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*Scientific articles*

***Revisión sistemática integrativa sobre estudios de egresados de  
instituciones de educación superior publicados en revistas  
mexicanas***  
***Integrative systematic review on studies of graduates of higher education  
institutions published in Mexican journals***  
***Revisão sistemática integrativa de estudos de graduados de instituições de  
ensino superior publicados em revistas mexicanas***

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## Resumen

Las instituciones de educación superior (IES) consideran esencial evaluar la pertinencia de las investigaciones y su impacto en la empleabilidad de los estudiantes como indicadores de calidad, de ahí que los trabajos sobre egresados hayan sido recurrentes desde la década de los noventa. Por tal razón, este trabajo tiene como objetivo identificar la investigación existente sobre egresados de IES en revistas mexicanas para comprender la transición de la universidad al ámbito profesional. Específicamente, se busca responder las siguientes preguntas: ¿dónde se aborda el tema?, ¿cuándo se han publicado trabajos al respecto?, ¿qué documentos son relevantes para la comunidad científica?, ¿qué tipos de instituciones se han estudiado en relación con los egresados?, ¿qué enfoques de investigación se aplican en este tema? y ¿cómo se construye el conocimiento sobre los egresados de la educación superior? Para responder estas interrogantes se optó por realizar una revisión sistemática integrativa siguiendo la estrategia de la declaración de PRISMA como metodología. La búsqueda de información se llevó a cabo en 2023 en SciELO, donde se identificaron 60 artículos, lo que proporcionó una visión amplia del tema. En concreto, emergieron siete grupos temáticos: 1) caracterización, 2) satisfacción, 3) movilidad social, 4) inserción laboral, 5) mercado laboral, 6) desempeño profesional y 7) evaluación. Este estudio ofrece una visión general de las metodologías empleadas en este campo de estudio, sintetiza las evidencias científicas y sirve como punto de partida para futuras investigaciones.

**Palabras clave:** educación superior, egresados, mercado de trabajo, revistas electrónicas, calidad de la educación.

## Abstract

Higher Education Institutions include among their quality indicators the need to understand and assess the relevance of studies and their impact on the employability of their students, for this reason, research on graduates has been a recurring theme in educational research since the 1990s. The objective of this work is to identify what has been investigated about Graduates in mexican journals to understand how the transition from university to the professional field occurs. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions: What are the diffusion spaces where the topic is discussed? In what period have works on the subject been published? What documents are of interest to the scientific community? What type of institutions have been the subject of study regarding their graduates? What kind of research

is conducted on the subject? And how is knowledge about higher education graduates constructed?

The chosen methodology was integrative systematic review following the PRISMA statement strategy. Information retrieval was carried out in 2023 in SciELO, identifying 60 articles, which provided a broad view of the object of study. Seven thematic groups emerged: 1) characterization, 2) satisfaction, 3) social mobility, 4) integration, 5) market, 6) performance, and 7) evaluation. This research provides an overview of the methodologies used in this area of knowledge, synthesizing scientific evidence and serving as a starting point for further research.

**Key words:** higher education, graduates, labour market, electronic journals, educational quality.

## Resumo

As instituições de ensino superior (IES) consideram essencial avaliar a relevância da investigação e o seu impacto na empregabilidade dos estudantes como indicadores de qualidade, razão pela qual os estudos sobre licenciados são recorrentes desde a década de 1990. Por este motivo, este trabalho tem como objetivo identificar as pesquisas existentes sobre graduados de IES em revistas mexicanas para compreender a transição da universidade para o campo profissional. Especificamente, procura responder às seguintes questões: onde o tema é abordado Quando foram publicados trabalhos sobre o assunto Que documentos são relevantes para a comunidade científica? Que tipos de instituições têm sido estudadas em relação aos egressos? são aplicados a este tópico? E como se constrói o conhecimento sobre os egressos do ensino superior? Para responder a estas questões, optou-se por realizar uma revisão sistemática integrativa seguindo a estratégia da declaração PRISMA como metodologia. A busca de informações foi realizada em 2023 no SciELO, onde foram identificados 60 artigos, que proporcionaram uma visão ampla do tema. Especificamente, emergiram sete grupos temáticos: 1) caracterização, 2) satisfação, 3) mobilidade social, 4) inserção profissional, 5) mercado de trabalho, 6) desempenho profissional e 7) avaliação. Este estudo oferece uma visão geral das metodologias utilizadas neste campo de estudo, sintetiza evidências científicas e serve como ponto de partida para pesquisas futuras.

**Palavras-chave:** ensino superior, egressos, mercado de trabalho, periódicos eletrônicos, qualidade do ensino.

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## Introduction

Studies on university graduates began to be the object of research interest in the nineties of the last century (Navarro, 1998) when the evaluation policies of higher education institutions began to be analyzed (Anuies, 1998; Coello *et al.*, 2021; Simon, 2015). Nowadays, this type of inquiry is essential, since it provides valuable information for decision-making by various actors (Aldana *et al.*, 2008), which contributes to the continuous improvement of HEIs (Domínguez and Ojeda, 2021; Domínguez and Pérez, 2021;

To this end, various perspectives have been used to examine economic and labor market contradictions (Solano, 2021), the quality of educational institutions and programs (Arias *et al.*, 2021; Espinoza *et al.*, 2021; Rodulfo, 2022; Morales *et al.*, 2023), as well as the democratization of education to reduce inequalities (Adrogué and García, 2021) and improve quality of life (Duarte, 2022). The work performance of graduates in organizations has also been analyzed (Cedeño and Zambrano, 2020), their satisfaction and perception regarding their training and applicability in the labor market (Cabana *et al.*, 2021; Grigorieva *et al.*, 2022), and the acquired cultural capital that allows them to adapt to work demands (Domínguez and Ojeda, 2021).

