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**Development agents**

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European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training



Development agents  
Spain

Enrique Retuerto de la Torre

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## Introduction

1. The expansion of production and income over the past 20 years in Spain has been accompanied by a clear trend towards concentration. The regions and provinces of the interior (with the exception of Madrid, Valladolid and Zaragoza) have shown a constant decline in their population and production indicators.

Since 1979, family incomes in these areas have been in relative decline, this despite a marked increase in the transfers of funds from the public sector (mainly pensions and unemployment benefit), to the less developed provinces.

Exceptional cases with a long-standing agricultural tradition such as Malaga and Almeria (southern Spain) and Gerona (northern Spain) show how exogenous factors - in these cases tourism - are of decisive importance for development.

However, in Almeria and also in northeastern Spain (Lerida as well as Gerona), the entrepreneurial spirit of the local populations and the stimulating impact of factors such as information and organization, have been instrumental in their beginning to overcome the problem of underdevelopment. It is here that the work of the development agents is to be directed.

But what are these agents doing in 1986? Which of them are closest to the instruments and management base for development? These are the questions which, rather like coordinates, will facilitate the structuring of this report.

2. Castilla y León and Castilla-La Mancha, regions located in the interior, though representing only 2 of the total of 17 self-governing (autonomous) communities, account for more than one third of the national territory; at the same time, their population hardly amounts to 11% of the total population of Spain. Taking the mean national value added per capita as 100, these two regions, ranking below Andalucía and Extremadura, fail to achieve 90 points on this scale.

The following figure shows the comparative situation of the various regions/self-governing communities of Spain, and also sets out the social and economic framework of reference for the activities and careers of the social development agents who are the subject of this report.

The two types of agents selected, being the most representative for deployment throughout the country and for the nature of their functions within the framework of the development of human resources, will of course be of particular importance in the short term in the less developed regions for the reasons set out above.

Figure 1: Comparison between the regions of Spain on the basis of demographic and economic indicators (1982 figures)

Region	Population density		Gross value added per capita	
	Pop./km <sup>2</sup>	Index Spain = 100	Ptas./cap	Regional index / national average=100
Andalucía	74.6	99.2	377.760	76.0
Aragón	25.2	33.5	515.230	103.6
Asturias	107.2	142.5	541.600	108.9
Baleares	131.8	175.3	647.650	130.2
Canarias	191.4	253.5	477.580	96.0
Cantabria	97.7	129.9	517.490	104.1
Castilla y León	27.5	36.6	444.380	89.4
Castilla la Mancha	20.9	27.8	408.230	82.1
Cataluña	187.3	249.1	592.280	119.1
Comunidad Valenciana	158.0	210.1	506.510	101.9
Extremadura	25.7	34.2	309.200	62.2
Galicia	96.0	127.6	417.150	83.9
Madrid	593.0	788.5	597.820	120.2
Murcia	85.6	113.8	451.420	90.8
Navarra	49.1	65.3	584.160	117.5
País Vasco	296.1	393.7	616.340	124.0
Rioja	51.0	67.8	584.220	117.5
España	75.2	100.0	497.240	100.0

Source: Indicadores Estadísticos Regionales. Instituto National de Estadística, 1985



Within the context of the 12 Member States of the European Economic Community (EC), the per capita domestic product in Spain ranks in tenth place, lagging only slightly behind that of Ireland and exceeding only the figures for Greece and Portugal.

The Spanish regions mentioned (Castilla y León, Castilla-La Mancha and Extremadura) rank on average at a level equal to that found in the southern part of Italy.

3. Proceeding from the hypothesis that economic and social development depends largely on the development of human resources, furthermore from the fact that in Spain it has traditionally been the central government authorities which have planned regional development and that the self-governing communities with their regional mandate - still of very brief historical date - have not yet had time to crystallize their own experiences, two types of development agent have been selected for the purposes of this report, each acting at a different level in terms of promoting human resources. In the first case the agent's action is governed by the central authorities and extends over the entire national territory (and consequently also in the regions/self-governing communities), and in the other case the agent's action is planned by and for a region or self-governing community, this since 1980 when the relevant administration became accountable to the authorities of the region or self-governing community.

The two types of development agent selected for this analysis are:

- a) promotion agents for vocational training and integration into working life, who are centrally managed by the National Employment Institute (Ministry of Labour and Social Security);
- b) agricultural extension agents, who work in the agricultural sector and are accountable to the chancellory or ministry of the respective regional government.

Each of these agents and the models which they represent is analysed separately, and the report closes, by way of conclusion, with brief reference to what both represent in their development work and their similarities as public officials working in this field.

This analysis is structured in three sections: the first provides a description of the functions, objectives and accountability of the agents concerned as set out by the relevant legislation; in the second the analysis is centred on the role actually played by these agents; and the third section explores the training process undergone in connection with both development agent profiles.

The report closes, as could be expected, with a number of brief conclusions on various aspects to which the superordinate authorities should attach particular importance - as much from the training viewpoint as from that of work management - so that each day brings further progress towards realizing the philosophy and objectives of social and human resource development.

