

National report for Spain

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Contribution to the European report:

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Universities and Disciplines

In Spain there are nearly 70 universities of which 48 are supported with public funds and the other 19 are private. Over the last three decades there has been an increase in the number of higher education institutions. In the eighties some public institutions were set up in Autonomous Communities where there had previously been none. During the nineties – with the right wing Government - the number of private universities increased again. These universities differ greatly in size. One out of four has between 15,000 and 20,000 students whereas some have 40,000 to 50,000. Media studies and communication studies do not exist as a discipline in Spain. Traditionally, Sociology and Social Psychology Departments have been more involved in empirical research on audience behaviour, while Communication and Journalism Departments have been more focused on analysing the structure of the media and media content. Theoretical research on the Internet has been carried out by academics involved in Philosophy, whose reflections have dealt more with the general effects of the Internet on society and everyday life. IT and society and New Media do not exist as an academic discipline. Informatics, is directly related to engineering.

National Data Collected

The Observatory of Telecommunications and the Information Society and the public institution, Red.es (www.red.es), dependent on the Spanish Ministry of Industry, set up a permanent panel consisting of households whose members, all aged over 10, are studied in their use of the Internet. In total the habits of nearly 7000 users are monitored. One of the aims of this panel consists of analysing the evolution of the uses of the Internet in Spain. Whilst this study collects data on all household members aged over 10, it gives specific information about people in the following age groups: 10 to 14 and 15 to 24. Another aim of the Observatory is the promotion of the use of ICTs by providing services and contents to the education community. It also provides broad band infrastructures and security measures in order to promote trust in ICTs and in the services they can provide.

The national Statistics Institution (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) annually collects data on the Internet, but it does not pay specific attention to studying children's habits. The data gathered by this institution has to do with adult behaviour or at least, the behaviour of those over 15 years of age.

Institutional processes in applying to conduct research

Research applications have to be approved by an academic committee which evaluates the interest of the project, the consistency between the methodology and the main objectives and, also, the theoretical framework of the projects. Even though there is no specific ethics committee, ethical questions are always considered to be important as there is a great interest in protecting vulnerable groups such as children.

All research proposals have to be checked by the departments before they can proceed, but this is more of a formal requirement.

Pressures to conduct research

There is now an increasing pressure from the universities themselves on their employees to do research. The researchers do both academic research and collaborate with industry. Moreover, industry itself is also asking academics to collaborate with it as it considers academics to generally enjoy more social prestige than that of private research institutions. Ministries do not normally demand specific types of research but they tend to give much more funding to technological projects than to those related to social sciences.

Factors influencing the orientation of research

It has not been very common for universities to approach industries with suggestions for research projects until now. But, as there is a limit to the number of academic projects researchers can apply for, sometimes the only possibility of continuing work on a project is through the collaboration of an industry interested in the project. The *Plan Nacional de I+D+I* (the National Plan of Investment + Development+ Innovation) in the Spanish system of sciences and technology establishes the mid-term targets and priorities of research policy, development and innovation. These plans started in 1988 for periods of 4 years, and the last one was approved for the period 2008-2011. This plan favours research being carried out in five strategic fields, defines objectives, decides upon priorities and accepts budget obligations for the duration of each Plan. The five fields are:

- Health
- Biotechnology
- Energy and Climate Change
- Telecommunications and Information Society
- Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, New Materials and New Industrial processes.

The National Strategy of Science and Technology and the National Plan of Investment and Development have six instrumental lines to achieve the goals stated by both public organisms:

- Instrumental line for human resources: national programme for training, mobility and employment of human resources.
- Instrumental line for projects of Investment + Development+ Innovation: national programme for projects of fundamental research, applied research, experimental development and innovation.
- National programme for institutional enhancement.
- National programme for the development of scientific and technological infrastructures.
- National programme for technological application, evaluation and promotion of corporations with a technological base.
- Instrumental line for the articulation and internationalization of the system: national programme of networks, of public-private cooperation and the internationalization of I+D.

Within the instrumental line for projects of Investment + Development+ Innovation there is a special programme called the “national programme of projects of fundamental research”, which is oriented towards institutions and corporations from both the public and private sectors: public research organisms, universities, hospitals, technological centres, etc.

