

## **GLOBALIZATION OR AMERICANIZATION OF SPANISH HIGHER EDUCATION? A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF REQUIRED SKILLS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF THE UNITED STATES AND SPAIN**

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### **Abstract**

New Spanish degrees have emerged in this academic year 2008-09 as a result of the great effort required in adapting to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) planned in the Bologna Declaration. The main consequence of that adaptation process (better known as the Bologna process) is that the new degrees had to be designed by identifying the students' required skills in order to progress efficiently, self-governmentally and flexibly in the professional context. This paper analyzes the adaptation process of the Spanish Degree in Advertising and Public Relations and presents a comparative study of the skills related to the practice of public relations in two educational systems: the US system and the Spanish system, once the Bologna process has been implemented. The conclusions of this research suggest the strong influence of the US model on the new Spanish model as a form of the influence of globalization in higher education.

### **Keywords**

Globalization in higher education; public relations education; Bologna process; European Higher Education Area

## Introduction and literature review

First Public relations education is undergoing a major transformation in Europe with the application of the “Bologna process”, according to which the syllabuses of the 46 countries that signed the Bologna Declaration are adapting their university degrees to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

With the implementation of the Bologna process, higher education systems in European countries are to be organized in such a way that 1) it will be easy to move from one country to the other (within the EHEA) for the purpose of further study or employment; 2) the attractiveness of European higher education has increased, so many people from non-European countries will also come to study and/or work in Europe; 3) the EHEA provides Europe with a broad, high-quality and advanced knowledge base, and ensures the further development of Europe as a stable, peaceful and tolerant community benefiting from a cutting-edge European Research Area; and 4) there will also be a greater convergence between the U.S. and Europe as European higher education adopts aspects of the American system.

This last goal is the one that affects this research, which compares the development of the adaptation of public relations degrees in Spain to the EHEA compared to the situation and recommendations of the American system. Since the process of implementation in Spain will not be effective for a further three years, our study is based on two key documents: *The Professional Bond – Public Relations Education and the Practice* drawn up by the Commission on Public Relations Education (2006), and the *White Paper: Undergraduate Degrees in Communication (Libro blanco: Títulos de grado en comunicación)* approved by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA, 2005).

The fact that the two documents taken as reference for the comparative analysis have approaches which are actually closer to each other than might have been expected, has enormously enriched the research outcomes. First of all, neither of them are mandatory, thus allowing the authors to seek excellence with no strings attached. Moreover, the point of view of the professionals was largely taken into account in defining the major guidelines that should drive the offer of public relations education.

What is more, the legitimacy of the participating institutions is unarguable: Commission on Public Relations Education in collaboration with the Institute for Public Relations, Public Relations Society of America and Scripps Howard Foundation, in the case of the United States, and all the schools where officially approved degrees in Communication are taught in Spain (scholars, practitioners, students, and education managers were involved in the validation of the resulting skills).

As is logical, numerous additional sources were leveraged to contextualize, extend and to qualify the results obtained by means of the comparative study.

Beginning with Bernays (1978), many authors have sought to determine the orientation that the courses that prepare students to exercise this discipline should have, which has often led them to draw up an inventory of the ideal skills of the good professional. Many times, however, the expression of this desideratum is born more out of conviction and own experience than of rigorous investigation.

Numerous text books on the discipline mix true skills and personal qualities without a break in continuity. This is the case, for example, in Jefkins (1993), whose proposal includes communicative skills (oral, written, audiovisual...), organizational capacity, capacity to interact with all kinds of people, integrity, imagination and the ongoing desire to learn, and in Black (2004), who alludes to common sense, curiosity, mastery of oral and written communication, flexibility, resilience, an eye for detail, etc. Even authors such as Wilcox et al. (2006), who explicitly distinguish between qualities and skills, relinquish any exhaustive desire on reducing the latter to five: writing skills, research capacity, planning expertise, problem-solving skills and economic and business skills.

