






## COMPETENCIAS Y FORMACIÓN ÉTICA DE LOS PROFESIONALES DE LA COMUNICACIÓN CORPORATIVA EN CONTEXTOS INTERCULTURALES

## COMPETENCES AND ETHICAL TRAINING OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONALS IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS

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### RESUMEN

Este trabajo propone una revisión de la necesidad de fomentar el estudio de la Ética y de la Deontología Profesional aplicada al ámbito de la Comunicación Estratégica e Institucional, sobre todo al mundo de las Relaciones Públicas y los Gabinetes de Comunicación. La revolución digital, que ha llegado para quedarse, plantea nuevos retos que el profesional de la comunicación estratégica debe afrontar: el uso de la información de los clientes, la privacidad y publicidad de las redes sociales, el nuevo derecho al olvido en la red, nuevos delitos a la intimidad y el honor a través de las redes sociales, la transparencia y acceso a la información tan de moda como herramientas para el control del poder político. A todo ello, hay que añadir el contexto de un nuevo escenario económico, social y cultural. Vivimos en una sociedad multicultural con conflictos étnicos, culturales y religiosos, permanentemente. En la actualidad, la interculturalidad se ha convertido en una realidad que no puede ser ignorada. Los futuros profesionales de la Comunicación necesitan una formación específica en valores universales que les capaciten para un mundo contemporáneo en el que cada vez tiene más sentido el término globalización. La ética adaptada a la interculturalidad es una competencia que debe desarrollarse de forma transversal en diferentes materias de las impartidas en los estudios, grados y especializaciones de las Ciencias de la Comunicación.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** ética y deontología profesional; comunicación estratégica; gabinetes de comunicación; relaciones públicas; multiculturalidad.

### ABSTRACT

This article proposes the necessary review of promoting the study of Ethics and Professional Deontology applied to the field of Strategic and Institutional

Communication, especially to the world of Public Relations and Corporate Communication. The digital revolution, which has arrived to stay, poses new challenges that the professional of strategic communication must face, including the use of private information, the social media, the new right to be forgotten on the web, new crimes to privacy and honor through digital media, transparency and access to information. Also, we must add the context of a new economic, social and cultural scenario. We live in a multicultural society with ethnic, cultural and religious conflicts, permanently. At present, multiculturalism has become a reality that cannot be ignored. The upcoming professionals of Communication need a specific education based on universal values that enable them to find their place in a contemporary world in which the term globalization makes more and more sense. Ethics adapted to multiculturalism is a competence that must be developed transversally in different subjects from those taught in the studies, degrees and specializations of Communication Studies.

**KEYWORDS:** ethics and professional deontology; strategic communication; press office; public relations, multiculturalism.

#### Cómo citar el artículo:

**Pablo Martín-Antoranz, Francisco Cabezuelo-Lorenzo y Ángel Bartolomé-Muñoz-de-Luna (2019).** Competencias y formación ética de los profesionales de la comunicación corporativa en contextos interculturales. *Revista de Ciencias de la Comunicación e Información*, 24(1), 59-72.  
doi: [http://doi.org/10.35742/rcci.2019.24\(1\).59-72](http://doi.org/10.35742/rcci.2019.24(1).59-72)

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

What is legal is not always ethical, and what is ethical is not always legal. Therefore, the discussion about the role of ethics within the field of Public Relations is a topic that has been debated and continues to be debated (Stortini, 2011). The current economic, political, and social crisis in Western societies is, according to many analysts, the result of a significant crisis of ethics and professional ethics in various areas of activity in our digital society, ranging from the business world to the realm of political institutions and the media. Ethics affects corporate communication, that is, identity, image, and reputation. Our "identity" comes from what society gives us, and what surrounds us. The philosopher asserts that we are products of our environment. Therefore, our traditions play a significant role in ethics: the customs and habits that our society has acquired over time. Despite the interest in this issue, from the perspective of communication in organizations, research in this field is not extensive, but it is quite interesting, recent, and promising. Almost all of them are based on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) studies.

