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Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay: Public Relations education in digital culture

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ABSTRACT – Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay: Public Relations education in digital culture. This study aimed to compare the National Curriculum for Public Relations of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, reflecting on the qualification in higher education. The methodology relies on bibliographical research and documentation support. The results showed that only Brazil has specific curriculum guidelines for the field. Regarding the course load, there are significant differences between the countries. And in relation to this scenario, which inserts the profession of Public Relations in digital culture, we realized that such a change is incipient when discussed by the Brazilian official documentation. Also, another point observed is that in Argentina and in Uruguay the courses have the autonomy to create contents. **Keywords: Higher Education. Public Relations. Curriculum Guidelines. Digital Culture.**

RESUMO – Brasil, Argentina e Uruguai: ensino de Relações Públicas na cultura digital. Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo comparar as Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais de Relações Públicas de Brasil, Argentina e Uruguai, refletindo sobre a formação no ensino superior. A metodologia conta com pesquisa bibliográfica e amparo documental. Os resultados mostraram que há diretrizes curriculares específicas para a área apenas no Brasil. A respeito da carga horária, há diferença significativa entre os países. E em relação ao presente cenário, que insere a profissão de Relações Públicas na cultura digital, percebemos que tal mudança é discutida de forma incipiente pela documentação oficial brasileira. Ademais, outro ponto observado é que, na Argentina e no Uruguai, os cursos têm autonomia para criar conteúdos. **Palavras-chave: Ensino Superior. Relações Públicas. Diretrizes Curriculares. Cultura Digital.**

Introduction

One of the key practices that transform the world of work is communication. Barichello (2009) described the implication of this scenario in organizations and, consequently, among communication managers, emphasizing the interactivity with the public and the convergence provided by the environment:

Contemporary organizations need to do more than use computer-mediated communication strategies. They need, above all, to assimilate these new space-time levels in their everyday activities. Two structural properties of digital communication need to be used: the maximization of interactivity with the public and the convergence of possible actions in only one communication device (Barichello, 2009, p. 351).

Such challenges are faced by the Public Relations field¹ as a profession and also are a concern related to the academic training of new professionals. This is an issue that emerges when we reflect on the relationship of theory and practice as supporting spheres of the curricular proposals.

About 3.2 billion people (corresponding to approximately 40% of the world population) are estimated to have access to the internet, according to the G1 website². Thus, the global scenario changes amid the growing digital culture, establishing new ways of being, thinking and acting with support of the possibilities offered by digital information and communications technologies. However, are the University courses of Public Relations attentive to such changes? And in Brazil, are we in accordance with close realities, such as those from neighboring countries, like Argentina and Uruguay?

Under this bias, the questions of this study are justified, as we seek to understand an issue relevant to the Public Relations field and to the higher education: *To what extent the changes in the Curriculum Guidelines for higher education in Public Relations, today, considering the scenarios of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, are responding to the challenges of digital culture?*

From the theoretical perspective, this study focuses on Higher Education Policies, which, according to Franco and Bittar (2006, p. 166):

[...] define rights and duties, preferences, goals, principles and forms of organization of the tertiary Education, including the functions of teaching, research and extension. One of the main issues of the educational policy in Brazil is related to the democratization of access and quality of education, often interwoven in the controversy between the duties and prerogatives of the State (public) and private interests.

The authors complement that the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) are terms related to the Higher Education Policies. In the

interim, the aim of this article is to analyze and establish a comparison between DCNs of Public Relations from Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, considering the current higher education training in the field and the challenges of digital culture. Thus, we intend to verify *if* and *how* the different curricular proposals of the undergraduate courses include contents and activities that address the digital culture, by reading the documentation about the area in the countries studied regarding training changes.

With this goal in mind, the trends of the world of work and of the curricula are never compliant. Barichello (2008, p. 536) stresses the importance of higher education studies for communication professionals, as the training consists of “[...] one way of understanding its performance, both in the academic and in the professional context, especially regarding the recognition of its identity contours.”

To carry out the study proposal, besides the bibliographical review, the main method used to conduct the study is the document analysis, which includes records that serve as a relevant source on the subject. For the construction of the text, we surveyed specific references of the area in Brazil: Resolution No. 2, September 27, 2013 (Brasil, 2013); and wider Resolutions for higher education in Argentina and Uruguay, for lacking specific documents: Resolution No. 6, February 13, 1997 (Argentina, 1997); Decree No. 104/14, April 24, 2014 (Uruguay, 2014).

