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## The current trends of young people choosing a university degree: Interests and expectations

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### Abstract

This work is a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical research with a descriptive design done in 2013 and 2015, about current preferences that young people have at the time of continuing their post-secondary education. We could conclude that there is a strong tendency to choose degrees related to Social and Human Sciences closely followed by Biological, Ecological and Health Sciences, together with Administration and Trade degrees. The professional interests of students are related with: The influence that exerts the orientation from which they graduate, Poor concordance between interests that they are aware of and their genuine preferences, Multiplicity of interests which are due to poor self-concept. Insecurity in the election generated by pressure of time and resistance to abandon the evolutionary stage. The results obtained allowed us to make contributions aimed at improving existing educational policies related to Educational Orientation.

Keywords: Vocational guidance; trends; decision making; educational policies.

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## **1. Introduction**

In the present work, a study is carried out on the tendencies that adolescents present at the moment of deciding their studies superiors. Current tendencies (perceptions, valuation and expectations) of the young people of the senior level of the secondary of San Juan who chose a university degree are identified and analyzed. The information that counts on the team of professionals of the area of University Orientation, led to raise the following questions:

- What are the factors that contribute to determining the choices and decisions of young people?
- What attitudes and styles do young people express when making a decision?
- What are the obstacles and constraints that make it harder to make decisions in the context of today's culture?

To find answers to these questions, we will describe the current situation in which young applicants to the 1st year of Higher Level are working, and identify the changes that must occur in the UCCuyo, from the perspectives of future and current students.

### ***1.1. Current scenario affecting young people in their transition to the adult world***

All vocational choice involves a process in development, where the person will try to discover what interests, skills and style of personality he possesses, and then identify the occupations where he can be inserted. Making a decision about where it will develop in the future is not a simple task, this process generates some contradictions in young people.

The future, the world of the professions and trades increases the fears and anxieties when assuming new responsibilities.

From a social dimension, the choice of what to do, in terms of occupation, is closely linked to the economic, political and cultural context (Rascovan 2013).

### ***1.2. Vocational choice***

The concept of vocational choice refers to the process that the individual makes in relation to his interests and possibilities that lead him to choose a profession or occupation, analyzing and reflecting on the capabilities, aptitudes, values, arriving at a personal and individual decision in views to the future.

In every vocational choice cognitive and motivational factors are involved that are not totally conscious. According to Lauretti (2004) there are three fundamental aspects: success in the study of the profession, satisfaction or enjoyment of the activities of the career and stability in the vocational decision that has been taken.

To choose, besides a process, is an act expressed in the decision making through which the subject chooses an object with which establishes a particular bond, hoping to obtain some kind of satisfaction of the same.

Every act of choice has conscious and unconscious aspects, in the incessant search that involves choosing a vocational object, in which it is crossed by moments of illusion, euphoria, but also of disenchantment, disappointment, apathy.

## **2. Method**

A systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation was carried out on the current preferences of the young people at the moment when they continued their studies.

For that, an empirical methodology was carried out with a descriptive design.

We worked with three random samples selected at random:

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To inquire the vocational trends, a closed survey was applied to 6129 students from public and private educational institutions in the province of San Juan.

To explore the perceptions, expectations and valuation that the adolescent have on the careers, the data collected from the administration of open interview and specific vocational orientation techniques (CHASIDE, Incomplete Phrases and Autobiography) were analyzed during the group process of Vocational Orientation carried out in the years 2013 and 2015 in the UCCuyo.

Finally, to analyze the variable of institutional educational policies, a focused interview was conducted on a third probabilistic population, selected by stratified random sampling, formed by the students who entered the UCCuyo in 2014, being established as follows:

**Table 1. Interests towards areas of the knowledge of adolescents of the last years of Average level**

Faculty	Nº of Students composing the sample
Food, Biochemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences	10
Economic Sciences	15
Medical Sciences	64
Law and Social Sciences	252
Education	4
Philosophy and Humanities	40

For the variable: Current Trends in choosing a career, indicators were selected: Interest to areas of knowledge; Motivations towards higher education studies; Perceptions about the future of the workforce and demand for graduates; Assessments and social, family and personal considerations of careers and educational institutions; Career expectations; Expectations on the level of difficulty of the race; Assessments of the duration of the races; Assessment on the level of difficulty in entering the race.

