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## University Teaching of Communication Theory in Europe and Latin America

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**Abstract:** Communication Theories are one of the main pillars of many higher education studies that, placing communication as its core topic, have raised public presence during the last two decades at universities worldwide. However, this ongoing process of consolidation inside the scholar field is not walking together with an objective analysis of the ontological and epistemological positions serving as milestones for Communication Theories' courses. Taking an international online survey as the initial source of information, completed by professors and lectures working at different European and Latin American countries, this paper collects some useful information about the positions and the content of these courses, bringing some light in a confusing fieldwork. If the goal of a common higher education area is real, then deep comparative studies like this must be carried out. Results appeal to a clear dominance of Mass Communications as the main topic inside these courses, although there is a high level of interdisciplinary approaches. Some of the requirements established by the new European Higher Education Area are not implemented in the expected competencies for the students, although they are all present in the courses' objectives. Professors and lecturers are conscious about the new standard set by the Bologna Process, but this consciousness has not arrived to the classrooms yet.

**Keywords:** Communication Theory; Teaching; University; Europe; Latin America; Survey.

**Summary:** 1. Introduction: Teaching communication theory at university. 2. Material and methods. 3. Results. 3.1. Geographical areas of interest taking part in the survey. 3.2. Universities, degrees, courses and professors. 3.3. Degrees. 3.4. Titles of the subjects. 3.5. Professors' answers. 3.6. Professors' education. 3.7. Requirements to study the subject. 3.8. Competencies to be achieved by students. 3.9. Goals Established in the teaching guides. 3.10. Content and thematic interests. 3.11. Dominant paradigms. 3.12. Dominant theoretical models. 3.13. Key authors cited. 3.14. Assessment criteria. 4. Conclusions. 5. Bibliography. 6. Notes

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### 1. Introduction: Teaching Communication Theory at university.

Those who explain communication by affirming that it is enough to know that a sender sends a message through a channel to a receiver are only trying to cover up the sun with a finger. The theoretical teaching of communication has always entailed numerous difficulties, because those who are supposed to be more educated in communication (professors, for example) do not necessarily have a guaranteed ability to communicate and make themselves understood as intended. Conversely something similar happens, because those who communicate with ease (students, for example) are not consequently guaranteed to know what communication is.

Just as many other issues, the problem of teaching communication at university is complicated when it is confirmed that communication theories are best taught and learn by actually communicating. Consequently, if communication (as an object of study) is at the same time the main tool you have to define and analyze it, we must be clear that this is a term much more complex than it seems. Admittedly, the need or curiosity to "know something" is triggered by the need "to know what to do with that something", that is, when we became interested in communication, our first concerns are not directed to know more about that term, but rather, what really interest us is to know what to do to "communicate better". Why is this happening? Because we communicate without knowing it, without being aware of it and what really worries us the most is simply doing it better and better. In summary: knowing how to communicate does not mean knowing about communication.

Communication Sciences, and especially Communication Theories, are a field of knowledge that is in constant growth and has the university teaching and academic research as core axis. A quick review of the teaching guides of the European and Latin American universities teaching communication theories clearly shows its presence and, above all,

its permanence over the last decades. However, the position of Communication Theories in the academic structure does not always have the same importance and the divergence is even greater when analyzing the organization and the theoretical approaches included in the academic courses. To this process of expansion we should also add the fact that communication studies are present in other academic disciplines, which increases the difficulty to capture the evolution of this field of knowledge.

We are at a crucial time, in which there are new institutional initiatives to rethink the university education system. These initiatives are part of the framework of a broader strategy that aims to standardize higher education in order to avoid traditional gaps mainly based on national differences. The clearest example is the current attempt to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) among all EU countries. However, this process is being built without the active participation of scholars from Latin America, a group whose voice should also be taken into account.

The hemerographic research produced few focused results when the objective combines the field of communication theories with the sphere of university teaching. The works of José Alberto García Avilés and Leonarda García Jiménez (2009), and Miquel Rodrigo and García Jiménez (2010) have recently joined the empirical approaches previously made by Estrada and Rodrigo (2007). All these studies attempted to evaluate and propose improvements in educational systems, always taking as a starting point the analysis of the changes imposed by the current process of changing the educational model. As a common value, all these studies not only went beyond the theoretical analysis of the different schools of thought and dominant models and supplemented it with an empirical approach, but also pursued the benefit for the educational community.

Taking these two starting points, the interuniversity research group MDCS (Dialectic Mediation of Social Communication) has attempted to offer another perspective on the teachings of the Communication and Information Theories offered in European and Latin American universities. The main objectives of this research are to identify the dominant perspective, the current situation and future prospects of convergence across countries and the type of teaching developed by university professors. Through an online survey in six languages we received over 300 responses from more than 40 countries that involved more than 220 universities. The subsequent data analysis allowed us to generate a significant overview of our object of study.

