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The logo for the Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública (INAP) consists of the letters 'INAP' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are closely spaced and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance.

Elements of a municipal professionalization system

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Introduction

This essay contains a proposal to integrate a System for Municipal Professionalization. For its elaboration, the author's experience in training processes within the INAP and other institutions has been taken into account as well as his active participation in the Permanent National Forum of Professionalization for Public Servants in State and Municipal Administrations sponsored by the National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development (INAFED) of the Ministry of Interior. Bearing in mind that it is a proposal, it will provide methodological and organizational elements, as well as mechanisms to be able to accredit System programs; reason to dispense other documental sources as references.

Profile of the problem relating to municipal public servant's education and training

Ever since the Municipal Reform of 1983; the development of studying, consulting and training material related to the administration of the Mexican municipality has been enriched

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with several works that are now seen as seeds in the formation of scholars, public servants and analysts in this government instance.

Several institutions have been pioneers and have been dedicated to municipalities; some of them are Instituto para el Desarrollo Técnico de las Haciendas Públicas (INDETEC), el Centro de Análisis Municipal de BANOBRAS, el Centro de Estudios de Administración Municipal, del Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública, el Centro Nacional de Estudios Municipales de la Secretaría de Gobernación (y sus transformaciones en Centro Nacional de Desarrollo Municipal e Instituto Nacional para el Federalismo y el Desarrollo Municipal –INAFED–), y el Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE).

This last century, in the 90's decade, other institutions of different areas joined the aforementioned: the Universidad Iberoamericana with some certificates; the Facultad de Estudios Superiores de Acatlán, UNAM with a program broadcasted by satellite signal; the Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, UNAM; the Instituto Hacendario in the State of Mexico, the Fundación Cívitas A.C., of the State of Guanajuato; los Institutos de Administración Pública of each state; el Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores of Monterrey; and Universities in the States of Guanajuato, Querétaro, México, Tlaxcala and Zacatecas, among others.

This century, works done on municipal studies have included other areas of specialty like federal administration to attend to several decentralized programs and those who work as generators of transferred resources to communities within municipalities. In this area, the Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Social (INDESOL), the Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería y Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación and the Rural INCA are important because they have a generous collection of materials related to municipal and federal relations through federal programs.

Since the 80's decade the municipality, its government and its administration have been the most analyzed fields in public management in disciplines such as public administration, public policies, community law, public services, intergovernmental relations, public management and approaches to the study of governance, among others.

Despite these advances, a permanent and professional base of municipal employees has not been developed in most of the country's municipalities; except in those administrations that have a higher systematization of their regulatory, organizational and processes frameworks and in those where there has been a continuity in governments of the same party; this have guaranteed the persistence of services and fairly stable institutional routines.

Currently, municipalities exhibit dependence not only in economic and political terms; a subordinate relationship between the state and the federation has been created in terms of program management and resources coming from funds and budget transfers of said levels of government.

Municipalities have improved in matters such as autonomy as political power; nevertheless they have moved backwards in issues such as training, managing and reproducing their own planning parameters; as well as tax resources which limits their improvements in administrative modernization processes.

On the other hand, an employment system of public servants that is capable of resisting and transcending triennial changes has not been achieved; in contrast, current institutional successions have been contaminated by the presence of forces in power that not only affect candidate designation, but also in the imposition of complete work teams that obey to interests that are completely alien to those required by municipal and community laws.

It is true that studies and training material for authorities and public servants have been enriched with work done by the aforementioned institutions; still factors that limit or hinder their effectiveness continue to be present.

The imagination of those readers interested in administration issues might be of service when trying to explain the diverse causes and casuistic interpretations of why there are still limits in municipal professionalization; a recap of municipal studies bibliography is not intended. It is necessary to realize that there is a need for one or more systems that allow an accompanying and training support, to appease the vices that result from staff turnovers in new municipal administrations, as well as the loss of knowledge, practice, routine and public management control that comes with the retirement of staff.

Likewise, it is possible to start from an assumption that leads us to an articulate and viable proposal to function as a methodological orientation for the makers of policies and professionalization programs.

The assumption is the following: “The professionalization of municipal public servants is the result of an appropriate systematization of their government and administration’s institutional routines and of a public employment stability; nevertheless this is not a generality and this is why it is necessary to rethink the training and education of municipal public servants through a curricular system that puts into order collective and individual formation plans, having made a prior analysis of knowledge and working experience; this should be taught in any city council in accordance to its degree of congruence between its staff profile and the standard and specialized subjects of said government body. Consequently, the curricular design of the training should be done according to the reality of the profile of the municipal public servants”.

Designing an offer of training and education plans and programs that do not take into account minimum profile and public servants’ requirements is to backslide into plans that offer information but do not assert abilities. It is necessary to provide in a short time and sometimes with scarce resources, a training offer capable of improving the municipal working experience.

