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Professional Skills and Profiles in Journalism Demanded by Companies: Analysis of Offers at LinkedIn and Infojobs

Abstract

The goal of this research is to analyze whether the profiles and professional skills in journalism demanded by companies in Spain correspond to those compiled in the *Libro Blanco* of the ANECA, or whether they have been modified over a decade later by the impact of the digital era and emergence of new employment needs. In the current setting of rapid and unpredictable changes, periodic analyses and research like this study are necessary.

The methodology chosen was the analysis of the content of job offers directed to journalism graduates on the two most used job portals in Spain, Infojobs and LinkedIn, in September 2017. All the information in the offers was organized into two categories related to descriptive data about types of contracts and data over required skills. The results led to the conclusion that the professional skills currently demanded of journalism graduates differ qualitatively and quantitatively from the professional skills described by the ANECA in 2005. The skills most demanded by companies respond to the emergence of new professional profiles related to Web 2.0. However, it is also the case that companies do not seem to know precisely what skills a journalism graduate must have.

Keywords

Journalism, professional skills, professional profiles, job offers, human resources web sites, Spain.

1. Introduction

Journalism in Spain was first taught as a trade at one of the following institutions: *El Debate* (1926), the Official School of Journalism (1939), the Institute of Journalism at the Universidad de Navarra (1958) or the School of Journalism of the Catholic Church (1960). It became a university degree course in 1971. Research on this teaching presents the trade as rooted in tools and technique (Beneyto, 1958; Benito, 1967; Graña, 1927).

Study plans have been modified since journalism began to be taught as a degree course at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in 1971. In the first few years, they were more theoretical, with subjects like “Theory of Communication,” “Theory of Information,” “Structure of Information” and “Specialized

Journalism". In the 1990s, new proposals were made to shape the general teaching of journalism (Galdón, 1999; Real, 1997). There was a balance between social sciences and humanities subjects and specialized communications subjects, and equal weight was given to theory and practice (Gordón, 1991; Humanes, 1997).

1.1. *Professional skills in journalism degree courses*

Since the adaptation of degree courses to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), articulated in the guidelines of the *Libro Blanco Títulos de Grado en Comunicación* (ANECA, 2005), a change took place in university studies in general and in journalism in particular. The model for learning went from being grounded in objectives to a model based on the acquisition of skills for professional application (Marta-Lazo, 2010; Sierra & Cabezuelo, 2010; Real, 2012; Marta-Lazo, Agustín Lacruz & Ubieta Artur, 2012; Marta-Lazo & Vadillo Bengoa, 2013; Rodrigo-Alsina & Lazcano, 2014; Sánchez-García, 2016).

In the review of the scientific literature, there is a considerable catalog of research that analyzes the implementation of the competency model in the EHEA (Barranquero & Redondo, 2009; Marta-Lazo, 2009; Marta-Lazo, Agustín Lacruz & Ubieta Artur, 2012; Marta-Lazo & Vadillo Bengoa, 2013; Real, 2012; Rodrigo-Alsina & Lazcano, 2014; Sánchez-García, 2016; Sierra & Cabezuelo, 2010). Other studies focus more on learning based on the transformation to digital skills (Flores, 2012; Gonzales & Méndez, 2013, 2015; Salavarría, 2000; Tejedor Calvo, 2008). Others specialize in the labor market (Vivar, Abuín, García, Vinader & Núñez, 2010). Others address its implementation in different autonomous regions (Sánchez-García, 2013; Vadillo Bengoa, Marta-Lazo & Cabrera, 2010). Meanwhile, other sources shed light on the instability of the profession (Figueras-Maz, Mauri-Ríos, Alsius-Clavera, Salgado-De-Dios, 2012; Soengas, Rodríguez & Abuín, 2014; Ufarte Ruiz, 2012), and others concern the loss of news quality (De Pablos & Mateos, 2004; Gómez Mompert, Gutiérrez Lozano & Palau Sampio, 2015; Parreño, 2013).

Journalism is dynamic and constantly changing (Díaz Nosty, 2011). The spread of technology and information through mobile devices, applications and social networks have changed the skills necessary for journalistic tasks. In the last decade, there has been a major conversion in news production processes having a direct effect on the profiles of professional journalists.