Today, university education of communication theory requires a serious reflection to meet the level of innovation that the European countries expect to reach in the field of higher education with the famous "Bologna Process", and to provide a response to the constructive and vibrant experiences of the Latin American universities in this area. But above all, this reflection should provide formal and instrumental responses to the new social and technological challenges faced by the contemporary world. In this sense, in our view, the knowledge of communication should be a common cognitive competence in all disciplinary fields, since in all branches of science and technology communication is an indispensable tool to achieve goals, procedures and results. However, the academic programmes show that very few of these fields regard communication as a theoretical concept that requires an epistemological treatment.

Academic production, from very different latitudes, has been decisive for the debate and the enrichment of communication theories. In Spain, the foundational work of Miquel de Moragas (1985) found abundant and regular feedback from authors like Miquel Rodrigo (1991) and Leonarda García (2007), who have completed a precise mapping of the dominant traditions in this research area, in parallel with the studies of other authors which expanded the thematic scope to the group of research in communication in Spain (Martínez, 2006 and 2008). Similarly, there are some examples of similar work that expanded their scope of action to an international scale (Craig, 1999; Donsbach, 2006; Nordenstreng, 2007) and supported the relevance of this type of studies to consolidate the disciplinary field of communication.

In fact, the drafting of specific teaching manuals has generated a considerable wealth of bibliographic sources to approach the study of communication theories (Rodrigo and Estrada, 2009). Similarly, the Latin American space has also been analysed in detail by authors such as Jesús Martín Barbero, Néstor García Canclini and Jesús Galindo [1]. These contributions are based on approaches and views very similar to those of authors of global reference and Anglo-Saxon origin like McQuail (1982) and De Fleur (1982).

It would be rash to question the depth and exhaustivity of most of these studies, but the truth is that none of them put in the first place all the people who daily face university teaching. This is precisely one of the main objectives of this research, which aims to combine theoretical reflection with knowledge about university professors, in search of what professors make in the classroom.

## **2. Material and methods**

The interuniversity research team "Dialectic Mediation of Social Communication" (MDCS), which is directed by José Luis Piñuel Raigada, Chair Professor of Journalism at the Complutense University of Madrid, began this study in June 2008 with the design of a survey in six languages (English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish).

The questionnaire posed, initially, a series of identifying variables (country and home university), and then gave way to a number of questions focused on the main features of the courses on Communication Theories. At one level, the questions pursued the basic identification of the subject (degree in which it is given, literal name, type of subject, chronological location within the curricula, staff in charge of its teaching, and the origin of the faculty staff). In a second level the course content became the focus of attention, gathering information on the objectives of each course, the skills required and persecuted, the thematic interests, objects of study, disciplinary paradigms and dominant theoretical models, most used literature and evaluation systems. This completed a detailed tour through the most important issues for any university subject.

The international scope of the research required the previous work of locating the appropriate people to respond the questionnaire. First, we reviewed the websites of all Spanish universities to complete a database with the names and contact details of persons who, during the academic year 2007-2008, were in charge of these subjects. Secondly, we established institutional contacts with some of the main associations from Europe (*Société Française des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication*, SFSIC; *Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association*, MECCSA; *European Communication Research and Education Association*, ECREA) and Latin America (Latin American Federation of Faculties of Social Communication, FELAFACS) to ensure the highest possible volume of response in all other territories.

The survey was conducted online and the access to the questionnaire was controlled through invitation emails previously sent to all those who eventually became part of the database. The online survey was answered by 363 professors from 237 universities in Europe and Latin America, and this involved more than 40 countries. With this initiative we have set the main profiles of the teaching of communication/information theory in the European and Latin American universities.

For the sake of methodological rigour, it is important to note that the finite universe of professors who responded to the questionnaire can be considered as "significant" because the voluntary responses of professors, in all cases, were moved by personal initiative in relation to specific cases (clinical) and personal experiences. Thus, the data extracted from the survey should not be considered conclusive information but rather as tendencies or points of departure which, at best, can help refine methodologies and enable the creation of new research to continue to address and know this issue better.

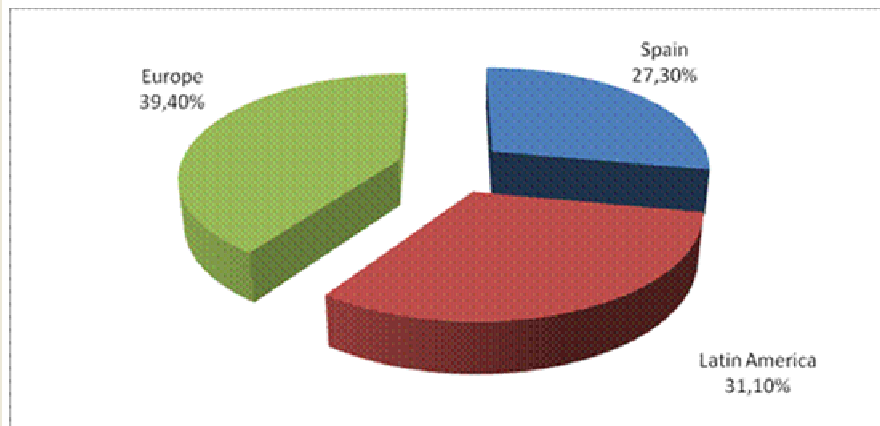
Despite this limitation, the volume of responses is high for a research technique that was applied to a limited audience and that, moreover, was channelled through the Internet. The value of this information is also endorsed by the scarcity of studies applying these techniques to an object of study like the university teaching. During the literature review phase we detected similar uses of the survey in some Anglo-Saxon literature, but we did not identify any survey sharing our methodological approach applied exclusively to the field of Communication Theories.

