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**Profile of technical staff in local development
management in the Valencian Community. A first
exploratory study on functions, needs and
perceptions of their professional practice (2019)**

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ARTICLE SECTION

Profile of technical staff in local development management in the Valencian Community. A first exploratory study on functions, needs and perceptions of their professional practice (2019)

Abstract: Professional practice in the Valencian Community dates back to the mid-1980s. In 2001 ADLYPSE was created. Little has changed in the situation of the ADLs in two decades. The local development professional and his or her functions is an issue that over time has led to skills in employment and grant management. In the Valencian Community this is a case that has become more acute in the last decade. This has led to dissatisfaction among professionals and a limitation of other functions in which the local development professional could participate in activities that impact on the diversification of socio-economic activities in the territory in which they work. It is a question of proposing an analysis and a proposal of the situation of the Employment and Local Development Agents linked to ADLYPSE, which has been the subject of our research during 2019.

Key words: Local development, roles, professional profiles, networking, economic diversification, employment.

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IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. El técnico en desarrollo local (ADL) es una profesión muy útil en territorios urbanos y rurales, aunque su perfil es muy disperso.2. En la Comunidad Valenciana, desafortunadamente, solo se limitan a la gestión administrativa de subvenciones, la mayoría de las ocasiones.3. Se necesita una revisión de su perfil profesional, que viene condicionado por las necesidades y características del Territorio.4. La administración pública (local y supralocal) deben ayudar a definir funciones y valorizar acciones.5. Es importante formar a estos profesionales ya que el perfil formativo es muy heterogéneo, en planificación estratégica, participación comunitaria, proyectos europeos, etc. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The local development technician (LDA) is a very useful profession in urban and rural areas, although his or her profile is very dispersed.2. In the Valencian Community, unfortunately, they are limited to the administrative management of subsidies, most of the time.3. A review of their professional profile is needed, which is conditioned by the needs and characteristics of the Territory.4. The public administration (local and supra-local) should help to define functions and enhance actions.5. It is important to train these professionals, as the training profile is very heterogeneous, in strategic planning, community participation, european projects, etc. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. El tècnic en desenvolupament local (ADL) és una professió útil en territoris urbans i rurals, tot i que el seu perfil és molt dispers.2. A la Comunitat Valenciana, desafortunadament, només es limiten a la gestió administrativa de subvencions, tot i que poden gestionar altres activitats per al foment de la diversificació econòmica del territori.3. Es necessita una revisió del seu perfil professional, que ve condicionat per les necessitats i característiques del Territori.4. L'administració pública (local i supralocal) han d'ajudar a definir funcions i valoritzar les accions que aquests professionals realitzen en el territori des d'una perspectiva socioeconòmica.5. És important formar aquests professionals en eines vinculades a la planificació estratègica, participació comunitària, projectes europeus, etc. |
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT¹

In this article we analyse the professional profile of Local Development Agents, their characteristics and functions through a diachronic analysis of some regulations and reinforced by a survey that we passed between October and December 2019. All this, in the framework of a study that was carried out on the professional profile in the framework of a project of ADLYPSE-Alicante proposed and approved by CEEI-Elche for the Valencian Community and carried out from the Department of Human Geography of the University of Alicante. And particularly in the general universe of all the associates of the federation of professionals of technical personnel in local development management, ADLYPSE-Comunidad Valenciana. From this perspective, it seems necessary to formulate measures to improve the working conditions and training of local development professionals, as well as to increase the means for a better management of resources and services. As Sanchís Palacio and Campos Climent (2005, p.286) point out, the solution would involve “the incorporation of the post of AEDL into the civil service staff of the Administrations in which they carry out their work, the provision of the necessary material resources, the creation of multidisciplinary teams and the granting of autonomy and responsibility to the agent in the design of objectives and the execution of the actions to be carried out”.

In the last decade, Local Development Agents in the Valencian Community were conceived as qualified professionals who carried out multidisciplinary functions in structures that were usually (almost 70%) of a single-person nature, and who in most cases have not consolidated their jobs (68%). Their professional qualification, however, is not an obstacle to identifying certain training deficiencies and low specialisation, mainly due to the complexity and diversity of the tasks they perform, the single-person nature of the services and the scarce supply of training (González, 2008).

A bibliographical review has been carried out on aspects linked to local development agencies and agents in recent decades, and more specifically in relation to the Valencian Community. The aim has been to establish the “state of the art” in terms of the evolution of local development agents, their functions and their professional profiles (where we come from in order to know where we want to go). On the other hand, data collection has been carried out by means of surveys, in order to enrich the fieldwork and update the data available in the bibliography and in other recent works.

