

PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A SOCIOCULTURAL ANIMATOR: KEY COMPETENCES

EXIGENCIAS PROFESIONALES DEL ANIMADOR/A: COMPETENCIAS CLAVE

REQUISITOS PROFISSIONAIS PARA UM ANIMADOR SOCIOCULTURAL: COMPETÊNCIAS BÁSICAS

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ABSTRACT: This article comes from a project sponsored by AECID³ of *Educational Intervention on Social contexts* and it approaches a specific dimension.

As they contribute to solve several problems, sociocultural professionals claim for higher recognition. Given their superior studies they have been able to open a professional specific space. Their CV now includes aptitudes, abilities and skills to perform a job linked to several scenarios and contexts.

The goals of this research are either to identify the key competences of the sociocultural animator that contribute to work efficiently and to detect their educational needs.

A multi methodological approach has been used. A survey was made to sociocultural animators all over Spain, with a reliability of 0,930 Cronbach's alpha. Semi organized interviews were made to key informants. 376 surveys were received back. The SSP program was used for statistical treatment for quan-

titative data, including variance and factorial analysis. Atlas-ti was used for qualitative data.

In order to classify the results, competences were divided into three categories: methodological, planning and generic, confirming that the sociocultural workers have them on a high degree. The factor analysis reflects that the three initially proposed working fields linked to professional performance became four with the empirical work. There is a good identification between the *methodological* and *planning* competences, while the *generic* is divided into: *generic* and *transversal*. A combination of them creates the professional profile, a compulsory reference source.

KEY WORDS: Sociocultural animator; competences; intervention; profession; education.

RESUMEN: Este artículo es fruto de un proyecto financiado por la AECID¹ sobre *Intervención Educativa*

en *Contextos Sociales* y aborda una dimensión específica de la misma.

Los profesionales de la animación sociocultural reclaman un mayor reconocimiento puesto que contribuyen a resolver múltiples problemas. Han tenido la habilidad de abrir un espacio profesional específico, a lo que ha contribuido que su formación haya alcanzado nivel universitario. Su curriculum incluye aptitudes, habilidades y destrezas para ejercer una labor vinculada a diversos escenarios y contextos.

Esta investigación persigue, por un lado, identificar las competencias clave del animador/a² que contribuyen a la práctica eficaz de su profesión y, por otro, detectar sus necesidades formativas.

Se ha utilizado una metodología multimétodo. Se elaboró un cuestionario para animadores socioculturales de todo el estado español, con una fiabilidad del 0,930, alpha de Cronbach. Se efectuaron entrevistas semiestructuradas a informantes claves. Se recibieron 376 cuestionarios. El tratamiento estadístico se realizó con el programa SPSS para los datos cuantitativos, entre ellos el análisis de varianza y factorial. Para los cualitativos se empleó el Atlas-ti.

Para el tratamiento de los resultados las competencias se sistematizaron en tres categorías: metodológicas, de planificación y genéricas, constatándose que los animadores las desempeñan en alto grado. También se han identificado las que precisan mejorar. El análisis factorial confirmatorio refleja que la propuesta inicial de tres campos vinculados a la actividad profesional, se ha transformado en cuatro en el trabajo empírico. Existe una buena identificación con las competencias *metodológicas* y *de planificación*, mientras que las *genéricas* se han desglosado en dos: *genéricas* y *transversales*. Todas ellas identifican el perfil de este profesional, fuente obligada de consulta.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Animador/a sociocultural; competencias; intervención; profesión; formación.

RESUMO: Como eles contribuem para resolver vários problemas, os profissionais socioculturais reivindicar maior reconhecimento. Dado os seus estudos superiores têm sido capazes de abrir um espaço específico profissional. Seu currículo inclui agora aptidões, habilidades e competências para realizar um trabalho ligado a diversos cenários e contextos.

Os objetivos desta pesquisa são tanto para identificar as competências essenciais do animador sociocultural que contribuam para trabalhar de forma eficiente e detectar suas necessidades educacionais.

