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**Publizistik**

ISSN 0033-4006

Publizistik

DOI 10.1007/s11616-016-0306-4



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# Communication teaching and research in Spain

## The calm and the storm

Esteban López-Escobar · Manuel Martín Algarra

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### 1 Introduction

As in other countries, the origin of communication studies in Spain is strongly linked to training programs for professional journalists (Delia 1987, pp. 73–77). We will begin these pages with a historical overview of communication studies in Spain before they became part of university education and research at schools, departments, and undergraduate or postgraduate degrees within the higher educational system.

Until the 1940s, media professionals and their training in Spain received no attention either from the education authorities or from the professional body of journalists. Most of the latter were self-educated writers, better known for their journalistic activity and personality than for their literary work. The growing importance of newspapers in political, cultural and social life at the end of the nineteenth century meant that the earliest suggestions concerning formal training in journalism arose around that time (Cantavella 2005, pp. 34–37). In the first quarter of the twentieth century, Terren Palacin (n. d.) published a booklet titled *La carrera de la prensa* (The press career). He advocated formal training to work at newspapers, and suggested a specific program to teach the profession to the journalists-to-be. In 1926, a Catholic daily newspaper, *El Debate*, created a school of journalism inside its newsroom (Graña 1930). Both the newspaper and the school were closed in 1936 at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (Vigil y Vázquez 1987, pp. 33–63).

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## 2 A period of controlled calm

In the middle of the war, in April 1938, the military government passed a Press Act strongly inspired by Italian fascist laws. It established several means of control of the mass media by the state, including prior censorship, the appointment of newspapers editors, compulsory official registration of journalists, and in 1941 led to the creation of the “Escuela Oficial de Periodismo” (EOP) to control journalists from their very first steps in the media. The 1938 Act envisioned journalists as a sort of civil servant and remained unchanged till 1966.

The EOP, the first permanent, official professional training system for journalists, which officially started its classes in January 1942, was not considered at that time to be a higher education institution. It was not part of the university system under the Ministry of Education, but was rather a government institution depending on the ideological and political authorities. This situation continued after the creation of the Ministry of Information and Tourism in 1951, which was responsible for the activities of the press, propaganda, broadcasting, film, theater and tourism, as well as the management of the EOP. Some attempts to link this school with the university failed. For a number of years the training in the EOP required three academic years, but in 1967 an order from the Ministry of Information and Tourism imposed the requirement of four academic years and the qualification came to be regarded as an equivalent to a higher education degree (“título de carrera superior”), even though the EOP maintained its organic dependency on the Ministry of Information. The EOP had its headquarters in Madrid, the state’s capital, but during its existence opened branches in Barcelona (1952–1963) and the Canary Islands (1963–1974). In 1960, the Catholic Church was allowed to begin its own school of journalism in Madrid.

In 1958, a significant event took place. In that year, the University of Navarra, which had been established in 1952 as a *Studium Generale*, started the “Instituto de Periodismo”, an academic center with all the characteristics of “regular” university centers (or “Facultades”), although the Spanish authorities did not officially recognize the institute’s degree as a university degree. For the first time journalism and communication had become fields of study at a Spanish university, even if the new “Instituto” could not be considered a full school, due to the political circumstances and the legal framework. In fact, the students had to pass their exams before a jury consisting of members of the EOP in order to get the official diploma required to work as a journalist in Spain.

The Ministry of Information established some other official education centers related with vocational and technical training in the audiovisual media. The “Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía” (Official School of Film) began to operate in 1962 and the “Escuela Oficial de Radiodifusión y Televisión” (Official School of Radio and Television) in 1967.

### 3 First institutional steps in communication research in Spain

With Navarra's "Instituto de Periodismo", communication research took its first steps in the Spanish university: the new center hired full-time faculty who developed their initial research taking into account German "Zeitungswissenschaft", Italian "Publicistica" and U. S. "Mass Communication Research" (Benito et al. 1967; Benito 1973). Around this time, the publishing house of the University of Navarra launched a new book collection in communication.

One sign of coming-of-age in those early years was the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference of AIERI-IAMCR, at the University of Navarra in April 1968; this organization was to become one of the biggest international academic associations in the study of communication<sup>1</sup>. A year earlier, to manifest the attention paid to the new "Instituto" by the University, Professor Roegele, director of the "Institut für Zeitungswissenschaft" at the LM Universität München (Germany), had been awarded an *honoris causa* doctoral degree, a fact that had an important symbolic significance for communication research and the educational status of the field, because at that time there was no doctoral degree in communication in Spain.

Nevertheless, since the 1950s, some initiatives had already been taken in the field of communication research in Spain. In spite of the control exercised by the regime, many advances were made in the intellectual field. In 1957, the year in which UNESCO promoted AIERI/IAMCR (Association Internationale des Études et Recherches sur l'Information/International Association for Mass Communication Research, today renamed International Association for Media and Communication Research), Beneyto, a professor of Political Science at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and associate director of the EOP, published a pioneering book using the English title *Mass communications*, inspired by the lectures delivered by the author in 1951 in a course on "Teoría y Sociología de la Información" and a seminar on "Opinión e información".

The fuzzy borders of the new field that was being defined are evident in Beneyto's book. The foreword to this volume described it as promoting "a research programme with a sociological lineage" but which was also sensitive towards the European orientations of the French "Science de la Presse" and the German "Publizistik", and frames the book as an attempt to bring about a situation in which the "Press and Radio, Book and Poster, Advertising, Tourism, Theater, Motion Movies, and Public Relations will find themselves considered among the highbrow knowledge of our time" (Beneyto 1957, pp. 5–6). Beneyto quoted some of the best-known mass communication research scholars of the moment, most of them social scientists, but along its nearly 300 pages the book devotes particular attention to work in the European research tradition. As a matter of fact, Beneyto was trying to transform Spanish journalism education into a platform for the development of real media research: "I believe that a scientific treatment of the whole subject needs a full conceptual readjustment" (Beneyto 1957, pp. 22–23). He suggested classifying

<sup>1</sup> All the documents of the conference were published in the volume *Los profesores de periodismo*, Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra S.A., 1970.

the new field under the wide and comprehensive term “mass communication”, as UNESCO did to translate the French word “information”.

