PROFESSIONAL INSERTION OF MASTER AND DOCTORATE STUDENTS IN THE FIELDS OF COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This investigation is part of an academic innovation project within the framework of the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) Quality Strategic Plan 2015-2019. With the experience of having participated in several innovation and teaching projects, we propose the beginning of a new project in the field of postgraduate, official masters and doctoral programs' training.

This project allows students to improve their learning experience by conducting their research work of Master and Doctoral Theses within the framework of the professional reality. This experience shows the best academic training for professional insertion of master and doctorate students, in the fields of research applied to communication, especially in relation to the management of public institutions and non-profit organizations.

This project aimed graduate, masters and doctorate students carrying out their work to Master's and Doctoral Theses in collaboration with public utilities. Thus, students are offered the opportunity to realize their academic work as an exercise of professional practice in real cases, in the real context of working activity of the present moment, achieving their training goals. For its part, the partner organizations provide necessary information and tools for the development of the mentioned works, while they see their interests satisfied to receive the results of the academic work done by students. In turn, the development of the mentioned works of master's and Doctoral Theses have the accurate guidance of tutors and teachers who are involved in the good work of their students and that once the work is completed, will facilitate the transfer of results not only to the collaborating entity, but also to all the scientific community. To carry out all these graduate work, as mentioned, students have the invaluable support of the Director of the Library of the School of Information Sciences, as well as all staff of it.

The results can serve as indicators of the quality of master's and doctorate's programs from the School of Information Sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid, and as a reference for the implementation of similar projects to other graduate degrees from different universities, both in Spain and abroad. On the other hand, it offers tutors the ability to link their teaching to professional practice, raising the direction of the work of their students as exhaustive case studies.

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Keywords: Academic innovation, teaching project, postgraduate students, professional insertion, professional practice.

1 INTRODUCTION

This academic innovation project will allow students to improve their learning experience by conducting their research work of Master and Doctoral Theses within the framework of the professional reality.

With the experience of having participated in several innovation and teaching projects by the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), we propose the beginning of a new project in the field of postgraduate, official masters and doctoral programs' training.

In response to our commitment to improve teaching quality and continuous adaptation of university education to the processes of change in the workplace, we present the innovation project "University
and society: communication and integration in public institutions and non-profit organizations*, within the framework of the UCM Quality Strategic Plan 2015-2019.

This innovation project proposal arises from the mutual collaboration between the university and the professional sector and it meets a threefold purpose.

On the one hand, it allows students to improve their learning experience by conducting their research, both to Master or Doctoral Theses, as a part of the professional reality, without this being considered, in any way, unfair competition in the labour market.

This experience will show the best academic training for professional insertion of master and doctorate students from the Complutense University of Madrid, in the fields of research applied to communication, especially in relation to the management of public institutions and non-profit organizations.

In this sense, the results of the innovation project will serve as indicators of the quality of master's and doctorate's programs from the School of Information Sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid, and will serve as a reference for the implementation of similar projects to other graduate degrees from different universities, both in Spain and abroad.

On the other hand, it will offer tutors the ability to link their teaching to professional practice, raising the direction of the work of their students as exhaustive case studies. This would also encourage the training of teachers, especially those with lower rank and seniority, which also represent improvements for their academic accreditation.

Staff and management services support, especially from the Director of the Library of the School of Information Sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid, on behalf of all staff of the library, has been really important for the development of our project, and they represent an extraordinary endorsement. The involvement of the Teaching and Research Staff (PDI in Spanish), Administration and Services Personal (PAS in Spanish) and students from our university, shows the confluence of efforts and endeavours to achieve a better and committed university to society.

The project is presented for the 2016-2017 courses. However, the proposal has been brewing since the 2014-2015 courses, when meetings and discussions were held for the implementation of these collaborations with public institutions and non-profit organizations.