The basic condition for this system is the existence of a series of possible learning paths that are required to develop different tasks in government and municipal administrations. That is, to have a plan that has subjects, topics, subtopics and previous and consecutive knowledge that is perfectly differentiated; allowing the training program designer to teach the appropriate knowledge according to the public servant's profile in any municipality.

Even though the aforementioned may seem obvious, it is necessary to know that most classic municipal administration programs are full of primary topics and general notions; instead of reflective practice and learning.

Not wanting to describe a program that has been put into practice or is about to be by some public, private or social institution; the following areas should be included: concept of municipality, municipal legal framework, government organization and municipal administration, development planning, municipal taxes, public services, and some academic topics like public policies, administrative modernization, leadership, citizen participation, among others. Topics concerning governmental culture may be included: governance and civil society, human rights and gender equality; in other cases issues concerning current problems like public safety, civil protection and the environment may be included.

Programs that were developed following a classic perspective only comprise subtopics that contain generalities and summary or secondary statements that are more closely related to the operative reality of municipal work.

In specific programs of different sections of state and federal areas, more than a third of their contents go over classical municipal components: legal framework, organization and mechanisms of community participation, among others; the other third describes operation rules or method conditions regulated by the head of the section and the last third comprises operative instruction aspects or practices.

From another angle, there is a lack of programs that evaluate municipal structural conditions, for instance, obstacles that hinder municipal governments from becoming promoters of their own economic and social development, topics related to strategic aspects to improve governmental management abilities such as administration of urban municipal development or others that relate to opportunities for the sustainability of the country such as the role of the municipality and environmental protection.

It is not common to have programs that offer reflection for investigators and municipal intelligence to envision new perspectives of the municipalities in real and possible worlds: the new institutional design, cybernetic relations between the people and the municipal administration; administrative defense of the municipality in its programmatic relations with other government bodies; intermunicipal corporations of public services; present and future condominium management, global municipal relations, risk of feudalization in the urban area in socioeconomic layers: vertical relations going upwards: municipality – state – federation; municipality and citizen formation and the preservation of local culture, etc.

In many occasions training is reduced to some kind of training in operation rules of federal programs, which means to review and memorize administrative procedures, filling out formats and develop follow up and physical-financial reports of actions involved in those programs.

In the last ten years, municipal public servant's professionalization that has been done by institutions like the INAFED which has tried the Civil Service of Carrera which has had poor results in the 10 municipalities it has been applied: Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes; Torreón, Coahuila; Benito Juárez, Quintana Roo; and Morelia in Michoacán. On the other hand, Competence Certification has been used as a mean to ensure municipal servant's abilities; one of the most important cases was the Certification in public tax management in two institutions at

least: the INDITEC and the Instituto Hacendario in the State of México as well as in municipalities in the state of Queretaro.

Another way to professionalize is to offer free courses of national coverage, as well as programs of sectorial training not only face to face, but also online and printed, videotaped and electronic self-learning materials. These programs have been endorsed by public and private educational institutions like the Certificate in Municipal Government and Administration from the National Institution for Social Development sponsored by the Metropolitan Autonomous University for the last two years. Even though each institution plans carefully how to design its training plans, most of them are based on theoretical references and not on practical evidences or direct consultation of public servants whom face the challenges of management in different areas by their own means; in both programs that the municipality developed on its own and other ones regulated by Federal or State norms and procedures.

It is safe to say that municipal training offers have been varied and constant, but also not well articulated and sometimes full of repetitions, because of a non-existent systematic generic base with inter-institutional recognition that allows an appropriate planning of an incremental forming process of several municipalities according to their own degree of development.

An alternate professionalization system of municipal public servants

Returning to the issue at hand: the need to create a municipal professionalization system so as to train public servants, it is possible to rethink some of the terms that have been included in said programs as well as the offers that have been made to its receivers.

The important elements that are much needed in professionalization systems are:

Methodological components of the system:

- Framework of reference to plan education and training paths, that should include: documented compilation of practices and procedures of municipal administrations of the Mexican Republics; a summary of topics and attributions of the municipalities that arise from current legislation and the profile of federal and state programs or entrusted to councils administration or management.
- Municipal typology with profiles that refer to the degree of economic and social development and institutional development (real abilities for management and public administration);
- Real municipal models of occupational structures. Profiles of job positions and areas of municipal management of each type of municipality;
- Profile of strategic areas of municipal operation, depending on their development characteristics;
- Summary of governmental issues, divided by government periods of the municipal administration (years and semesters);
- List of topics or subjects that concern municipal development;
- Inventory that contains the needs of public servant's training of municipalities that will receive training and education programs;
- Curricular planning methods that concern public servant's training and education processes; different from the ones that are connected to academic and higher education. Making sure the first ones have contents that balance theoretical and practical aspects in municipal reality areas., and
- Operation rules, systems and procedures of the stages of planning, institutional coordination, instruction, qualification, evaluation, and formal recognition of the program's results.