Other early steps in communication research had taken place during the years of the Franco regime (1939–1975). When the EOP was founded in 1942, the *Gaceta de la Prensa Española* (later on *Gaceta de la Prensa*) was launched, a complex and miscellaneous periodical the last issue of which, number 238, was published in July 1972. In this periodical one can find references to the “*Zeitungswesen*”, the Italian “*Publicistica*” or the “*Science de la Presse*”, indicating the connections among the studies focusing on the press and the research on communication and teaching in this field.

In July 1942, the Spanish administration also founded the “*Instituto de la Opinión Pública*” (Public Opinion Institute), with the main task of exploring the attitudes of Spanish citizens regarding the war, but also taking in a wider scope of subjects of investigation. This institute, created “to serve scientific interests”, had a foundational period (1942–1946), and a second period (1952–1956) in which it was ruled by secret orders, not published in the “*Boletín Oficial del Estado*”. The Institute published a periodical (*Opinión*) with a limited circulation for those involved in the activities of the institute (Giner 1978; López Roldán 1945).

A new minister of Information and Tourism, appointed after the ministerial crisis of 1962, promoted a second period at the “*Instituto de la Opinión Pública*”, which in April 1965 launched the journal *REOP* (*Revista Española de la Opinión Pública*). The editor, the sociologist González Seara, wrote in the first issue that the journal’s purpose was to provide some useful elements “for the knowledge of public opinion and for the improvement of its theoretical understanding”. That meant a wider and more academic approach to public opinion and communication research and, as was indicated on the inside cover of the journal in issue 34, the institute’s tasks were “to carry on studies and researches on the mass media and release and make public the results of the researches conducted, and also the scientific theory they are based on” (October–December, 1973). After Franco’s death, the IOP was renewed in 1976 and re-baptized as the CIS (“*Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*”), and the *REOP* was replaced by the *REIS* (*Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*) in 1978, January–March being the first issue (Alcobendas 2006).

In 1965, the Ministry also promoted the quarterly *Revista Española de Documentación* (*RED*) to cover issues related to information (mass communication), tourism and popular culture. In 1967, the quarterly was renamed *Estudios de Información*, focusing on “the study of information processes, so relevant in modern society” (López-Escobar 1984, p. 22). These analyses in the wide field of mass communication would be developed from the perspectives of Sociology, Law, Political Science and Broadcasting techniques. The declared purpose was to separately study each medium, but with a slow trend towards gathering a cluster of ideas to elaborate a “theory of information”<sup>2</sup>.

The improvements mentioned in education and research in the media unleashed some latent energy and fresher ideas among a new generation of young, competent, and more critical journalists who came onto the media stage in the following years.

<sup>2</sup> *Estudios de Información*, April–June, 1968, bibliographical annex, p. 66.

It was clear that the media policy ruled by the war Act of 1938 was not sustainable. The new minister for Information and Tourism pushed for a new law that was passed in 1966 as the Act of the Press and Printing (“Ley 14/1966, de 18 de marzo, de Prensa e Imprenta”). The Act was still an authoritarian instrument of control, but prior censorship and other means of controlling the media were suppressed. The EOP and the research institutes and journals were still under the control of the Ministry of Information.

#### **4 The university: where research and education in communication converged**

The real change arrived with the official incorporation of communication in the university syllabus. In 1970, the Spanish government carried out a thorough educational reform (ruled by a new “Ley General de Educación”) with consequences for the studies of journalism and communication as a whole. The law ordered, in its transitional provision number 2.5, that “the studies of Journalism and other media will be incorporated into University Education on the three levels of diploma, graduate and doctoral degrees”. This meant that communication studies were going to depend on the Ministry of Education, and no longer on the Ministry of Information. Several factors explained this change: the new Press Law of 1966; the technological developments in media, especially audiovisual media; the growing importance of advertising in media and economic life; and especially, the agreement among the new generation of journalists and professors at different official and private institutions where journalism was taught. They realized the need for progress in the reform of media studies: the new media landscape and the new media professions demanded reform of communication education that could not be limited to training of journalists. And they agreed also that university was the best place to do it (Nieto 2008, pp. 72–73).

In 1971, the Ministry of Education (Decree 2070/1971, August 13) published the rules specifying how universities could apply to open “Facultades de Ciencias de la Información”. This name was adopted following the tradition of the southern European countries (France, Italy, Spain) which in those years gave the name of “information, informazione, información” to the general phenomenon of the media. The term “information” was not yet linked in ordinary languages to “computer science” or “information science”.

The schools could have three departments – “Periodismo”, “Ciencias de la Imagen Visual y Auditiva” and “Publicidad” – to offer three majors within the communication degree. As a consequence, the educational centers related to communication and media depending on the Ministry of Information were closed. That was the case for the EOP and also the “Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía”, and the “Escuela Oficial de Radiodifusión y Televisión”.

In 1971, there were 15 state universities in Spain plus three more which were created under the Agreements between the Catholic Church and the State. The government decided on the creation of two schools of communication in the State University System: one at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the second

at the young Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, established in 1968. In the case of the University of Navarra, the new “Facultad” emerged as the continuation of the existing “Instituto de Periodismo” (Barrera 2009, pp. 152 ff.; Nieto 2008, pp. 71–73). These three are regarded as the “founding schools” in Spain (Moragas 2005). The studies in Madrid and Barcelona were subdivided into the three different majors (journalism, audiovisual communication, and advertising), whereas Navarra’s school continued with a more specific focus offering only a major in journalism.