Foi utilizada uma abordagem multi metodológica. A pesquisa foi feita para animadores socioculturais em toda a Espanha, com uma confiabilidade de alfa de Cronbach 0930. Entrevistas semi-organizadas foram feitos com informantes-chave. 376 inquéritos foram recebidos de volta. O programa SSP foi utilizado para o tratamento estatístico dos dados quantitativos, incluindo variância e análise fatorial. Atlas-ti foi usado para dados qualitativos.

Para classificar os resultados, as competências foram divididas em três categorias: metodologia, planejamento e genérico, confirmando que os trabalhadores socioculturais têm-os em um alto grau. A análise fatorial reflete que os três campos de trabalho propostos inicialmente ligados ao desempenho profissional tornou-se quatro com o trabalho empírico. Há uma boa identificação entre as competências metodológicas e de planejamento, enquanto o genérico está dividido em: genérico e transversal. A combinação dos dois cria o perfil do profissional, uma fonte de referência obrigatória.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Animador sociocultural; competências; intervenção; profissão; educação.

Introduction

We are once again forced to refer to the current economic and social crisis and the requirement of urgent answers to globalization, vulnerability, loss of ideological and cultural frameworks and the maintenance of the society welfare.

We should bear in mind that the sociocultural animation (ASC) contributes to the socio-educational development, as well as to reinforce personal and community identity. This situation shows inflection points which influence directly in professionals linked to the social field. Their profile has evolved, in order to give a suitable answer to the the rising needs generated in their working scenarios.

After the paper research, it can be established that there is a separation between the university education and the real world, where specific requirements are demanded. To face this situation we propose a question: *Which are the key competences defining sociocultural animators professional duties?*

The aim of this paper is to identify the requirements of sociocultural animators on new social intervention contexts. We have collected some professional opinions in order to determine the competences performed and the improvement needed. The specific goals are:

- To identify the key competences used daily by the animator.
- To diagnose the educational needs.
- To suggest improvements to provide a quality intervention.

This research is done from the professional sociocultural animator perspective, analysing the skills used on a daily basis, because those skills can only be legitimate by them. The volunteer's work is still recognized along with other professionals using the animation methodology.

This article begins with the analysis of the sociocultural animator profile and studying his profession and professionalization in the research's framework. A special attention is paid to their professional competences. The empirical aspect gathers information about the competences of the exercising animators, where the research group is working. On this occasion, qualitative and quantitative methodologies are used. We end up with the presentation of the main results which allow us to make conclusions and improvement proposals

1. The sociocultural animator

We live in a society that is known as a knowledge society; multicultural, technological ... Those names force the sociocultural animators to adapt their job to a less static stage in order to meet the needs of this new era. In fact, the power of technological improvements affects the professional work and opens new channels to the economy, culture, politics, education, leisure and citizen involvement, modifying the users' job. This situation requires sociocultural animators to have a broad education so they can be efficient in their job on versatile and changing societies.

On complex contexts like this one, professionals have to be even more aware of their working framework due to its many different scenarios and contexts. Moreover, it has to be said that the ASC concept is not univocal, so it has several interpretations which has complicated its professional development.

We find useful to specify from a global perspective what we understand by ASC, highlighting its main elements. It refers to an interventional methodology, with an intentional and suggestion purpose, which promotes the involvement and development of sociocultural values, oriented to individual promotion and social transformation, and giving prominence to the community at the same time. In words of Pérez Serrano and Sarrate Capdevila (2013, p. 90) "in the civil society it is important to boost the participation to work towards the development of a democratic culture, using committed social practices that promote the underlying values in human rights".

Having said that, the animation can not only be understood as a methodology, it implies compromise and life. Historically it has mostly been identified with the promotion of the involvement and its influence on the associative life invigoration (Catalá, 2012).

Human beings and their initiatives are the main aspects to enrich different social groups. In that sense, animation tries to characterise, organise and mobilise individuals and communities in order to transform them into active agents for its own promotion, and if possible, help them to manage their future.

The previous can be possible thanks to sociocultural animators' work. Animation requires either a cultural agent advice or an intervention. Its competence degree is tightly linked to its professional job quality. Their education, both initial and continuous training, is a decisive factor for intervention quality. That is why sociocultural workers with specialised sociocultural animators are needed in order to invigorate and give the society the responsibility of its own progress.

