






Gender studies in Communication Degrees

Los estudios de género en los Grados de Comunicación

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ABSTRACT

This paper is the result of a research carried out under the umbrella of the “UNESCO UniTWIN Network on Media, Gender, and ICTs” Project, and it tries to determine the presence of subjects with a specific focus on gender in the current Communication Degrees offered at Spanish universities. The inclusion of subjects about gender equality in relation to media follows the suggestions of the IV World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). The main objective of this research will be to investigate the presence of these subjects in Communication Degrees, identifying the elements that define them at a thematic, methodological and relevant levels within the curriculum. A mixed methodological design is proposed based on ex-post-facto research, with a descriptive orientation and the search for improvement, a qualitative analysis of study plans using ATLAS.ti and a panel of experts. The results reveal a scarce presence of this type of subjects, with a higher percentage in public universities than in private ones, and also a minimal relevance as compulsory subjects. This research study reveals the current formal training in gender studies of future generations of media professionals and serves as an endorsement for forthcoming changes of curricula in the European Higher Education Area context.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo es fruto de una investigación desarrollada en el marco del proyecto «UNESCO UniTWIN Network on Media, Gender, and ICTs» para determinar la presencia de asignaturas con un contenido específico en estudios de género en los actuales planes de estudio de los Grados españoles en el área de comunicación. La inclusión de asignaturas que aborden la igualdad de género en relación a los medios y procesos de comunicación obedece a lo establecido en la IV Conferencia Mundial sobre la Mujer de Beijing (1995). El objetivo principal de este trabajo será la indagación del nivel de presencia de estas asignaturas en los Grados en comunicación identificando los elementos que las definen a nivel temático, metodológico y relevancia dentro del plan de estudios. Se plantea un diseño metodológico mixto partiendo de una investigación ex-post-facto, con orientación descriptiva y de búsqueda de la mejora, un análisis cualitativo de planes de estudio mediante ATLAS.ti y un panel de expertos. Los resultados inciden en una escasa presencia de este tipo de asignaturas, con mayor porcentaje en la universidad pública respecto a la privada y una mínima relevancia como materia obligatoria. Un trabajo que vislumbra la actual formación reglada en cuestiones de género de las futuras generaciones de profesionales de los medios y que sirve de apoyo para futuros cambios de planes de estudios en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Equality, gender, communication, journalism, ICT, university, Degree, curriculum. Igualdad, género, comunicación, periodismo, TIC, universidad, Grado, currículo.

1. Introduction

The development of an integral plan to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through the media is a priority on the UNESCO agenda. Universities and colleges specialized in different areas of Communication are called to play a key role in helping eradicate any form of discrimination against women.

Section J of the "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, stressed the importance of mass media in achieving that goal (UN Women, 1995: 57). Since then, the international debate on gender equality in the media has generated extensive literature (Grizzle, 2014) and annual reports including, among others, "The World Summit on the Information Society" (EES, 2003), "Report on equality between women and men in the EU" and "Women in the digital age" (European Commission, 2018a; 2018b), "Mainstreaming gender into policies and the programmes of the institutions of the European Union and EU member states" and "Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU member states: Women and the media. Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organizations" (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2013a; 2013b), or "Global report on the status of women in the news media" (International Women's Media Foundation, 2011).

Regarding universities, the Beijing Declaration proposed to "develop non-discriminatory education and training" (strategic objective B.4). Among the actions to be taken (Action 83), the Declaration emphasized the need to include a gender perspective in all educational programs, in particular in the curricula of higher education institutions (UN Women, 1995: 56-59). In its "Priority Gender Equality Action Plan 2008-2013", UNESCO reaffirmed this recommendation, helping its development and launch in 2012 and together with the International Federation of Journalists the "Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media." Among its strategic objectives (A5.2) is to foster gender equality awareness among "journalists, other media workers and media officials (male and female) and access to education and training, including on gender related issues, for women and men in the media" (UNESCO, 2014: 40).

