

**CLADEA**  
**Guide** to  
Responsible  
*Business*  
**Education** in  
Latin America

*Edited by* **Mariella Olivos Rossini**

© 2016 Greenleaf Publishing Limited

Published by Greenleaf Publishing Limited  
Salts Mill  
Victoria Road  
Saltaire  
BD18 3LA  
UK  
[www.greenleaf-publishing.com](http://www.greenleaf-publishing.com)

Cover by Sadie Gornall-Jones.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-1-78353-335-0 [hardback]  
ISBN-13: 978-1-78353-322-0 [PDF ebook]

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# 4

## The relationship between the labor market and Vuad's business management program in the city of Bogotá

**Martha Cecilia Pachón**<sup>1</sup> [marthapachon@ustadistancia.edu.co](mailto:marthapachon@ustadistancia.edu.co)

**Diela Moreno**<sup>2</sup> [dielamoreno@ustadistancia.edu.co](mailto:dielamoreno@ustadistancia.edu.co)

Research hotbed members: Astrid Juliana Giraldo Caro [astridgiraldo@ustadistancia.edu.co](mailto:astridgiraldo@ustadistancia.edu.co);  
Carlos Felipe Hidalgo Reyes [carloshidalgo@ustadistancia.edu.co](mailto:carloshidalgo@ustadistancia.edu.co)

**This research project aims to find the relationship between the needs of both the labor market and companies, through the education received by the graduate students of the Business Administration program (distance mode) at the University of Santo Tomás. Information will be obtained from job portals to inquire into the needs of businesses and establish the connection of these with the teaching of graduates.**

- 1 Commercial Business Administrator Universidad Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca; Social and Economic Proposal and Assessment of Projects Specialist, Universidad Católica; Mg. Marketing, Universidad Externado de Colombia. Working experience of the private and public sectors as a professor at Universidad Santo Tomás, Universidad del Tolima (undergraduate and graduate level) and SENA (acronym for National Learning Service). Universidad Santo Tomás, VUAD, School of Sciences and Technology, Business Administration Program
- 2 Statistics Professional, Universidad de la Salle; Data Analysis Specialist, Universidad de la Salle. With experience of working in the public and private sectors, and within entities such as ICFES, EPS Saludcoop, Universidad Manuela Beltrán, and Universidad Santo Tomás. Universidad Santo Tomás, VUAD, School of Sciences and Technology, Business Administration Program.

**The concern for the improvement of quality in the professional education offered by the Business Administration program is a current issue due to the university's concern with meeting the particularly urgent needs of regional and social contexts.**

**Thus, the proposal aims to contribute to strengthening the quality of the program and the investigative processes of the students.**

**Keywords:** Labor market, occupational profile, graduate, Universidad Santo Tomás, School of Research

## **Introduction**

Currently there are some differences between what the labor market requires and what the universities offer in their academic programs. To fill this gap, the university can prepare an academic program, based on previous studies of the needs of the labor market in the last two or three years, achieving an adjustment in the programs offered; but due to changes in market behavior, companies may require different output profiles of the graduates, as a result of the changes faced by the organizations. In this regard, the university cannot respond at the same rate as the labor market changes; this situation prompts reflection on the fact that not only the media analysis must be considered, but prospective models must also be contemplated, providing a broader picture of the labor market's needs concerning the graduates. In this case of Business Administration, the graduates should be able to use their knowledge, and research management and labor expertise to support the organizations' needs at a local, regional, national and international level.

It is fundamental for higher education institutions to strengthen their work with research schools; it is in this sense that Semillero Estratega from the VUAD's<sup>1</sup> Business Administration program, based on its own interest, with the accompaniment of a tutor, made the decision of getting involved in research that aims to implement a greater connection between the current field of work and the professional training that the aforementioned program provides to students.

Business administration and the current field of work, as well as that of the future, demands collaborators who are characterized by having excellent abilities and dexterities to offer, thus allowing them to perform excellently for the organization that employs them.

## Research program

Business Administration is a profession that promotes comprehensive education in the universal knowledge of said discipline. There are various studies that evidence how business administration has been developed in Colombia, both in the aspect of education and in the practice within the organizations. These studies consider: concepts from engineering, with the method of scientific administration provided by Frederick Winslow Taylor; the need for professionalization, by Max Weber; and a classic approach, with contributions from Henri Fayol, among other authors who have been studied throughout history, taking up aspects that originate from lectures and that contribute to the education of future employers or colleagues within organizations, who subsequently apply a part of the training they have acquired to the reality of the organization.

