THE CYBERJOURNAL **COMUNIC@NDO**, A LEARNING TOOL FOR STUDENTS OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA WRITINGS

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**Abstract**

This paper presents the application of a real environment, a cyberjournal in the activities of students in Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Alicante, to develop powers and skills contained in the teaching guide for the subject Communication and Media Writings.

This course applies an innovative methodology for effectively incorporating new ICT tools, such as the development of a cyberjournal by students. In this way, students learn from a real environment which is an online media, the sections they have and how to write on the Internet. The interest of this research is justified by the need to implement innovative teaching methods related to ICTs are able to motivate students and facilitate their learning.

Students participate actively in the preparation of news, articles and interviews related to communication, advertising and the University in Cyberjournal **Comunic@ndo**, which develop the skills and powers under the subject Communication and Media Writing (1st degree). This tool encourages students for the participation and teamwork, as part of a university writing an online media. In addition to the newsroom in practical classes, students who make up the team of section leaders meet every 15 days to plan activities, conducting training sessions on the use of social networks and are planned and implemented campaigns to be released in the environment online journalism at the University of Alicante and other universities with communication studies. The teachers coordinate the editing process as well as the meetings of the editors.

**Keywords:** Communication, **Comunic@ndo**, news, cyberpress.

1 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 A change in the teaching / learning process

The implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in the Spanish University and the changes of undergraduate degrees require new teaching tools that are adapted to the plans of the Bologna Process. It is not only to develop the skills and abilities in a very practical way, listed in the teaching guide of the subjects, but it may take into account the trades which will develop future graduates, with a more and more importance of the Internet like the information technologies and the communication (ICTs).

On the other hand, what is known as the Society of Information and Communication, in which we are in, is making major changes in the educational process that should not be forgotten. Thus, the teacher has gone from being a transmitter of content to a learning facilitator, mediator, and the student has gone from being a receiver of information to a constructor of his knowledge [1]. In addition, to build that knowledge is essential the interaction and collaboration with the other peers and the teacher. For this reason, ICT is not just a teaching tool, directed by the teacher in a process designed by him, but allow the student and / or the group of students take an active role in the construction of the knowledge [2]. This causes a change on the mind complex for the teachers and for the students, as it modifies the way of teaching and learning.

Given these challenges, it was created the Research Network Comunic@ndo, within the Research Networking Programme in Higher Education [3], which is organized by the Institute of Sciences of the equation (ICE) and funded by the Department for Strategic Planning and Quality. This research group was established in 2010 to provide education and methodological support to the teachers of the subject Communication and Print Media, which are making the practice of this subject in the computer room.
1.2 The subject Communication and Print Media

The University of Alicante has started this academic year 2010-2011 the EEES reforming their curricula. In this sense, the Bachelor of Advertising has become the Degree of Advertising and Public Relations, where the subject Communication and Media Writing, adapted to the requirements of the European Higher Education Area and the result of the merger of two four-month courses licensure, Written Communication and Information, and Analysis and Expression in the Written Communication and Information.

It is one of the four subjects that are specific vital matter of communication and has prevailed over all the content and the continuous assessment, drawing for the first time, performing half the practices in computer rooms. It has 6 ECTS credits, and is framed in the form of foundations and processes of communication. Basic Training. Teaching is given in the first year of the Degree and the first quarter.

The course has the descriptor: "Study and training in technology, analysis and expression in forms and print and electronic media" and examines the processes of selection, production and evaluation of facts and ideas, the processes of composition and social communication forms of expression, styles and internal and external structures that take messages and other editorial units of information genres, interpretation and opinion, through the media and the Internet and other messages of the mass communication.

The general educational objective of this course is to provide an updated education, and to be practical, which will provide the student with training to be able to assess, evaluate and argue the events that occur in the society, with some approaches that take into account the social responsibility of the communicator. The contents are intended to ensure that students understand that different forms of communication are tools for the community to develop and display their content. In addition, they show the characteristics of the organization and structuring of information and are taught to understand the relationships of the media information with citizens and social and political inequities to the freedoms of expression and information.

In the practical axis highlights the goal of teaching the techniques of written communication are: the treatment of the sources, the different genres and content management in all its aspects. In turn, it is promoting a set of intellectual skills (understanding of concepts, use and critical processing of media and discussion of journalistic pieces on science) and affective (attitudes of cooperative work, communication of knowledge , etc.), which are the base of their own criteria and independent thinking.

This course contributes to the formation of students' skills in the knowledge of media, the writing skills of students in reference to the characteristics of the media, enter the formal study of media discourse e integrate it as an essential element of the communication process, learn the basics of journalistic Message construction, especially in its critical reporting format, the story of current events, the news.

From a cognitive standpoint, the purpose of this course is to offer students a minimum content of structures, supports, settings, effects and theoretical and methodological tools related to communication that will allow later in other areas, explore issues much more detailed than the communication and print media have been advanced. More specifically the student must: Know and properly use the resources that allow the new information technologies and communication. You must also use proper spelling and grammar rules in written and spoken language understanding, reasoning and synthesize content from various fields of knowledge, and express yourself well orally and in writing in their native language.