The sociocultural animator is an expert whose main function is to boost and facilitate access to a more active and creative life in community contexts. This is based on respect and defence of the individual dignity, and in application of human rights towards welfare society and social equity. Their aim is to boost both individual and groups to participate on its own cultural contexts, in order to reach real community interests. As the process has to be assumed by the participants, they are focussed on helping others to organise, plan and coordinate themselves. So, the sociocultural animator is the power that conducts the social transformation through an active and participative methodology pointed towards the citizen compromise.

López Noguero (2002) points out some characteristics of the professional animator. Amongst them, we can find a better education and specialization influencing in the quality of the results, dominance over the intervention tools and techniques, receiving institutional support and social recognition and to guarantee a better stability on programs and projects by being committed by contract.

His competences are the more important active of his work. He acts from, with and by his singular personality. Their competences and abilities are based on knowledge, know-how and a specific know-how. However, it would be convenient to mark them off to avoid other professionals to intervene and complicate their duties.

2. The professionalization

The sociocultural animator needs to secure its profession. This word comes from the Latin (*professio, -onis*) which means: to express, show and execute an occupation. According to the dictionary *Real Academia de la Lengua* (2001, p.1840), a profession is "an employment, trade or ability, that it is executed by someone by getting a monetary compensation back". From a descriptive prospective it is understood as a combination of public functions, valued by society, performed by specifically and technically prepared individuals, independents and with a common ethics code

The professionalization term is linked to the previous one, and it refers to the action and effect of professionalize. It means to give a professional nature to an activity. It is a social process for which any occupation becomes a consolidated profession. This sequence implies a limitation on the competences recognized by their own professional college association. Those institutions create regulations, code of actions and the required accreditation for its professional exercise. So the differentiation from amateurs is established. A profession means power and social status.

As Sáez Carreras (2009) said, professions are built up with history, changing at the same time the daily routine and social reality. Every profession depends on its own ability to maintain the need for their competences on the society mind. Related with the prior, the animators defend, build, maintain and legitimise the competences needed to promote the public believe over the necessity and benefit of their work.

In the seventies, animation was practiced without a specific or systemic education. It was mainly volunteering and linked to religious and non-profit organizations. Afterwards, in the eighties and nineties,

it was boosted by the new democratic local governments in search of agents linked to social change, improvement and transformation. On that period, it gained a higher recognition both for their specialised CV and for their job performance. Later on, the professional animator image has been secured, working both for public and private institutions.

This image status shows an institutional profile regulated by contract, and limited by a ethics code. The Access to this job is restricted to an established education, based in a recognized qualification, competences and compromise with the responsibilities that has to assume. The sociocultural animator, like any other professional, should meet a list of requirements. This profession is still on a building process, as Sravilla, Pac and Cano (2011) have said, because it has to secure its epistemology. Besides, they are facing the political changes on the public administration and specially on the social programs, which create instability among the sociocultural animators.

In 1991, an important landmark happened, when the University Degree on Social Education was created including sociocultural animation studies, one of the three main specialising channels, along with adult education and specialized education. The competences and functions of the *Técnico Superior en Animación Sociocultural*ⁱ (1995) were redefined in 2011, changing its name to *Técnico Superior en Animación Sociocultural y Turística*ⁱⁱ (Real Decreto 1684/2011, of the Spanish Regulation) increasing its functions and working contexts. It belongs to the Professional Family of Sociocultural Services to Community.

As all the social professions, animation is currently undergoing and inflection point due to the socioeconomic crisis. It is classified on the name of community animatorⁱⁱⁱ, on the national occupational listing. Amongst its duties are the related to obtain a better use of free and leisure time as well as the ones for prevention to marginalisation and the inclusion, volunteering promotion and social reinsertion. As we can see it is persevere on a social prospective, but the ASC also helps in the cultural promotion.

In relation to its duties, for defining the professional contexts of this technician it is compulsory to consult the current legislation. In that way, we could see that they work in social services and more precisely on: community development and youth information; cultural services (read, information, TICs and cultural sources and several products): touristic services, leisure and free time (free time, sports, environmental and outdoor activities).