It was not easy to hire a group of qualified scholars to teach at university level at the new “facultades”. Part of the teaching staff of the former official schools joined the new professors at public universities, especially to teach the most technical-vocational subjects. But the newer schools became a sort of promised land not only for those interested in communication and in media, but also for those who discovered that their interests were in a neighboring field or could fit with those topics taught and studied at the new schools. Of course, some faculty members were already university professors, but the new “facultades” became very enticing for scholars educated in other disciplines and with or without professional experience in the media (philosophers, philologists, lawyers, economists, historians, sociologists or political scientists). Most of the first associate and full professors in the field who got tenure in the second part of the 1970s (Benito, Desantes, Lara, Martínez Albertos, Nieto, Núñez Ladevéze, Orive) had a degree in law or in humanities. This variety can explain the lack of coherence in the concept of communication they worked with. But it is also true that the problem of defining our field and object of study was receiving more and more attention at the new schools, making it possible to develop a truly theoretical approach to the basic notion of communication (López-Escobar 1997, p. 17).

Since 1971, things have changed enormously in Spanish communication research and education landscape. The most obvious change may be the growing number of universities today offering communication programs, both undergraduate and graduate. But there are also other changes reflecting the state of communication as an academic field, like the names of the schools of communication at Spanish universities today. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s the name of a school could only be the one officially approved of by the government, in the 1990s, university regulations became more flexible and different universities began to include communication studies in their programs, starting new schools or renaming the existing ones to adapt them better to the new reality. Among the 32 schools currently existing in Spain, only the Universidad Complutense de Madrid has retained the original name; Navarra and the Autónoma de Barcelona changed their names to “Facultad de Comunicación” and “Facultad de Ciencias de la Comunicación” respectively. And the most recent schools include the word communication in their names as the only field, or combined with other topics, with only one exception (Table 1).

## 5 Communication education and research at Spanish universities today

The *boom* at universities gained speed with the approval of the 1978 Constitution, which organized the state in autonomous communities; since then, almost every

**Table 1** Schools of Communication and Journalism in Spain

School of ...	Year	University
Ciencias de la Información <sup>a</sup>	1971	Complutense de Madrid
Comunicación	–	Camilo José Cela (Madrid) [2000]
	1971 (1958)	Navarra
	1990	Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona) <sup>b</sup>
	1988	Pontificia de Salamanca
	1991	Sevilla
Ciencias de la Comunicación	2003	A Coruña
	–	Antonio de Nebrija (Madrid) [1995]
	1971	Autónoma de Barcelona
	–	Francisco de Vitoria (Madrid) [1993]
	1997	Internacional de Cataluña (Barcelona)
	1992	Málaga
	2005	Rey Juan Carlos (Madrid)
	1990	Santiago de Compostela (Galicia)
Ciencias de la Documentación y la Comunicación	2012	Extremadura
Comunicación y Ciencias Sociales	–	San Jorge (Zaragoza) [2005]
Comunicación y Documentación	2010	Granada
	2003	Murcia
Comunicació i Relacions Internacionals	1994	Ramón Llull (Barcelona)
Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación	–	Católica San Antonio (Murcia) [1996]
	–	Europea de Madrid [1995]
	1980 (1977)	País Vasco/Euskal Herriko
	1994	Vigo (Galicia)
Ciencias Humanas, Sociales y de Comunicación	–	IE (Inst. Empresa) Universidad (Madrid) [1997]
Ciencias Políticas, Sociales y de la Comunicación	1988	La Laguna (Islas Canarias)
Empresa y Comunicación	–	Vic Central de Cataluña [1997]
Filología, Traducción y Comunicación	2005/07	València
Humanidades y Comunicación	2014	Burgos
Humanidades, Comunicación y Documentación	1996	Carlos III (Madrid)
Humanidades y Ciencias de la Comunicación	–	Cardenal Herrera-CEU (València) [1999] San Pablo-CEU (Madrid) [1993]
Periodismo <sup>b</sup>	2010	Castilla-La Mancha

Table made by the authors using a variety of sources, basically the ANECA web page ([www.aneca.es](http://www.aneca.es)) and the web pages of the universities

<sup>a</sup>As we say in the text, this school is the only one that maintained the original name

<sup>b</sup>The Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, exceptionally, has a school of journalism

medium-sized city (by Spanish standards) has at least one public university. Another reason for the fast growing number of universities was the “Ley Orgánica 6/2001”, December 21, which developed the constitutional right to create educational centers at the highest level, and allowed private universities to be founded. The landscape is now more stable because, after the initial *boom*, the ANECA (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación), a public agency for quality assessment and accreditation, which provides evaluation, certification and accreditation for the Spanish Higher Education System, evaluates which degree proposals are designed in accordance with the European Higher Education Area criteria. Universities can only offer undergraduate and graduate programs that have been previously approved of by the ANECA. Of course, changes occur constantly, but we consider they will not be enough to modify the current panorama in the medium term.

Its arrival in the University marked the clear opening of communication as a new academic field. Of course, legal conditions and institutional changes are very compelling reasons, that explain the birth of our field, but it would be misleading not to consider the deep underlying forces that explain why communication became an important academic discipline in Spain. And this can be explained by the perception of media professionals, university scholars and the public in general of the unquestionable relevance of communication in both public and personal space. Three circumstances may be useful to explain the emergence of communication as a new relevant reality in social life, and therefore in the Spanish academic world:

Firstly, the development of the “communication industry”, which generated a need for well trained practitioners. Since the 1960s, the media, popular culture, entertainment, advertising and other related activities became vigorous activities in socioeconomic life. The need for high level education for those working in these areas was obvious. Because of the economic and social relevance of public communication in the wider sense, it became inevitable that universities should play a main role in teaching and research in the field.

On the second hand, after Franco, a transitional process opened up, favoring the way to a democratic system. This was consolidated in the 1978 Constitution, which established a constitutional monarchy with Juan Carlos I as king. As might have been expected, with democracy, the role of the media changed after several decades of control and calm. During the dictatorial period, the press news were heavily controlled through diverse means, and the state enjoyed an information monopoly regarding radio and television. One sign of political change was the radio news programs, and from 1977 onwards, Spain also had a number of free new FM radio stations; besides the state radio and television there emerged the radio and television channels of the autonomous communities in the 1980s, and by the 1990s, some commercial television channels were in operation.