In 1992, UNESCO launched the "University Twinning and Networking" (UNITWIN) Program to promote cooperation and inter-university linkages worldwide. This initiative under the "Global Alliance on Media and Gender" involves more than 700 institutions in 116 countries (UniTWIN, 2017). As regards the Bologna reform and the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Preamble of the 1993 Berlin Communiqué already stressed the pivotal role of universities in ending gender inequality. One of the key drivers of the EHEA was to develop gender objectives and verification agencies for all Degrees (Saldaña, 2010).

In Spain, the conference on "Women's, Gender and Feminist Studies. Graduate and Postgraduate Degrees" ("Los Estudios sobre las Mujeres, de Género y Feministas. Grados y Postgrados"), held at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) in 2006, draw attention to the urgent need to incorporate gender studies in all university curricula. This demand was also based on Title I, Chapter 4, Section 7 of Organic Act 1/2004, of 28 December, on comprehensive protection measures against gender-based violence, subsequently confirmed by Title II, Article 25, of Organic Act 3/2007, of 22 March, on effective equality for women and men, and all regional implementing regulations. The Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies ("Red Española de Agencias de Calidad Universitaria", REACU) also addressed these concerns in the introduction of the Evaluation protocol for verification of official university Degrees (REACU, 2011).

The poor implementation of the objectives set forth in Section J of the 1995 Beijing Declaration (Verloo, 2005; Rees, 2005; North, 2010; Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011; Gallagher, 2015; Ross & Padovani, 2016; Padovani, 2016), gave rise to the creation in 2017 of "The International UNESCO UnitWIN Network on Gender, Media, and ICTs" under the framework of the "Priority Gender Equality Action Plan 2014-2021, the "Incheon Declaration for Education 2030" and the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (UN, 2015). This was conceived as an inter-university project to train the new generations pursuing communication studies in gender equality.

In the Spanish case, numerous studies confirm the poor achievement of those objectives in professional practice (Gallego, 2004; Bernárdez et al., 2008, Matud et al., 2012; Martín & Navarro-Beltrá, 2012),

which is also the case for EHEA's recommendations and the regulatory framework governing higher education (López-Díez, 2000; 2005; Ballarín, 2009; Bosch & Ferrer, 2012; Bosch et al., 2011; Castellsagué et al., 2014), and particularly in the field of Communication (Menéndez, 2013; 2014; Guarinos et al., 2018).

In this context, and in light of the Beijing+25 process scheduled for March 2020, UNESCO-UniTWIN launched in 2018 the project "Mapping Educational Strategies for Creating Gender-sensitive Journalism, Media, and ICT Curriculums" in 11 countries: Australia, Chile, Ecuador, Spain, United States, Ethiopia, India, Italy, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. Aware of the importance of contributing to this mapping, the UCM, based on Guarinos et al. (2018), developed a study covering the whole Spanish university system based on seven objectives:

- 1) To identify the subjects in communication studies curricula explicitly promoting gender equality in the media and ICTs—including the name of the subject.
- 2) To determine the optional or compulsory nature of those subjects.
- 3) To determine the varying presence of those subjects in public vs. private universities.
- 4) To describe the contents, methodology and bibliographical references for those subjects.
- 5) To identify the gender composition of the faculty.
- 6) To analyze the data and to assess the Spanish case.
- 7) To recommend strategic actions to be taken by UNESCO-UniTWIN to promote gender equality in communication studies.

2. Materials and methodology

This study applies a mixed methodology based on an *ex-post facto*, non-experimental approach (Latorre et al., 2005, Buendía et al., 1998; Bernardo & Calderero, 2000; Latorre et al., 2005), with a descriptive orientation towards improvement. In this type of research, the event has already occurred (Bisquerra, 2004) or is still occurring. Given that the researcher "has no control over the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or are inherently non-manipulable" (Kerlinger, 1975: 268), the focus is placed on "defining" the education phenomenon by answering questions about its situation.