3. Competences

Nowadays, not one profession can anticipate the knowledge, ability or skill that will be needed in the future. That is why, the concern for a continuous training is essential and it is required when recruiting good professionals.

It can be certified that there is no agree on the conceptual delimitation of the competence construct, given its similarity to other concepts as knowledge, capacities, abilities and skills. To approach the issue several references have been used (Alonso, 2009; Escudero Muñoz, 2009 & MEC, 2006; among others).

From an etymological approach the substantive *competence* comes from the Latin *competere*, which derives from the adjective *competens-tis* meaning competent, accurate, convenient and suitable. In general terms, this word is used to define a good user of a technique, discipline or art.

Generally speaking, it is understood in several ways, but they all converge in an essential aspect: the know-how without forgetting the knowledge and know how to be. In that sense, MEC (2006) in relation to its academic definition, non to the professional attribution, establishes that:

“competences are a combination of knowledge, abilities (intellectual, manual, social, etc), attitudes and values which will entitle a graduated to face efficiently a problem or an issue intervention, in an academic, professional or social determined context”. (p.6)

From a working point of view, this concept refers to the ability to perform the duties attached to a specific job, taking into account the level and specialization. It is a combination of activities performed independently by a professional of any kind. They should be understood from a systemic point of view, as integrated actions supported by and an ethical project that contributes to solve problems.

It can then be deduced that the competences have to cover some requirements, as the application or transference of its character into several situations, and the achievement of diversified goals. Pérez Carreras (2009) considers that those definitions combine sources acquired by education, experience and by direct practice contact. They appear when acting accurately on a complex situation and by coordinating their knowledge, aptitudes and actions. The key competences, also known as basic or fundamentals should provide a solid base which allows lifetime training.

Usually, on the several approaches to this concept there are two main aspects: its relation to “usefulness” in a broad sense, linked with social, economical and cultural interests, and on the other hand, the ability to be “acquired” by the individuals (Alonso, 2009).

The European Higher Education Area, through its White Paper (2005) examines the sociocultural animator competences. The comparative study made within graduated, associations and professionals, classify them on transversal or generic –needed to perform any occupation- and specifics –gathering the special requirements of a determined profession-. The first group includes aspects related to organization and planning. The second group the know-how and know of how to be.

This professional profile can be defined by the competences covered on the 2011 legislation, which states “to program, to organize, to implement and to evaluate sociocultural and touristic animation interventions, promoting active individual participation and by coordinating actions of volunteers and professionals”. They can be completed with professional, social and personal competences and their own professional qualifications.

All challenges faced by the sociocultural animator are related with the innovative capacity. He has to be able to overcome the limits and borders of knowledge and acquired skills. Among these, we can mention the entrepreneurial spirit, responsibility, versatility and creativity. Those agents should be able to stare at reality and get into it in order to help to the prevention of social problems.

4. Methodology

It has been established some objectives in order to identify the sociocultural animator competences and its main educational lacks, goals of this study, the information collected is divided into three categories. They are Based on existing researches over this issue, and on the data provided by the exercising animators. They are called:

- *Methodological*: main elements for sociocultural intervention. It stands out team working skills, the ability to face and to solve problems skills at work, the command of team working methodologies and the development of the invigoration for participation processes.
- *Plan*: related to coordination, execution and project evaluation aspects, the coordination between different social agents, and the communication in the development and participation in the professional activity dimensions.
- *Generic*: also known as basic, as they refer to competences that any professional worker should have. The highly related to what a sociocultural animator do are: the use of TICs, to analyse and to understand social contexts, source localization, participation into interdisciplinary teams, to detect group intervention requirements and ethical commitment.

On the empirical research process one of the key moments is the selection and creation of data gathering tools. According to this research, it was decided to interview the key informants and to create an ad-hoc questionnaire, whose goal was to collect valuable information from sociocultural anima-

tors. It was divided into two sections: the first one collects personal, contextual, educational and working characteristics; and the second one presents the professional animator basic competences. It ends with two open questions. It was sent online to 530 social animators, the target population of this study. A total of 376 surveys were received back which rise up the respond number to 70.94%, this rise was mainly due to the huge number of encouraging messages sent.