Considering the character that we suggested for this study, we brought the concept of comparison in education as a history of meanings (Cunha; Isaia, 2006), i.e. the meanings that different communities give to their actions and that allow them to build and rebuild the world. In this sense, the article presents the reality of the guidelines in the Public Relations field of the three countries aforementioned, which will be analyzed and, next, compared in general terms. It is an attempt that does not claim the singular explanation, but that acknowledges itself on the complexity of meanings, understanding the limits of its interpretation. In this sense, it is understandable that the guidelines influence higher education through minimum training lines and that several other factors involve educational institutions, the management of courses and teaching staffs, which makes possible an updated statement in the area.

Training in the Age of Digital Culture

Digital culture has developed in the sense of communication and sociability through technological advancement. The users assumed the roles of content producers, presenting themselves as authors and social actors participating in unlimited networks of connections, by which information travels without boundaries. In this sense, as Bauman stresses (1999, p. 84), “[...] we are all on the move.” In the current context, this fact results from a dynamic with which we connect, via the internet, 24 hours a day. Spanish sociologist Castells (2008), in a dossier published by the magazine Telos, defines the digital culture in six topics:

1. Ability to communicate or mix any product based on a digital common language; 2. Ability to communicate from the local to the global in real time, and vice versa, in order to blur the interaction process; 3. Existence of multiple modes of communication; 4. Interconnection of all database digitalized networks or the achievement of Nelson's hypertext dream with the storage and retrieving data system, called Xanadú in 1965; 5. Capacity to reconfigure all configurations creating a new meaning in the different multilayers of the communication processes; 6. Gradual creation of a collective mind due to online work through a set of brains without any limits. At this stage, I am referring to connections between online brains and the collective mind (Castells, 2008, online).

Also according to the author, the culture of the internet is “[...] a technocratic belief in the progress of humans through technology” (Castells, 2003, p. 53). Thus, a challenge emerges for higher education, that is, the issue is not only to teach technology and obtain metrics: we have to know what to do with all the data circulating. As stressed by Maciel (2009, p. 283), “[...] the mere reproduction of theories and methods does not prepare the professional to monitor the changeability of the world and the reality of its profession.”

As for education in Brazil, especially concerning Public Relations, the DCNs are parameters drawn up by the Ministry of Education to guide the training. According to Resolution No. 2, September 27, 2013 (Brasil, 2013, p. 28):

Art. 2. The organization of undergraduate courses in Public Relations, respecting the National Curriculum Guidelines and the Opinions on this Council, should be drawn up with clear establishment of curricular components, which, without prejudice to other aspects, will cover: I – pedagogical project and curricular matrix; II – training lines; III – articulating theory and practice; IV – update processes; V – total course load; VI – laboratory structure; VII – description of general and specific skills; VIII – skills and profile desired for the professional; IX – curriculum content; X – supervised curricular internship; XI – monitoring and evaluation; XII – extracurricular activities; XIII – final course paper.

The curriculum guidelines are, according to the National Council of Education (Brasil, 1997), guidelines for the preparation of curricula, which must be respected by all higher education institutions in the country, in any training areas. To ensure flexibility and the quality of education, the guidelines must observe the following principles:

1) Ensure wide freedom in the composition of the course load to be accomplished for the completion of curricula to higher education institutions, as well as in the specification of units of study to be taught; 2) Indicate the topics or fields of study and other teaching-learning experiences that will compose the curricula, avoiding as much as pos-

sible the establishment of specific contents with three pre-determined course loads, which may not exceed 50% of the total course load of the courses; 3) Avoid the unnecessary prolongation of undergraduate courses; 4) Encourage a solid general training, so the graduate student may overcome the challenges of renewed conditions of professional practice and knowledge production, allowing various types of differentiated training and qualifications in the same program; 5) Stimulate independent study practices, aiming at the student's progressive professional and intellectual autonomy; 6) Encourage the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside the school environment, including those referring to the professional experience deemed relevant to the training area; 7) Strengthen the articulation of theory with practice, valuing individual and collective research, as well as internships and participation in extension activities; 8) Include guidelines for the conduction of periodic evaluations using a variety of instruments to inform teachers and students about the development of educational activities (Brasil, 1997, p. 2-3).