According to Pabón Suárez (2007), "In 1942 Daniel Samper Ortega founded the first business school in Colombia at Gimnasio Moderno and was the first to introduce 'case method' teaching from Harvard Business School, which was the institution that provided advice for the elaboration of its first study program."

Business administration has had to adapt to changing circumstances that follow market needs and are related to economic, social, cultural, political, technological, and innovational factors, according to national and international contexts and the different actors concerned with training in this discipline.

Universidad Santo Tomás, distance mode, which is committed to responding to the most urgent needs of social and regional surroundings and seeks to promote integral training for people in the field of higher education, created the first Academic Program of De-schooling Teaching in 1975 and in 1976 it opened the first Philosophy and Religious Sciences program, which led to the complete de-schooling of distance learning in higher education. On July 2, 1996 through Decree 04, the Founders Committee of the University approved the creation of the Section Universidad Abierta y a Distancia de la USTA (Universidad Santo Tomás; 1995). On December 16, 1996, through Agreement 19, the Board of Governors approved the Special Statute of the Division of Open and Distance Education, and with Agreement 30 of November 5, 1997 the vice presidency was created for academic and administrative purposes. Focusing on the Business Administration program, this was created through Agreement 16 in December 1996, issued by the USTA Board of Governors.

Since then, the development of the curricular structure of the Business Administration program has been concerned with attending to the problems linked to management and management style of administrative practice, as well as responding to the need for effective and efficient administration of organizations' resources.

Taking into account that the graduate's profile is aimed at managing organizational processes at different levels, identifying opportunities and generating innovative responses, and developing and orienting the organizational strategies of different sectors, a research question arises that reflects upon the professional

training that the program offers according to the organizational needs of the surroundings, clarifying: **What relationship exists between the labor market and business needs, with reference to the courses on which VUAD's Business Administration graduates were trained?**

## Research objectives

### General

- To determine the relation between the labor market and business needs, in terms of the training of graduates from VUAD's Business Administration program.

### Specific

- To characterize the labor market in which the graduates of VUAD's Business Administration program are immersed.
- To establish whether business needs adjust to the training of the graduate of the program.
- To verify the occupational practice of business administrators who have graduated from VUAD, having studied in the business field.

## Theoretical framework

To establish the existing relationship between the labor market and business needs, with regard to the courses on which the graduates of VUAD's Business Administration program were trained, it is necessary to review the different perspectives from which this field of knowledge has been approached. Besides, the role of employers in deciding the kind of characteristics and knowledge required of future employees of organization must be reviewed.

The mega-administrator shall have the ability to comprehensively analyse the area, have knowledge of the different behavior patterns of the global communities and the diverse ethnic groups, the diverse social-political movements that are presented to him, the changing conditions of the different economies, the variety of obstacles that are stated in the function of exercising mega-administration of the business that he must lead." (Melgar, 2009)



Taking into account the new demands of the market, it is once more fundamental to be aware of the role of the universities in the training of future professionals, who not only must have the specific knowledge of their specialty, but must generate added value, represented in the methodology, motivation, leadership and professional ethics, among other factors, that significantly influence the outcome profile of the new professional.

Hamel (2008) mentions: "maybe the practice of administration is not evolving at the same speed as before, the environment that companies of the 21st century are facing is more volatile than ever."

Based on the interests of the students participating of the school of Strategic Research, it is beneficial to find out information on the needs of the labor market, taking as reference two prior studies done in the Business Administration program: 1. (Pineda et al., 2013) "Trends of knowledge in the Business Administration program". In this research, the fields of study, reflection and conceptualization on the field of knowledge in Business Administration were analyzed with the purpose of signifying trends of knowledge produced in the program between the years 2006 to 2012; 2. (Moreno and Tovar, 2013) "Characterization of the Occupational Profile of the graduate of the Business Administration program at Universidad Santo Tomás". The focus was on determining the relation existing between the training profile and the occupational profile of the graduates of VUAD's Business Administration program, identifying the occupational activities or other labor links of the graduates, the social impact of the graduates of the program was established, to respond to updating of curriculum, analytical contents and denomination of courses according to the results obtained.