Fortunately, authors such as Kalupa and Allen (1982), Culbertson (1983, 1985), Walker (1984), Baxter (1985), Wakefield and Cottone (1986 and 1987), VanSlyke Turk (1989), Schwartz et al. (1992), Culbertson and Jeffers (1992), Dostal Neff et al. (1999), Russell (1999); Stacks et al. (1999), Van Leuven (1999), Van Ruler et al. (2004), Creedon and Al-Khaja (2005), Xifra (2007) and Gregory; (2008) have addressed the skills aspect from a scientific perspective. Of all these works, the most

valuable ones for the matter in hand are those by Van Ruler et al. (2004), by dint of their ambitious approaches and for focusing on European specificity, and Xifra (2007), who had already compared the report by the Commission on Public Relations Education to the Spanish educational reality, although to the pre-Bologna process in this case.

The Delphi study promoted by Van Ruler et al. (2004) entailed the implementation of interviews with professionals and academics from the field of public relations in 25 European countries (including Spain). Their results enable us to determine what knowledge and skills are essential in order to engage in public relations in Europe. On the other hand, the study by Xifra (2007) focuses on the situation in Spain, analyzing the contents of the syllabus and also interviewing 29 scholars.

With this background, and the aforementioned documents, the purpose of this article is to compare the skills required for university training in public relations in Spain and in the United States of America in order to find differences and similarities and, furthermore, to test the influence of American system on the Spanish one, as a result of an Americanization or globalization process.

## **Methodology**

On making the comparison between the United States and the Spanish proposal, two pitfalls had to be overcome: one was related to form and the other to content.

The formal pitfall is basically taxonomic. The typology of skills used in the document of the United States Commission on Public Relations Educational does not match that of the Spanish White Paper. Thus, in the case of the United States, skills are distributed into two basic categories: knowledge and skills. The skills category, nevertheless, includes skills that are clearly attitude-based (for example, the ability to apply cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity and critical listening skills). The typology of skills in the Spanish case, on the other hand, is somewhat more complex, since it includes four categories: one pertaining to knowledge (disciplinary knowledge) and another three pertaining –generally speaking– to skills (professional

skills, academic skills and other specific skills). The name of this last category (“other specific skills”) is particularly unfortunate, since in actual fact it encompasses the more transversal or generic skills: teamwork skills; insight, inventiveness and creativity; analysis, synthesis and critical judgment skills; time management capacity, etc.

To overcome this obstacle and facilitate a comparison between both models and make it really productive, we addressed the subjects to which every skill belongs, regardless of the type of skill. We did this due to the dissimilarity of the types used in every report but, particularly because some skills regarded as knowledge in one model are classified as skills in the other, which demonstrates that in many cases *knowledge* and *savoir faire* are not easy to separate.

The second pitfall –content-based– is that the skills included in the North American report are those which are desirable for public relations studies, while the *White Paper* refers to the skills that are specific to the degree in advertising and public relations, due to the Spanish tradition of academically associating both persuasive communication disciplines, in a marketing-fuelled approach which has greatly conditioned the teaching of public relations in the university setting (Xifra & Castillo, 2006). In fact, the advertising and public relations degree will train students in the professional practice corresponding to four basic profiles, of which only one slots fully into public relations (corporate communication management).

Consequently, in the Spanish case we have had to filter the set of skills proposed for the degree in advertising and public relations so as to eliminate those which are specific to professional profiles alien to public relations. Therefore, the skills that are explicitly limited to the area of advertising have been ruled out, provided that they do so in an excluding way. This criterion has been compared to the data disaggregated by profiles of the surveys which, to determine the importance of every skill, were conducted by the authors of the *White Paper*.

## Results and Discussion

The convenience –justified in the previous section– of performing the comparative study in terms of subjects and not skills, led to the need to identify these subjects (we eventually established 19) and to assign to them each one of the 36 skills found in the United States report and each one of the 38 skills that survived the by-profile screenings we applied to the Spanish report. The result is summarized in table 1.

**Table 1.** Table of the subjects with the list of skills per country.

The results of the analysis of each subject are commented in the light of the literature already revised.

