

Dossiê “Jovens, Trabalho e Educação”<sup>1</sup>

## **The integrality in the formation of the labor paths of graduates from technical secondary school: the configuration of processes of labor insertion in different jurisdictions of Argentina**<sup>2 3 4 5</sup>

### *La integralidad en la formación de las trayectorias laborales de egresados de la escuela secundaria técnica: la configuración de los procesos de inserción laboral en distintas jurisdicciones de Argentina*

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## Abstract

The transformations of the labor market, the “wage-earning” crisis, technological change and new forms of work management had a great impact on the processes of youth occupational insertion. In this context, an investigation was carried out to gather information on the labor sectors of those graduated from technical secondary education in different jurisdictions of Argentina. Based on the analysis of results, it can be inferred that the processes of youth occupational insertion are built in a period that covers more than ten years of graduation; are mainly based on family support that is conditioned by economic resources, as well as by the existing educational offer in different jurisdictions. And the link between the specialization of the secondary education degree and labor insertion is restricted by the effective labor opportunities available and determined by the traditional differentiation of gender.

**Keywords:** youth, technical education, insertion in the labor market, transition to adult life

## Resumen

*En los procesos de inserción ocupacional de los jóvenes ha tenido un gran impacto las transformaciones del mercado de trabajo, la crisis del “salariado”, el cambio tecnológico y las nuevas formas de gestión de la fuerza de trabajo. En este contexto, se realizó una investigación que se propuso construir información sobre las trayectorias laborales de los egresados de la educación técnica de nivel secundario en distintas jurisdicciones de Argentina. Del análisis de los resultados surge que los procesos de inserción laboral juvenil se construyen en un período que abarca más de diez años luego del egreso, se sostienen principalmente por el apoyo familiar que es condicionado por los recursos económicos, así como por la oferta educativa existente en las jurisdicciones. Y la vinculación entre la especialidad del título del secundario y la inserción laboral está restringida por las efectivas oportunidades laborales disponibles y determinada por la diferenciación tradicional de género.*

**Palabras clave:** jóvenes, educación técnica, inserción en el mercado de trabajo, transición hacia la vida adulta

## Introduction

The problems associated with youth occupational insertion occupy a central place in the public agenda. The processes of labor market transformation, the “wage-earning” crisis, technological change and new forms of labor force management had a great impact on youth and educational environments. Especially in the field of secondary and higher education, labor issues affect youth in their expectations, projections and decisions. These processes, together with the expansion of the period corresponding to this stage of life, implied new forms of transition from education to the labor world, which are more extensive, individualized and heterogeneous. Demands for more education have been reflected since the 2000s in policies aimed at promoting the extension of compulsory secondary education in many countries, in a general model of social protection accompanied by a set of social programs.

This occurred in the context of one of the worst crises in Argentina’s history, in which the social situation of the youth sharply deteriorated. The scarcity of opportunities for young people reached such a dimension that schooling became a place of refuge, a “minimum threshold of social recognition” for many, struggling between inactivity and the search for meager income in the urban informal sector. The economic meltdown sharpened a process started in the late 1990s and challenged the classic postulates of human capital theory. Thus, and unexpectedly, educational enrollment of youth reached historic levels by 2001 (Bendit & Miranda, 2014) and the Federal Education Law No. 24,195/93 (LFE) had a negative impact on technical education, especially at the middle level, breaking with its original structure and transforming it into cycles. The LFE implied that the first two years of technical school corresponded to basic general education. The diversity in the enforcement of this law gave effect to a great heterogeneity of organizational models at the jurisdictional level (Cappellacci & Miranda, 2007), becoming “blurred” as an educational offer (Bottinelli 2015, cited by Terigi, 2016). From 2003 onwards, the economic strategy changed accompanying a regional process characterized by economic growth. At the educational level, technical education once again achieved great prominence with the passing of the *Ley de Educación Técnico Profesional* (Technical Professional Education Law) No. 26,058/05, and the development of actions to promote this modality. These actions included the creation of the *Fondo para la Mejora Continua de la Calidad de la Educación Técnico Profesional* (Fund for the Continuous Improvement of the Quality of Technical Professional Education), the *Catálogo de Títulos y Certificados* (Catalog of Degrees and

Certificates), the *Registro Federal de Instituciones de Educación Técnico Profesional* (Federal Registry of Technical Professional Education Institutions) and the *Censo Nacional de Último Año* (National Senior Census). In addition to that, the enactment of the *Ley de Educación Nacional* (National Education Law) No. 26,206/06 (hereinafter LEN), which defines the compulsory nature of secondary education, and in subsequent years the *Asignación Universal por Hijo* (Universal Child Allowance) in 2009 and the PROGRESAR Program in 2014 built a framework of rights in which the National State took on a strong commitment to promoting the living conditions of youth in our country (Jacinto, 2016; Kessler, 2014).