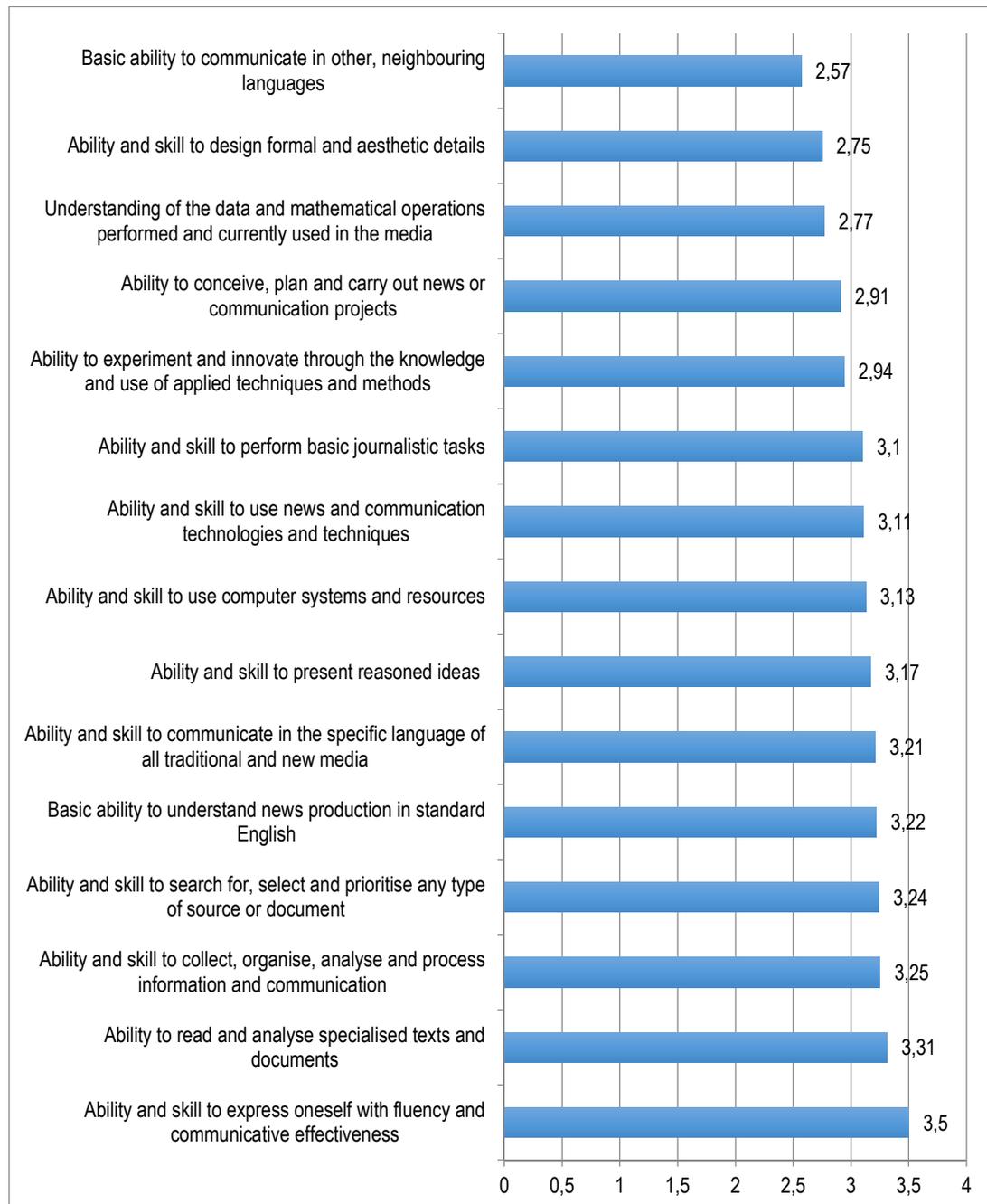
The aim of this research is to determine, via an analysis of the skills and requirements sought by the labor market, whether profiles and professional skills (know-how) compiled in the 2005 *Libro Blanco* are still valid or whether they have changed.

The four professional positions included in the *Libro Blanco* (2005, p. 191-192) are:

- Copywriter of journalistic information for any type of medium
- Editor-in-chief for press or institutional communication
- Researcher, teacher and communication consultant
- Web site administrator and content editor

The *Libro Blanco* (ANECA, 2005, p. 210-213) lists 15 professional skills (know-how) pertaining to the four positions. The skills were rated on a point scale ranging from 1 to 4, and are ranked below according to the average scores they received.

Figure 1: Professional Skills of Journalism Graduates. *Libro Blanco*. Source: ANECA 2005.



The highest-rated according to the *Libro Blanco* are “Ability and skill to express oneself with fluency and communicative effectiveness,” “Ability to read and analyse specialised texts and documents,” and “Ability and skill to collect, organise, analyse and process information and communication,” while the lowest-rated is “Basic ability to communicate in other, neighboring languages.”

New facets and needs reflected in the profiles of interactive, multimedia journalists join the more traditional skills related to journalistic fundamentals, procedures in the creation of genres and formats, and the professional ethics the job requires. This change is important in

considering the need for revising the model set by the ANECA (2005), a model still in place over a decade after its creation.

The problem revolves around whether or not we are creating journalists with criteria based on outdated profiles and skills. In this regard, for some experts, “the qualification and skill requirements of the digital economy obligate universities to incorporate academic strategies which make [making] it possible to learn the technological requirements, which improves individual opportunities for job placement” (Álvarez-Flores, Núñez-Gómez & Rodríguez Crespo, 2017, p. 540).

1.2. *Emerging profiles in journalism*

With regard to the status of the issue, there are numerous studies comparing old and new professional profiles (Agustín Lacruz, Marta-Lazo & Ubieto Artur, 2013; López, Gago, Toural & Limia, 2012; Túñez, 2012). Some are focused on the demand for journalism students (Pérez Serrano, Rodríguez Barba & Rodríguez Pallarés, 2015). Others are based on the change of profiles as a consequence of the spread of on-line journalism (Alguacil, 2012; Balandrón, 2010; Esteban, 2012; López, 2001, 2012; Salavarría & García Avilés, 2008). Other studies discuss the importance of the multi-faceted nature of professional profiles (Gómez Patiño, 2012; Masip & Micó, 2009; Scolari, Micó, Navarro & Pardo, 2008). Others discuss the use of social networks or greater interaction with the public through them (Carrera, Sainz, Herrero & Limón, 2012; Noguera, 2013; Túñez & Sixto, 2012), while still others present the nature of maintaining the journalist’s traditional functions (Sánchez-García, Campos-Domínguez & Berrocal Gonzalo, 2015).

In this research, we rely on new trends highlighted by some authors and resulting from the evolution of professional journalism. The following are some of the recently-established positions and fields: data delivery editor, social media editor (community manager), hypertext writer, web content manager, influencer, blogger, multimedia content editor, user-generated content editor, information architect, news moderator, usability expert, interactivity manager, web video editor, mobile journalism, journalism consulting, communication consulting and internet journalism research (Flores, 2013, p. 40).