Thus, CNE decided to adopt a common orientation for the guidelines, ensuring flexibility, creativity and responsibility for the institutions to create their curricular proposals. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, there are general lines that should guide the courses and educational institutions in the preparation of the Pedagogical Project of the Curriculum (PPC). Therefore, it is important to understand the theoretical-practical relationship, which breaks with the dichotomy present in the positivistic perception of science, in which the practice is understood as the application of the theory. In this perspective, the components integrate the didactic teaching system, which is something complex, with heterogeneous, interdefined and interdependent elements (Lucarelli, 2009).

Regarding the heterogeneous elements, in the debate on innovation in higher education, Carrasco (2013, p. 49) adds that:

The great accumulation of knowledge, its fast obsolescence and the renovation and emerging of new bodies of content mark the need to think of other forms of organizing the program contents and to design new teaching-learning strategies and assessment of such learning.

The way the curricular discussion has been conceived and organized, in the context of higher education, obstructs the thinking of proposals and teaching mediation able to respond to different demands of the knowledge society and the world of work, which need to be raised and dealt with within the University.

The representations of the University professors, graduated following a monodisciplinary and specialization logic, have created difficulties for the imaginative exercise of other curricular designs.

This design hinders actions and proposals for interdisciplinary works in which the themes would be binding

to more complex and less narrowing (reductionist) approaches, as pointed out by Morin (1994, 2001). The mono-disciplinary logic of our teacher training curricula eventually set up a specialized and isolated teaching method (Oliveira, 2003, p. 254).

This conception, in areas other than teacher training, configures a specialized professionalism, not allowing, in the University space, the rewiring of knowledge, which, in the world of work and life, are inter-related. The isolation of some curricular proposals of the professional domain and of the demands of the current society produces, in the student, after entering in his/her field, the feeling that he/she was prepared for challenges that have changed.

Now, in a time of constant changes, due to the expansion of digital culture, the context of higher education of Public Relations in the digital culture is in the midst of complexity. As a result, it is not possible to study it in a generic way, because it would be implied the risk of covering specific perspectives.

The advancement of the internet and the expansion of digital media created a mismatch between the world of work and the courses that prepare Public Relations professionals. The rapid pace of the technological development, coupled to all social activities, to some extent, lags behind the course. The media are not exclusively digital, and the traditional media can have an online version.

For Negroponte (1995, p. 22), “[...] one of the reasons why the media have become digital so fast is the fact that we have achieved high levels of understanding much faster than most people expected.” In this sense, the role of the Public Relations professional needs to be rethought not only because of the world of work and their new requirements, but also regarding the meaning of the profession to society.

In a way, the digital content has greater or lesser insertion in a PPC, depending on the emphasis and on the teaching staff, except for the DCNs, which must support each project. The centrality of communication in the contemporary society involves the strengthening of this field of study in the academia. More than to adopt a set of technical knowledge for the improvement of contemporary communicative practices, the development of theoretical bases that allow the understanding of the digital era is essential. In this sense, the resources can no longer be seen as something complementary to the context of the integrated communication. For Kunsch (2008), the integrated communication is composed of various forms of communication (institutional, marketing, internal and administrative), allowing the synergistic activity of an organization's policy in an integrated manner. In other words, the digital scenario cannot be an appendix of Public Relations work, it needs to be the central focus.

For Grunig (2009), the digital scenario is reflected in the activity of Public Relations professionals, assigning a degree of flexibility and accuracy of the information, in real time, which, recently, was not part of the reality of the communicator, with more speed and interactivity.

The Trajectory of Higher Education of Public Relations in Brazil

Considering the creation of the Journalism course at Universidade do Distrito Federal in 1947 as a historical landmark, the teaching of communication, in Brazil, began 70 years ago. The training in the area was first linked to Journalism, because of its precursors being, originally, members of the press, but there was a reference to Public Relations (Moura, 2002).

The first Public Relations course, lasting four years, was created 20 years later, in 1967, with the foundation of the School of Cultural Communication, at Universidade de São Paulo, known currently as the School of Communication and Arts (Teixeira, 2002). During this period, the Law No. 5377 was sanctioned (Brasil, 1967), regulating the profession and making Brazil the first country in the world to adopt specific legislation for Public Relations. This fact sparked the creation of several faculties and departments at national level.