In this context, and after a decade of the enactment of the *Ley de Educación Técnico Profesional* (Technical Professional Education Law) in Argentina, a research was conducted aimed at gathering information on the labor paths of secondary level technical education graduates in different jurisdictions of Argentina, more specifically in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA), Greater Buenos Aires, Neuquén and Salta. The project was based on different assumptions arising from previous research results: 1) the labor paths of secondary education graduates are built in a period that spans practically ten years after graduation; 2) they are widely intertwined with higher level studies and the processes of complementarity and competition with labor activity; 3) they have broad family support; and 4) they express differentiated gender patterns (Bendit & Miranda, 2016; Miranda & Corica, 2015).

In view of the foregoing, this article presents the preliminary results of the project based on the empirical evidence surveyed from April to June 2018 with the aim of accounting for the processes of labor market insertion in different jurisdictions of Argentina, and the affinity between the secondary level studies modality, the integrality of training and the occupational path ten years after graduation.

## **The relationship between education and labor: debates to think about integrality and linkage**

Currently there is a consensus that after the social transformations related to the crisis of the wage-earning society, educational and labor paths have lost their linear character. In this sense, it is increasingly difficult to predict the future with sufficient certainty based on family origin, as was the case in industrial society, but neither does human capital seem to be working as a predictor of position in the social structure (Gil Calvo, 2009). That is why recent studies mention that youth is increasingly less likely to follow linear insertion paths and that labor insertions are increasingly taking on different routes, many of which are precarious and changing (Casal et al., 2006; Corica & Otero, 2020). On the other hand, technological changes brought significant changes to the organization of production and labor. These entail new skill requirements, sometimes difficult to acquire through formal education and, above all, great instability and uncertainty about competencies, knowledge and skills required in the medium and long term. At the same time, the processes of devaluation of educational credentials acquired in the formal education system stand out and, although still important for accessing the labor market, no longer guarantee access to better jobs (Coll, 2011).

In this regard, some studies highlight a decrease in the effect of certificates on the demand for available jobs. Others point out that beyond the fact that education no longer guarantees jobs according to the school degree obtained, education remains indispensable. The possibility of opportunities is intimately linked to credentials, either as a constraint or as a framework for competition (Baudelot & Leclerc, 2008). In other words, educational certifications are still relevant, but not sufficient (Filmus et al., 2001). In this framework, competition between degrees blurs the weight of education as an equalizer of job opportunities.

Thus, the classic critical debates have focused on two main positions that account for the link between knowledge acquired in the educational system and the labor market requirements. On the one hand, there is the adaptationist approach or correspondence theory (Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Willis, 1988), which demonstrates the relative autonomy of the educational system with respect to the demands of the labor market. It suggests that the demand for educational levels responds to a logic relatively independent of the requirements of labor demand in terms of professional qualifications, and that an approach based on labor

competencies allows for a better analysis and interpretation of the relationship between training and employment (Coll, 2011).

This approach started losing relevance when critical reproductive theories showed that youth presented low levels of correspondence between training orientation and the modality of the job held, being associated with the phenomena of unemployment and overeducation. However, other research shows that in some jobs the match between training major and employment continues to be relevant, especially among those in which “professional licenses” are required to perform these occupations (Bédoué et al., 2005). However, these two views reveal a tension between the appropriateness of training and employment that is part of the broader debates on the education-labor link. In this sense, this relationship becomes more complex when the social variable is incorporated into the analysis, which shows once again that the relationship between education and labor, between educational credentials and jobs, as well as levels of schooling and income levels are spurious and conditioned by a multiplicity of factors that intervene and determine different directions. The social sector, productive structure, branch of activity and socio-political context influence this relationship, giving it a more unspecific, unequal, complex and heterogeneous character.