The new media professions mentioned above involve skills and functions that overlap between them (Hayasaki, Roca-Cuberes & Singla, 2016). Companies themselves seem unable to distinguish the differences between some professions and others. The result is that, in recent years, many journalists have undertaken functions that have little or nothing to do with the education they received at university.

Pérez-Serrano, Rodríguez-Barba & Rodríguez-Pallares (2015), in their study “Mercado de la Comunicación y estudiantes de Periodismo. Estructura de la demanda de perfiles profesionales” (“The Communication Market and Journalism Students: Structure of the Demand for Professional Profiles”), also emphasise the lack of adaptation between company job offers and the new journalistic context. After analysing offers from the Centre for Job Orientation and Information (COIE) at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in relation to students’ internship contracts, they conclude that “the new occupations that entail digital communication activities, simply because they can be held by journalists, cannot properly be considered positions within the profession if they do not fulfill the social mission of information. As such, they are occupations or job opportunities for which a person with studies in journalism would be qualified, but which in no case should be admitted under the umbrella of the profession.”

Gómez, Roses & García (2017) underline the importance of recycling content within study plans in with the labor market reality and which include knowledge that *a priori* is unrelated to a typical journalism background but is linked to current job offers for journalists. This knowledge includes computer skills, use of social networks and on-line marketing.

Recent reports from the sector indicate that, in years to come, companies will seek an increasing number of candidates with digital profiles (Inesdi, 2016; ADECCO, 2017; Magna Global). Technology has fully entered all sectors of society. The Internet of Things has altered the skills the market currently requires and rendered obsolete others demanded in the same jobs five years earlier.

The advent of social networks on the Internet has led companies to seek candidates with experience that will help them “manage their image” in these new platforms (Vinader, Abuín & García, 2011, p. 78). The flow of communication between senders and receivers has changed, giving way to more horizontal communication in which the message is constantly moving and where the message is constantly moving and needing professionals with abilities and skills not considered before.

They are what, after analysing offers from Infojobs and conducting 10 interviews with leading innovation consultants and managers who have experience in Spain, the United States and Latin America, Palomo & Palau-Sampio (2016) referred to “adaptive journalists”. They conclude from their research that “the profile and classical qualities of journalists are the foundation of current demands in the sector. Fifty-five percent of job offers include the drafting of information, while new functions related to the administration of social networks and content are complementary” (2016, p. 194).

Periodic analyses and research are necessary in a setting where new labor market needs respond to rapid, unpredictable changes in an ever more global and technological communicative context. Through this research, we can gain an overview of the situation, helping to reduce the gap between the labor market and the academic education of journalists.

1.3. Objectives and Hypotheses

Main Objective:

- Learn about the most requested profiles and professional skills, after an exhaustive bibliographic review of the literature addressing the question.

Secondary Objectives:

- Determine whether professional skills in journalism, described in 2005 by the *Libro Blanco Títulos de Grado en Comunicación* (Bachelor’s Degrees in Communication), correspond to the current demand of the labour market.
- Analyze whether the academic education required by ANECA in study plans corresponds to labor demand in the field of journalism.
- Determine whether new professional journalism profiles related to the rise of new technologies and Web 2.0 are the most demanded.
- Determine the minimum requisites demanded by companies for journalism graduates to enter the labor market.
- Learn the types of employment contracts that are offered to media professionals.

Hypotheses

Ho: The professional skills currently demanded of journalism graduates differ qualitatively and quantitatively from the professional skills of journalism studies described by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) in 2005.

H1: There is confusion among companies making offers indiscriminately to graduates in disciplines which do not share the same study plans, especially offers related to the so-called new journalistic profiles.

2. Methodology

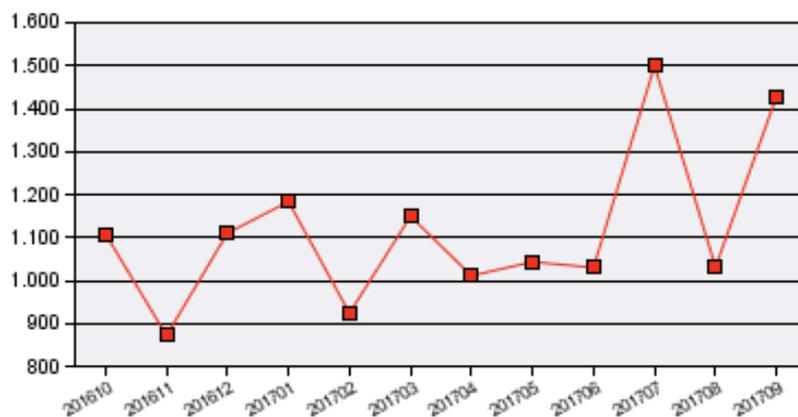
On the basis of a thorough documentary review of academic studies published since 2005 and which are related to our subject of study, it was decided to address the research by applying the technique of content analysis. To do so, job offers to journalism graduates were analyzed.

The job offers were published in September 2017 on the two most used portals by job seekers and recruiters, Infojobs and LinkedIn. After a period of observation, taking into account the categories most repeated on both portals, showing few differences, a list of categories for the joint analysis of data and subsequent presentation of results was created.

Content analysis was the instrument chosen to gather information. As Laurence Bardin underlines, content analysis seeks to “obtain indicators (quantitative or otherwise) by systematic and objective procedures for describing the content of the messages, allowing the inference of knowledge relative to the social context of these messages” (1996, p. 32).

The choice of the time frame was based on labor statistics that show how, after the summer months, when most of the job-offers pertain to the service sector, the selection process in the other sectors begins. This is why we chose the month of September for the field study. In addition, according to the Occupations Observatory of the State Public Employment Service, in September 2017, journalism showed a positive variation in hiring compared with the same month of the previous year (9.5%) and awarded almost 40% more contracts than in the previous month (SEPE, 2017).

