

Revision of university degrees: evaluation of the European convergence in Advertising and Public Relations degrees in Spain

La revisión de los grados universitarios: valoración de la convergencia europea del Grado en Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas en España

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Abstract:

This study summarizes key informants' assessments of the repercussions of the European convergence in Advertising and Public Relations degrees in Spain. Academics' opinions about the development of degree curricula are gathered through focused interviews; noting changes to educational offerings; the relationship between universities and the business sector or the interest of the academy in the study of the profession. The results highlight the specificity of the degree as opposed to the generality of the bachelor degree as the most significant change. The selection of subjects at public universities has been conditioned by teaching staff. The convergence process has not encouraged the study of professional profiles and the relationship between the university and the professional sector is still inadequate.

Keywords:

Higher education; advertising; public relations; European convergence; professional profiles.

Resumen:

Este estudio sintetiza las valoraciones de informantes clave sobre la repercusión de la convergencia europea en la formación en Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas en España. Se recogen, mediante entrevistas enfocadas, las opiniones de académicos sobre la elaboración de los planes de estudio; las modificaciones en la oferta educativa; la relación entre la universidad y el ámbito empresarial o el interés de la academia por el estudio de la profesión. Los resultados destacan la especificidad del grado frente a la generalidad de la licenciatura como el cambio más significativo. La selección de las asignaturas en las universidades públicas ha estado condicionada por la plantilla de profesorado; la convergencia no ha alentado el estudio de los perfiles profesionales y la relación entre la universidad y sector profesional es aún escasa.

Palabras clave:

Educación superior; publicidad; relaciones públicas; convergencia europea; perfiles profesionales

1. Introduction

1.1. Advertising and Public Relations studies in Spain

In 2010 Spanish universities were in the process of revising university degrees. Four academic years have passed since the completion of the convergence to the European Higher Education Area. There is no better time to evaluate the way in which this change was developed as well as to understand the real impact that it has had on the university community.

However, it is necessary to briefly summarize the development of Advertising and Public Relations studies in Spain before addressing the subject of study; starting from its origins to the finalization of the convergence process in order to assess the most significant differences resulting from the change.

The background to current Advertising and Public Relations studies in Spain could date back to the 20s and 30s. Pedro Prat Gaballí, who in 1915 and 1917 worked as a teacher in the Chamber of Commerce and navigation in Barcelona teaching the subjects, “A new technique: Scientific Advertising” and “Sales by correspondence and Advertising Campaigns”, played an important role in the early phase of the discipline in the 20th century. Prat Gaballí also played a decisive role in the development of professional associations. He founded the Advertising Professionals’ Association in 1922 along side a group of professionals dedicated to teaching advertising techniques. The association later dissolved giving way to Publi-Club; an Advertising studies and organization association. Publi-Club participated in International Advertising Congresses and organized the International Congress for the Continental Union of Advertising in 1934 (Pérez Ruiz, 2001:91 y ss.). Barcelona became the birthplace of Advertising from an educational perspective, which in turn favoured the emergence and proliferation of professional associations (i.e. Méndiz Noguero, 2000; López-Berna, 2007).

The Spanish Civil War suddenly interrupted the educational trajectory of Advertising which had commenced, and it was not until 1964 when the “Advertising Statute” was enacted (law 61/1964, June 11) that this dynamic resumed. This legal statute defined regulations and professional activity for the first time in Spain and imposed the creation of an institution dedicated to advertising professionals’ training: “*el Instituto Oficial de la Publicidad*” (The Official Institute of Advertising). This institution took on some of the objectives in the 60s which are currently commended to universities and professional associations, such as the investigation of advertising material, the dissemination of information, professional guidance and Advertising education. Education commenced in this period, which would lead to the title of Advertising Technician in la *Escuela Oficial de Publicidad* (The Official School of Advertising). This school contributed the first curriculum related to this discipline, although there was still a long way for it to go in order to meet the curricula standards that universities would later have. (Fernández Poyatos, 2006).

Communications studies in Spain acquired the status of an undergraduate degree in 1971 with the creation of a Media Studies Faculty in *La Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, *la Autónoma de Barcelona* and *La Universidad de Navarra*. The Ministry of Education and Science later established guidelines for new curricula by way of decree in 1991; converting the three branches of the Media Studies Licentiate into three different degrees: Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations and Audiovisual Communications (ANECA, 2004: 100).

Once at university, the Advertising and Public Relations licentiate experienced its first phase of consolidation (1971-89), whereby programs derived from the Official School of Advertising were taught. Curricula took shape in the academic year 1986-87, until that point in time they had been very different from each other in terms of core subjects; both obligatory and elective, according to the Royal Decree 1497/1987. The proliferation of bachelor's degrees began in 1989 and lasted until 2000. As of 1991, the curricula was renewed going from 5 to 4 years in most cases; the temporary organization was based on four-month periods causing the number of subjects to double; and contents were renewed. (Méndiz Noguero, 2000:211 and ss).

There was a total of 236 university campuses in Spain by 2010, 154 of which were public universities, 69 private universities as well as 13 universities such as UIMP (Menéndez Pelayo International University) and UNED (National University of Distance Education) (MEC, 2010: 5). According to the data from the NSI (National Statistical Institute it was possible to study Advertising and Public Relations in 32 universities in the academic year 2009-2010.

1.2. The convergence to the European Higher Education Area

The convergence to the EHEA in Spain was performed by the State via the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (known in Spanish as MEC) and ANECA (National Evaluation Agency of Quality and Accreditation).

