

Experience of good practices in the cooperative sector

Municipal University Center and local development. An essential binomial

Centro Universitario Municipal y desarrollo local. Un binomio imprescindible

Centro Universitário Municipal e desenvolvimento local. Um emparelhamento essencial

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ABSTRACT

Local development is currently of extraordinary importance in Cuban municipalities. The Municipal University Center has contributed to management and knowledge, identifying problems, enhancing training oriented to needs, connecting knowledge that will facilitate solutions and forming values in all actors and decision makers involved in local development. The methods and techniques used were documentary analysis, synthesis-analysis and historical-logical analysis. The objective of the article is to explain why the Municipal University Center, in synergy with the municipal government, constitutes an important pillar for local development. The result obtained shows various experiences of the role played by this center, where the interrelation between community education and local development is highlighted as that which prepares the individual to be able to improve his/her relationship with the natural environment, changing the way of thinking and acting.

Keywords: local development; binomial; decision makers; municipal university centers.



RESUMEN

El desarrollo local en la actualidad tiene una extraordinaria importancia en los municipios cubanos. El Centro Universitario Municipal ha contribuido a la gestión y el conocimiento, identificando los problemas, potenciando la capacitación orientada a las necesidades, conectando el conocimiento que facilitarán las soluciones y formando valores en todos los actores y decisores que intervienen en el desarrollo local. Los métodos y técnicas utilizados fueron el análisis documental, el análisis-síntesis y el histórico-lógico. En el artículo, se plantea como objetivo fundamentar por qué el Centro Universitario Municipal en sinergia con el gobierno municipal constituye un pilar importante para el desarrollo local. El resultado obtenido muestra diversas experiencias del papel jugado por este, donde se destaca la interrelación educación comunitaria-desarrollo local como aquella que prepara al individuo para que sea capaz de mejorar su relación con el entorno natural, cambiando la forma de pensar y actuar.

Palabras clave: desarrollo local; binomio; decisores; centros universitarios municipales.

RESUMO

O desenvolvimento local é atualmente de extraordinária importância nos municípios cubanos. O Centro Universitário Municipal tem contribuído para a gestão e o conhecimento, identificando problemas, promovendo treinamento orientado às necessidades, conectando conhecimentos que facilitarão soluções e formando valores em todos os atores e gestores de decisão envolvidos no desenvolvimento local. Os métodos e técnicas utilizados foram a análise documental, a análise de síntese e a análise histórico-lógica. O objetivo do artigo é explicar por que o Centro Universitário Municipal em sinergia com o governo municipal é uma pilastra importante para o desenvolvimento local. O resultado obtido mostra diferentes experiências do papel cumprido por isto, onde a inter-relação entre a educação comunitária e o desenvolvimento local é destacada como aquela que prepara o indivíduo para poder melhorar sua relação com o ambiente natural, mudando a maneira de pensar e agir.

Palavras-chave: desenvolvimento local; binômio; tomadores de decisão; centros universitários municipais.

INTRODUCTION

At present, community development has become very important, where effective work is carried out and managed by all members of the community, a greater integration is observed, as shown in issues related to the environment, the solution of different social problems, whether related to housing, cleaning of streets and sidewalks, the fight against vices such as drinking, just to mention a few, are a sample of the actions that the members of this can alleviate with active participation in the different tasks that are carried out. Community development based on self-management requires, as an indispensable condition, the participation of all those who live in the community. This requirement is not just another idea, nor can it become a slogan in society, much less in Cuba, where the government is based on the power of the people and its main scenario of materialization is in the community and in the search for collective solutions to the most immediate problems that arise there (Caballero Rivacoba, 2004). The above is in tune with the existing conditions in each territory.

The Municipal University Centers (Cum in Spanish) have new functions to fulfill in order to respond to the demand of the territory, a generator of knowledge. Therefore, the university is open to the territory and responds to a social task by responding to specific problems through teaching, extension and research. As a result of the management developed, the university contributes to the development of scientific knowledge in the whole society, at the same time that new tasks are posed that must be solved favoring local development.

Some definitions of local development

Several authors have referred to the concept of local development.