Figure 2: Number of contracts made for journalists. Source: SEPE, 2017.



With regard to the platforms chosen to collect data, LinkedIn is a professional social network that currently has more than 500 million users (LinkedIn, 2017). It is the most used by Spanish companies to find candidates, bearing in mind the number of users LinkedIn has, with 89% of recruiters registered (Infoempleo-Adecco, 2016).

On the other hand, Infojobs is the benchmark job search portal for both job seekers and companies. More than 10 million users use the platform to look for work or find candidates (Infojobs, 2017). Furthermore, most human resources professionals (67%) make use of the job portals to recruit new employees (Infoempleo-Adecco, 2016).

After the first exploratory phase of searching for offers with key words like “community manager,” “digital journalism,” “journalism,” “multimedia journalist,” “copywriter” and “institutional relations,” those which contained a bachelor’s degree in journalism or, in the case of internships / grants, current studies in journalism as a minimum requisite were selected.

In the case of LinkedIn, the total sample of offers compiled was 210, and 73 were chosen for the analysis according to the criteria mentioned. It shocks to see] that among 65% of the offers not selected were many of the new digital professional profiles associated with journalism, like community manager, social media manager, and global content and social media manager.

In the case of Infojobs, the total was 100, and 83 were selected.

From an initial sample of 310 job offers, 156 were ultimately chosen, discarding those that were repeated or were not explicitly directed to journalism graduates.

In the content analysis, different categories were established, taking note of the skills and profiles demanded.

To analyze whether there is correspondence between the academic education required by ANECA and the professional skills and profiles demanded in the field of journalism, the data provided in the offers was divided as follows:

Profiles sought:

- Minimum studies required
- Minimum experience
- Field of employment
- Profiles sought

Professional skills:

- Job duties
- Knowledge of computer systems
- Knowledge of editing programs
- Knowledge of social networks
- Other knowledge
- Languages

Given that one of the goals of the study is to determine whether the professional skills described by the 2005 *Libro Blanco Títulos de Grado en Comunicación* correspond to current labor market demands, 10 of the 15 *Libro Blanco* skills most often cited in the information provided in the job offers (job functions, knowledge of office equipment, editing programs and social networks, other knowledge and languages) were selected and grouped as follows:

Table 1: Professional Skills. Source: prepared by the authors.

COMPANY REQUISITES	LIBRO BLANCO PROFESSIONAL SKILLS
JOB DUTIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability and skill to express oneself with fluency and communicative effectiveness - Ability to conceive, plan and carry out news or communication projects - Ability and skill to carry out basic journalistic tasks - Ability to experiment and innovate through the knowledge and use of applied techniques and methods
KNOWLEDGE OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability and skill to use computer systems and resources
KNOWLEDGE OF EDITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability and skill to design formal and aesthetic details
KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability and skill to communicate in the specific language of all media - Ability and skill to use news and communication technologies and techniques
LANGUAGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic ability to understand news production in English - Basic ability to communicate in other, neighbouring languages

3. Analysis of Results

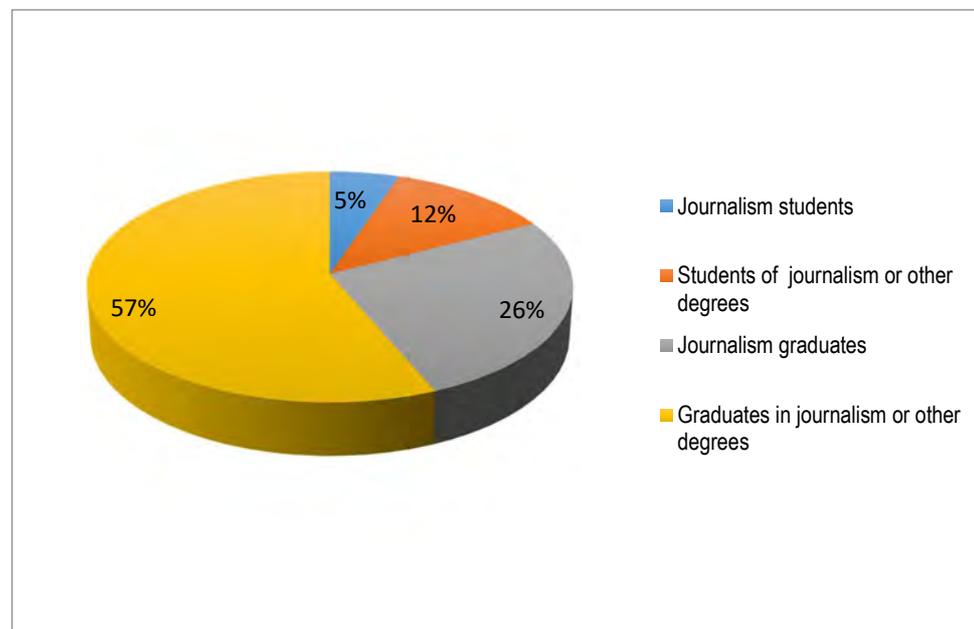
3.1. Professional skills and profiles demanded

3.1.1. Professional Profiles

This study is focused on offers to journalists. The minimum studies required in the job offers have been grouped into four categories. The offers that seek only journalism graduates or journalism students have been separated from offers that, in addition to journalism, include other degrees ushering advertising, marketing, public relations, audiovisual communication, business administration, economics, and language and literature.

Only 31% of the offers are directed specifically to journalism graduates or students (26% and 5%, respectively), while a large majority, 69%, are directed to graduates (57%) or students (12%) in journalism or other degrees.