According to Campanella (2008 p. 68-69), “[...] the number of faculties of communication, in Brazil, in 1974 – not all offering the Public Relations course – was 54, being 15 in São Paulo, 10 in Rio de Janeiro, and the remaining ones in other states.” The quality of education provided was problematic, according to Marques de Melo (2007), with programs that were outdated and distant from the Brazilian reality.

In 1984, a new minimum curriculum was formulated, with Resolution No. 02/84, which, according to Moura (2002), brought infrastructure demands for facilities, laboratories and proper equipment for vocational training in different areas of communication, in addition to mandatory experimental projects in Public Relations courses. The redemocratization process in Brazil, which triggered direct elections in 1984, helped the profession to leave the governmental bias, tied to ceremonial and protocol procedures during the period of military governments, and started inserting itself into the organizational domain (Moura, 2002).

The 1990s denoted a particularly important landmark due to the development of the internet and the emergence of digital technologies. This period also stands out because of the discussions for the implementation of DCNs, which entered into force at the beginning of the following decade. Amid the advances, in the 2000s, many Public Relations courses were created in Brazil³. Discussions on the professional's profile continued at the beginning of the new millennium. Currently, according to the Inep/Mec⁴, 76 Public Relations courses are in operation. A change that can affect teaching, but that still does not reflect on higher education, are the DCNs for the Public Relations field, adopted in 2013, which are presented next.

The 2013 National Curriculum Guidelines for Public Relations in Brazil

Although no specific reference was made to the emergence of digital culture, the 2013 document that establishes the Public Relations DCNs mentions that the professional should be in command of the communicational process of different media. Another document guidance is stated in general principles, referring to the issue of updating courses, which are hold responsible for the offer of conditions, to students, so they develop knowledge and practices in digital media, with updated technological resources and constant training of the teaching staff (Brasil, 2013).

In comparison with the old guidelines, approved in 2001 (Brasil, 2002), which were not specific to the Public Relations field, there are three new aspects: the mandatory curricular internship, the increase in the mandatory minimum course load (from 2,700 to 3,200 hours) and the presentation of the structure, which, from basic and complementary content went on to be described in areas, with four provided aspects and study of the digital scenario. Although they are qualitatively shy, in terms of scope, they alter the current structure of the courses in the country.

The implementation of the 2013 guidelines, compared with the previous ones, brought a timid breakthrough regarding the digital scenario. Among other factors, the low participation of academic and professional communities in the discussion process, both in the virtual consultation and in the public hearings, possibly contributed to this result.

The structure that covers the curricular content of the Public Relations course presents an organization into four areas: General Training; Communication; Public Relations; Additional Training. In *Communication*, the document provides for studies on the digital scenario in two items: a) studies of media, information and communications technology, and b) studies on cyberculture. In *Public Relations*, there are two items aimed at the digital scenario: a) crisis management, institutional writing, production of printed, audiovisual and digital media, and b) network communication.

That is, of the total of four areas, only half of these include issues related to the digital scenario. Overall, there are four items, focusing on the issue of ICT and media studies (in the broader scope of Social Communication) and digital media production and network communication (specifically in Public Relations). This shows gaps of various functions and activities that may be of the Public Relations field in the digital scenario, such as measurement, campaigns, consulting, for instance. Rhoden (2013) conducted a survey through the Digital Public Relations Study Group, coordinated by ABRACOM (Brazilian Association of Communication Agencies), in 2010, applied to 197 communication professionals from different communication agencies from Brazil that presented the five most offered services by agencies in the country:

social networking content management (69%), monitoring/auditing (57%), management of corporate blogs (55%), activation of promotional campaigns (53%), and social media consulting (47%). Data indicate that measurement has been the most frequent service in agencies nowadays. And the services that clients sought the most were: networking content management (51%), monitoring/auditing (42%), activation of promotional campaigns (33%), management of corporate blogs (31%), and social media consulting (29%).

What we can observe, based on the research, is that the world of work focuses on a management profile of these digital communication processes, with emphasis on the use, monitoring and updates of social networks. The need to measure the return that communication provides becomes, increasingly, an essential factor in the communication process, even to justify the investment. In the digital environment, there are tools and evaluation programs available and, through them, these possibilities are extended, demonstrating, effectively, the results they provide to businesses.

Amid the process of transformations, it is possible to claim that the updated guidelines serve to indicate what is expected from a Public Relations professional in the digital scenario and regarding their communication skills and competencies, so that students do not have a disproportionate education in relation to other communication areas. In Brazil, all Public Relations courses are bachelor's degrees. In Argentina, the situation is different, as we shall see in the following session.