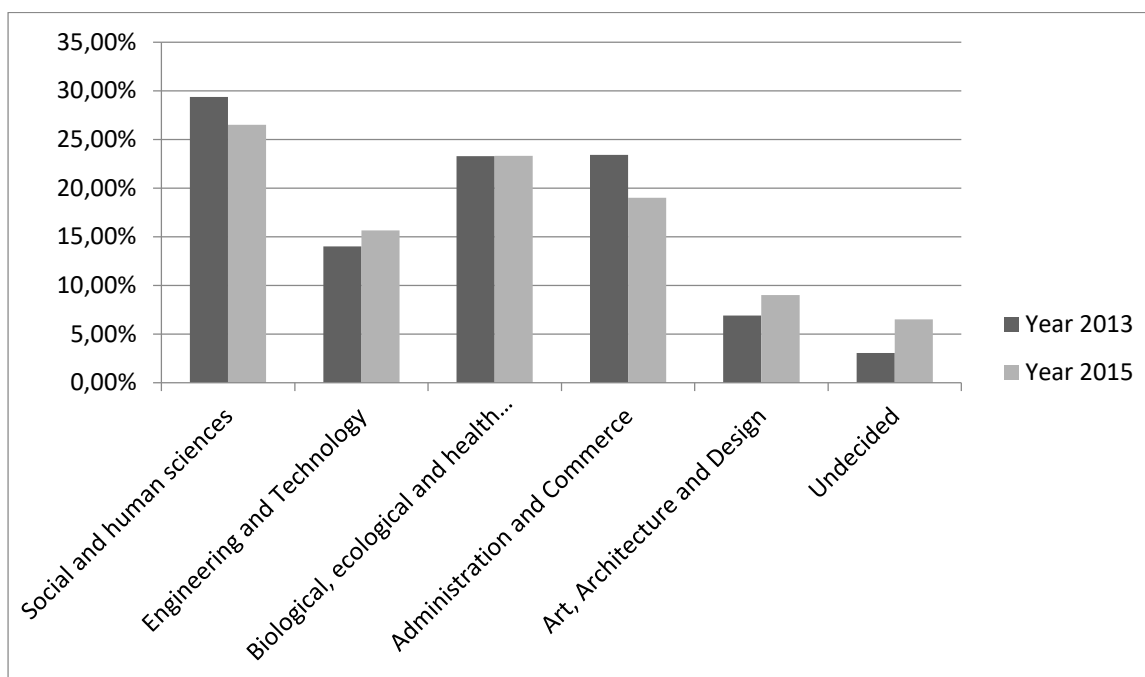
While, for the variable indicators Institutional policies were completed modalities offered; Duration of educational programs; Cost of programs; Recognition of the degrees awarded.

### 3. Results

The data obtained corresponding to the variable "current trends in choosing a career" were analyzed according to quantitative data (self-administered survey in the editions of Expovocacional of the year 2013 and 2015) and qualitative, based on targeted interviews and specific techniques Of vocational orientation that was administered to the young people who attended the group processes, organized by the Catholic University of Cuyo.

Subsequently, for the variable "institutional policies", the qualitative analysis of the collected data is continued, based on the focused interviews applied to incoming students to the UCCuyo in 2014.