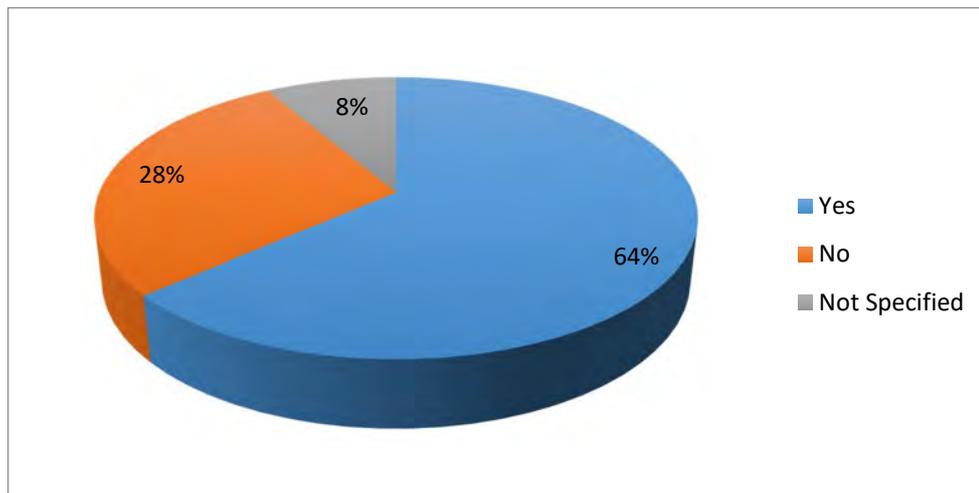
Figure 3: Academic Education Required for Position. Source: prepared by the authors.



In addition to minimum academic requirements, the companies highlight other transversal values like international experiences, having lived abroad, and in interest in the Internet and new technologies. They also look for “innovative, creative people,” people “who know how to work in groups,” people who are “proactive and can work under pressure” and, in one case, people “who can tolerate frustration.”

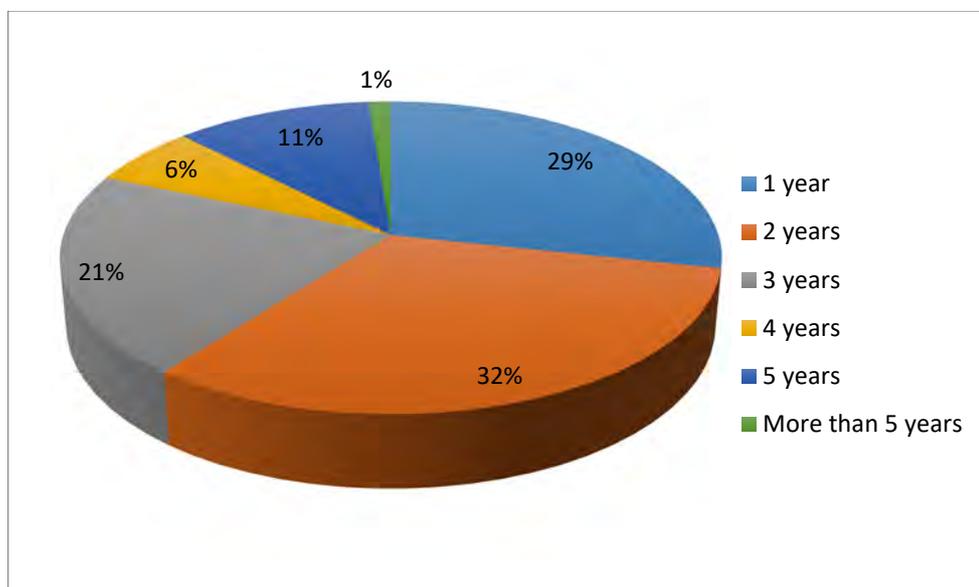
In more than half of the offers analyzed (64%), minimum experience related to the job published is required, while 28% indicate no experience is necessary and 8% do not specify. Most of the jobs that do not require experience correspond to training contracts aimed at students.

Figure 4: Previous Experience. Source: prepared by the authors.



As for number of years of experience in the sector, more than half the companies that require experience in the job offer demand between one (29%) and two years (32%). Twenty-one percent of the offers demand three years, 6% demand four years, 11% demand five years and only 1% demand more than five years. This last category corresponds to management positions.

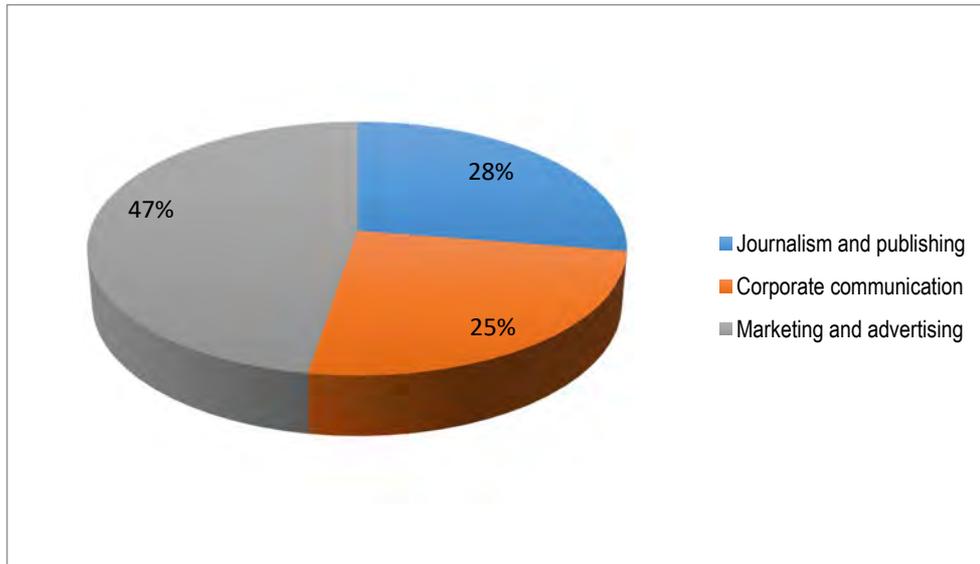
Figure 5: Years of Experience. Source: prepared by the authors.