Public Relations in Argentina

According to Ferrari (2004, p. 6), Public Relations in Argentina have emerged "[...] in the colonial times, when the first 'lobbyists,' against the Spanish trusteeship, were members of the first governing body of 1810." However, the author states that, officially, the birth of the function occurred only in the mid-twentieth century.

In 1930, Galicia Bank, Lever Brothers (now Unilever), Shell, Siemens, Swift Armour, Banco Rio de la Plata, Ericsson, Colgate Palmolive, Astra, Bayer, Agfa-Gevaert, Price Waterhouse, Goodyear, Citibank, Kodak, Deloitte & Touche, Dun & Brandstreet, Esso, Ford, IBM, Duperial, Cyanamid, and Bank of Boston were already established in Argentina (Ferrari, 2004, p. 6).

Despite the presence of big companies, where professionals performed the Public Relations function, until the early 1960s the position was usually occupied by journalists in Argentina. This happened because, until then, there was no formal academic education in the field.

With the arrival of Frondizi as President in 1958, and the insertion of his developmental policy of opening up to foreign capital, Argentina's economy took another dimension. Multinational companies that already existed in the country began to grow in volume, especially railcars and oil companies. At that time, the country began

making contact with what was going on abroad, including in the business communication framework. Other important dates of the period are also mentioned by Ferrari (2004, p. 9):

In 1958, the Argentine Association of Public Relations was created by Argentinean professionals and foreigners who worked in public relations at the time. In 1961, the Argentine Circle of Public Relations Professionals was founded. In 1962, the Circle opened its first school of public relations, which offered vocational, non-university education. The first students would be entering the job market only in the late 1960s.

In 1962, a vocational course at the School of Public Relations was opened. According to Kemp (2014), in 1964, the *Universidad Argentina de la Empresa* opened the first Public Relations course that issued the University title approved by the Ministry of Education. In 1968, the Public Relations course at the *Universidad Argentina John F. Kennedy* was inaugurated. In 1972, training in the area was created by *Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora* and the *Universidad de Morón* also established its course.

In the political scenario, the 1970s were turbulent in Argentina, with Perón's short second period, followed by his wife's, Isabelita. Then, with the arrival of the new military government and the closing of the Congress, the country took other directions. According to Ferrari (2004, p. 10):

The companies needed to communicate through almost personalized managements with public authorities that had great power. Thus, with the presence of a strong State, public relations included 80% of government relations. In addition, the communication in companies suffered a tremendous budget cutback. Along with this situation, multinational companies established in the country had its officers kidnapped by guerrilla groups and, also, due to the Falklands War.

Between the decades of 1960 and 1980, the nationalist sentiment arose in Argentina against the North-American force. Governments systematically fostered nationalism, which also served to justify the white elephant into which the State had been converted. The multinational companies maintained their numbers for decades. Until the mid-1980s, the local papers did not dedicate a space for business news. Besides not having economic supplements, the section aimed to the theme was occupied by issues regarding the government economic policy and macroeconomics. In view of this, the high demand from the students who enrolled in Public Relations in the 1970s took the universities by surprise.

In the late 1980s, the process was identical to the Brazilian one, in the sense that there was more communication and an increased need for this sector, as Ferrari explains (2004, p. 10): "In the private area, the outsourcing era had started [...] and in the early 1990s, the privatization

of state-owned enterprises and its consequent rationalization.” These factors boosted the profession in Argentina.

In the 2000s, the field grew due to the creation of several communication agencies, among them, Edelman Argentina, one of the leaders in corporate communications in the world. In relation to the areas of greatest expertise in Public Relations, the country's most developed ones were those of press relations, followed by financial communications, strategic planning, crisis management and event organization, in addition to ceremonial and protocol, services that are also very widespread in the country.

In Argentina, 47 Public Relations courses⁵ are in operation today, being 27 of undergraduate level and 20 of *pregrado* (which equals, in Brazil, to a vocational course). Despite this, the profession has not been regulated yet.

Curriculum Guidelines for Public Relations in Argentina

In Argentina, the Resolution No. 6/96 establishes a minimum course load of 2,600 hours for undergraduate courses in the country. In relation to the minimum contents for higher education, careers are divided into two types, listed in Law No. 24521 (Argentina, 1995), in its articles 42 and 43. Some areas are regulated by the government, while others are not. The latter ones, to which Public Relations belong, do not have minimum contents. Therefore, the course descriptions of this area depend on each University.

