercultural graduate from the opinion of the graduates and the authorities of both institutions. This was done in reference to the entry and exit profiles and the professional practice of its graduates.

The article presents, initially, the approach that has addressed intercultural higher education in Mexico, in order to note the fundamental features from which the intercultural discourse is based, which permeates among its actors. As a second element, the methodological details through which an interview guide was designed and applied to young people recently graduated from the UNICH and the UIEM are presented, and it is indicated how the congruence relationship between the graduation profile (EP) and the type of work (T) in which the person was working at the time of the interview was evaluated. Finally, the part dedicated to the results presents the different versions of opinion, or perception, from the authorities of the two universities, as well as from the graduates who constituted the sample, in order to interpret the degree of success that the



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Intercultural University has had up to now with regard to the insertion of its intercultural graduates and the goals, which are very ambitious, that they must meet, unlike conventional professionals.

## 2. The intercultural university

La Interculturalidad refers to a discourse that seeks to recognize the existence of contact and relations between different cultures. Although its conceptual construction could be the subject of wide debate, one can distinguish the acceptance of its ethical basis that includes the idea of respect and dialogue. In education, study programs based on interculturality have the purpose of supporting the recognition of existing cultural diversity, such is the case of Mexico, a country where the plurality based on ethnic groups is constitutionally recognized, which together corresponds to 10.1 % of the total population (INPI, 2017).

Unlike other cases in Latin America in which the participants of the original peoples have been the basis for the promotion of the intercultural educational model, in Mexico the model had an institutionalized origin under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Education (SEP). This educational model emerged in 2000 and has now spread to 11 universities in the following states: Tabasco, Michoacán, Chiapas, State of Mexico, Puebla, Guerrero, Veracruz, Quintana Roo, Hidalgo, Sinaloa and San Luís Potosí. The entire model offers 32 bachelor's degrees, six master's degrees and four doctorates (SEP, 2018).

The Intercultural University in Mexico was structured in accordance with the fundamental principles of Intercultural Education that emanate from UNESCO (2006)<sup>1</sup>. The incorporation of the principles of intercultural education into the field of university education resulted in the design and offer of a diversity of careers with differentiated profiles, in accordance with the specific environment of each university. Notwithstanding the above, it can be seen that, in general, both entrance and exit profiles seek to prepare a type of professional who will constitute a bridge for the organization, dissemination and promotion of those areas where the community or indigenous cultural strength lies (SEP, 2018).

However, these principles allow us to understand the relevance of adopting educational environments directed towards respect and tolerance, while allowing the ability to raise the levels of educational and labor competitiveness regardless of the ethnic or cultural status of its practitioners, but in reality, there is a distortion of its components. Erdösová (2013) had suggested that the intercultural university, although it refers to a unidirectional educational model, may differ in different social imaginaries and thus adjust to different types of interests.

Among the main purposes of intercultural education in Mexico, emphasis has been placed on helping traditional lifestyles and practices at risk, as is the case with the practices of groups that are sustained by their native languages. However, as often happens when the

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<sup>1</sup> Intercultural education respects the cultural identity of the learner by providing everyone with a quality education that is appropriate and adapted to their culture. 2. Intercultural Education teaches each learner the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to participate fully and actively in society. 3. Intercultural education teaches all learners the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations.



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discourse goes beyond reality, the incorporation of intercultural education in Mexico has been distinguished by assuming an integrative orientation, so that it has sought to raise the skills of the population, at risk, so that their participation in the national and international environment is carried out in the best conditions; but it lacks a sense of full respect so as not to damage the original conditions.

With 20 years of existence of the Intercultural University model, it is not possible to speak of a failure, but it is possible to mention that its fundamental purpose is stagnant within a political environment that has allowed those in charge of the construction of educational policy to obtain a discursive solution to the demands of the groups, previously excluded.

In quantitative terms, the Intercultural University model in Mexico has not had the expected impact on its scope of coverage. Thus, for example, Aguirre (2015) indicated that in the year 2015 the Intercultural Universities as a whole attended a population that represented nearly 18% of the target population and only 4.3% of the potential; added to this, these universities face a severe problem of dropouts and undergraduate graduates, so it is generally mentioned that it has been a model whose perception is of uselessness within formal education.

