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Ágora Universitaria Journal: innovative experience in teaching journalistic writing for people over 60

Revista Ágora Universitaria: experiencia innovadora en la docencia de la redacción periodística para mayores de 60 años

Abstract
The educational system opened its doors to new students' profiles, apart from those coming from high school, since there is an increase in students coming from vocational training, over 25, 40 and 55, foreigners, with different backgrounds and so forth. This heterogeneity is undoubtedly a driving force for updating more realistic teaching methodologies to connect with the social diversity, which requires different learning methods. Miguel Hernández University has been developing the Senior Experience Classrooms for 20 years. Journalistic writing is offered as a supplementary course where, specifically, the editing of the cultural journal Ágora Universitaria takes place. By employing a case study, this article analyses the teaching of journalistic writing content adapted for students over 60 years of age in non-formal education. Features in relation to competencies, objectives and content achieved are evaluated by means of the interview method and participant observation. The conclusions highlight an increased interest in the profession, a breakdown of associated stereotypes and prejudices, a better knowledge of routines, a distinction of genres, management and an access to sources associated with these processes.

Resumen
El sistema educativo abrió la puerta a nuevos perfiles de estudiantes y, además, de los venidos del bachiller, cada vez son más los procedentes de ciclos formativos, mayores de 25, 40 y 55 años, extranjeros, diversidad, etc. Esta heterogeneidad es sin duda un revulsivo para actualizar metodologías docentes más realistas con la diversidad social que exige modos diferentes de aprendizaje. La Universidad Miguel Hernández cuenta desde hace 20 años con las Aulas de la Experiencia para Mayores. En su oferta complementaria se ofrece el curso de redacción periodística que tiene como particularidad la edición de la revista cultural Ágora Universitaria. Este artículo analiza, empleando el estudio de caso, la enseñanza de los contenidos propios de la redacción periodística adaptada al perfil de mayores de 60 años en enseñanza no oficial. Se valoran aspectos de objetivos y contenidos logrados, empleando el método la entrevista y la observación participante. Se valoran como conclusiones el incremento del interés por la profesión, ruptura con los estereotipos y prejuicios asociados, ampliación del conocimiento de las rutinas, distinción de los géneros, gestión y acceso a las fuentes asociadas a estos procesos.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, teaching methodologies in the field of communication have drastically changed. Nowadays classrooms are equipped with multimedia systems, computer programmes that facilitate teacher's work [1], group dynamics and practical methods where students feel as if they were an active part of their training are encouraged, and teaching is adapted to achieve academic success (Bolívar and Rojas, 2014: 10). The educational system opened its doors to new students' profiles, apart from those coming from high school, since there is an increase in students coming from vocational training, over 25, 40 and 55 years old, foreigners, students with reduced mobility, or various disabilities and so forth. (García-Rodríguez, Meseguer Martínez, González Losada and Barrero Torrejón, 2012: 104).

This heterogeneity is undoubtedly a driving force for updating teaching methodologies, making them more attractive and innovative and, especially, more realistic to connect with social diversity, which requires different learning methods. (Martín and Rodríguez, 2003: 98). In this context, retired people over 60 years of age return to classrooms or join them for the first time. Their interests are different, since they do not seek training for a subsequent professional application, but rather to satisfy their curiosity and their knowledge of the world.

Miguel Hernández University has been developing the Senior Experience Classrooms for 20 years. Journalistic Writing is offered as a supplementary course, taught by journalism lecturers, where, specifically, the editing of the journal *Ágora Universitaria* takes place. This course is a clear innovative experience in the field of journalism teaching and media education.

By employing a case study, this article analyses the implementation of the teaching of journalistic writing adapted for students over 60 years of age in non-formal education. Objectives and content achieved are evaluated, assuming that they were not previously known, by means of the group methods of participant observation and interview to obtain information about the results achieved.

1.2. Education for the elderly in university

1.2.1. The elderly become interested in university

As explained by Román González (2011: 110), "scientific and social advances in the last fifty years have contributed to an upward increase in life expectancy in most countries in the world". As a result, new needs have arisen in the health, educational and cultural fields to care for the elderly. Corcho and Corcho (2004: 530) consider that the increase in life expectancy and the right to a paid retirement "have been two factors that have led to a substantial change in the perception of old age". Blázquez explained that:

> 'Adults' lives have dramatically changed in the last 25 years in Spain. University programmes for this age range may be one of the most important services offered to them, and they are certainly needed in our country because of the progressive increase in the elderly population, which places us among the first countries in the world in terms of life expectancy, as well as because of the socio-cultural and human isolation in which many of our older people find themselves or because of the difficulties they experienced in entering university at some point in their lives (Blázquez, 2002: 89).