Nevertheless, and without ignoring the contributions of these classical currents, several ongoing debates have pointed out that the linearity proposed by these classical currents is not the same as the linearity proposed by the social sector, productive structure, branch of activity and socio-political context. Considering the changes produced in the accumulation regime, the Western research has placed greater emphasis on conjunctural aspects of the socioeconomic and political order to understand youth transitions. The incorporation of temporality and territoriality into contextual terms allows a larger framework to understand the processes of reflexivity and individuation typical of the West (Bendit & Hahn-Bleibtreu, 2008). These processes highlight the centrality of youth biographies, which are presented as everyday constructions interwoven in the prevailing social vulnerability. In this sense, biographical construction of youth grants a core place to temporality and conjunctural territoriality, in which the effective conditions on employment possibilities require resuming reflexivity as a space of agency in the construction of segmented identities (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; Furlong, 2009; Reynolds, 2015).

Likewise, recent studies highlight the elements about time and territoriality in the biographical construction. These studies give rise to the notion of “grammars of youth”:

"(...) approaching the contexts, norms and institutional spaces that act in a structuring way in the life worlds in which young people grow and develop in their daily experience. Spaces such as family, school, neighborhood, club, affections, friendships, religion, technology, leisure activities and cultural productivities make up these life worlds and the ‘structures of activity’ (Mørch, 1996), where inter- and intra-generational relationships are produced and reproduced, and where young people come into contact with social institutions, building their biographies and their modes of interaction and social insertion” (Miranda & Corica, 2018, p. 28, *free translation*).

In analytical terms, the grammar of youth bets on the situated study of socially validated spaces for youth experiences in their many fields that is combined with the agency capacity that these youngsters have when resignifying inter- and intragenerational determinations. This link between agency and structure has provided a fertile field for youth studies in the form of youth transition(s).

However, the study of the education-labor link in Argentina has not remained untouched by these analytical trends, in which everything starts changing with the compulsory secondary education. Secondary education expanded its social roles, moving away from a terminal level which enabled specific jobs toward becoming a mandatory minimum level to enter the labor market, losing its direct correspondence with a job. Historically, the technical high school in Argentina was “founded” with a view to finding a job according to the modality of its offerings rather than the other modalities such as the baccalaureate and the commercial (although the latter was linked to specific job positions) orientations of secondary school in which there was a more propaedeutic function than training for work. In this sense, reviewing the link between education and labor in technical secondary education implies thinking about the role played by the specificity of orientations by this educational modality in the labor paths of the youth. In this line, studies indicate that it is the training major rather than the level that plays a significant role in the relationship (Borras et al., 2008). Considering the above, this text also aims to deepen the analysis of this link by focusing on the technical modality of the intermediate level of education.



## Methodological approach

In recent years, research from different perspectives and fields of knowledge has deepened the understanding of youth transition processes and, thus, advanced from the analysis of stocks to the study of flows. In this context, studies based on the biographical method are multiplying. This strategy is mainly based on the theoretical developments of the so-called “life course” school (Elder, 1994), and is projected from longitudinal studies. In terms of its specific characteristics, the biographical method organizes research around an individual or collective self that takes a narrative form, bringing together descriptions of their experiences, events and interpretations (Sautu, 1999). In this sense, biographical research consists of the unfolding of the events of a person’s life over time (the life course), always in a given context linked to social relations with others (in the family, at school, at work, in the neighborhood), but always mediated by the selection and interpretation made by the protagonist of those experiences. It is important, since it consists of the selection made by the individual of the events they decide to report as they life history. The biographical method starts by considering the people’s experience, reconstructing in the actor light both the events they have lived through and the evaluations and perceptions they have on those experiences (Sautu, 1999). Biographical research, depending on the theories and ways of approaching the events narrated by people, may be considered either a qualitative or quantitative methodology. Since longitudinal studies are usually carried out, the methods used are close to quantitative methodology, but the theoretical approach is closer to the definition of qualitative methodologies. This research used the retrospective biographical interview, which allows us to approach the subjective testimonies about decisions, experiences and projects of the youth, but at the same time approaches them as a reflection of an era with certain values and customs of which they are a part (Pujadas Muñoz, 1992).