*Conceptual and theoretical basics.* In this subject there is a notable coincidence. The United States “Communication and persuasion concepts and strategies” are equivalent to the Spanish “Communication basics” and the “Communication and public relations theories” of the American model are perfectly comparable to the “Theory [and practice of advertising and] of public relations” of the Spanish model. However, probably this coincidence is more a question of convenience than conviction. Embarking upon university studies lacking a solid theoretical and conceptual base is unthinkable, but the literature reviewed uncovers a bleak reality: these basics are rarely perceived as truly necessary for the exercise of the profession in the United States or Europe (Terry, 1989; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003; Van Ruler, 2005). Although Hazleton and Kruckeberg (cited by Culbertson & Chen, 1996) state that European training in the field of public relations has a more theoretical orientation than the North American one, in the Spanish case Xifra and Castillo (2006) state that the investigators address public relations from an eminently instrumental standpoint, which also ends up having an impact on the orientation of their teaching activity.

*Relationships.* Relationships can hardly be ignored in a public relations program, so it is logical that both the United States model training and the Spanish one should pay attention to it. From a European standpoint, although it may be extrapolated perfectly to other environments, Van Ruler et al. (2004) consider that the capacity to establish a network of relationships is the main tool available to the public relations professional to do their job. Similarly, in the ranking of concepts defining the discipline produced

by Vercic et al. (2001), the concept of *relationships* holds the first place, in a tie with the *communication* concept.

The approach to the study of relationships in both cases, nevertheless, differs considerably. In the United States report, it is addressed in all its complexity, according to its cognitive dimension (“Relationships and relationship-building”) and to its applied dimension (“Community, consumer and employee relations and other practice areas”). In the *White Paper*, on the other hand, the skills that explicitly address relationships are always presented as skills lacking an underpinning knowledge, either to emphasize – somewhat paradoxically – the individuality of the professional (“Capacity to relate to people and to the environment without losing independence, maintaining one’s own identity and values”) or to outline some of the actions comprised in the core business of the discipline (“Capacity and skill to deal with the communication area of an organization or company: it is based on establishing contacts with the different publics, both internal and external, as well as the planning, control and management of the annual communication plan”). The Spanish model, therefore, has not exorcised the risk of perpetuating the deficit already detected by Xifra (2007) in the Pre-Bologna degrees with regard to the relational approach.

*Ethics.* In general, the descriptors of the skills are much terser in the North American report than in its Spanish equivalent, so we cannot draw value-based conclusions from the fact that the United States Commission on Public Relations Education formulates the skill that nourishes this subject much less tediously (“Ethical issues”) than the *White Paper* (“Ethics and professional code of conduct [of advertising and] of public relations” and “Capacity to act freely and with responsibility, assuming ethical references, values and consistent principles”). The attention normally paid by the United States programs to ethical aspects is beyond doubt and, in fact, Van Leuven (1999), already stressed the need to consider the ethics of public relations as a different skill with an identity of its own.

*Law.* As occurs in the *Ethics* subject, the North American model (“Legal requirements and issues”) and the Spanish one (“Legal planning of [advertising and] public relations communication”) also agree that the skill pertaining to the legal aspects that

affect the performance of the profession is a specific skill. One might wonder, nevertheless, how much attention would have been paid to this subject in the *White Paper* if public relations did not go hand in hand with advertising in the Spanish educational system.

*History.* In this subject, we witness the first radical discrepancy between the United States model, which includes knowledge of “Public relations history” as a skill, and the Spanish model, which makes no explicit reference whatsoever to it. Since the Spanish *White Paper* was closed in 2005, this omission cannot be ascribed to the limitations which Hoy, Raaz and Wehmeier (2007) attribute to text books on the history of public relations. Two more plausible hypotheses thus emerge: 1) The history of public relations tends to be a history of public relations in the United States, and it is logical that greater attention be paid to it in the United States than in Spain, and 2) the adaptation of the syllabus to the EHEA and its emphasis on skills led to the sacrifice of knowledge whose direct applicability to professional practice is not clearly perceived.