## Methodology

Within the research a quantitative research methodology was carried out of the exploratory-descriptive kind, which would allow collection, organization, analysis and interpretation of results. The participants in the research were graduates of the program and the employment portals in the city of Bogotá.

### Population and sample

The population consisted of two groups located in the city of Bogotá; the first group was made up of 327 graduates of the Business Administration program from the years 2010 to 2014; through our intentional convenience sampling, a survey was undertaken with 38 graduates, who were asked about position, functions carried out, salary, level of knowledge required for the job, and kind of contract.

The second group corresponds to employment portals that offer opportunities in the city of Bogotá: Computrabajo, Eempleo.com, and LinkedIn from which 110

records were collected from September 1, 2015 to October 30 of the same year, with the following variables: name of position, functions, salary, kind of contract, and years of experience.

During the surveys, the graduates were specifically asked to state, in the form of a percentage, how much they use the contents of their professional training in the development of their jobs; they were also asked about the detailed functions that they carry out with the purpose of identifying courses that need to offer greater guidance and finding out if the analytical contents of the courses correspond to business needs

## Results

The new labor market dynamics focus on matching qualified personnel with the characteristics and needs of each company. This is why the analysis in this investigation found that the surveyed students do not only think of having an employment relationship based on critical thinking and ethical training in order to focus on professional development based on the knowledge they have acquired and their practical experience, but they are also increasingly aware that they must strengthen their skills at the professional level, in order to be more competitive in a steadily more challenging market scenario, which is a result of global changes in areas such as: economics, culture, and technology, among others.

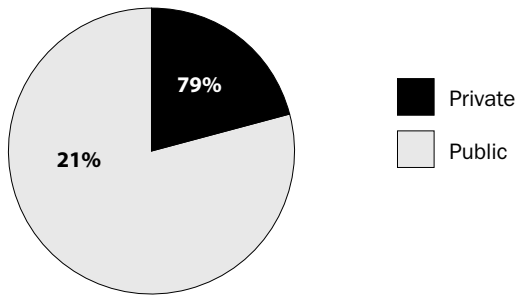


Figure 1: **Sector of the company in which the graduates work**

Source: Authors, result of the research.

It is evidenced that 79 percent of those interviewed think that the private sector is more attractive to work in, according to their professional profile; 21 percent view the public sector as a stable employment possibility.

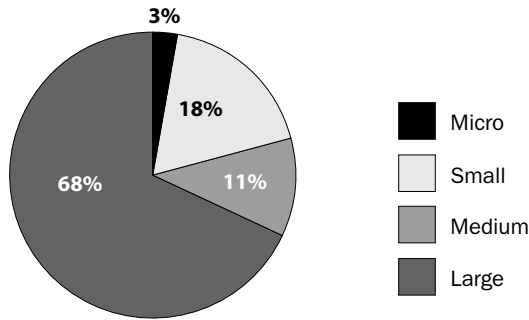


Figure 2: Size of the company where the graduates work

Source: Authors, result of the research.

Of those interviewed, 68 percent work in big companies; 18 percent in small companies; 11 percent in medium-size companies; and only 3 percent work in microbusinesses.

According to a report published in *El Espectador* about the 23,000 micro-, small, and medium-size companies in Colombia—which are found mainly in Bogotá, where 96.4 percent of them are established—in Cali, Barranquilla and Bucaramanga, 76 percent of the employment is generated by micro-, small, and medium-size companies. 70 percent of employment in Bogotá originates from small and medium-size companies and 45 percent of the production of these companies is dedicated to manufacturing (Cantillo, 2011). 40 percent of salaries recorded by the country are originated by micro-, small and medium-size companies.