Researcher Florentino Pérez (in Blázquez, 2002: 89) already pointed out that age is not a limitation for learning, much less at university, "if we consider that education is a lifelong process". Mataix (2011: 809) highlights that after retirement the elderly continue to lead a very active life to feel useful, avoid loneliness, and postpone dependency. Blázquez (2002: 91) considers that both early retirees and younger retirees are an important sector in society because they have a great deal of acquired knowledge and are at a good time in their life, aware that this is not a stage for loneliness and marginalisation.

The elderly attend university for cultural, social, psychological, health-related, and educational factors. It is very attractive for them because they appreciate such a privileged cultural space where they can keep up with scientific and technical advances, and participate in their cultural activities. The educational component is highly valued by older people as compared to the students of an official degree, "who may not appreciate what they learn because they do not know what this knowledge is for, in contrast with people over 60, who place value on everything learned" (Amay, Marrero and Fernández Esteban, 2011: 176).

Corcho and Corcho (2004: 534) concluded that older people's interest in training, which seems exclusively addressed to working people, gives them many incentives and consequences not directly sought. This is not just a matter of the training, content, or objectives of the course or workshop in which they participate, but it stimulates their minds, slows down the effects of cognitive impairment, and improves depressive illnesses. Having an active mind helps them prevent pain and some diseases, it also avoids loneliness,

promotes social interaction, interpersonal communication and allows them to be in tune with their children and grandchildren.

Other authors postulate that their interest in university is due to the fact that they want to have the experience of studying in this institution, an experience they could not enjoy throughout their lives for different economic, social and cultural reasons (Blázquez, 2002: 94), and they retire with a high cultural level and purchasing power, feeling that studying at university is a pending matter in their lives. They perpetuate and give meaning to what has been called active aging, which is described as a moment in life in which people continue to participate in social, cultural, and civic events (Pérez-Albéniz, Pascual, Cruz and Lucas-Molina, 2015: 54).

The elderly find in university a social and cultural space that opens its doors to them. "University is a necessity in all aspects, both in the production of knowledge and in the immediate return of its values to the community" (Blázquez, 2002: 92). The participation of the elderly and their interests are far from resembling those of their younger fellow classmates, and which are essentially based on the need to occupy their free time, avoid loneliness, and the desire to communicate and share experiences (Barrera, 2009: 42).

A non-exhaustive list of references in relation to the most emblematic documents on the educational process for the elderly is as follows: the Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the report *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996), the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (1997) [2], the *White Paper on Active Aging* (2011), the celebration of the European Year for Active Ageing (Morales; 2014: 27), Spanish Law 47.2007 and Royal Decree 1892/2008 on university access for people over 40 years old; Ramón Arilla's doctoral thesis (2014), *La universidad de la experiencia: los mayores a través de sus expectativas culturales [The University of Experience: the elderly through their cultural expectations]*; the paper *University lecturers´ self-efficacy as teacher and researcher: relation to approaches to teaching and influence on conceptions of the teaching-research nexus* (Tesouro, Corominas, Teixidó and Puiggalí, 2014) and the paper *The effects of university programmes for seniors in their social network and social support* (Vives, Orte, and Ballester, 2015), just to mention a few examples.

1.2.2. Universities open their doors to the elderly

Universities respond by offering an adult education for the elderly population that goes beyond literacy, and teaches how to age in a healthy and solidary way" (Blázquez, 2002: 90). Joaquín Gairín, David Rodríguez-Gómez, Carme Armengol and Isabel del Arco (2013: 54) remind us that Senior University Programmes are established with the support of social organisations, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Institute for the Elderly and Social Services (IMSERSO), the departments of social services of the different Autonomous Communities, among others; and that "universities were asked to put these projects into practice, making all the necessary efforts so that they were developed with a sufficient quality assurance".

> Historically, the university has also promoted and continues to promote initiatives to respond to the lifelong learning principle and to fulfill the dream that access to education represents for many people. Universities, aware of the importance of the relationship with their social environment, have gradually become involved in this understanding that they are also schools for life and not only spaces for the initial training of professionals (Gairín et al., 2013: 53).