*Marketing.* Both training models agree on the need to include marketing in the syllabus: when all is said and done, 70% of the work performed by public relations professionals pertains to genuine marketing purposes (Van Leuven, 1999). The Commission's report on Public Relations Education includes “Marketing and finance” under the same heading, which is by no means unusual. In fact, Wilcox et al. (2006) express it thus: “Students training for a career in public relations should build up a solid base by means of courses in economics, management and marketing” (p. 36). It is nevertheless telling that this economic-business skill did not appear in previous editions of the Wilcox et al. (2006) text book, despite the fact that marketing in particular already held fifth position in the ranking of courses required for training in public relations produced by Baxter (1985).

Although this situation, as we have said is not unusual, it is nevertheless redundant, since other skills from the area of management are later included. In the Spanish case, two skills are included in this subject: a general one (“Marketing methods and techniques”) and another more specific one (“Relational Marketing processes and specific techniques: positioning, segmentation, analysis procedures and measurement



of efficacy”). Probably, the mention of relational marketing is due more to the inclusion of a fashionable label than the desire to underline the relational factor.

*Organizations and management.* Once again we are dealing with a subject where convergence is mandatory: in view of the managerial function that is attributed –often more as a desideratum than real– to public relations, its professionals cannot currently be conceived without management skills. This was already demonstrated by Kalupa and Allen (1982), VanSlyke Turk (1989), and Lauzen (1992), who shows that the lack of management skills in public relations managers is one of the factors that contributes to encroachment from unqualified outsiders and to the potential of this discipline as a central management function in organizations being underestimated. Van Leuven (1999: 81), in turn, detects that training in management is one of the most sought-after by graduates, who do not take long to discover that their limitations in this subject put a curb on their promotion prospects. From the European standpoint, Vercic et al. (2001) place *management* in fifth position of the ranking of the concepts that define public relations (only behind *communication, relationships, publics* and *mutual understanding*). While in this area Xifra (2007) has detected serious shortcomings in the pre-Bologna syllabus, the *White Paper* augurs well for notable improvements since, as opposed to the two skills which are more synthetically included in the United States report (“Management concepts and theories” and “Managing people, programs and resources”), it devotes no less than eight skills to it: “Theory and practice of management techniques in communication companies”; “Study of the communication department in companies and institutions and of the skills and techniques required for their management”; “Skill in economic and budget management in their area of activity”; “Capacity to define and manage communication budgets for correct cost allocation”; “Capacity to lead projects that require human resources and of any other nature, managing them efficiently and assuming the principles of social responsibility”; “Know how to skillfully manage time for the organization and the timing of tasks”; “Economic and social knowledge and analysis of [advertising and] public relations companies”, and “Capacity to adapt to organizational objectives (possibility of forming part of the management teams)”.

*Psychology.* This subject takes us to a new and absolute discrepancy, since the Spanish model includes two skills directly linked to psychology (“Basic psychological

processes in communication and in the consumer and specific psychological models developed for communication and persuasion” and “Psychosocial, cognitive and emotional processes of communication”) while the United States model, on the other hand, includes no explicit reference to it.

*Languages and other communication skills.* Although it is an obligatory subject, it is approached in somewhat different ways in both models. In the United States case, seven skills are used to develop it: “Mastery of language in written and oral communication”, “Informative and persuasive writing”, “Message production”, “Public speaking and presentation”, “Sensitive interpersonal communication”, “Critical listening skills”, and “Fluency in a foreign language”. The Spanish report perfunctorily reduces the question to a single skill (“Theoretical and practical knowledge of the elements, forms and processes of advertising languages and other forms of communication, using, for this end, the official languages of the state and foreign languages, particularly English”), although it does subsequently mention oral and written communication as a tool for the development of teamwork skills. This blunt contrast gives rise to major doubts as to the sufficiency of the Spanish language skill in such a critical subject:

