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The education of journalists in the 21st Century in Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico

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Abstract: The experience gained during the last decades in the area of Communication Studies at Anglo-Saxon, Hispanic and Lusophone universities has had three clear consequences: a progressive incorporation of these studies in the majority of higher education institutes in the most developed countries, with different programs and through very different routes; an increase of research within this field; and a growing interest in adapting the education to the new profiles that have appeared in the different media platforms.

This has produced a panorama with a good academic offer and with many more journalists with a university degree. The data indicate that journalists' education level has increased, but also that they are increasingly in need of updating their knowledge in order to properly work in today's complex society, and that there is a favorable panorama for the continuing education, a challenge for all communicators of the digital age.

Efforts made in recent years in Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico in this field indicate -as I will try to show in this article, which is the result of a comparative study of four cases, especially in the last ten years- a difference, several coincidences and a shared goal: the development of initiatives to improve the curricula with projects of higher quality.

Keywords: communication; journalism; professionals; education.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Review of the phase of changes. 3. Historical perspectives from Europe. 4. The Latin American contribution. 5. Puerto Rico's contribution. 6. Experiences with a digital perspective. 7. Challenges for the new times. 8. The response in Spain and Portugal. 9. The response in Brazil and Puerto Rico. 10. Collaboration spaces. 11. Conclusion. 12. Bibliography. 13. Notes

Translated by **Cruz Alberto Martínez Arcos** (University of London)

1. Introduction

Data on the situation of the education of journalists in Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico [1] during the first decade of the 21st century are coincident and convincing on one issue: the education of journalists in the 21st century is the responsibility, above all, of the universities.

Regardless of the path chosen, there exists in the hypersector of Communication and important citizens sectors the widespread belief that information professionals need, at least, a bachelor's degree or its equivalent to perform the profession. In recent years steps have been taken in this direction, with an important moral impulse in all the European context since 1993, when the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly adopted the European Code of Ethics for the Journalistic Profession, which in its 31st article states: "given the complexity of information process, increasingly based on the use of new technologies, speed and synthesis, journalists should be required to have an adequate professional education".

A quick x-ray of the current panorama tells us that journalism education is present in the universities of the US, Latin America and the European Union, to name three major areas of contemporary societies.

In recent decades the Communication Sciences have won a place in the field of social sciences and have shown good performances when addressing some of the major challenges that emerged after the advent of the Internet. Depending on the country and the traditions, there coexist three trends [2], one that walks hand in hand with the Sociology of Communication, Political Communication, Semiotics and Communication Theory -which is dominant in many European universities-; a second more practical tendency, which is based on the model of many North American schools that designs most education programs to meet the needs of the professional activity; and finally a third trend that seeks a balance between the previous two -several of the new Spanish schools created at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, including the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the University of Santiago de Compostela, follow this model-. The debate about the model to follow has been very present in all universities in the last actualizations to the curricula, which have incorporated subjects related to Internet journalism and some of the latest trends registered in the sector. Now, in the late noughties, these discussions about the models and the presence of current technologies were reopened in the EU countries as a response to the objective set by the universities to adapt their teaching programs to the so called Bologna Process [3]. Since five years ago the major countries of the EU debate, with more or less intensity, about this new project that seeks the unification of some of the aspects of the different countries.

While this is happening in the EU, the Americans continue with their professional model, with short degrees, that incorporates new specialties and strengthens research strategies in some areas, while the Latin Americans update their syllabus and reflect on their model. Some countries like Brazil already have the project to, still with the current system, experiment with a model that includes a degree phase of three years, and a specialization phase of two years. Others, like Puerto Rico, orient their model to the North American context, of which they are dependent for being an associated state. There are, therefore, debates that reflect the common concerns of the different geographical areas for more efficient models to refine the education of journalists and which make constant references to the three models I have previously described.

2. Review of the phase of changes

The approval process of the Communication curricula in European universities occurs at a time of great changes in the sector, with the emergence of new professional responsibilities and renewed content production systems. In the case of journalists, the major changes that have occurred in the hypersector of Communication in the last twenty years have not only forced journalists to “catch up” to work with the tools of the present generation, but have also renewed and refined the professional profiles.

The birth of new media, with the Internet as the paradigm of “total” communication, has caused the need to experiment with languages, formats, etc. Journalists, especially those who have opted for training to acquire the knowledge necessary to work in the so-called Information and Knowledge Society, have had to go into the digitalization, the secrets of computer programming, interactivity, the keys of the multimedia environment, etc. That is how a large number of journalists have won positions on a field originally reserved for technologists. Their commitment has marked the beginning of a journey to successfully overcome the present and future challenges, through two main instruments: the formation of new profiles, which will be provided by the Faculties of Communication Sciences, and the continuing education.

As already noted, after the changes made in academic studies in recent years, a new phase of renovation programs is starting in the European Union. At the moment, the Faculties of Communication Sciences of Spain, most of them with their plans in a draft and assessment stage, are trying to face the new challenge with a quality offer that takes into account the new professional profiles and market demands without forgetting the objective of the University: to educate professionals who can think and investigate, who know and understand the functioning of society, and are prepared for working in the society in which they live.

3. Historical perspectives from Europe

The experience of educating journalists for the past 25 years in different geographical and cultural areas should provide data for the new model demanded by all Communication sectors for the 21st century. As I have said, this is a set of projects that are little homogeneous, at least with regards to Europe, since each country has trained its journalists in different ways. Despite the newly created supranational framework, the EU has not yet taken steps to examine the general aspects of a common education plan for future communicators. Some professional voices of the sector have already demanded this project, but for different purposes. But the truth is that Communication studies arouse increasing interest and universities have increased their attention to this area of study, with the creation of faculties or departments that explain, in the various fields of the Social Sciences, the role of Communication in the new era.

Nobody, or almost nobody, doubts that the social and technological transformations of the past 25 years have created a favorable environment to turn a large number of occupations into specialized professions, most of which have found a niche in a university in need of opening up to society and being more in touch with the trends of the civil society. That is, at least, what has happened in Spain, which in the 1970s introduced journalism to the university - at that moment only in schools offering middle grade training cycles and three-year long diplomas.