Moreover, Spanish Universities have three different models to support scientific research. One provides help for the initiation or re-incorporation of research, the second supports consolidated research groups, and the third supports projects developed by the University and Corporations together. In this last case, obviously the Corporation and the University must agree about the common interest of the research, and the corporation must grant at least 15% of the funds (cash, not only know-how or knowledge) for the project.

National Research Traditions

The main pattern of research in Spanish universities is still quantitative. Since the eighties, there has been an increasing interest in empirical research supported by an explosion of research techniques and new technological devices – personal computers and data analysis programmes - which facilitate the knowledge and use of quantitative techniques

Since then, the number of Sociology and Communication Faculties has increased and there are several private and public institutions that conduct social research. Quantitative research is far more common than is qualitative. For example, there is tremendous emphasis placed on the requirement for specific percentages in virtually all research related to the media (audience studies or behaviour for instance). In fact, the limited number of qualitative research projects undertaken in these fields are almost always academic. When commercial research of this nature is undertaken, the results are usually for internal use only. There is also a well established tradition of qualitative research, but this is not so widespread as the quantitative. After the Spanish Civil War a great number of sociologists had to leave Spain so there was not much empirical research done and it was mainly carried out by private consultants.

During the seventies, there was some sort of rebellion against empirical research in Southern European countries and things such as data, surveys, samples, were looked upon as reductionist, empirical, functionalist techniques and were regarded as worthless. Meanwhile, an important group of qualitative methodologists was formed in Spain who had strong connections with the French methodologists. In fact, the limited number of qualitative research projects undertaken in Social Sciences are almost always academic.

We could speak about the start of communication research occurring at the beginning of the seventies when communication became a new field of research. Before that, there was a School of Journalism and a School of Film-making, which had been created by the Dictatorship to control the new generations of journalists and filmmakers, but the Schools themselves were not very interested in radio and television research as they censored and controlled these two medias. The beginning of mass media studies originated in the different fields of Humanities and Social Sciences (History, Law, Sociology, Psychology, Economy, and Political Sciences) close to the new Faculties of Information and Communication, created in 1972 (Madrid, Barcelona and Pamplona). Some years later, in the eighties, when Democracy had already come to Spain, Information and Communication Sciences gained the status of a new and interdisciplinary field (In France, it was in 1975, when the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) recognised this field) and from then on there has been a considerable improvement in communication research.

In the nineties and in the first years of this new century, there has been a spectacular increase in communication studies; new Faculties, research groups, specialist journals, doctoral programmes, etc started. There was a tradition of research from History and Telecommunications Engineering Departments about the means of interpersonal communication: mail, telegraph and telephone, but this always related to the political and social influence of those means and their technological evolution. One example of this is that in the Library of “Museo Postal y Telegráfico” of Madrid where there are more than 3,500 books about these media. In 1993 a Conference was held about “The communications between Europe and America, 1500-1993” which had great importance in the development of this research field and led to the creation of a data base about the History of Communications in the Spanish Centre of Documentation. Nevertheless, this research about telephones was not from the point of view of their being an interpersonal means of communication and research from this angle really only began when the second generation (GSM and GPRS) or even 3G of cell phones were developed, so, in the last ten years. For instance, in ZER, the main journal of communication in Spain (the only journal with the highest CINDOC rating), three papers have been published to date: one, about SMS, WAP and MMS technologies applied to journalism (nº16, 2004), a second one about audiovisuals on the 3G mobile phone (nº19, 2005) and the third one about mobile telephony (Nº22, 2007). In this century there have also been some quantitative studies about mobile phones, some of them related to adolescents.

The first empirical study related to the Internet in Spain was carried out in 1999 and it studied the effects of audiovisual contents on adolescents. In fact, this study tried to study the penetration of audio-visual media into adolescent cultures in Spain between 1999 and 2003. This research analysed the way audio-visual technologies, multimedia and other technologies influenced young people's everyday life and life styles in general. Data collection was carried out in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. Three different samples, two years apart, provided evidence of how some aspects of audio-visual media use and interpersonal relationships were changing very rapidly.