Regarding to the technical characteristics analysis in the survey, its reliability was determined by Cronbach's Alpha process with a value of 0.930, which means a high level of reliability. The validity of the content has been certify by judges and experts linked to the animation sector, and two of them are specialised on research methodology. The results were satisfactory, both in the survey organization and on the clarity of expression, some items were even rewritten.

The 18th version of the SPSS program was used for the quantitative statistical treatment. to establish precisely the personal characteristics there were made descriptive analysis studies of the sample individuals, using percentages and average values to assess the observed competences.

On a second stage, the ANOVA test was used to certify whether there were significant differences between the analysed groups or not. It was developed on the pre-established four age segments. This test was also used to check the average equity with Welch's method; as well as *a posteriori* contrasts over group where the minimum confidence levels of "F" rise up to 95%. Finally, the FCA (Factorial Confirmatory Analysis) was used to check the competence assembly with a series of constructs or factors, in order to study its similarity with the theoretical framework.

5. Results description

The sample data shows that although there is a rise on the number of men there is a feminine predominance by 70.1%, ratifying prior researches conclusions. The more populated age segment is 31-40 years with the 43.7% of individuals. The educational level is high: 60.9% has studied at University and 39,1% has obtained an average degree on high school, vocational training and university access. Moreover, the basic professional activity is focussed on two main aspects: 36% of young population and 32.2% of adults and seniors. This information shows the importance that sociocultural animator has nowadays for groups that are at risk of social isolation. At the same time, agents consider that they should be more active on some scenarios: educational, intercultural, social-civic, leisure and on shelters for vulnerable groups.

Competences are seen from two perspectives: professional performing and improvement needs. Those results are presented on the table below. Figures have been organized from the higher percentage to the less percentage of professional positive answer. The required improvement percentages are next to them.

Normally, sociocultural animators assure to use the given competences in a high degree. So, over 90% of them perform two important working activities: "invigorate and mobilise participants" and "to have a problem solving skills". Between 80-90% of them show skills as "team work skills development", "ethical attitudes development", "oral and written communication in its professional performance" and "dominance of team working methods and techniques". So, which stands out is the importance of the teamwork for the professional performance, because they have a positive consideration for both its development and its technical and methodological dominance. At the same level, we can find ethical compromises related to social professional requirements.

The 3rd group, from 70-80% contains the following competences: "participate in an interdisciplinary team", "coordinate implicated project agents" and "conduct, execute and evaluate intervention projects and actions". As it can be seen, most of them are related to the technical field because an initial and permanent dominance is required.

Table 1. Professional competences performed and improvement needs

Competences	Execution	Need to improve
Invigorate and mobilise participants	97,1%	52,4%
Problem solving skills	90,6%	48,2%
Team work skills development	85,7%	45,2%
Ethical attitudes development	84,3%	37,6%
Oral and written communication in all professional dimensions	82,8%	47,1%
Dominance of team work methods and techniques	81,8%	50,0%
Interdisciplinary team working	79,4%	48,8%
Coordinate implicated project agents	70,7%	52,9%
Conduct, execute and evaluate projects and intervention actions	70,6%	42,4%
Efficient use of TICs	63,9%	46,3%
Localise and generate sources for intervention development	62,1%	54,1%
Analyse and understand social contexts	60,6%	60,0%
Detect intervention requirements in a group of determined characteristics	58,9%	50,6%

There is a 4th group, from 60 to 70%, with aspects such as: “efficient use of TICs”, “localise and generate sources for intervention development” and “analyse and understand social contexts”. Those competences are linked to social media and sources that need to be understood for an accurate professional performance. Finally, the less considered is “detect intervention requirements in a group with specific characteristics”, with just 58.9%.

Regarding *competences that need to be improved* just “analyse and understand social contexts” reach 60%. Undoubtedly, it is necessary to go deeper in the basic element that must support the whole intervention. That is why competences as: “locate and generate sources for intervention development”, “coordinate implicated projects agents”, “detect intervention requirements in a group of specific characteristics”, “invigorate and mobilise participants” and “dominance of team working methods and techniques” are above 50%. In this group there are combined aspects of job daily duties with technical aspects requiring a higher education.