Last, but obviously not least, we need to consider the role of ICTs. Technological developments make communication a commodity and lead to the “information societies”, anticipated by Daniel Bell in the 1960s (Bell 1967). The rise of communication technologies makes the access to information, and also the management of public presence through media, essential not only for institutions but also for personal life. During this period technological development constantly generated an

increase in citizens' time of exposure to the media, bringing out their influence in shaping culture, politics and public space in general.

## 6 A growing field: the struggle for clarity and recognition

Despite the social demand for higher education and academic research in communication, the lack of flexibility of the Spanish higher education regulations in the 1970s and 1980s meant that few universities initiated communication studies in those years. Until the 1980s, only the three founding schools had programs in communication. In 1999, after successive legal reforms, 22 higher education institutions had communication programs (Moragas 2005, p. 17). And with the arrival of the twenty first century, undergraduate and graduate degrees in communication bloomed at practically all universities.

In the last 25 years the Spanish university has undergone a radical change. Traditionally, half the students and professors at Spanish universities were in the field of sciences and the other half in humanities, but the situation changed at the end of the twentieth century. Now, the number of students enrolled in traditional programs in humanities (philosophy, history, philology) is decreasing significantly, while studies in social sciences, which are among the latest arrivals, are increasing dramatically. An illustrative fact is that in the period from 1990 to 1999 the number of graduates in humanities programs fell by 8% while graduates in social science degrees grew by 77% (Rahona 2008, pp. 56–59). Moreover, even some of those degrees considered “classic social sciences” (sociology, political science, anthropology) are losing students as a result of the inflation of communication programs (Martínez Nicolás 2009, p. 39).

The increasing number of schools, departments and undergraduate or postgraduate studies at Spanish universities fostered a parallel increase in the number of scholars, researchers, doctoral dissertations, publications and “I + D + I” research projects (funded R&D projects), and the number of publications and doctoral dissertations in communication grew considerably. All these developments resulted in the perception of the need to ensure that communication is recognized as an important discipline within the Spanish academic community.

An important moment in this process of recognition took place on the occasion of the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) directives – the so-called Bologna process – in Spain. In the very period in which the government was drafting a royal decree organizing the official university teaching, the members of the “Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación” (AE-IC), the first academic association of professors and researchers with a national scope, which was at that time in the process of constitution, realized that communication was absent among the basic subjects in that decisive draft. That fact triggered a coalescing effect among the members of a collective body which had previously lacked cohesion. There was also a shared concern for the fact that in the commissions to evaluate the candidates for the diverse academic teaching levels, as also in the committees to

assess the research projects to be financed by the R&D National Plan<sup>3</sup>, the number of experts in the field was very small, basically taking into account that the number of graduate and postgraduate studies, as well as faculty members, was much higher compared to other knowledge areas in social sciences.

The officers of the newly constituted association played a decisive role, discussing with ministry officials the text of the draft, in which communication was finally included among the basic social science subjects for the official degree titles<sup>4</sup>. For the first time a relevant legal norm included communication as a basic discipline with the same rank as Anthropology, Political Science, Economics, Education, History, Psychology, Sociology and so on.

## 7 Communication studies in the Spanish university system today

Currently, 67 of the 83 Spanish universities – 50 of them public and the others private – offer 168 degrees in communication for undergraduate students: 44 are in Audiovisual Communication, 39 in Journalism, and 35 in Advertising, mainly with public relations. But there are also 13 degrees in “Información y Documentación”, 8 degrees purely in Communication, 4 in Digital Communication, 3 with the title Multimedia, 2 in Animation, 2 in Photography, and after those an array of degrees with hybrid titles. The university undergraduate degrees in communication have become very popular. They offer general education and extensive training in the necessary skills for professional practice of communication in its diverse forms. Despite the crisis of the traditional media industry, there is still considerable demand for these degrees among young students.

Also, as might be expected, most of the 158 Master degree programs offered by 60 Spanish universities have a strong vocational orientation, since their object is to find qualified jobs for their graduates in the labor market. The number of programs demonstrates that postgraduate education offers positions which are attractive for those entering the labor market and which are in demand in the communication sector or industry.

Overall, in Spain there are 45 universities with a school, a department or a doctoral program connected with communication. But only 15 of them cover the whole cycle at this moment, with a school of communication – alone or mixed with other studies –, a department including communication, and a specific doctoral program that also centers on communication (Table 2). Even so, at diverse universities, schools, departments or programs we can find an embryonic trend leading towards a more complete academic structure, insofar as they meet the legal requirements *a propos* of the size of the faculty staff or the qualifications on offer.

<sup>3</sup> This task is entrusted to the “Agencia Nacional de Evaluación y Prospectiva” (ANEP), depending on the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, the task of which is the scientific-technical assessment of research teams and research groups aspiring to participate in the National Plan of R&D. ANEP is also in charge of the evaluation of the results.

<sup>4</sup> Decree 1393/2007 October 29th, *BOE*, 260, 30/10/2007, Annex II.