In 2002, over 50 out of 69 universities in Spain had implemented senior programmes and the Spanish network of Senior University Programmes started its development. Miguel Hernández University was included in this group with the Experience Classrooms. After so many years, universities continue to be a success, as evidenced by the long waiting lists. Going to university is not enough for elderly people, they want to spread within their sector and city the activities they perform, as well as others that are in the collective interest of people of a similar age. Initiatives allowing this dissemination include the *Ágora Universitaria* cultural journal, the radio programme for seniors *Radio de Mayores*, two theatre groups, off-campus conferences that enable closer contact with all citizens, and so forth.

University should be oriented to many new profiles. Blázquez (2011: 90) points out the importance of the General Assembly of the United Nations declaring 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons, giving them a fundamental role in society.

According to Montoya and Fernández (2002: 183), senior universities have a training offer linked to university but they do not share the same objectives, and they are regulated by its own statutes and regulations. As Mataix (2011: 811) explains: "universities in the 21st century must promote a society for all ages while becoming more democratic and accessible to the entire population". He also states that universities should

encourage exchange among generations and that "they should meet on campus and benefit from this time together" Mataix (2011: 811).

Researchers Amay, Marrero and Fernández Esteban (2011: 176) consider that "involvement of elderly people in the field of Higher Education has opened a debate on the meaning, implications, and effects of this type of education" including the university role, the characteristics of this education and the training profile of their teaching staff. As it is a teaching that does not lead to an official degree, training may suffer, turning teaching into a meeting of friends that departs from the university spirit (Delgado, 2011: 210). "Their programmes are not aimed at achieving professional competence, but at cultivating the mind, promoting reflection on culture and providing elderly people with the knowledge needed to learn how to function in such a changing society" (Mataix, 2011: 288).

Hence the importance of establishing good practices that continue to maintain the quality of teaching at the university level. Nowadays "university training for older people is similar to university extension, with a low profile, because of its low-performance levels" (Delgado, 2011: 210). To ensure quality, the author proposes that these courses become university's own courses regulated by the EHEA. Since elderly people have different interests in relation to content, the university and, consequently, the teaching staff, must adapt their learning styles, because they logically change according to the students' profiles, as a result of the age difference and the different interests pursued with the attendance to classes. Methodologies and strategies must be different and adapted to various learning methods (Martín and Rodríguez, 2003: 98), as well as teacher training (Morales, 2014: 26). "This situation causes teachers to adapt to the new reality and update their resources and methods with regard to the subject taught", explains Jurado (2015: 220), who reminds that one of the teachers' roles is to motivate and enhance the capabilities of all their students.

1.3. The *Ágora* Journal Journalistic Writing Workshop

In 2016, The Sabiex Integral Programme for Older Adults, through the Vice-rectorate for Culture and University Extension, approved the development of the *Ágora* Journal Journalistic Writing Workshop as a university extension training activity aimed at improving quality of life for people over 55 years old in the university context. The activity is not limited to the personal development of this profile interested in actions within the university itself, but it goes one step further and has a social and cultural impact beyond university classrooms.

The project emerges as a journalistic writing workshop in which a cultural journal is produced as a practical product. However, the magnitude and quality of the publication have led to a product-focused vision that requires regular working meetings, moving from a mere exercise to a professional product. In this context, a phenomenon of product empowerment has been generated by the elderly participants and, essentially, by older women who have spent their lives looking after the house and children and are currently seeking intellectual emancipation.

Nowadays, the *Ágora* journal has become a project of social and cultural activities of a journalistic nature integrated into the activities for the elderly that are carried out on a formal basis, both in the cities in which it has a direct influence through the dissemination of the journal itself and in national and international events where this activity is disseminated. *Ágora Universitaria* is a journalistic magazine specialising in culture promoted and financed by the Vice-rectorate for Culture by means of its Integral Programme for Older Adults, Sabiex. The university provides its expertise to facilitate, manage, organise, and disseminate cultural content aimed at satisfying the specific interest of this profile of population which these days is described as particularly active. Unlike other academic journals for the elderly, *Ágora* is an innovative project since the journal articles are written by older adults.

The Journalistic Writing Workshop enables personal, social, and cultural development of older people who want to discover new social and cultural areas intended for them, make them known in their environment, and highlight the importance of a new generation of elderly people beyond stereotypes. In this context, the university provides the instruments needed to make it possible.

This project, which celebrates its sixth edition in 2020, was considered to be a social and cultural interest activity in 2019 by the Generalitat Valenciana (Regional Government of the Valencian Community). It establishes a link between university and society. The project is possible thanks to the coordinated work between the university and the older students' initiative to disseminate their activities and to expand their knowledge in connection with the profession of journalism.