However, concern for the education of journalists was born long before the creation of those schools. The Spanish case is a good example. It was the journalist and professor Fernando Araujo, who, in 1887, opened in Salamanca a private course in journalism. He was a person ahead of his time, because in all Europe only in Germany, in 1690, Tobias Peucer developed a thesis and gave several lectures on the training of journalists. This pioneer of academic research on journalism did not have many followers, and for this reason the interest of the academy for Communication and the education of future journalists was not generalized. Despite these initiatives, in Spain there was no school of journalism until 1926. It was started by Madrid's Catholic newspaper *El Debate* (The Debate), which promoted intensive courses through the Galician priest Manuel Graña, trained in journalistic issues in the US. From that moment on, the training of journalists found a new way.

Long before other countries showed interest in taking studies related to journalism to the University. The concern in Europe, especially Germany, for the journalist's role in the 17th Century was not materialized into a project to bring the teaching of journalism to the university. Other European countries neither showed that concern. It was in the US where this interest surfaced earlier, at the end of the 19th century, and resulted in the creation of a large network of universities with Communication Studies in the 20th Century. The passing of time has demonstrated that it has been the Americans who have made the biggest effort to bring the teaching of journalism to university.

In Europe during the 20th century, faculties and departments of communication have gradually been emerging, although we do not really know whether this is to follow the American model or as part of their own movement. The truth is that even today there is a great diversity of variants of the three basic models and that a review of the different countries shows a unique mosaic. In some countries the education of some professionals is still taught in schools and in the media, by veteran professionals.

4. The Latin American contribution

The analysis of the evolution of studies in Latin America is vital for Europe to understand other inputs based on their own experiences outside of the models that inspired them or the models they sought to establish with their own style.

In this sense we should look to Argentina at the point of departure, because it was in this country where, in the early 20th century, the first two schools of journalism were founded and where, in 1940, the National University of La Plata incorporated studies to create the School of Journalism. Likewise, we must focus on Brazil because, at the same time as Argentina, the Brazilians established formal training for journalists. Thus, the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature at the University of Rio de Janeiro, ran courses in journalism over a short period of time until 1939 when this faculty was abolished, and afterwards, in 1943, the University of Brazil, located in Rio de Janeiro, offered courses in journalism. As Eduardo Meditsch explains in several of his works on the study of journalism in Brazil, it was in 1947 when, in this country, through the Casper Libero Foundation, established the first formal degree course in journalism, followed in 1948 by the National Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Brazil, today the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Other schools also date from the early 1940s. This is the case of Cuba, which found it in 1942; of Mexico, which incorporated it in 1943; of Ecuador and Peru, in 1945; Venezuela, in 1947; Colombia, in 1949; Guatemala, in 1952; Chile and Dominican Republic, in 1953; El Salvador, in 1954; Nicaragua, in 1960; Panama, in 1961; Paraguay, in 1965; and Bolivia and Costa Rica, in 1968 [4]. There was therefore an early concern for the education of communicators, which today makes these countries to have experiences of a long period of time which, in many countries, goes back 50 or more years and that has forced them to constantly reflect on how to face the new challenges.

Another point to remember is the spectacular growth of communication studies in Latin America in the last twenty years. The Latin American Federation of Faculties of Social Communication (aka FELAFACS), a non-governmental organization created in 1981 with the aim of bringing together communication schools and contributing to the development of education and professional practice of communication in various areas (and recognized by UNESCO since 1987), provides revealing data on this matter: more than 200 faculties of 23 countries are part of the entity [5]. Moreover, tens of faculties not integrated to the FELAFACS must be added to that number.

From the review that several authors made about the development of these programs in recent years, we can deduce a similar incidence of schools in Spain -two basic and one emerging and in a consolidation phase-, with models that give different degrees of attention to the theoretical contents and professional practice. To explain this position, I will follow in the Latin American case the differentiation of three models made by the Chilean journalist and professor Héctor Vera. This differentiation was applied to the case of Peru by the Peruvian professor and journalist Juan Gargurevich, who differentiates between culturalist, professional, and communicational plans.

The human or culturalist model considers that the best communicator is the best educated, and thus insists on courses of social sciences and humanities; whereas the practical professional model emphasizes the practical aspects, in line with the recommendations of the Inter American Press Association; while the communication model understands journalism as a variant of communication, with the aim of educating professionals trained in various aspects and then focus the attention on a particular specialization [6]. There is much more information on the origin and consolidation of communication studies at university, with attention to the education of journalists, which shows some common concerns and debates about these models.

I will not dwell on details because this suffices to justify the starting point of this comparative analysis. In fact, the outline given here about the past of Europe, with references to Spain and Germany, and about the beginnings in Latin America -both in the Lusophone and Hispanic areas-, with contextual data from the time of emergence, help us to debate at the present time, when it is very necessary to analyze all the steps taken and the mistakes made, and seek solutions to overcome the present situation. This is also the time to look ahead and to discuss the new challenges, the implications of the network society for the technologically-mediated communication, the coexistence of the media with the horizontal communication networks, and to analyze new challenges that will face the journalists.

5. Puerto Rico's contribution

The experience of Puerto Rico is unique in the Latin American context because of its location, cultural tradition and its current status as US's *Free Associated State and Commonwealth*. Although Puerto Rico was not the first at integrating communication studies to university in the Latin American and Caribbean context -it did it in 1971 when it integrated the masters and bachelor degrees (the later officially designated in 1977)- its evolution in recent years has made it a unique case. After being born in a university context with Latin American and European references, its steps in recent years are directed, within the framework of the country's education policy, towards an increased formal standardization with the North American model, particularly in relation to the formal aspects.