On the basis of the key words that the companies publish and the area they note the candidates will work in, we find that almost half of the offers contain professional functions that would be performed in the area of marketing and advertising (47%), followed by journalism and editing (28%) and corporate communication (25%).

This is a significant picture that indicates that the most demanded profiles are not among what we understand to be “journalism,” but instead have more to do with marketing jobs.

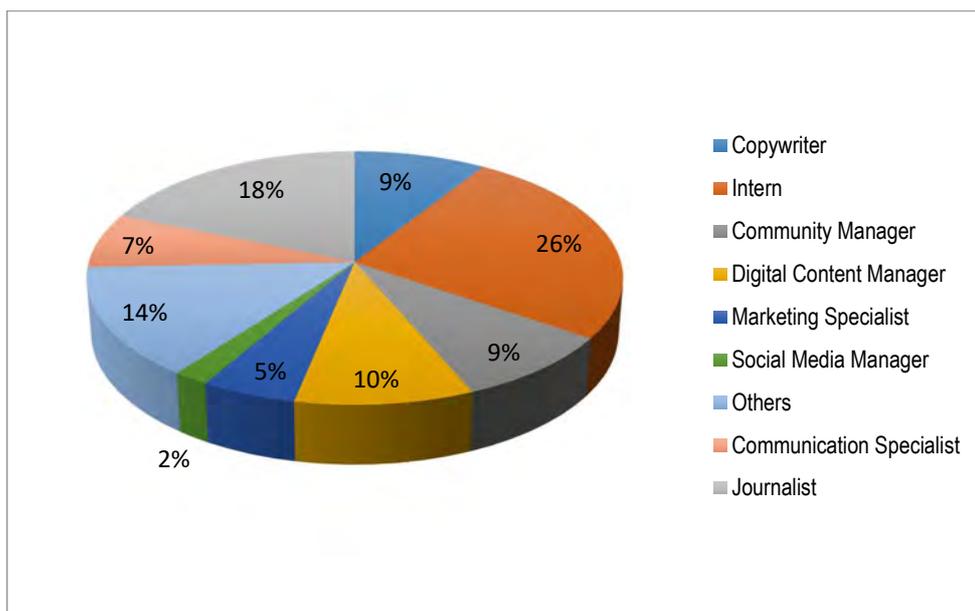
Figure 6: Field of Employment. Source: prepared by the authors.



In the job descriptions of the companies analysed, we see new profiles in the sector. Digital Content Manager (10%), Community Manager (9%), Communication Specialist (7%) and Marketing Specialist (5%) are some of the most used descriptors in English.

Furthermore, we find positions called “journalist” (13%), “copywriter” (9%) or “account executive” (5%), which are in line with a more traditional nomenclature. Included in the category “Others,” which accounts for 14% of the offers, are more of these new profiles, such as “brand journalist,” “content strategist,” “SEO consultant” and “digital content manager.”

Figure 7: Profiles demanded. Source: prepared by the authors.



The traditional positions (journalist and copywriter) account for 27% of the offers, while the new positions (community manager, digital content manager, marketing specialist, social media manager, communication specialist and “others”) account for almost half (47%), and 26% are for internships.

If we match the four profiles of ANECA’s *Libro Blanco* with the job offers, we find a clear imbalance between the percentage of jobs for profiles 1, 2 and 3 compared with profile 4.

Table 3: Professional profiles. Source: prepared by the authors.

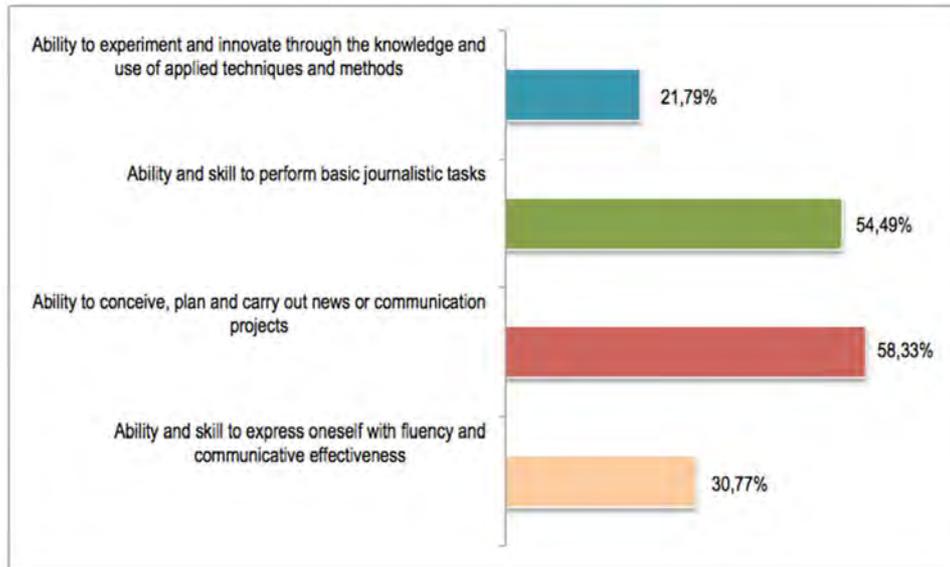
LIBRO BLANCO PROFILES	JOB POSITIONS OFFERED
1. News copywriter in any kind of medium	Copywriter Web Copywriter Journalist Communication Specialist Brand Journalist
2. News/institutional communication editor	Head of Marketing and Communication Marketing Director Communication Director Junior Marketing Specialist Internal Communication Technician International Public Relations Manager Event Communication Technician Corporate Communicator On-line Marketing Technician Public Relations Manager
3. Researcher, teacher and communications consultant	Digital Consultant Consultant & SEM Manager SEO Consultant
4. Web site administrator and content editor	Community Manager Digital Community Administrator Digital Content Manager Social Media Manager Copywriter Creative Copywriter Content Strategist Junior Product Analyst