In fact, shortly after closing the questionnaire, which has served as the basis for this article, three of the main international research associations in communication (*International Association for Media Communication Research*, IAMCR; *International Communication Association*, ICA; and ECREA) undertook similar research to study the use and academic recognition of scientific journals in their field of knowledge. It is therefore a technique that can produce results of great scope and depth with a much lower cost than that involved in the direct application of the questionnaire. In a complementary manner, the first results of the survey were discussed publicly at an international symposium organized by the MDCS group at the Complutense University on 6 and 7 May, 2009 [2].

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Geographical areas of interest taking part in the survey

The survey was basically directed to university professors teaching Communication Theory; the selection of participations corresponded, rather than a strict a geographical distribution, to a delimitation that put three regions (geographic areas) almost at the same level: Spain (27.3%) as is the country where the survey was designed and where the respondents also felt much more involved; Latin America (31.1%) as a part of the world that is often very alert to changes in the university world and which has professors who are strongly interested when they are called to participate in such research; and rest of Europe (39.4%) which corresponds to the number of professors, universities and countries that expressed interest in taking part in the survey.



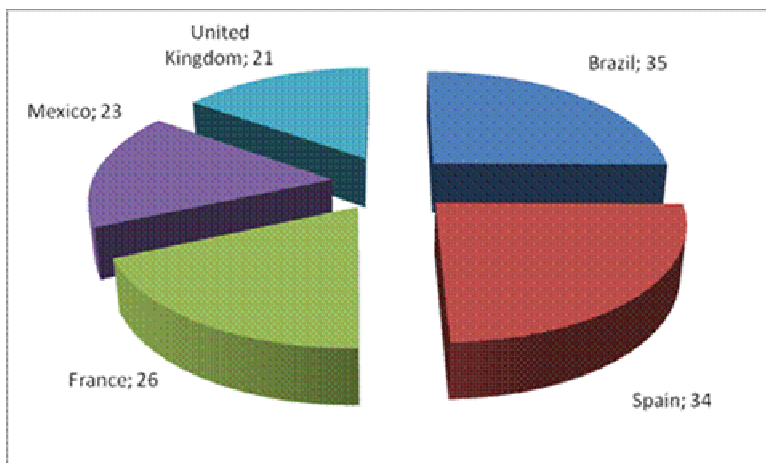
Graph 1. Distribution of participants according to geographical area

Although the geographical distribution analysed does not correspond directly with the "reality" of the data obtained, this is a classification built to balance the data and being able to establish comparisons. This distribution also reflects very well the position of Spanish universities as a link between European and Latin American universities.

The analysis of the data by country shows that Spain is the one with more participants (94, which is 25.9%), followed by Brazil (45 participants, 12.5%), Mexico (33 participants, 9.1 %) and France (31 participants, 8.1%). The previous classification does not correspond to the language used for teaching, this is the case of the Portuguese language, given that Brazilian professors, for example, are located in Latin America and the Portuguese in Europe. Anyways, taking into account the country of origin, not the language chosen to answer the survey, almost half of professors (44.9%) taught their subjects in Spanish, followed by Portuguese (14.9%) and French (11.8%).

### 3.2. Universities, degrees, courses, and professors

Of the 237 universities involved in the survey, through the voluntary participation of their professors, the countries that have the greater number of universities are Brazil (35, that is 14.7%), Spain (34, 14.3 %), France (26, 10.9%), Mexico (23, 9.7%) and the UK (21, 8.8%). Here is important to note that although the 35 Brazilian universities were represented by only 45 professors, the 34 Spanish universities were represented by 94 professors, that is, Spain is the only country where the survey has more impact because in average three professors per university answered the questionnaire. This last figure takes on greater significance if we remember that the vast majority of Spanish universities with communication studies are represented in the survey.



Graph 2. Distribution by countries with the largest number of universities in the study, which represents 58.6% of the total sample.

### 3.3. Degrees

In what kind of professional careers, undergraduate or postgraduates degrees is the subject of Communication Theories included? One would expect that communication theory would be best integrated in the curricula of the degrees dedicated to the study of Journalism, Advertising, Audiovisual Communication, Documentation, and Public Relations. However, this is not exactly the case because one in three respondents (35.8%) teaches this subject in a degree whose title refers generically to "social communication".