For that purpose, The Ministry published the framework document in 2003, which would lay the foundations for the current structure at two levels: undergraduate and post-graduate degrees. According to the text, the undergraduate degree would lead to the attainment of a professionally qualified degree in the European labor market; at the Postgraduate level, it would be necessary to have first passed the undergraduate degree, which would end in a Masters and/or PhD. The aim was that students acquire general knowledge in the Undergraduate degree, which would then be complemented with specific subjects in the Postgraduate (García-García, 2010:67).

In relation to the educational objectives of the degree, the framework document makes the professional guidance of the undergraduate clear. University studies must be orientated towards skills which allow students to carry out their profession. The Tunning Project (2000) laid down reference framework, which also relied on real experiences such as the research network projects Socrates-Erasmus and the pilot projects ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) in order to understand this new focus (Aboites, 2010; Universia).

For that purpose it is considered to be, “essential for the design process and development of certified programs at an undergraduate level, not only for the scientific, technical and artistic areas, but also in the close collaboration between academic authorities, heads of associations and Professional Organizations” (MECD, 2003: 8). This document expresses the need to directly involve the professional sector in the Bologna process and ultimately to close the gap between the professional and academic spheres (Mérida-Serrano, 2006).

ANECA is the organization which took centre stage in adapting regulated education to the EHEA in Spain. It set a process in motion, which for practical purposes resulted in three calls for proposals of economic aid that would foster work in Spanish university networks with the aim to develop a White Paper as a reference. Some guidelines expecting obligatory compliance were presented in the calls for proposals, so as to organize and make the works from different networks comparable. The White Papers were prepared with the purpose of identifying professional skills which would lay the groundwork for degree curricula a posteriori (ANECA, 2003: 12). Professional profiles thus became the cornerstone upon which the new curricula were structured.

1.3. Professional skills guidance for undergraduate degrees: the case of Advertising and Public Relations

As Riesco González (2008: 81) maintains, the EHEA, “has signed up for the employability movement”, which implies that degrees must prepare future graduates for access to professional practice. On the grounds of this premise, curricula are based on professional skills, in other words, “effective capacities to successfully perform identified work activity”.

Curricula must focus on skills acquisition for students, “therefore extending (although not excluding) the traditional focus mainly based on content and class time”. Emphasis has to be placed on the methods for learning these skills and the procedures to evaluate their acquisition. “This reference both to skills and knowledge is necessary to facilitate the mobility of university graduates within the European Union (...)” (MEC, 2006: 6).

“The interrelation of skills and their integration-competences map-“(Tejada Fernández y Ruiz Bueno, 2016: 22) must be taken into account in higher education. On many occasions, a professional competence cannot be acquired/developed in only one subject or academic year, but rather must be approached in different subjects and levels, taking into account varying degrees of mastery. The evaluation of transversal competences conditions the creation of degree curricula, given that subject contents must be interconnected between them and in no case overlap. Moreover, professional skills-based training implies being based on real situations and problems by developing curriculum organized into practicals, “learning competencies is always functional; its connection with the context and the need to act implies methodological approaches and open, multiple, varied and flexible organization...” (Tejada Fernández y Ruiz Bueno, 2016: 25).

With this in mind, the universities initiated the adaptation process to EHEA with at least two primary documents sources: the framework document published by the Ministry in 2003 and the White Papers, with one clear directive: that the degrees were a reality in the academic year 2009-2010.

The White Paper for Communications Degrees was developed (ANECA, 2004) with the aim of identifying professional profiles in Advertising and Public Relations based on a professional demand differentiated by each of its degrees. The document's approach differed in what was maintained by the commission for the evaluation of the project "Communication degrees". After revising the document, the assessing officers conveyed in the report that the need for three different degrees was not justified. Notwithstanding this, they recommended editing the White Paper and it being processed by the Ministry and the University Coordinating Council (ANECA, 2004:13).

There are 4 professional profiles in the White Paper (ANECA, 2004: 33): Communications director, Researcher and Strategic Consultant in Advertising and Public Relations; Researchers, Planners and Media Buyers; Creative Staff and Designers and Corporate Communications Manager. Whereas, some authors (Castellblanque, 2006; Lanas, 2011; Zurita, 2011) have admitted that this reference document does not include all of the most important professional profiles. In fact, the collective state agreement endorsed by Advertising agencies (BOE-State Official Gazette in English, February 2010) has included up to 41 professional profiles.

The Communication sector is characterized by its changing nature; new professional profiles appear and are consolidated with certain assiduity. It is with good reason that in the same year that the process of convergence concluded (2010) that many Advertising degrees verified by ANECA were put into effect. 80% of agencies surveyed by Corredor-Lamas and Farfán-Montero (2010) had modified their structure, adding specialist divisions in charge of coordinating online activities with the incorporation of new profiles such as: Mobile Marketing Managers, Social Networks Experts or Creative Digital Directors. The most important media agencies currently offer more services as a result of new media (Flores-Vivar, 2009; Papí-Gálvez, 2015). Even so, undergraduate degrees are the educational offerings which seem to include more profiles linked to the internet in their content, even in relation to Postgraduate degrees. This demonstrates to some extent, the influence of career guidance in the university reform (Papí-Gálvez y López-Berna, 2012), on the other hand the contradiction of this approach to the acquisition of general knowledge in the degree, which is inferred in the framework document in MECD (2003).

This fact seems to do justice to some critiques of the advantages of this focus and the procedure authorized for its application. Previously, curricula consisted of a relationship between disciplines identified through general descriptors which allowed for content planning by areas of knowledge. As far as efficiency is concerned, the disappearance of core subjects enabled an open process of development.