As to the nomenclature, undergraduate courses are called: *teaching degree in public and institutional relations*. In vocational courses (*pregrado*), however, *public relations analyst* is predominant.

In the following section we provide details about the Uruguayan higher education dedicated to the Public Relations field.

Public Relations in Uruguay

Public Relation activities in Uruguay formally emerged in the government sector, in the 1950s, with the creation of a specialized department in the Armed Forces. In the 1960s, the state-owned company ANCAP (National Administration of Fuels, Alcohol, and Portland) was a pioneer, after establishing a Department of Public Relations.

In Uruguay, the entities of the category also had a decisive role in the development of Public Relations. “[...] Radeck Balcárcel, Public Relations manager of ANCAP and undersecretary of the newspaper *El País* at the time, encouraged the creation of the *Asociación Uruguaya de Relaciones Públicas* (AURP)” (Ferrari, 2004, p. 13). The Association, established on September 19, 1962, highlights in its bylaws three key goals:

- a) developing and consolidating the public relations reported in the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, with the character of expertise geared to the public good and for

a harmonious coexistence with all sectors of society; b) promoting the exchange of knowledge, techniques among the members and among the entities in the country and abroad; c) defending the public relations activity, raising it to the category of profession in the country (Ferrari, 2004, p. 13).

Ferrari (2004, p. 14) also highlights the creation of the first courses of the field in Uruguay:

In 1966, the first courses of PR began, sponsored by AURP. The courses were taught by the Argentinean lawyer and Public Relations professional Carlos Panisello La Moglie. In addition, Román Perez Senac began the course of Agricultural Public Relations. Subsequently, the Uruguayan Institute for Public Relations was created where, for several years, specialized courses that shaped a generation of professionals in the field were offered.

Since 1968 and throughout the 1970s, AURP began to offer National Days, presenting itself at inter-American events. In 1981, the association sponsored courses in vocational level with the Center for Studies and Qualification from Uruguay and, in 1983, it was responsible for organizing the first World Meeting of Public Relations Teachers (Ferrari, 2004).

In the 1980s, the courses were reorganized by AURP, being divided into three levels: vocational (one year), Public Relations consultant (two years) and manager (three years). AURP, in such a way, formally contributed to the training of the area, with a decisive response by the students of Public Relations, which yearned for knowledge that could be applied in their professional activities. The courses promoted by the entity spread over Uruguay, covering 20 cities. In this scenario, local entities were established, all endorsed by AURP (Ferrari, 2004). According to Ferrari (2004, p. 14), in the 2000s:

[...] companies that recognize the importance of public relations are advised by international specialized agencies; also, in all public offices, ministries and even in Presidency there are people qualified by AURP. According to Public Relations professionals, the concept of public relations activity is more related to protocol and social events than to the administration or to the planning of business and institutional communication.

Presently, it is possible to have a teaching degree in Social Communication, not Public Relations specifically, at undergraduate level in four educational institutions in the country: *Universidad ORT*, *Universidad Católica del Uruguay*, *Universidad de Montevideo* and *Universidad de la República*. The University Business offers a master's degree in *Corporate Communications* and *Public Relations*.

In Uruguay, University courses have a duration of four years. There are also universities that offer one- and two-year options, such as the *Universidade de la Empresa*, with the *Public Relations Analyst*

one-year long course, and the *Universidad ORT*, with the two-year long courses of *Analyst of Corporate Communications* and *Public Relations*, and the two-year long Vocational Course of Public Relations and Event Management.

The *Universidad del Trabajo del Uruguay* offers vocational training and has a two-year course, granting the title of Social Communication Technician. Vocational institutes, on the other hand, generally offer one-year courses.

Curriculum Guidelines for Public Relations in Uruguay

In Uruguay, Decree No. 104/14 (Uruguay, 2014) grants recognition to Universities and to institutes on the several courses offered, only considering the minimum course load of 2,200 hours. Concerning curriculum or content guidelines, there is no guidelines on the part of the Uruguayan Ministry of Education, that is, each institution has autonomy regarding the courses offered.

According to the President of AURP, Juan Pablo Topalian (2015)⁶, the country has:

[...] a professional registry. Considering the data of members from our organization, those involved in professional updating courses and seminars, and the number of university graduates, I venture to estimate that there are more than a thousand professionals working in our country.