The members of this project at university are a coordinator, a Journalism lecturer, in charge of the workshop and the journal management, and a Graphic Design lecturer, in charge of the journal design and layout. Society is represented by older students who, after the Experience Classrooms, want to continue their

training in a more active way. The team is currently made up of a group of about 15-20 people, including editors -who carry out reporting, documentation, and photography tasks-, and regular collaborators who encourage citizen participation in their environment.

2. Objetives and Methodology

This article is aimed at verifying the fulfillment of the objectives and content of the *Ágora* Journal Journalistic Writing Workshop based on students' perceptions. Therefore, the objectives of the article are:

1.   Verifying the level of fulfillment and satisfaction of the objectives set in the course.

2.   Verifying the level of fulfillment and satisfaction of the content set in the course.

3.   Knowing other results and/or consequences not set in the course in relation to its development.

Participant observation of the six editions held is the method used to describe its activities, according to the objectives and content and following the method by Corcho and Corcho (2004) in the study focused on the Computer Science Workshop of the University for the Elderly of Extremadura. Interview with students [3] has also been used.

Participant observation has been used for the workshop documentation process, development, organisation of sessions, approach to the group's needs and interests to establish a relationship between the interview results and the qualitative descriptive analysis of the classes. All the editions of the workshop have been taken into account in this method. The researcher's point of view is that of the workshop teacher.

The information document on the dissemination of the workshop in the Senior Experience Classrooms of the Miguel Hernández University of Elche is taken as a reference. This text, which is similar to a teaching guide for a subject in formal education, includes the content of the lessons as a syllabus and the objectives pursued. At the end of the workshop, an interview is carried out with each of the attendees, which serves to quantify and qualify their achievements. The interviews were carried out in April 2020, and the elderly students gave their opinion on current and past editions in which they had participated.

The following objectives and content are described in this document:

The workshop objectives are:

1. Promoting interest in current affairs, mainly in cultural and social fields, related to the older students participating in the Sabiex programme;

2. Gaining knowledge about work routines in the journalistic field: deadlines, different roles, work routines specific to the profession, and so forth;

3. Gaining knowledge about journalistic writing, the distinction between different journalistic genres, writing skills, editing a journal, and so forth;

4. Committing to work constantly for the publication of the journal;

5. Publication of a journal.

The workshop content is:

1. Organisation of the journal editorial department: roles, management, deadlines;

2. Topics and creation of journal sections;

3. Scheduling and routine work of the editorial team;

4. Journalistic genres and selection of the genres appearing in the journal. Workload distribution;

5. Practical methods for conducting the interview, face-to-face interviews, and editing;

6. Guidelines for writing news, features, and reports;

7. Opinion genres: article, review, and column;

8. Text editing process;

9. The importance of photographs, drawings, and other supplementary elements.

The interview includes 22 questions in two blocks, one related to workshop content and the other one related to workshop objectives. The state of emergency posed a challenge in the way of exposing the instrument to the students to obtain information, since they are profiles that are not normally used to participating in this type of samples, regardless of the face-to-face or online nature of the interview. Excluding the possibility of a discussion group, the questions were provided in simple language and with a close-ended format, whenever possible, but with the possibility of adding comments [4]. There was a high risk of not obtaining a representative sample in an already small student group. The risk was taken to know if the workshop was fulfilling its objectives and content. The responses are presented by means of the assessment of the trends of the responses.

The interview model presented as a Google form [5] includes the following questions:

Block 1. Content of the journalistic writing course: Tick if you think that the content described has been taught. Types of response: 1. Yes, and several times; 2. Yes; 3. Not at a theoretical level, but we have worked on it; 4. No, but it is not necessary; 5. No, and it would be advisable; 6. Other: (please explain). All questions are introduced with the sentence: "Have you been taught about…?:". 12 options were provided and an additional one outside the table for them to explain their opinion. They are as follows: 1. What a newspaper editorial office is like; 2. The reasons why the magazine is arranged in sections; 3. Guidelines for working as an editorial team; 4. Journalistic genres; 5. The reason why *Ágora* works on these specific journalistic genres; 6. Preparation and editing of interviews; 7. Preparation and editing of reports; 9. The reasons why texts are shortened; 10. The importance or role of photographs in a cultural journal; 11. The importance or role of supplementary elements in a cultural journal (running titles between paragraphs, introductory headings, subtitles, photo captions, and so forth); 12. Sources of information, access to the same and how they should appear in the text to avoid plagiarism; and 13. Outside the table to allow an open response: Have you had difficulty in accessing sources? Please justify your answer or explain your experience.