Consequently, despite having access to a White Paper reference, the contents can ultimately be conditioned by contextual elements of the professors' work, such as "the educational organization, professional culture (...), departmental structure (...) the rules of each institution, values, (...) - and indeed- "the traditions" (Mérida-Serrano, 2006: 5).

Therefore, both these processes and the importance that the profession had in the bachelor's degrees origins could have repercussions in the success of the professional guidance of the university studies of certain specialties (García-García, 2010, García, Domínguez and Mayor, 2011)

The role of ANECA in the new curricula formation stage is limited, rather its objective is to assess university proposals within the framework of EHEA and not to design the degree. Therefore it is necessary to focus the analysis on universities, and in particular on those responsible for coordinating the development of the degrees.

In accordance with the aforementioned, the main objective of this study is to summarize the opinions and assessments of key informants on the repercussions of regulated education to the European convergence in Advertising and Public Relations in Spain. In particular it intends to explain:

- 1) The development process of degree curricula;
- 2) Changes to educational offerings
- 3) The relationship between the university and the business sector- institutional links- and
- 4) The academic interest in the study of the profession.

2. Methodology

In order to respond to the objectives, we have used the technique of an in-depth focused individual interview based on "ideal typical cases or guides". The in-depth interview is a, "technique in order to obtain information by means of a professional conversation with one or several people for an analytical study of investigation or to contribute to diagnostics or social treatments (...)". Thus, the interview "takes the form of an account of an event narrated by the same person that experienced it, and from their point of view; it is in itself the context in which this account is produced, creating a social situation so that it can take place; and the interviewer performs the role of facilitator or transmitter in this account" (Ruiz Olabuénaga, Aristegui and Melgosa, 2002: 76). The term, "focused interview" was coined by Robert Merton (1946) to describe a variety of undirected general interviews. "It is a type of interview that always deals with a core or focus of interest (...) it is directed at a particular individual, characterized and previously noted for having taken part in that situation or having lived that experience". The characteristics that best define a focused interview are (Ruiz Olabuénaga, Aristegui and Melgosa, 2002: 77; Vallés, 2002: 20):

-The interviewee is a subject who knows what has intervened in a particular situation.

-The interviewer directly or indirectly knows about this situation beforehand and has analysed it systematically. On the basis of this analysis, an interview guide is developed in which points of greater interest for the investigation and the hypothesis are highlighted, which assigns greater relevance to the data that is going to be gathered.

-The interview concentrates on the subjective experience of its interviewed subjects aiming to obtain their definition of the situation.

-The interview is always open to responses or unforeseen accounts giving rise to new hypotheses or interpretations of the experience.

Case guide selection can be defined as, “a procedure in which the researcher comes up with the profile of the best, most efficient and desirable case of a population and, subsequently finds a case in the real world that adapts to this in an optimal way” (Rodríguez Gómez, Gil Pérez, García Jiménez, 1999: 137).

The profile of the informant who can respond to the core questions related to the results of the application of EHEA in Advertising and Public Relations studies include:

- a) Academics and researchers who belong to a selection of Spanish universities (public and private) where the Advertising and Public Relations degree is offered.
- b) Those who hold or have held academic positions during the adaptation process of licentiate to bachelor's degrees, which would authorize them to directly participate in this process i.e., for the management, coordination, supervision and/or implementation of the programme (Vicedeans of the degree, Coordinators or Directors of the Licentiate degree/Degree in Advertising and Public Relations or Academic Planning Vicedeans).
- c) That disposes of information relating to degree curricula that are to be phased out (Licentiate in Advertising and Public Relations). Thus, they must have formed part of the IDP (Integrated Development Program) in the academic institution before the adaptation process to bachelor's degrees was completed, academic year 2009-2010.
- d) That work or have worked as teachers in Licentiate and/or the Bachelor's degree in Advertising or Public Relations.

The previous stage to the selection of the interviewees was determined by the universities in the study. Therefore, it was ensured in the selection of universities that firstly there would be the same representation of public and private universities. Afterwards, using the data from the NSI relating to the academic year 2009/2010, the universities with the highest number of students enrolled were selected amongst all the universities that offered a Bachelor's degree in Advertising and Public Relations in Spain. Finally 8 universities were included in the study (the four public universities with the highest number of students among all public universities and the four private universities with the highest number of students

among private universities) totalling 7,847 enrolled students; a figure which constitutes 53.53% of all the students enrolled in Spain (14,659 students). This allows us to confirm that only 8 institutions were educating more than half of future Advertising and Public Relations professionals at that time.

The key informants were contacted via email once these 8 universities were selected, which is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Key informants.

University	Informant	Entry year	Position
ALICANTE	Enric Mira Pastor	2000	Vicedean for Advertising and Public Relations. Faculty of Economics and Business Studies
CEU CARDENAL HERRERA	M ^a José González Solaz	1999	Vicedean for Advertising and Public Relations. Faculty of Humanities and Communications
COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID	1. M ^a Teresa García Nieto 2. Javier Davara ¹	1. 1989 2. 1977	1. Vicedean for Academic Planning. Media Studies Faculty (2005-2009) 2. Dean for the Media Studies Faculty (1998-2009)
OBERTA DE CATALUÑA	Ferrán Lalueza	1999	Director of Studies, Communications degree
RAMÓN LLULL	Antonio Solanilla Pascual	1997	Advertising and Public Relations Course Director. Faculty of Communications.
REY JUAN CARLOS	1. Esther Martínez Pastor 2. Manuel Martínez Nicolás ²	1. 2006 2. 2005	1. Advertising and Public Relations Coordinator. Faculty of Media Studies. 2. Vicedean for Academic Planning and the Student Body (2006-2008).
CEU SAN PABLO	Karen Sanders	2006	Director of Advertising and institutional communication. Faculty of Humanities and Media Studies.
VALLADOLID	M ^a de la Cruz Alvarado	2003	Vicedean for Academic Planning and Advertising and Public Relations. Faculty of Social Sciences, Law and Communications.