2 WHAT IS AN INNOVATE-TEACHING PROJECT?

Epistemic concern for teaching innovation is not new or unique to our time. However, the need to think, reflect and innovate has been widespread among teachers in recent decades. In an attempt to systematize these contributions on educational innovation, Barraza (2013) highlights several orientations, as the development of models and the discrimination of perspectives when addressing the issue of innovation (Estebaranz, 1994).

Moreover, the theoretical approaches on:

- The educational innovation as the contributions of House (1988), Gonzalez and Escudero (1987), or Tejada (1998);
- The "innovative process", as Havelock and Zlotolow (1995) and Tejada (1998) or;

Parallel to the theoretical development in the field of management of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and from its first steps in the last decades of the twentieth century, with the beginning of the Bologna Plan, it rocked the foundations of the settled higher education, and removed European countries borders.

The implementation of the Bologna Plan was a revolution in the university training process based on a change in focus. Higher education was no longer to "teach" but to achieve, successfully, that the student learns himself. The university communication changes its main characters.

The focus is not located at the university, as an institution, or their teachers, responsible for teaching, but students, as key players in the learning process. University managers and teachers are responsible for the success of the learning process of their students.
The goal of university education is no longer limited to the acquisition of knowledge by students. The goal is also the professional training of students. Thus, learning does not mean only acquiring knowledge but the graduate should be able to apply in the field of different work activities related to their area of science.

Higher education is doomed to emphasize not only knowledge, but also and above all, know-how and knowledge to do it right. So learning does not consist anymore of a mere accumulation of knowledge. Learning is also research to generate new knowledge and apply the knowledge already acquired to problem solving.

In this sense, a teaching innovation project is actually an educational innovation project, whose accent should fall on the innovation of learning by the student. Although, as a result, this involves necessarily innovate and teaching processes. An innovation project must propose new teaching methods and tools to optimize learning. Innovating does not mean change; innovation means always change for the better.

On the other hand, innovation does not only involve transforming teaching methods. Innovation in training also involves changes in school management and curriculum planning. It requires changes in behaviour and ways to make programmed, intentionally and systematically lead to an improvement in the teaching, as indicated Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991).

In this sense, although a project of educational innovation often responds to a specific need, it also tries to improve a specific aspect of education as a comprehensive response that promotes learning systems.

In our approach, innovation in the field of education is not only to promote new technological instruments or incorporate new ways to handle them. Educational innovation is not necessarily technology, but the technology is used as an instrument for change.

From this perspective we find ourselves, as a working group, to raise the development of innovative educational project presented here.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT AND PROPOSED VALUE

The goals we set with this innovation project respond to various approaches:

- Demonstrate the applicability of the training provided in graduate degrees (official masters and doctoral programs), in response to the professional requirements. That is we try to show that the master's and doctoral research oriented cannot only respond to meeting academic requirements but also to the professional profiles of the working world.
- Endorse, with experience, the close relationship between the university and society, acting in collaboration.
- Reveal training to graduate studies in social communication and specifically in media, advertising and public relations, and journalism, for professional practice of consultancy in any of the fields.
- Validate the training of graduate students for research and especially for the generation of applicable knowledge, on the basis of scientific rigor, being transferred to community forums, conferences and publications of high scientific level.
- Prove the applicability in the international context of knowledge generated from research conducted by students.

On the other hand, this innovation project aims to:

- Value the support of university documentation services and, especially, the staff of the Library of the School of Information Sciences (UCM) in the development of the research of graduate degrees of our University.
- Facilitate the transfer of knowledge generated by graduate students, with their presence in conferences and scientific publications.
- Involve UCM teachers in management, mentoring and monitoring the research work done by students, in collaboration with companies, public institutions and non-profit organizations.
And from the above objectives:

- Encourage motivation and feeling of pride in belonging to the UCM community, making teachers, students and administrative staff, meeting conscious their training objectives.
- Enhancing the visibility of the UCM in scientific forums thanks to the good work of students and teachers in graduate degrees.