Likewise, the National Graduate Survey (ENE) carried out by the University of the Valley of Mexico in 2022 reveals that 52.1% of university graduates are women and 47.9% are men. Of that total, 63.6% graduate from public universities and 36.4% from private universities, although it is private companies that mainly absorb graduates (48.3%), compared to the 33.6% who find employment in public institutions. In fact, according to the Labor Observatory (OAL) (2023), work experience significantly increases the chances of finding a formal job, with a 95% probability of finding it one month after graduating.

Regarding the motivation to complete their degrees, the ENE (2022) indicates that 54.8% of those surveyed are motivated by the possibility of improving their standard of living by entering the labor market, a vision shared by their parents, who are the main source to cover totally (40.9%) or partially (27%) the cost of studies. This justifies why for 26.2% of graduates, higher education is perceived as an investment in the future, even before entering that level, and 45.6% consider that lack of experience is the main difficulty in finding a job.

Given the importance of the topic and with the aim of continuing to enrich knowledge in this field, this research seeks to investigate the works published in Mexican magazines about IES graduates. To do this, the following specific questions are asked:

1. In what dissemination spaces is the topic of IES graduates addressed?
2. What is the period in which works related to this topic have been published?
3. What documents are of interest to the scientific community in this area?
4. What types of institutions have been studied in relation to graduates?
5. What research approaches are used to explore this topic?
6. How is knowledge about higher education graduates generated and developed?

## Methodology

To achieve the proposed objective, this research entered into a documentary analysis process to explore previous studies, following a systematic review approach, which, according to Sánchez *et al.* (2022), involves identifying, selecting, evaluating and synthesizing evidence in a transparent and accessible manner. Within the broad spectrum of systematic reviews, an integrative approach was chosen due to its ability to address the heterogeneity of studies in terms of contexts, methodologies, methods and results. In this regard, Hong *et al.* (2020) explain: “the synthesis of these complementary studies is necessary to acquire a complete understanding of the current state of knowledge about a problem” (p. 5). Therefore, integrative reviews combine studies from various methodologies and take advantage of the complementarity of their results.

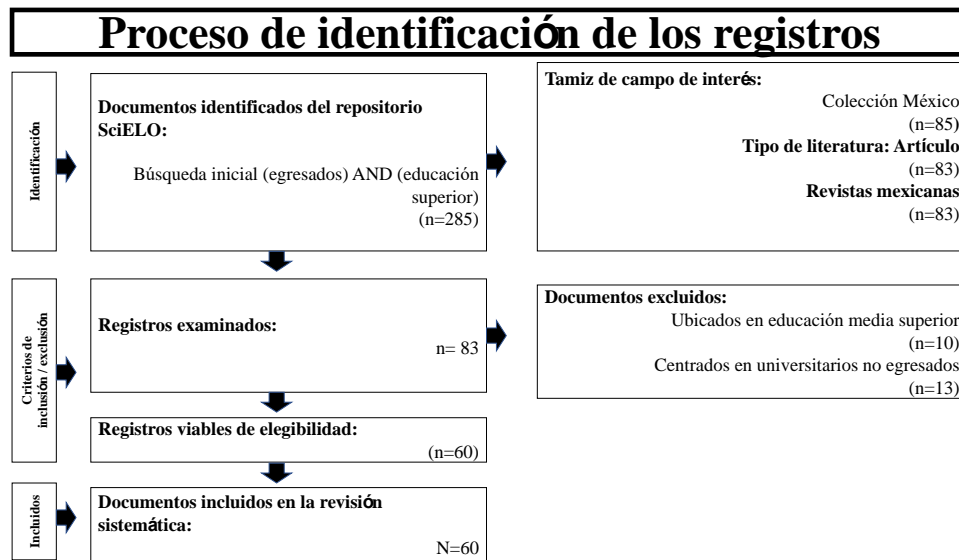
The methodological strategy was based on the guidelines established by Page *et al.* (2021), which refer to the PRISMA 2020 statement (*preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis*), which provided a framework to synthetically understand the current state of knowledge on the topic. The meta-analysis phase of the review involved presentation of overall data and statistical analysis of the collected evidence, as well as a narrative discussion of published studies to build a coherent view (Hong *et al.*, 2020).

The PRISMA 2020 checklist includes sections with check items to ensure the rigor of the inclusion and exclusion process of published records, which allowed us to decide which studies were eligible for research (Figure 1).

The information search was carried out in early February 2023 in Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), a multidisciplinary repository that preserves and disseminates

research data and articles published in journals of the SciELO Network, with a special focus on Latin American countries, including Mexico. SciELO-México has been active since 2004, and is a repository that guarantees that the included journals meet basic quality criteria and go through a rigorous peer evaluation process (Forni and De Grande, 2020).