Solo de Zaldívar (2006) states: "the local can also transcend the narrow limits of the municipality, to functionally transcend them as in the case of production chains, or, conversely, be confined to a small territory within the municipality".

This concept is not only limited to the municipality, but also to the productive chains, i.e., to the companies and organizations engaged in economic development within the municipality itself.

In consideration of these requirements, the definition of local development by Torres Paez et al. (2018) is assumed:

A process of social construction and structural change that, from an innovative territorial environment and led by local governments, develops capacities to manage public policies, strategies, programs and projects aimed at taking advantage of endogenous and exogenous resources, promoting economic, social, natural and political-institutional transformations in the localities on a sustainable basis, with active and protagonist citizen participation, in order to improve the quality of life of the population.

This is a broader concept and has had a greater application as part of the strategies and programs by municipal governments where a priority has been the use of endogenous resources with the active participation of the population in the solution of the different problems that may affect the territory.

Municipal University Centers with respect to local development

The University today is more proactive in the economic and social development of the territories. The Municipal University Center has played an important role since its emergence. On October 12, 2002, the municipal university center of Consolación del Sur was created as part of the process of universalization of higher education, conceived with the purpose of providing answers to the educational needs and continuity of studies of young graduates of different specialties of higher secondary level, with an enrollment of 136 students from two sources of income, 33 social workers and 103 students of the Assisted Distance Education as territorial interests, an experience of the province of Pinar del Río. These students enrolled in 7 careers, attended by 24 part-time professors, 3 full-time professors and a teaching secretary, later in 2009, it became a Municipal University Center.

From the perspective of the universalization process and more recently the integration process between the different universities (Pedagogical, Physical Culture and Ministry of Higher Education (Mes in Spanish) opens an important path within the university-society link and at the same time becomes a necessary line of work to contribute to the development both from the academic and labor point of view of university students who are trained in the careers. The reunion of students-tutors and coordinators under a single objective, the elevation of the scientific level of the former leads to the preparation of the latter two to be greater every day and the feedback between the two increases as the exchange between them takes place. On the universalization process Núñez Jover and Pérez Sánchez (2018, p. 12) state: Around 2002, what we have called the (territorial turn) of

higher education began to take place. It came hand in hand with a process promoted by Fidel, which resulted in the creation of municipal university campuses throughout the country, with the consequent generation of extensive training programs and the multiplication of the number of university students.

At this early stage, these institutions were created to universalize higher education, to give everyone access to the centers for undergraduate education (broad access), since the Cum are called not only to train professionals, but also to create human capacities for local development, to train the human potential needed by the municipality to meet the demands of the Municipal Development Strategy (EDM in Spanish).

In the municipality, the role of the Cum is increasing day by day, in its relationship with the Government it becomes an important entity for the improvement not only of the cadres that direct the economic and social life of the territory, but also makes synergy with the other factors to contribute to the development of strategies and other programs carried out by the different institutions.

Regarding the contribution of the Cum to local development and the university-society link, Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, Núñez Jover and Torres Paez (2020) state:

There are Cum in practically all the municipalities of the country and universities in all the provincial capitals. The Mes has a strategy to strengthen the link between higher education and local development and in many municipalities there are growing links between governments, universities, Cum, enterprises and other actors. In the country, there are 191 polytechnic institutes with agricultural specialties, agronomy careers in 62 municipalities and progress is being made in the development of university higher technical programs.

Since its inception, Cum has served not only for the preparation of human resources who will be in charge of local development, but has also contributed to follow up on that qualified force that in the labor centers contribute with their knowledge to the development of human capital and are an important pillar in the efforts of the territory for local development. An example of this are the postgraduate offers and the improvement of government cadres and their substitutes, in which hundreds of them have been trained over the years, and today great importance is given to their improvement as part of the strategy followed in the municipalities to do science and innovation as a

pillar for government management. Local innovation systems (LIS) are an important contribution in which the government is working together. In coinciding with the introduction of LIS, Pérez Viñas et al. (2020) state:

"allows arguing the connection between knowledge, innovation and local development and strengthens the role of higher education in this development" (Núñez Jover et al., 2017, p. 4). In this way, policies are supported that articulate the work with local actors, namely government, cooperatives and different state sectors, as well as entrepreneurs, among others "(...) strongly connected with national and foreign actors, capable of providing knowledge, technologies, financing and other inputs for local development" (Núñez Jover et al., 2017, p. 4). An example of this is the Network of University Management of Knowledge and Innovation for Development (Gucid in Spanish) of the Mes, the Municipal University Centers and the links with other networks and programs that exist in the country, linked to local development, especially, the Articulated Platform for Territorial Integral Development (Padit in Spanish) that "(....) as a framework program, offers an articulated development platform that drives decentralization processes, strengthening local and territorial capacities for planning, development management and multilevel articulation" (Gorgoy Lugo & Torres Paez, 2019, p. 32).

It is therefore important to highlight the role played by the Cum as part of these networks to promote capacity building at the local level and its relationship with social actors, in order to move towards the prosperous and sustainable development that the country demands. Another important element is integrated community work. For Garbizo, Ordaz and Lezcano (2020b) achieving this relationship constitutes:

"In this sense, a challenge that reveals the university social responsibility is given by the need to promote a harmonious relationship between the university and the community as a key element that favors the educational process, from the design of actions that enhance the effective social participation of students and teachers in projects, strategies and programs that contribute to the solution of community problems with the active participation of the community, from the community".

Another important area in which progress has been made and where the role of the Municipal University Center is growing is the role played by graduates and their impact on local development. On this, Pérez Viñas et al. (2020) say:

Other thematic lines cover the impact of university graduates on local development, knowledge management and innovation in the practical application of local development initiatives by higher education institutions and the formation of knowledge, skills and aptitudes to generate transformative thinking by Municipal University Centers (Pineda Machado et al., 2019, p. 108; Rojas Murillo & García González, 2018). Meanwhile, Garbizo et al. (2020a, p. 108) propose methodological teaching actions to "(...) integrate knowledge, skills and values related to local development with the student's socio-professional context to solve problems in an innovative and creative way".

Local development demands people with a high level of preparation who are capable of managing knowledge and innovation and apply it in a creative way in the current socioeconomic context where it is demanded that the government itself, in relation to the Municipal University Center, applies science with an innovative spirit.

This research exposes the experiences of the centro universitario municipal de Consolación del Sur in synergy with the municipal government to contribute to local development. The objective is to explain why the Municipal University Center in synergy with the municipal government constitutes an important pillar for local development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the elaboration of the research, it was used as general method: dialectical-materialist, since it constitutes the methodological basis that defines the use of general scientific methods, which is present throughout the entire research and which raises as a principle the assumption of knowledge from the general to the particular and vice versa.

As methods and procedures are used:

The historical-logical one that allowed the study of the peculiarities and trends of local development and the impact of the Municipal University Center.

The analysis-synthesis that made it possible to approach the object of research by determining the basic elements, in addition to the opportunity to establish the correct structural relationship between all the components of the object of study.

The documentary analysis: aimed at the review of documents of the institution that could contribute significant elements to the research being developed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The contribution of the Cum to the development of science in the territory, as a transmitter of the best accumulated experiences, constituted a bulwark for the fulfillment of programs and strategies, as well as an important pillar for the promotion of economic and social development.

In the area of Science and Technology, scientific work shows progress, since there is a teacher staff with important scientific results in all areas, which enhances and consolidates the technical scientific work in the center. The Cum has strengthened its relevance in the territory, which is evidenced by the results and impacts obtained in terms of awards in the municipal and provincial forum, awards from the Cuban Academy of Sciences and technological innovation awards, as well as other awards related to university extension and training processes. On the other hand, ties have increased with the municipal government in training actions, in the formulation of local development projects, in the provision of services to evaluate the economic and financial feasibility of investment projects and in the formulation of projects financed by international collaboration, as is the case of Padit projects and the introduction of LIS.

Nothing is alien to the Municipal University Center, since its foundation it has become a catalyst and mobilizer of the best innovative experiences. Together with the Municipal Government and other institutions, it has developed several initiatives, which has put it in a better position to advise the latter, not only in the Municipal Development Strategy until 2030 in which the municipality has been a standard bearer in the province of Pinar del Río, but also in the training of its cadres.