- (1) To begin with, the skill is subordinated to advertising, and public relations are reduced to a general “other forms of communication”.
- (2) It does not include explicit references to writing, despite the fact that specific writing skills are more useful for getting ahead in the profession than general communication skills (Dostal-Neff et al., 1999), and that public relations professionals, even the most senior ones, spend 40% of their time writing (Napoli et al., 1999).
- (3) As opposed to the references to “sensitive interpersonal communication” and “critical listening skills” that we find in the United States model, the Spanish *White Paper* omits any reference to bidirectional communication.
- (4) The journalistic skills included in the United States model (“Informative (and persuasive) writing”, “Public speaking and presentation”, etc.) are absent in its Spanish equivalent. In fact, “experience in journalism is no longer a requirement for employment in public relations” (Cutlip et al., 2006, p. 126), but precisely for this reason it would seem reasonable to equip future public

relations professionals with these skills instead of perpetuating the systematic recruitment of those who have already acquired them in the sector: graduates in journalism. In Spain, around 77% of professionals that work in internal public relations departments and are graduates took their degree in journalism (Arceo-Vacas, 2004). Among the people with maximum responsibility in the area of communication and public relations in companies, the percentage of graduates (degree or PhD) in journalism is 33.5% versus 6.7% of graduates in advertising and public relations (Dircom, 2005).

*Management of communication.* We are dealing again with a subject that clearly lies in the core business of the discipline, so there is no room for dissent: it must be included. In the United States report, this is resolved with a single and extremely generic skill (“Management of communication”) whereas in the *White Paper* it is developed in four, which gives rise to unnecessary overlapping with other subjects. These four skills (“Capacity and ability to establish the communication plan: establish communication objectives, define the target, address strategies and control the communication budget”; “Communication, motivational research and evaluation techniques of the psychosocial effects of social communication”; “Management of the functional areas of [advertising,] public relations and corporate communication”, and “Capacity and ability to identify, assess, manage and protect the company's intangible assets”), moreover, confirm the penchant of the Spanish model for psychological aspects and underline concepts that are in tune with the research activity of certain universities. This is the case of the so-called *intangibles* and of the Observatorio Español de Intangibles (Spanish Observatory of Intangibles), linked to the Complutense University of Madrid.

*Context.* Wakefield and Cottone (1986) show that the passage of *publicity* into modern public relations requires that the practitioner have knowledge of the political, economic, social and cultural environment. Culbertson and Jeffers (1992) are of this same opinion, in associating the importance of knowledge of the social, political, and economic contexts to the evolution experienced by the public relations professional, who moved from message production to strategic counseling. The attention to this subject is rendered patent in both the United States training model (“Various world social, political, economic and historical frameworks”) and in the Spanish one

(“Knowledge of the economic, psychosocial, cultural and demographic environment that enables one to interact with the company”). The main difference emerges through the emphasis attached by the North American report on more concrete questions through four additional skills: “Societal trends”, “Multicultural and global issues”, “The business case for diversity”, and “Applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity”. Although it cannot be denied that the United States has been a long-standing melting pot and has always evinced an exacerbated trend towards the politically correct, the absence of this type of skills in the Spanish model is still worrying. Particularly so, because there seems not to be prospect of headway, not even to a modest degree, in the trend detected by Xifra (2007) in the pre-Bologna degrees, which are totally reluctant to integrate contents that address ethnic questions, gender studies or even areas as expansive (Culbertson & Chen, 1996) as international communication. To be fair, however, we cannot overlook the reference to authors who have doubted that the training received by public relations students in the United States is truly sensitive to multiculturalism (Creedon & Al-Khaja, 2005), and to those who have considered that even the European training model is too US-centric (Vercic, 2000; Vercic et al., 2001; Van Ruler et al., 2004).

*Environmental analysis.* This subject may seem relatively similar to the previous one, but when we talk of *context* we are referring to the more macro elements (that should be known and taken into account but nevertheless are what they are) while the *environment* is comprised of much closer factors (which to a certain extent may be controlled). Both the United States and the Spanish references pay heed to this subject, albeit with certain distinguishing nuances. Initially, we see once again that the skills with a more journalistic profile present in the United States model (“Management of information”, “Working with current issues”) do not appear in the Spanish model. Moreover, the North American model lays the emphasis on concepts such as *monitoring*, *forecasting*, and *research* (“Environmental monitoring”, “Research methods and analysis”, “Uses of research and forecasting”) while its Spanish equivalent goes for concepts such as *evolution*, *creativity*, *innovation* (“Creativity and innovation skills: capacity to evolve towards the unknown, based on a solid knowledge of what is going on”) albeit without foregoing solid analytical basics (“Analysis, synthesis and critical judgment skills: know how to identify tasks and relate causes and effects”, “Skill in the objective analysis of reality and the

extraction of valid considerations”). The emphasis on a changing reality is seen in the United States model (“Organizational change and development”) and in the Spanish one (“Capacity to understand and interpret the environment and adapt to change”).