The qualitative biographical method or, according to Denzin’s denomination, interpretative biographical method “assumes the existence of an ‘I’ or ‘selves’ whose perspectives are generated and acquire meaning in their social insertion” (Denzin, 1989, cited by Sautu, 1999, free translation). The research emphasizes the study of turning points that represent changes in people’s life course (e.g., family cycles), which affect their experiences and, therefore, their interpretations and mark the beginning of new stages.



A panel of the 2006 graduates of technical secondary education in different geographic areas of our country was conducted. The panel construction for this study was based on retrospective biographical interviews, using the tracer studies technique for graduate follow-up. This technique collects information after graduation. The unit of analysis was women and men who graduated from technical education in 2006, from schools located in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Greater Buenos Aires, and the provinces of Neuquén and Salta. Based on theoretical criteria, an intentional and non-probabilistic sample segmented by educational establishments was assembled. This definition was taken up with traditional criteria within the studies of educational segmentation, and with a wide field of empirical relevance by the sociology of education (Miranda & Corica, 2018). The educational establishments sample was composed of a total of 29 schools, distributed as follows: nine schools in CABA, seven schools in the Province of Buenos Aires, four schools in Neuquén and nine in Salta. The dimensions collected for inclusion in the sample were: location, infrastructure, institution, teaching staff and prevailing social sector of the attending population.

Based on the production of qualitative information, an exploratory study was carried out on the youth's social paths. The sample was carried out selectively, based on theoretical criteria (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Thus, criteria were defined for the youth sample, designed based on the variables jurisdiction, gender and educational specialties. It should be noted that it was also adjusted to the existing possibilities in the different jurisdictions where the fieldwork was conducted, so as to cover all the orientations of the technical schools and to consider a homogeneous number between provinces. We approached the issue of youth paths in a situated analysis, taking the generation of individuals born between 1987 and 1989, who at the time of the interviews were between 29 and 31 years old. The sample consisted of a total of 69 young people who graduated from technical education in 2006. The fieldwork was developed in the jurisdictions during the months of April and June 2018. It should be noted that it was also adjusted to the existing possibilities in the different jurisdictions where the fieldwork was conducted, so as to cover all the orientations of the technical schools and to consider a homogeneous number between provinces. Respondents were recruited through informal contacts. This decision resulted in the use of the snowball technique within the interviews to be

carried out for the graduates of the same school. This made it possible, through the contacts provided by the graduates themselves, to reach the number of young people previously defined<sup>6</sup>

## Typologies of educational-labor paths

Based on the qualitative data collected in the research, we proceeded to review the empirical evidence by constructing typologies of the educational-labor paths of young technical high school graduates (graduates in 2006, i.e. 2006 cohort) from the four jurisdictions covered by the study. These were constructed based on the situation of the youngsters at the end of the courses. The criteria considered are, on the one hand, educational integrality, dividing the paths into “integrated” and “non-integrated”. On the other hand, the type of current job and its link with the modality of the secondary school from which they graduated is analyzed. Integrated educational paths are those of continuity of post-secondary studies related to the school modality, and include the different educational levels: technical training, tertiary, university. On the other hand, “non-integrated” paths include young people who did not continue studying, as well as those who pursued studies in areas not related to the school’s modality. In the cases of young people who dropped out of post-secondary education, the decision was made to consider as an integrated pathway only if the young person had completed more than half of the pathway. With regard to employment paths, “linked” paths are classified as those in which there is a relationship between the school modality and the job performed at the time of the interview. “Unlinked” labor paths, in turn, are those in which young people perform unrelated occupations or do not perform remunerated productive activities (Table 1).

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<sup>6</sup> Retrospective interviews were applied by local research teams. Through the training of the people in charge of conducting the interviews (it is worth mentioning that they were undergraduate and/or graduate students at the time of the fieldwork), the implementation of the interviews was scheduled to be carried out after the contact with graduates. Thus, the interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes and were carried out in different places, as previously coordinated with the respondents.