This work aims to emphasize not only the good practices of organizations from the perspective of CSR but also the professional role of communication directors in different organizations, whether they are public or private. To achieve this, the study of successful models from major North American professional communication associations is proposed. "Ethics is established by what the company does, not by what the company says. It is necessary to act in a way that serves and is seen to serve the public welfare," says Sam Black (1994, p. 196).

The inclusion of communication ethics in the era of interculturality implies a transformation in didactic approaches and requires an effort of pedagogical adaptation and planning that was previously distant from university teaching, in which interculturality is present. Future communication professionals need specific training in universal values that equip them for a contemporary world where the term globalization is increasingly relevant. Ethics adapted to interculturality is a competence that must be developed transversally in different subjects taught in Communication Sciences studies, degrees, and specializations.

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

When establishing the objectives, it is necessary to make it clear from the beginning that, like many philosophical and ethical approaches, this work does not aim to provide a material or quantitative study of reality. It could be said that the following words are more concerned with long-term goals than with short-term measurable and quantifiable objectives. The purpose of this work is to encourage researchers in the field of corporate communication to reflect on certain points and issues that often go unnoticed: the ethical and deontological aspects of professional practice in corporate communication. Recent scandals such as the Panama Papers, Bankia's black-card scandal, various political scandals of all kinds, the Syrian refugee crisis, or the Volkswagen emissions case, for example, highlight the value of ethical foundations. The authors of this work, based on our professional, research, and teaching experience, pose some research questions and propose as an argumentative line an initial review of the importance of ethics and its justification in the multifaceted communicative activity of organizations. Subsequently, we will attempt to respond to and raise new questions regarding these research issues. Can we consider the profession or occupation of communicators in corporate communication as a homogeneous profession like many others in the job market regulated by law? Should professionals be required to have a license or be part of a professional association to practice their work? Is a document accrediting us as communication professionals necessary? Would certain university studies guarantee the professionalism and integrity of men and women working in the sector?

These questions are some of the aspects that our colleagues debate today, especially in the United States and Canada, pioneers in the field of corporate and institutional communication, and which undoubtedly have become professional aspects that should also be discussed in Spain and the rest of Europe. That is the goal pursued and intended to be achieved by this work. It seeks to contribute to the field of corporate communication. These pages also advocate for the implementation of effective and real ethical codes, not just symbolic or ineffective ones. In terms of methodology, this work proposes an initial theoretical approach to the concept and study of corporate communication in today's knowledge society. Subsequently, it denounces the lack of mandatory ethical criteria and demands the omnipresence of ethical and deontological principles in the profession. Likewise, it proposes its own keys for an Ethics of Corporate Communication based on the following premise: if corporate communication is a management tool through which all forms of internal and external communication are consciously used to create a favorable basis for relationships with the stakeholders on which the company depends, the actions of communication professionals must meet the expectations of stakeholders, who cannot feel deceived by the conduct of their counterparts. There is no image without identity because what is communicated cannot be pure design, but rather what truly

transcends and communicates is anchored necessarily in reality. It is true that a brand is a promise, but it must always be a promise based on reality and with well-justified reasons to link the promoted product or service to reality. Any other intervention would be a lie or distortion. Current trends in studies on corporate reputation and social responsibility are based on the good actions and behavior of members of an organization. Finally, in line with the public interest and service, this work proposes the study of North American professional communication organizations and their ethical codes, such as PRSA or IABC, among others, to provide an example from our American colleagues who, in this aspect, once again lead the market and are the true creators of theories on corporate social responsibility and the resurgence of the debate on the need for quality training for future professionals and professional associations, which are still weak in Spain, especially after the economic crisis that ended several initiatives in the field launched a decade ago during times of supposed economic prosperity.

### **3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

A brief approach to the concept and practice of corporate communication in today's digital society is necessary. Corporate communication of an organization and the ethical behavior of its members are distinct but interconnected.