### 3.1. Analysis of quantitative data



**Figure 1. Interest towards areas of knowledge of adolescents in recent years midlevel**

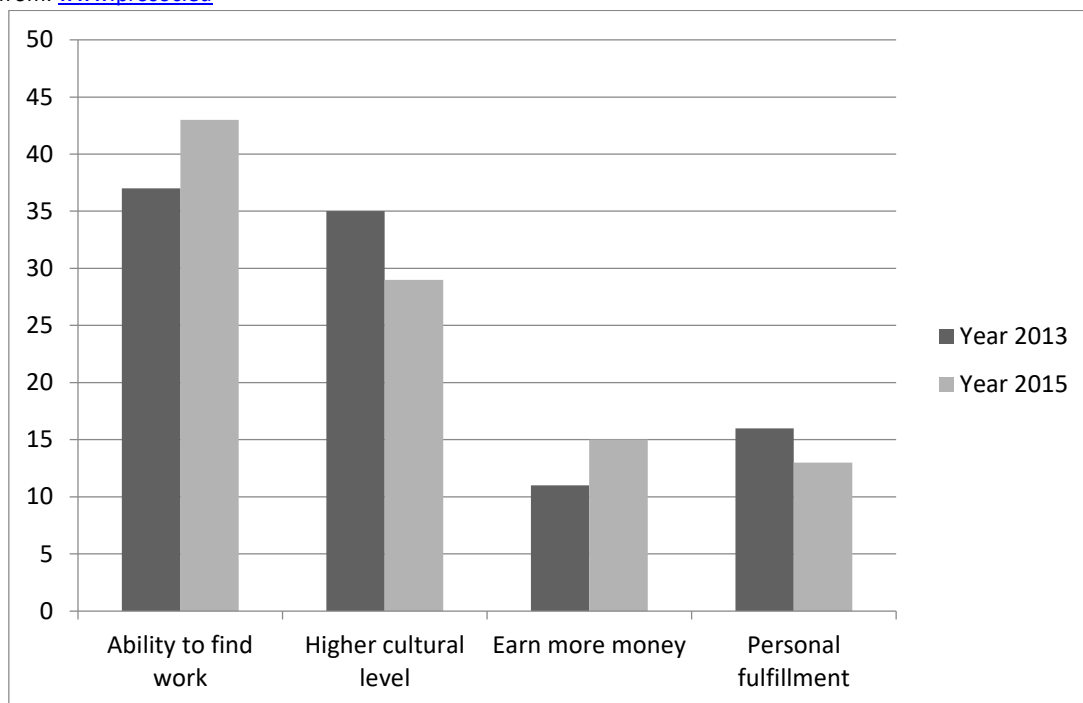
The study shows that in both 2013 and 2015 the trend towards careers in the area of social and human sciences has been maintained, increasing minimally in the areas of Engineering and Technology, as well as in Art, Architecture and Design, Same with those young people who are undecided.

This trend reflects some relationship with the training received in the middle level since there seems to be a poor basis in subjects such as mathematics, chemistry and physics.

This moment in the social and human sciences could also have its origin in the socio-political and economic crises that the country has suffered for some years, which leads young people to want to change some social realities such as work organization, migratory phenomena As an attempt to reach new forms of participation.

**Table 2. Motivations towards higher level studies**

Motivation	Year 2013	Year 2015
Possibility to find work	37	43
Higher cultural level	35	29
Earn more money	11	15
Personal fulfillment	16	13



**Figure 2. Interest to areas of knowledge of adolescents in recent years midlevel**

In relation to the reasons that impel them to continue with the studies of superior level, it is observed difference between the students of the last years of secondary of the year of 2013 with those that culminated the average level in the year 2015.

Although in the two years, what motivates them most is the possibility of finding work and acquiring a higher cultural level, in the year 2013, personal fulfillment would seem to be more important than earning more money.

The data allow us to infer that current adolescents try to revert with their higher education the high cost of unemployment and underemployment, which is why they choose to continue with higher education. Having access to higher quality jobs, in turn makes them feel valuable to themselves and to society and brings better income.

**Table 3. Ratings regarding race duration**

Assessment	Year 2013	Year 2015
Very important	39.3%	54.3%
More or less important	41.6	3.4
Less important	19.1	11.7

As can be seen from the table, there is a change in assessment when analyzing the duration of careers, according to the adolescents surveyed in 2013 and 2015. In the latter group, the time devoted to university studies is a preponderant factor at the moment of decision, which encourages young people to choose careers of shorter duration and degree of difficulty, above their tendencies and interests.

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### **3.2. Analysis of qualitative data**

After analyzing the different techniques administered to participants in vocational orientation processes, the most significant data are presented.

#### **3.2.1. Interests towards areas of knowledge**

The adolescents who carried out the group vocational orientation process showed that, when choosing the career, the interests regarding what they like to learn, read or study take into account the study plan of the career since according to the subjects that compose it, it is the inclination that they have towards their choice or discard.

In general there is a marked tendency to choose careers related to the orientation they attended in school, noting that they are not very clear if they are really interested or is what they know the most.

Adolescents who have discovered that the orientation chosen in the secondary do not like, are those who try to discover preferences, skills and interests in a more reflective way.