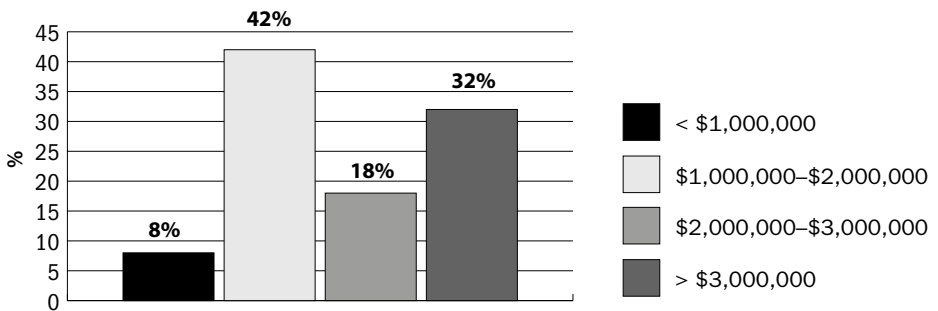


Figure 3: Graduates salary range

Source: Authors, result of the research.

The salaries of the graduates range between \$1.000.000 and \$2.000.000 for those who work in the private sector; nevertheless, it is highlighted that the public sector offers the highest salary scale, but in the majority of the contracts it is for service provision. The salary obtained in private companies is more favorable for the

graduates, due to the benefits and the possibility of putting into practice their abilities as business administrators.

Paulina Leyva Casas, Director of the Graduate Support Office of Universidad Santo Tomás says that the young in Colombia are faced with the reality of coming out of their universities to earn salaries that do not correspond to their academic training nor to the investment they have made. “Besides, this leads to graduates being unable to aim for a salary increase in less than a year, which is logical, since if they start with a salary range below what has to be a decent salary for them, they are hardly able to stabilize during the next five years” (Quintana, 2015).

The matrix of information offered by the employment networks, with a total of 110 sets of data, identifies that within 52 percent that corresponds to the level of direction, the specific positions to supply in the different areas are of professional business administrators, coordinators, commercial managers, logistics analysts, heads, and vice presidents; among the most mentioned, with personnel management at the top, were management indicators, budget control, report delivery, direct responsibility in internal and external auditing, contracting, process control.

Research also provided information about a requirement that harms many professionals: work experience. It was found that for the different position levels it is necessary to have certain amount of years of practice and exercise; for example, for those who aim at a support position full experience is required, while in the direction and assistance levels this requirement ranges between 96 percent and 98 percent.

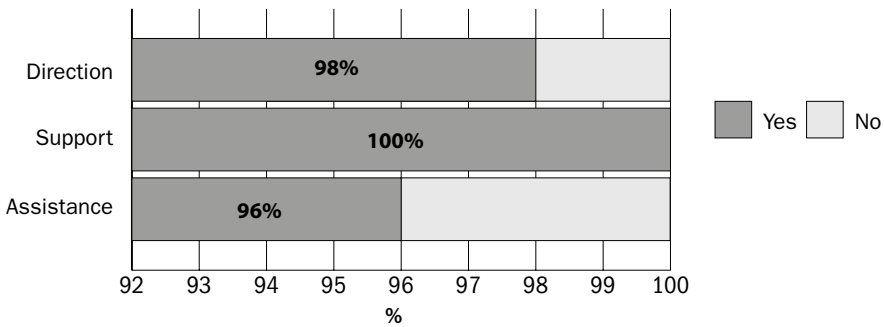


Figure 4: **Work experience**

Source: Authors, result of the research

18 percent of graduates practice their profession in the area of administration, 16 percent in the auditing area, and 54 percent in other areas such as banking, collecting and billing, sales, human talent, management, client service and operations.

For the professional graduates of the Business Administration program, the topics addressed in academic spaces include: administrative processes, managerial abilities, knowledge and management of accounting and financial matters,

market management, human talent management, and the use of technological tools (ICTs), which is essential.

It is a concern that the surveys show there are parts of the Business Administration program that are not used very frequently by professionals in their work, perhaps due to the types of companies where they are currently employed; in this case, English language skills, which are also covered in other academic areas, can strengthen teaching methodologies such as case studies, presentations in English, laboratories and any other active learning that allows students to become more familiar with this language, because today many professionals lose job opportunities due to the fact that they do not master a second language.

Universidad Santo Tomás in its path toward being the first institution of its type to have university status in Colombia, is committed to the productive sector and society in general. Its goal is to train students to be highly competitive professionals, which implies enhancing the different processes every day; for this, it is fundamental to generate spaces in which professors, businessmen, and students may interact and develop research projects, with the purpose of carrying out the activities that allow maintenance of or improvement on what is required, to respond to the more demanding needs of the market regarding the professional profile of graduates.

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