## I. Promotion Agents for Vocational Training and Integration into Working Life

### 1. Administrative framework

In 1985 the Ministry of Labour and Social Security prepared a number of studies and standards which resulted in the launching of the National Vocational Training and Integration Plan (PLANFIP), which became a statutory instrument with the Ministerial Orders of July 1985 and February 1986. The National Employment Institute (INEM) was commissioned with implementing the Plan.

As a result of this measure, INEM had to increase its training target figures fivefold over the corresponding figure relating to 1984 and the preceding years. Of course, it also had to provide for additional manpower and develop new management approaches.

It therefore had to draw from the training opportunities market a supply of reactions and responses which would do justice to this call for multiplying the resources for training human resources and facilitating integration into working life.

A large number of private vocational training centres subsequently joined INEM's vocational training network, henceforth being subsidized and monitored by the latter

institute. At the same time, a huge number of specialists with a wide range of experience and qualifications were recruited and commissioned with the task of providing a wide supply of courses sufficient to cater for the entire national territory (more than 5,000 per year).

Of course, this operation harboured the risk of not only not being able to monitor the courses and the quality of the instruction but also of not being able to offer the contents or specialized know-how best suited to meet the needs of the labour markets.

It is one thing to plan global training objectives, even to reach decision on the programmes which are to be given priority (young people, the long-term unemployed, etc.), on the basis of a scheme which is well aligned with the functioning of the European Social Fund (ESF), but it is quite another, a much more complex task, to move down to the regional and local levels. These are levels at which the demand can be more accurately assessed by those responsible for each small unit but which remain beyond the grasp of macroeconomic information schemes and surveys to monitor population trends such as the Survey of the Workforce (a frequently used forecasting instrument).

## 2. Need for promotion agents for vocational training and integration

There thus emerged a need to appoint agents on a nationwide basis to be responsible for the many and varied tasks required by a human resource development plan as ambitious as that under review.

At the Ministry of Labour and Social Security it was decided that INEM should recruit the personnel concerned, assigning them the title of promotion agents for vocational training and integration, in order to meet the requirements set out in the PLANFIP. 370 such promotion agents were recruited at the end of 1985, and a further 420 were recruited in February 1987.

These promotion agents are dispersed throughout Spain on the basis of a ratio proportionate to the number of trainees envisaged by the National Vocational Training and Integration Plan; from the functional viewpoint they are accountable to the INEM Provincial Directors.

## 3. Profile of the promotion agents

The profile envisaged for these promotion agents is that they should hold an intermediate or higher education qualification, depending on whether they are to be mainly concerned with coordination and extension work (work methods but also training in curriculum design, or for

particular special functions), or with direct programme promotion work (programmes for which it is necessary to find experts in particular specialisms qualified to specific levels and also the centres to run such training programmes; these must in turn be monitored with regard to course implementation), involving a large proportion of work in the field of information and support for self-employment, establishing a business venture, etc.

The minimum requirement<sup>1)</sup> is complemented by a requirement for a minimum period of professional experience of six months, with preference being given to work on labour market studies, occupational structure analyses, work process analyses, curriculum design, selection and evaluation, occupational guidance, provision of training, etc. The last group recruited was required to have extensive knowledge or experience in the field of the new technologies.

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1) In the first group recruited, trainees with a background in the social sciences predominated; in the second group, quotas were reserved for trainees having completed studies in science and technology both at intermediate and higher education level.

Also considered valuable are characteristics such as ability to adjust to working with different people in different situations, clear aptitudes for communication and team work, a sense of responsibility, and practical administrative experience.

For those with higher education qualifications who are to be responsible for extension or coordination work, the qualities sought are easy-goingness and a gift for participative leadership; in this case special emphasis is placed on experience in the design and implementation of training courses for trainers or those leading to integration into working life.

#### 4. Functions

With regard to the functions to be discharged by the promotion agents, there is once again a need to distinguish between:

4.1 Those who, irrespective of their educational and professional background, will be largely concerned with

- promoting and coordinating tests to ascertain the aptitudes of the job-seekers;
- analysing the job opportunities offered by employers;
- organizing group sessions to provide information for job-seekers on finding employment, creating self-employment opportunities and integration into working life;
- providing occupational guidance in general.

4.2 Those whose functions are basically the following:

- identifying job opportunities in firms and also vocational training requirements on the subsectors of the employment market;
- organizing the involvement of the social agents in the planning of training and integration activities;
- negotiating the deployment of resources and preparing training contracts and agreements;
- carrying out follow-up and evaluation work with regard to the programmes and measures;
- participating in selecting and monitoring the (public and private-sector) vocational training centres cooperating in the scheme.

## 5. Selection of promotion agents

5.1 The candidates' curricula vitae are examined and assessed with special importance being attached to any experience with vocational training processes (as mentioned in connection with the profiles), and experience in handling working groups and analysing economic and social information.

Since many of the candidates are required to work in self-governing communities where the language spoken is not Castilian Spanish (in particular in Cataluna, Comunidad Valenciana, the Balearic islands and Galicia), importance is also attached to mastery of the respective language.