Source: Own preparation.

¹ Javier Davara intervened as the president of the assembly of Deans in 2004, at the request of Dr. García Nieto. At that time, professor Davara was Dean for the Faculty of Media Studies at the University Complutense de Madrid.

² In the part referring to the development of the bachelor's degree, Professor Manuel Martínez Nicolás intervened, Vicedean for academic planning and student bodies from 2006 to 2008; since professor Martínez Pastor had not yet held the position in the year that the

The interviews were performed throughout October, 2011. The script, which was employed, is shown hereinafter and was validated by four professors; two of them from social research techniques and the other two from communications theory:

CURRICULA Bachelor's degrees.

-What is for you a professional that works in Advertising and/or Public Relations?

-What professional profiles in Advertising and Public Relations do you currently consider to be the most demanded by the labor market?

-Do you believe that the training for graduates to work in these professions is included in the bachelor's degree curricula?

-Could you tell us what the curriculum development process for current Advertising and Public Relations degrees offered in your university was? What information/data was used as a starting point? What competences were taken into account? (Besides the White Paper for Communication degrees from ANECA).

-What significant changes were noted between the licentiate degree curriculum and the bachelor's degrees where skills-based training was concerned?

-Are "placements in external companies" included in the curriculum? If so, are they elective or compulsory?

Post-graduate degrees

-What competences, skills or professional abilities are included in the post-graduate degree curriculum at your university?

-What essential difference(s) between post-graduate training and undergraduate degrees was/were noted where competences/professional profiles are concerned?

WORK ENVIRONMENT University-company

-Do you know what relationship your University/Faculty has with the work environment: Agencies and/or Advertising Agencies?

Professional Partnerships and Professional societies

-Could you tell me what connection your University/Faculty has with regional or national associations belonging to the advertising sector and/or Official Advertising and Public Relations Associations?

program was implemented. Professor Manuel Martínez Nicolás was responsible for coordinating the development process of Journalism and Public Relations degrees.

RESEARCH

-Do you know of research projects or research collaboration agreements between University/Faculty and companies or organizations from the advertising sector?

-Do you know of any research lines in research groups from different departments in relation to Advertising and Public Relations that are centered on the study of the advertising profession?

Complementary information was gathered based on the analysis of selected universities' web content in order to contrast information provided by the interviewees. The available information about postgraduate education was compiled following a classification protocol- own degrees (specialist, expert and magisters courses), university masters and doctorates (PhDs) that had a direct relationship with Advertising and Public Relations-. On the other hand, relevant data was compiled about the lines/research groups whose subject of study was the profession of Advertising and/or Public Relations.

3. Results

3.1. Bachelor's degree Curriculum Development

All the experts interviewed coincide highlighting the White Paper as a reference document for developing the bachelor's degree curriculum. Most consider that the required compilation for the preparation of this document is sufficient. Nevertheless, the lack of scientific output focused on the study of the Advertising and/or Public Relations profession is highlighted. In order to bridge this gap, the interviewees note that they have resorted to the information stemming from work commissions in other universities- bachelor's degree curricula reports elaborated by ANECA, etc., but in no case have research studies ad hoc been developed or scientific reviews, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Bodies and procedures created for bachelor's degree curricula development in Advertising and Public Relations and information sources consulted.

University	Work commission	Sources consulted
ALICANTE	- Bachelor's degree Commission with all involved departments composed of teaching staff, students, graduates, a representative from the Official School of Advertising and Public Relations from the region of Valencia and PAS (administration and service staff).	Bachelor's degree Curriculum and White Paper. Curricula from the commissions of other universities: <i>Jaume I</i> and <i>la Complutense de Madrid</i> . In addition to this, information about communication degrees from some foreign universities was sought, in particular from the U.S.A.

University	Work commission	Sources consulted
CARDENAL HERRERA CEU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advisory committees composed of teaching staff in the Faculty, FIAP, Marcel Moliné, and other professionals. - Numerous meetings: Meetings were carried out with the three universities that make up the CEU Foundation: <i>Cardenal Herrera CEU</i>, <i>San Pablo CEU</i> and <i>Abat Oliva CEU</i>. - Agreements for benchmarking: The CEU Foundation signed an agreement to form part of the <i>Platón program</i> with an organization from Harvard University. It includes what is called a “contract”, the equivalent to subject sheets which include the competences and the evaluation system. It is signed by professors and students and is obligatory for both parties. 	Licentiate degree curriculum and the White Paper. Curricula from some model universities in the U.S.A: Harvard among others.
COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Faculty committee composed of all the professors who taught in the Licentiate degree in Advertising and Public Relations. -The professional sector was not consulted. 	Licentiate degree curriculum and the White Paper.
OBERTA DE CATALUÑA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bachelor's degree Commission with professors and personnel from quality control at the <i>UOC</i>. -Interviewed professionals in the sector: in agencies in Barcelona. 	Licentiate degree curriculum and the White Paper. Educational offering at some model universities in Europe, which also offered bachelor's degrees of a general nature.
RAMÓN LLULL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commission with all of the professors in the Advertising and Public Relations degree. -Informal consultations: occasional conversations with professionals in connection with the centre. It was not a structured or formal consultation. A professional association or college was consulted. 	Licentiate degree curriculum and the White Paper.

Source: Interviews with key informants.