Sources of Funding for Research

Most research projects (about 90%) are financially supported by public institutions such as the Education and Science Ministry or public universities. Private universities do little research, and what they do is usually financed by enterprises interested in obtaining results they had foreseen. Usually, there is a public competition for research projects every year and the most interesting of these projects are given financial support.

Since 1999, the Telefónica Foundation, supported by *Telefónica* the main telecommunications operator in the Spanish-speaking world, publishes a study on the Information Society in Spain. This study collects data on the use of ICTs in order to know the level of development of the Information Society in this country. It also publishes a Good Practice Guide on the use of technologies in order to promote ICTs among the public, enterprises and the administration. Finally, the study gives some recommendations for both technological development and the use of the services provided by Telefónica.

The BBVA Foundation, supported by the Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria, has recently published a report on the impact of ICTs in the Spanish economic development. This report analyses the data on the use of ICTs in order to highlight its importance in the different economic sectors.

As far as national research on children and the Internet is concerned, the main funder is a Public Institution, either the National Government or a Regional Government, as these bodies have funded 5 out of 10 studies. There are also two studies funded by an academic institution and another one funded by a commercial firm. These data clearly shows that there is a lack of interest in the academic world in the use of the Internet, whereas public institutions are mainly interested in promoting the use of ICTs among the Spanish in order not to be left behind in comparison with other European countries.

As far as multi-country studies are concerned, nearly all have been funded by the European Union (or the Government), which has demonstrated itself to be more aware of the risks children may run while surfing the Internet. There are also three studies funded by commercial firms and one by an academic institution. The funding pattern clearly shows the interest of the EU in collecting data on the use of ICTs and its awareness of the safety problems users may encounter.

Political initiatives influencing research

The current Spanish Constitution of 1978 guarantees the freedom of expression for every means of communication, including the Internet (art.20). This freedom is only limited by the requirement to respect the rights of others, which is also recognised in the Constitution, especially the right to honour, privacy and image¹, and the protection of children and young people. It is only possible to confiscate newspapers, books, records and other means of information with a court order. The most common prosecutions in Spain related to free speech are crimes of libel and offence, committed by press, radio, TV or the Internet.

The law which has the biggest influence on the regulation of the contents on the Internet is the Criminal Code, which was reformed in 2003 and punishes child pornography with a jail sentence of one to three years. After this reform, for the first time in Spain, the possession of child pornography (pornographic material such as photos, videos, digital images, electronic

files, etc., in which someone under the age of eighteen has been involved) was considered as a crime and punished with a prison sentence.

The Spanish Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Education Ministries of the 17 Autonomous Communities have made a great effort to promote the use of the Internet in schools. Computer studies feature on both Primary and Secondary School syllabi, and children are taught specifically about ICTs. In the last five years, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Education Ministries of the 17 Autonomous Communities have invested more than 700 million euros in different ICT programmes and 2.1 million students, 200,000 teachers and 7,500 schools have taken advantage of these programmes. One of the most important educational projects is *EducaRed* (www.educared.net), created in 1998, and in less than ten years it has become the main project from which the Spanish and the Latin American communities have benefited. This project is supported by *Telefónica*, the main telecommunications operator in the Spanish-speaking world, with the participation of the main educational institutions of Spain. *EducaRed* aims to promote innovation in teaching through the use of ICT, especially Internet, from Primary School to the end of Secondary education. In 2006, more than 24,000 schools participated in *EducaRed*'s projects and initiatives, either online, through direct contact or both, and last year its web pages were visited by more than 40 million people.

Fundación Telefónica and Fundación Encuentro have recently set up the Centro Educared for Advanced Education. The main aim of this project is to train teachers to manage the new digital environment, and Educared has been trying to develop this training for a few years now. Even though the Government has made a big effort to promote the use of the Internet in the last ten years, it has not organised campaigns to raise awareness. The institution which is most concerned about children and the Internet is, without doubt, *Protégeles* which is also the Spanish hotline within the Safer Internet Plus Programme. In fact, this institution has also conducted some research on children and their safety on the Internet.