We should note that the innovation project titled "University and society: communication and integration in public institutions and non-profit organizations" responds the following lines of innovation:

- New methodologies and innovation in classroom teaching for productive development of Master theses (TFM in Spanish).
- Design learning tools for new generations of students.
- Learn the applied practice since university.
- Offer initiatives and tools for assessing students and graduates their involvement in the processes of quality assessment. By applying an evaluation questionnaire to participants we can meet their satisfaction with this experience and verify its effectiveness checking compliance with the objectives.
- Promote proposals to employability and entrepreneurship among students.
- Participation in this innovative project will allow students to check their professional skills and motivate them for self-employment.
- Internationalization. Participants belong to eight different nationalities from Europe and Latin America.
- This project also poses for doctoral students, some of them displaced in their home countries during seasons in the doctoral period. Recall that the project participants come from seven different foreign countries.

4 METHODOLOGY AND WORKING PLAN

The method for innovation and improving teacher quality that we propose, called "University and society: communication and integration in public institutions and non-profit organizations" makes students themselves protagonists of the learning process and skills development.

This project aimed graduate, masters and doctorate students carrying out their work to Master's and Doctoral Theses in collaboration with public utilities.

Thus, students are offered the opportunity to realize their academic work as an exercise of professional practice in real cases, in the real context of working activity of the present moment, achieving their training goals.

For its part, the partner organizations provide necessary information and tools for the development of the mentioned works, while they see their interests satisfied to receive the results of the academic work done by students. All this happens in the framework of close cooperation based on trust and commitment.

In turn, the development of the mentioned works of master's and Doctoral Theses have the accurate guidance of tutors and teachers who are involved in the good work of their students and that once the work is completed, will facilitate the transfer of results not only to the collaborating entity, but also to all the scientific community.

To do this, these teachers guide their students so they can present their work at national and international conferences and publish in scientific journals.

To carry out all these graduate work, as mentioned, students have the invaluable support of the Director of the Library of the School of Information Sciences, as well as all staff of it.

Among the partner organizations, we quote some of the most relevant:

- UNICEF Spain: study of childhood image published in print, broadcast and Internet media as its social perception.
• **12 de Octubre University Hospital in Madrid**: Hospital image study published in print and audiovisual media, internet and social networks, and the perception by external and internal public; in addition of an exploratory study for the development and optimization of its strategic plan of corporate social responsibility.

• **The National Institute of Statistics**: study its image in print media.

• **The Centre for Sociological Research**: study its image in print media.

• **The Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality**: study of communicative effectiveness of their campaigns against gender violence.

• **The Armed Forces Cyber Command of the Spanish State**: study of public communication on cybersecurity.

• **University Complutense of Madrid**: study of professional communication profiles required by the labour market and their correspondence with the training and professional expectations of students of Journalism at the University.

Other researches carried out under the innovation project are:

• Study of policies for reconciliation of work, family and personal life in the Spanish organizations as the practice of corporate social responsibility.

• Study of the use of social networks in the political area.

In addition to the investigations undertaken with international reach:

• The use of ICTs by cultural managers of the Department of Bolivar (Colombia).

• The communication of the Emergency Office of Chile: coordination and information on natural disasters.

Among other:

• The relevance and quality of Master theses (TFM in Spanish) and PhD theses done by students in collaboration with organizations make them protagonists of the project presented and therefore are considered main participants of this innovation project (Annex I).

5 **JUSTIFICATION AND ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES**

For the implementation of our project we have the necessary human resources at Complutense University of Madrid. Specifically, the team consists of more than twenty students from different official master's degrees and doctoral programs of the School of Information Sciences. We started mentioning students because, as we have indicated, we understand that they are the true protagonists of this innovative learning process.