University	Work commission	Sources consulted
REY JUAN CARLOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bachelor's degree committee in which all the teaching staff from the degrees participated. It was later delegated to bachelor's degree commissions composed of professors, students and Pas. -Discussion groups and interviews with professionals. No professional association or College was consulted. 	Licentiate degree curriculum and the White Paper.
SAN PABLO CEU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Faculty commission composed of all the teaching staff in the centre. - Numerous meetings: Meetings were carried out with the three universities that comprise the CEU Foundation CEU: <i>Cardenal Herrera CEU, San Pablo CEU and Abat Oliva CEU</i>, other competences linked to CEU were created. -No representative from the professional sector was consulted. 	Licentiate degree curriculum and the White Paper. Curricula from some model universities in the U.S.A: Harvard among others.
VALLADOLID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advertising and Public Relations Commission where all teaching staff in all areas were consulted . It was delegated to another commission of professors only from the field of Advertising and Public Relations. -There was no representative from the professional sector. 	Licentiate degree curriculum and the White Paper.

3.2. Changes to educational offerings

Three aspects have been highlighted by the interviewees: the alternative specificity/generality in the curricula and its constraints, the new approach to teaching- development of content based on professional profiles- and the educational characteristics of postgraduate degrees.

Firstly, the educational offering has differed in the universities studied by virtue of specificity/generality in the bachelor's degrees offered. Thus, *La Universidad Complutense de Madrid, La universidad de Valladolid, Ramón Llull* and *CEU San Pablo* commit to the first option, while *UOC* and *Rey Juan Carlos* opt for the second. There are two key issues in order to make these decisions: the professional profiles and human resources at each university.

As a specific example of this, *La Universidad Complutense de Madrid* defends the differentiation between the three bachelor's degrees in accordance with the stance of the Committee of Deans; going against the original aim of the Ministry, which was to offer only one communications degree. According to Javier Davara, Dean of the *UCM* (Connection to the Media Unit) and former president of the Committee of Deans, the argument that is given at that time is based on professional profiles, "They are comparatively very different, consequently a clear differentiated education is required".

As opposed to the *UOC*, which has a "generalist vocation" and where according to Allouez, differentiated degrees are not set out, but for 6 itineraries that are subject to certain profiles: "Advertising creativity"; "Corporate communications" and "Public Relations"; "Audiovisual creation"; "Audiovisual management"; "Advertising management" and "Informative communications". This option responds to the search for complementary educational offerings in public universities in order to acquire a subtly different public. In the words of professor Lalueza, "The *UOC* is not here to compete with physical Universities but to complement their training. There are already many bachelor's degrees that are specifically linked to communications in Catalonia".

Rey Juan Carlos also follows the same line as the *UOC*. Therefore, according to professor Martínez Nicolás, "this university understood that bachelor's degrees in the Bologna framework had to be generalist, given that the specialization came in the Masters". Despite this interpretation, and in the words of the expert, a bachelor's degree attending to two specialist areas was developed: "Advertising creativity" and "Strategic planning".

Martínez Nicolás adds another explanatory factor for the selection of subjects with a more generalist vocation, which was the teaching force, "On the one hand professional profiles included in the White Paper were taken into account, on the other hand we relied on the existing teaching staff. Then there was the problem of connecting the market demand with professors' profiles. Many cessions had to have been made". The

presumption that is to be made here is that in order to accommodate all the stable teaching staff, some subjects whose content was more generic were selected and that did not respond to specific required professional skills.

According to professor Lalueza from the *UOC*, the contractual nature of teachers is the source of origin for his argument:

"(...) in our opinion, the rest of the universities above all in the public universities, given their bureaucratic structure, the change towards only one bachelor's degree is more difficult, but in ours it is much more simple, since there are 300 full time professors in all the *UOC*, whereas there are 3,000 collaborators. They work outside the university (such as associate professors). If you change the subjects, you change the collaborator. This gives us a degree of flexibility" (Dr. Lalueza- *UOC*, Barcelona).

Professor Sanders (*Universidad CEU San Pablo*) considers that there are differences between public and private universities' approach which is subject to the labor structure of the former, "(...) unlike public universities, where they do not have

so much leeway and make concessions to subjects and teaching staff, we have more flexibility here". Sanders mentions the possibility of "concessions" subject to the contractual relationship and the specialty of teachers in public universities, which completely coincides with professor Martínez Nicolás's contribution and could contradict the professional profiles degree approach. In fact, external professionals' consultations in the sector for the development of bachelor's degrees is reduced to occasional communications, according to the statements of the experts.

In relation to the selection of subjects, consultations were carried out via email with certain professionals in the sector with whom the university occasionally collaborated. Professor Alvarado, from the University of Valladolid notes that, "... but they were informal consultations." About this she adds, "many concessions between professors had to be made. What's more is that it was worked on very quickly, under a lot of pressure, consequently professionals could not be consulted as would have been desirable". Moreover, with regard to the educational design-generalist/specific- and when asked about the differences between the licentiate degree and the bachelor's degree she states, "The fundamental difference is that core subjects are focused towards Advertising. This is a little contradictory, given that the spirit of the European convergence is centered on a more generalist education undergraduate degree, and leaves the specific training for the postgraduate degrees. But we prevented the subjects from being as generic as in the licentiate degrees, we were looking for specificity, in the compulsory subjects as well as the electives. It was understood that it was better this way".

The workforce and the lack of contribution from the professional sector have been able to condition bachelor's degree content in public universities, and by extension their orientation- generalist/specific-.