### 3. Methodological aspects

This work considered the case of two Mexican intercultural universities selected for their representativeness with respect to the historical trajectory within the model of intercultural education. First, the Intercultural University of the State of Mexico whose academic offerings fall into six study programs: Intercultural Communication, Language and Culture, Sustainable Development, Intercultural Health, Art and Design, and Nursing (UIEM, 2019). Second, the Intercultural University of Chiapas where there are six degree programs at the higher level: Intercultural Communication, Language and Culture, Alternative Tourism, Sustainable Development, Intercultural Law, and Medical Surgery (UNICH, 2018).

Since the intention was to study the participants' perception of the model regarding their performance as intercultural graduates or professionals, it was proposed to develop a qualitative study that would allow for the collection of voice and opinion in two dimensions. First, the individual dimension, in reference to the relationship between cultural identity and professional practice, how is the intercultural graduate identified and valued? Second, the community dimension, to assess the capacity of intercultural education in promoting the development of communities of origin.

The first phase of the research was carried out by consulting official sources located through the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES), and other materials issued by the SEP; this part was complemented by direct consultations with personnel specialized in the follow-up of graduates from both selected universities. With this, an approach was made to the evolution in numbers of these universities, such as the degree of representation in reference to total higher education in Mexico, information was also recovered on enrollment and graduation, and a tracking of job placement of graduates was carried out.

The second part of the methodology was qualitative and was carried out through data collection using the semi-directed interview technique, with a structured sample that allowed access to testimonies at two levels: institutional, in accordance with the opinion of the authorities of the selected campuses, and with graduates. Twenty-one testimonies were



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collected, divided equally between UNICH and UIEM, from the following degrees: Alternative Tourism (33.3%), Intercultural Communication (52%), Sustainable Development (9.52%) and Language and Culture (4.7%).

A random sample was determined for the graduates, without distinction as to the degree of graduation, gender or current occupation. The sample itself determined the status of the informants in terms of their origin from an indigenous community and their connection with a native language. The UNICH sample shows a greater presence of graduates from a rural or indigenous community, while the strong presence of the Tzotzil language is identified, either as the first language or as a traditional language within the families.

In the case of the UIEM, there was no presence of any native language as a first language, although the Mazahua and Otomi languages stand out in the order of use of family tradition. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the graduates interviewed.

Interviewed	Degree	Source	Cultural and linguistic status *
UNICH			
Teresa	Alternative Tourism	San Cristóbal de las Casas	TLI <sup>2</sup>
Gloria	Alternative Tourism	San Cristóbal de las Casas	Half-blood
Diana	Alternative Tourism	Pichucalco	Half-blood
Enoc	Alternative Tourism	La Frailesca	Half-blood
Santos	Alternative Tourism	San Pedro, Huixtan	HLLI <sup>3</sup> tzotzil
Mario	Alternative Tourism	San Marcos Tulijá	HLLI tzeltal
Juan	Alternative Tourism	Santa Martha, Chenalhó	HLLI tzotzil
Sandra	Intercultural Communication	Ocosingo	TLI
Abelardo	Intercultural Communication	Amatenango de la Frontera	TLI
Miguel	Intercultural Communication	Carmito, Huitiupán	HLLI tzotzil
Francisco	Intercultural Communication	San Martín, Pantelhó	HLLI tzotzil
UIEM			
Edén	Intercultural Communication	Emilio Portes Gil, San Felipe del Progreso	TLI mazahua
Ismael	Intercultural Communication	San Felipe del Progreso	Half blood
Norma	Intercultural Communication	Atzacmulco	TLI mazahua
Yeni	Intercultural Communication	Jocotitlán	Half blood

<sup>2</sup> TLI: person with indigenous linguistic tradition in the family whose first language is Spanish, but, in addition, can handle in different degrees the respective original language; mestizo: person with Spanish as first language, without notion of indigenous roots in the family

<sup>3</sup> HLLI: speaker of indigenous language as first language.