The request for a title to exercise the profession in the country is quite recent, since the official graduate and vocational courses are more than 15 years old. Today, it is common the requirement of training in one of these courses to search for vacancies in the world of work. AURP is working on the development of a legislation for Public Relations and a professional record, however, there is still no date for promulgation.

Brief Comparative Analysis between the Guidelines of the three Countries

As seen in this article, in Brazil, the DCNs for Public Relations were published in 2013. In Argentina and in Uruguay, there are no specific documents for the field, only a broad legislation related to the guidelines for higher education. In both countries, the courses and institutions have autonomy in relation to the syllabus content.

In this part of the discussion, Franco and Bittar's vision confirms the importance of Higher Education Policies (2006, p. 166):

[...] Higher Education policies define the academic territories, practices and signs, recognized by the State and by society; they must always have as reference the public mission of Higher Education for the political formation of citizens, Culture, Science & Technology, sustainable development, national sovereignty and social justice, as well

as the growing popular demand for right to Education, including higher education.

In view of this and based on the content exposed here, Chart 1, below, shows a comparative synthesis of the three countries, pointing out the main differences in relation to higher education in Public Relations in the current scenario, digital development followed by a more detailed explanation on the information provided in the chart. Only the training referring specifically to the field of Public Relations and not to Social Communication are described.

Chart 1 – Comparison of the Guidelines/Curriculum Guidelines for Public Relations between Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay

ASPECTS ANALYZED	BRAZIL	ARGENTINA	URUGUAY
<i>Public Relations profile</i>	One reference (Art. 4th/Res. No. 2/2013)	Does not have	Does not have
<i>Specific skills for the digital scenario</i>	Two references (Public Relations training/Res. No. 2/2013)	Does not have	Does not have
<i>Minimum course load</i>	3,200 hours	2,600 hours	2,200 hours
<i>Internship</i>	Mandatory	Not mandatory	Not mandatory
<i>Structure</i>	Four areas: (1) General training; (2) Communication training; (3) Public Relations training; (4) Additional training.	Educational institutions/courses have the autonomy to create the content.	The courses have autonomy, there is no guideline to guide the content.
<i>Most often terminology used in the academic education</i>	Public Relations	Public Relations Analyst Teaching degree in Public and Institutional Relations	Public Relations Analyst Corporate Communications and Public Relations Analyst Technician in Public Relations and event management

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the graduate profile, the Brazilian guidelines have the following provision:

The graduate of the Public Relations course must be an ethical, humanist, critical and reflective professional, with the following personal characteristics: I – accurate conjunctural analysis capacity, dealing with quantitative

and qualitatively statistical, economic and social data, transforming them into indicators for communication policy-making. II – perception of socio-cultural dynamics, aiming to interpret the demands from various types of organizations and from the public; III – understanding of contemporary problems caused by globalization, of *information* and communication *technologies* and sustainable development required for the planning of public relations; IV – understanding of the technical and scientific field of communication, able to establish a systemic vision of Public Relations policies and strategies; V – leadership, negotiation, decision-making and entrepreneurial vision (Brasil, 2013, p. 2, emphasis added).

As there are no guidelines in Argentina and in Uruguay, there is no description of the graduate profile in both countries. On the competencies of the graduate concerning the digital scenario, as mentioned earlier, the Brazilian guidelines have two references in the Public Relations axis – *crisis management*, *institutional writing*, *production of printed, audiovisual and digital media*, and *network communication*. Just like in the profile issue, this item description was not found for Argentina and Uruguay.

Regarding the study period, in Brazil, the minimum course load increased in 500 hours, following the 2013 guidelines, from 2,700 to 3,200. In Argentina, the minimum course load required is 2,600 hours. In Uruguay, the minimum course load for undergraduate courses is 2,200 hours.

As to the internship, this item is mandatory only in Brazil, being added to recent guidelines. In the other two countries analyzed, the requirement of this activity is not listed as one of the training elements.

Concerning the structure, as already reported in Brazil's descriptive section, the country has four specific training areas. In Argentina and Uruguay, the course description is still flexible, with more autonomy in curriculum organization, however, it has no guidelines that orient studies in Public Relations.

Finally, it is still interesting to consider the terminology of the area, an issue discussed earlier in the article. In Brazil, although there are some exceptions, the training is known as Public Relations, justified by its regulation, in 1967. In Argentina and Uruguay, other classifications appear, as shown in the descriptive sessions of both countries, especially Public Relations Analyst and Teaching degree in Public Relations.