#### **3.1. A NECESSARY REVIEW OF THE CLEAR YET BROAD CONCEPT OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION**

Corporate communication, as understood by Cees B. M. Van Riel (1997, p. 26), is "a management tool through which all forms of internal and external communication are consciously used." This tool is harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible in order to "create a favorable basis for relationships with the publics on which the company depends." This concept of corporate communication, understood as the strategic management of all factors that influence the image of an organization, has summarized in recent years in our country a strategic vision of corporate image whose main objective was to harmonize the communicative and business strategies of companies (Villafañe 2004, 21). This initial conceptual approach to corporate communication already implicitly indicates that an organization, regardless of its type, cannot have a good image among its public and stakeholders solely based on its identity if it is not accompanied by good actions, as communication is not just design.

Every action of the members of a company or institution also communicates. Similarly, it is not difficult to agree with Norberto Mínguez (1999) when he states that the concepts of corporate identity and image are interdependent" and that "there is no image without identity because what is communicated cannot be pure design but must be anchored in reality." It is also not difficult to agree with Mínguez when he points out that corporate image does not exclusively concern the communication department but is a task that affects top management, and its management requires the commitment of different functional areas of the organization and ultimately every employee of the company.

Indeed, a positive image and reputation are not only the result of good communication but also of activities that meet the expectations of an organization's publics.

Although corporate communication is vital today, it is not the only element that contributes to an organization's good reputation. Companies and institutions must effectively and systematically manage all their assets, with particular emphasis on those that cannot be easily recovered once lost. As Mínguez states, "image must be managed at all levels of the organization and in all areas of its activity because the behavior of the company, every act of each of its employees, has an effect on its overall image." We reach another current reality: the era of corporate reputation studies. "Corporate reputation" is understood as the expression of an organization's identity and the recognition of its corporate behavior. According to Justo Villafañe (2004, p. 29), corporate identity is the synthesis of the organization's history, its current business strategy or project, and its corporate culture. From this perspective, for this author, the notion of identity is synonymous with corporate reality, and reputation has "its origin in the reality of the company, more specifically in its history, the credibility of its current business project, and the alignment of its corporate culture with that project." Thus, Villafañe defines reputation as "the crystallization of the corporate image of an entity when it is the result of excellent corporate behavior maintained over time, which gives it a structural character in the eyes of its strategic stakeholders" (Villafañe 2004, p. 2). This corporate communication that aims for a good reputation is not an abstract concept.

### **3.2. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN TODAY'S DIGITAL SOCIETY**

Undoubtedly, it is quite challenging to determine clearly where the current postmodern reality is leading us. In this first quarter of the 21st century, with Donald Trump as the President of the United States, intellectual and political discourses have lost credibility, and our postmodern world is undergoing a process of "atomization" and new populist movements. Thus, it seems that the current ethical considerations in our information and knowledge society are situated between the skepticism of some ancient Greek authors and the healthy Aristotelian pragmatism. Some authors dare to assert that today, most Western citizens doubt those who declare the existence of truth and claim a direct connection to it. The clues seem to point in other directions. In the 20th century, despite significant historical failures, we inherited some positive values, such as those promoted by movements concerned with our relationship with the natural environment. The current tendency is to link the study of human behavior with its environment.

Already in antiquity, Aristotle referred to humans as "political animals" (*zoon politikon*). Human beings are social beings by nature. We need others. We need communication. For Aristotle, our "identity" comes from what society delivers to us, the society in which we live and surround ourselves with. Aristotle asserts that we are products of our environment. Human beings are extraordinarily gregarious. Community life is based on traditions and values that groups pass on to their members. Aristotle proposed that positive attitudes toward others should be encouraged, and ethical behavior will become instinctive, independent of rules or systems. Therefore, our traditions, the customs and habits that our society has acquired over time, greatly influence Ethics.

Earlier philosophers like Plato had already described the existing concern at that time about moral issues in the ancient world, laying the foundations for what we currently

call "ethical analysis." Plato was already aware that we all have our own ideas of what is "good" and what is "bad." Times change, and many authors now claim that the Ethics of Communication is at a crossroads.