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Rosario	Intercultural Communication	San Felipe del Progreso	TLI mazahua
Gaba	Intercultural Communication	San Pedro de los Baños, Ixtlahuaca	TLI mazahua
Hermilo	Intercultural Communication	Álamo, Veracruz (vive en Edomex)	Half blood
Alma	Sustainable Development	Rincón de la Candelaria, Atlacomulco	Half blood
Anayeli	Sustainable Development	San José del Rincón	TLI mazahua
Griselda	Language and Culture	Santa María Nativitas, Jiquipilco	TLI otomí

Table 1. Graduates interviewed and their personal characteristics

With the information obtained, two aspects were worked on. An indicator was prepared to assess the congruence relationship between the exit profile (EP) and the type of work (T) in which the person was working at the time of the interview. In order to estimate the degree of congruence between the profile and the job (PE/T), the contact with the communities (rural and/or indigenous) maintained by each graduate was considered as the first distinctive moment of each job position, given that professional performance in community contexts is the very basis of the approach to intercultural degrees.

A second aspect was to capture the perception that each one of the interviewees has about the relevance of having acquired an intercultural profile, together with identifying or verifying the relationship between their work status and their communities of origin. Additionally, it was taken into account whether the graduate puts into practice the skills acquired during the degree and whether he or she is aware that his or her university training was different from the conventional one.

#### 4. Results

The success of each intercultural university can be measured by the performance of its graduates, that is, by the congruence between the characteristic of work performance and the corresponding graduation profile. The initial question is whether the potential of the educational model of the Intercultural University has been able to be expressed in a solid formation of graduates "of another type" who consequently act in society according to intercultural values, some specialists are optimistic, for example, Sartorello 2007.

What happens after the completion of an intercultural university education? Quantifying the placement of graduates on the labour market and their professional success is nothing new at any higher education institution. However, in the case of intercultural universities, the issue is more sensitive than elsewhere due to the special type of training and social function that it fulfils.

In the framework of the interculturalist discourse, for the graduates there are very ambitious goals, nothing less than to create new spaces in the existing labor market, saturated with the "conventional" professionals, using a formation specially designed to



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bring comparative advantage to the indigenous youth (González Ortiz, 2007a, p. 80). And as Sartorello points out:

I dare to suggest that these young people are being trained to be agents of change for their peoples and communities in order to help overcome the economic, social and political marginalization suffered by their people and, at the same time, to strengthen and revalue their own culture as a unifying element and creator of ethnic identities capable of resisting the onslaughts of Western urban culture (Sartorello, 2007, p. 4).

But how many graduates have actually managed to establish themselves in professional areas that are in tune with their intercultural training? How likely is it that former students (especially those who declare an "intercultural" vocation) will be able to fully practice that vocation outside their alma mater in the face of what Sartorello (2007) called the "onslaughts of Western urban culture" (p. 4) Both among the graduates and among the institutional workers there is the awareness that in the intercultural degrees there must be trained professionals who are different from the "conventional" ones. What is lacking is a consensus on whether flesh and blood graduates really fulfill this characteristic. First, the institutional vision shared by the rectors of both universities regarding the performance of their graduates must be reviewed.

The speech of Javier Alvarez Ramos, rector of the UNICH between 2011 and 2014, is characterized by two positions that are somewhat incompatible: awareness of the mission of the Intercultural University that must train "alternative" professionals for community work (limited by the reality that few alumni get to perform in this way by seeking rather conventional jobs), and the tendency to measure success according to parameters linked to competitiveness, good jobs and high salaries.

I'd say our graduates have a 30% immediate placement. Unfortunately, not in the logic of the graduation profile that they return to their community. Two claims collide here, and one is cultural. In indigenous communities, leaving the community is a reason for progress. Returning is a reason for failure. Then we find a natural resistance of the boy to return to his community and our boys seek employment in the formal market. This is not the aim of the university. They are prepared to be able to manage projects and develop management of dependencies outside them and to set up cultural, productive projects from and with the community (Álvarez-Ramos, personal communication, 10-04-2014).

The rector's complacency in cases of young people with business placement, well established, is noted below, highlighting the case of a graduate marketing manager of Nissan brand cars who serves the indigenous clientele in their mother tongue. Although the rector is aware that it is not the desirable profile in which such a person should work, he cannot refrain from an enthusiastic tone when faced with such a "success story".