“Participate on an interdisciplinary teamwork”, “problem solve skills”, “oral and written communication in professional performance”, “the efficient use of TICs”, “team work skills development”, “conduct, execute and evaluate intervention projects and actions” show over 40% of improvement requirements. In all of them there is a need for continuous training. In fact, they state the need to prepare them better to perform teamwork duties and to be updated with the TICs. They are also worried about the design and evaluation of intervention projects in the social context.

Only “to develop ethical attitudes” has a lower demand, just the 37.6% wants an improvement on this competence related with the respect towards the individual.

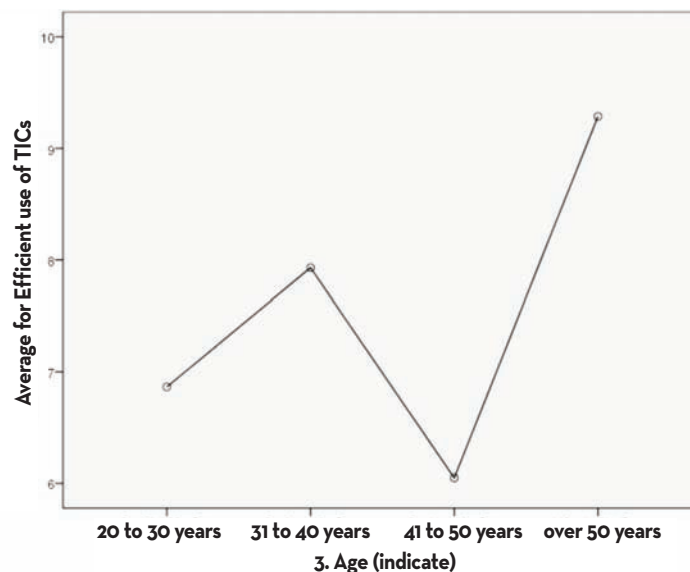
To sum up, we should highlight that some of the competences performed more often in a professional work do not match with the improvement requirements. In fact, technical and specialized aspects have the higher percentages, while the ones related to daily performance require a lower improvement level, which is normally due to the acquired experience.

We believe that the *sociocultural animators age* is one of the most important variable. Given the data dispersion, they have been divided into four groups (20-30 years; 31-40 years; 41-50 years and over 50 years). On the following table we will find average values for each competence, both globally and by groups. Moreover, the ANOVA “F” statistical value has been added; which allows to confirm the big differences between the age segments. Those analyses have been made over competences performed by professionals. Its evaluation scales can vary from 1-10.

Table 2. Professional aging and performed competences assessment

Competences	Global	20-30	31-40	41-50	Over 51	"F"	Represents
Analyse and understand contexts	7,43	7,44	7,38	7,12	8,29	1,384	0,248
Dominate methodologies and teamwork techniques	8,07	8,14	7,97	7,88	8,50	0,826	0,481
Invigorate and mobilise participants	8,89	9,33	8,25	9,08	9,43	13,844	0,000
Coordinate project agents	7,50	7,32	7,95	6,48	9,14	8,201	0,000
Detect group intervention requirements	7,44	7,41	7,26	7,28	8,86	3,336	0,020
Conduct, execute and evaluate projects	7,78	7,37	8,19	7,55	8,21	2,528	0,058
Localise and generate sources for intervention	7,20	7,21	7,67	5,92	8,07	6,834	0,000
Teamwork skills development	8,38	8,63	7,83	8,70	8,86	8,843	0,000
Participate in a interdisciplinary team	7,94	8,66	7,65	7,38	8,43	7,455	0,000
Problem solving skills	8,75	8,76	8,60	8,72	9,71	3,166	0,025
Efficient TICs analyse	7,25	6,87	7,93	6,05	9,29	15,931	0,000
Oral and written communication	8,09	8,05	8,51	7,22	9,14	7,058	0,000
Ethical attitude development	8,50	8,85	8,56	7,70	8,79	5,578	0,001

Graph 1. Perform. Efficient use of TICs



With the graph above we have confirmed the highly representative differences on some competences. So, the "F" statistical value is higher on the efficient use of TICs for the most aged segment; while the group from 41-50 years is more critical and less considerate to this item. It also has a low level for the youngest group. Those *a posteriori* contrasts reveal the importance of such differences, as shown on the following graph.