The Influence of media coverage, events and lobbies on research

There is no evidence about media coverage influencing studies or research. Some of the specific fieldwork carried out in Spain on children and safety on the Internet was carried out by *Protégeles* and the Minors' Ombudsman. In fact, it was these studies that paid most attention to the risks faced by children and included the following topics: exposure to illegal content and to harmful or offensive content, contact with strangers, encountering sexual/violent/racist /hate material, giving out personal information, invasions of privacy, cyber bullying, downloading illegal content, and cyber stalking or harassment.

Particular debates and concerns about children

There is some public concern about TV advertising directed at children that tries to persuade them to eat some industrially produced food products that are very rich in salt, sugar and fat. The Government is concerned because in the last decade the number of obese children has increased in Spain and has launched a plan (NAOS) in order to make people aware of the importance of healthy eating and exercise for wellbeing. There is some public concern about protecting children but there is no interest in promoting their participation in civil life. Children are not regarded as particularly vulnerable in Spain. Parents tend to be more protective nowadays, as they have fewer children and new technological devices, such as mobile phones, give them the chance to protect their children and control their whereabouts. Spanish children are still allowed to spend a lot of time playing in public spaces in comparison to what occurs in many other European countries.

Case Studies

Even though researchers were already interested in studying the Internet, being members of the Eu Kids Online network made our interest in the issue grow, especially on the uses and effects the Internet may have on children and minors in general. We decided to employ a qualitative research perspective for two reasons. First, there was a lack of this type of

research in this field and, second, there was a need to adapt to the available resources at the time when the research was designed¹.

From a methodological perspective it seemed more suitable to approach the habits of young people with an *open* mind, making it possible to detect Internet behaviour and uses that would not have been foreseen when designing the project. This aspect turned out to be especially interesting in that the number of users and different uses of the Internet was –and still is– undergoing a phase of expansion.

In this respect, the aim of this research was fundamentally *exploratory* insofar as it tried to identify different uses, habits, perceptions of risk and patterns of parental control. This will not prevent subsequent quantitative research from trying to determine how different patterns detected are distributed amongst Spanish youth.

On the other hand, our interest in carrying out qualitative research grew due to the fact that practically all of the research undertaken concerning Internet use in Spain had had a quantitative character². For this reason, qualitative research contributes to widening the perspective on the object of study.

We decided that the minimum age for our study would be 12 as prior to this age many children do not have the necessary level of oral expression to be able to fully participate in focus groups and, moreover, data show that 12 is the age at which minors begin to use the Internet with greater frequency and for longer periods of time. The fact that 17 was the upper age limit is obvious as adults were not part of our study.

As stated previously, we used focus groups to obtain the data in our research. The objective of this type of group is to produce an “open atmosphere” in which the participants express themselves freely and do not feel limited to answering extremely specific and structured questions. Therefore, what led to the particular questions of our study being asked was our attempt to achieve the open atmosphere mentioned above.

The funding came from the University of the Basque Country. We applied for a project to conduct research about minors and the Internet and received the financial support to cover the fieldwork in six different Autonomous Communities all over Spain. Naturally, we frequently apply to our own institution for the funding of our research projects and in this case, our university clearly considered the project worthwhile.

¹ There is a specific law to protect these rights called “Ley orgánica sobre protección civil al derecho al honor a la intimidad personal y familiar y a la propia imagen” (Organic law governing the civil protection of the right of honour, personal and family privacy and own’s image”, Ley orgánica 1/1982, 5th May.

¹ The research was set out in two phases: in the first we envisaged using a qualitative methodology, and in the second a quantitative one. The project budget from the University of the Basque Country UPV05/63 made it possible to cover the first, qualitative stage; further funding in the future will enable us to complete the quantitative phase.

² One of the few qualitative works in Spain was carried out by the Directorate-General Information Society and Media, in April 2007, which was undertaken in 29 European countries (the 27 countries of the Community plus Norway and Iceland), including Spain, with the title “*Safer Internet For Children. Qualitative Study in 29 European Countries*”. The age groups were 9-10 years and 12-14 years and it was centred on the use of Internet and the mobile phone. In the Spanish case the four focus groups were held in Madrid.