**Table 2** Spain: Universities, Schools, Departments and Doctoral Programs Regarding Communication

University, year of foundation	School	Department/s	Doctoral Programs
Autónoma de Barcelona, 1968	Ciencias de la Comunicación	Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad Publicidad, Relaciones Públicas y Comunicación Audiovisual Medios, Comunicación y Cultura Periodismo y Ciencias de la Comunicación	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación Estratégica, Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas Programa de Doctorado en Medios, Comunicación y Cultura Programa de Doctorado en Psicología de la Comunicación y Cambio Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad
Burgos, 1994	Humanidades y Comunicación	Historia, Geografía y Comunicación	Programa de Doctorado en Humanidades y Comunicación
Carlos III de Madrid, 1989	Humanidades, Comunicación y Documentación	Periodismo y Comunicación Audiovisual	Programa de Doctorado en Investigación en Medios de Comunicación
Complutense de Madrid, 1293	Ciencias de la Información	Sociología VI (Opinión Pública y Cultura de Masas) Periodismo I (Análisis del Mensaje Informativo) Periodismo II (Estructura y Tecnología de la Información) Periodismo III (Teoría General de la Información) Periodismo IV (Empresa Informativa) Historia de la Comunicación Social Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad I Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad II	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación Audiovisual, Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas Programa de Doctorado en Periodismo
Extremadura, 1973	Ciencias de la Documentación y la Comunicación	Información y comunicación	Programa de Doctorado en Información y Comunicación
Granada, 1531	Comunicación y Documentación	Información y Documentación	Programa de Doctorado en Ciencias Sociales <sup>a</sup>
Málaga, 1972	Ciencias de la Comunicación	Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad Periodismo	Programa de Doctorado en Educación y Comunicación Social
Murcia, 1915	Comunicación y Documentación	Información y Documentación	Programa de Doctorado en Gestión de la Información y de la Comunicación en las Organizaciones

**Table 2** Spain: Universities, Schools, Departments and Doctoral Programs Regarding Communication (Continued)

University, year of foundation	School	Department/s	Doctoral Programs
Navarra, 1952	Comunicación	Empresa Informativa Comunicación Pública Cultura y Comunicación Audiovisual Proyectos Periodísticos	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación
País Vasco/EHU, 1968	Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación	Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad Periodismo Periodismo II	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación Social
Pompeu Fabra, 1990	Comunicación	Comunicación	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación
Rey Juan Carlos, 1997	Ciencias de la Comunicación	Ciencias de la Comunicación y Sociología	Programa de Doctorado en Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas <sup>a</sup>
San Pablo-CEU, 1993	Humanidades y Ciencias de la Comunicación	Periodismo Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación Social
Santiago de Compostela, 1495	Ciencias de la Comunicación	Ciencias de la Comunicación	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación e Información Contemporánea
Sevilla, 1505	Comunicación	Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad Periodismo I Periodismo II	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación
València, 1500	Filología, Traducción y Comunicación	Teoría de los Lenguajes y Ciencias de la Comunicación	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación e Interculturalidad
Vigo, 1989	Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación	Psicología Evolutiva y Comunicación Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación
Cardenal Herrera-CEU, 1999	Humanidades y Ciencias de la Comunicación	Comunicación Audiovisual, Publicidad y Tecnología de la Información Comunicación e Información Periodística	–
Castilla-La Mancha, 1982	Periodismo	Periodismo	–
La Laguna, 1792	Ciencias Políticas, Sociales y de la Comunicación	Ciencias de la Comunicación y Trabajo Social	–
Vic-Central de Catalunya, 1997	Empresa y Comunicación Ciencias y Tecnología	Comunicación	–
Internacional de Catalunya, 1997	Ciencias de la Comunicación	Ciencias de la Comunicación	–

**Table 2** Spain: Universities, Schools, Departments and Doctoral Programs Regarding Communication (Continued)

University, year of foundation	School	Department/s	Doctoral Programs
A Coruña, 1989	Ciencias de la Comunicación	–	Programa de Doctorado en Sociedad del Conocimiento: Nuevas Perspectivas en Documentación, Comunicación y Humanidades
Ramón Llull, 1991	Comunicación y Relaciones Internacionales	–	Programa de Doctorado en Comunicación
IE (Instituto Empresa) 1997	Ciencias Humanas, Sociales y de Comunicación	–	–
Antonio de Nebrija, 1995	Ciencias de la Comunicación	–	–
Camilo José Cela, 2000	Comunicación	–	–
Católica San Antonio, 1996	Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación	–	–
Europea de Madrid, 1995	Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación	–	–
Francisco de Vitoria, 1993	Ciencias de la Comunicación	–	–
Pontificia de Salamanca, 1940	Comunicación	–	–
San Jorge, 2005	Comunicación y Ciencias Sociales	–	–
Barcelona, 1430	–	Biblioteconomía, Documentación y Comunicación Audiovisual Filología Hispánica, Teoría de la Literatura y Comunicación	Programa de Doctorado en Información y Comunicación
Valladolid, 1295	–	Historia Moderna, Contemporánea y de América, Periodismo, Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad	Programa de Doctorado en Español: Lingüística, Literatura y Comunicación
Jaume I de Castellón, 1991	–	Ciencias de la Comunicación	Programa de Doctorado en Ciencias de la Comunicación
Alcalá de Henares, 1977	–	Filología, Comunicación y Documentación	–
Alicante, 1979	–	Comunicación y Psicología Social	–
Cádiz, 1979	–	Marketing y Comunicación	–
Girona, 1991	–	Filología y comunicación	–

**Table 2** Spain: Universities, Schools, Departments and Doctoral Programs Regarding Communication (Continued)

University, year of foundation	School	Department/s	Doctoral Programs
Lleida, 1991	–	Filología Catalana y Comunicación Audiovisual	–
Salamanca, 1218	–	Sociología y Comunicación	–
Pontificia Comillas, 1892	–	Filosofía, Humanidades y Comunicación	–
Abat Oliba CEU, 2003	–	Comunicación	–
Deusto, 1886	–	–	Programa de Doctorado en Ocio, Cultura y Comunicación para el Desarrollo Humano
Politécnica de Valencia, 1971	–	–	Programa de Doctorado en Industrias de la Comunicación y Culturales

Table elaborated using data from (i) the ANECA web page ([www.aneca.es](http://www.aneca.es)); (ii) the report “Estadística de Universidades, Centros y Titulaciones. Curso 2015/2016”, in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport’s web page (<http://www.mecd.gob.es/educacion-mecd/areas-educacion/universidades/estadisticas-informes/estadisticas/universidades-centros-titulaciones/curso-2015-2016.html>); and (iii) several web pages of a number of universities

<sup>a</sup>We include these two programs because they have an specialization in communication and a substantial number of theses presented

## 8 Research in communication: doctoral dissertations and research projects funded by the National R&D Plan

Both doctoral dissertations and funded research projects are a very good indicator of the academic strength of our field, insofar as they involve continuing research activity and the existence of more or less stable research teams and areas in the field of communication. Every doctoral dissertation presupposes at least the existence of a Ph.D. student, a research supervisor or supervisors, as well as some resources and infrastructure for research (bibliographical, technological, financial and human resources, academic relations, etc.). The existence of such an infrastructure shows the extent to which academic research activity has been integrated into academic institutions.

