**Conclusions and proposals for improvement from the seminar**

**“Challenges in university education in the field of Communication”**

The seminar “Challenges in university education in the field of Communication” was held on 30 January 2019 at Blanquerna Faculty of Communication and International Relations of Ramon Llull University. It constituted a forum for dialogue and reflection in which representatives from the business world and the university community strengthened synergies in order to achieve improvements in educational programmes.

**The paradox**

Bachelor’s degrees in the field of Communication (Audiovisual Communication, Journalism and Advertising and Public Relations) experience huge demand meaning that top students are admitted to the programme. Each year some 1,500 individuals graduate in this field and although almost all of them are in work after qualifying with most performing functions linked to their study programme, their level of satisfaction with the education is below the average for the remaining study programmes in the Catalan university system.

**The diagnosis from the employers’ survey**

Almost half of the companies that have recruited individuals who recently graduated in the field of Communication report shortcomings with regard to the following cross-disciplinary skills:

* Practical training
* Problem solving and decision-making

This is also true of specific skills linked to the field of Communication:

* Ability to present reasoned ideas and arguments
* Ability to create, plan, design and implement communication projects
* Ability to effectively communicate

In addition, one of the foremost challenges that education in the field of Communication needs to address relates to ICTs (digital communication, digital journalism, social media, digitisation, etc.).

**Education challenges in Communication**

The seminar held on 30 January 2019 entitled “Challenges in university education in the field of Communication” benefitted from the participation of a host of experts in this sphere (teachers, professionals and students) who raised various challenges for professionals from the sector: we live in a society increasingly subject to surveillance in which those who have information also have control, a society that is increasingly isolated due to the filter bubble, as it is known (advice and suggestions based on personal preferences), which erodes the public sphere, threatening the very debate that is characteristic of democratic cultures, in addition to the digital tidal wave that has and continues to transform the way information content is produced at an frantic pace.

**The educational proposal**

Professor Pérez Tornero gave an opening presentation on the future of education in the field of Communication. The various ideas raised include the following:

* Education should be digital for the creation, construction and distribution of content; accordingly, programming should carry greater weight in educational profiles in order to achieve this.
* Education should be *transmedia*. As Esther Vera also mentioned, information constitutes the raw material and there are subsequently several ways of “packaging it”.
* Content related to artificial intelligence, statistical subjects and big data also needs to be strengthened.

He also proposed structuring this education in three layers according to the following diagram:

An initial layer formed by “knowledge”. There was broad consensus among those taking part in the seminar regarding this need, although when it comes to the specific academic fields involved, certain individuals considered semiotics to be losing importance compared to the others. A second layer would be formed by media technology, languages and visual arts (which constitute an expanding sphere for access to the labour market). There would be a third layer formed by journalism and communication where journalism is understood as “ethical engineering of information” and audiovisual communication as “fiction engineering”.

Moreover, the individuals taking part in the round tables also raised the following ideas as proposals for improving education in the field of Communication:

* Improving practical training by means of the concept of “pre-working”. Promotion of practical cases based on real cases from companies, such as the business school model (taking on actual roles in educational processes). This would make it possible to heighten students’ ability to think, persuade and reason, etc.
* Observing how digital marketing agencies are becoming “consultagencies”: the mass volumes of technology, data and artificial intelligence are transforming traditional agencies into consultancy firms. In this case, assessment is results-based rather than solely dependent on the time spent on a specific project. This new approach would need to form part of education in Advertising and PR.
* Steering Bachelor’s degree final-year projects to meet companies’ needs.
* Considering the challenge of lifelong learning: both for active professionals and teaching staff, the frantic pace of innovation means it is necessary to set aside time in order to ensure active professionals and educators alike are up-to-date on matters.
* Ensuring English is the language of instruction for 50% of the subjects in Communication study programmes in order to avoid limiting graduates’ future opportunities for access to the labour market to a national scale.
* Introducing subjects on creativity and creative techniques into the Bachelor’s degrees in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication to offset shortcomings perceived by employers when it comes to the ability to offer new ideas and innovate.
* Working on motivation and teaching individuals to create their own brand (personal branding).
* Adopting a cross-disciplinary approach and working in teams.
* Adopting a project-centred approach.
* Creating start-ups in the final years of the Bachelor’s degree.
* Encouraging hybridisation: promoting cross-over study programmes.

Taking into consideration these aspects and recommendations when designing study programmes in Communication could have a positive impact on the calibre and access to the labour market of future graduates in this field.