However, to make successful this project is essential the participation of tutors and directors of theses and master works in order to perform these students. So, we work with 11 teachers and professors from the UCM, a visiting research professor at another university, an honorary collaborator, a doctoral intern and the invaluable help of the staff of the Library of the School of Information Sciences, represented in the person of its Director.

This great team of research and innovation can provide students a multidisciplinary support of great interest and help.

Teachers and professors belong to different departments and areas:

- Audio-visual Communication and Advertising II.
- Audio-visual Communication and Advertising I.
- Journalism III.
- Sociology VI.
- Department Section of Sociology IV.
- Department Section of Philosophy, Moral Law and Policy I.

We have all the necessary human resources for the development and implementation of the innovation project.
The material resources required for implementation of the project are provided by the teachers and all participants, in addition to those available in the School of Information Sciences. These material resources include:

- Its library, equipped with 75,000 volumes, around 2000 periodicals, media library department and other document services.
- Newspaper library, with more than 100 daily newspapers.
- Video library, with more than 5,000 videos and 650 DVDs.

In addition, all participants have other resources such as computer rooms, with the necessary software for conducting postgraduate to academic papers included in this project.

The School of Information Sciences has the necessary rooms required for public protection and defense of all the Master Theses (TFM in Spanish) and Doctoral Theses involved in this innovative project with facilities, offices and meeting rooms.

In another, we have the support of partner organizations in this project. These organizations provide information, materials and facilities for the performance of the different planned academic work.

6 EXPECTED IMPACT AND INDICATORS FOR MEASURING RESULTS

The success of this project will not only be measured by the results of the academic work done by students, but also and especially for its impact on the scientific community, with contributions of great interest in the field of communication, that will allow the community to transfer the knowledge generated by students through their presentation in forums and scientific publications.

For the evaluation of the innovation project we will use the following indicators:

- A survey of all participants, students, teachers and administrative staff and services. This survey will provide necessary and sufficient information for checking the degree of satisfaction of the participants and their perception in meeting project objectives.

But also, and according to the above, the success of the innovation project can be checked by the number and quality of:

- Communications in congresses, conferences and seminars to:
  - Present the results of research conducted by students in their academic work.
  - Show the own innovation project and improvement of teaching quality.

- Publications in scientific journals to:
  - Disseminate the results of the Master Theses (TFM in Spanish) and Doctoral Theses.
  - Expose the characteristics, applications and effectiveness of the innovation project.

Moreover, the internationality of the group of innovation as well as the issues addressed in their academic work, enable international impact of the results of the innovation project.

This innovation project will provide also the partner organizations the results of investigations in which each of them has been involved. And the scientific and rigorous research that led from the academy will be extremely useful for the development and optimization of strategic communication plans in these organizations. For that reason, it will be necessary to know, also, for checking the effectiveness of our innovation project, the degree of satisfaction of the managers of partner organizations in relation to fulfilling its goals for concerted topics.

7 CONCLUSIONS

As we explained in the beginning, this project allows students to improve their learning experience by conducting their research work of Master and Doctoral Theses within the framework of the professional reality. This experience shows the best academic training for professional insertion of master and doctorate students, in the fields of research applied to communication, especially in relation to the management of public institutions and non-profit organizations.

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According to this goals and ideas, this project has finished with two doctoral theses, with honours, and a good part of the students involved in the project have presented their final dissertation work, also with excellent ratings. Many representatives of partner organizations were invited to the public defences of these works, demonstrating a high degree of satisfaction in meeting its objectives. We are convinced that the realization of works directed from the academy, in collaboration with organizations, provides students real learning quality in the pursuit of excellence.

The university should be close to reality. Without it, it is impossible for students to find their place in the professional field. Postgraduate studies should not be directed solely at the academic field. It is a mistake that the students believe that to do a masters or doctorate takes them away from the world of work. On the contrary, it can make them better professionals. The university, more in the fields of Communication, must be attached to the work and profession of the communicators, to continue forming good professionals and good researchers.

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REFERENCES