In conclusion, table 3 shows those universities with specific subjects or areas of specialization in Advertising and Public Relations degrees, according to the interviewees. There are four universities- *Alicante*, *Rey Juan Carlos*, *CEU Cardenal Herrera* and *Oberta de Cataluña*- apart from the orientation in the educational offerings, which have pointed out that the most notable change between the licentiate degrees and the bachelor's degree lies in the teaching approach. The content development centered on professional competences marks the difference. As claimed by Professor Enric Mira from the UA, "(...) in the bachelor's degree the task plan is based on the acquisition of professional competences". This means that the emphasis is given to the implementation of external placements. It is a compulsory subject in all the universities, except two of them: *Complutense de Madrid* and *Alicante*. Both report an understanding of the compulsory nature of the placements as the ideal status, but in their cases it is administratively unfeasible, given the elevated number of students.

Table 3: Most significant changes between the bachelor's degree and the licentiate degree in the curriculum

University	Differences in the curriculum
ALICANTE	-Conceptual and operating changes: Ways of thinking about teaching: The licentiate degree is programmed learning in accordance with contents, and the bachelor's degree is based on the acquisition of professional skills.
CARDENAL HE-RRERA CEU	- Orientational change in educational offering: The education in the licentiate degree is generalist, the specificity is defined by elective subjects. The education in the bachelor's degree is also generalist, but there are not so many elective subjects because specialization takes place in the Masters.
COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID	- Change in orientation and educational offering: More specific subjects in the bachelor's degree than in the licentiate degree. - Increase in the number of subjects in Public Relations.
OBERTA DE CATALUÑA	-Changes to the entrance system. The UOC only offer licentiate degree in Advertising and Public Relations in the second cycle. Students already had a degree and a background. This was not the case in the bachelor's degree because the students enter the first year. -Orientational changes in educational offering: The pre-Bologna degrees have a model based on more specific contents, the bachelor's degree opts for more generic and transversal training
RAMÓN LLULL	Orientational changes in educational offering: - Increased specificity and professional guidance in the bachelor's degree. -Elimination of overlapping between subjects. - Comprehensive curriculum: including so called "training units", which make the incorporation of professional skills possible.
REY JUAN CARLOS	Operational changes: - Positives: Increased number of internships than in the licentiate degree. - Negatives: Reduction in the number of class hours replaced by students' independent learning. Conceptual changes: - Positives: End of degree assignment. - Negatives: Specific subjects replaced by generic subjects. Increase in the number of subjects in Public Relations in detriment to Advertising.

University	Differences in the curriculum
CEU SAN PABLO	Oriental change of educational offering: Greater specialization in the bachelor's degree.
VALLADOLID	Oriental change of educational offering: Greater specialization in the bachelor's degree.

Source: Interviews to key informants

The changes to the orientation of teaching and the changes in educational offerings are pointed out by the interviewees. However, when the experts are asked about the improved elements that these changes have meant, one of the reiterated aspects is subject planning focused on professional abilities. A common aspiration among the Interviewees is that university education guarantees training to enable students to fit into the most demanded professional profiles. Accordingly, four of the eight universities point out that the market is seeking “Managers of on line communication”; three that require “Public Relations” and “Strategic planners” and another three “*multi-tasking communicators*”.

Despite the general concern among the surveyed about the educational offerings allowing students to be trained in these areas, only two universities of those analyzed claim to specifically include the profile of “On line communication Manager” in the bachelor's degree contents. Another five centres say that they facilitate part of the training necessary apart from specific subjects.

In relation to other professional profiles, the competences of the profile of “Public Relations” and “Strategic planning” have been included in the new curricula and the offer for these subjects has increased compared to the licentiate degree. Regarding the profile of “*Multi-tasking communicator*”, experts state that it corresponds to the contents of the bachelor's degree, although, as shown in table 3, the orientation of the programme is rather specific- not generalist-, especially orientated toward strategic planning and creativity.

In table 4 the most demanded profiles by the market and its correspondence to the content of the bachelor's degrees have been gathered.

Table 4: Most demanded professional profiles by the labor market and included in the curriculum.

Universidad	Most demanded profile	Included in the bachelor's degree
ALICANTE	-Community manager -Internet Planner	None of the aforementioned.
CEU CARDENAL HERRERA	-On line communicator -Account executive -Media Planner	All of the aforementioned.
COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID	-Public Relations - <i>On line</i> Communicator	One of the aforementioned: Public Relations
OBERTA DE CATALUÑA	- Versatile professionals with online knowledge.	All of the aforementioned.
RAMÓN LLULL	-Community manager. -Planner. -Media Planner -Public Relations -Communication at the point of sale.	All of the aforementioned.
REY JUAN CARLOS	-Versatile professionals	All of the aforementioned
CEU SAN PABLO	-Versatile professionals	All of the aforementioned
VALLADOLID	-Social Corporate Responsibility - Strategic Planners -Creatives	All of the aforementioned

Source: Interviews to key informants

Another change to educational offerings lies in the possibility that the bachelor's degree can be completed with the offer of a postgraduate degree. Notwithstanding, this option

is not always given. It has been observed by reviewing the selected centers' web pages that only half of universities offer official masters, two offer their own titles, while another two do not provide any postgraduate training related to Advertising and Public Relations (data from academic year 2010-2011). The offer for postgraduate degrees is scarce. Experts highlight that this training is being thoroughly planned due to its importance in the convergence process, which has slowed down its implementation. They add that implementing bachelor's degrees has meant a considerable effort, which has

given second place to the postgraduate degrees. It is imperative to consider that this would occur with graduate training in Advertising and Public Relations if the postgraduate offer was not notably increased, since some experts coincide in pointing out:

“(…) the bachelor’s degree assures students an employability, but with a much more general profile. Masters are what will help students to specialize, but that is what is yet to be seen, to what extent is a bachelor’s degree that has a more generalist training and with a year less going to be capable of giving the same result in the profession as a licentiate graduate? The response is that it’s not going to give the same result as a licentiate degree because it will be necessary to do that master, and the offer for masters is yet to be developed”. (Dr. González Solaz, *Universidad CEU Cardenal Herrera*).