In particular, this happens in universities from Latin America (45.4%) and Europe (45.4%), whereas in Spanish universities this type of denomination of the degree is a minority (7.7%). Something very different happens when the name of the degree is common to careers in "Journalism, Audiovisual Media, and Advertising & Public Relations", in such case one in six professors (17.4%) teach the subjects in these degrees, and in this aspect the Spanish universities (57.1%) stand out in comparison to European (23.8%) and Latin American (19.0%) universities.

### 3.4. Titles of the subjects

While it is true that the research focuses on the study of university teaching of the subject "Communication Theory", it is nevertheless worth noting that such title is not dominant in the universities that teach it. In other words, "other titles" (36.4%) dominate over the title "Communication Theory(ies)" (35.6%), and relegate to a marginal presence those courses whose title only refers to "Information Theory(ies)" (2.7%) or even those courses whose name involves both notions "Communication and information Theory(ies)" (8.2%).

When other titles are used, it is the European universities (52.3%) that basically are in charge of renaming the field. They are followed by the Latin American universities (28.8%), whereas the Spanish universities are the ones using other names the least (17.4%). Importantly, the Latin American universities (50.3%) are the ones that maintain the literal name "Communication Theory(ies)" the most, followed by Spanish universities (26.3%), and European universities (22.4%), which use such literal title the least.

### 3.5. Professors' answers

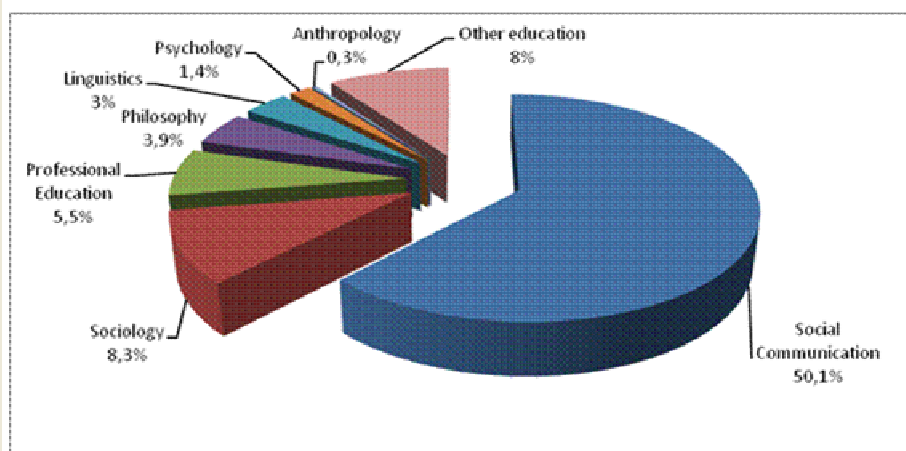
The vast majority of university professors responded to the survey individually (92.3%), while only a very small number (5.8%) responded on behalf of a team. Contrasting this question with another that explores the number of professors

we see that one third of the universities have only one teacher (30.6%) to lecture this kind of subjects, followed by those universities which have between three and seven professors (24.2%); then universities with two professors (19.0%), and finally universities using more than seven professors only comprised 6.3%.

Anyways, the rates are not similar, i.e. two out of three professors who recognize that in their universities there is more than one teacher to lecture subjects related to Communication Theories responded to the survey individual. This implies that there is not much coordination between them. Although in their defence we should highlight that this situation may be affected by the novelty of this type of survey in communication research, and that we would need a greater analysis of day-to-day activities of professors to see the real level of coordination among them.

### 3.6. Professors' education

The majority of university professors who answered the survey and are responsible for teaching a subject related to Communication are mostly trained in Social Communication (50.1%), but also recognize other kinds of education, all of which are minority with respect to the previous: sociology (8.3%), professional training (5.5%), philosophy (3.9%), linguistics (3.0%), psychology (1.4%), anthropology (0.3%) and other kinds of training not identified above (8.0%). Latin American professors (43.4%) stand out for having more academic education in Social Communication, followed by Spanish professors (30.8%), and finally, European non-Spanish professors (25.3%).



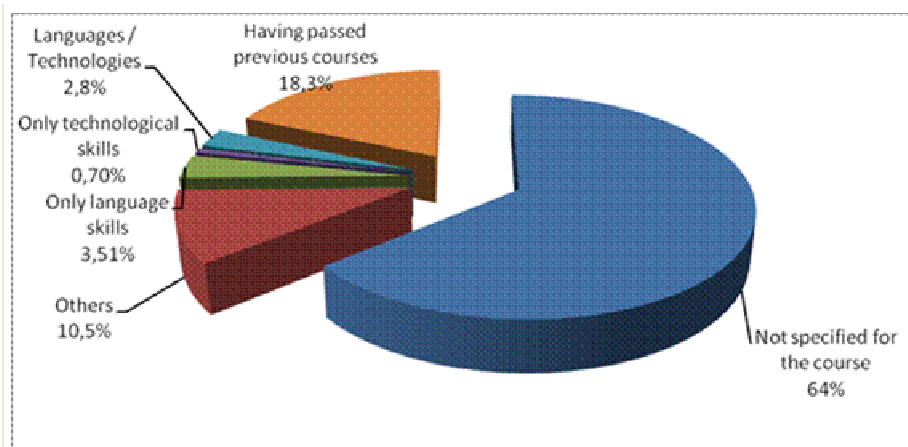
Graph 3. Distribution of academic education among professors who voluntarily answered the survey.