*Strategy.* As Baskin stated (1989) two decades ago, but which is now truer than ever: the growing influence of public on organizations affords an unarguable strategic dimension to public relations. Strategy, indispensable for any academic program that addresses this discipline consistently and rigorously, is present in both training models analyzed herein, although with a significantly different approach. In the North American model, the approach on this occasion is impeccable: a generic approach (“Strategic planning”) duly complemented by one of the more genuine theoretical and conceptual resources of public relations (“Issues management”). For Botan and Taylor (2004), issues management constitutes precisely the strategic core of the discipline as opposed to the merely technical techniques regarded as *peripheral*. While it is not as forceful as the report of the United States Commission on Public Relations Education, neither does the Spanish approach leave any doubt as to the importance of strategic orientation, to which it also devotes two skills (“Knowledge of the design and development of the strategies and applications of persuasive communication policies in institutions and public and private companies, studying the methodology necessary to analyze the corporate status, evaluate it by means of auditing and ultimately, design a specific strategy” and “Capacity and ability to act as experts in the strategic management of a company's corporate image”). Moreover, the absence, in the Spanish model, of any specific mention of issues management can be offset by the solidity of the skills dedicated to the *Environmental analysis* subject.

*Audiences.* Although in the discipline in hand it might seem to more suitable to talk of *publics* than *audiences*, both the United States model (“Audience segmentation”) and the Spanish one (“Audience analysis and investigation”) allocate one skill to this subject. As has been commented, the specificity of the American proposal is balanced if we take into account the specificity of the Spanish proposal in the *Marketing* subject (with one skill dedicated to *segmentative* relational marketing).

*Technology.* Information and communication technologies (ICT), with special attention paid to multimedia contents, are also present in the skills of the United

States model (“Technological and visual literacy”) and the Spanish one (“Capacity and ability to use technologies and communicative techniques”). The coincidence should come as no surprise, because the deep impact of ICT in the practice of public relations was already rightly foreseen by Kruckeberg (1998), and because Van Leuven (1999) includes visual and interactive communication as one of the four essential training areas for tackling the challenges of the 21st Century.

*Cooperative work.* Honoring the stereotype of the individualism of the United States, the skill pertaining to cooperative work is included in the Spanish model (“Teamwork skills, developing personal opening through oral and written communication”) but does not appear in the North American one. One might think that this is a very transversal skill and that therefore regarding it as specific to public relations lacks sense, but it is true that the same might be said of skills that do appear in the report by the Commission on Public Relations Education.

*Problem-solving.* In accordance with Dostal-Neff et al. (1999), the two most useful skills for making headway in the public relations industry are the ability to think critically (which we addressed in the *Environmental analysis* subject) and problem-solving. It is therefore logical that one skill be also assigned to it in both models. In the United States case, with the emphasis on negotiation (“Problem-solving and negotiation”), and in the Spanish case with the emphasis again on creativity (“Insight, inventiveness and creativity skill that make it possible to find efficacious solutions to new problems”). We might lapse into the temptation of attributing the prominence of creativity to the fact that public relations in Spain shares a syllabus with advertising, but this would be a very reductive vision. Walker (1984) considers that creativity is the “name of the game” (p. 23) in the profession and that this should also be so in the training of future practitioners. Van Ruler (2005), in turn, analyses an emerging model of professionalism in public relations from the 90s, the so-called *personality model* (mentality is more important than rational knowledge), and shows creativity's absolute value in it.