The creation of university schools in the fields of journalism, audiovisual communication, and advertising and public relations made possible the development of doctoral programs in these domains. The first graduates at the three founding schools received their degrees in 1976, and in 1979, Faus Belau, a scholar who had previously studied Otto Groth’s “Zeitungswissenschaft” in Germany, presented at the University of Navarra the first doctoral dissertation in communication (Faus Belau 1966, 1980). Even if that was not the first evidence of research conducted in the field of communication in Spain, it was a sort of milestone in the path of communication studies to equal status alongside other university disciplines.

**Table 3** Number of doctoral dissertations approved in the Spanish Schools of Communication During the Period of 1979–1998

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
UCM	3	8	7	22	9	13	14	19	26	15	14	24	24	23	26	46	39	60	29	21	442
UAB	-	-	1	7	3	1	2	7	8	10	10	11	11	7	9	10	9	8	9	7	130
UNav	3	3	1	1	3	2	3	1	5	5	2	5	9	8	7	9	10	6	7	11	101
UPV	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	13	1	2	3	3	13	4	4	6	8	6	5	74
ULL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	15	-	2	4	2	8	34
USE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	2	5	7	7	28
UST	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	4
UPF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	4
CIII	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	819

Analysis made by the authors, based on Jones *et al.*, (2000)

Mistakingly, Jones *et al.* included Cebrían Herreros and Urrutia Gómez among those that got their doctoral degree in the Facultad de Ciencias de la Información at the University Complutense de Madrid, but both got a doctoral degree in Philology

UCM Universidad Complutense de Madrid, UAB Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Unav Universidad de Navarra, UPV Universidad del País Vasco, Universidad de La Laguna, USE Universidad de Sevilla, UST Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, UPF Universidad Pompeu Fabra, CIII Universidad Carlos III

**Table 4** Doctoral Dissertations Presented in Spanish Schools of Communication (2007–2013)

University	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Tot
Carlos III de Madrid	3	3	2	6	9	8	9	40
Católica de Murcia	–	1	–	1	–	3	–	5
CEU Cardenal Herrera	–	1	4	2	4	1	4	16
Complutense	1	19	28	66	45	63	43	265
De Alicante	–	2	–	–	1	1	2	6
De Extremadura	1	2	2	–	3	6	1	15
De Granada	–	–	–	6	2	–	1	9
De La Laguna	2	1	3	4	5	4	9	28
De Málaga	3	4	5	10	11	12	12	57
De Murcia	–	1	1	1	3	2	2	10
De Navarra	2	7	6	2	6	4	4	31
De Salamanca	–	1	2	1	1	–	1	6
De Sevilla	–	1	12	6	6	15	9	49
De Valladolid	1	1	4	1	4	6	–	17
Del País Vasco	6	4	4	11	6	11	8	50
Pontificia de Salamanca	3	1	1	1	–	3	5	14
Rey Juan Carlos	–	4	5	1	6	5	3	24
San Pablo CEU	–	6	3	6	3	4	8	30
De Santiago de Compostela	3	2	2	4	8	10	5	34
De Vigo	–	6	6	3	9	3	3	30
Univ. Autónoma de Barcelona	2	12	4	8	9	18	14	67
Universitat de Girona	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	3
Universitat de Lleida	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	2
Universitat de València	–	5	7	2	4	6	7	31
Universitat de Vic	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	2
U. Internacional de Catalunya	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
Universitat Jaume I	3	2	2	6	6	6	–	25
U. Politècnica de València	–	2	–	2	4	3	1	12
Universitat Pompeu Fabra	–	5	4	7	6	6	5	33
Universitat Ramon Llull	1	3	2	8	8	6	8	36
Total								948

Table elaborated by the authors using the data provided by the *MapCom* project. Some doctoral dissertations dealing with communication were presented in the period of 2007–2013 at universities still lacking an approved school of communication; among these should be mentioned the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (10 theses), the University Miguel Hernández (10 theses) or the University of les Illes Balears (5 theses) (<http://www.mapcom.es>)

A more detailed study would be needed to give account of exactly how many doctoral dissertations have been completed since 1979, and at which universities and schools. We can report some data for the period of 1979–1998 offered by Jones et al. (2000), who list 1550 dissertations related to communication, but including theses prior to 1979, several hundreds were completed at schools of other specialties.

A careful scrutiny of these data indicates that the real number is 817 (Table 3). The number of theses completed in the period of 2007–2013 is close to one thousand, according to the data provided by the MapCom project (Table 4). We lack data regarding the intermediate period of 1999–2006, but the data reported from the other two periods allow us to guess that the total number exceeds two thousand.

The provision of public funding for research projects by the National R&D Plan is also a good indicator of the strength of any academic field. It implies the existence of consolidated research groups that compete for funding with groups belonging to different areas of the social sciences and humanities. It also means that the scientific results of these research projects will be publicly evaluated at the end of the funded period. Between 2007 and 2013, 26 universities received funding from the National R&D Plan to carry out 143 research projects in communication (Piñuel et al. [in press](#)).