Professors from Latin American universities offering courses related to Communication Theories largely dominate in the vocational training (55%), followed by professors from European universities (30%), and in the worst place are professors from Spanish universities (15%). Spanish professors, however, stand out significantly from the others two areas in the psychological training; and finally, the European professors significantly stand out from their colleagues in education in other areas like linguistics, philosophy and sociology. The fact that most Latin American professors who teach subjects related to Communication Theories are trained in Social Communication or come from the professional world offers a coherence that does not exist in Spanish or European universities, which are much more dispersed in this particular aspect.

The comparison of the education received by professors of communication theory in each of the three regions shows that among Spanish professors just over half (56.6%) received training where social communication predominates. In the case of Latin American professors, two in three (69.9%) say they have training in social communication, which is very far from those who claim to have professional training (9.7%). One in three European professors (32.2%) say they have a background in social communication, although 12.6% admitted having a sociological training.

### 3.7. Requirements to study the subject

It is important to note that 64% of professors responded that at their universities there are no requirements or previous abilities demanded to pursue the subject of Communication Theories. The explanation is that 74.9% of professors recognized that the subject is mandatory or core, and that 54.5% reported that this subject is taught during the first term of the degrees.

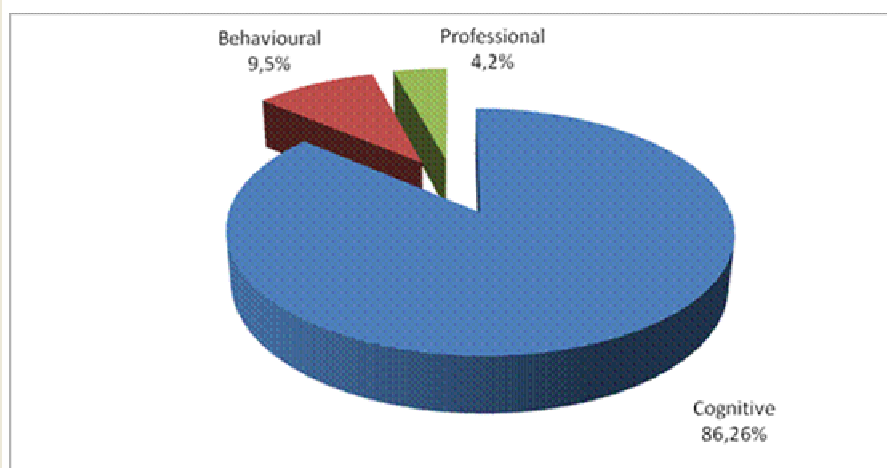


Graph 4. Requirements to study Communication Theories

With these data it is easy to realize that the subject in question is of basic theoretical training character and that students do not have many opportunities to choose different or equivalent subjects. Only 2.8% of the professors who responded to this question said it was an elective subject.

### 3.8. Competencies to be achieved by students

The set of resources (knowledge, “know”, know-how skills, and “know how to be” attitudes) that the professors surveyed believe students must learn to use to properly resolve the degrees’ professional situations and problems, are predominantly cognitive skills (86.2%), with which students can analyse, evaluate and solve problems related to communication. In second place are, at a considerable distance, the attitudinal skills, which help to know how to be and behave (9.5%), and finally, the professional skills that help to know how to do and develop projects (4.2%).



Graph 5. Competencies to be achieved by students

The privileging of cognitive skills over the other two occurs similarly in the three geographical areas, i.e. 36.3% of European professors, 33.1% of American professors, and 30.2% of Spanish professors favour “knowledge” about other kinds competencies.

The first explanation that emerges from this is based on the theoretical nature of the subject, an inevitable detail that sometimes forces professors to implement another kind of competencies to their syllabus. The second key explanation refers to the initial stage of the methodological actualization process in the European institutions, which suggests that the gradual consolidation of university strategies promoted by the EHEA will lead to the combination and balance of cognitive, attitudinal and professional abilities. It will be the ability of professors the one in charge of finding a formula that equates traditional knowledge with a kind of understanding more focused on professional practice and the development of positive attitudes and values.