We have analysed the results of the survey we launched to all ADLYPSE-Comunidad Valenciana partners between November and December 2019, which covered four main sections:

- Area of work; who it depends on; the degree of satisfaction with their professional performance and recognition as a professional.
- Responsibilities and coordination of projects and measures; objectives of the entity; scales of work.
- How we "see" ourselves and how we are seen as local development professionals; the degree of usefulness of local development professionals and the degree of resources managed.
- Roles; profiles; training; age; gender; type of contract; education; qualifications.

¹ Traducción exclusiva de los autores / Authors' exclusive translation.

For many of the responses we used the Likert scale. A measurement tool that, unlike dichotomous yes/no questions, allows us to measure attitudes and to know the degree of agreement of the respondent with any statement we propose. It is especially useful to use it in situations where we want the person to qualify their opinion. In this sense, the response categories have helped us to capture a greater diversity in the respondents' responses and intensity towards the statement. In this sense, we had a total response from 114 professionals, both associated (67.9%) and not associated (32.1%) to ADLYPSE-Comunidad Valenciana. Of the responses received, 56.3% were from the province of Alicante, 27.7% from Valencia and 17.9% from Castellón. This represents a confidence level of 90%, with a margin of error of 7%, for a total sample of 600 working professionals, according to ADLYPSE-Comunidad Valenciana. These would come out of the 264 eligible for LABORA subsidies in 2019, 150 consolidated professionals and the rest in other occupations linked to commonwealths, local action groups and jobs associated with the promotion of entrepreneurship and collaborative work (private entities).

Therefore, what is presented here is an exploratory study, with a quantitative perspective, limited by the ADLYPSE-Comunidad Valenciana census, linked to professionals from local development agencies, and open to all technical personnel in local development management in the Valencian Community. Despite this, we have found that we have encountered many limitations, due to the degree of response from the professionals surveyed, and the lack of definition of tasks, not functions, as well as the contexts (rural-urban, large cities and smaller population centres). In this sense, the article has a bias, in relation to those who have participated, which serves as a start, although there is undoubtedly a need to go into much more detail about the figure, to a greater degree of concreteness in relation to the functions and their delimitations, as well as to determine a joint census of professionals for the Valencian Community. Undoubtedly, the professional practice of Local Development is transversal and multidisciplinary, although there are disciplines that are better adapted to the competences to be carried out in the management of Local Development, which are sometimes not taken into account in public calls for applications, such as geography. In this sense, the Professional Association of Geographers continues to work to reverse this situation.

We have analysed the reality of the professional practice of Local Development technicians in the Valencian Community. The general conclusion is that, in spite of the geographical determinism, the attitude and aptitude of the Local Development Agent, there are notable problems which are the same for all, and which are reproduced independently of the scale of action. On the other hand, not everyone is qualified to be a local development agent, because apart from other considerations, it is a vocational job that demands a lot from oneself. Some general conclusions are that there is still no professional recognition of this technical figure; there is no job stability to reinforce their position in the municipal hierarchy; their actions are still limited to the field of subsidies and administrative management; there is a tendency to be a "boy/girl" or a "boy/girl" in the municipal hierarchy; there is still a tendency to be a "boy/girl" or a "boy/girl" in the municipal hierarchy; There is a tendency to be a "jack-of-all-trades", which is reinforced by the perception that many politicians and colleagues in the public administration have of LDAs; there is a lack of training, but above all in matters related to the promotion of social skills; the regulations governing local development functions, from the outset, characterise a technician who has many fields of action, but little capacity for action. Undoubtedly, the need for associative corporativism is important in order to be able to fight, in an organised way, for the rights and profiles of these professionals. The

dispersion of academic and professional profiles, together with the lack of definition of professionals working in local development in public or private organisations and entities, does not help to have a clear definition and specification of what a DLA really is. On the other hand, the ADLYPSE directory should be updated by province. This source is not sufficient to cover the current reality of all professionals in local development management in the Valencian Community.

Furthermore, from this article we can also extract the need, after gathering information, to carry out qualitative research, which would delve deeper into the realities and needs of technical staff in local development management. This would require a singularity by casuistry, differentiated contexts and sizes of entities, being able to establish a classification of categories, which could then be useful to the local administration. There are public announcements for places and aid for local development projects, but do they really meet the needs of the “subsidised” territories?

On the other hand, and in relation to the above, there is also a need to look more closely at the reality of local administrations and other supra-local local development structures, as these have undergone important legislative changes, such as the law of budgetary stability or the so-called “law of contracts”, which have restricted their capacity to act and react. Establishing a single profile of technical personnel in the management of Local Development in the Valencian Community is very difficult if there is not enough time and resources available for the interested parties themselves. The public administration must also perceive the local development professional as a key player and catalyst of municipal and supra-local processes in many areas. But all of this must also be demonstrated through the measurement and quantification of the resources that it generates and the synergies that it provokes in the territory.