We already have two companies of young students who are managers that perfectly fulfill the mission of the University and with quite success. We also have children who have set up their own business, there is someone who has a very successful restaurant there and produces his own food. We also have in formal employment, the marketing manager of Nissan San Cristobal; it is very clear to me that it is not his profile, but



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why does Nissan hire him? The main consumer of the nissancita truck here in Chiapas are indigenous people and sales increased because the manager speaks in the indigenous language with the buyer. So there are success stories, but it is still a challenge for us that most of our children fulfill the mission that we have been entrusted with for the purposes of its exit profile (Alvarez-Ramos, personal communication, 10-04-2014).

For his part, Monroy-Gaytán, rector of the UIEM, at the time of the interview, in his speech described the performance of the graduates as rather satisfactory, although the need to recycle careers more often to prevent the regional market from becoming saturated was pointed out.

There are many (students) of Language and Culture who have gone out to the teaching side, which seems pertinent to me because there are teachers who do not speak the (native) languages, so devoting oneself to teaching with this value is positive. (The career of) Sustainable Development has gone a lot to non-governmental and self-managed organizations, doing projects in the (indigenous) communities. And Intercultural Communication has been linked to all regional and local media, such as radio. Because of the size of the area there should be a faster process of recycling careers and changing their profiles. The Intercultural University is going through a stage of reflection, restructuring, and realizing what its profiles are. For example, the degree in Intercultural Health: we did not understand well how the market is, what the profile should be. Today we have it clear: with a clinic, with an area of laboratories working on phytopharmacy, we already understand which is our strongest side (Monroy-Gaytán, personal communication, 08-05-2014).

The director stressed that the Intercultural University was in the process of defining itself and that its degree profiles were just crystallizing. This last argument also appears in the speech of Felipe Medina, responsible for the follow-up of UIEM graduates, who summarized the complications faced by the alumni. The academic considers as successful those graduates who did know how to develop within their profiles that involve community work.

We are a recently created university and we have to consolidate our image, so our graduates have serious problems of a thousand kinds, such as the degree, refresher courses, or being recognized by other institutions. We have a very low terminal efficiency, maybe 60% more or less, in degree by 20%. There is a lot of unemployment, unfortunately. We need to do a lot of work on the entrepreneurial graduate. In fact, that is the ideal of the Intercultural Universities that are being located in areas of high marginalization, that the graduates carry out development projects in their own communities and that they make an impact on this marginalization. Few, in fact, have formed civil associations that allow them to generate or obtain projects, which in turn have an impact on the communities. They are few, but we can mention some successful graduates (Monroy-Gaytán, personal communication, 08-05-2014).

As exemplified in the speeches reproduced, and beyond, the problems faced by graduates are multiple. The educational model of the Intercultural University is not widely



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disseminated, coverage in a country as large as Mexico is reduced, and the large part of society is unaware of it, which becomes a problem especially when it comes to employers. Moreover, the model is wrapped in a fabric of beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes and criticisms to a greater or lesser extent justified, which consider it as segregationist, "for Indians", "for the poor", of low academic quality or simply as utopian and, therefore, incompatible with the country's globalized reality.

From the archives of the Intercultural Universities it was possible to obtain a series of data about the working conditions for the graduates of the universities.

Indicators	UNICH	IUEM
Scope or type of performance of the graduates employed	83% organizations or businesses 8 % partners 6% business owners	93% organizations or businesses 7% business owners
Contract type	35% of indefinite time 54% of defined time 11% other	54% indefinite time 33% of defined time 13% other
Income level (monthly)	25% less than 2 thousand pesos 48% 2 to 5 thousand pesos 23% more than 5 to 10 thousand pesos 3% unpaid (own plot, family business)	Average net income of 4 575 pesos
Performance based on contact with communities	45.5 % Yes 54.5% No	40% Yes 60% No
Reason for unemployment	78% for low wages 14% because they are waiting for the degree	52% for not finding a job 17% to continue studying

Table 2. Employment situation of UNICH and UIEM graduates Source: Own compilation based on Hartmann and López (2013) and Medina and Hernández (2014)

Table 2 shows that most of the graduates of intercultural universities depend on jobs in established organizations or businesses; a low percentage attend their own companies or businesses. The type of contract that they have assumed is mostly of a defined duration, or temporary, for graduates of the UNICH and mostly of an indefinite type for graduates of the UIEM, although this indicator is not relevant for evaluating the performance of an intercultural professional, because the types of contract can be assumed as part of the very make-up of the labor market.