5.2 Once pre-existing merits have been assessed, there follow psycho-technical tests to assess the suitability for meeting the requirements of the job.

5.3 Finally, those who are successful in the tests are interviewed with a view to obtaining detailed information on their experience and aptitudes on the basis of the following factors:

- personal circumstances;
- initial and continuing training (including the factors which were determinant for the training undergone and the interest shown in this field of work);
- professional experience (with data on the career path, reasons for changing positions, aspirations, etc.);
- specific preparation for the post (familiarity with and mastery of the work techniques and processes);
- motivation and interest with regard to the new post, including the disadvantages which it implies;
- main personality traits (the significant factors observed during the interview);

In conjunction with the above, a suitability diagnosis is then prepared taking into account the job content and the circumstances under which the work is to be carried out.

## 6. Analysis of the actual function of the promotion agents for vocational training and integration

The technique used for this purpose was a survey and consultation process: a questionnaire was sent to those interested and group meetings were held under the leadership of two promotion agents previously trained for this purpose.<sup>2)</sup>

Thirteen direct replies were received from promotion agents in the two regions/self-governing communities Castilla y León and Castilla-La Mancha; the questionnaire is included in the Annex.

The replies were then summarized to show the attitudes and reactions of the protagonists to their functions. This is undoubtedly the most informative and direct manner of charting out a description providing a graphic image for the purposes of this section and allowing for a comparison between that which the central administration intended from the development agents' interventions and the scope afforded them by the real environment and the government authorities.

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2) Ms. Juana López, who is employed in the capital of the self-governing community of Castilla-La Mancha, and Dr. Ciro F. Acebes, who is employed in the capital of the community of Castilla-Léon.

A word of caution: the following description is not intended to incorporate a critical judgement on the activities of the public administration with regard to this subject; it is merely an account of the actual situation facing the protagonists by virtue of which the reader can better understand the difficulties and obstacles - both real and administrative - which the Spanish public authorities will have to overcome in their effort to ensure that the development agent can discharge his functions in line with a predetermined plan or programme.

## 7. Functions to be developed

7.1 All the agents consulted mentioned that their tasks should be related to that indicated in the PLANFIP, and by way of explanation referred to the following:

- studies on human resource training needs and the employment needs identifiable on the labour market;
- vocational guidance and information;
- planning and monitoring of training measures;
- support for self-employment initiatives and for occupational promotion activities in general.

7.2 With regard to the time devoted to specific tasks involving technical support for development projects, the replies varied greatly, ranging from those from some agents who appear to devote no time whatsoever to this task and others whose replies indicated a time fraction of 80 %.

On the other hand, the replies concerning the role of "animator" or development agent largely reported a range of between 15 and 50% of the total work time.

Liaising between institutions and social agents does not appear to be a task of relevance to these promotion agents, and the question which was intended to provide information on this point provoked a range of replies which were difficult to interpret. By way of an initial attempt to interpret them, the view must be that though not yet acting as liaison agents, they do have personal contacts with authorities and/or companies, associations and cooperatives, this, however, being at the request of the latter or when such contacts form part of the organizational work in launching some activity which is typical of the Institute in which they are employed.

Contacts with representatives of the workforce play a much less significant role.

7.3 When asked about their perception of social needs in their respective areas, between 40 and 60% held the personal view that employment needs exist and a likewise high proportion (30% on average), referred to vocational training needs; undoubtedly here it will necessary to introduce a countervailing factor to ensure that these promotion agents' priority task that of identifying this type of need.

Of much greater interest was the information that the need for "more collective participation in decision-making" was recognized by the majority of those surveyed, the relative weighting being reported as ca. 10%.

The agents surveyed did not consider "citizen organization" to be a felt or expressed need.

7.4 Of particular importance will be the reaction forthcoming from the consultations on the agents' positive contribution towards meeting these needs.

One interesting result in this respect is to note that the promotion agents in one of the regions replied by making their potential positive action in this field conditional on action to "facilitate their carrying out the functions indicated in the Plan in whose service they are working". At the same time, their colleagues working in another region, regarded their activity as positive as it "provides orientation", "provides information", "promotes training", "supports the organization of training-employment arrangements", etc.

7.5 Likewise useful in reorienting the training provision for these agents is the fact that all consider that their work will be successful thanks to the experience which they are gaining, whereas the training which they received on entry was either insufficient or insignificant.

Undoubtedly INEM will take up this information to press for a reorientation of future training programmes for its promotion agents.

As will be seen in the next section, the second group of training promotion agents recruited by INEM undergo an initial training programme which is much more cohesive than the ten days of ill-structured information received by some of those surveyed.

The promotion agents in the first group of 370 reported deficits in both initial training and in the guidelines forthcoming from the central departments to the territorial delegations responsible for their activities, including work to pool resources and compare experiences.

It is true that the years 1985 and 1986 were trial years for INEM, as has been stated by its management; the full accession of Spain to the EC and the application of the Community structural funds, together with the fact that the regional communities were experiencing their first phase of self-government, makes it necessary to be less than incisive or radical in undertaking a critical analysis.

