

Presentation

Professor Manuel Castells reminded us at the Inaugural Lecture of the 2017-2018 Academic Year of how the Catalan university system, and universities as institutions, have evolved over the centuries, leading up to the rapid changes of recent years in the wake of the technological revolution.

In just the last half century, we have progressed from only teaching the elites to taking on the responsibility of educating large layers of the population, as well as professionals who are aware that training now has to be extended throughout one's life.

In addition to new educational requirements, there is also the impact of technology on education. As in other human activities, from communications to economics, and from leisure to social relationships, the now not-quite-so-new technologies have turned education on its head. On the one hand, because they have provided us with resources whereby education can be customised and improved to unthinkable levels. And on the other hand, because they have enabled a paradigm shift whereby we have advanced from passive 'teaching' to active 'learning' or, further still, to the even more active 'learning to learn'.

Higher education must not be a mere procedure that ends with an official certificate. It should contribute to the development of people, businesses, institutions and society in general. We must train our students in the skills and knowledge that will allow them to bring value to society. An increasingly more global world requires programmes that are focused on training global and socially committed citizens and professionals. The change is already here and we need to be ready.

It is with that same urgency that we face the call of the UN and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals to change our world by 2030. This international agenda understands the key role of universities, and for the first time has included the need for equal and inclusive higher education and research in order to address the global challenges from a local perspective.

There is no use having such an excellent and erudite university system if it is solely confined to its own inward-looking world. Because ... without social impact, without reaching beyond the campus walls, are we really serving the society to which we are truly due? Hence the need for an open university system that is committed to teaching, research and knowledge transfer in search of social impact, and with its feelers out in readiness to adapt to the changing needs in education and in the nature of work.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the introduction of the first syllabuses structured according to the guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), where the acquisition of skills by students became the main objective, replacing the more traditional approach based on content and lecture time.

In recent years, universities have introduced constant changes and improvements to enable the transformation of syllabuses and to adapt teaching to a scenario where continuous evaluation, quality, and constant review and improvements play a central role in the learning process.

The results of these changes are reflected in this "2018 Education and Teaching Report", which contains real, palpable results that have an impact on the work done by the universities that form part of the Catalan Association of Public Universities.

As public universities, it is our duty to keep track of our activity and present the results and impacts of the public investment in our institutions. We do so with total responsibility and commitment, and this publication is a further example of that.

Josep A. Planell

President of the Catalan Association of Public Universities