The policy of recent years has marked a plan of restructuration and strategic objectives to be achieved by 2016. The

University of Puerto Rico [7] followed that project, in the case of communication, through a strategic plan executed by the School of Communication of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus. This school, which was directed in February 2010 by Dr. Eliseo Colon, known researcher in the field of Communication and Culture, joined the plan with its own proposal of revision of the three programs in offer and in 2007 received all the approvals to begin their implementation in 2007-2008. The objective of these programs is focused on ensuring that students receive wide general information in various disciplines so that they have a solid academic and cultural foundation, as well as ensuring that students develop from an ethical perspective the sense of social responsibility that should identify any professional of communication.

The new programs -with a part open to the general basic education established by the university for all students, a second part of free choice content, and finally a part of mandatory content- maintain a broad scientific and humanistic foundation to understand the functioning of modern society, while incorporating content from digital journalism and the most innovative and dynamic fields of modern communication. The end result is an updated model that keeps the roots where they have always been, in the Latin American and Caribbean context, but also applies characteristics of the US model, in order to get recognition and being at the same level of the education projects per excellence in today's society.

The most immediate objective of the renewed programs is to formalize the request for the accreditation of its three programs of communication and get it, after taking steps to meet the formal requirements set by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). This recognition, which at the moment, in 2010, within the Latin America context is only held by the Catholic University of Chile, is a qualitative leap and sets new objectives for the quality of schools in this area. It is therefore a new path that also helps us to further reflect on the evolution of the education of journalists in the digital age.

6. Experiences with digital perspective

we can take a look at the future, especially, by analyzing some of the interesting contributions of the Latin American and European universities. Some schools, apart from the evaluations of their degrees, have made some analyses through research groups, with the subsequent publication of scientific articles, which allows us to have different points of view to learn from past experiences. In the texts I have reviewed [8] there is a consensus on the concerns for: the development of what is established in the syllabus; the quality controls of teaching and research; the incorporation of new subjects that meet the demands of the current media map and the complexity of the information and knowledge society; the relationship with the industry without being dependent of it; courses of thematic or media-platform specialization; and participation in international networks to exchange experiences.

The results of the first steps of the education in digital journalism are very present in most of the reflections of Spanish and Latin American scholars. It is important to remember that in 2000, Professor Ramón Salaverría publicly exposed [9] his criteria for the training of Internet journalists. At that moment, the Professor from the University of Navarra argued that it was necessary that the education programs were aimed at ensuring the training of journalists who understand digital technologies as co-natural tools for any journalist activity. Salaverría joined the voice of Javier Díaz Noci [10], in several books and conferences, and representatives of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the University of Santiago de Compostela, among others. Some Latin American voices have also attracted attention since the first time the education of journalists for the digital age started. In this sense, without a doubt one of the main contributions, after the investigation and reflection, have been those made by Elias Machado and Marcos Palacios [11], who defended with data from the beginning of the new decade that the education of Internet journalism has become a necessity since this new form of journalism was consolidated. They insisted on the defense of specific methodologies and on linking the research and teaching. For them, the technological basis behind the Internet journalism highlights the vocation for applied research and technological innovation, until that moment almost non-existent. These postulates about the need to revitalize and somehow reinvent journalism education are quite consistent with those postulates advocated by Marcial Murciano [12], in Spain, Marques de Melo [13] in Brazil, and Jorge Pedro Sousa in Portugal [14], to name some of the authors who have written the largest number of articles on these matter.

7. Challenges for the new times

The computerization of the newsroom and the incorporation of digital technology have revealed the beginning of a new era for the media. Now, with the convergence of telecommunications, computing, and content, no one doubts that we face a new scenario where the old paradigms are ineffective and where the citizens seem willing to demand more social mediators. From the beginning, communication studies experienced major changes in the curricula, which show the tension between the search of the increasing foundation at the scientific level, the disciplinary autonomy, the professional specialization, and the contextualization in the socio-cultural and historical-political processes [15]. And now, in the third millennium, keeping this general approach, different institutions concerned with the quality agree that it is necessary to take a leap forward to address the challenges of the digital age.

As a first response to the new challenges, I have explained that in the past two decades the faculties of communication have had to update their programs and have done so in accordance with market demands and the requirements of a good education to overcome current and future challenges. Much of the work of changing the curricula is based on the criteria of efficiency, and in accordance with what happens in the communication hypersector, and is focused on overcoming the challenges of the Communication Sciences in the current scientific landscape. This has been the case in Portugal, Spain, Brazil and Puerto Rico, although it is true that in each case there have remained singularities according to the existing tradition of each country [16].

In fact, most schools for communicators in Portugal, Spain, Brazil and Puerto Rico have made efforts to maintain an approach to the reality of the sector and to respond to new education needs of students. The result has been the

maintenance of disciplines from other scientific areas -sociology, philology, history, economics, etc.-, but also the strengthening of the presence of specific communication contents, both theoretical and practical. It was an open road with good results, judging by the evaluation of the various social actors and reports by external experts who have evaluated the qualifications in recent years.

This phase of incorporation of subjects related to the Internet and new media, as well as a review of the relations with the media and the active sectors of civil society, is a constant, with greater or lesser extent, both in the Lusophone area -especially in Brazil and Portugal- and the Hispanic area -Argentina, Colombia, Spain, Mexico and Venezuela-. There are important differences in each country, that are not the main object of this analysis [17], but in all cases the educational authorities share, at least formally, a concern for knowing results about the different models to try to move forward with proposals that ensure the path to academic excellence, an essential objective for a contemporary and entrepreneurial university.

After having overcome the objective of locating the Communication Sciences in their place at the university and guided the frames of the main models of academic programs, many schools of the abovementioned countries -especially the Spanish schools- suggest that perhaps it is time to increase the debate in different areas of society outside communication and that maybe is time to extend the actualization of the academic programs to all levels of the communication and academic worlds. This debate should produce the outline of the innovation program of educational, which should contemplate both the future graduates and those already working in the hypersector. And, for the latter, it is necessary to meet their demands and, therefore, to develop proposals for continuing education.