However, at the time of the investigation of interests and preferences, it was observed that few of them know themselves, as to define where their interests are inclined, for example they express: "I am interested in several things" "I like several things at a time, I could not say what interests me more, "" I do not know what interests me more ... I'm just sure what I do not like. "

By correlating the data previously expressed, it is possible to perceive the heterogeneity of foundations that adolescents manifest according to the areas of knowledge that prevail; For example, when it comes to careers related to the hard sciences, the adolescent puts more emphasis on the taste and interest shown by the study of contents related to those areas, while those who choose social, humanistic or artistic careers consider that the habits, strategies and attitude towards the study, will favor the conclusion of the university career.

Some expressions are given as an example: "I love what the chemical engineer does, but when I see the materials I have it will cost me, I prefer to follow something else that I like and I do not have to study", "I do not like to read a lot, I can not spend so much time with theoretical things, but I know that if I put myself I'll be able to with the legal matters. "

#### **3.2.2. Motivations towards higher studies**

Like the adolescents who responded to the survey, the participants in the Group Vocational Guidance workshops explained that they want to continue a university career because it will allow them better job opportunities and hope for a better socioeconomic level in the future.

This trend shows the low importance of the adolescent to broaden horizons in the academic, personal and / or professional fields. There was also no awareness of fulfilling future personal projects or wishes.

These results demonstrate that when choosing higher studies, adolescents think more about social mobility that will allow them to achieve a degree, rather than that related to personal aspects.

This is evidenced for example in some expressions of the participants, "If you do not study you are nothing in life", "If I do not continue studying I will not be able to have a good job", "When I grow up I want to have a job that allows me to have a good economic pass".

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### **3.2.3. Perceptions about the future of the workforce and demand for graduates**

When inquiring about the future of the job and the demand of professionals in a particular area, the adolescents stated, in the great majority, to take into account at the time of their choice, the possibilities of work leave and the salary that can be aspired with the title.

In this way, the prospect of job insertion, together with that of achieving a good salary appear second, after the taste for the profession.

By collecting information on different professions, young people showed disagreement with those in which industrial relations are perceived as ephemeral and unstable, expressing concern for those in which a few years ago professionals were incorporated naturally and today appear to be in complex situations of labor insertion. In this sense, this feeling has been repeated against careers as a lawyer, psychology and teaching staff in physical education. Some of the phrases that reflect these feelings are: "I know that I would like to be a gym teacher, but I'm going to starve ...", "I see myself as a lawyer but there are millions ... and I do not come from a family of lawyers like to Get a job fast, "" It's good to be a psychologist, but I do not know, I've read that there are more psychologists than people, I do not want to risk studying something that I can not live with. "

### **3.2.4. Social, family and personal evaluations and considerations of careers and educational institutions**

It would seem that adolescents do not take into account, at least consciously, the social and family value of careers, most of the sample said that they do not give importance to the moment of the election,

Only a low percentage values how the professions are viewed at a social level. However, the analysis of the results of projective techniques shows how the prestige of the socially recognized professions influences them.

It is also significant that in those most clearly observed this situation was in the male population, while in women it was given in a smaller proportion.

There was a link between the family academic tradition and the choice of some professions in particular, this happened first in families in which in each generation is repeated the title of lawyers, followed by families who have a tradition in medicine and third Place engineering. In several of these cases it was observed that the interests and preferences pointed to other careers and at the time of choosing they opted for the one that has a family identity.

### **3.2.5. Expectations in the level of difficulty and duration of the races**

When inquiring about the academic difficulties and the duration of the courses, there is a very marked tendency in choosing a race that allows to fulfill the requirements of the study, in addition to the development of other activities. For the adolescent, the concept of difficulty originates in the insecurity of being able to fulfill the expectations, either because of a lack of cognitive ability, or because they do not adapt to the university study pace.

Significant is the fear shown by young people to routine and boredom and are aware of the low perseverance in the study, which is why they prefer a shorter career.

### **3.2.6. Assessment of the level of difficulty of the entrance course**

The adolescents did not show any signs of concern regarding admission to the race, since they generally present an alternative plan.

Only those students who had the medical career as a choice and preferred to study it in San Juan showed their fear and insecurity. In particular, they are insecure because of the low admission quota and the fact that the admission course lasts one year.

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Significantly, the large number of students who left this election aside for this reason and preferred to choose another career rather than risk wasting time and money on something that is valued as difficult.