**Figure 1.** PRISMA flowchart



Source: self made

In the identification process, we began with an initial search based on the specific concepts of “graduates” and “higher education”, which yielded a total of 285 documents. Then, a filtering focused on the field of interest was carried out to narrow the search to the object of the research study. That is, the search was limited to the SciELO-México collection, which reduced the number of documents to 85. Subsequently, a filter was applied to include only articles, which resulted in 83 documents. Afterwards, the search area was limited to Mexican journals, although the final number remained 83 articles.

Regarding the specific question “In what dissemination spaces is the topic of IES graduates addressed?”, it should be noted that 14 Mexican magazines were identified. Then, in the inclusion/exclusion phase, the identified data were extracted from the SciELO-Mexico database and recorded in an Excel file. To organize the information obtained up to this point, the file was structured including bibliometric indicators managed by the repository, such as the title of the article, the authors, the journal, the language, the year, downloads, the abstract and the URL to locate the complete document.



Subsequently, the characteristics of each article were analyzed in more detail. Of the 83 records examined in this phase, 23 were eliminated because they did not meet the research criteria. Of these, 10 were related to the higher educational level and 13 did not address the central theme, since they focused on proposals to improve the job placement of future graduates through various methodologies.

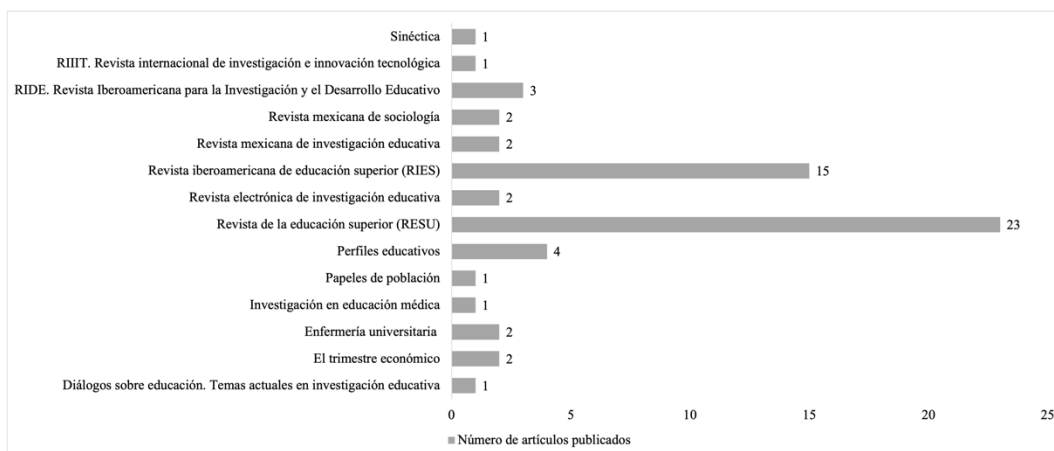
Once the authors verified and contrasted the information collected independently, consistency in the methodological strategy was guaranteed, which led to a consensus on the study in 60 articles.

## Results

For a more effective presentation of the information extracted from the database, graphs and tables have been prepared to facilitate the visualization of the results. After identifying the 60 documents eligible for research, it was discovered that 95% of them are written in Spanish and 5% in Portuguese. These documents are distributed in 14 Mexican journals indexed in SciELO (figure 2). The *Revista de la Educación Superior* (RESU) leads with 38% of the publications, followed by the *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación Superior* (RIES) with 25%.

In addition, the location of the studies was examined: 81.7% focus on Mexico and 18.3% abroad (Colombia, Chile, Brazil and Spain). Within Mexico, the states with the greatest scientific production on the subject are Mexico City (11.7%), Tlaxcala (10%) and Jalisco (6%).

**Figure 2.** Articles published in Mexican magazines



Source: self made

According to the data collected from SciELO, it was observed that the number of downloads of the indexed articles could reflect the interest of the scientific community in the research content. In this sense, it was found that the five most downloaded articles are from the *Revista de la Educación Superior* (RESU) and *Perfiles Educativos*, all of them written in Spanish (table 1). Furthermore, it was identified that both Burgos and De Vries are the most productive authors on this topic. Burgos has published three articles (one in *Perfiles Educativos* in 2011, and two in *RESU* in 2010 and 2008, respectively, all co-authored), while De Vries also has three publications (two in *RIES* in 2013 and 2011, and one in *RESU* in 2008, all co-authored).