*Decision-making.* The ability to take decisions is a pivotal element of the professional exercise (Culbertson, 1985) and is, together with problem-solving, the best-rated skill by those who recruit public relations professionals (Wakefield & Cottone, 1987). In

tune with these considerations, both the Spanish and the North American model dedicate one skill to this subject, albeit also with distinguishing nuances. In the *White Paper*, the emphasis is placed on risk situations (“Preparation to assume risk, developing the skill from thinking to deciding”), while the United States emphasizes the ethical aspects yet again (“Ethical decision-making”). This orientation links up with a tradition –from Culbertson (1983) to Heath and Coombs (2006)– in which ethics is not reduced to the great principles, but rather are taken to the field of the tangible, everydayness.

*Professional exercise.* Both the United States and the Spanish model include skills linked to the professional exercise. However, whilst the former does so with an explicit desire to promote student involvement (“Participation in the professional public relations community”), the latter simply fosters the mere skill (“Capacity and ability to act as professionals that deal with the agency's clients to serve them” and “Capacity and ability for the independent practice of the profession and teaching, rendering assessment to communication agencies or their clients in matters related to any form of communication”). This degree of difference is not a trivial one. Baxter (1985: 40) already places external practices in the third position of the ranking of academic activities essential to the training of the future professionals of the corporate. In the Spanish case, however, the practices developed in the professional environment have been more the exception than a rule (Xifra, 2007), and the *White Paper* affords no glimpse of hope for the post-Bologna scenario.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the results obtained, the following three conclusions may be drawn. First of all, the level of coincidences between the public relations training models in the United States and in Spain is very high. Of the 19 skills identified, 16 are common to both. Moreover, of these 16 shared skills, only half of them present significantly different nuances. The reasons that might explain this high level of coincidence are the *US-centrism* of the European educational model in the discipline (Vercic, 2000; Vercic et al., 2001; Van Ruler et al., 2004); the probability that some of the rapporteurs of the *White Paper* were aware of the previous report of the Commission

on Public Relations Education, which dates back to 1999, and the fact that both proposals are largely in tune with the contributions contained in the literature dedicated to the question.

Secondly, both the discrepancies detected between the United States and the Spanish model, such as the different tones in apparently similar subjects, are the ones that allow us to configure the specific orientations of each model. Thus, the United States training model is characterized by paying greater attention to the more genuine concepts of the discipline (relational theory, issues management, bidirectional communication), by laying great emphasis on the ethical aspects, by attaching paramount importance to skills linked to oral and written communication and by strengthening the bonds with the profession. The Spanish model, in turn, is characterized by the emphasis laid on psychological aspects, the promotion of creativity and teamwork, the marked desire to move away from skills regarded as journalistic, and the omission of a historic perspective: an approach greatly in tune with a vision of public relations as an ensemble of techniques and tactics that help marketing.

Thus, and thirdly, we are facing an apparent Americanization of the process of adaptation to the EHEA of the Spanish degree in Advertising and Public Relations or with a definition of skills in response to the globalization of the public relations professional skills? While it is true that the globalization of the profession has been noted by various authors (e.g. Cutlip et al., 2006, Wilcox et al., 2006), it is equally true that, as Dodds concluded (2008), globalization interacts with higher education: “Perhaps the only apparent point of consensus amongst contemporary researchers is the claim that globalization affects HEIs [higher education institutions], rather than HEIs themselves being implicated in its promotion” (p. 514). Despite this study confirms this statement, the professionalization of the fields object of higher education can influence in the education of the futures professionals. In this case, these situations, as occurs with public relations education, can be viewed as a form of how globalization influences both higher education and HEIs.