According to the aforementioned components of the method the intended changes compared to traditional systems of education

and training are: to consider as starting points different objective elements of reference to analyze and diagnose municipal reality and program professionalization paths based on real requirements from public servants.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to compile a “Framework” document of current organizational systems and real procedures of municipal administration. Currently, none of the aforementioned institutions have developed a General Handbook of real municipal administration, not even one that is emblematic or one that models a systematic public administration.

A fundamental tool for path and content planning of the System programs is needed; a compilation called “General Handbook of procedures for municipal administrations of the Mexican Republic” is needed. Likewise, it will be necessary to plan a summary of topics and attributions of the municipality and develop a catalogue of general operation processes of federal programs which would guide education areas and general training areas or management and specialty arenas as a minimum typology of the System’s own programs.

The next step would give support to the planning of professionalization programs, it is necessary to update existing municipal typologies and enrich them with new ponder profiles and the characterization of different degrees of development Mexican municipalities have, which could be the ones that are related to the profile of institutional development of the municipality and the ones that refer to the appropriate analysis of functions and main job positions of their administrations. Once we have this information, backed up by studies of several real models of occupational and organic structures; we will be able to design programs that are consistent with the topics that public servants handle and consequently provide information, situations and experiences that are similar to the ones they face in their employments.

To complement all of this, the process of planning professionalization paths needs to include and catalogue strategic and

essential topics to generate greater municipal institutional abilities such as the ones that concern management of federal land maritime zones, rural development planning, cadastre as a tool for urban development; management of municipal real estate; environmental sustainability systems through urban planning; inter-urban public transportation, among others that are directly related to the reality of emblematic municipalities that have been taken into account for System programs.

All of these factors are needed to catalogue topics and areas of knowledge that are related to the reality of municipal experience. It would be very useful to include in the planning processes the results of several need inventories that have been administered to municipalities that will receive training and education programs; as well as recognizing the dynamics of municipal administrations in every six-month government period and for every one of the three years that their constitutional government period lasts.

Finally, the methodological components of the System need methods of curricular planning to educate and train that include characteristics, references and approach planning and development through training and educating experiences; which will be very different from those given out in higher education courses.

The point is to establish a difference in method, design, planning and the appropriate ways training, apprehension and learning processes are made in public servant's education and training. In this sense, ways to train can include known methods: medium and long-term programs (specializations and certifications), incremental or sequenced programs (accredit competences), update courses (short courses, seminars), training programs (workshops, conferences, training); municipal management programs of federal and state programs; organization culture programs; selected topics of municipal management programs, special programs (induction of municipal authorities); civic education programs, among others.

These programs are not given out to limit institutions under conditions that are part of the System; there is a general commitment to adhere to methodological and procedural rules and statistically register data in the System's database.

Organizational components of the System

The following components are part of the inter-institutional operation of the System:

- Development of an Advisory Council for the professionalization of municipal authorities;
- Agreement to form a Technical Committee for the planning of the System; constituted by institutions that have abilities and experience in planning and management of programs to train and educate public servants;
- Creation of the Network of coordinated institutions for the professionalization of municipal public servants;
- Development of inter-institutional professionalization programs for different areas: for new authorities, sectorial, intergovernmental government programs, specialized in municipal management, etc.;
- Creation of the National Database for education and training programs; public collection of teaching, practical and learning materials, and
- Creation of the National Catalogue of municipal training and educating institutions and an Institution Directory of trainers and training programs facilitators.

Guidelines to organize and operate the System.

The concept of professionalization is possible in municipalities that have a high rotation of middle and senior managers; the System will then ensure a rapid integration and induction of staff to their own responsibilities, especially legal, programmatic and of resource exercise based on the real profile present at any stage of the government period. Thus, professionalization should be based on an accurate knowledge; normative, technical

and of the main procedures and routines that are related to the areas of municipal administration.

Besides organizational components, the System needs consultation mechanisms and inter-institutional coordination so as to have a collaborative framework and an appropriate planning of programs. An organic proposal of the System is to create an Advisory Council of municipal authorities (probably through the concurrence of existing local authorities) to act as an orientation body of educating and training priorities and requirements.

To design the paths of professionalization, integration programs and contents and materials of training, learning and application; we propose the creation of a Technical Committee of System planning constituted by institutions that have the abilities and the experience in planning and managing education and training for public servants programs. Consequently institutions like INAFED, el INAP, el CIDE y el INDESOL could be invited to participate to constitute a technical body in curricular planning so as to integrate a general curricular map that includes possible professionalization paths according to the reality of the periods of governments, special developments of municipal administrations, strategic topics to improve their development and special programs; to have an effective impact and a efficient professionalization of public servants.