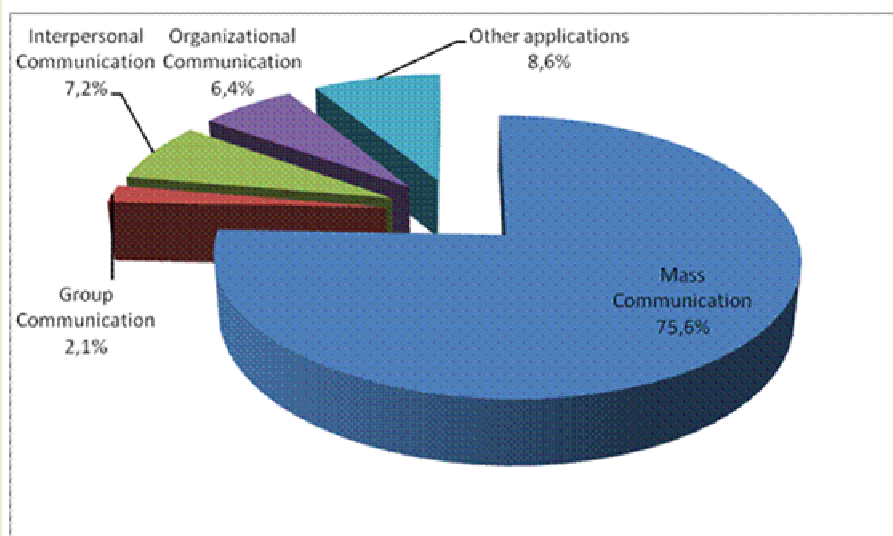
### 3.9. Goals established in the teaching guides

Although there should be a more or less direct relationship between the target competencies (skills to be achieved by the students) and general and specific objectives established in the course syllabus, the professors who responded to this survey do not show that correspondence between objectives and skills. Approximately two in three professors (59.3%) pointed out that their main generic objectives are basically balancing knowledge, procedures, and attitudes,

which is contradicted by the fact that professors privilege the acquisition of cognitive abilities over others. However, one in three professors (37.4%) maintains a coherent answer throughout the questionnaire and acknowledge that in their main objectives predominate the learning of knowledge.

### 3.10. Content and thematic interests

The main objects of study addressed in the courses are related to mass communication (75.4%), which is the area most monitored by professors. In this sense there is an equidistance between the professors of the three areas analysed: mass communication is one of the main objects of study in 37.8% of Latin American professors, 32.1% of Spanish professors and 29.7% of Europeans professors. This paints a panorama clearly dominant, in which the presence of basic areas such as Interpersonal Communication and Organizational communication hardly have their own and differentiated space. The most extreme case is found in Group Communication, with a precarious figure of 2.1%.

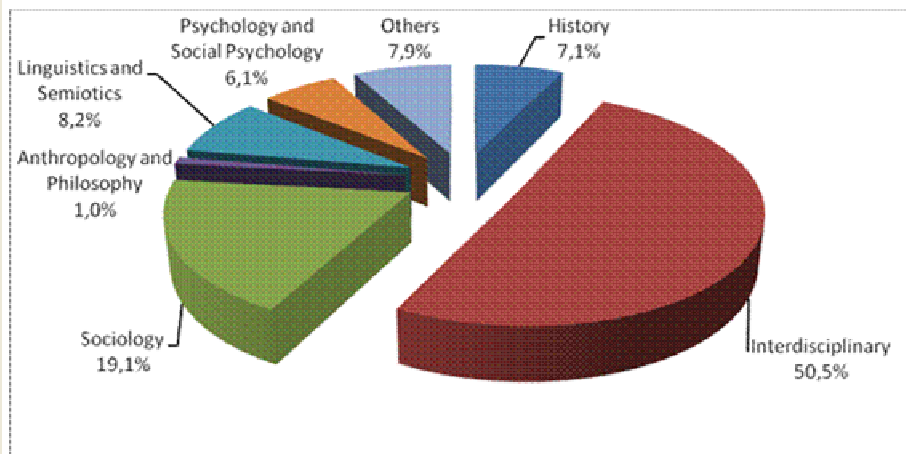


Graph 6. Distribution of the main objects of study included in the course syllabus

In relation to the thematic interests, the study of paradigms, models and theories (83.9%) dominates, very markedly, over the study of systems, processes and products (9.6%), and epistemological critique (6.4%). These data reinforces the previous data about the abilities sought to be achieved and underpins the idea of high homogeneity in the general approach on the subject. In terms of geographic areas, it must be said that it is in Europe (37.7%) rather than in Latin America (35.2%) and Spain (26.7%), where professors showed more preference for this kind of studies.

### 3.11. Dominant paradigms

Among the main paradigms of reference included in the teaching guides, the interdisciplinary perspective (50.3%), which is a comprehensive approach that involves several disciplines to address the communication phenomena, dominates well above others. In this regard, the Latin American professors (40.0%) are more prone to this multidisciplinary approach than professors from Europe (31.4%) and Spain (28.6%).