Therefore, the question is as follows: Should our ethical principles change in today's information and knowledge society? Does Ethics adapt to the times? Undoubtedly, the values and guiding criteria of our actions must adapt to the times. Our values and criteria are somewhat affected by the rapid spread of knowledge thanks to the new technologies of the current information society. However, this evolution does not mean that everything is constantly changing in the field of Ethics or that these values can be "relativized."

Some authors, such as Enebral Casares (1995), remind us that the criteria within Ethics aim to "regulate the interactions that are taking place in a group by the vitality of its components in the best, most authentic, and sustained way." It is understood, therefore, that there is an axiomatic spirit that will always remain valid in any circumstance. In other words, Ethics has been, is, and will be there to try to improve, make more authentic, sustained, and effective the way interactions take place among the different members of a group.

That is the permanent and always valid foundation of Ethics. Thus, it can be stated that the specific manifestations of that inspiring and fundamental principle of Ethics can and should adapt to the interactions to which it is applied. Enebral Casares (1995) also reminds us that

when humanity was restricted to tribal groups, Ethics within them had expressions appropriate to their level of knowledge and the social complexity of their civilization. However, when these changes, increase, and enrich with new and multiple facets, Ethics must aim to encompass these new aspects in a manner consistent with the knowledge gained about the complexity manifested in coexistence.

Today, we live in a society of information and knowledge, of new technologies, which requires a specific application of Ethics.

Ethics itself is always evolving as it is constantly being developed and put into practice, but that does not mean it is "relativized." In other words, Ethics is evolving, but not the principles that inspire it. It maintains its axiomatic axis of improving, authenticating, and ensuring the sustenance of just and effective interactions. These principles have been, are, and will always be valid, inspiring each of the developments that adapt to new events in which they are applied (Cabezuelo Lorenzo & Pérez Serrano, 2008, p. 10).

Therefore, we cannot say that due to changes in this increasingly complex society, and especially in the interactions that occur within it, Ethics no longer exists or has disappeared. It can never be said that Ethics is in crisis, at least if we understand crisis as the inherent demand of human intelligence to better govern the environment in which it lives. Nowadays, the applications of Ethics have changed. The set of second-order referential criteria, which are more pragmatic and circumscribed to certain perspectives, has changed. These criteria may be in crisis and may require a

drastic renewal or update. Today, the more pragmatic and immediate aspect of Ethics probably could not be understood in another temporal context. The need for ethical principles, as well as professional values, is particularly interesting in the field of applied communication, such as the professional practice of Corporate Communication.

### **3.3. AN ETHICS SPECIFIC TO CORPORATE COMMUNICATION**

Joan Costa speaks of the "language of acts." According to the Catalan author, this corporate language must maintain necessary and obligatory coherence with the rest of the messages that the organization exchanges with its stakeholders. This language of acts is based on conviction, commitment, and self-regulation of all members of the organization. In the case of large organizations, such as giant and omnipresent multinational companies, these stakeholders are primarily composed of shareholders, investors, financial markets in which their shares are traded, and regulatory bodies. We can also include the personnel and their families, considering not only their direct relationship with the company but also their respective social spheres. Of course, customers, consumers, users, and suppliers cannot be overlooked. In these companies, characterized by their complex organization and diverse audiences, communication with each of these segments constitutes a specialty assigned to different areas and departments, but always with decision-making under the common umbrella of Ethics and Professional Communication Deontology (Cabezuelo Lorenzo & Pérez Serrano, 2008, p. 12).

Sam Black (1993, p. 195) states that "the statement of objectives of a company should provide guidance on what type of ethical behavior is mandatory within the organization" and that "the concept of ethical and moral values in a company must come from the top and be reflected down to the lowest level." Undoubtedly, the issue of Ethics in communication is a matter of vital importance for communication professionals who work day by day to achieve the best acceptance and support from the public for their organizations.

Moral and ethical values are not always absolute. Furthermore, their articulation within any company or institution will be related at all times to the corporate culture of the organization, but not to the campaigns or various strategies and tactics aimed at achieving short-term objectives.