As regards information gathering, the sample includes all official curricula for the 2017/18 academic year in the Spanish university system in Journalism, Advertising, Audiovisual Communication, Communication, Cultural Communication, Digital Communication and Social Communication Degrees. We downloaded the curricula from the official websites of each university, and we processed them using the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti. Those primary documents were grouped by regions (autonomous communities) and public/private universities.

The sampling strategy used codes including the name of the relevant Degrees, a word finder listing the terms "gender," "women," "equality," and "diversity," and their subsequent "Auto-Coding" based on the Degree codes. The subjects were validated as part of the sample by verifying in the corresponding syllabus whether gender equality was one of their main objectives and central in their relation to the field of communication.

The final sample of 165 Degrees under consideration comprises 30 public universities and 25 private universities. Among those, 22 subjects corresponding to 21 different Degrees included the relevant codes in their own names. In order to qualitatively improve the recommendations of the final report for UNESCO-UniTWIN, a panel of experts was convened in April 2018 to discuss and assess the results, and to identify the needs and actions to promote the inclusion of gender equality in those syllabi.

The panel was made up of 42 experts among teaching and research staff (PDI for its initials in Spanish) from national and international universities selected based on their experience in gender equality and higher education in the field of Communication, their independence, geographical spread, and teamwork skills (Table 1).

Table 1. Panel of experts by academic ranks from national and international universities

University	Full Professor	Professor	Senior Assistant Professor	Assistant Professor
Univ. of Alicante	—	—	—	1
Autonomous Univ. of Barcelona	—	2	—	1
Autonomous Univ. of Madrid	—	1	—	—
Univ. of Burgos	—	2	—	—
Complutense Univ. Complutense of Madrid	—	2	2	2
Univ. of Girona	—	—	—	1
Univ. of Granada	—	—	—	1
International Univ. of La Rioja	—	1	—	—
Univ. Rovira i Virgili	—	2	—	—
Univ. of Salamanca	—	—	—	1
Univ. of Sevilla	—	1	—	1
Univ. of Valencia	1	1	1	2
Total National Universities	1	12	3	10
Aston University, UK	1	—	—	—
Clark University, USA	—	—	—	1
University of the Atlantic, Colombia	—	2	—	—
Charleston University, USA	—	1	—	—
Dartmouth College, USA	1	—	—	—
Dickinson College, USA	—	1	—	—
Universität Giessen, Germany	—	—	—	1
Université Grenoble-Alpes, France	1	—	—	—
Uniwersytet Lodzki, Poland	—	—	—	1
Louisiana State University, USA	—	1	—	—
University of Mass.-Amherst, USA	1	—	—	—
University of Minnesota, USA	—	1	—	—
Oxford Brookes University, UK	1	—	—	—
Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil	—	1	—	—
Université Paris-IV-Sorbonne, France	—	1	—	—
Total International Universities	5	8	—	3

3. Analysis and results

The results regarding the presence of specific gender equality subjects in the official syllabi of Communication Degrees in Spanish public and private universities in 2018 are presented below.