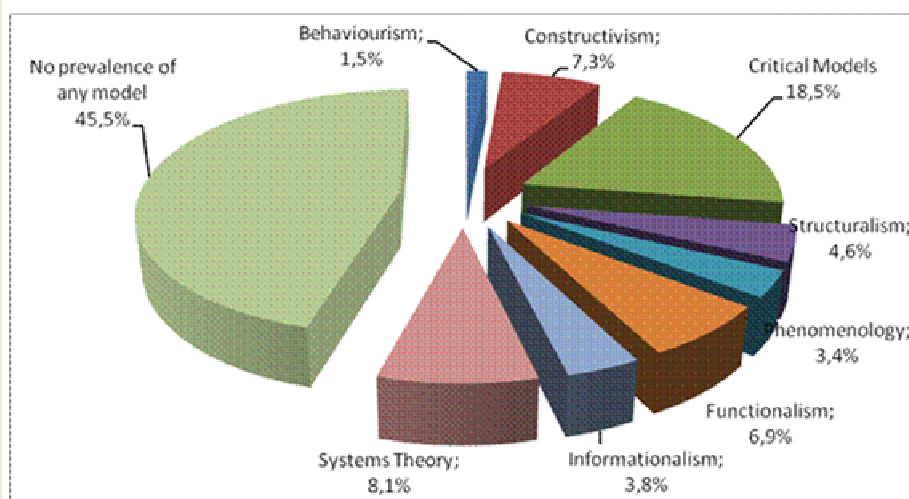
Graph 7. Distribution of the main paradigms included in the teaching guides

It is important to mention that the following disciplinary field in importance is sociology (19%) and that the least used paradigms are Anthropology and Philosophy (1%). In terms of disciplines it can be said that anthropology, linguistics and semiotics predominate in Europe; whereas history predominates in Latin American, and psychology in Spain.

If we pay attention to the dominant paradigms in each region we will see that nearly half (49.6%) of professors in Latin America acknowledges that their subject is inscribed in an interdisciplinary perspective and that only 12.4% recognized that their subject is dominated by a sociological approach. 40.4% of Spanish professors maintained that their subjects are taught from an interdisciplinary perspective, whereas 17.2% said their subjects are dominated by a sociological approach. Finally, 30.8% of European professors maintained that interdisciplinarity is the main perspective, while only 15.4% indicated the sociological framework was the major discipline. The similarities are, therefore, evident among the three regions.

### 3.12. Dominant theoretical models

Given the existing wide range of theoretical models to address communication phenomena such as Behaviourism, Constructivism, Structuralism, Phenomenology, Functionalism, Informationalism, Systems theory, and critical models, among others, a large number of professors responding to this question (45.5%) recognized they do not prefer one theoretical model over another. Among the theoretical model, the critical models stand out more (18.5%) than the other models, and at this point it is noteworthy that Latin American professors (45.8%) use this tradition more than the Europeans (37.5%) and Spanish (16.7%).



Graph 8. Distribution of the main theoretical models included in the syllabus

Analysing the dominant theoretical models in each of the regions we can highlight that both in Spain (39.4%) and Latin America (36.3%) there is no predominance of a particular model. Contrasting these data with the date analysed before we can establish a determinant relationship in the conception of the subject by professors from both Spain and Latin America. No one could say the same about European professors, since only one in four (25.9%) acknowledged addressing the subject without the dominance of theoretical models.

### 3.13. Key authors cited

One of the survey questions asked professors to list at least four key and essential bibliographic references to study their subject. The question was answered by nearly half of respondents (49.5%) and the authors that obtained more references were: Mauro Wolf (39), Denis Mc Quail (32), Armand Mattelart (32), Miquel de Moragas (20), Miguel Rodrigo Alsina (19), Jesus Martin Barbero (19), Manuel Martín Serrano (13), Umberto Eco (12), José Luis Piñuel (12), and Juan José Igartua (11).

The reason that of the list of the ten most cited authors six are Spanish-speaking and the other four speak English, French or Italian is because this question was answered by 69.6% of Spanish professors and 61% of Latin American professors, while only 29.3% of European professors revealed to us their bibliography. The results, without trying to extrapolate their meaning, coincide with some of the main figures within the contemporary academic system.

### 3.14. Assessment criteria

Perhaps this is the area in which professors from all latitudes are much more conservative and traditional because they recognize criteria that deviate from the new trends in higher education based on learning rather than teaching. For example, in relation to the balance between theory and practice, 73.8% of professors responding to this question acknowledge that their classes of knowledge transfer comprise between 51% and 100% of the academic course, while only the remaining 26.2%, acknowledges that the share of their theoretical classes do not reach half of the academic course.



In relation to the assessment of class participation it is important to highlight that 60.2% of professors admitted to give it a value of up to 50% of the final grade, while 32.1% said they did not give it any value in the final grade, and only 7.7% recognised that student participation in class was reflected with a value greater than 50% of the final grade.

Students' practical work is neither valued positively since 58.6% of professors say such work has a value of less than 50% of the final grade, only 28.1% give it more than 50% of the final grade, and 13.3% recognized that they do not require practical work at all or do not give it a value for the final grade.