The proponents of this theory, most of them in charge of faculties at Spanish universities, believe that if we can get closer to what happens in the communication sector and the tendencies of the new professional profiles, we shall know how to develop an innovative program to educate the new journalists that are needed in the new era that is about to begin. These new journalists will need a good general education to understand what happens in society and how it works, as well as a good specialized education to work with contemporary tools.

8. The response in Spain and Portugal

The actualization of the academic programs at the universities of Spain and Portugal that offer journalism studies is marked, in this first decade of the new millennium, by the plans implemented in both countries to adapt the university model to the European higher education system. Since the beginning of the 21st century, in both countries there were debates about what constituted the new model and about the variants that could be introduced in it. However, Spain and Portugal worked at different pace and, finally, some Portuguese schools streamlined the implementation and application of the new plans, resulting in a three-years program of education to obtain the bachelor's degree -180 credits-, while Spain, more slowly, is right now approving the plans to provide bachelor degrees in four years -240 credits-, which will be run the next academic year.

In the discussions in Portugal there was a tendency to keep the specifications of journalism as a university degree, and to promote academic programs combining theory and practice. Some schools, such as the private Fernando Pessoa University, quickly established the model. It was the beginning of a new era led, based in the experiences gained in recent years, by very competitive schools with determination to address current challenges -like the public universities of Braga, Lisbon, Aveiro, Beira Interior, to name a few-. In other words, the subjects of the new programs included transversal content of the changes occurred in the ICT sector, and new subjects were added to seek the greatest possible harmony with the sector, especially in research fields which have considerably advanced in the recent years.

A similar line is being followed in Spain, where the conference of deans of faculties of communication prepared a document based on which each university began its work to materialize the objectives of the so-called European model. Some institutions, like the Carlos III University, had already approved their curricula by June 2008, and defended a harmonious coexistence between the theoretical and practical contents, as mechanisms of interrelation between them, with the establishment of practical labs and research proposals closely related to the main aims of the academic program. Therefore in recent years there is a continuity of steps aimed to strengthen that third way previously described: a balance between theory and practice, but without getting caught by the interests of the main companies of the sector.

It must be said that some EU countries started the reformation of the curricula in early 2010 in accordance with the Bologna Process, while others had already implemented it years ago throughout the first decade of the third millennium. Although the implementation keeps moving forward at different paces across the EU -some countries of our Iberian area, such as Italy and France, did it much earlier-, and so countries have not agreed on university degrees of three or four years -everyone has to meet the minimum of credits, set between 180 and 240 [18], but they can choose the number of years-, everything seems to indicate that we are at a stage that opens many perspectives, at least towards an easier recognition and approval of degrees among EU countries and towards the creation of collaboration plans to advance on joint projects in the area of higher education. Thus, what is certain is that from now on, the four most important and influential EU countries -Germany, France, Britain and Italy, which signed the Declaration of La Sorbonne, the precedent of Bologna-, with very different university systems, will have a model that will unify them in some basic aspects.

With regards to communication studies, there is a greater focus on programs, although with many plans with an eminently theoretical project and others more related to practice, according to the tradition of each university and the influence of each department. And together, we can conclude that, apart from important differences that persist among many plans, there is a first result: the commitment to the education of Journalism at the University is consolidated in these plans and there is a significant number of universities, especially in Spain and Portugal, working to improve the

offer of education for journalists with theoretical and practical training, with graduates who know how to work and have skills and competencies in the field of journalism.

9. The response in Brazil and Puerto Rico

The role of Brazil in the field of Communications of the 21st Century is particularly relevant not only because of the number of universities offering these courses but also because of the quality of research undertaken in recent years by some of their most qualified teachers. The data indicate that, at the end of 2007, Brazil surpassed the six hundred courses in communication, largely with training in journalism, with thirty post-graduate programs (MA and PhD) in the area of communication [19]. And in this context, journalism studies are oriented towards a greater specialization, with offers of master and doctoral degrees in journalism approved by the Capes, the organ of the Ministry of Education, which assesses the post-graduate programs.

In fact, in August 2007 the first master's degree specialized in journalism began in Brazil, at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, coordinated by Professor Eduardo Meditsch. This gave continuity to the line of masters and doctoral studies started in the 1980s by the University of São Paulo under the direction of Professor José Marques de Melo, which lost weight later in successive internal reforms, and the Masters and Ph.D. in Communication with a line of research called "Journalism and Society" offered by the University of Brasilia. That was how, after different phases and successive debates, Brazil recovered in recent years the connection lines with the professional stage, with the commitment to provide all universities with communication studies with laboratories to conduct practical classes. This important change came with the minimum curriculum model of 1984, which increased the duration of courses from three to four years and established a minimum of 2700 hours/classroom for its completion [20].

Since the 1990s, it was noticeable in Brazil the growing importance of Communication studies and a greater concern for the quality of these courses, as well as a tendency towards the increase of post-graduate degrees and of journalism in these programs, while the subject Theories of Journalism was becoming increasingly important in the universities [21]. This was the way to the current situation, when several universities were already working more intensity in the field of journalism and looked for ways to achieved specialized education, always within the framework allowed by the Brazilian government for higher education. These campaigns for the specialized education were a constant in recent years in the National Federation of Journalists and among several officers of professional organizations that advocated for specialized higher education in journalism as the necessary condition for the quality of journalism [22].

As for Puerto Rico, although the number of universities providing communication is very small –from the private schools, the Sacred Heart University also offers these studies and a master's degree in digital journalism-, the history of the School of Communication at the University of Puerto Rico, the oldest and most prestigious university of the island, is marked by the achievement of objectives which progressively have improved the academic offer and students' education, with the sights set on the establishment of a Ph.D. program, still pending, and on the recognition and approval by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). The concern for quality has been present in debates at that university, particularly for the development of the current academic offer, which they have started in the late noughties.