This is based on the evidence of programs developed and taught by said institutions, their collection of teaching materials and their different technical and competence resources that they can provide.

The System would operate through the promotion and use of the general curricular map and through the operation of programs; in strict coordination with state authorities responsible for municipal strengthening and city councils which would receive the programs. If others wanted to collaborate, this participation would not be restricted or conditions because according to the

programs, invitations can be made not only to institutions that are related to certain specialties but also to professionals that are connected to program topics.

The strategic goal is to achieve the highest efficiency in programming and reviewing useful and proactive topics in public servant professionalization taking into account their reality and their performance requirements.

By having a General Curricular Map that centers its assumptions and evidences in needs to educate, train and develop professionalization paths; the designing of courses and events based on hypothetical parameters or presumed requirements that only valid in a scholar's mind would be ridiculous and preposterous.

The organic viability of the System depends on an inter-institutional concurrence of the ones that see themselves as practitioners of municipal development and as providers of education and training programs. An alternative would be to organize and manage meetings to be specific about the actions that will be carried out by institutions like the INAFED within the framework of a System such as the one that has been proposed.

As articulator elements of the system in organizational issues, it is possible to create at least three mechanisms that would guarantee the coordination of the different bodies that are to professionalize public servants. The first one would be the Network of Coordinated Institutions that will include those dedicated to the provision of training services and those who can conduct research, encourage municipal culture or sponsor professionalization through funds and budget support programs.

The second mechanism is the development of inter-institutional programs of professionalization, these can be conducted in a collaborative and inter-institutional manner and support them-

selves in the redesign or adjustment of programmatic collections and available materials in participating institutions. It is safe to say that currently there are not a lot of things to develop from scratch; this means that most of the topics that concern the professionalization of public servants have been studied at some point in this decade by some institution.

The third mechanism is the development of national public catalogues to be issued under “transparency” rules with the following categories: National Database of training and education and public collection of teaching, practice and learning material; Registry of institutions with professionalization for municipal public servants services and Directory of trainers and facilitators.

Accreditation and recognition components in programs of the system

As part of the rules and to give institutional credit to the programs, several accreditation components are acknowledged in the System:

- Agreements of program collaboration and accreditation with educational institutions, centers of study and research, national institutes of development, associations and civil societies;
- National Statistical Registry of Education and Training Programs of Municipal Public Servants, and
- Evaluation rules to certify performance capacities in functions and job positions in municipal administrations.

The aforementioned components are directed to the maturing of the System, trying to have an official recognition of any of its programs even in non-academic or schooled modes so that federal, state and municipal authorities can sign collaborative agreements in the framework of the System and its programs, recognize the accredited course, the studied topics and their curricular value, if agreed upon.

The National Statistical Registry for Education and Training Programs for Municipal Public Servants is destined to ensure an open management of the System and its public and non-profitable character. The registry is a compilation tool of professionalization programs and activities of the bodies that agree to join it. Its legal status is that of a diffusion toll for professionalization data that does not interfere with the competences of the institutions that constitute the country's official statistics.

The registry does not seek to make any of the programs conditional, not even under the System's parameters; it compiles monitors and leaves evidence of the different options to educate and train public servants. At the same time, it can function as a locator of bodies that manage one or several topics, the recurrence of their programs in a supply and demand framework and of the concurrence and collaboration of public, social and private institutions.

The other component is the development of Evaluation Rules to certify performance capacities en functions and job positions in municipal administration; its design, integration and formalization would be done in accordance to their own agreements, without having to depend on a registry before the bodies that are in charge of certifying labor competences. In this case, the System would promote rules that guide training programs with competence perspective; this is why if they are applied to certification processes they would have to be generated in a framework of institutional coordination.

Conclusions

All of the aforementioned has been the result of a process of reflection and reference to profiles concerning education and training programs for public servants, also because of a programmatic and budget effort that constitutes a cyclic task that has not reported the persistence of competent staff in many of the country's municipalities. Since there is an isolated

sectorial activity that functions without regulated parameters of real requirements of municipal administrations, this proposal was articulated to lead to a serious institutional reflection that reaches inter-institutional areas to try to repair the design of municipal professionalization programs, at least in the methodological area.

There can be, without a doubt, several ways to achieve a consistent, congruent and sufficient education with the help of profiles of municipal staff that is subject to a persistent rotation; this essay proposed another one that invites the aforementioned institutions to take the lead, review the idea, shape what will surely become a strong alternative, arbitrated by the capacities of scholars who have given them prestige and reliability.