**Table 1.** Most downloaded articles

	Reference	downloads
1	Burgos and López (2010).	74 483
2	Taguenca (2008).	37 562
3	Barron (2005).	27 388
4	Angulo <i>et al.</i> (2012).	24 351
5	De Vries <i>et al.</i> (2008).	21 808

Source: self made

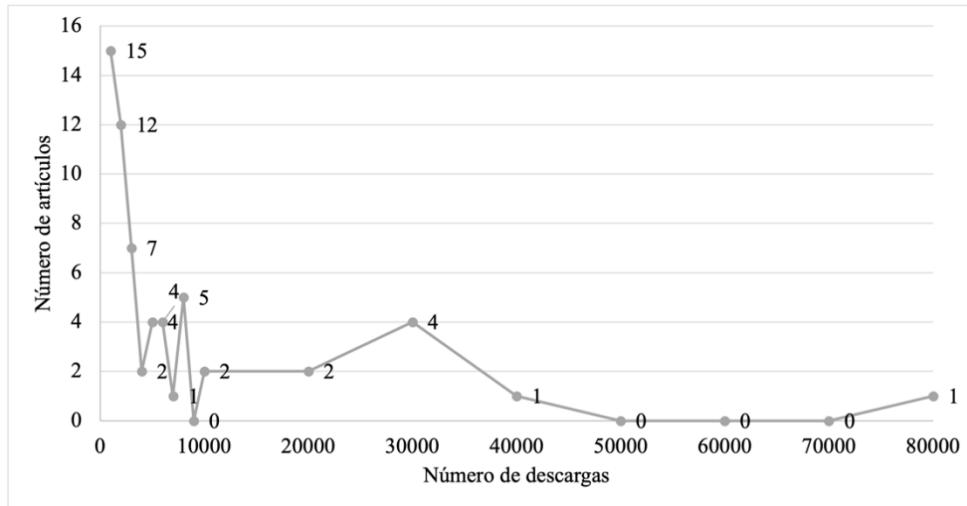
It should be noted that the article with the highest number of downloads shows a clear advantage over the other four in terms of interest from the scientific community. This work, based on the results of a survey, reveals the presence of overeducation phenomena and suggests the need to implement policies that facilitate the satisfactory integration of graduates into the labor market (Burgos and López, 2010).

Taguenca 's (2008) research argues that curricular designs that separate two closely related disciplinary fields can have a negative impact on qualified professional performance. For his part, Barrón (2005) explains how the process of modernization of higher education has modified study plans to adapt to the demands of the labor market, using the studies of graduates as a criterion to evaluate the quality of the training received. Furthermore, Angulo *et al.* (2012) establish a relationship between human capital theories and job satisfaction, highlighting the non-monetary benefits of work.



Among these five papers, the least downloaded article is that of De Vries *et al.* (2008), which explores the contribution of various careers to the labor field of its graduates. The distribution of downloads by article can be seen in figure 3.

**Figure 3.** Article downloads

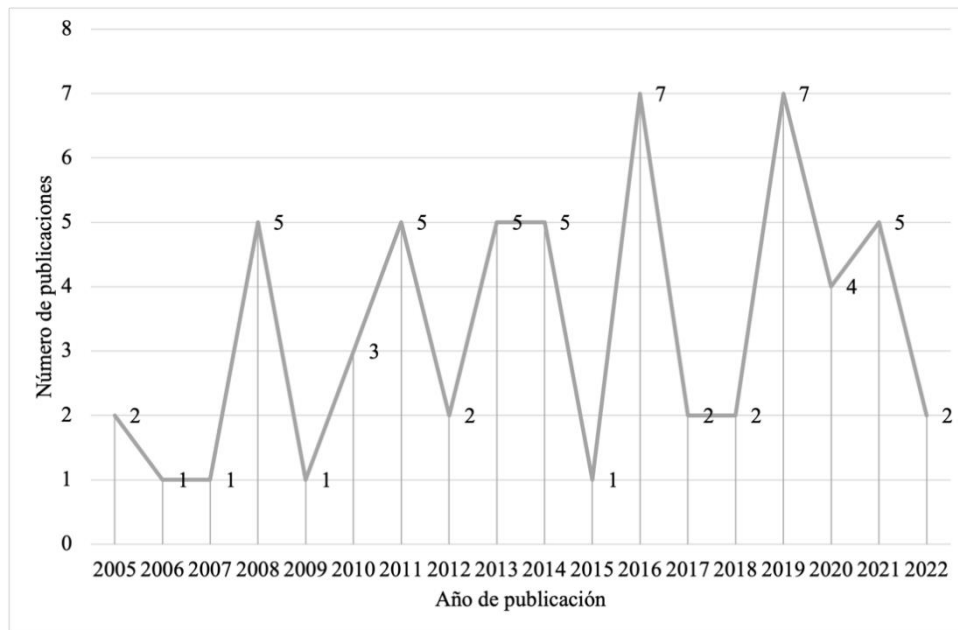


Source: self made

Next, to explore the period in which works on the topic have been published, the years of publication of the articles were identified. Figure 4 shows the period in which the first and most recent research was published in SciELO, spanning from 2005 to 2022. It is important to note that SciELO-Mexico was integrated in 2004, so the first studies reflected date back to 2005. despite the fact that there is previous research on the topic, such as those by Anuiés (1998).

In a more detailed analysis, the years in which the most articles on the topic were published (such as 2016 and 2019) and the years with the lowest incidence (such as 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2015) can be highlighted. Furthermore, it is observed that although there are publications each year, the quantity varies significantly, which suggests an irregular distribution in the frequency of one, two and five articles throughout the established period. Therefore, it can be inferred that this topic does not follow a clear trend of increase, but rather is characterized by a permanent occupation in scientific literature. Since the search was conducted in February 2023, it is possible that the registration of two articles in that year could still increase throughout 2023.