The course has a strong capacity for students to learn and use the possibilities that information in its various basic applications, offered in their professional field. In turn, it is that the student knows the ways of expression, styles and internal and external structures that currently take messages and other newspaper editorial units, gender and interpretative information and opinion, channeled through the press, radio, television and the Internet and other messages from the mass media. Able to produce journalistic messages tailored to the characteristics of the print media and hypermedia is the ultimate goal of the course.

The agenda is divided into 12 thematic units. In Unit 1 introduces the student to the press. How a newspaper and its structure. In item 2 you learn the language Newspaper. The style of the journalist. Unit 3 is dedicated to the journalistic genres and units 4 and 5 focus on the News. What is news, who chooses the news story, structure and parts. In Unit 6 discusses the sources of information, passing
under item 7 of the Communications Media Management in the Press Office. Press Releases. Unit 8 is also connected, by analyzing the Press Conference. The unit 9 is dedicated to the genres of opinion and interpretation. The Report specifically covered in the unit 10, and the interview, the 11. The Online Journalism, newspapers online, is the last issue, 12 discusses the various models of online journalism.

In direct relation to the contents that are introduced each week, the course is divided into theoretical and practical sessions equally, and also provides for the independent work of students. The practical classes are essential for its binding and are based on the one hand, the resolution of problems and on the other hand, computer classroom practices through the provision of smaller groups.

The development of the practices of the knowledge that the student acquires in the lectures. The knowledge of the journalist and writing informational text forms the bulk of the practices that the student must perform during the course. The base is news writing, interviews, reports, editorials and press releases. The precision, accuracy and time are factors to assess writing. In addition, computer practices are developed informational texts that are published on the subject cyberjournal, Comunic@ndo, which is the object of study for this project.

Since the beginning of the course, students have the Virtual Campus of library materials to support the course. They are compiled as the program area, such as basic texts that the teacher presents the basic bibliography and further reading is recommended for each unit. They also have available through the Campus both power-point presentations in class, they can guide the sessions and the "Selected links".

All theory sessions of communication and print media are taught using the power-point. Always starts asking the student teaching unit objectives openly and presenting the outline of the topic. If the issues require more than one session, they start picking up the main points from the previous lesson and relate to a brief summary of the session that is going to happen.

Practical classes, which have always been important in the former subjects of journalistic writing, take on a particular dimension, for mandatory and it is given to groups smaller than the theoretical.

The development of the practices of the knowledge that the student has acquired in the lectures, which will serve as the base. Over the course will evolve in the kind of practice, always the rhythm of the relevant theoretical and previous lessons, so that the student part of a broader exercise, until it begins to write their own individual text.

As a preliminary step to the completion of the internship, students are invited to respond to an anonymous survey that informs the teacher of certain issues that are extremely useful when planning for subsequent years. Language the student knows, what newspapers read and how often, what are the sections that interest you most, what news content are the least stringent, and so on. are some of the data.

Computer practices are developed informational texts to be published in online journalism from the course, adapted to the characteristics of journalistic language multimedia environment.

The evaluation system chosen is the continuous evaluation system, using the guidelines of the EHEA. In this sense, the theoretical and practical tests, practical work is about solving problems, and delivered made in class and corrected by the teacher, representing 30% of the final grade. Theoretical and practical tests conducted in the computer room, where food is prepared for publishing newspaper articles on the subject cyberjournal account for another 30% of the final grade. 10% belongs to the oral presentation of a group practice consisting of a simulated press conference. We evaluate the presentation, appropriateness of the topic, speaking and group work. The remaining 30% belongs to the examination or final objective, which consists of two short-answer questions and a question of development as well as writing a story. In all written evidence is assessed, in addition to knowledge on the subject, relationship skills, synthesis, expression, and consistent syntax and spelling correction. The existence of more than three spelling mistakes in the evidence may make it impossible to pass the examination.

In this context, it has launched Comunic@ndo, an innovative project that has begun to implement during 2010-2011 in the subject and print media communication of the Degree of Advertising and
Public Relations at the University of Alicante. Following is the basis on which the project is based and online journalism.

2 COMUNIC@NDO, A CYBERJOURNAL OF STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS

Comunic@ndo [4] is a cyberjournal which is part of an academic project real approach of information technology to students in the course Communication and print media. Basically consists of the development of an essay to give birth to a real cyberjournal beyond experimentation in the classroom.

On the one hand, there is a part of writing that consists of all students of the subject, who practice in online journalism, writing news, articles and interviews. This work will serve to enter the world of journalism, while developing the skills and abilities listed in the teaching guide for the subject communication and print media, described above. Your cooperation is temporary and no longer belong to the language when the semester ends.

On the other hand, there is a stable writing cyberjournal is composed of all those students who willingly accept the responsibility of carrying out the various activities which include the maintenance of a digital medium, to devote part of their free time without receiving any compensation in the form of grades, but being aware of the benefit given curricular participation. This is rewarding voluntary form of a semi-professional practice puts them at the forefront of new trends from two perspectives: the coach, which gives them knowledge management and online publishing, and journalism, which encourages them to seek and news writing for different sections.