Although some publications have tried to tell the history and describe the current situation of communication research in Spain (Barrera 2009, 2010; García Jiménez 2007; Jones et al. 2000; Martínez Nicolás 2009; Salaverría und Barrera 2009; Saperas 2016), and relevant data can be found in them, there is no systematic and general overview of the state of the field. Nevertheless, a remarkable qualitative and quantitative database on communication research during the period of 2007–2013 has been made accessible to the public thanks to the work of a large team of researchers from 28 Spanish universities. The MapCom group, with its four subgroups covering different geographical areas, has conducted a research project entitled “The system of research on social practices in Communication: map of projects, groups, lines, objects of study and methods”, and is starting to publish its results on its website. This group aims to “contribute to the development of a map that can represent the development of the research system about social practices of communication in Spain”. MapCom is offering good information concerning the state of and major trends in communication research in Spain. These data provide relevant information as they reflect “recognition of scientific competence of professors and researchers including academics who are usually co-opted through rites of passage such as theses and competitive projects”. Moreover, “theses and competitive projects indicate the research lines, their directions and scope” (Piñuel et al. [in press](#), pp. 1–3). The MapCom study takes into account the target of the investigation, the practice of social communication that is the primary object of study, and the dominant technique used in research.

The main research objectives of most of the projects and theses analyzed (55%) are “to describe” studied communication practices (e. g. “recording, classifying, cataloging, presenting and/or define”); 12% intend “to explain”, that is “to establish relationships between features and the object of study offering representation models to propose causes, effects, correlations and evolution of the study object, using, for example, well-known theories or introducing a new one”; 28% of the theses and analyzed projects aim “to evaluate”, meaning that the analyzed material is used “to test, to contrast or to validate theoretical and/or methodological models”; while finally, research projects and dissertations seeking to intervene, that is, to “change behaviors or social processes” account for less than 4% (Piñuel et al. [in press](#), p. 18).

Regarding the social practices of communication analyzed, doctoral dissertations and R&D research projects addressed the four classic contexts of communication: mass communication (almost 60%), organizational communication (16%), and interpersonal and group communication, which were the object in less than 10% of all theses and research projects (Piñuel et al. [in press](#), pp. 10–11). The weight of mass communication research could be linked to the historical fact that in Spain, the field has its institutional origins in the study of the mass media. During recent years, the study of other contexts of communication has been growing, particularly in the field of communication in organizations (corporations, governments and political institutions, NGOs, etc.). Research about group communication and interpersonal communication improved only marginally in our field, at least in contrast to mass communication and organizational communication, which are usually technically or strategically mediated communication practices. From the very origins of the field of psychology, interpersonal and group communication practices, usually technologically non-mediated ones, have been a common research object for psychology, but mobile communication devices and social networks are a growing practice within technologically mediated interpersonal and group communication, and therefore the research into these new communicative phenomena has become more popular in Spain. Data show that research on online interpersonal and group communication is improving its specific weight in the academic field of communication, especially with the spread of digital communication.

The MapCom study provides data on two methodological aspects: first, the dominant technique for processing primary data; and second, the type of sample used in research (Piñuel et al. [in press](#), p. 14). In 60% of the research, including both doctoral theses and R&D research projects, documents are the primary way to obtain data for research. In these cases, this generally means data from documents are obtained through methodologies such as content analysis, discourse analysis, etc. Another 15.9% of the research – both doctoral dissertations and research projects – obtained primary data through observation techniques such as systematic observation and participant observation. In 9.9% of the cases, conversations were used to obtain primary data, particularly through personal interviews, focus groups, group dynamics or techniques such as Phillips 66 or Delphi. Only 7.8% get their data through surveys, and 1.9% by conducting experiments (Piñuel et al. [in press](#), pp. 20–22).

Besides the technique used to gather primary research data, it is interesting to know how the sample was obtained from the data originated by the researchers. In 5.6% of the doctoral dissertations and funded research projects, probability samples were calculated “by establishing the margin of error, confidence level, etc. in relation to the studied universe”. In 54.2% of cases the sample was intentionally selected “based on and justified by criteria previously established by the researcher” but with no specific way to demonstrate the statistical significance of the data obtained with respect to the universe to be studied. Only 5.9% of the doctoral dissertations and research projects analyzed used significant population samples that are “selected by the segmentation of the universe according to the object of study relevant variables”, while 6.3% of the studies’ structural samples were built “considering variables or categories that derive from their relationships and positions within the universe”. Finally, 14.8% of the studied dissertations and research projects used no sample

“because they worked with the entire universe, or they are just a case study”. And in 13.2% of the cases, the sample was not recorded, not used, or it was not appropriate to use a sample for this precise research (Piñuel et al. [in press](#), p. 19).

It can be concluded that most of the research in communication analyzed used samples without statistical representation with respect to the studied universe. It is also significant that at least 28% of doctoral dissertations and research projects funded by the National R&D Plan during the period of 2007–2013 did not use a sample or even mention it.

It seems that much of the research into communication suffers from some methodological lack of definition. At the very least, we can affirm that most of the research in communication during the period analyzed was not built on the basis of a solid statistical representativeness of the studied universes. We do not think this is necessarily detrimental to the quality of communication research. We rather think that is an expression that the reality studied in our field can be understood through classic social sciences methodologies – as seen in the data – and also through approximations to reality that are more typical in humanities: explaining, describing, criticizing or searching for the conceptual foundations of cultural products.

## 9 Other indicators of research activity in communication

Doctoral theses and funded research projects are not the only indicators of the state of communication research. There are some other indicators of research activity that could be useful in order to get a better picture of the Spanish communication research landscape – namely the number of scholars working in the field, the Spanish journals in which communication research is disseminated, and the academic and scientific organizations for communication research.

With the boom of university centers dedicated to communication education the number of scholars in the field grew exponentially, but the true numbers are hard to calculate, since this would require deeper consideration due to the complexity of the current situation. Much scientific production – articles, books, chapters, papers, etc. – comes from the academic activity of these scholars, and specifically academic journals are a natural vehicle for research diffusion and serve as a good indicator of the status of the scientific field, both intellectually and institutionally.