In early 2010 the School of Communication, at the University of Puerto Rico, in Rio Piedras campus, maintains the offer of two areas of specialization in the master's degree: they are journalism and research theory. It also offers the B.A degrees in Public Relations and Advertising, Audiovisual Communication, and Information and Journalism, which is structured in such way that students can finish it in four years. After updating the program and formally adapting it to the American model, now the challenge of this school is to obtain the recognition of external assessment bodies, especially in the cultural and legal contexts that frame education in this Caribbean country.

10. Collaboration spaces

In the "big picture" perspective of the recent years that we have described in Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico there are some similarities and important differences, both in evolution and in the situation they are currently experiencing. In all four countries there is a long tradition of Communication studies at university -of more than two decades-, with attention, among other issues, to the education of journalists, with more or less specific programs, and with important contributions to the field of scientific research, with studies on the media system, the media discourse in each country, the journalistic discussions, and the impact on users of the media messages.

We found then a strong basis to address challenges with informed knowledge and very different experiences harvested over the years. This good basis for cooperation should not prevent us from noticing the important differences both between Spain and Portugal -although both adopted the Bologna model, Spain will begin to teach four-years undergraduate degrees, whereas Portugal is already offering three-years undergraduate degrees- and with Brazil, where Communication studies with specialization in Journalism predominate, and where, amid debates about the degree, projects of post-graduate programs in journalism are emerging.

This is the recovery of a pathway that increases the avenues of approximation to the Spanish and Portuguese model, while maintaining the specificities of the Brazilian model, which has shown strength in both the educative field -the number and quality of federal universities- and the capacity of production of scientific research in communication and,

specifically, in Journalism. There are also differences with Puerto Rico, with its open model that has also imitated the US model, and can be completed, in most cases, in four years.

The best collaboration happens, then, by strengthening the channels of communication to better understand the models that are applied in Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico -especially in those schools that evaluate their qualifications, are subject to national and international external controls, and reach the level of excellence. No doubt there are interesting contributions on both sides of the pond to face the actualization processes that lies ahead, because the academic programs have a basic skeleton, some fundamental and compulsory subjects that hardly change, and with some elective subjects that will require constant changes, in accordance with the trends and the future innovations.

In addition to the updating of transversal content on the fundamental and mandatory subjects, the new professional profiles and the renovated process of specialization -both thematic, and of products and tools applied to the field of journalism- will force this constant updating assumed by planners [23] of the four countries analyzed for this study. In the case of Brazil, the federal universities have substantial autonomy to undertake these specific changes of subjects in programs -they only require the approval of the federal bodies of each university-, while in Portugal and Spain the changes will also depend on the rhythms set by the universities, according to the results they get and the evaluations they are submitted to. In Puerto Rico an implementation and analysis phase for the current model has been set up and will last until 2016 -at the University of Puerto Rico, the most important one.

Brazil's major model -which now rests on four-years bachelors' degrees, two-years master's degrees, and three-years Ph.D. degrees-, has offered solid results. However, after the federal authorities' initiatives in education, the model will be completed with a new option that, in an experimental form and in parallel, can be implemented to test other formulas. This is an interdisciplinary three-year "bachelor" degree in which the student can choose between a wide range of subjects. Then, the student, according to the rules, can take a course of specialization, with a profile focused on the professional market and very practical education, or a master's degree that is less oriented to the professional activity and with more openness to the doctoral and research worlds.

This model, which is very open because allows students to choose many different subjects, is a new route that, when it was announced, gave rise to suspicion and rejection, particularly because of the loss of specialization that communication studies may have, which somehow can be a step backwards on the gains made in the last thirty years, while at the same time it is understood as threatening the quality of the professional education in journalism [24]. This option has, therefore, contributed to promoting the process of reflection and debate about journalism studies in Brazil, through a process qualified as a "liberalization plan" in the field of education following the election of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva that surprised the entities in the area of journalism -organizations of researchers, journalists and professors [25].

In any case, recent debates in Brazil about the education of journalists have been marked by the decision of the Brazil's Supreme Federal Court to put an end to the requirement of the university diploma to exercise journalism professionally. The decision, in June of 2009, led to the emergence of a new issue in the debate on the education of journalists. Various professional bodies expressed their disagreement and the commission itself formed by the Ministry of Education to set the new curricular guidelines of journalism courses defended the need for higher qualifications for journalists. The debate remains open in 2010 and there are initiatives to try to change the situation. And in terms of education, there continues the search for models, some based more on the specialty and others with more open proposals -where students are better able to choose subjects in their university education.

11. Conclusion

The importance of Communication studies in Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico is ever growing. In recent years, in the four countries the number of degrees, and students enrolled, and the scientific production in this area have experienced a growth that can be regarded as remarkable [26]. To this steady growth, that still continues today, it seems necessary to add a dose of reflection on the nature of the education offered, to try to establish improvement plans. This is what the major universities of the four countries (based on the number of professors, students as well as the volume of scientific production) are defending: the road to excellence and an introduction of mechanisms to ensure better quality.

Some reflections to improve quality have been produced in the four countries, coinciding with the phase prior to the introduction of the Bologna model in Spain [27] and Portugal [28]; in Brazil [29] and in Puerto Rico [30], to mark the initiatives for the specialized education of journalism and for the implementation of post-graduate and PhD courses in journalism. It was a good preface to a discussion that should be continued because the answer to the challenges, regardless of the choice made by each country and each university, is not definitive and should be updated according to changes in the industry and the new needs arising from time to time in their respective societies. In seeking contributions, which must come from all areas of society, an important role must be played by all members of the current schools, the educational authorities, the reports of external evaluation bodies, the main social actors, and the academic and research networks established in recent years. The open collaboration channels between Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico have not only enabled a better mutual understanding, but have also helped to promote discussions to analyze the routes to facilitate the coming together of the respective syllabus but without making the existing programs in each country to lose personality and fail to meet the demands and traditions of their political and social contexts. It is, therefore, time to try to get the most out of these experiences also for the future improvement of the syllabus for journalists on both sides of the pond. And in this role, certainly the experience of Galicia in the education of communicators aims to play an important role because of its involvement in the Lusophone and Hispanic areas, both in the education field and in the professional organizations of professors and researchers [31].