Block 2. Objectives of the journalistic writing course: Eight questions about journalistic writing and profession were posed in two new blocks. 1. Do you think that the workshop has aroused your interest in topical issues addressed to older people? In all issues in general or only in the cultural ones? Please justify your answer; 2. Do you appreciate the fact that the journalistic writing workshop has the added value of the publication of a journal?; 3. Has the fact that the workshop has their own journal allowed you to learn the whole process for the edition of such a publication? 4. Although not all students/editors work on all journalistic genres, can you say that you have a general idea of genres, their types, and their basic characteristics?; 5. One of the course objectives is that participants acquire the commitment of continuous work (work meetings, brainstorming) and the commitment to collaborate to ensure the publication of the journal. Do you think that this objective has been achieved?; 6. Has the workshop allowed you to get closer to the journalistic work routines? (deadlines, professional roles in an editorial office, importance and function of photographs), and so forth; 7. Referring to the previous question, do you think the workshop gets closer to the routines of a professional journalist and/or to knowing the organisation of an editorial office?; 8. Regarding difficulties in accessing sources, have you changed your mind about journalists' work after your experience in *Ágora*?; and 9. After completing this course, have you changed your mind about the journalistic profession?

3. Results

3.1. Characteristics of the journalistic writing workshop

The journalistic writing workshop of the *Ágora Universitaria* journal begins its first editorial meetings in January, with proposals for topics and sections taking into account the experience of the previous years. The coverage of topics is carried out from February to May and, exceptionally, June as "last minute" topics. During this time, and depending on the group needs, sessions are held to expand knowledge and management of information technologies with the preparation and editing of interviews, reports, features, reviews, management of user-level computer systems -use of Word, sending documents, attaching texts and photos to emails-, photojournalism, basic journalistic writing, documentation process, and so forth. In June, the layout process is started, followed by the editing and proofreading steps. In July, taking advantage of the printing step, a practical training activity is organised outside the university at the printing plant -located in Petrel- to learn about the penultimate stage in the process. Finally, the dissemination and distribution are carried out by the editors themselves [6].

The magazine is not a space for the dissemination of its own literary content, but rather the journalistic routines of this type of publication are followed without the requirements of commercial products. This exercise gives it an innovative added value, which differentiates it from other publications for the elderly. Some of the most significant sections of the magazine are: an Opinion section to invite people to

participate; Active Life, a great report on topical issues and a report on health and medicine; Theatre, news and reviews of local senior university companies; Society: cultural trips and gastronomy; Cinema, films for the elderly; Interview, great interview with the personality of the year as proposed by the editors; Literature; Art; Music and New Technologies. Finally, there is a section called Agenda for the dissemination of the Sabiex activities.

It currently consists of 44 pages including covers with 4/4 printing on 170-gram matt coated paper. Closed format 18 x 26 cms. –open format 36 x 26 cms.-. 500 copies are printed, about 300 are distributed within the campus of Elche, mainly among AUNEX students and several stands located at the university, another 100 copies are distributed on the other campuses, and the remaining copies are distributed by the editors in public spaces in their surroundings where they may be of interest: hospitals and health, civic, cultural and social centres, both public and private. It can also be found electronically on the Sabiex website.

The workshop has two student profiles, face-to-face and remote or collaborative profiles. Face-to-face students take responsibility for seeking new collaborators, thus extending the workshop activity. Only 12 out of 16 students are face-to-face students -the remaining four are collaborators- and they are the ones who must achieve the objectives and content. The second group is the one relevant for the study, and the interview has been sent out only to them. The number of editions in which each student has participated is different: five out of twelve students have participated in six editions; five out of twelve students have participated in two editions, and the remaining two have participated in only one edition. Five interviews are from seniors who have participated in six editions, three are from seniors who have participated in two editions; and one of them is from a student participating for the first time. The commitment of those who have participated in the course right from its beginning is evident. The nine interviews received represent 75% of the students.

Table 1: Seniority of students in the 19/20 course and interviews received

Number of editions	Senior participants according to the year in which they joined the course	Number of interviews received
1 (2015)	5	5
2 (2016)	0	0
3 (2017)	0	0
4 (2018)	0	0
5 (2019)	5	3
6 (2020)	2	1

Source: Own elaboration

3.2. Objectives achieved by the journal

As described in the workshop offering and the Methodology section, this course has five objectives. The participant observation result is, for each of the objectives, as follows:

1. Interest in current cultural and social issues related to the older participants in the Sabiex programme is estimated to have been promoted. However, due to the development of the group itself, only the current cultural issues appearing in the journal have been worked on in-depth. Almost half of the classes focus on reviewing the tasks of each of the editors, and the other half on offering guidelines, as applied theory.