In both cases, the average salary reported is low considering that they are professionals. This is an alarming fact when we know the testimonies of graduates, who indicate the existence of demerit for an intercultural graduate, as stated in the comments of graduates<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The states of Mexico and Chiapas are located within the group of 10 entities with the lowest average income level, below the national average (which corresponds to 6,405 pesos per month, about 330 dollars per month; STPS, 2020).



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Despite the fact that the data on employed graduates, or not, was ambiguous, it has been possible to locate the problem of such performance. Graduates who stated that they were unemployed said that low salaries were the main reason. In this sense, a vicious circle has been formed; the situation for students is aggravated by the scarcity of economic resources, whether to complete their degree or to pay for their degree (the case of non-UNICH graduates is outstanding: 65%), which affects the quality of employment options, since without a degree, the young person does not receive a professional salary, but rather a technical salary.

Indicators	UNICH	IUEM
They work within the profile	34%	33%
Their work has little or nothing to do with the profile	60.6%	19%
Their Works is not related to the profile	5.4%	39%

Table 3. Consistency between the exit profile and the work (CE/T). Source: Own compilation based on Medina and Hernández (2014, p. 37) and Hartmann and López (2013, p. 13).

Continuing with the data extracted from the institutions, Table 3 presents the congruence relationship between the current exit and employment profile; in this field there is a similarity between both universities, since the registered graduates who work within the profile for which they were trained are: 34% for the UNICH, and 33% for the UIEM. However, for the UIEM there is a greater problem with regard to the conglomerate of graduates who declare that they work in areas that are scarcely, if at all, related to their profile.

However, the personal experiences, opinions and significant pieces of life narratives of former students opened the door to social action (both to their intellectual conception and to real practices) of this new type of professional. The following will show the perception of intercultural formation on the part of the graduates.

There are differences between UNICH and UIEM students regarding the reasons for entering intercultural studies. It seems that young applicants in Chiapas are more aware of the intercultural model. In this regard, among the main reasons that condition their entry were detected: the proximity and interest in the native languages, followed by economic factors along with identifying an innovative model proposed with alternative careers that could not be acquired in other models. On the other hand, in the UIEM, the applicants stated that economic difficulties and proximity to the University were the main reasons for their choice, followed by the factors that interpreted it as an innovative model. There is also a sector of students who made unfavourable comments about intercultural education, stating that it was their last option when in fact they were looking to participate in other educational models.

Scarcely, the perception of the interviewees was to have entered an educational model that would allow them to position themselves within the labour market in a full and advantageous manner. Most of them point out that the favourable part of intercultural



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education was the attitudinal change they experienced throughout their career. This was due to the fact that they perceived a transformation towards valuing the model and the advantages that it can bring, although not related to the labour market but rather to a position of social and even altruistic focus. This allows them to understand themselves as potential promoters of change and development in their communities of origin.

In terms of the degree to which graduates apply the mission and vision of the Intercultural University in their workplaces, 36.4% of UNICH graduates say that the university's intercultural vision has not only transformed their way of thinking, but is also reflected in their way of working. The rest are less optimistic: there are those who simply do not have a job at the moment (36.4%) and others work in areas where intercultural dialogue is not promoted and their proposals are not taken into account (27.3%) (Hartmann and López, 2013, p. 16). In other words, the mission of the Intercultural University is not too much questioned but the situation prevailing in society and specifically in the labour market prevents it from becoming a real practice. UNICH alumni recommend that intercultural education should be expanded: as an institution (43%) and to expand its work (19%), in addition to hiring more qualified teachers (26%) (Hartmann and López, 2013, p. 17).

There are no comparable data on the UIEM, but according to Medina-Flores y Hernández-García more than half of the graduates are very satisfied or satisfied with their role of doing something useful for society (20% and 43%, respectively) and 15% and 57% said they were very satisfied or satisfied with putting into practice the knowledge acquired in the UIEM. This leaves the UIEM in a better light than the UNICH, or perhaps reflects a less critical attitude of Mexican graduates towards Chiapas. (Medina-Flores y Hernández-2014, pp. 28, 49). What is the particular situation of our informants and how far were they able to keep within their professional profiles?

