
Introduction

Issue 49 of *Quaderns del CAC* is being launched to be a venue to reflect on the university education of future communication professionals within a context of constant change, innovation and reformulation.

We are aware that university organigrams guarantee that this debate happens and that university teaching and research staff is always aware of social, economic, political, technological and business transformations. Within this context, universities are forced not only to update contents and improve the planning of classroom participatory activities but also to know firsthand how these changes are affecting students' activities and routines, which includes making an effort to understand the technology that students use, for example. Bearing in mind this constant effort on the part of the university community, and dovetailing with the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Quaderns del CAC*, we believe this is a good time to devote an issue to sharing ideas, experiences and reflections outside of administrative environments, which are often conditioned by criteria and requirements that do not always take the areas of the social sciences and humanities into account, not to mention the everyday pressures that get in the way of the deliberateness that this type of reflection requires.

'**University and critical thinking: training in communication**' was the title of the invitation for authors to contribute to this issue. A few days before our working meetings to decide on the theme of the monographic section of this issue, UNESCO published the book *Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (2021), and at the launch, it posed questions directly related to the university's ability to generate critical thinking, like What type of knowledge is being produced? How is it being generated? Where does it come from? How is it distributed? We at Quaderns del CAC believe that the texts in this issue clearly contribute to this essential debate. In this sense, we believe we have risen to the challenge proposed: to contribute to the debate on the role of universities in educating communication professionals of the present and future and, in a broader sense, to the debate on the mission of higher education in educating and transmitting valuable knowledge for the exercise of critical citizenship. The texts in this issue also contain relevant reflections on the place occupied by the university in today's social, economic and political context, another question of vital importance.

The **monographic section** contains five articles, all featuring an overview of the university degrees as a whole, while each also examines a specific topic.

José Luis Terrón Blanco opens the monographic section with the article 'Mercantile logic: The current underpinning of university studies. A reflection on the Bachelor's in Journalism'. Terrón Blanco has been an Associate Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and now, from a distance (after retiring), he has written a critical view that goes beyond anecdotes and personal perceptions. His account, the outcome of a longstanding dialogue with the specialised literature and his interest—and constant effort—in understanding university dynamics, explains how the neoliberal discourse promoted by the World Bank since the late twentieth century is affecting the way universities operate. According to Terrón Blanco, 'both teaching and research are imbued with the logics of competition, profitability and accountability'.

Lydia Sánchez and **Jorge Franganillo**, Associate Professor and Lecturer at the Universitat de Barcelona, respectively argue that critical thinking is a key tool for both working as a communication professional (it enables one to effectively analyse and weigh evidence, arguments and opinions) and addressing such dangerous phenomena as disinformation and the manipulation of news in the exercise of citizenship. In their text, 'Audiovisual Communication and critical thinking: Challenges for university education', they assert that higher education should be considered a public asset and a human right, given their further concern about universities being in danger of subjugation to market imperatives or political interests.

The third article in the monograph, written by **Marta Civil i Serra**, **Marta Rial Pan** and **Teresa Santos Prados**, is entitled 'The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB). Fifty years of public service supporting teaching and research (1972-2022)'. The authors, who are very familiar with the way this library works given that they are on its team, provide a comprehensive overview of this space, which they define as a 'public facility open to society'. Reading this document reveals not only its history but also its general and special collections, like the documents and materials related to contemporary politics in Catalonia and Spain, which can be consulted at the Documentation Centre on Communication (CEDOC).

Professor **María del Carmen García Galera** and Associate Professors **Beatriz Catalina García** and **Manuel Martínez Nicolás** from the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos have contributed the text entitled 'Digitalisation, labour market and training. Opportunities and vulnerabilities of Communication graduates'. This article provides two takes on this topic. First, it explores the use of digital platforms to find jobs and concludes that personal contacts (the traditional method) are still the main way of finding one. Secondly, they reflect on the digital competences needed in the communication sector. Specifically, the text questions whether university education is adequately providing students with these competences. The combination does not seem easy, and this leads us to consider the importance of the university's role in lifelong learning for all professionals.

The **monographic section** closes with an article that reflects on the importance of getting students involved in the dissemination of scholarship through the development of final projects at the end of bachelor's degrees. Associate Professor **Patricia Lázaro Pernias** and Serra Húnter Fellow **Ileana Zeler**, both at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, tell about their teaching innovation project in their article 'YouTube as a tool of formative dissemination of the final project: The case of the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona'. The document does not conceal the difficulties entailed in undertaking this type of project, not only in terms of the challenge of stimulating a proactive attitude among students but also the concern of always guaranteeing that quality knowledge is being disseminated.

The Miscellany section contains two articles, and even though the topics in this section are open, both of them are situated in the field of gender studies, which reveals the unstoppable upswing in this thematic area.

'Homonormativity or marginality: The double pattern in LGTBIQ+ characters in TV series', by **Juan-José Sánchez-Soriano**, Lecturer at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, reflects on the narrative patterns used to construct LGTBIQ+ characters in TV fiction. Sánchez Soriano analyses the physical, social and psychological dimensions of a random representative sample from Western TV series and finds that historical, stereotypical and distorted patterns that reflect intolerant societies persist.

Secondly, in the article 'The invisibility of women's sport in Catalan public television news in March 2023', **Isaac Pecino Peláez**, graduate of Universitat Pompeu Fabra, and **Lorena Gómez Puertas**, Lecturer at the same university, analyse the presence of women's sport on the TV news broadcast in primetime on Televisió de Catalunya's TV3 channel. In recent years, the social recognition of women's sport has risen, and therefore studies like this one can serve as a starting point to check whether this improvement in their social standing is in any way reflected in media content. This study finds that for now, women's sports does not account for even 15% of the sports news on the programmes analysed.

To conclude this introduction, we would like to highlight the fact that this issue contains reflections and studies by people at very different points in their academic careers, a career that entails a long road with phases characterised by specific requirements and challenges, all of which require extraordinary dedication. Hence, the importance of this diverse range of voices.

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