### **3.2.7. Variable of institutional policies**

The incoming students of the different academic units of the UCCuyo showed conformity with the modality of study that offers the institution. The percentage of students who showed dissatisfaction belong to careers in the Faculty of Food Sciences, Biochemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences and Faculty of Medical Sciences; In these cases the complaint was raised in that it does not allow them to organize their times because the schedules are unstable as well as the places of study.

It should be noted that this situation reflects the academic units of medical sciences and food sciences, is given by the type of subjects that they carry out in laboratory or hospital practices and also because of lack of physical space to accommodate some Classes, being the most affected by the mentioned academic units. In the rest of the faculties this inconvenience does not become significant.

### **3.2.8. Duration of educational programs**

The duration of the programs is positively valued by the students; Believe that it is appropriate in terms of the years of study, but also said that they think it now that they are just starting, they do not know if they will say the same thing later, for example they said "I think it's fine, although I feel that here Couple of years my feeling may be different and feel like running away ... ", "It's good that it's 4 years, but I do not know ... just like my brother already has 7 and still does not receive and study the same as me. "

### **3.2.9. Schedule of programs**

A high percentage think that the tariffs are very high and they worry about how long their parents can support it: "I study here because it is not in the public, if not impossible ... I hope I can continue", "my old people wanted me to come here because they believe In the other I will never receive, but there is no relation between what you pay and academic level, but good money is theirs ... ", "for me it is very expensive for the services we have ... "

In this sense, it would seem that students expect other types of services that justify their parents' investment, although they do not know what they would like it to improve, in general they relate it to the topic of air conditioning of classrooms and sanitary facilities.

### **3.2.10. Recognition of titles awarded**

Most of the entrants said they had not analyzed the recognition of the titles, is not something that worries them. Only a minority showed some doubt about a career as was the case in psychology.

But the students believe that this is not important at the time of choosing and therefore did not take it into account.

## **4. Conclusions**

Based on the study of the variables related to the vocational trends of the young people of the province of San Juan in the years 2013 and 2015, it is possible to arrive at a series of conclusions that allow to adapt and make adjustments to educational policies of the UCCuyo, as well As a reference for vocational guidance programs along the path in the middle level.

According to the data provided by the present study, the professional interests of the students are related to the influence exerted by the orientation of the student.

In many cases, the interests that prevail are not analogous to the real preferences of young people, who feel the influence of media and social valuations that are reflected in society.



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There is a high number of adolescents who present a diversity of interests and vocational skills, resulting from a low level of self-concept developed at this stage of their lives.

It is inferred the existence of discordance between latent choice and manifest choice. The former responds to more stable interests because they project characteristics of the personality and are a source of personal motivation; While the overt choice is versatile because it responds, in general, to a synthesis usually carried out by the adolescent about socio-labor perceptions and access to employment, a simpler and quicker test to perform and which is the current tendency of young people.

The union of the latent choice with the manifest election would allow a reflexive and autonomous analysis of the most decisive aspects of the vocational conduct and that is usually reached in a process of systematic vocational guidance.

A high percentage of young people feel insecure when choosing because of the confusion that causes them to think about the future, the pressure of time and resistance to abandon a stage where they feel safe and do well.

Moreover, / research shows that the joint that makes the average level with the top inadequate and insufficient, since students who graduate have not developed a solid vocational profile or capabilities that allow them to adapt to the demands on the university level, Generating feelings of insecurity and frustration in the realization of a future life project.

The aspects related to curricula, admission requirements and degree recognition are not significant when choosing a career for the youth; However, the fees involved in pursuing a career are valued as very important to them and their families.

It is observed the need to generate institutional actions in articulation with the average level that promotes the development of skills for making mature decisions in young people.

For this the UCCuyo has suitable personnel in this area and currently the relations with Ministry of Education are favorable for the initiation of concrete actions. In this sense, it is very valuable to give continuity to the group vocational orientation workshops developed by the UCCuyo through the Faculty of Education since 2011, carrying out more promotional activities.

Generate information channels on the possibilities of studying in the institution, especially in the economically disadvantaged sectors; To foster spaces for exchange, adaptation and accompaniment for young aspirants to different faculties; Creating careers with enabling qualifications in line with the emerging labor demands of the environment and the students' capacities, and strengthening ties between the community's labor companies and the university institution, would help strengthen vocational choices among the young people in our society.

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