It turns out that six graduates (three from the UNICH and three from the UIEM) have the highest possible PE/T congruence ratio, as they show positive work profiles. But there are also numerous cases of graduates who work in community settings and use the knowledge they have learned at the Intercultural University, even though they personally do not feel much influence from the intercultural training they have received (there are nine in total; five at the UNICH and four at the UIEM). There are also those who are not currently working in community settings and are not practicing their intercultural skills, but hope to do so soon: four Chiapas graduates who are employed by the Intercultural University were interviewed.

There are also cases where the PE/T is low or none at all. The situation for the graduate is the following: a) he does not work within his profile and this is added to his alienation from the community (three cases in the UIEM and none in the UNICH); b) he works within his profile but without being in contact with the communities (two cases in the UNICH); c) he works within his profile but without maintaining the intercultural approach and without working in the community (two cases in the UIEM).

Cases (b) and (c) are graduates of Intercultural Communication and are distinguished by one circumstance. In case b), the two graduates work in an Intercultural University, that is, they attend to the problem of cultural diversity in their work as communicologists, although they are not required to do field work. In case c) there is no such approach, since the first graduate worked in the area of communication for the police and the second for a private radio station.



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In summary, all 11 graduates from Chiapas worked to a lesser or greater extent within their professional profiles, and approximately half of them also worked in the field. On the other hand, only four of the ten Mexican graduates were clearly working in accordance with their profiles and at the same time were working in community settings.

This is where the regional differences come in, which probably have to do with the different degree of cohesion and vitality of the original socio-cultural structures in both regions. This context provides more "intercultural" jobs for Chiapas graduates than for Mexicans who live in a mostly urbanized and industrialized area. However, the UNICH is not exempt from the problem either: the graduates interviewed from both Intercultural Universities frequently questioned the usefulness of intercultural training in the existing market and pointed out the difficulty of creating a new working space for themselves. Even so, in many cases, their vocation to dedicate themselves to occupations of an "intercultural" type was strong, although for the moment it could not be converted into real practice.

However, according to the competitiveness that could be denoted in relation to other educational models, the Intercultural University orients a rather altruistic performance, with the capacity to generate the promotion for the change of their environments of origin. And it is at this point where there is controversy when the graduate is valued in terms of his or her individual opportunities to address work performance. In fact, there are comments among graduates who assure that the model is far from their proposed achievements, identifying it as non-functional. The maximum aspiration perceived is to be able to occupy positions in teaching or in social research.

## 5. Conclusion

The Intercultural University is perceived as an alternative model that offers opportunities to young people who come mainly from rural or community contexts, and who otherwise would not have the possibilities of access to university studies elsewhere. The purpose of intercultural higher studies as seen in its different components (entry profile, exit profile, mission and vision) is, in fact, to create a type of professional who is differentiated by the fact that he or she is capable of dealing with the problems that arise in the context of multiculturalism. However, in real practice within society and the labor market, graduates do not find a clear way to insert themselves in the ideal conditions for which they were trained.

There is an official version that does not hide the problems that young graduates are facing, but one perceives a discourse of confidence in assuming that working spaces will slowly open up so that graduates may become promoters of development for local and regional contexts. In addition, those who direct these institutions emphasize that in view of the unfavorable economic conditions from which their students come, intercultural university education makes it possible to balance, to some extent, this situation of inequality. The majority of young people at both the UNICH and the UIEM come from families that do not have sufficient income to allow for high registration costs, perhaps tuition payments, transfers, accommodation, etc., for which the intercultural model is a unique opportunity.

Finally, the generalized perception that the interviewees had, indistinctly of the UNICH or of the UIEM, with respect to the relation existing between the profile of exit and the principles of the interculturality is of positive type. The graduates agree that the careers in which they participated have allowed them to develop an alternative and innovative type of



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work that differs from conventional education because of the capacity to approach community spaces.

In spite of the above, the graduates make it known, through their testimonies, that in the work environment ignorance and discrimination for intercultural education permeates; they have realized that the salary level tends to be lower for them than that given to graduates from other educational environments. The possibilities for the development of their professions are not included in public or private programs that encourage their effective incorporation.

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