The target figures of the National Employment Institute, as mentioned at the outset, have increased at an extraordinary rate, and perhaps five years must elapse before it is possible to have better and more cohesive analyses of the application and administration of development resources.

7.6 Finally, reflecting through this investigation project is the fact that the promotion agents for vocational training and integration perceive, in a somewhat ill-defined manner, the presence within their field of action of "other types of development agent".

In this connection, a large number of them referred to "street animators" or "social animators", whereas in reality the persons concerned are still ill-defined figures carrying out tasks which are almost exclusively of a cultural nature within urban communities.

7.7 To extract the most salient points from the observations made by the promotion agents in these two regions in the Spanish interior, the following points warrant consideration:

- a specific weight imposed by administrative tasks which prevail over others of an informative or supportive nature;
- a lack of basic information and instructions to accomplish the task of supporting self-employment ventures and collective movements;
- little coordination and pooling of resources concerning the work of the various promotion agents assigned to different areas; this should be done by some central or regional institution;
- still inadequate definition of the post and profile of the promotion agent for vocational training and integration.

At this juncture the point should once again be made about the brief time which these agents have had to gain experience and test their qualities, despite the importance of the presence and potentialities of such agents from the viewpoint of both their territorial spread and also the scope of the National Plan in the service of which they are carrying out their work.

## 8. Specific training for promotion agents

8.1 After what was noted in the preceding section on the deficits felt by the current promotion agents for vocational training and integration, it would seem useful to examine in detail the initial training programme which is currently undergone by the groups recently recruited by INEM who will have similar functions to discharge.

Undoubtedly, gaps, anomalies and inadequacies will be seen to separate this training programme from the reality of working life. Nevertheless, in terms of both duration and intensiveness, this is a programme which is the product of that first experience and has been developed by an organization which for more than one year now has been administering the Plan implementation.

8.2 The programme in question is structured as five common subject modules and a number of specific modules depending on whether the promotion agents concerned are to be more involved with managerial activities or with supporting vocational guidance and training.



The common modules concern:

- the organization and responsibilities of INEM in the field of promoting employment and training;
- identifying needs in relation to human resources;
- work analysis and training programme design;
- administration of INEM programmes, in particular training programmes;
- evaluation and follow-up of training promotion programmes.

8.3 For the promotion agents who will be largely concerned with the design and development of training schemes, emphasis is placed on themes relating to curriculum design, training media and process evaluation.

For those who will be investigating and addressing themselves to aspects concerning the impact of new technologies on employment, emphasis is placed on aspects relating to the impact and spread of new technologies among the workforce, new occupational profiles, the identification of new occupations emerging on the basis of the new information technologies, etc.

Those who are basically concerned with information, the promotion of an exchange of experience and the organization of employment and training programmes undergo a course of training in which detailed attention is given to the following themes: identification of demand for

human resources and occupational skills; administrative procedures for launching training measures using one's own media, in conjunction with training centres cooperating in the scheme, in conjunction with companies, etc.; analysis of training programmes carried out by other institutions and centres within the PLANFIP framework; follow-up and monitoring of the results of planning work; means of promoting employment and also a knowledge of administrative tools and how to handle them.

8.4 The initial course which was referred to above is of three weeks' duration, providing for five contact hours per day.

The course methodology favours participation, interaction and the development of hypotheses and practical case studies.

The course development work and course implementation involve:

- technical experts in the methodologies of training for work or continuing training;
- technical experts in analysis and diagnosis relating to occupations and skills;
- experts in the new information technologies;
- personnel employed by the training centres cooperating in the scheme;
- vocational guidance experts.

8.5 Aware that such a course duration is still insufficient for training agents for human resource development within the INEM framework, the latter Institute has decided to offer supplementary seminars to be held at the request of its provincial delegations.

At the same time, there is to be a repetition and increase in seminars to follow-up and exchange experience.

Three such national seminars were held in 1986 for a subgroup of 25 promotion agents who are concerned in their respective self-governing community or region with extension work among the other promotion agents; with communication techniques; activity design; evaluation and selection (experts and course participants - from INEM, private centres cooperating in the scheme, and companies); planning and management techniques with local communities, cooperatives, etc.; measures to promote self-employment, training-employment arrangements, etc.; and activities to restore the historical and artistic heritage.

## II. Agricultural Extension Agents

### 1. Background and organizational framework

Local groups of agricultural extension agents have been set up since 1955, modelled on a mainly popular education and technical assistance scheme run with aid from North America.

The theory underlying the establishment of such groups is that the agent concerned should always form part of a team and be integrated within a specific rural environment.

Thus, there developed first agencies and subsequently educational centres with a chief agent, assistant agent, house management officer and a number of specialized personnel. On the other hand, the structure - being accountable to the Ministry of Agriculture, in Madrid - moved down via the regional delegations (parallel to those of the Ministry), the provinces, and the "counties" (territorial units smaller than the provinces, more or less homogeneous in terms of their characteristics).

With this structure and vast geographical spread throughout the country, it was not surprising that these were the first bodies of the central administration to be transferred to the regions when the self-governing communities were constitutionally established.

