


Editorial

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Research as a Strategy for Training Educommunicators: Master and Doctorate

La investigación como estrategia de formación de los educomunicadores:
Máster y Doctorado

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Training educommunicators, experts in audiovisual education and media literacy, is undoubtedly one of the best strategies for consolidating this new class of professional in this field, and it should be a successful synthesis of communication and education dynamics taken to a higher level. The educommunicator is no mere media or teaching professional, and neither is he or she a mixture of both. This is a new type of professional with origins in both trades but with a separate, specific vocational profile that combines communication and educational competences, its main target being the “audience” of a mediatized society in all its diverse strands and situations. Educating audiences in media competence is based on the simple premise that since we live in a society «mediated by media», what is needed is a generalized form of education and literacy aimed at the public because, as research consistently shows, consumption of media does not guarantee that these are viewed in an intelligent, creative and constructive way. In this sense, research in its essence becomes the best resource for training educommunicators for the development of audiovisual literacy and media competence; and this new task calls on all sectors involved in communication and education to contribute to the training of citizens in a media world. For this to happen, the generation of scientific endeavor in this new knowledge area is essential. The design and implementation of research projects is one of the more urgent needs especially given that there is still so much to discover in this field. It is a new reality that did not exist previously and which could not have been foreseen a decade ago but which has transformed our lives. Let’s pause and think for a moment of a typical daily situation, our dependence on the mobile phone that manifests in any work or leisure space in any type of society where smartphones have taken control of the audience.

The call for projects needs to attract competent researchers, making the concerted support of public institutions and audiovisual bodies crucial. The best example of this is the European Commission and the «Media» programme. As well as research projects as a strategy for promoting educommunication, an essential factor should be the training of researchers in this new knowledge space in order to raise the level of communication as an educational space focused more on the media than on the audiences that generate it. Today only universities as a higher education institutions can guarantee the type of quality training needed to produce qualified educommunicators, providing them with a broad range of research methodologies and educational strategies aimed at audiences that will enable them to confront this huge task ahead of them. Although other successful experiences have taken place internationally, we wish to emphasize two well-established researcher

training projects in educommunication: the Interuniversity Master in Audiovisual Communication and Education, and the Interuniversity Doctorate in Communication, as official aggregation frameworks developed by universities in the south of Spain, but which are vocationally international in their outlook and whose aim is to create a pool of young qualified educommunicators. The Official Master in Communication and Education (www.master-educomunicacion.es) is now the



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best-established postgraduate training programme of its type in Spain in terms of official courses. Now in its fifth year, and has successfully formed a wide-ranging group of young people and professional educommunicators from around 20 countries, especially from Latin America and



Europe. The Master is taught by the International University of Andalusia (UNIA) in conjunction with the University of Huelva (UHU), and this excellence in postgraduate studies has recognized international prestige and is regularly oversubscribed. With a staff of 42 researchers from 21 universities in Spain –many of whom are full professors–, the Master is a solid academic proposal with face-to-face or virtual classes and a study plan based on research, ethics, technological resources, professional work experience and the study of the media from the perspective of audience education. Its almost 200 graduates from across the world is the best advert for the quality of this official qualification that leads directly to the doctorate course. For the first time, several universities in Andalusia now offer a doctorate course, together with the Master, with the first admissions accepted this academic year 2013/14.

The Official Interuniversity Doctorate in Communication (www.doctorado-comunicacion.es), a unique course in educommunication and media literacy, is an acknowledgment on the part of the university establishment of the need to investigate further in this field, with its own seat and resources, given the subject's social relevance and the widespread research possibilities. The doctorate has a clear international vocational direction and is taught in the universities of Sevilla, Málaga, Huelva and Cádiz; the aim is to extend this course to other prestigious universities in Latin America and Europe, and to sign collaboration agreements with similar institutions in the countries of North America, Africa and Asia. More than 80 academics with PhDs from the broad spectrum of Communication, both from the universities that organize the course and other prestigious institutions, form the staff that imparts this doctorate, whose quality has been verified by several agencies. Almost 80 doctoral students have completed their first year, in this initial year of the course, having participated in a wide range of training activities provided by the universities where the doctorate is taught. Almost two dozen chose the educommunicator line of study which ensures good quality future research in this field, which is in urgent need of good, solid investigation and the widespread publication of the results. Research projects of excellence, official Masters in Educommunication, International Doctorates in Communication with lines in media literacy, scientific journals such as «Comunicar» with its clear educommunication vocation, are just some of the actions that, together with international policies like those implemented by UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the European Parliament or the European Commission, can endow the mediated citizens of the 21st century with tools for a better understanding of their reality and, above all, for an intelligent transformation of the media as key pieces in the quest for personal development.