The opinion of the interviewed students is, basically, that it has awakened their interest in general and cultural current issues alike, but in certain cases they would have preferred to focus more on older people's issues, and, in a couple of cases, also on current affairs.

2. The acquisition of knowledge about work routines in the journalistic field is estimated to have been successfully achieved, in relation to deadlines, adoption of different roles, work routines specific to the profession, and so forth. In fact, it is a part of the work that gives rise to much debate, even though each editor only produces one or two texts over a semester.

Concerning journalistic work routines, the interviewees have been very active in their responses. All of them have stated that they have learned about the roles of photography, the internal work of a newspaper, the importance of rules, turnaround and deadlines, the stress and nervousness caused by the deadlines, the need to meet deadlines, or becoming aware of how little they know about the journalistic profession in general. There is a wide range of opinions regarding the journalist's work and the organisation of an editorial office: five of the interviewees think that they have been able to get an idea about it, one of them says that he should know what work in an editorial office is like to give an opinion, and three

interviewees consider that they have been able to approach this idea, but the course does not really show all this reality.

3. A knowledge acquisition is estimated to have been partially achieved in relation to journalistic writing and the use of the different journalistic genres, writing techniques, journal editing, and so forth. Not all students have worked on all types of texts, since many of them have a very limited knowledge of the journalistic field and even of writing and usage of computers and documentation techniques on the Internet. Performance levels are low, so is the possibility of fully achieving this objective.

In relation to the acquired knowledge about journalistic genres, their use, and how they are written, three of the interviewees assure that they have acquired this knowledge; but six of them explain that they have a general idea about it or that they need to further strengthen this content, and, in one of the cases, it is pointed out that this content has not been studied in depth. The latter is the opinion of the student who joined the course this year for the first time and, because of the state of emergency, has continued the workshop remotely since March [7].

Regarding the complete editing process of a journal, all interviewees agree that they have been able to participate in the entire process and highlight, in many cases, the added value of visiting the printing plant as the culmination of the whole process.

4. The acquisition of a constant work commitment for the publication of the journal is estimated to have been successfully achieved. In fact, some healthy competition has been observed among the students, to be the first to submit, in good time and manner, the text or texts assigned.

The elderly consider that this commitment has been fulfilled, although in two of the cases they consider that it has not been in the way they would have liked because they had to follow the course remotely and in lockdown. As part of this objective, they state that the workshop should be face-to-face.

5. The objective of publishing the journal is estimated to have been successfully achieved. The commitment of the elderly as well as the editing and layout work of the professional lecturers made it possible.

All interviewees agree that the publication is the strongest part of the workshop. They describe it as a motivating, positive, fundamental addition, necessary for their work to be reflected, the results of their efforts, and so forth.

3.3. Content achieved by the journal

The course content consisted of eight lessons. None of them are studied from a theoretical point of view, but they are worked through practical activities. Contents, sections, and journalistic genres are explained in the order in which they appear and with the theoretical approach necessary for the development of the workshop. The topics are not explained chronologically but are developed gradually and simultaneously throughout the sessions.

Lesson 1, about the organisation of a journal editorial office: roles, management, deadlines. It does not contain any theoretical content as it would be the case in a formal Degree in Journalism. In the first session, students learn about the organisation of an editorial office and the staff structure, a content also included in lesson 3. Additionally, a parallel is made with the workshop, and the different phases of the writing and editing work are explained as they appear throughout the course. Lesson 2, about journal sections, is presented in the second session. First of all, an explanation on the sections in the Ágora journal is provided, together with the reason for their choice. Then, if deemed necessary, proposals for changing the sections are made. The sections are distributed among the students and a work routine is established until the end of the course. Lesson 3 is explained throughout the following sessions and until the end of March or mid-April –it is adapted to the pace of the group-, students suggest different topics, and they are guided on which journalistic genre is the most interesting to work on. At this point, they return to the theoretical aspects of the genres, corresponding to lessons 4, 5, 6, and part of lesson 9. While working on the documentation and edition process, other important genres are explained, even though they do not appear in the journal, such as news items, features, or opinion articles, as well as the pending content of lesson 9, about photographs, drawings, infographics or supplementary elements. Finally, and as they finish and send the texts to the teacher, they receive corrections. If deemed necessary, corrections are discussed in the group so that everyone is enriched with other students' proposals. This process lasts almost until June [8]. This is the content corresponding to lesson 8, and which ends, whenever possible, with a visit to the printing plant.