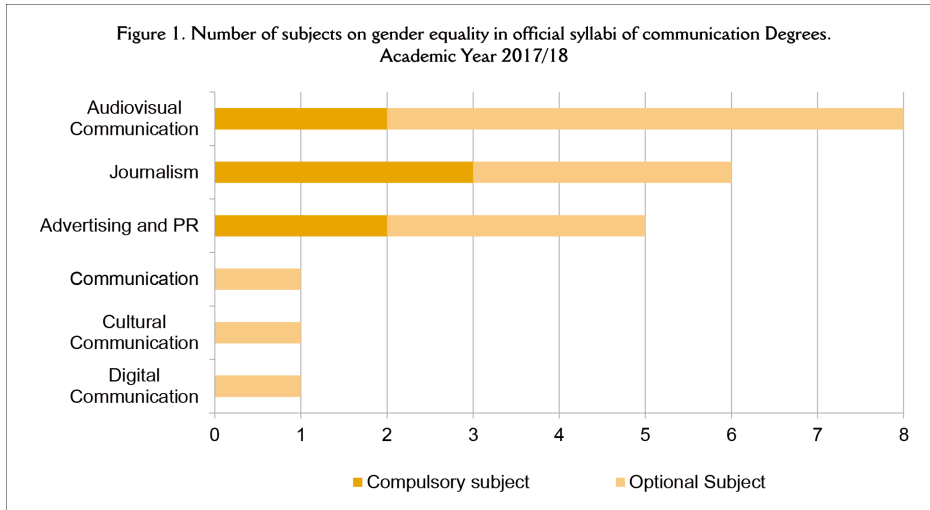
3.1. General features

In the academic year 2017/18, Spanish universities offered a total of 165 Degrees in the field of communication (including Journalism, Advertising, Audiovisual Communication, Communication, Cultural Communication, Digital Communication and Social Communication Degrees), as reflected in the sample. Of those, only 22 subjects had specific gender equality content explicitly included in their name in relation to the media, new technologies, and audiovisual culture (Figure 1).

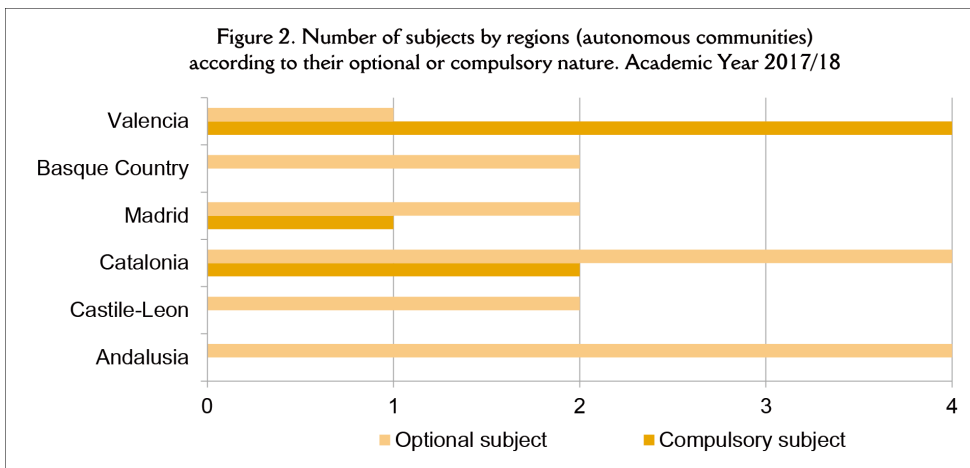
Ordered by Degrees, Audiovisual Communication offers 8 subjects (36.36%), Journalism offers 6 subjects (27.27%), Advertising offers 5 subjects (22.72%), and Communication, Social Communication and Digital Communication offer 1 subject each (4.55%). As regards the optional or compulsory nature of the 22 subjects, Journalism offers the highest number of compulsory subjects: 3 out of 6, i.e., 50%. Advertising offers 2 compulsory subjects out of the total 5 (40%) and Audiovisual Communication offers 2 compulsory subjects out of the total 8 (25%). The single subject offered in Communication, Social Communication and Digital Communication Degrees is optional.

In terms of regional distribution (autonomous communities), Catalonia leads the ranking with 6 subjects offered (27.27%), followed by Valencia with 5 (22.72%), Andalusia with 4 (18.18%), Madrid with 3 (13.63%), and Castile-Leon and the Basque Country with 2 each (9.1%). None of the other regions offer these subjects.

When it comes to the compulsory or optional nature of the subjects, Valencia ranks first with 4 out of 5 (i.e., 80% of its offer), followed by Catalonia with 2 out of 6 (33.33%) and Madrid with 1 out of 3 (33%). All the subjects offered in Andalusia (4), Castile-Leon (2) and the Basque Country (2) are optional.