At the present time their operation and funding depend on the regional or autonomous governments. Central government bodies intervene only for pooling techniques and a number of programmes; in particular, and of special interest to our subject, is a centrally-run Training and Research Centre which continually receives agents from all the regions for seminars to update technical know-how and exchange experience (this school is located near Madrid, in San Fernando de Henares).

Throughout the 1960s, agricultural extension agents were largely engaged in the following fields: technical assistance (e.g. for mechanization, seeds); technico-economic rationalization of farm holdings; the promotion of collective movements and a community type of farming (there still exist good examples of well-integrated cooperative projects, seldom found in western Europe: the province of Burgos is a case in point).

During the 1970s, the "model" underwent a shift towards another aspect of promotion which introduced strong elements of animation and education for development. We will take a closer look at this aspect of the extension agent's work as this is still of importance today.

2. Using the so-called "Extension and Farm Management Seminars" (SEGEs) as a basis and test unit, and in conjunction with the concept of the "natural county" corresponding to the aggregate of various extension agents'

fields of work, certain types of farm were selected where the agents "abstracted" an experience and set about the task of developing and expanding on it.

With the power now being held by the self-governing communities, the only things which differ substantially from this model are that on the one hand training functions have been added (these were previously discharged by a different, likewise central organization), and on the other more importance is attached to applied research (another process of fusion took place recently, involving the work of the National Agricultural Research Institute (INIA)).

To some extent this development became a mandatory one in the wake of the economic crisis of the 1970s, this in turn having been provoked by the introduction of the new technologies.

At the present time some regions already have institutions developing technology (e.g. Madrid and Murcia). By contrast, one of our test regions, Castilla-La Mancha, is one of the least developed in terms of research; perhaps because of its proximity to Madrid.

### 3. Organization of services, functions of the agents

Until very recently, the operational model was based on four pillars: the farm, the family, the community, and young people.

3.1 Under the terms of this model, the agent was to proceed from a good knowledge of the framework within which productive farm holdings and the family were to develop; with this information he formulated an action plan which was in line with the real possibilities of the local population. The plan also made provision for upgrading technical and managerial skills among the farming community and for continuous consultancy services. Following a model widely used in the OECD countries, programmes were selected for providing information on business economics and the application of management techniques (20% of the specialized agents are involved in this type of activity), with the SEGEs being largely devoted to this function.

The material addressed in this operational area is as follows: farm accounting, group analysis and vertical analysis, budgeting methods, financial and investment analysis.

3.2 With regard to work in the field of home economics, a support plan was developed for women tied down to domestic duties which was to introduce them to garment-making, craft activities, providing services to promote tourism, and activities to promote and upgrade marketing.

3.3 Community development still continues to hold fundamental importance in our concept; an animation process was launched whereby the farmers joined together to study, plan, implement and evaluate measures which were

of common interest and also to develop the necessary attitudes and abilities. Of course, there had to be an active training process here.

The group activities usually involved measures relating to the land and the production infrastructure, the provision of inputs, joint use of production equipment, the processing and marketing of agricultural produce, credits, etc.

In addition, efforts were made to improve the basic community services and complementary activities (e.g. social centres, recreation centres, child day-care centres, health centres, clubs for the elderly, etc.).

3.4 With regard to young people, the key function discharged by the agents is that of preparing future generations of farmers for both their particular type of work and for rural life.

The alternatives open to young people in rural areas continue to be: abandoning the farming sector, entering farming as an entrepreneur, or entering farming as a skilled worker. Each alternative has its own specific requirements: in the first case an extra-agricultural orientation, in the second, training in farm management, and in the third a vocational training.



3.5 As was pointed out in the foregoing, during the course of this decade the basic operational model is changing and the distinction is now more one of niveau than of objectives, with the basic programmes for community development and young people of course being maintained. Today, the functions covered also include research, extension and training in the proper sense of the term.

The philosophy of development has remained to a certain extent, but has evolved away from the family farm unit (except for isolated cases such as in Cataluna, in cooperation with the University), and towards specialized work to upgrade the farms, and also towards non-farming work and efforts to raise incomes and the quality of life.

Naturally, since the organizational side is now dependent on the respective self-governing community, it is possible to proceed on a step-by-step basis in adjusting the model; depending on the characteristic features of the region concerned, the agent will be more or less a specialist and will have greater or lesser recourse to the stimulating forces of collectivism, etc.

3.6 The following figure is provided to summarize the coordinates and alternatives for shaping the work of the agents in line with the type of community in which he is engaged and the predominant type of farm holding encountered there.

Figure 2: Programmatic orientation of the extension agent

Holding potentially amenable to adjustment	Part-time farm holdings		
	Inadequate holding	More industrialized community	Community with a low level of development
1.Consolidate the continuity of the family farm	1.Search for non-farming activities	1.Greater emphasis on self-reliance	1.Search for non-farming activities
2.Undergo managerial training	2.Promote collectivism and managerial training	2.Women could play a more important role in farming activities	2.Only managerial training can allow young people to take up any job opportunities available
3.Increase the technical resources of the holding in conjunction with a non-farming activity		3.It is not easy to try to expand because of the shortage of manpower	3.Vocational training for the manpower is important

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Source: Revista de Extensión Agraria, 1981. Author's compilation.