3.1.2. Professional Skills

The professional skills (know-how) compiled by ANECA and explicitly mentioned in the job duties of the 156 job offers analysed are the following: Ability to conceive, plan and carry out news or communication projects (58.33%); Ability and skill to perform basic journalistic tasks (54.49%); Ability and skill to express oneself with fluency and communicative effectiveness (30.77%); Ability to experiment and innovate through the knowledge and use of applied techniques and methods (21.79%).

Although proper spoken and written expression is imperative for any journalist, many companies do not specify it, perhaps because, as occurs with other areas of knowledge like office equipment, they assume the candidate possesses this ability.

Figure 8: Professional Skills and Job Duties. Source: prepared by the authors.

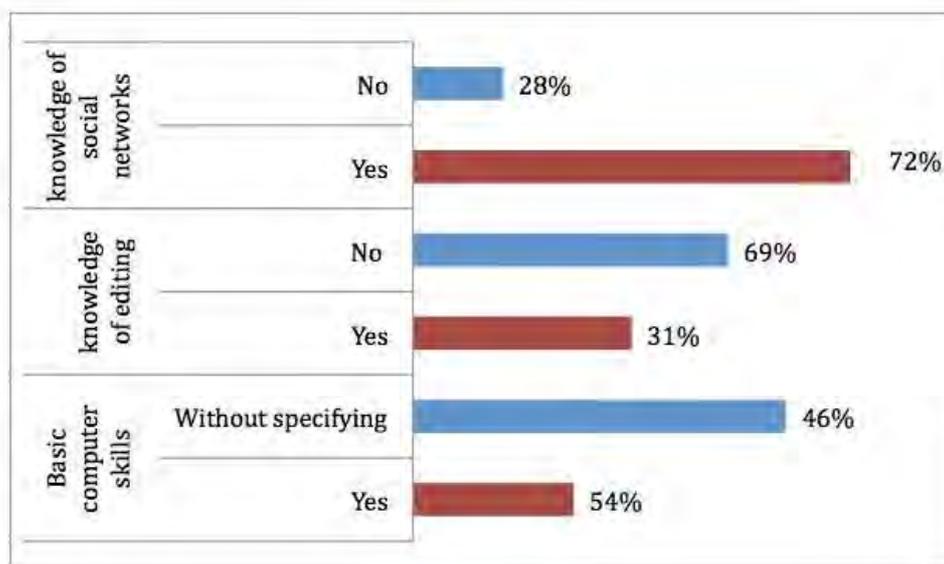


Most of the companies analyzed (54%) specify that the candidate must have knowledge of office equipment, while 46% do not specify the level of knowledge of office equipment required.

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the offers analysed do not require knowledge of editing, while 31% of the companies specifically include different photography or video editing programs.

There appears to be a strong consensus on knowledge of social networks, as 72% of the companies require candidates to know Web 2.0 at the level of tools, platforms or SEO. The 28% of the offers that do not include knowledge of social networks correspond to more traditional positions like corporate communicators or account executives, or the offers directed to students.

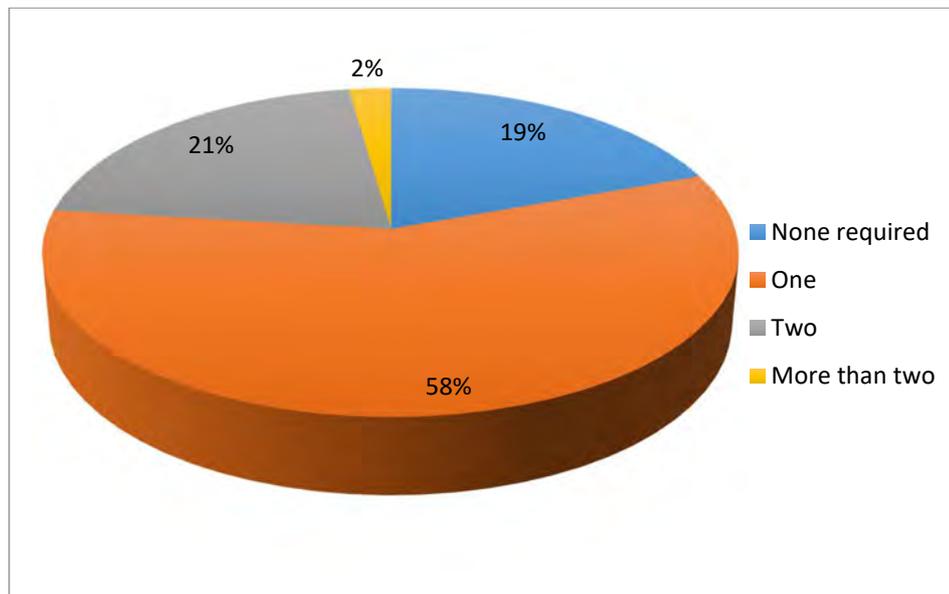
Figure 9: Specific Skills Required of Journalists. Source: prepared by the authors.