There is agreement with Hernández Medina (2012), when referring to the role that the Cum should play in knowledge management and innovation, when he points out:

The Cum must act in the context of the municipality as managers of knowledge and innovation and, to fulfill this role, they must minimize the threats and enhance the

opportunities that arise in the municipal environment based on the transformations in higher education and seeking quality, efficiency and economic rationality. In addition, they contribute to local development by identifying problems, promoting needs-oriented training, connecting knowledge to social needs, collaborating in the management of knowledge that will facilitate solutions and forming values in all local actors.

A priority objective is the dynamization of the government-science relationship, managing innovation, with the closing of the Research + Development + Innovation cycle, and the generalization of the results, for which we work together with all the factors, incorporating as a priority the leading producers.

It is working to advance towards sustainable development. From this, the relationship between the environment and local development is inferred. Since its foundation, the Cum of Consolación del Sur has worked on several environmental education projects in various communities of the territory. An example of this was the "Interdisciplinary Program of Environmental Culture". In this way, it helps and supports decision making by the formal leaders of the community for environmental protection.

All of this has contributed to community development. At present, each community where the project is located has developed its own map and socialization workshops have been held, such as the one held at the Club de Cazadores where several community resilience plans were presented, and some have a map of families vulnerable to Covid, which is being used by the family doctor's offices.

Relationships between Cum, the head office, agencies and entities of the territory are increased to improve the quality of work practice and the participation of students in solving problems of the territory.

- Training and advice to the Municipal Local Development Group for updating the Municipal Development Strategy until 2030 (27 participants)
- Awareness-raising workshop for the constitution of the Multi-stakeholder Platform of the Local Food Innovation System (SIAL) with the presence of the provincial coordination (30 participants)

There is a contribution to the improvement, approval and implementation of the EDM, determination of Cum professors to advise and accompany enterprises, entities and organizations in the territory in the development of their strategies.

At least one course for cadres and their substitutes was given with the participation of the local government in the municipality of Consolación del Sur, aimed at improving the preparation, implementation and management of the municipal economic and social development strategy, training 30 cadres and their substitutes.

Courses and workshops have been held at the Cum, aimed at local development. Among the topics are: Management of financing for local development, Management of local development projects, Agriculture and climate change, Management of quality of life, Nature tourism and hiking, Local innovation system articulated with the Municipal Development Strategy, Recapitalization of agricultural production cooperatives (CPA in Spanish) and credit and service cooperatives (CCS in Spanish), Food and nutritional security, Training of managers for local development. In addition, workshops on strategy design and updating, workshop for presentation to and approval by the Municipal Administration Council, Local innovation system linked to the Municipal Development Strategy, and workshop for the implementation of SIAL actions.

The authors share the criteria of Sánchez Santamaría and Pí Crespo (2017):

Based on these concepts stated in the conceptual frameworks of the Gucid Program in 2006, currently constituted as a national network, the Municipal University Center in its new name has worked to become a dynamic agent of knowledge management and innovation for sustainable local development. The identification of the main channels of university-municipality interaction has made it possible for the Cum, in coordination with the central headquarters and the main actors of the territory, to advise in the elaboration of the Local Development Strategy until the year 2030, facilitating the process as a carrier of certain scientific knowledge, as well as in the training processes for the government cadres and directors of the institutions of the territory.

The 95% of municipal delegates and community leaders are trained to contribute to better address social problems in the community, in accordance with the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals.

An example is the action plan for the implementation of the Local Agricultural Innovation System in the municipality of Consolación del Sur, Pinar del Río, which has allowed:

- In the Local Agro livestock Innovation Group for handicrafts created, 10 jobs will be generated for women who work from their homes in the production of handmade garments
- Collection of 8000 CUP from the sale of masks, handicrafts, toys, among others.
- An organoponic garden was built in the Ocuje community, where fresh vegetables are offered to 70 families in the community, as part of the actions taken in response to the confrontation with Covid-19
- Ten liters of milk are delivered daily to the bodega located in the community "El Ocuje" for the children who live there
- Donations of agricultural and livestock products are made to assistance centers for 10 elderly in the Entronque de Herradura Popular Council
- Ten kg of canned food, 2 quintals of food and fresh vegetables are provided weekly to the mother's home in the municipality of Consolación del Sur
- Increased production by 891 quintals of fruit, 2040 tons of canned fruits and vegetables
- Planting of one hectare of timber trees (cedar, mahogany and majagua) in the Cascajales Farm of the Vladimir Ilich Lenin CCS