**Figure 4.** Articles published between 2005-2022

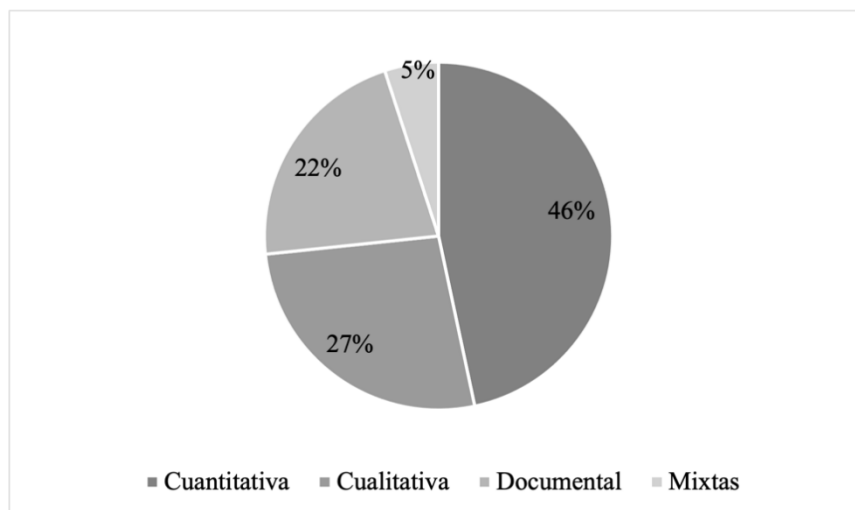


Source: self made

Following the methodology of the integrated systematic review, we sought to identify a final bibliometric data related to the type of research carried out on the topic. This was achieved through a methodological analysis of the works, which allowed each article to be classified according to the approach used.

Of the 60 articles reviewed, 28 works with a quantitative approach, 16 qualitative, 13 documentary and 3 mixed were identified (figure 5). According to this analysis, most documents use surveys to identify common characteristics in graduates through indicators. This is followed by studies that use interviews to understand the phenomenon from the subjects' experience, while a smaller number use mixed approaches in their approach to the object of study. In addition, articles were found that address the reality studied from theoretical perspectives.

It is important to highlight that, within this group of documentary-based works, a rigorous explanation of the methodology used to address the phenomenon is not always provided.

**Figure 5.** Types of research

Source: self made

## Discussion

To deepen the understanding of what has been researched about HEI graduates in Mexican magazines, an analysis was carried out based on the hermeneutic method. This approach allowed the development of a discussion that seeks to expose the interrelation of the main milestones of the research and reflect its added value for “a fruitful approach to the object of research, through an argumentative process of quality and certainty” (Sánchez *et al.*, 2022, p.61).

In this analytical phase, the documents were differentiated using an identification code: quantitative studies were labeled as CT, qualitative studies as CL, theoretical as D, and mixed studies as M. Each document was identified sequentially with a unique number. Once the works were categorized by type of research, common features of the phenomenon studied were identified to organize and systematize the analysis.

were distinguished: 1) characterization of graduates, 2) satisfaction of graduates, 3) social mobility, 4) job insertion, 5) labor market, 6) job performance and 7) evaluation (figure 6), in which the coded works were grouped. It is relevant to note that the majority of research (50%) on graduates published in the Mexican magazines studied focuses on the connection to the labor field, as stated by Navarro (1998), either in terms of the needs of the labor market, insertion into it or professional performance in terms of performance.

**Figure 6.** Thematic groups

Caracterización de egresados 7%	Satisfacción de los egresados 12%	Movilidad social 13%	Inserción laboral 13%	Mercado laboral 12%	Desempeño laboral 25%	Evaluación 18%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CT 28 Martínez et al. (2005)</li> <li>CL 3 Chaves (2021)</li> <li>CL 9 Gómez et al. (2017)</li> <li>CL 11 Mateos et al. (2016)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CT 7 Doña y Luque (2019)</li> <li>CT 9 Murillo y Montaña (2018)</li> <li>CT 27 De Vries et al. (2008)</li> <li>CL 10 Pieck y Castañeda (2016)</li> <li>CL 12 Keck y Saldivar (2016)</li> <li>CL 14 Quiroz (2014)</li> <li>M 1 Cisneros (2016)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CT 1 Aké (2022)</li> <li>CT 2 Castañeda y Brand (2021)</li> <li>CT 11 Cordero y Salmerón (2017)</li> <li>CT 14 Jiménez (2014)</li> <li>CT 22 Jiménez (2011)</li> <li>CL 2 Flores y Rodríguez (2021)</li> <li>D 1 Barragán y Tarango (2022)</li> <li>D 2 García (2019)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CT 4 Pérez y Pinto (2020)</li> <li>CT 10 Méndez et al. (2018)</li> <li>CT 17 Sánchez (2013)</li> <li>CT 18 Planas (2013)</li> <li>CT 7 Martínez et al (2019)</li> <li>CL 8 Valdivieso y De Ibarrola (2019)</li> <li>D 4 Planas y Enciso (2014)</li> <li>D 7 De Vries y Navarro (2011)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CT 21 Burgos y López (2011)</li> <li>CT 23 Burgos y López (2010)</li> <li>CT 25 Burgos (2008)</li> <li>D 5 De vries et al. (2013)</li> <li>D 6 Angulo et al. (2012)</li> <li>D 12 Muñoz (2006)</li> <li>M 3 Díaz (2012)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CT 5 Lagunas et al. (2020)</li> <li>CT 6 Jiménez (2019)</li> <li>CT 12 Gamboa (2016)</li> <li>CT 13 Juárez et al. (2015)</li> <li>CT 15 Sánchez (2014)</li> <li>CT 16 García et al. (2013)</li> <li>CT 19 Ramírez et al. (2011)</li> <li>CT 20 Ramírez (2011)</li> <li>CL 4 Morales (2020)</li> <li>CL 6 Mendoza et al. (2019)</li> <li>CL 16 Ruiz (2009)</li> <li>D 8 Vila et al. (2010)</li> <li>D 9 Meller et al. (2008)</li> <li>D 10 Taguena (2008)</li> <li>D 11 Ruiz (2007)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CT 3 Villas y Rodríguez (2021)</li> <li>CT 8 Aguilar y Mungaray (2019)</li> <li>CT 24 Figueroa et al. (2010)</li> <li>CT 26 Cano (2008)</li> <li>CL 1 Tagle et al. (2021)</li> <li>CL 5 Díaz-Barriga et al. (2020)</li> <li>CL 13 Alberto (2016)</li> <li>CL 15 Troncoso et. al (2013)</li> <li>D 3 Barrera et al. (2016)</li> <li>D 13 Barrón (2005)</li> <li>M 2 Felicetti et al. (2014)</li> </ul>