#### 4. The extension agent in the real-life context: profiles, status, training

4.1 Proceeding from the conclusions of a study conducted in 1965 which was financed by the World Bank and the FAO, there is evidence that agricultural extension agents are beginning to become more specialized professionals; for example, the recruits now include agricultural engineers, forestry engineers and veterinarians, and these are carrying out duties which in the initial years did not require such specific profiles.

These specialists work from the regional centres and are engaged in comparing crop varieties, technologies, etc. They tend to have intermediate-level qualifications, and as the supply of such qualifications increases, there is an increasing demand for persons with a higher-education background.

Sociologists are also becoming involved in the community development effort, concentrating on aspects such as infrastructure and project animation.

4.2 These agents, with such an educational background and specialized skills, basically have to attend to community and collective experiences (orchard projects, livestock shelter projects, etc.).

Their activities in this field correspond to those of the promotion agent or trainer. Consequently, they have to concern themselves with the pooling of resources, organization and training. These aspects account for their main areas of action today.

4.3 Responsibility for the organization and planning of training measures for such profiles has moved, in line with the transfer of power to the self-governing communities, to their respective government machineries.

Each regional body will undertake in the immediate future to organize training programmes jointly with the corresponding authorities in other regions.

This is a task which has not yet been accomplished, and much will depend here on the political negotiation process.

The agricultural extension training centre mentioned in the foregoing, a central government institution, will cooperate to the effect that this project makes rapid progress, by regularly and systematically organizing courses on specific techniques and subjects relating to cooperation.

4.4 As the post of agricultural extension agent is a public service post, the candidate has to take a competitive examination; the successful candidates then take up their posts in the corresponding region.

Prior to starting work, they have to undergo a brief period of training (some two weeks in duration) at the above-mentioned training centre; technical support is provided by the self-governing communities.

The programmes for these courses are intended to be descriptive, introducing the trainee to the administrative side of the corresponding services, and also the entire range of issues which the agent will face during his assignment: community development, farm structures, agricultural structures, new agricultural and livestock-raising techniques, etc.

During this period of transition for the agricultural extension service, emphasis is moving away from obligatory, highly structured programmes to seminars designed to take full account of the target group and self-governing community concerned.

For integrating the two sections<sup>3)</sup> "agricultural extension work" and "training in the agricultural sector" within each self-governing administration, they have remained accommodated in the same directorates. Conse-

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3) "Training in the agricultural sector" is a different body which used to be centrally located within the Ministry of Agriculture; its functions are exclusively concerning with providing vocational training in the agricultural sector. It has likewise been transferred to the regional authorities.

quently, it can be expected that, from the technical viewpoint, the training programmes for the agents will be decisively influenced by this integration effort.

4.5 With regard to the training methods adopted by the organization responsible for these extension agents, it should be pointed out that except in cases where the political context is of predominant importance, the methods applied will continue to be the same as in the previous period.

The prevailing philosophy here is thus that of adult education (as advocated by the EC, OECD, FAO, etc.), and methodologies which can be generically assigned to the concept of "active pedagogy".

The departments in which these agents work believe that "extension" is more than mere persuasion or induction, or even instruction and education. Instead, it is a mix of all these objectives.

All the self-governing communities and regions now make use of audiovisual methods (including video clips), pictogramms, lectures and discussions in their group training sessions.

Also regularly applied are the following techniques and methods: symposia, debates, seminars, group discussions, decision-making meetings, and specialized group meetings. These techniques and methods make for easier problem identification and analysis for the agents running the courses on cooperatives/collectivism, technical resources, management support, etc.

At the same time, recourse is also sometimes had to radio, the press, the cinema and television as media and aids for reaching a broader public. From the investigations made, however, there is no evidence of a sufficiently well-balanced deployment of such media. It can be assumed that when regional/autonomous television and radio broadcasting becomes more widespread, greater use will be made of these media.

The most customary approaches continue to be - in descending order of importance - personal interviews, group sessions, symposia and seminars, and the press.

### III. Other Training Opportunities for Development Agents in Spain

1. On the basis of the philosophy of the "integrated development" of resources - human, information, scientific, technological and financial resources -, one Spanish association<sup>4)</sup> has suggested a training scheme for "development agents" whose work project is to study low-cost techniques and experiences offering a high information output.

1.1 These development agents should be trained first and foremost in group dynamics, the preparation of natural resource inventories, gaining access to sources of technological and administrative information, and project documentation and implementation, and they should acquire a thorough knowledge of the available sources of funding.

1.2 A number of experiences - some already gained, some anticipated<sup>5)</sup> - have made it possible to profile programmes with which such a scheme could be assembled. The structure provides for four general modules:

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4) Sociedad Española de Sistemas Generales (SESGE), with headquarters in Madrid.

5) In particular for public officials employed at local government level.



- education for development
- public health
- information for development
- information technology for development.