It is also synonymous with collaboration and autonomy, because it becomes a model not addressed. That is, although the basic structure is created by the team of teachers, writers give their news and their stories with their own views, building together a cyberjournal plural in all senses.

The cyberjournal Comunic@ndo uses an editing system (Control Management System, CMS) created by the company in Alicante and communication networking Nitsnets Studio [5] under the name of Gopress [6]. The decision to use this platform, and nothing else comes of the features that make it unique compared to other content generation engines. In addition to a single platform to include own journalistic content, content provider has RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and gives the ability to insert advertising content, although in the case of Comunic@ndo this aspect has not been addressed yet, for wanting to keep Academic personality and informative rather than promotional.

As a platform for educational innovation at the same time Gopress allows practical learning of the most advanced web tools: Access restricted, online management, databases, backups, graphic design, concept maps, files, images, audio and video, search engines external and internal layout and publishing real-time, entry into cooperative websites, etc.

Is developed with 2.0, Ajax, Flex, CSS2, Flash, PHH and MySQL and allows almost complete customization of the interface. Its main advantage is that being only a tool for creating online journalism, is devoting all its resources to this objective, easily generating informative documents on the Internet in a simple way compared to other publishers, professional visual outcome. Thus plays a dual role, because on one hand facilitates quick learning for students who otherwise would not be feasible, and offers the public a professionally finished product which can be read.

This simplicity of use is precisely the main advantage Gopress when approaching anyone in the world of journalism, with professional visual results, which is the main reason for that was chosen as an engine for the project. This will get the progressive alignment technique of each student regardless of their previous computer knowledge. During the first session students are instructed in handling Gopress examples with the publication of news. In less than two weeks all members of Comunic@ndo reach the level required to operate with ease in the CMS.

The issue in the CMS is distributed in different permission levels, with managers, director, section chiefs and editors. The first two are reserved for teachers of the subject, while the third and fourth are distributed among the students according to the different responsibilities they have agreed to assume. Different access levels encompass the overall aesthetic design, building blocks and sections to organize the news, the news almost intuitive integration with text editors, tags, comments, photos, etc.. and subsequent publication.
Another interesting aspect is the ease of the layout of content that is graphically through Java, which makes navigating with the mouse, click and drag blocks of news and pictures, as it would on the wording of any large cyberjournal.

Also included personnel management through a proprietary database, beyond the assignment of access permissions. Each member has a personal profile with public and private data for better internal coordination and contact with the outside. In relation to the interaction, the news can be commented by readers include the management and publishing letters to the editor, featured links section and a newspaper. In addition, each reader can choose the most interesting news to PDF or email them.

In terms of content, topics on which students write are very varied as they are free to choose, but highlight news and reports on issues of communication and advertising. Comunicando consists of five major sections (Reporting, Communication, Advertising, opinion and Services), which in turn are divided into other sections, such as music, TV and Fashion.

3 RESULTS
At this early stage of implementation of cyberjournal Comunicando in the subject Communication and print media, the project is performing well, according to the evaluation questionnaire that the students have done. The most common ratings are the practices of news writing and reporting has been more dynamic and they can be very useful in the future exercise of their profession. In addition, students stress that makes learning easy and fun. However, we detected some difficulties with the CMS when using images and videos, questions will be modified to improve its implementation.

The result of volunteer editors group was quite heterogeneous. As expected, the commitment of spending time on cyberjournal not been fulfilled in all editors, which has caused problems in the operation and failure to update some news and sections. This issue will attempt to resolve with repositioning of the responsibilities of editors less active and give more support to those who met their commitments.

4 CONCLUSION
Project Implementation Comunicando practices of the subject communication and print media has been well received by students, and has meant a change in the teaching / learning. Thanks to the drafting of texts for online journalism, students have learned the basics of journalistic writing and have also implemented the basic features of Internet communication. In this way, have learned the importance of hypertext, with links to news, multimedia, with the inclusion of photos and video, the interactivity with readers and among the editors, and the continuous updating of the information, all this in a practical way, applying theoretical knowledge in a professional platform. He has also served to encourage teamwork, collaboration and intellectual involvement and responsibility in working together. It has also allowed to see the student's ability to stand on an issue and assess it critically and reflectively.

On the other hand, the cyberjournal has proved a useful tool with professional results and extensive customization and management, making it a good option for improving student learning in Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Alicante.

This project, which started in 2010-2011, will be continued in future courses and in the near future training sessions will be held on the use of social networks, for use as a platform for interaction and dissemination of the contents and advertising campaigns to publicize the cyberjournal in the environment of the University of Alicante and other universities with communication studies.

Finally, it should be noted that this project creates an environment conducive to the development of learner autonomy, motivation and responsibility for the study and willingness to cooperate and work collaboratively, seeking the common good.
REFERENCES


[3] The program encourages and promotes research projects in teams consisting of collaborative work among teachers, directing their efforts towards the improvement of teaching in general and the quality of student learning, in order to promote the exchange of experiences, methodologies and tools among professionals from academia. En: http://www.ua.es/ice/redes/index.html