After some attempts that did not succeed or maintain continuity, the three oldest academic journals in communication that are still active started in the 1980s: *Anàlisi: quaderns de comunicació i cultura*, appeared in 1980 at the Autonomous University of Barcelona with a typical academic journal approach; *Telos*, published by the Telefónica Foundation, a periodical focused on communication and technology in modern society, started in 1985, but was discontinued from 1997 to 2002; and *Comunicación y Sociedad* (today *Communication & Society*) was born in 1988 at the School of Communication of the University of Navarra, as a journal aspiring to be a purely academic journal about communication. In the 1990s, the number of journals with some continuity increased to 14, and since the year 2000, 25 journals have appeared that still operate, 8 of them dating from the year 2010.

The list of periodicals in the field with a more or less pronounced academic orientation includes 39 academic journals that were active in January 2016<sup>5</sup>. Higher education centers are the publishers of thirty of them – the Universidad Complutense de Madrid publishes 11 – and 4 are official journals of academic associations. 25 of those journals have a generalist approach to communication, and the others center on film studies (2), sociology and communication (2), health communication (2), education and communication, history of communication, TV studies, advertising, advertising and marketing, public relations, and communications law (1 in each of these areas).

Most journals are published once (11) or twice a year (19). There are 4 published 3 times every year and 4 more are quarterly journals. Finally, one journal publishes 50 articles in one volume per year. All journals select the articles after a peer review process and 20 of them are included in some national or international scientific research databases, while 7 are in one or more international scientific literature databases like Scopus, EBSCO, Proquest or Thomson Reuters. An indication of the journals' quality is the FECYT<sup>6</sup> Seal of Quality currently held by *Anàlisi, Communication & Society, Comunicar, Ámbitos, Doxa* and *L'Atalante*.

A final dimension that shows the boom in the communication field in Spain is the creation of several academic associations. The growing number of scholars led to an awareness of being part of an academic community. As in every scientific field, meeting colleagues and submitting to each other one's own research findings to get confirmation or refutation are essential aspects of academic activity: conversation generates more and better knowledge of the reality studied. The first associative initiatives of this kind began in the 1980s but were not consolidated by continuity in time.

Among the academic associations that still operate actively in Spain, some have a regional character, such as the "Societat Catalana de Comunicació", founded in 1986, or the "Asociación Galega de Investigadores e Investigadoras de la Comunicación" (AGACOM), founded in 2000. Nonetheless, we are going to focus here on nationwide associations, both specialized and generalist.

A first example is the "Sociedad Española de Periodística" (SEP), established in 1989 during a conference on journalism studies. The association, with about 200 members, focuses its attention on journalism studies and has held an annual Conference since 1990. In 2008, it initiated its own yearly journal: *Textual & visual media*.

<sup>5</sup> We have obtained these data from five different sources: DICE (Diffusion and Editorial Quality of Spanish Journals of Humanities and Social Sciences and Law); RESH (Spanish Journals of Social Sciences and Humanities); System Quality Assessment of Scientific Journals of FECYT (Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology, depending on the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness); the website of the "Observatory of Scientific Journals of Social Sciences"; and, finally, from the journals' websites. We included in the list only journals directly dealing with communication, published at least during the whole year 2015.

<sup>6</sup> FECYT supports the Spanish scientific journals. Those that successfully complete an evaluation process receive the Seal of Quality in recognition for scientific and publishing quality awarded for a three-year period.

Another example is the “Asociación de Historiadores de la Comunicación”, promoted in 1992 as an intellectual meeting point for scholars teaching or investigating the history of media and communication, which gathers a number of Spanish and foreign researchers interested in Spanish media history. The association holds conferences every 18 months, and since 2012 has published the digital journal *Revista Internacional de Historia de la Comunicación* twice a year.

In 2004 a group of scholars in Public Relations founded the “Asociación de Investigadores en Relaciones Públicas”, a field which is now improving its academic position in the Spanish communication academy. The association has had an annual conference since its foundation year.

But one of the most interesting developments was the creation and later activities of the mentioned “Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación” (AE-IC), the biggest Spanish academic association in communication with almost 800 members, which meets every two years at its general conference. The foundation of AE-IC in 2006 was a huge success in the Spanish community, proving that a general academic forum for scholars to meet was needed. AE-IC has a broad focus of interest in communication and the members can join a number of thematic sections. Its mission is to strengthen the research on communication in scientific policy, to facilitate the cooperation among researchers in the field, and to create networks among them, as well as to promote a cooperation policy with international associations of researchers in the field. In 2014 an online academic journal of the association was launched, which appears twice a year.

The “Asociación de Comunicación Política” (ACOP) was established in 2008 by a group of scholars and political consultants. Today, among its more than 300 members from twelve countries, 60% are consultants. The association focuses on studying, teaching and practicing political communication. In addition to the academic conferences, the ACOP organizes training seminars for practitioners in political communication. The scholars who are members basically come from the fields of journalism, sociology, political sciences, advertising, public relations and law.

Finally, the “Asociación Española de Universidades con Titulaciones de Información y Comunicación” should also be mentioned. It was created in 2011 as a continuation of the “Conferencia de Decanos de Facultades de Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información”. Currently, schools of 30 Spanish universities are members of this association.

## 10 Concluding remarks

In this overview of communication education and research in Spain, we have witnessed many signs of a settled field with a status similar to that of other academic disciplines. When we compare the current situation with the quietness of the authoritarian regime, it even seems we are living through a stormy moment, reflected in the increasing number of schools, departments, degrees, master and doctoral programs, doctoral theses, research projects, journals and associations. The institutional strength of communication as an academic field in Spain is a reality. This is very

encouraging, although we are not implying that administrative success is a synonym of intellectual felicity. Of course, this is not an exclusively Spanish problem. Spain is not very different from other countries and is sharing with them some of the risks regarding the lack of a clear identity, intellectual weakness or lack of coherence in the field, which have been emphasized by many authors from different areas (Anderson 1996; Calhoun 2011; Charaudeau 2010; Craig 1999; Donsbach 2006; Kane 2016; Martín Algarra 2009; Martino 2003; Peters 1986; Shepherd 1993). But in any case, the energies displayed during the last decades are a sign of vitality, and hopefully, their positive consequences will endure.

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