At a more detailed level, Andalusia offered 1 specific subject in Audiovisual Communication at the University of Sevilla (US); 1 in Digital Communication at the University Pablo de Olavide (UPO); 1 in the Communication Degree at Universidad Loyola of Andalucía, and 1 in Audiovisual Communication at EUSA-University of Sevilla (EUSA-US). Castile-Leon offered 1 subject in the Communication and Audiovisual Creation at University of Salamanca (USAL) and 1 in Advertising at University of Valladolid (UVa). Catalonia offered 1 subject in Audiovisual Communication, Journalism and Advertising at Universitat de Rovira i Virgili (URV); 1 in Journalism at Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), 1 in Public Relations at Superior School for Public Relations, affiliated to University of Barcelona (ESRP-UB), and 1 in Cultural Communication at University of Girona (UdG). Madrid offered 1 subject in Journalism at Complutense University (UCM) and 1 in Audiovisual Communication and the Double Degree in Journalism and Humanities at University Carlos III (UC3M). The Basque Country offered 1 subject in Audiovisual Communication and 1 in Journalism at University of the Basque Country (UPV). Finally, Valencia offered 1 subject in Audiovisual Communication at University of València (UV) and 2 in Journalism, 1 in Advertising and 1 in Audiovisual Communication at University Jaume I (UJI) (Figure 2).



Considering the public or private nature of the university, 19 subjects were offered by the public network (86.36%) and 3 by the private one (13.64%). Subjects in Journalism, Advertising and Cultural Communication were only offered by public universities. Subjects in Audiovisual Communication were offered both by the public and private network, while subjects in Communication and Digital Communication were only offered by private institutions. Of the total 165 Degrees, 73 were offered by

public universities (44.24%) and 92 by private ones (55.76%). Finally, looking into the gender composition of the faculty, all the syllabi refer to women teachers, except in two cases: “Communication for Equality”, at ESRP-UB and “Communication, Gender and Mass Culture in the Contemporary World” in Journalism at UPV.

3.2. Name and methodological approach

The 22 subjects have 16 different names in the syllabi: 75% of the subjects combine the concepts of “gender” and “communication” for a total of 12 different names with negligible variations; 18.75% of the subjects are named based on the concept of “equality” giving rise to 3 different names. The only markedly different case is the subject on the history of women (Table 2).

Name of the subject	Type	Degree	University
Gender and Communication	Optional	Journalism	Univ. Rovira i Virgili
	Optional	Journalism	Univ. Jaume I
	Optional	Audiovisual Communication	Univ. Rovira i Virgili
	Optional	Advertising	Univ. Rovira i Virgili
Communication and Gender	Optional	Journalism	Univ. Complutense
Gender and Audiovisual Communication	Optional	Audiovisual Communication and Creation	Univ. Salamanca
Gender and Audiovisual Culture	Optional	Audiovisual Communication	Univ. Carlos III
Audiovisual Communication and Gender	Optional	Audiovisual Communication	Univ. Sevilla
Gender Studies in Audiovisual Communication	Optional	Audiovisual Communication	EUSA-Univ. Sevilla
Communication for Equality	Compulsory	Journalism	Univ. Jaume I
	Compulsory	Audiovisual Communication	Univ. Jaume I
	Compulsory	Advertising	Univ. Jaume I
	Compulsory	Advertising	Univ. of Barcelona
Communication and Gender Studies	Compulsory	Journalism	Autonomous Univ. of Barcelona
Image, Gender and Identity	Optional	Audiovisual Communication	Univ. of the Basque Country
Gender Studies	Compulsory	Journalism and Humanities	Univ. Carlos III
Gender Policies and Discourse Theory	Compulsory	Audiovisual Communication	Univ. of Valencia
Communication, Gender and Mass Culture in the Contemporary World	Optional	Advertising	Univ. of the Basque Country
Advertising and Equality	Optional	Advertising	Univ. of Valladolid
Equality and Diversity Management	Optional	Communication	Univ. Loyola de Andalucía
Gender and NICTs	Optional	Digital Communication	Univ. Pablo de Olavide
History of Women	Optional	Social Communication	Univ. of Girona