Higher differences (F=13,844) can also be seen for the competence "invigorate and mobilise participants" in the more distant groups, while the more critics can be found on the segment 31-40 years.

"Team work skills development" highlights (F= 8.843) the differences between the oldest segments and the other two, mainly with the segment 31-40 years. Similar values are found in "coordinate project agents", where the lowest level corresponds to the segment 41-50 years, showing the differences with the rest.

“Participate in an interdisciplinary group” shows ($F= 7.4555$) a significant difference between the youngest and the oldest segments. Similar values can be found for “good oral and written communication skills”. The most critical group is 42-50 years old.

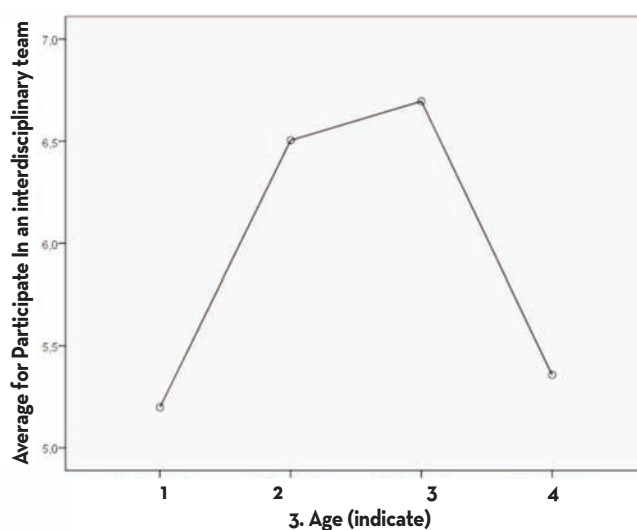
A more consistent behaviour can be seen on competences as: “localise and generate sources to intervene in social contexts” and “ethical attitudes development” where the segment 41-50 years is the lowest one. On a lower confidence level (95%) there are important differences between groups for the competences “to detect the team intervention needs” and “problem solving” where the segment over 50 years stands out.

It is important to know that on the competences that define the professional performance of the animator, there are not big differences between the groups. This ratifies that they are of daily use in animation. We can list here: “analyse and understand contexts” and “dominate teamwork methods and techniques”. “Conduct, execute and evaluate projects” has a similar value to the above mentioned, but the youngest segment gives them a lower value. In order to reinforce the previous information, in the following table we will show the animators *improvement requirements*:

Table 3. Professional age and competences improvement needs

Competences	Global	20-30	31-40	41-50	Over 51	“F”	Represents
Analyse and understand contexts	6,77	6,44	6,90	6,97	5,79	1,627	0,183
Dominate teamwork methodologies and techniques	6,86	6,17	7,32	7,00	5,93	4,064	0,007
Invigorate and mobilise participants	6,55	5,13	7,54	6,83	5,79	16,065	0,000
Coordinate implicated project agents	6,51	6,39	6,79	6,01	5,86	1,313	0,270
Detect group intervention needs	6,46	6,61	6,27	6,28	5,93	0,505	0,679
Conduct, execute and evaluate projects	6,23	6,05	5,96	6,67	5,86	1,094	0,352
Localise and generate intervention sources	6,53	6,58	6,46	6,33	5,93	0,251	0,861
Teamwork skills development	6,20	5,50	6,56	6,42	5,50	3,040	0,029
Participate in an interdisciplinary team	6,05	5,20	6,50	6,70	5,36	5,979	0,001
Problem solving skills	6,13	5,54	6,46	6,35	5,07	2,566	0,055
Efficient use of TICs	6,12	5,78	6,50	5,58	5,86	2,194	0,089
Oral and written communication	5,77	5,21	5,75	6,30	5,64	2,209	0,087
Ethical attitudes development	5,46	5,18	5,54	5,25	5,36	0,348	0,791

Graph 2. Improvement needed. Interdisciplinary group participation



In this case, we do not find important differences. The highest are related to the function of “invigorate and mobilise participants” highly demanded for the segment 31-40 years contrasting with the youngest segment; that situation may be motivated by the changes on the initial education of the professionals

There exist the necessity of improving the “interdisciplinary team working” with an $F=5.979$ demanded mainly for the middle age groups. The average contrasts show the differences between the youngest group and the middle agers, but not seniors, as showed on the following graph.