**Chart 1. Typologies of educational-labor paths**

Typologies of paths	
Type I	Integrated educational path and linked labor path
Type II	Non-integrated educational path and linked labor path
Type III	Integrated educational path and unlinked labor path
Type IV	Non-integrated educational path and unlinked labor path

Source: Author's elaboration

Based on the typology constructed, the different training courses taken by the youth throughout the decade (“post-secondary study path”), their relationship with the secondary school modality and the reasons behind the choice of post-secondary courses or careers are analyzed in detail. In addition, young people’s opinions about technical school are investigated in order to understand the factors that influence the decisions made by this population after graduation. The contributions of both the knowledge learned and the degree obtained were reviewed, as well as the opinions on the influence of the secondary education on the choice of post-secondary studies. On the other hand, we sought to show the employment path of the young people considering different times: “First part! (first two post-secondary years, 2007-2008), “Second part” (2009-2010), “Third part” (2012-2013), “Current labor” (2018). The labor experiences that the young people had while in high school are also collected in order to know what their first insertions were like. Also interesting are the labor contacts that led them to enter jobs to account for the different forms of access to work. The distribution of the paths identified is detailed in Chart 2.

**Chart 2. Sample composition according to the typology**

Typology	Male	Female	Total
Type I	27	10	37
Type II	2	-	2
Type III	6	9	15
Type IV	6	9	15
Total	41	28	69

Source: Author's elaboration

There are noticeable differences in the composition by jurisdiction; for example, in type IV, the majority are from Salta, while in type III the distribution of cases by jurisdiction is quite homogeneous. Type II is the least numerous group, composed of males, one from Neuquén and one from Salta. Type I is found in all jurisdictions. The conditions of access and permanence in the labor market in Argentina present a strong regional segmentation and by branch of activity for the youth population. In this sense, income, stability and quality of employment are differentiated between provinces as a result of the very realities in which they are inserted (Pérez & Busso, 2018). With an insourced economic structure, the centrality of enclave farming activities with low or moderate technological incorporation is the reality on which the jurisdictions of Salta and Neuquén are inserted. The area of CABA and Conurbano Bonaerense, in turn, incorporates a higher level of industrialization and activities linked to tourism, with significantly higher population agglomerate (Keogan et al., 2020). The following section analyzes the employment paths of graduates considering the different typologies identified. As mentioned, some present greater affinity and integrality and others weaker links with the secondary technical degree obtained.

## **Configuration of the education-labor transition processes**

One of the challenges proposed in this article is to link the conceptualization of youth grammars with the debates on integrality and linkage in the analysis of the education-labor transition. In this sense, the situated analysis of the paths of women and men who lived their youth in the same period, but in different regions of the country, allows unveiling how territoriality contributes to shape widely diverse experiences of youth transition according to the opportunities presented to a group of young people in a given social space and time (Woodman & Wyn, 2015). The conceptualization of grammars allows us to analyze how they influenced the spaces that contextualized and determined the experiences of young people in different fields, as well as their forms of action (agency) in relation to these structures and determinations. Next, the paths are analyzed by focusing on the local issues that acted on the opportunities of this population and, on the other hand, the particularities in these paths.

## **Integrality and linkage in a situated manner**

Among those who had an integrated and linked path (Type I), there are young graduates who were able to integrate their post-secondary education with the modality of their technical degree, and obtained a job placement linked to that education. This group was characterized by the heterogeneity in the types of training, the multiplicity of educational experiences -they have different training, even if they only managed to complete one- and the diversity of labor experiences that in some cases were threaded together until they got the job they had at the time of the interview. Most of the jobs they had were professional insertion jobs, others were informal, precarious and family jobs (in the case of men with an agricultural modality), as well as their own businesses. It was also noted that women were the ones who mostly continued and completed university degrees, while several men started university degrees that they were unable to complete. However, there were similarities and not so many differences: among women and men, one possibility was self-employment and teaching. The motives, desires and paths that led them to this insertion were different, but these alternatives (entrepreneurship and teaching) also reflected what a high school technical degree enables in young people, as well as the availability of the labor supply they had in the different jurisdictions reviewed.