Source: self made

### Thematic group 1. Characterization of graduates

One of the aspects of studies on graduates focuses on the observation or knowledge of the characteristics of those who have completed their university studies. In this group, the research shares the intention of understanding the particular attributes of graduates in terms of demographics, socioeconomics, educational level, academic career, and types of institution of origin, among other aspects related to those who finish their careers in educational institutions. higher, whether at the undergraduate or graduate level.

For example, Martínez *et al.* (2005) emphasize the importance of having extensive and systematized information that, as a starting point, enriches general knowledge about graduates and allows the decision-making process to be based on students' progress throughout the curriculum. These approaches also provide an objective view of graduates, which can serve as a basis for follow-up research.

This approach is supported by the work of Gómez *et al.* (2017), who, by drawing up the profile of their graduates, were able to identify that they enter the labor market during the first year after graduation, which validates the relevance of the university program in relation to the needs of employers. In addition, the common traits of graduates also provide prognostic elements, as evidenced by the research of Chaves (2021), who, from a longitudinal perspective, identifies the peculiarities in the behavior of those who complete academic programs and those who abandon their studies.

Although some characteristics are common among educational institutions, other peculiarities serve as generators of knowledge. This is the case of the institutions that have recently emerged to serve indigenous populations. Based on the analysis of the characteristics of the first graduates of these intercultural universities, not only the academic and community

knowledge acquired is identified, but also an emerging intellectuality is formed made up of people who, being the first in their family and community By obtaining a university degree, they acquire prestige and act as “nodes for transmitting information and representation of their communities to civil society and exogenous institutions” (Mateos *et al.*, 2016, p. 830).

### **Thematic group 2. Graduate satisfaction**

In addition to profiling graduates, it is crucial for HEIs to know the level of satisfaction they experience with the training received, since this strengthens the bond with the institution. In this sense, both Cisneros (2016) and Doña and Luque (2019) found that graduates from various careers expressed satisfaction with the knowledge acquired, which allowed them to find employment according to their skills. Similarly, De Vries *et al.* (2008) reported that graduates from traditional careers such as Law, Health and Education also expressed satisfaction, and some even had the opportunity to be partners or owners of their own professional projects. It even seems that the university of origin can also influence this aspect, as Murillo and Montaña (2018) indicate.

When undergraduate graduates see that their expectations are met, they are likely to choose to continue their studies through postgraduate or continuing education programs, as this allows them to expand their experiences and networks of professional contacts, according to Keck and Saldívar. (2016). However, Pieck and Castañeda (2016) identify another reality in which some students wish to continue their studies, but cannot do so due to lack of financial support.

### **Thematic group 3. Social mobility**

In this thematic group, it was identified that one of the main reasons why graduates finish their studies is the search for improvements in their living conditions (Barragán and Tarango, 2022), which coincides with the data from the National Graduate Survey. (ENE) of 2022. However, the ability of graduates to access these improvements is hindered by a series of multifactorial factors (Aké, 2022), which include disciplinary particularities (Cordero and Salmerón, 2017), skills and knowledge, economic situation of origin (Barragán and Tarango, 2022), and the educational quality of the institution of origin, among others (Aké, 2022). For example, Flores and Rodríguez (2021) observed that some graduates manage to complete higher education, unlike their parents and grandparents, who did not have that opportunity, which allows them to enrich their cultural capital and improve their quality of life.



Finally, it is worth highlighting that in the phenomenon of social mobility, social and professional networks facilitate both horizontal and vertical development, especially when graduates choose to pursue postgraduate programs, where contacts play a crucial role in the search for opportunities. positions of higher hierarchy and better remuneration (Castañeda and Brand, 2021; García, 2019; Jiménez, 2011, 2014).