From a situated knowledge perspective (Haraway, 1991), it should be noted that feminist critical theory is the dominant approach in all the syllabi. New masculinity studies are included in the subject “Gender and Communication” in the three Degrees offered at URV. Queer theory is only mentioned in two instances: “Gender Studies in Audiovisual Communication” in the Audiovisual Communication Degree at US, and “Gender Studies” in the Double Degree in Journalism and Humanities at UC3M. Only two subjects are informed by a postcolonial approach: “Gender Policies and Discourse Theory” in the Audiovisual Communication Degree at UV and “Advertising and Equality” in Advertising at UVa. The syllabus of this latter subject incorporates a specific block on gender studies and functional diversity, being the only one that adopts this theoretical angle.

The most-cited bibliographic references in the whole sample of syllabi under consideration are works by Juana Gallego Ayala (9 entradas), María Milagros Rivera Garretas (6), Luisa Muraro (5), Judith Butler (4), Laura Mulvey (4), María Zambrano (4), Annette Kuhn (3) and Giulia Colaizzi (3), followed by Simone Weil, Simone de Beauvoir, Teresa de Lauretis, Donna J. Haraway, Michel Foucault, Stuart Hall, Enn Ann Kaplan, Asunción Bernárdez, Eulàlia Lledó and Eloísa Nos Aldás (2 each). Other authors or references,

such as Virginia Woolf, Monique Wittig, Gayle S. Rubin, Barbara Zecchi or UNESCO reports are cited only once.

3.3. Results of the expert panel

The discussion on the results revealed little progress—two decades after the creation of the EHEA—in the elaboration or modification of Degree curricula to incorporate specific gender equality subjects in the field of Communication. This is all the more so if we look at previous studies such as Menéndez (2013; 2014) and, in Andalusia, Guarinos et al. (2018). The following conclusions and recommendations were reached for the report requested by UNESCO-UnitWIN:

1) Training in gender studies in Communication Degrees is particularly important to promote gender equality values, to foster a broader view of professional practice—not limited to a male perspective—and to help build an academic education that does not conceal women’s contributions in different professional areas and aspects.

2) Training should be carried out through subjects included in official curricula and syllabi, without prejudice to mainstreaming and complementary activities. Optional subjects should never reduce the offer of compulsory subjects.

3) In 4-year Degrees, at least one compulsory subject should be offered in the first or second year and at least an optional one in the third or fourth year.

4) Compulsory subjects should cover all aspects addressed by gender studies: feminist and women’s studies, men’s/masculinity studies, and LGBTIQ+.

5) The new “Verifica” (Verify) and “Modifica” (Modify) programs for official curricula provide an opportunity to include these subjects.

6) There is an urgent need to draw up a “White Paper” to promote education policies integrating gender studies in a more effective and specific manner, including an agenda focused on the objectives set forth in Section J of the 1995 Beijing Declaration.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Let us now point out the most relevant aspects regarding the presence of gender studies in the different communication Degrees offered by Spanish universities. Before, we will indicate the limitations encountered in this work.

The object of study is limited to the subjects included in official curricula of Degrees offered in the academic year 2017/18 in the field of Communication. Only Graduate Degrees are considered, since they constitute the basic and common training for university students. Optional subjects may vary each year depending on the course, the needs of the teaching departments and faculties, as well as the students’ demand. However, these aspects do not pose a major problem, since this study focuses on the subjects included in current official curricula.

Pursuant to Article 35 of Organic Act 4/2007 of 12 April, we have observed that curricula and syllabi are easily accessible online in public universities, in contrast to private universities.

Spanish universities offer few subjects that explicitly promote gender equality in the media and ICTs: only 22 subjects out of 165 Degrees, which shows the little relevance attached to gender studies in the media in Spain. Hence, the hegemonic perspective in this field is still not sufficiently aware and sensitive to gender issues. Also, poor training in this area will affect how future professionals analyze and develop information, discourses and our collective imagination.

It is somewhat remarkable that Audiovisual Communication Degrees offer more gender-related subjects than Journalism and Advertising, even if Journalism offers more compulsory subjects.