Melvin Sharpe, a professor at Ball State University of Indiana, formulates the following guidelines for ethical and professional communication:

- a) Communicate honestly in order to gain credibility.
- b) Be open and consistent in all actions to gain public trust.
- c) Maintain impartiality and fairness in your actions to provide fair treatment.
- d) Maintain ongoing communication to achieve mutual respect and understanding.
- e) Adequately research your social environment to communicate your positions more effectively and adapt your actions when they no longer serve the public interest.

Sharpe also believes that decisions made in secret, even if they align with ethics, carry the stain of mistrust. Reality and image should be intertwined; it's not just about doing justice, but also demonstrating that justice is being done. This aspect is of vital importance for corporate communication.

### **3.4. ANGLO-SAXON ORIGIN ASSOCIATIONISM AS A PROPOSAL FOR SELF-REGULATION**

From a deontological perspective, it is considered that researchers in communication sciences, like in any other science, should act based on a deontological code (Parés i Maicas, 2006, p. 46).

In some countries in our environment, especially those more advanced in communication matters, there have been professional organizations for many years that can be very useful in guiding communication professionals in their daily work. In Spain, there are increasingly several initiatives of this kind emerging, with the aim of defending the rights of these collectives. This article proposes a review of the positions of the main international professional associations that group together thousands of communication professionals, in order to draw clear conclusions and guidelines that can be used to create an Ethics specific to Corporate Communication. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), The Institute of Public Relations (IPR), The International Association of Business Communication (IABC) are some of the associations analyzed here.

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is the largest Public Relations association in the world. It is based in New York and has a total of 116 chapters throughout the United States. It is divided into 18 professional sections ranging from business and industry to consulting firms, independent professionals, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and many others. It holds an important annual meeting or conference and publishes two publications: 'Tactics,' a monthly tabloid with information about the profession, and 'The Strategist,' a magazine that analyzes PR practice changes in more depth. PRSA bases its professional values on good counsel, honesty, experience, independence, loyalty, and uprightness of its members. It invites its members to serve the public interest, offering a single voice for well-informed idea exchange. It seeks the adherence of its members to the highest standards of accuracy and truthfulness to beneficially serve the interests of their clients and communication with their publics and audiences. The ethical code proposed by PRSA is based on six values that it considers "vital for the integrity of the profession as a whole" and states that "the reputation value of the partners depends on the ethical conduct of each PRSA member." "Each of us is an example for others, as well as for other professionals, by striving for excellence in our work with high standards of performance, professionalism, and ethical conduct," adds its code. PRSA invites to serve the public interest, offering a well-informed idea exchange adhering to the highest standards of accuracy and truthfulness for clients' interests and communication with the public, while fostering mutual understanding in today's knowledge society.

In the case of PRSA, despite being theoretically one of the best frameworks to guide the profession, we find that, despite the numerous scandals, its strict compliance has



been quite limited. For example, we find that from 1990 to 1998, no PRSA member was reprimanded for any action, let alone expelled or suspended from the association.

The second major association for communication professionals is The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). It is headquartered in San Francisco (USA) and has members distributed across more than 60 countries. Although the majority of its members are in the United States, it has significant sections in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Hong Kong. Among IABC's activities, the publication of the prestigious magazine 'Communication World' stands out, which thoroughly analyzes practical cases and reports on the latest developments in the sector. Its code is based on three principles that state that professional communication must be, above all, legal, ethical, and in good taste.

The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) is the third most important professional organization in the field of Public Relations. It is also Anglo-Saxon but goes beyond North America. IPRA is based in London (United Kingdom) and has members in a total of 96 countries worldwide. Most of its members could be defined as "senior international public relations executives." Its main publication is titled 'Frontline.'