#### **Thematic group 4. Job insertion**

Another trend in research on graduates focuses on understanding the transition processes between formal education and the world of work, especially considering the challenges it entails. Within this approach, there are studies that examine actions related to university activity (Pérez and Pinto, 2020), those that explore this activity in the context of professional work (De Vries and Navarro, 2011; Méndez *et al.*, 2018; Sánchez, 2013; Valdivieso and De Ibarrola, 2019), and those that address both aspects (Planas, 2013; Planas and Enciso, 2014).

The first focus on determining the statistical relevance of a set of predictive variables, such as qualifications, academic and curricular elements, on job placement (Pérez and Pinto, 2020); while the latter analyze university activity in the context of professional work, and are divided into two aspects: those that explore the challenges related to job placement (De Vries and Navarro, 2011; Sánchez, 2013) and those that investigate competencies. of graduates, professional trajectories and institutional factors that influence their careers, including job placement pathways (Méndez *et al.*, 2018; Valdivieso and De Ibarrola, 2019). These studies also address problems of access to the labor market, such as lack of experience, which often leads young people to find employment before completing their higher education (as indicated by the 2022 National Graduate Survey), and market saturation. labor, which can result in underemployment and unemployment in precarious conditions of vulnerability (De Vries and Navarro, 2011).

Finally, the third aspect analyzes the journeys of graduates towards the world of work and proposes indicators to better understand this process (Planas, 2013).



### Thematic group 5. Labor market

In addition to understanding the transition processes between formal education and work, the studies also evaluate the opportunities and requirements of the labor market (Díaz, 2012). Some of them, under the theory of human capital, show certain deficiencies in the labor market, such as imbalances in the demand for labor in relation to supply, which highlights the imperfections of this market (Angulo *et al.*, 2012).

Regarding these imperfections, Muñoz (2006) analyzes some factors that impact the unemployment of HEI graduates and points out the determinants of underemployment. Along the same lines, Burgos and López (2010) conclude that a significant proportion of professionals work in inadequate conditions, and that there is great heterogeneity in the labor market situation for each of the careers. These same authors, in another study carried out in 2011, examine the issue of salaries and the search for alternative employment; In this regard, they conclude that professionals who experience an educational and knowledge gap, known as *overeducation* (Burgos and López, 2011; Angulo *et al.*, 2012), have lower incomes and are more likely to seek alternative employment, which is consistent with what was reported by Burgos (2008).

Another variable evaluated in this area is salary differentiation, which is influenced by the type of educational institution, the area of knowledge, work experience and gender, as well as other factors such as personal presentation, family origin and mastery of the subject. English (De Vries *et al.*, 2013).

### Thematic group 6. Job performance

Research in this category provides causal explanations about the adequacy of the study plans, the training received and the work performance of graduates, based on the skills acquired during their university education (Jiménez, 2019). In this context, regional instruments such as the PROFLEX survey are useful to contrast the current needs of the labor market with the academic preparation of graduates, which provides HEIs with valuable feedback (Vila *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, specific resources such as mentoring, which can be carried out by experts with apprentices in a professional setting, are useful to optimize the completion of tasks (Morales, 2020).

On the other hand, factors specific to the field of specific knowledge can influence work dynamics both positively and negatively (Gamboa, 2016). Regarding the first case, works such as those of Ramírez (2011) and Taguenca (2008) confirm the positive relationship

between the training received and job performance. However, this relationship, no matter how optimal, is not free of tensions, especially when graduates come from intercultural universities or rural areas and must adapt to different environments, as evidenced by the conclusions of Mendoza *et al.* (2019) and Martínez *et al.* (2019). Likewise, a gap may arise between what is learned in the classroom and the demands of the professional environment, as explained by Quiroz (2014), Juárez *et al.* (2015) and García *et al.* (2013). In fact, although there are positive aspects in some fields of knowledge—as demonstrated by Juárez *et al.* (2015) and García *et al.* (2013)—the lack of specialized decision-making skills in various professional areas and complex situations is also recognized.

For this reason, it is recommended to reorder and update curricula to improve the quality of student preparation and ensure that their performance is aligned with the needs of society (Lagunas *et al.*, 2020). In effect, the study of the graduates' work performance will allow us to understand the activities they carry out both at the beginning of their careers and after several years in the labor market, when it is expected that they will have assumed greater responsibilities and a higher hierarchical position within the organizations.

Sánchez (2014) addresses this question and discovers that, at the beginning, graduates generally occupy roles that coincide with their academic training. However, with the passage of time and advancement in their professional careers, it is common for them to stop working in areas directly related to their training. This is because, despite having acquired experience, it does not always translate into hierarchical promotions or economic improvements. This phenomenon is also observed in the case of researchers trained in high-quality graduate programs at the national level. Although they show high performance in research during their studies, upon graduation their research productivity in their areas of knowledge tends to decrease (Ramírez *et al.*, 2011).