A first point to highlight is that, in this group, integrality is achieved at the end of the path. The education-labor transition is lengthened over time, leading to labor market insertion ten years after graduation. This situation was especially visible among women. For example, Clara<sup>7</sup>, a young woman from the CABA jurisdiction who graduated from a technical school with a degree in Interior Design, told us:

“Yes, I graduated from school and that year I was also taking on-site courses at UP (a private university) related to design. These were courses of one or two days, free of charge, on specific topics”. (...) “I did interior design, and I was missing a plus (...) So, I followed architecture. It happened to me that I said “can I do this?”, “No, not as a designer, you have to be...”, so I followed architecture. (At school) I had a lot of architect teachers too” (Clara, personal report, CABA, 2018).

The foregoing exemplifies the paths of young women in which there was a simultaneity of different types of training. At the same time these young women matched post-secondary educational activity with labor activity. The multiplicity of activities shows one of the forms that educational paths take on and that are behind the lengthening of the time spent in higher education.

Those who present an integrated educational and unlinked labor path (Type III), some paths show different situations whereby after graduation and after studying careers related to the school’s modality, the youngsters were not employed in related jobs at the end of the third decade of life. Some had jobs in other fields because they could not find quality labor demand in their jurisdictions. For other young people, it was because they had not yet completed their post-secondary studies, so they believed that in the future they would be able to find jobs in their profession.

One example is the case of Sara, a young woman from the city of Salta who had studied agriculture. After graduating, she had studied veterinary medicine for two years at the university, but then switched to a degree in Animal Farming at a private university, where she was in her last year. As for her labor path, she started her career in a job related to the agricultural modality she had studied at secondary school, a state curriculum training program. However, once she had finished, she had not found a related job, so she had spent the decade doing odd jobs. At

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<sup>7</sup> Names have been changed to preserve the identity of the respondents.

the end of the decade, she was about to finish her studies and expected to start working as a clerk in the agricultural sector. This path shows that the processes of youth insertion in the labor market are prolonged over time, and that the study of paths is a very important element in the analysis of these processes.

On the other hand, the territorial dimension sheds light on the local employment possibilities for the different technical degree specialties. In the paths integrated in terms of education but disconnected in terms of employment, we also find how the territorial factor influences the routes. Some youngsters found themselves working in other fields because they could not find quality labor demand in their jurisdictions. For example, among the graduates of the agricultural technical modality who continued studying was Osvaldo, a young man who graduated from a technical school in the center of the city of Salta. Although he had completed a higher technical degree in Agricultural Management with a focus on Animal Farming, he argued that he was doing his teacher training in order to finally find a stable job with what he considered to be a good salary. Although he had started his labor path (“first time”) in a construction company in the fields, he had left because he had not adapted to the work team (he described the experience of dealing with the workers and the bosses as stressful). At that time he decided to start working with his father’s cab and continued to do so until the time of the interview; he combined this work with temporary jobs in plumbing and cleaning grills, among others; however, according to him, in all his jobs he applied the knowledge he had learned at school.

## Particular links

Next, the analysis focuses on the particularities and individualities in the youth’s choices. It is observed that in all paths the decisions and changes of direction of the routes are related to the desires and interests of the young graduates; as well as in the different paths identified there are routes with “comings and goings”, especially in the early periods of the paths. In the first work experiences, changes of tasks are responsible for the greater volatility with the modality.

An example are the male graduates who developed integrated paths and had achieved the link with the modality (Type I). Basically, these young men agreed that the knowledge and content acquired in secondary education had been of help to them at the time of finding and



performing their jobs. This path of diverse evidence can be seen in the case of Iván, a graduate of an agricultural school in the town of Lobos, located in the Province of Buenos Aires. In the first part of his career, Iván had gone to study in the federal capital to pursue a different career (Chef) from what he had studied at school. While living in the city he had done temporary work as a painter's assistant for an uncle who had employed him. However, the experience was short-lived because the following year he returned to his hometown where he took the Grain Grading Expert course, and began his work career in the fields, which he was continuing at the time of the interview.

These aspects of individuation also stand out in the young people who had multiple educational paths that, in addition to continuing training in their modality, allowed them to be inserted in other careers. Thus, at the end of the decade they had greater resources to adapt to the job offers of the moment or to find jobs more adapted to personal tastes. Therefore, they developed work paths of experience accumulation in various fields. This is the case of Pedro, who had completed high school with technological and mechanical major in the south of the Conurbano Bonaerense. Upon graduation, he took several professionalizing courses integrated with the modality (such as computer repair technician and other network courses). During the decade, Pedro also took a tertiary degree in Environment and another one in Journalism, as he stated:

"Something completely different from technology and, well, I took the degree already with the idea of mixing these two things, technology as an information channel for people as today everyone is connected to mobile devices, computers, tablets..." (Pedro, personal report, Conurbano Bonaerense, 2018).