PRSA, IABC, and IPRA are the organizations that encompass the largest number of professionals (Wilcox & Cameron, 2006), but there are many other significant entities that have played a prominent role in the implementation of ethical codes among North Americans. Undoubtedly, one of the first things that catches attention when studying Ethics applied to Communication in North America is the use of names, that is, terminology. The way they refer to codes as "codes of conduct" instead of "ethical or deontological codes" already gives us a further glimpse of American pragmatism. Practically, each association has its own code, with the codes of the aforementioned organizations being especially well-known, and most of them reserve the right to criticize, censor, or expel those who do not comply with these codes. IABC's code emphasizes the principle that communication professionals must go beyond what is legal and ethical; they must also strive for good taste and the most decorous cultural values and beliefs. IABC bases its principles on legality, ethics, and good taste, in a code of twelve articles that underline the need for professionals to practice honest, truthful, and pluralistic communication by promoting the free circulation and flow of information and content in accordance with the public's general interest. This organization also places special emphasis on professionals' commitment to truth and freedom of expression, as well as respect for current legality. It also pays special attention to respect for cultural values and beliefs, pluralism, and encourages the correction of detected errors while demanding confidentiality of information accessed through professional activity.

### **3.5. INTERCULTURALITY, A PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVING GLOBAL COMMUNICATION**

In general, interculturality is presented as a new challenge in university classrooms of Communication and Information Sciences. In the university classrooms of the United States, in the subject of Communication Ethics, one of the key topics is interculturality and respect for diversity. Interculturality should be understood as a principle, but also

as a project for improving actions and relationships between cultures. In the didactic realm, it is formed through dialogue and shared encounters among all students, faculty, and participating communities. Interculturality should seek the creative encounter of diverse human experiences. It requires new educational conceptions and practices focused on equity, solidarity, and pluralistic approaches among all individuals and peoples.

In the new European Higher Education Area (EHEA), popularly known as the Bologna Process, interculturality is considered one of the most important cross-cutting competencies. Interculturality has become a reality that cannot be ignored. This reality has reached primary and secondary school classrooms, as well as faculties and postgraduate centers related to Information and Communication Sciences. But what is interculturality? Does the teacher have the necessary tools to internalize it within their didactic rhythm?

Interculturality is "the principle and project for improving actions and relationships between cultures, formed through dialogue and shared encounters among all students, faculty, and participating communities" (Domínguez, 2006, p. 12); or, in other words,

the overcoming and experiential synthesis of human being and knowledge that recognizes itself in the relationship and creative encounter of diverse human experiences, requiring new educational conceptions and practices centered on equity, solidarity, and pluralistic approaches among all individuals and peoples, with the utmost respect for identity in the context of new global actions (Medina et al., 2004).

This approach of openness and understanding fits perfectly into the interdependence demanded by the world we live in, which motivates collaboration between citizens from previously isolated countries, regardless of the context. As university professors, we have experienced this reality thanks to the experimental and advanced implementation of our studies in line with the EHEA and various academic exchange experiences (students, professors, and non-teaching staff) through the well-established Erasmus program. This intercultural conception has reached the university, and although not without difficulties, it is translating into strategies that pursue the achievement of objectives such as the education of free citizens through a quality educational system, a principle that is one of the positive values associated with our civilization.

The incorporation of interculturality into the reality and teaching practice is a widely discussed field that constantly concerns teachers, pedagogues, and researchers. What is not so common is its connection to university teaching and, even less so, to the specificity of Communication studies.

Although for many years Spain had a different reality compared to other countries in its European environment, gradually our socio-demographic reality has ceased to be unique (Cabezuelo Lorenzo & Pérez Serrano, 2009, p. 9). Immigration began to grow strongly in the 1990s and has exponentially increased in the last decade and a half, to the point where it has become an increasing challenge within the teaching spectrum. Now, there are more Spanish citizens, which sometimes leads to the emergence of a range of complex situations posed by students, which, in some

cases, are related to a plausible language deficiency and even inadequate prior schooling.

Different studies on interculturality and multiculturalism indicate that the former refers to the interaction and communication between different cultures in a respectful, horizontal, and synergistic manner, where it is inconceivable for one cultural group to be dominant over another, and where integration and coexistence of both parties are fostered at all times. Intercultural relationships establish a bond based on respect for diversity and mutual enrichment, something vital in these times, and even more so in times of crisis and conflicts. Training in intercultural matters teaches that conflicts are resolved through respect, dialogue, mutual listening, agreement, and the union of goodwill (Cabezuelo Lorenzo & Pérez Serrano, 2009, p. 10).