All the interviewees think that content has been properly taught and even on several occasions. There is only one interviewee who considers that to adequately explain what an editorial office is, she should visit one.

Table 2: Interviewees' opinion on the content offered throughout the course

Have you been taught about:	Yes, several times	Yes	No theory, but practice	No, and it is not necessary	No, and it would be advisable	Other
1. What a newspaper editorial office is like	67%	33%				
2. The reasons why the magazine is arranged in sections	67%	33%				
3. Guidelines for working as an editorial team	78%	22%				
4. Journalistic genres	78%	22%				
5. The reason why *Ágora* works on these specific journalistic genres	67%	33%				
6. Preparation and editing of interviews	78%	22%				
7. Preparation and editing of reports	78%	22%				
8. Preparation and editing of columns or reviews	67%	33%				
9. The reasons why texts are shortened	78%	22%				
10. The importance or role of photographs in a cultural journal	78%	22%				
11. The importance or role of the supplementary elements in a cultural journal (running titles between paragraphs, introductory headings, subtitles, photo captions, and so forth).	67%	33%				
12. Sources of information, access to the same and how they should appear to avoid plagiarism	78%	22%				

Source: Own elaboration

3.4. Other achievements

The objectives and content did not consider two aspects detected in the participant observation. On the one hand, difficult access to certain sources or people to be interviewed, either for the publication of an interview or as part of the documentation process for a journalistic text. They are less accessible than it might seem beforehand. On the other hand, it was also noted that, in some of the sessions, comments were made in relation to the profession and especially to the responsibility attributed to the professional working for a journalistic enterprise, beyond a professional aspect and pointing out the morals or ethics of the exercise of their activity. Some prejudices about journalists were identified, but they were actually prejudices about a general opinion about the media. Both aspects have been discussed at different times in the course sessions, and the interview was used to obtain the students' opinions on these aspects.

Regarding the difficulties they consider that journalists have in relation to sources, all of them, except for one case, have changed their perspective in this respect, thanks to the experience gained in the workshop. These are some of their opinions: sometimes, it is not easy to obtain the information from the source, or the information you really need and not the one they want to give you, or simply getting an answer. The source is very important, it should provide the journalist with truthful information since it is easy for the fake news to have its origin in the source and not in the journalist. Background work in the search for sources is much more complex than I expected, you have to look for more than one source, you have to respect the authorship of the work being consulted. Journalists should spend a lot of time to find quality information from different sources, not all sources are valid. The Internet is not enough. Some sources consulted are not useful, and so forth.

In relation to the prejudices detected about the journalistic profession, they were asked one last question about whether the journalistic writing course had changed their opinion regarding the profession. In three of the cases their opinion did not change, as they had a positive initial assessment of the profession; the other six students recognised that they had changed their opinion regarding journalists, as they also

experienced the difficulties related to access to sources, compliance with deadlines and assigned topic, the need to seek much more information than what is actually needed to be sure that it is relevant, the exposure of this profession to criticism, ethical and moral difficulties in not spreading fake news and being honest with the truth, and so forth.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The *Ágora* journal workshop gives a new innovative approach to the teaching of journalistic writing, where theory becomes supplementary and necessary for the edition of a journal. The objectives of the article were to find out the level of fulfillment and satisfaction of the objectives expected in the course; check the level of fulfillment and satisfaction of the content provided in the course, and knowing other results and/or consequences not foreseen by the course in relation to its development. The methodologies employed were participant observation and interviews with seniors enrolled in the 2019/2020 course. However, health circumstances at the time of the research and drafting process of this article derived from the state of emergency due to COVID 2019 have provided some new results that deserve to be highlighted.

According to the first objective about the achievement of the objectives foreseen by the course, it can be deduced that the interviewees have the perception that they have been achieved: since they know the routines of the profession and have experienced them throughout the workshop, despite the fact that, according to their feedback, their expectations have not been very ambitious, since they only work on two texts. Once again, it can be seen that journalistic writing is not their main objective, since indirectly or unconsciously, they push it into the background. In fact, their interest in the visit to the printing plant organised at the end of the course is highly remarkable. Their healthy competition and the satisfaction of achieving a final product that will be disseminated among their friends and family are clear motivations to achieve the edition of the journal and the commitment to meet deadlines.