In the first years of the labor path, his knowledge related to the school modality was useful to him, since he performed in companies technical support of equipment and networks. At the end of the third decade, and once he had completed his tertiary education, he entered the labor market with his new profession (he worked as a park ranger and as a journalist on environmental issues).

It is also interesting to review these aspects in the paths in which there was neither integrality nor linkage (Type IV). Among the paths of this group, different post-secondary paths were found. Some took careers or courses in areas other than their school modality, while others did not continue their studies after graduation. However, in no case were the young people at

the end of their studies in jobs that showed a *link* with the technical modality. In this group there are both men and women in the different specialties. In terms of jurisdictions, a greater number of young people came from the jurisdiction studied in the north of the country, Salta. In terms of educational paths, secondary school did not play a role when it came to choosing a career or course to continue their studies. And, in this sense, it should be noted that this may have to do with the fact that the offer of post-secondary careers in the jurisdiction was a factor that influenced the paths taken. In some jurisdictions, the possibilities for continuing studies were found in the private sphere, making them difficult options for those who did not have the resources to support their families.

Among these paths is the case of Mateo, an electronics technician who graduated from an industrial school in Salta, and who started working when he was in school and continued for several years in the industry. In fact, he worked from the age of 15 to 25 in a laboratory in the maintenance and repair of elevators, so that what he learned in high school helped him to perform his tasks. This is how he told the history: *“I started welding plates and ended up as an assembly manager”* (Mateo, personal report, Salta, 2018). However, in the “third part” (2012-2013) he realized that it was not what he liked to do, and decided to take a tertiary degree in Journalism and start working in that. In 2012 he began to work in press in the municipality, and as an editor and reporter of the police section of the digital newspaper *Qué pasa Salta*, where he held a formal contract. In addition, at the time of the interview he was a panelist on a TV show and hosting a radio show, both on a per-show contract.

Another young man who had begun his journey in a job in his modality was Juan. He had received his high school degree in Goods and Services with focus on Automotive. Once he graduated he started a career in Criminalistics at a private university in Salta because it was what he liked, but he was unable to finish. In his own words: *“I chose Criminalistics because I like that, I always liked it, I wanted to be a forensic doctor or crime scene investigator, that’s why I chose”* (Juan, personal report, Santa, 2018). During the first years after concluding high-school, he worked at the PSA company, selling water purifiers; but since he had knowledge he did maintenance tasks. His industrial technical modality, workshops and knowledge learned in school helped him, as Juan affirmed, to work in the plumbing installation part. In the following years, he had a scattered career with different jobs as a commercial advisor in a telephone company (where he held a formal contract), working in a bakery and, finally, at the time of the interview, he was a dog groomer.

As an element to be highlighted among the interviews conducted, and considering the configuration of the labor market insertion processes of this youth group, there is the assembling of their own enterprises, both in women and in men. This is especially true in the integrated and linked paths. The businesswomen identified are those who began university courses that they did not manage to complete, but after some back and forth they accumulated different types of training: third-degree and vocational training courses. However, these unfinished educational experiences gave them the tools to start their own business or to work independently and autonomously. An example is the case of Lucía, an interviewee from the CABA jurisdiction, who graduated from high school specialized in Interior Design. In her educational path she started several careers (Architecture, Calligrapher, Event Organization), and finally finished the last of the third-degree courses. As for her work path, during the ten years after graduating from high school, Lucia worked in a call center as a formal job and also eventually did some work as an interior designer by contacting acquaintances. At the time of the interview, she was working independently as an event organizer, so she had achieved integrality and linkage.