In the field of higher education, there are alternatives such as short three-year degrees. Meller and Rappoport (2008) examine these options and highlight some competitive advantages offered by certain short-cycle programs, such as better performance of graduates and, in some cases, higher income. This is due, in part, to the fact that the study plan of these careers is more aligned with the demands and needs of the market, unlike more traditional study plans, which usually last four to five years and may lack that direct connection with the labor market (Meller and Rappoport, 2008).

These findings are complemented by those of Ruiz (2007), who analyzes the employability and performance of specialized technicians who emerge from this type of

programs. These technicians represent a new super-specialized job category that challenges the traditional dichotomy between scientific and technical work, which is especially relevant in fields such as computing, engineering and management. However, empirical research also carried out by Ruiz (2009) indicates that the cultural and social change associated with these super-specialized technicians is barely permeating the labor market.

### **Thematic group 7. Evaluation**

Barrón (2005) maintains that in the context of globalization and international educational influences, the principles of effectiveness, efficiency and quality are crucial elements to evaluate the relevance of public policies, educational systems, actors and specific programs in each profession. In this sense, HEIs seek to adapt the training of human resources to the new professional profiles required worldwide, hence it is vital to use various mechanisms to monitor compliance with these elements, such as evaluating the profitability of the training received (Cano, 2008) or the efficiency of a system in terms of employability (Aguilar and Mungaray, 2019).

Following these trends, assessment plays a crucial role in ensuring that educational institutions can offer the best possible education to their students, which is why it must be ensured that teachers are trained to perform their teaching role effectively. In addition to this, it is relevant to evaluate the training processes of future teachers to develop strategies for continuous improvement in teacher training (Alberto, 2016).

The ultimate objective of the evaluation, as a crucial element to determine the quality of education provided by higher education institutions (HEIs), is to be accountable for the professionals trained by them, as stated by Figueroa *et al.* (2010). For example, the intention of some national exams—such as the National Student Performance Exam (ENADE) in Brazil and the General Graduation Exam (EGEL) in Mexico—is to evaluate student performance. On this topic, Villas and Rodrigues (2021) focus on ENADE, while Barrera *et al.* (2016) address the case of EGEL.

Furthermore, the studies coded in this group not only consider graduates, but also those who continue their studies, as a measure of comparison between current and graduated generations. This is done to evaluate graduate programs (Figueroa *et al.*, 2010), the reception of a flexible curricular design compared to a closed one (Díaz-Barriga *et al.*, 2020) or to contrast learning evaluation practices (Tagle *et al.*, 2020). *al.*, 2021).

Likewise, the weighting of new entry profiles compared to graduates in terms of employability, remuneration, satisfaction, among other positive aspects, is a subject of evaluation (Felicetti *et al.*, 2014).

In summary, the figure of the graduate becomes a rich and valuable source of information, not only in academic terms, but also in indicators of social responsibility, understood as personal investment in the well-being of others and the ecosystem in which they live. As noted by Troncoso *et al.* (2013).

## Conclusions

The integrative systematic review carried out has provided an exhaustive answer to the initial question about what has been investigated about graduates of higher education institutions in Mexican journals. Specifically, the 60 studies analyzed focus mainly on the characterization of the graduates, their satisfaction with the training received, the social mobility they experience, their insertion into the labor market and the profiles demanded by it, as well as the evaluation of the profitability of the education received. Although the study period covers 17 years, the interest in this topic extends beyond this period, since it must be considered that the selected database was established from 2004, as mentioned above.

Now, it should be noted that the research findings focus mainly on studies on graduates of the undergraduate level, which suggests the need to conduct research on graduates of postgraduate programs, since this educational level continues to be a relevant space for updating. continuous and an important factor of social mobility.

Likewise, it should be noted that accountability in higher education institutions implies considering the studies of graduates as a fundamental indicator in the framework of academic performance and excellence. These studies link the field of vocational training with that of work, therefore addressing social and labor market needs that have historically been separated.

In short, the integrative review of 14 Mexican journals in the Scielo database has made it possible not only to identify the quantitative dimension of the research, which provides indicators on the behavior of graduates, but also to explore the qualitative dimension of the studies. This has contributed to understanding how the phenomenon manifests itself in terms of actors, experiences and meanings, especially in the context of national universities. However, it would be beneficial to expand the scope of future research on graduates to obtain a comparative and more complete view of the phenomenon.

## Future lines of research

Below are some ideas to delve deeper into the field of study in future research. Firstly, although the characterization of graduates reflects a common reality in higher education, it would be beneficial to delve deeper into the emerging offers of higher education, such as intercultural universities or short-cycle universities. That is, it would be important not only to identify the specific characteristics of these graduates, but also to contrast them with those who come from traditional systems.

In addition to this, and given that the satisfaction of undergraduate graduates influences the possibilities of students continuing with postgraduate studies, it would be valuable to conduct longitudinal research to track this indicator.

socio-professional relationships have been identified, such as networks, so it would be interesting to delve deeper into this topic and how these networks can expand connection opportunities for future work.

Likewise, as the labor market and the work context vary depending on the field of knowledge, it would be beneficial to have specific studies that analyze the insertion, behavior and performance of graduates in each profession, as well as the evaluation of the programs that train them.

Finally, other databases other than those used in this review could be explored, since, by focusing on Mexican journals, it is possible that relevant information that is outside the context of the country has been overlooked.

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