The data indicate that the current curricula for the education of journalists in Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico have many similarities within the diversity of models and the mosaic of cases that represents the map of universities with communication studies in each of these countries. There are key subjects that are integrated in all syllabus, there are systems of relation between theory and practice that appear in most of the syllabuses, there are projects for the end of studies in the programs of these countries, and there are concerns shared by the directors of the schools of the four countries, particularly for finding a higher quality of teaching and the organization of constant actualization systems for the programs.

The latest actualization has been marked largely by digitalization, the Internet and new forms of communication. But they are not the only changes and the priority must remain to be the quality of teaching and research. And this is a challenge shared by all universities seeking excellence which, judging by the results of research work published in recent years in scientific journals on the education of journalists, are many in these countries.

The strong identity of journalism as a field of knowledge, recognized by the general lines of the curricula of Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico, as well as by most Latin American universities and by many others from European countries, is the main reason for this common path of exchanges and coordinated efforts to improve education curricula and the quality of journalism teaching.

The second major via of collaboration is around the design and monitoring of doctoral programs, which in Spain and Portugal are being designed according to the European model of higher education. These programs seek to give continuity to the specific lines of Journalism, Advertising and Audiovisual Communication, which have been given in recent years at universities in these two countries. In both countries there are specific journalism programs that allow feeding lines of research in the field of journalism, where Brazil also wants to open new projects with the creation of the first specialized PhD in journalism [32]. The via of the master's degree is also part of the short-term 2010 projects of Puerto Rico -following the approval by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) [33].

Judging from the picture painted by this comparative analysis of the evolution of communication studies in the four countries, with special emphasis on journalism, the data point out similarities and differences that, at least, encourage a greater exchange of information and a monitoring of the on-going experiences to collaborate with the main goal shared by researchers and professors of three countries: to improve the education of journalists in accordance with the needs of the twenty-first century society, in a digital environment, with highly complex processes occurring in the spheres of the world, and with the challenge of building a more conversational journalism to the service of the citizens.

This challenge is perfectly described by the prestigious veteran Brazilian researcher in Journalism, Marques de Melo [34]: "It is about corresponding to the expectations of the Brazilian society, when entering the digital age, demanding skilled professionals for the media industries. This is the battle we have to articulate, as educators, at the start of a new century" [35]. What Marques de Melo pointed out for Brazil can be expanded for Puerto Rico, Portugal, Spain and the whole European Union.

It is therefore a shared objective and to make it a reality it is possible to articulate joint ventures from the Ibeoramerican universities that can benefit the European and American societies. And Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Puerto Rico have experiences and debates that, based on the comparative studies on education in these countries, allow us to conclude that an increased collaboration is desirable in order to overcome this shared challenge. The existence of several research and education networks in the year 2010 is the best proof that this is a way that offers good results and that there is still room to increase the collaboration in the Euro-American space in order to improve the education of communicators with programs that successfully combine theory and practice.

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13. Notes

[1] This article is an extension of a study of the cases of Brazil, Spain and Portugal. This time we extended the analysis to the case of Puerto Rico, with the analysis of the offer of the School of Communication at the University of Puerto Rico (which is public and the oldest and most prestigious on the island) because of the situation in this country in the American landscape, with a strong tradition of the Spanish presence in some models and its status of state associated to the US. It is necessary to remember that from the first years of the new millennium, the University of Puerto Rico began a process of revising its plans for a major adaptation in some formal, and sometimes conceptual, aspects, to the North American model. One of the most significant cases is the School of Communication at the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras campus, which, under the direction of Professor Eliseo Colón Zayas, is in a very dynamic phase and is among those that have advanced the most in the project of applying for accreditation of their *Bachelor* programs to the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). This article was prepared during the academic and research stay I undertook in February 2010 in the School of Communication at the University of Puerto Rico. Part of this paper is the verbatim reproduction of the results of the first study of the training of journalists in Spain, Portugal and Brazil, which was previously published.

[2] Most authors pay particular attention to the first two trends and rightly because they are the ones that are most defined and have the most extensive tradition in the academic practice. Professor Javier Díaz Noci reminded us of the bases of these two main schools in a recent article entitled "Hipertexto y redacción periodística: ¿un nuevo campo de investigación?" (Journalistic hypertext and writing: a new field of research?), which was published in *Sala de Prensa*, N. 104 (Year X, Vol 4, June 2008). The article is available online at www.saladeprensa.org.

[3] The document known as the Bologna Declaration is a joint text of the European Ministers of Education about the European Higher Education Area, from June 19, 1999, which develops the ideas of the previous declaration of *La Sorbonne*, of May 25, 1998, which stressed the central role of universities in the European dimension. The Bologna Declaration sets out the objectives that Ministers consider most relevant to the establishment of the European Higher Education Area and for the worldwide promotion of the European higher education system. It establishes a common framework and provides the basis for enhancing the mobility of professors and students. The document is available at: <http://universidades.universia.es/fuentes-info/documentos/bolonia.htm>.

[4] The data on the first schools of journalism in Latin America are collected from the interesting work done by the Red ICOD (Iberamerican Network of Digital Communication), entitled "Digital Communication. Professional skills and academic challenges". Available online at: <http://www.icod.ubi.pt/home.html>. The data on the establishment of the first courses in journalism in Brazil in 1947 can be found on Eduardo Meditsch's article "A qualidade do ensino na perspectiva do jornalismo: dos anos 1980 ao início do novo século", published in the collective book "Ensino de Comunicação", published by Intercom and ECA-USP in 2007.

[5] These data is contained in the FELAFACS website: <http://www.felafacs.org>.

[6] Héctor Vera published an article in the magazine *Diálogos de la Comunicación* ("The quality of information and the educational model", 1998, pages 79-22, N. 51) where he set these criteria, which was later applied by other authors, like Juan Gargurevich to the case of Peru in an article published in *Sala de Prensa* ("What is journalism and how to teach it", 2001, April, N. 30). Gargurevich's article is available online at: <http://www.saladeprensa.org/art214.htm>.