**Table 1.** Table of the subjects with the list of skills per country.



SUBJECT	SKILLS BY COUNTRY	
	USA	SPAIN
<i>Conceptual and theoretical basics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and persuasion concepts and strategies</li> <li>• Communication and public relations theories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication basics</li> <li>• Theory [and practice of advertising and] of public relations</li> </ul>
<i>Relationships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships and relationship-building</li> <li>• Community, consumer and employee relations and other practice areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to relate to people and to the environment without losing independence, maintaining one's own identity and values</li> <li>• Capacity and skill to deal with the communication area of an organization or company: it is based on establishing contacts with the different publics, both internal and external, as well as the planning, control and management of the annual communication plan</li> </ul>
<i>Ethics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics and professional code of conduct [of advertising and] of public relations</li> <li>• Capacity to act freely and with responsibility, assuming ethical references, values and consistent principles</li> </ul>
<i>Law</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal requirements and issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal planning of [advertising and] public relations communication</li> </ul>
<i>History</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public relations history</li> </ul>	
<i>Marketing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing and finance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing methods and techniques</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational Marketing processes and specific techniques: positioning, segmentation, analysis procedures and measurement of efficacy</li> </ul>
<p><i>Organizations and management</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management concepts and theories</li> <li>• Managing people, programs and resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory and practice of management techniques in communication companies</li> <li>• Study of the communication department in companies and institutions and of the skills and techniques required for their management</li> <li>• Skill in economic and budget management in their area of activity</li> <li>• Capacity to define and manage communication budgets for correct cost allocation</li> <li>• Capacity to lead projects that require human resources and of any other nature, managing them efficiently and assuming the principles of social responsibility</li> <li>• Know how to skillfully manage time for the organization and the timing of tasks</li> <li>• Economic and social knowledge and analysis of [advertising and] public relations companies</li> <li>• Capacity to adapt to organizational objectives: possibility of forming part of the</li> </ul>

		management teams
<i>Psychology</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic psychological processes in communication and in the consumer and specific psychological models developed for communication and persuasion</li> <li>• Psychosocial, cognitive and emotional processes of communication</li> </ul>
<i>Languages and other communication skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastery of language in written and oral communication</li> <li>• Informative and persuasive writing</li> <li>• Message production</li> <li>• Public speaking and presentation</li> <li>• Sensitive interpersonal communication</li> <li>• Critical listening skills</li> <li>• Fluency in a foreign language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical and practical knowledge of the elements, forms and processes of advertising languages and other forms of communication, using, for this end, the official languages of the state and foreign languages, particularly English</li> </ul>
<i>Management of communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity and ability to establish the communication plan: establish communication objectives, define the target, address strategies and control the communication budget</li> <li>• Communication, motivational research and evaluation techniques of the psychosocial effects of social communication</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of the functional areas of [advertising,] public relations and corporate communication</li> <li>• Capacity and ability to identify, assess, manage and protect the company's intangible assets</li> </ul>
<i>Context</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various world social, political, economic and historical frameworks</li> <li>• Societal trends</li> <li>• Multicultural and global issues</li> <li>• The business case for diversity</li> <li>• Applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the economic, psychosocial, cultural and demographic environment that enables one to interact with the company</li> </ul>
<i>Environmental analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental monitoring</li> <li>• Organizational change and development</li> <li>• Research methods and analysis</li> <li>• Uses of research and forecasting</li> <li>• Management of information</li> <li>• Working with current issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to understand and interpret the environment and adapt to change</li> <li>• Creativity and innovation skills: capacity to evolve towards the unknown, based on a solid knowledge of what is going on</li> <li>• Analysis, synthesis and critical judgment skills: know how to identify tasks and relate causes and effects</li> <li>• Skill in the objective analysis of reality and the extraction of valid considerations</li> </ul>
<i>Strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the design and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues management</li> </ul>	<p>development of the strategies and applications of persuasive communication policies in institutions and public and private companies, studying the methodology necessary to analyze the corporate status, evaluate it by means of auditing and ultimately, design a specific strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity and ability to act as experts in the strategic management of a company's corporate image</li> </ul>
<i>Audiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audience segmentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audience analysis and investigation</li> </ul>
<i>Technology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological and visual literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity and ability to use technologies and communicative techniques</li> </ul>
<i>Cooperative work</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork skills, developing personal opening through oral and written communication</li> </ul>
<i>Problem-solving</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-solving and negotiation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insight, inventiveness and creativity skills that make it possible to find efficacious solutions to new problems</li> </ul>
<i>Decision-making</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation to assume risk, developing the skill from thinking to deciding</li> </ul>
<i>Professional exercise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in the professional public relations community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity and ability to act as professionals that deal with the agency's clients to serve them</li> <li>• Capacity and ability for the</li> </ul>

R	R	independent practice of the profession and teaching, rendering assessment to communication agencies or their clients in matters related to any form of communication
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