It also provides for a series of flexible, specific modules, the most important being:

- energy
- agriculture and agrobusiness
- bioengineering, aquaculture
- electronics and communication technologies
- construction
- light industry
- tertiary-sector services
- fourth-sector services.

1.3 These modules are arranged in line with the type of work carried out by the respective trainee group.

A course launched with such a structure could be composed as follows:

- theory classes and exercises in application to simulated situations; collection and processing of information;

- development of practical case studies for agricultural and livestock-production activities, alternative energy sources, waste recycling, creation of local, integrated enterprises, and the preparation of project dossiers for financing, etc.

Both the simulation exercises and the practical casework converge in so-called "experimental zones", where population clusters, water courses, communication routes, etc. would be designed.

Finally, the projects are discussed in small-group, seminar form.

The training scheme suggested is sufficiently broad-based and flexible to be used in various situations.

As the programme has only been running for just under two years, it will need time to be applied to other cases before a definitive judgement can be advanced.

2. Over the past year, the Foundation for the Development of Cooperatives and Social Economics (FUNDESCOP), a private-law institution, has been developing training courses for development agents in certain provinces and self-governing communities.

Two target groups predominate in the current course schedule:

- a) development agent in rural areas, which is intended for trainees under 26 years of age and provides for 400 course hours;
- b) development agent in urban areas, which has the same duration and is intended for persons over 25 years of age.

Each course is run for a group of 15 trainees, and the respective programmes cover the thematic areas which have been examined elsewhere in this report: from the theories of development and collectivism, group leadership techniques, and training methodologies, to the classical subjects such as resource administration and project funding sources and means.

These courses are supported by funding from the National Vocational Training and Integration Plan of the Ministry of Labour (PLANFIP), and therefore qualify for co-financing by the European Social Fund (ESF).

3. The same organizational/funding sources - PLANFIP and the ESF - form the basis for a wide range of training opportunities for "sociocultural development agents", or, to use a broader term, for persons providing community services.

The large majority of these courses provide for instruction in communication techniques and group leadership techniques, though their ultimate objectives differ.

The courses concerned include training for launching and implementing projects such as the creation of initiatives which, within a given location and social context, can develop into collective movements working towards cultural objectives (fairs, exhibitions, etc), and others for establishing information support networks (tourism, preventive health care, etc.).

#### IV. Elements of Experience Shared with the Benelux Countries

1. With regard to the functions of the agents concerned, these are found to be carried out in Spain and in the three Benelux countries (though with a different weighting) by animators, advisers, agents, and in some cases technical consultants. Likewise a shared experience is that they often assist local authorities in implementing rural rehabilitation programmes.

In the same way, the work procedures are similar with regard to the collection of social and economic data, the search for contacts with the public administration, and the approaches adopted for carrying out advisory/consultancy tasks (group meetings, practical work in the field, periodic follow-up of project work, etc.).

2. The training provision for agents in the Benelux countries (in particular Belgium and the Netherlands) presupposes intermediate-level entry qualifications

(technical engineering in Spain); in Belgium, for example, a large number of these agents come from a situation of unemployment, and there is a high risk of a rapid trainee rotation insofar as the various agents are not recruited for an indefinite period (unlike in the case of agricultural extension agents in Spain).

3. With regard to the methodologies applied in the training, once again it has also been the Spanish experience that agents are beginning to make greater use of technical aids (VCRs, computers), and also of group sessions, which are now accounting for an increasing proportion of the course timetable.

The vocational training and integration agents have been invited to meetings to examine and exchange information on the positive and negative aspects of their activities; this methodological approach is sure to be consolidated in the immediate future.

For their part, the agricultural extension agents passing via the central training centre are likewise invited to come together to exchange experiences on their work in the various communities. However, it is information work and knowledge of work techniques which still account for the larger part of the time spent at courses and seminars held locally.

4. The most evident differences between the agent's profile in Spain and the Netherlands result from the fact that in the latter country the training is less specific from the technical viewpoint but more highly structured and formalized in terms of course programme.

Relations with the trade unions are only occasional matters in Spain, and when meetings are arranged, this is largely because they offer a possibility of bringing together all those involved in this type of work.

The differences are less marked when the comparison relates to Wallonia, where the alternating approach to training, work and the mutual exchange of experience makes for a genuine process.

V. Proposals Concerning the Profile, Qualifications and Training Programmes for Development Agents

1. Taking up the approach which claims that the problems of the least developed regions should be examined not in terms of survival but of development, and also the belief that there can be no positive economic development without changes at the cultural level and technical training for human resources, the conclusions to be drawn with regard to Spain are as follows:

- 1.1 That training provision for those living in under-developed areas should include an element emphasizing their double role as citizens and economic agents.
  - 1.2 That one of the predominant objectives for the development agents should be to prevent the out-migration of human resources trained to meet the needs of the region.
  - 1.3 That the action of the development agents will be all the more efficient, the closer the contacts fostered with the real environment in the zone or region; this would have the effect of spreading their dependencies and giving their work a broader base.
2. With regard to desirable profiles for these agents, in the Spanish case it would seem reasonable to argue in favour of a mix of the features of the vocational training and integration agent and some of the features typical of the agricultural extension agent.