The majority of the companies analysed, almost 80%, value knowledge of another language besides Spanish. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the offers demand a single language, which is usually English. Twenty-one percent (21%) require knowledge of two languages.

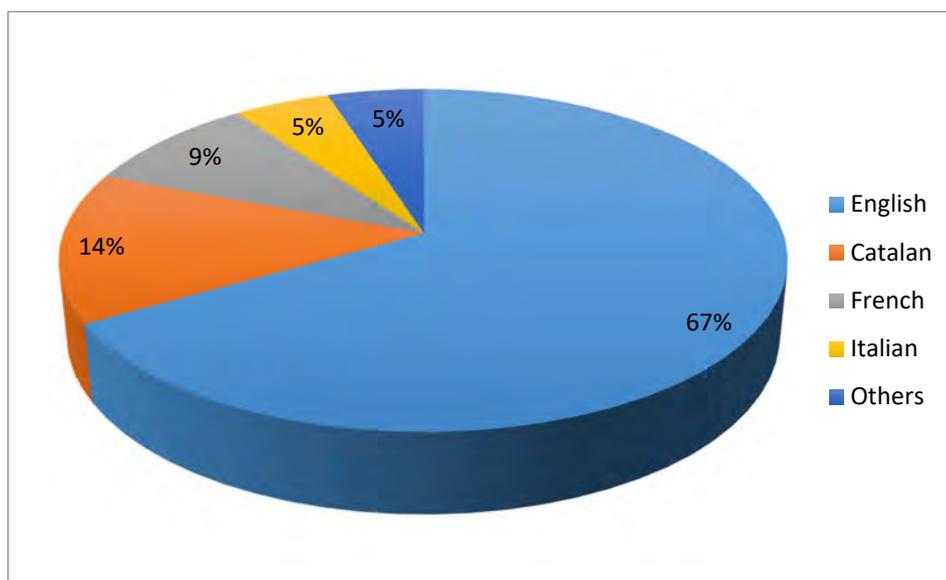
Only 2% of the offers require more than two languages, and in only one case, the offer is aimed at students. The other offers (19%) do not require another language.

Figure 10: Number of Languages Required. Source: prepared by the authors.



English is the language most demanded (67%), followed by Catalan (14%). It is worth noting that the greatest number of offers analyzed is concentrated in Barcelona. After Catalan are French (9%), Italian (5%) and other languages (5%) less demanded in the offers: possibly Polish, Portuguese, Basque, Valencian or German.

Figure 11: Language Required. Source: prepared by the authors.



The results of the professional skills required by companies, following ANECA's model (see Figure 1), are as follows:

- Ability to communicate fluently and efficiently: 30.77%
- Ability to conceive, plan and execute news or communication projects: 58.33%
- Ability to carry out the main tasks of journalism: 54.49%
- Ability to experiment and innovate through knowledge and use of applied techniques and methods: 21.79%
- Ability to use computer systems and resources: 54%
- Ability to design formal and aesthetic aspects: 69%
- Ability to communicate in the specific language of the different communication media and ability to use news and communication technologies and techniques: 72%
- Basic ability to understand news or communication production in English: 67%
- Basic ability to communicate in neighboring foreign languages: 21%

Skills in using social networks and design and editing programs are the most valued by the companies, followed by knowledge of English. In addition, 21.79% of the companies requested creativity and innovation among the skills of the applicants.

The *Libro Blanco* includes five other professional skills more associated with traditional aspects of journalism. These skills, listed below, are not reflected in the job offers of the companies on LinkedIn and Infojobs.

Ability to read and analyse specialised texts and documents

Ability and skill to collect, organise, analyse and process information and communication

Ability and skill to search for, select and prioritise any type of source or document

Ability and skill to present reasoned ideas

Understanding of the data and mathematical operations performed and currently used in the media

Five of the 15 professional skills in the *Libro Blanco*, then –one third– are not reflected in the current demands of the labour market.

4. Conclusions

On the basis of the results obtained, we can affirm that the initial hypothesis of this research has been validated. There is a gap between journalism studies in Spain and the labour market demand. The professional skills that are required of journalists in the labour market today differ from the professional skills in journalism studies described by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) in 2005.

The conclusions of this study coincide to a large extent with others of previously mentioned research. Palomo and Palau-Sampio (2016) note that 55% of the job requirements include news writing as a job function. This coincides with the results of this study, in which this more traditional skill appears in 54.49% of the offers. However, unlike the aforementioned study, knowledge and use of social networks turns out to be the most valued requirement in this study, appearing in 72% of the offers. As such, in only one year since the aforementioned study, the emerging journalistic profiles on Web 2.0 are the most demanded by companies. This confirms the theory argued throughout this research on the need for more periodic studies given the rapidity of changes in the current digital context.

As Pérez-Serrano, Rodríguez-Barba and Rodríguez-Pallares (2015) already noted, the new professional setting of journalism does not seem to manifest with clarity in the company offers, nor in this research. Knowledge of marketing is included in many (47%) of the positions offered on LinkedIn and Infojobs to journalists, when this is not a subject considered in the study plans of journalism. This leads us to validate our second hypothesis, which stated that companies do not clearly know what skills a journalism graduate should have.

After the analysis of the data, we can conclude that, more than a decade after the publication of ANECA's *Libro Blanco*, there is a significant gap between the academic education that students receive in journalism departments and the current demands of companies in the offers analyzed to fill job posts related to the sphere of information. In light of this conclusion, there must be greater concordance between the business world and universities.

Companies require candidates with skills and profiles that are not in the guidelines set out by ANECA. As such, it is important to review content and subjects of study plans so that future journalists have a place in the increasingly multidisciplinary job market. Meanwhile, we must not forget the importance of journalism's traditional skills, which seem to be largely overlooked by companies.

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