Community resilience plan in Consolación del Sur: contributions from the University

Impact of the result:

- The Resilience Plan for the municipality of Consolación del Sur was prepared for 8 communities, which are tools for the municipal government to work in the event of disasters
- With the use of the tool described by GOAL (2015, p. 5), it was possible to characterize resilience in 8 communities in the municipality, highlighting that it oscillates, fundamentally, between three of the five levels: 38 % with Minimal Resilience, 42 % Low Resilience, 20 % Medium Resilience
- In the communities, organizational capacities were established based on the University's leadership and the formation of 8 territorial groups, which were trained and provided support in the diagnostic process
- Four workshops and two seminars have been held on methodological proposals that contribute to active citizen participation

- In 10 communities, a cohesive social structure has been promoted in which all age groups can participate, without distinction, and all interested persons can participate. In 8 communities, it has been possible to change the way the population acts in terms of risk perception, reducing recovery time and resilience
- Participation of people in 100% of the activities carried out, the creation of 23 family patios, 16 of which are run by women, where 100% of the products are marketed in the community, benefiting more than 300 people
- During the Covid stage, more than 40 quintals of various crops were marketed in the community and 10 liters of milk, two quintals of yucca, one of sweet potato, one of cabbage, 300 ears of corn were donated daily to the Águedo Morales Reina Isolation Center, as well as a total of 30 soaps and 23 packages of detergent
- It was managed knowledge on methods and techniques on topics such as: vegetable planting, gender violence in the rural sector, women's empowerment, food conservation, equality and participation, allowing to reduce the conceptions of hegemonic masculinities that exist in the community
- 100% of the community leaders were trained in the preparation of the Community Resilience Plan for the effects of climate change and natural phenomena
- Handicraft and ceramics workshops for 15 young people who do not work were organized
- It was carried out a generalization event on the resilience plan was held, with the presence of 36 community leaders and stakeholders
- It was opened a point of sale for the commercialization of fruits, vegetables and greens harvested in the Family Patios and the products of the mini-industry, which would generate 12 new jobs, 5 of them for women

This is a sample of the results that have been obtained where the Municipal University Center in synergy with the government has played an important role in promoting local development based on government management with more science.

Food production with more science

One of the examples of the role to be played by the Cum is currently the production of food with more science in order to contribute to food sovereignty and nutritional education, based on the governance of local food systems and the management of knowledge and innovation in terms of sustainable territorial development.

A work system has been implemented in the territory where the Cum (including student leaders), the Ministry of Education, the Science, Technology and Innovation Entities, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, the agricultural system (state and non-state), the organizations of agricultural professionals, all work in an integrated manner to improve food production development programs. It is working on the presentation to the government of 28 programs, for which the Municipal University Center advises the entities, which have been presented to the government, where they are given criteria on how to enrich them.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the role of the Municipal University Centers in synergy with the government and other institutions is part of the fact that the Conceptualization of the Economic Model and the Guidelines are a priority of the first order and within it, the task of organizing the contribution to local development in a complex scenario, in the face of the world crisis caused by the Covid-19.

The Municipal University Center, together with the government, has continued to improve its work to strengthen its management and as the main entity in the transmission of knowledge. In agreement with Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, Núñez Jover and Torres Paez (2020):

Government management, supported by science and innovation, aimed at addressing the major challenges facing the country, seeks to strengthen decision-making at all levels and in all areas with the support of expert knowledge, while allowing experts to find more expeditious ways to advance their proposals.

The contribution of the Municipal University Center and its impact on local development has grown and strengthened to the extent that it has been an important pillar in the promotion of the economic and social development of the territory and the management of a stronger government, which in synergy with the university actually leads to the Municipal Development Strategy and the objectives of sustainable development until 2030, managing to integrate all local actors in pursuit of their development.

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Authors' contribution:

All the authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



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