There were few young people who did not pursue post-secondary studies, but they did pursue jobs related to their high school major. However, most of the respondents emphasized the influence of the knowledge learned in technical school on their further journeys. Among those who recognized that this knowledge had allowed them to get and/or obtain their jobs, beyond their post-secondary studies, was the case of Ramiro, a young man who graduated from a school in the CABA with the degree of Maestro Mayor de Obras (Senior Foreman). The young man worked in a telecommunications company and emphasized that his degree had furnished him with the tools to perform this job. According to his perceptions, it had been thanks to his high school degree jointly with previous work experience that he had obtained this type of job. In his own words:

“(...) what they needed was a designer who... not by designer, but someone who handled the software that is usually used in design careers; either sound editor, image editor. (...) they needed someone who already knew how to cut a ringtone, cut an image, format an image... well, a designer can only do it with the most basic knowledge they have, which is the programs they use all the time. So I kind of went in through the window, because they didn't want a designer for... for design tasks. But, well, I joined there and I really liked the communications sector, which is super dynamic. And I stayed, and I was like developing within the company" (Ramiro, personal report, CABA, 2018).

Therefore, the existence of articulated linkages between education and labor that are visible in the youth paths investigated shows that this linkage is built over the years with the educational and labor opportunities they have in their localities, but also with the family possibilities that provide them with their labor and educational routes. They are also characterized for being heterogeneous, differential routes in terms of the modality and youth gender, as well as their tastes and interests play an important role in that the paths they are taking in some cases are channeled and, in others, there is no affinity and integrality of the secondary-level education.

## Final comments

Based on the analysis carried out, the process of linking technical school and the labor world was described, revealing the different forms that these paths take and the particularities that appear in the typologies of the paths identified. In this sense, some issues that assume particular relevance for the formulation and adaptation of public policies aimed at technical-professional education should be highlighted.

In the first place, the early job placements of young people show low levels of linkage between the training major and the job. However, as the post-congress years were investigated, greater correspondences and integrality were recorded. This shows the need to study the link between school and the labor world in a procedural manner and over time, i.e., with longitudinal studies that demonstrate that the integrality between certificate and jobs is built up and occurs throughout the process, even more than ten years after completing secondary school.

Secondly, in the definition of educational-labor paths, the strong weight of the resources provided by the family of origin can be observed. This can be seen both in the influence it has

in maintaining a post-secondary education path and in providing the early work experiences, as in the case of graduates of the agricultural major.

However, in general terms, it was observed that the social sector was not necessarily a variable that defined the different paths identified (integrated or not, binding or not), but that geographic location was more decisive. Therefore, thirdly, it was noted that the territorial variable acquires relevance in the labor market insertion process. This is the case of young people who graduated from technical schools in Salta and Neuquén to whom, faced with the difficulty of obtaining jobs related to their modality, the educational environment appears as a space offering jobs. The possibility of insertion in teaching in technical schools is a highlight for these young people, in some cases in the same schools from which they had graduated.

Fourthly, modality and gender are two variables that distinguish the paths studied. That is to say, from the graduates' accounts it emerges that the industrial modality has greater certainty in terms of the possibilities of entering and obtaining a job related to that modality in the labor market. In the case of those graduating from the agricultural modality, there is continuity with the family agricultural enterprises. On the other hand, there is greater volatility in the services modality. In terms of gender, women managed to complete university degrees to a greater extent than men, but the labor market insertion they obtained was more unstable, less professional and in most cases there was no link with the modality of the secondary technical degree obtained. On the other hand, men had more job placements linked to their technical modality.

Fifth, and based on the set of paths identified, there is a diverse variety of educational and work experiences, confirming one of the hypotheses that transitions are increasingly heterogeneous.

Finally, and considering the conceptualization of the “grammar of youth”, empirical evidence shows that the institutional space of the technical secondary school modality shapes and structures the life world of this youth in a different way than that of young graduates from other educational modalities. For example, these youngsters recognize that the technical school, in addition to “preparing them for life” (a phrase that identifies young graduates from different secondary schools) (Miranda, 2015), prepares them for “self-entrepreneurship”, as well as to “apply” the knowledge learned in technical school in different types of work. The “activity structure” to which they access enables differential institutional, social and productive

relationships, contacts and accesses that shape their biographies and modes of interaction and labor insertion. In addition, grammars are constituted in a structured system that admits infinite sentences (biographies), and this is identified in the heterogeneity of educational and labor paths surveyed, but which characterizes the labor insertion of technical high school graduates that is quite different from the other more humanistic and social science orientations (Corica & Otero, 2017).

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