Currently, interculturality has become a reality that cannot be ignored. This reality has reached the classrooms, which is why new educational conceptions and practices centered on universal values are needed, with utmost respect for the plurality of the current globalized world in which we live. The inclusion of interculturality in the reality and teaching practice is a widely discussed field that constantly concerns teachers, pedagogues, and researchers. What is not so common is its connection to university teaching and, even less so, to the specificity of faculties of Communication Sciences.

Future professionals in Communication who are currently studying Journalism, Advertising, and Public Relations degrees need specific training in universal values that will equip them for a contemporary world where the term globalization makes increasing sense. Interculturality is a competence that must be developed in a transversal manner in different subjects taught in Communication Sciences programs, degrees, and specializations.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

In the end, all organizations are neutral entities, apparently, but they are formed by a group of individuals; therefore, they are neither moral nor immoral. Instead, we can say they are amoral. However, the behavior of their members, who are identified with the corporation they represent, can be moral or immoral. For this reason, professionals in corporate communication must understand the true value and meaning of professional practice according to guidelines, which undoubtedly would benefit Ethics. Hence, this work advocates for the need for professional self-regulation through associations and professional institutes, promoting professional associationism in an orderly manner, following the American model based on three major professional associations.

The recent cases of corruption, falsehood, or fraud, from the Volkswagen emissions scandal to the Panama Papers, highlight not only the need to maintain ethical standards, especially in the field of Corporate Communication, Institutional Communication, and Public Relations but also the need to question the importance of ethical values in daily work. Corporate Communication, both in North America and Europe, must find Ethics as the core of professional activity, in a way that codes do not replace legal instances or lead to self-censorship, but instead have sufficient strength as an effective regulatory power that significantly contributes to improving reputation.

Organizations, whether companies or institutions, must go beyond the rights and obligations that correspond to them as legal entities. In addition to fulfilling their specific purposes for which they were created, they can also go further and develop their activity as corporate citizens committed to the community that surrounds them or in which they operate. This relationship defines the scope of their social responsibility based on a unique budget of ethical conduct, grounded in a clear enunciation of principles and values shared throughout the organization, and in the exercise of self-regulation as a guide for their actions in all aspects. Ethics and social responsibility are vital topics in Public Relations since, in their deliberate, planned, and continuous effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding, they facilitate communication between the company and its various key audiences, including society at large (Stortini, 2011).

It is necessary to frequently question the ethical, deontological, and professional aspects of communication. Often, we only think about effectiveness and profitability, driven by our productivity mindset. In North America, the part of the world criticized for its consumerist mentality, ethics is discussed more than in Europe, and these terms are consistently used when talking about best practices in Corporate Communication. American companies allocate more resources to social causes than European ones, and American professionals have once again paid attention to diversity issues, especially in matters of interculturality and multiculturalism. Nowadays, in North America, it is inconceivable for a cultural group to be disproportionately favored over another, and integration and coexistence are constantly encouraged. In every intercultural relationship, there is a bond based on respect for diversity and mutual enrichment. Training in intercultural matters teaches us that conflicts are resolved through respect, dialogue, mutual listening, negotiation, and the convergence of good intentions. These competencies should be included in the curriculum of Communication Sciences degrees through subjects such as Communication Ethics and similar courses. Currently, interculturality has become an undeniable reality that must be studied in classrooms. Therefore, new conceptions and educational practices focused on universal values, with the utmost respect for the plurality of the current globalized world in which we live, are needed from the academic field. The inclusion of interculturality is vital.

These are some of the aspects that our North American and English-speaking colleagues, pioneering societies in the implementation of that famous Mix, are currently debating. Gradually, Spain is also studying these issues in the same way, due to the globalized world we share. Undoubtedly, all these matters have become professional aspects that must also be discussed in Spain and the rest of Europe. A first step in this direction is the purpose of this work: the debate on the proper ethical training of future professionals in corporate communication through ethical values such as Multiculturalism and Interculturality.

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