Regarding the second objective about the acquisition of the course content, it is estimated that the duration of the workshop, 60 hours, is still insufficient to go into all the topics in-depth, and despite the result of this observation, the elderly have a general perception that they have assimilated the content. They are satisfied with the topics covered because they are both current and cultural. However, it is interesting to devote more time to general current affairs specific to older people. They consider that they have, partly or entirely, been able to understand the working routines of a journalist and they show interest in working more intensively. This would mean devoting more hours to the assimilation of content related to the use of journalistic genres, sources, and computers, the sending of texts and photos, and the search for documentation on the Internet. However, some of these tasks are not associated with the workshop, but it suggests the possibility of offering a different workshop to meet these needs.

Finally, the approach to the journalistic profession is not the only reason for the elderly to participate in the workshop .In fact, although they have a great commitment to making the journal publication possible, their motivation is essentially based on the social relations they build. In most cases, students are widows with a middle cultural and/or educational level who are interested in leading an active life and being informed about social, cultural, and recreational events according to their age. They all build new friendships and collaborate in other university projects such as the radio, the theatre, the reading workshop, conferences, and day trips.

In this context and given the results of the observation and the interviews, the following conclusions are highlighted:

1. The initial interest of the elderly in the course is a key element that allows the lecturer to achieve success and motivation, adapting the teaching to the students' level, which is different in every course. Tutorial classes have sometimes been doubled to attend to all students' needs. Each student's potential is important to complement the workshop.

2. The difficulties experienced by the elderly throughout the workshop have enabled most of them to change their approach to professional journalism: difficulties in accessing sources, the need to shorten the texts to comply with the space requirements, the number of words, the size of the photographs in relation to the text, the need to meet style specifications on the use of journalistic and non-literary language, the understanding that they are mediators and not protagonists, and so forth.

3. Quality is not synonymous with achieving theoretical and practical knowledge of the syllabus, but with achieving maximum involvement and motivation. Although journalistic writing is a fundamental pillar, it is pushed into the background.

4. The practical application of journalistic writing is relevant to this group and the course sessions and syllabus become secondary and complementary. However, they must be reinforced to increase the quality of the teaching content and find a way to make them motivating.

5. The workshop achieves as indirect and unforeseen objectives an increased interest in the profession, a break with associated stereotypes and prejudices, and the provision of a meeting space that favours social relations and friendship of the elderly through journalism and cultural approach.

6. The lockdown derived from the state of emergency due to COVID 2019 has evidenced the value that the elderly place on the face-to-face nature of the workshop, and therefore the need to offer alternatives that promote social relations among the elderly to ensure the continuity of the course, should a new similar context arise.

The general conclusions are an increased interest in the journalistic profession, a break with stereotypes and prejudices associated with the profession, expanding knowledge of work routines and roles, gender distinction, management, and access to sources and problems associated with these processes.

The use of techniques for the teaching and learning of journalistic writing is developed in an innovative way since it is applied to people who do not seek in this process a tool for professional use. Efforts are made to get closer to the profession, develop empathy for it, and consolidate the cultural scene and the integrating elements of personal relations among the elderly.

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7. Acknowledgement

Notes

1. Considering gender equality and as recommended by RAE (Royal Academy of the Spanish Language), "the generic use of masculine is based on its condition as an unmarked term in the masculine/feminine opposition." In this article, the neutral terminology of the Spanish language has been used. Thus, words such as "alumno", "profesor", "el", "unos" include both masculine and feminine references. (Only applies in the Spanish version).

2. Online report: shorturl.at/eiCM8

3. Due to the state of emergency caused by the COVID19 pandemic, the discussion group method and the physical interview could not be implemented.

4. This change was adapted due to the state of emergency and lockdown context in which the interviews had to be carried out. This method was not foreseen, since the interviewees' profiles encouraged the implementation of the discussion group to increase the depth of the responses.

5. Since the students were a group particularly at risk, even after the end of the state of emergency, it was not advisable to meet to do the interviews. Additionally, in some cases, they find it difficult to type quickly on the computer keyboard. While they have up to four months to make an 800-word report, they were only given 15 days to respond to the interview. This is the reason why in two cases the interview was sent as a Word document to facilitate its completion (Google's service created distrust) and in one case it was conducted by phone.

6. In this edition, the state of emergency caused by COVID19 has unusually changed the deadlines. The journal's layout began in April and ended in May. Dissemination and distribution at the time of writing this article are not concluded.

7. The Experience Classrooms and associated courses cancelled face-to-face classes before the start of the state of emergency since all students were a risk group. Shortly after, remote teaching started.

8. In this 2020 edition, as they have not been discussed in common, this phase has been shorter.