The oral test is not part of the final assessment for 62.2% of professors, while 28.3% of them recognized that the oral test corresponds to less than 50% of the final grade, and finally only 9.4% said that the oral test is worth more than 50% of the final grade. The traditional written test, in this survey, also collects very traditional percentages: 46.7% of professors said they give it a value exceeding the 50% of the final grade, 39.9 stated it scored less than 50%, and finally only 13.3% say the written test is not part of the final evaluation.

#### 4. Conclusions

Evidently, the subject of Communication Theories is not something unique, but rather a multifaceted theoretical field of knowledge; there is no doubt that this is a kind of university subject that is continually being questioned because it is still debated whether it is a scientific discipline or, only, a field of study with a multidisciplinary task. The answer, in the words of Miquel de Moragas [3], "is dialectical: communication are two things at once".

Importantly, the results presented in this article should be seen as a starting point and not as the conclusion of an investigation, because we are confident that this work will be complemented with the development of other studies that put the analysis of the university education of Theories of Communication as a central axis. We are aware that the data have no "statistical representativity" to know the complex realities of all universities in the countries surveyed, and we also acknowledge that the only source of information consulted were the declarations of the interviewees.

However, the data show trends and projections of the current state of teaching the subject in the major European and Latin American universities, which should serve us to better understand the similarities and differences and, above all, to promote and give more presence to the theoretical studies of communication in the new designs of higher education. It is not about reconciling different points of view but, rather, about showing the differences for professors of these subjects to meet and exchange concerns and experiences [4].

Based on the previous results, it is clear that the importance given to Communication Theories in the teaching guides leaves much to be desired in the degrees closer to communication, such as Journalism, Audiovisual Communication, Documentation, Public Relations, and Advertising, among others, because its relevance in the academic curricula is not always considered. Communication Theories should not only be included prominently in these courses, but should also be integrated in other types of degrees more distant from the field of communication.

There is still a long way to go and for the moment it is worth highlight the situation, promoting events and publicizing through various media (articles, books, publications) the need for more coherence towards this kind of theoretical communication subjects in the academic lattices of the new university teaching guides.

Thus, both in the current and the future situation of the university education of Communication Theories in Europe and Latin America we can see the relationship of communication studies (as concrete praxis) with the different disciplines and traditions of the social sciences and humanities, and also with the renewed professional practices in this field. The search for a stronger connection between professional knowledge and formal knowledge based on theory and research in communication should be a guide for the design of the teaching of this kind of university courses to offer students a better and deeper understanding of the social reality in which they participate daily.

The introduction of the European Higher Education Area, and new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes promote a much more professional learning, i.e. a teaching more closely oriented to meet the market demands over the needs and demands of society itself. Consequently, it becomes necessary to demand the academic existence and development of subjects that are not necessarily designed to only address those utilitarian and pragmatic demands. Without underestimating the fact that universities should teach to learn and to do, it is also very important to remember that we should worry about learning to think, so that the professional future of communication is not only focused on its ability to produce communicative products but, above all, on its ability to learn to reflect based on appropriate foundations and criteria.

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## 6. Notes

[1] For a comprehensive approach to the study of communication theories in Latin America, see the special issue of the journal *Sphera Pública*, published in 2007 (VV.AA., 2007).

[2] The results have been presented, discussed and enriched in:

a) *First International Symposium on Educational Innovation in the European and Latin American Space. Survey on the university teaching profile on Communication Theory / information in Europe and Latin America*, held at the Complutense University of Madrid on 6 and 7 May 2009 with the collaboration of the *European Communication Research and Education Association* (ECREA), the *Latin American Federation of Faculties of Social Communication* (FELAFACS). Thematic Section "Communication Theory and Research Methodology" of the *Spanish Association of Communication Research* (EC-IC);

b) Congress of the *International Association for Media and Communication Research* (IAMCR), Mexico City, July 2009;

c) *XIII Latin American Meeting of Faculties of Social Communication*, Havana, October 2009;

d) II International Congress of the *Spanish Association of Communication Research* (EC-IC), Málaga, February 2010

[3] Speech given at the Inauguration of the *First International Symposium on Educational Innovation in the European and Latin American Space*.

[4] The inter-university research group MDCS put the first stone to celebrate the *First International Symposium on Educational Innovation in the European and Latin American Space*, which served to initiate the debate within the academic community of the area of communication, to respond to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Latin American demands. The symposium was developed around three themes: "The preferred interests in the courses on Communication theory", "The cognitive skills, abilities and attitudes sought to be achieved by the content of and teaching guides for Communication theory", and "The objects study included in the contents of Communication theory courses". Six workshops were conducted with the participation of professors from various European and Latin American universities. In these workshops, participants presented their practical experiences and theoretical analysis, which led to an interesting discussion in conjunction with the people attending the event. All papers were fully published by *Diálogos de la Comunicación*, 79 (Jan-June 2010) of FELAFACS, and they are also available on the MDCS research group's website (<http://www.ucm.es/info/mdcs/>).

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