[7] The document "University Vision 2016", approved by the academic senate of *Rio Piedras* in October 2006, sets the path to achieve academic and services programs that are characterized by excellence, leadership, relevance and dynamism, "and that respond to the highest standards", according to the document written by the same university and which contains the full text of the Strategic Plan.

[8] Some of the articles have been published in recent years in magazines such as *Zer*, *Estudios del Mensaje Periodístico*, *Ámbitos*, *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, *Chasqui*, *Diálogos de la Comunicación*, and *Comunicacao e Sociedade*, among others, as well as in the minutes of congresses or scientific meetings, which are then published in book chapters written by authors like, for instance, Salaverría, Elías Machado, Jorge Pedro Sousa, Marques de Melo, Marcos Palacios, Manuel Pinto, Emilio Prado and Marcial Murciano, among others.

[9] Ramon Salaverría participated in the National Congress of Digital Journalism, held in Huesca on January 14 and 15, 2010, with a paper entitled "Criteria for the education of journalists in the digital age". The text is available online at:

<http://www.unav.es/fcom/mmlab/mmlab/investig/crite.htm>.

[10] Javier Díaz Noci, after publishing several books on journalism in the Koldo Meso network, in which both authors analyze the evolution of the cyber journalism in all areas, participated in several conferences to defend the education of digital journalists. As an example, let's remember that in 2002, in the Second Conference on Digital Journalism at the Cardinal Herrera University of Valencia, he intervened to explain the presence of journalism studies at that university and the challenges they were facing in the field. Some information about his intervention and the conference are available http://www.universia.es/html_estatico/portada/actualidad/noticia_actualidad/param/noticia/dgaeb.html online at: <http://www.ehu.es/diaz-noci/Conf/0.htm>. The presentation of Javier Díaz Noci is available on his personal page in the conference section at the following address: <http://www.ehu.es/diaz-noci/Conf/0.htm>.

[11] The two authors have prepared a text on the experience of the MACOM-UFBA (1995-2005) in the teaching of Digital journalism, which they presented and defended at the 5th Iberamerican Congress of Journalism on the Internet, held on 24 and 25 November 2004 in Salvador da Bahia. The full text can be found online at: http://www.periodistaseninternet.org/docto_congresos-antiores/VcongresoBrasil/AIAPI_Machado_Marcos_Palacios.pdf.

[12] Marcial Murciano is a former dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the first president of the Conference of Deans of Communication of the Spanish Faculties of Communication Sciences. He addressed the report of elaborated at Conference of Deans for the ANECA on the communication degrees (available online at: <http://ccc-web.uab.es/pr.aneca.comunicacion/documentos.htm>), and participated in several forums to expose basic criteria for the education of journalists in Spain (one of the forums was the 12th Latin American Meeting of Faculties of Social Communication, held in Bogotá on September 25 and 28, 2006).

[13] José Marques de Melo published an article on the challenges of the education of journalists in 2007, which was entitled "Reinventar o ensino de jornalismo: desafio inadiável no alvorecer do século XXI" and appeared in the magazine *Liberio de Sao Paulo* (volume 10, number 19, June 2007, pp. 9-15).

[14] In the last years, this professor from the Fernando Pessoa University organizes the annual International Conferences on Journalism, which always examine the challenges of the today's journalism and the aspects related to the education of the future information professionals. In addition, Jorge Pedro Sousa, in 2004, in the 2nd Luso-Galician Congress of Communication and Culture in the table on "Challenges of today's communication", which highlighted the need to change the education plans for journalists.

[15] This statement is contained in the investigation undertaken by the Red ICOD entitled "Digital communication. Professional skills and academic challenges" (available online at: <http://www.icod.ubi.pt/home.html>).

[16] Here I am referring to a greater or lesser presence of practical subjects –all have incorporated the practical subjects-, to a greater or lesser connection with the Humanities or the Social Sciences -all included subjects from the Humanities and Social Sciences-, to a greater or lesser presence of foreign languages -English has been integrated in almost all-, and the names of the subjects –here is where there is more variety.

[17] The data analyzed prior to the writing of this work have been those related to the evolution of academic programs in Brazil, Spain and Portugal from 1995 until June 2008. For the Spanish case, I examined the report prepared by the Conference of Deans of Communication for the ANECA, while for Portugal and Brazil I reviewed academic articles and official information provided by the Portuguese and Brazilian authorities on education matters. In the case of Puerto Rico, I reviewed the program approved in 2007.

[18] The short degrees in the Bologna model -the European higher education system- are called Bachelor and are between 180 and 240 credits, distributed in three or four years. Long degrees are one or two years longer, that is, 300 credits, and are called Master degrees. To begin the writing of the thesis students must have studied 300 credits.

[19] The data comes from the monitoring carried out by Professor Eduardo Meditsch, from the Federal University of Santa Catarina, which were provided in an interview with the National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ) and posted on its website (<http://www.fenaj.org.br/materia.php?id=1739>). With data from the Ministry of Education, Meditsch recalled that the number of courses in Communication in Brazil increased from 126 to 839 in ten years, in the period between 1995 and 2005. The full reference can be found in Eduardo Meditsch's article "A qualidade do ensino na perspectiva do jornalismo: dos anos 1980 ao início do novo século", published by the collective book *Ensino de Comunicação*, published by Intercom and ECA-USP in 2007.

[20] The data comes from Eduardo Meditsch's "A qualidade do ensino na perspectiva do jornalismo: dos anos 1980 ao início do novo século", included in the monograph *Ensino de Comunicação* published by Intercom.

[21] Several scholars confirm this trend. In particular, Manuel Luis Petrik and Jacques A. Wainberg, who published the study "A Estado da arte da pesquisa em jornalismo no Brasil: 1983-1997", where they warned of the growing importance of this discipline and post-graduate studies in communication. The work was published in Porto Alegre's magazine *Famecos* (N. 11, December 1999) and is also available online at: <http://www.pucrs.br/famecos/pos/revfamecos/11/jacques.pdf>.