In this way,

- 2.1 The promotion agent would have greater access to resources and closer contact with a larger variety of social agents as these would include those working in urban and suburban areas.

- 2.2 He would be in closer contact with demand for human resources depending on profile and qualification level.
  - 2.3 The promotion agent should disseminate experience gained with self-employment initiatives and, more generally, address himself to identifying any means or opportunity for creating employment.
  - 2.4 For his part, the agricultural extension agent should be more involved with the technological aspects of development; this would enhance the value of the training and pave the way for action of a technical, specialized nature.
  - 2.5 Living in smaller communities and in permanent contact with the local people increases the possibilities for the extension agent to become fully aware of the problems prevailing there.
  - 2.6 Constant and close contact with the local authorities likewise affords the extension agent a relative advantage concerning coordination work and agreements to offer mutual support and seek collective solutions.
3. The professional qualifications which are most appropriate for the profiles resulting from the combination of features set out above, could cover the following range:



Higher education training in social work (intermediate level in the social sciences) and a higher-education diploma in sociology, economics, psychology; or, training in agricultural engineering.

This academic training should be complemented by a vocational training which provides for courses in training methodologies for those with an engineering background; and also by training modules (or a training credit system) in the techniques of developing agricultural projects to complement the existing technical knowledge.

The graduates or holders of social science diplomas could be better suited for work in the field of promoting human resource development, in particular the more general aspects thereof (economic and organizational aspects).

With regard to specialized vocational information and orientation measures, they should undergo additional courses, the nature of which would depend on whether they are working in rural or urban areas. In the same way, they should also receive training in training methodology.

The agricultural extension agents whose training is exclusively in the social sciences, irrespective of their fundamental commitment to community development and project evaluation in rural areas, could also apply themselves to community animation and organization functions in urban and suburban areas.

Adaptability, sociability, sound judgement, empathy, etc.  
- these must undoubtedly be the most important personality traits sought to complement the professional skills by any selection process for intending agents.

4. The training programmes for both types of agent should be flexibly structured in a manner which allows for a common body of knowledge on the following issues:

- dialectics of development/underdevelopment
- cultural factors in development
- social collective movements; typology and experience
- group work
- business accounting and economics; tax aspects
- social security
- business funding
- the environment and territorial administrative regulations
- processing of social and economic data
- methods, techniques and aids in vocational training
- social development and education
- work analysis
- preventive medicine
- etc.

The specific or applied knowledge required evidently varies depending on the context in which the agent is to apply it. By way of example:

- transport
- markets
- the various specialized services available to farmers
- tourism.

As far as the training methodology to be applied in this work is concerned, knowledge of and instruction in the following have been found to be both useful and of great interest:

- communication techniques: oral, written and audiovisual
- selection of audiovisual media and aids
- group leadership techniques
- selection of pedagogic methods (demonstration, enquiry, case studies, simulation, etc.)
- techniques for evaluating and following-up the training impact.

On the other hand, efforts to develop the training provision for these agents should include sessions for exchanging and exploring findings both throughout the induction period and then with a periodicity of at least four months during the first two years of work.

It would be very recommendable to involve the local authorities in the process of training the agents, and this would necessarily imply coordination with the regional administrations.

## ANNEX 1

## Questionnaire for Development Agents

1. What, in your view, should be the duties incumbent on a vocational training and integration promotion agent? (Please specify in detail)

2. What percentage of the work that you currently carry out as a promotion agent is devoted to: (including that in combination with PLANFIP measures)

%

- technical consultancy and assistance in connection with development projects
- liaising between institutions and social agents
- "animation" in your environment and field of work with a view to promoting individual and collective development initiatives
- promotion of self-employment?

3. What communications channels do you use to maintain contact with the authorities?

Local

Provincial

Regional/  
community

Direct/personal

Indirect via  
institutions

No contact

4. As above with regard to social agents? (Please estimate contact frequency in %)

Employers

Workforce

Associa-  
tionsCoopera-  
tives

Personal

Institu-  
tionalAt their  
request

No contact



### Information Sources

#### 1. Interviews and direct consultations:

- National Employment Institute:  
Head, Training Planning and Management Department  
Head, Training of Teaching Personnel Department  
Trainers of trainers, methodology; provinces of  
Valladolid and Toledo  
Provincial directors, Badajoz, Barcelona, Oviedo,  
Seville, Valencia, and Valladolid  
Twelve vocational training and integration agents were  
consulted via the survey; communities concerned:  
Castilla y León and Castilla-La Mancha
- Agricultural Extension Service (Ministry of  
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)  
Director, Training Centre, San Fernando de Henares  
Head, Research Department, Ministry of Agriculture
- Rafael Rodríguez Delgado, international consultant,  
specialist in development promotion affairs. Madrid  
28028 c/ Doctor Gómez Ulla, 14

#### 2. Studies on the corresponding development agents in the Benelux countries and Greece

#### 3. Secondary information:

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Enrique Retuerto de la Torre

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