3.3. *Institutional links- university- professional sector.*

On account of the importance of professional guidance in teaching competencies that the Bologna process implies, one of the issues that we wanted to analyze is the situation of the connections between universities and companies based on the changes brought about by the convergence. All of the universities studied have a framework agreement for the implementation of external placements, but only two, *La Universidad de Alicante* and *La Universidad Ramón Llull* also have a framework agreement with some professional associations, signed by both of them before the convergence process. The two universities from the *Fundación CEU* belong to several professional associations, both national and international. This link already existed before the completion of the European convergence process, so does not relate to the programme. This seems to indicate that the change to the teaching approach; now focused on professional profiles, has not had a greater presence or collaboration from the work environment at universities, as had been expected.

Half of the universities maintain a link to professional associations: *La Universidad de Alicante*, *Cardenal Herrera CEU*, *Ramón Llull* and *la Oberta de Catalunya*. In fact, this can be explained by the geographic location of these institutions: the Valencian region and Catalonia. No wonder that two out of three official Advertising and Public Relations associations have competencies in these two regions.

3.4. *Research centered on the Advertising and Public Relations profession*

On the other hand, it seems reasonable to investigate the increased interest in the study of the profession since the European convergence. The information provided by the interviewees in this respect was scarce.

Only two interviewees claimed to know of contributions to research in this field: *La Universidad de Alicante* and *La Universidad Ramón Llull*. In *La Universidad de Alicante*, professor Mira highlights Professor Martín Llaguno’s academic activity,

“she has carried out research directly linked to the professional sector”. She has worked on several projects with AEAP (Spanish Association of Advertising Agencies) and has developed the code for Child Advertising of Toys with AEFJ (Spanish Association of Toy Manufacturers). In addition to this, she has been a member of the jury of Autocontrol since 2007.

At *La Universidad Ramón LLull* research about the profession lies in the thesis focused on the study of the professional profile, “account executive” whose author is Isabel Solana.

Given the lack of information, a decision was made to carry out an additional search on web sites in order to contrast data. The results confirmed the lack of researchers’ interest in the study of the profession. Furthermore, we found only two research groups whose lines of work are focused on the profession at *La Universidad de Alicante*: Communication and the knowledge society (COSOCO), their line of investigation titled “Professionalism and quality of life in the work of cultural industries in the knowledge society”, supervised by Dr. Martín Llaguno: and Strategic communications studies (E-com) with their research line “Professionals in communication and Advertising”, supervised by Dr. Papí Gálvez. These groups existed before the convergence, so that contrary to what was expected, the process of the change to higher education does not seem to have encouraged scientific research centered on the profession.

Finally, concluding that *La Universidad CEU San Pablo* created the Centre of communication tendencies in 2011, whose objective it is to carry out research in the field of Advertising and Public Relations. It has several investigation projects underway which fall into the following categories: “Corporate reputation on line”; “Institutional communication”; “Social Networks and Advertising”; “Youth, ethics and interactivity” and “Children and television”. None of the projects sponsored by this centre, which reports to the Faculty of Humanities at *La Universidad CEU San Pablo*, has the study of the profession as their object, rather the subjects of study are the advertising manifestos.

Therefore, the scientific community demonstrates greater interest in the effects of communication processes that are generated.

4. Conclusions

In light of the results obtained we could initiate the discussion affirming that the construction of EHEA for Advertising and Public Relations studies in Spain has commenced from the same starting point; the White Paper, but it has been developed very disparately, in other words: we have encouraged a “divergent convergence”.

The experts recognise that in no case has the adaptation of the subjects been based on evidence and that the White Paper has strongly conditioned the current offer.

According to the approach maintained in this document to offer three bachelor's degrees- one for each specialty, half of the interviewees highlight the specificity of the bachelor's degrees over the generality of the licentiate degrees as the most significant change generated by the reform, contrary to the proposal by the Evaluation commission for the project "Titles of communications degrees" (ANECA; 2004: 13)

However, specialization is not set out in the undergraduate degree but in the post-graduate degree where, "the educational objectives must be more specific and orientated towards a more in-depth intellectual understanding" (MECD, 2003: 9 and 10). in this context it seems relevant to consider some issues. Firstly, in some cases, whether generic education in the bachelor's degrees guarantees professional guidance to graduates. In the case that there were significant differences, in terms of accumulation of knowledge among those that receive bachelor's degrees education based on more specific knowledge, and those that receive a more generalist education (taking into account that not all graduates would have the possibility to specialize in a Masters). Secondly, given the dissonance between the initial approach of the convergence (generalist education in the bachelor's degrees) and the reality being considered (where the specific training in the bachelor's degrees is being observed) to what extent has the essential objective of the Bologna process been achieved: the development of a common European Area for Higher Education in all countries where the graduates are able to obtain a, "bachelor's degree with professional qualification in the European labor market" " (MECD, 2003: 7). Finally, whether the specific training received by students in the bachelor's degree is appropriate to the demands of a market in which as the interviewees have stated- demand versatile professionals.

On the other hand, the selection of subjects at the public and private universities have been disparate. In the former, the model of teaching staff and researchers has been key to the selection of the subjects in the bachelor's degree and it has been able to maintain the *status quo* of the licentiate degrees. The university community must evaluate the ways in which this affects the educational offering; given that this could adversely affect fundamental subjects for the undergraduates' education and/or it could overload them with subjects whose content is not required for professional practice. The change to the educational approach that the university studies reform has brought about must be understood as such in the strictest of terms, thereby it could be a change as such (Mérida Serrano, 2006).