[22] One of the clearest defences I heard during my stay at the Federal University of Bahia in June 2008 was one by

the newly elected president of the National Forum of Professors of Journalism, Edson Luiz Spenthof, journalist and former President of the Journalists Guild of Goiás. His arguments presented in the interviews of the FENAJ and can be found at the following address: <http://www.fenaj.org.br/>.

[23] Those committed to making the necessary reviews without excessive changes, but without turning the academic programs into static and non-adapted to current reality in the world of Communication and Journalism, are: the authorities of the Ministry of Education of Brazil, through CAPES (<http://portal.mec.gov.br/>), the projects of the officials of the Ministry of Science and Innovation (<http://www.micinn.es/>), the programs of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation in Spain (<http://www.aneca.es/quees/queesplan07.asp>), the Portuguese authorities of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (http://www.portugal.gov.pt/Portal/PT/Governos/Governos_Constitucionais/GC17/Ministerios/MCTES/), and the organization most directly concerned, the Directorate General of Higher Education (<http://www.dges.mctes.pt/DGES/pt/OfertaFormativa/CursosConferentesDeGrau/>).

[24] Encontro Anual do Fórum de Professores, held in 2006 in Campos dos Goytacazes, called for the immediate suspension of the system and the creation of a negotiating round. The three entities in the area of journalism -FENAJ (Guild), FNPJ (professors) and SBPJor (researchers)- also let the Government know their opposition to the project. However, since 2008 the universities already obtained the go-ahead for its implementation. Moreover, the rector of the Federal University of Bahia has expressed his intention to experiment with this system, without removing the existing system in all public faculties of communications that have laboratories and strong presence of communication contents in the academic offer.

[25] This surprise is explained by Professor Eduardo Meditsch in his article "A qualidade do ensino na perspectiva do jornalismo: dos anos 1980 ao início do novo século" included in the monograph *Ensino de Comunicação* published by the INTERCOM. Meditsch notes, on page 135 of his work, that in 2003, with the change of government in Brazil, the Labour Party (PT) took over the Ministry of Education and "opposing all expectations generated by the first election of Lula", not only maintained the position of liberalization but also expanded it.

[26] The investigation previous to this article collected reports from the authorities in the area of higher education in the three countries, in the report for ANECA prepared by the conference of deans of the faculties of Communication Sciences of Spain and data collected by Professor Eduardo Meditsch, in Brazil. The reports on the evolution of higher education in the three countries present the increase in the number of faculties offering communication studies, with the speciality in Journalism, and the increasing number of students.

[27] We should note the importance of the creation in Spain, on 19 July 2002, of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), whose mission is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of the higher education system, through the assessment, certification and accreditation of academic programs, professors, and institutions, and therefore also to assess the degrees in communication.

[28] Regarding Portugal we should emphasize the international assessment program for higher education, presented by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education in December 2005. The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was commissioned to carry out this initiative in 2006 and this has been an important step forward in controlling the quality of higher education.

[29] Professor Marques de Melo understands that the struggle to improve the quality of education in Brazil began in 1981 with the EMDECOM -Movement in the Defense of Communication Degrees-, to prevent the destabilization of the existing courses in the country. And from that moment on, there have been many initiatives, as Claudia Peixoto de Moura explains in her article "Padrões de qualidade para o ensino de comunicação no Brasil", included in the compilation *Ensino de Comunicação* (Intercom and ECA-USP, 2007). Claudia Peixoto also indicates that the external evaluation of the degree of social communication, with training in journalism, was first performed in 1998 and that in 2004 the National System of Higher Education Evaluation (SINAES) was created to evaluate institutions and degrees.

[30] In the case of Puerto Rico, the review papers from the University of Río Piedras explain the need for assessments and the pursuit of excellence. The documents submitted by the School of Communication also indicate the need to achieve accreditation and improve the quality levels according to international standards.

[31] In Galicia there is the Galician Association of Researchers in Communication (AGACOM, www.agacom.org), which is chaired by Margarita Ledo Andión and is part of the Lusophone Federation for Communication Sciences (LUSOCOM, www.intercom.org.br/lusocom), also presided by Professor Ledo in 2008. Margarita Ledo Andión, Chair Professor of Audiovisual Communication, is also part of the Spanish Association of Communication Research (AE-IC, www.ae-ic.org), of which she is first vice president in 2010. Margarita Ledo Andión and other Galician researchers maintain an active networking presence with Brazil and Portugal, as well as Latin America, Europe, and North America. This study of education in four countries is part of a project to analyze the panorama of the education of communicators in the Latin American context.

[32] The proposal was made by Professor Elías Machado in a presentation given at the meeting of the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Journalism, held in Brasilia in 2007, entitled "As possibilidades para uma formação pós-graduada em jornalismo e a situação da pós-graduação em Comunicação". In his text, Elias Machado explains that with more than 171,000 enrolled in the 337 degree courses -in the area of communication the total enrolment at that time reached 197,068-, the sub-area of journalism is among those with more graduates in the country, with more than 28,000 new professionals each year. Therefore, he believes that the new doctorate, which the Federal University of Santa Catarina seeks to provide, is necessary.

[33] Professor Eliseo Colón, director of the School of Communication, confirmed this objective in February 2010, in an interview for this job. The project of the master degree is also included in the official records of Rio Piedras campus.

[34] Professor José Marques de Melo is a leader in teaching and research in Brazil, with recognition in different fields of Communication Sciences. Marques de Melo led the School of Communications and Arts at the University of Sao Paulo (ECA-USP) and in 2008 became the president of the Brazilian Society of Interdisciplinary Studies in Communication (Intercom).

[35] The text of Marques de Melo, translated for this reference, includes in its last part "The battle of quality in teaching communication: new (old) challenges", which is the contribution of the Chair professor of the UNESCO program Methods of Communication for the Regional Development, for the compilation *Ensino de Comunicação*, 2007, published by the Intercom and the ECA-USP.

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