Final Considerations

Digital technology has many amenities, but also represents a challenge for the undergraduate courses – particularly in the field of Public Relations, subject of this discussion. In this scenario, the society undergoes many transformations, which are not always ac-

accompanied by higher education institutions. In her study, Terra (2006, p. 66) described the “[...] birth of the digital organizational communication and digital public relations, both arising from the phenomenon of digitalization and the evolution of society.” That is, for a decade, the digital scenario has been part, in an incisive way, of Public Relations work and has been seen as an object of study.

In the interim, as Castells reinforces (2003, p. 212), the educational system, as a whole, in the world, “[...] is, for all I know, unfortunately unsuitable for the use of this new learning method [...] It lacks teachers able to use it efficiently, in addition to pedagogy and institutional organization to stimulate new learning skills.”

Higher education is the one that prepares or should prepare the professional for the world of work. Therefore, what is reflected on this article, comparing the Brazilian reality with those from other countries regionally close, is the issue that Higher Education in Public Relations has to incorporate, more substantially, the field into the digital domain, so this becomes a perspective of business and expansion to the professional life. However, according to Carrasco (2013, p. 46), we have seen that:

The university faces a major dilemma in relation to the conjugation of its strictly academic purposes with the requirements from the society. This is due to the fact that, despite the pressure, associated with the social pertinence of its tasks, according to the characteristics of its context and its time, being at the service of its social, political and economic setting of better positioning its graduates in the professional world, cannot turn in a mere toll in favor for the economy and the market demands. The knowledge that generates research and training of professionals is inseparable from its existence. Therefore, the university must deepen in what is constituent of itself.

Corroborating this view, in terms of guidelines, we observed, throughout this article, that, among the three countries, only Brazil has specific documentation for Public Relations, and only since 2013. Previously, the field integrated the broader guidelines for the field of social communication. In the case of Public Relations, the MEC documents that determine its curricula are from 1969, 1978 and 1984, in addition to the National Curriculum Guidelines from 2002 and 2013, which were specific.

For Moura (2002, p. 245), “[...] the guidelines are paths, recommendations for educational institutions.” These are guidelines for higher education, for the curricular planning of undergraduate courses specified by the National Education Council (CNE). Law No. 9394/96 – National Educational Bases and Guidelines Law (LDB) – establishes, in the item II of Art. 53, when referring to the University autonomy, that it is up to the University: “[...] to set the curricula of its courses and programs, in compliance with the relevant general guidelines” (Brasil, 1996, art. 53). This is an instrument that makes it possible to define the educational activity of the institution in amplitude, i.e. gives freedom to courses re-

garding the field. The presence of the digital scenario is little described, going against current changes in the world of work.

In view of the data exposed, it is understood that the DCNs can be deployed in an avant-garde mode, considering the local and regional needs in PPCs, with more references to the digital scenario. This involves a system that integrates what is expected from the professionals, graduate profile, their skills and abilities, in accordance with relevant legislation and professional opportunities.

In Brazil, although there is specific documentation, there are also gaps, both in the curricular structure and in the participation of interested institutions, especially in the multimedia scenario that involves our society. In the neighboring countries analyzed here, Argentina and Uruguay, one of the main factors that still requires breakthroughs is the structuring of a specific guiding document, stressing the need to broaden discussions about the world of work in Public Relations concerning the digital age.

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Notes

- 1 There are two possible classifications: Public Relations, with hyphen, and Public Relations, without hyphen. The former designates the professional and the latter, the activity. Source: Ordinance No. 116, May 09, 2011, Conferp. Available at: <<http://www.conferp.org.br/?p=2728>>. Access on: 12 May 2017.
- 2 Available at: <goo.gl/dqYZWM>. Access on: 31 Jul. 2017.
- 3 Inep/Mec data indicated that in July 2009 there were 127 accredited on-site courses in the country.
- 4 Available at: <<http://portal.inep.gov.br/censo-da-educacao-superior>>. Access on: 31 Jul. 2017.
- 5 Data from the Ministerio de Educación y Deportes de Argentina. Available at: <<http://titulosoficiales.siu.edu.ar>>. Access on: 31 Jul. 2017.
- 6 Excerpt taken from an electronic message sent to the authors, according to the list of references.

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