The fact that these Degrees only include 6 compulsory subjects in their curricula raises concerns about the achievement of the objectives laid down in Section J of the 1995 Beijing Declaration. This is especially so if Spanish universities intend to train future generations according to the 2030 Education Framework for Action, thus effectively promoting values for a more just, egalitarian and gender-diverse society. In this regard, the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” establishes in its objective 5 a more reduced and less specific framework than Section J of the 1995 Beijing Declaration regarding women and mass media,

which may be indicative of the agenda's gradual de-politization. In that context, the commitment and cooperation of social actors in general and of the university system in particular are all the more necessary. The results of this research confirm such need and shed light on the situation of Spanish universities facing potential changes stemming from the upcoming Beijing+25 process.

In this regard, universities in Valencia and Catalonia are the most committed. These two regions offer the largest number of gender-oriented subjects—Valencia offers the highest number of compulsory subjects, and UJI is the Spanish leading university in this field. Andalusia, Madrid, the Basque Country and Castile-Leon offer these subjects as optional, except for the Double Degree in Journalism and Humanities at UC3M. The other regions lag behind by offering no such subjects.

The fact that 86.36% of these subjects are offered by public universities says a lot about the great challenge facing private institutions to incorporate gender studies in their curricula—a significant issue considering that 55.76% of the Degrees in this field are taught at private universities. For instance, some new Degrees such as Communication and Digital Communication are only offered by the private network. Only 19 subjects include gender studies in relation to the media and ICTs out of the 73 graduate Degrees that can be studied at public universities, which shows the shortcomings of current curricula, and points in the direction of change.

In their names, these subjects fit into the theoretical framework defined by UNESCO indicators, acknowledging the key role of the media in promoting gender equality. In light of the gender composition of the faculty, this commitment should extend to the entire faculty, thus encouraging men to teach these subjects.

As for the content, methodology and bibliographical references, the results show that feminist critical theory is the core element in all the subjects. Subjects in Audiovisual Communication at US and the Double Degree in Journalism and Humanities at UC3M, which explicitly include LGBTIQ+ studies and queer theory in their syllabi, are an exception. Also remarkable are postcolonial approaches in Audiovisual Communication at UV and Journalism at Uva—in the latter case, also including studies on gender and functional diversity. These certainly are a minority, but may be relevant to design new subjects based on the inclusive indicators promoted by UNESCO.

The results show few bibliographic recommendations in the syllabi, which barely cite some key reference works in the field of gender studies. This was highlighted with concern by the panel experts, especially those coming from the English-speaking countries. There is an urgent need to update and enrich the bibliographic references in Spanish syllabi in order to include major figures in feminist critical theory and gender studies.

The poor theoretical training offered to students in the syllabi goes hand in hand with the scarce presence of these subjects in the official curricula of communication Degrees. This is of particular concern with respect to public universities, whose curricula should include at least one compulsory subject and an optional one.

The insufficient training in gender studies calls for the elaboration of a White Paper at national level. Furthermore, the expert panel's recommendations and requests have been submitted to the Women's Institute ("Instituto de la Mujer") as reflected in the proceedings of the "7th GECA International Conference: Representation, Education, and Fight against Gender-Based Violence" ("VII Congreso Internacional de GECA: Representación, Educación y Lucha contra la Violencia de Género," GECA, 2018). Sharing the results through the UNESCO-UniTwin network has served to frame this research as a model for future studies in Latin American countries. It has also provided discussion material for the drafting of "Gender, Media, & ICTs. New Approaches for Research, Education, & Training" (UniTWIN, 2019), a White Paper to guide the design of specific subjects by adapting the proposed content to each institution's educational, political and social circumstances.

In the meantime, we can only hope that Spanish universities, faculties, and departments, promote training programs for faculty members focused on gender equality and diversity so that these contents are mainstreamed into all the subjects of the curricula. This is particularly important if specific new subjects cannot be offered in the short term. Only if we adopt such a global and inclusive perspective may we ensure that future generations of media professionals are educated and trained in gender equality.

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