It is important to highlight at this point that according to the interviewees among the most demanded profiles in the labor market at present is the so-called "multi-tasker" in complete concordance with the spirit of the European homogenization, however it is contradictory to the bachelor's degree specificity approach, maintained de facto by most institutions. Thus, academics seem to have a view close to the reality of the market, which coincides with the approach held by the rest of Europe where more generalist bachelor's degrees are advocated (ANECA, 2004: 303). However, we have not found consistency in the bachelor's degree curricula. Once again, the White Paper can give us the response. The authors of the document maintain that the the rest of the approach of European countries is the result of the limited progress in the professionalization of communicative activities that exist within it. (ANECA, 2004: 304).

One of the most demanded profiles according to the interviewees is “Online Communication Manager”. This profile is not included as a specific subject and the Internet as a medium is only alluded to in some programs. It seems that the educational offering responds more to a personal concern than a common programming criterion for contents. In fact, the White Paper only mentions the Internet in the profile of “Creatives/Designers”. Perhaps this is because the White Paper was developed in 2004; it was from this date in particular when the Internet took off spectacularly.

Nevertheless, the experts saw an increase in the number of subjects that dealt with the online setting compared to the licentiate degree. Despite all of this, the educational offering related to this profile continues to be insufficient. The universities could have carried out a search for extra information to that provided in the White Paper, taking into account that the final date for the implementation of the bachelor’s degrees determined by the Ministry of Education was September 2010. In particular in terms of new professional profiles or they could have updated the current ones.

In addition to this, and in contrary to expectations, the process of convergence has not encouraged scientific studies focused on the study of the profession. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the number of research works in this area. The key motivation for the scientific community should be the need to know about new work routines that are attributed to unconventional agency structures as well as a new way of understanding Advertising and Public Relations. It is only through the investigation of work processes that profiles and professional competences, and/or the ways of association between other aspects that curricula orientated towards the job front could be developed and based on scientific evidence (López-Berna, Papí-Gálvez y Martín-Llaguno, 2011:229).

The professional sector’s contribution to the development of the bachelor’s degrees has been limited.

Only two universities created work commissions which included representatives from the professional sector: *Alicante* and *CEU Cardenal Herrera*. Both of which had representatives involved from the Official School of Advertising in the Community of Valencia. Geographic location seems to be a direct influence. The fact that some of the members of the School’s board of directors were professors in these universities was a facilitating element. In fact, only the universities located in regions with Professional Associations maintain ties with them. The universities located in Madrid and Castilla y Leon do not maintain ties, stating that they did not see it as convenient. The academy places little importance on professional associations and their contribution to education. In contrast, it awards more importance from the outset to the professional associations connected to academic education in Advertising and Public Relations (Méndiz, 2000: 184).

Continuing with the forms of association, private universities stand out for their connection to professional associations. The key to this could lie in the business philosophy of these institutions. In fact, some of these only offer specialization Masters in collaboration with private companies.

In any case, it is remarkable that only two universities have directly relied on professionals when planning the bachelor's degrees, taking into account that, "it would be essential in the design and development of the regulated education in the bachelor's degree (...) the close collaboration between the academic staff and those from the associations and professional associations" (MECD, 2003: 7 y 8). Subject planning must respond to skills of a professional nature, consequently it is necessary to change the teaching approach. One of the first steps would be to put an end to the existing division between the academic and labor world (Mérida Serrano, 2006: 10 and 11). In the case of private universities, it could be thought that this contribution comes from this teaching staff, given that most of their teaching staff also work outside the institution. However, in the public institutions this does not occur. The convergence requires an effort that is able to bring the academy closer to the professional environment and the public universities must exert a greater ímpetus in this respect. Nevertheless, it has been the professionalization of studies that has provoked the most controversy in the Bologna process. Branded by the most critical sectors as, "commercial", there was talk of an attempt at "privatization of university education" (Cazorla González-Serrano, 2011: 15).

Despite this, and in our view the nexus of union between the academy and the professional sector in general need to be revised, in particular in public universities. The relationship university-company should be centered on the mutual contribution of knowledge. Private entities in no case will condition educational programs. Yet the signing of agreements and collaborations with associations and professional associations is necessary. It is only then that the contents could be really orientated towards professional competences. Through this close collaboration a mutual benefit would be obtained: the academy would provide information and real data that would be key for incorporating into the theoretical knowledge communicated in classrooms; and professional practice would be defined by the theory, which would contribute to reinforcing professional identity. Furthermore, it is fundamental that students know about the activity of professional associations as well as the role that associations perform.

In view of the above, the curricula from the academic year 2013-2014 should be assessed, as it was the first graduating class of the bachelor's degree. The academic results obtained must be analyzed and compared with the licentiate degrees, among other aspects; the percentage of graduates that chose to undertake a specialization master in Spain as well as in the rest of the countries in Europe and the type of masters; the incorporation of the graduates in the bachelor's degree as well as the masters and in the European labor market. In addition, it would be relevant to establish a comparison between Spain and other countries in Europe in order to obtain a "descriptive map" of the communication degrees in the European Area of Higher Education.

The change to the didactic approach in university teaching required by the convergence must still today be understood by all involved, as an opportunity to achieve educational excellence for future professionals in Spain, and in full review of the bachelor's degrees. In no case is it a trivial matter and it would be a mistake to ignore the fact that professions are key parts in a society as they collectively comply with a social function in every respect (Fernández-Pérez, 2001; De Miguel, 2004).

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