Differences rise up to 99% confidence level for “dominance of teamwork methods and techniques”, demanded for middle agers. “Team work skills development” and “problem solving skills” are on the 95% limit.

Slight differences can be observed for “oral and written communication improvement” and “use of TICs”. In The other studied competences we find a similar demand in all the aging groups, which seems to confirm the professional perfectionism of all the animators.

A factor analysis was made over the professional competence performance to assess its assemblage along with animators’ main duties. So, the total variance reaches 79.752% around four factors, as shown on the following tables.

Table 4. Total explained variance

Component	Initial auto values			Saturation sums to the square extraction			Saturation sums to the square rotation		
	Total	Variance	Acumulated	Total	Variance	Acumulated	Total	Variance	Acumulated
		%	%		%	%		%	%
1	5,764	44,337	44,337	5,764	44,337	44,337	2,860	22,000	22,000
2	2,292	17,633	61,970	2,292	17,633	61,970	2,844	21,878	43,878
3	1,270	9,768	71,738	1,270	9,768	71,738	2,399	18,452	62,330
4	1,018	7,834	79,572	1,018	7,834	79,572	2,242	17,242	79,572
5	,671	5,160	84,732						
6	,495	3,805	88,538						
7	,353	2,719	91,257						
8	,324	2,493	93,749						
9	,276	2,120	95,869						
10	,190	1,461	97,330						
11	,167	1,288	98,618						
12	,121	,930	99,548						
13	,059	,452	100,000						

Extraction method: Main components analysis.

Here we present the rotated components matrix by the method of Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 5. Rotated components matrix

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
PERFORMANCE: Analyse and understand contexts.	,262	,078	,619	,351
Dominate team working methods and techniques	,190	,838	-,019	,188
Invigorate and mobilize participants	-,296	,641	,379	,221
Coordinate implicated project agents	,732	,129	,102	,552
Detect intervention needs on group with specific requirements	,471	,351	,376	,558
Conduct, execute and evaluate projects and intervention actions	,864	,035	,106	,227
Localise and generate sources for intervention development	,530	,137	,390	,588
Team working skills development	-,051	,882	,059	,057
Participate on and interdisciplinary team	-,053	,294	,718	,482
Problem solving skills	,301	,828	,075	-,033
Efficient use of TICs	,215	,069	,079	,878
Professional oral and written communication	,796	,102	,520	,071
Ethics attitudes development	,329	-,021	,870	-,090

Extraction method: Main components analysis.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

As shown on the table 4, the explained variance from these four main components raises up to 79.572% so the own system delete the rest. In order to reduce information it is important to choose accurately the cutting line for future analysis with those variables. Correlated values of each competence with rotated components are shown on table 5, Varimax rotation allows to select and to gather the highest correlated values.

factor one, gathers the competences related to “conduct, execute and evaluate intervention projects and actions”, “oral and written communication in all professional dimensions” and “coordinate implicated project agents”. So, they can be identified as planning competences.

On factor two, we find competences related to professional performance, methodological competences as: “team working skills development”, “dominance of team working methodologies and techniques”, “problem solving skills” and “invigorate and mobilise participants”.

The third factor shows three competences “ethical attitude development”, “participate on a interdisciplinary team” and “analyse and understand social contexts”. Those can be described as generic because they help professionals to perform their duties efficiently.

The fourth factor shows transversal competences somehow related to the professional duties of the animator; “efficient use of TICs”, “localise and generate sources for social intervention development” and “detect intervention needs on a group with specific requirements.”

To sum up, the factor analysis reveals that competences performed by professionals can be assembled on four specialized fields which are related to previous theoretical statements and creating a new one from the division of the generics competences into generics and transversals.

Conclusions and proposals

It can be stated that we face a curious and responsible group interested in obtaining better levels of professional performance quality. It has been observed their appliance of the studied competences into their working life which do not impede their wish of continuous training.

The results show that there is a high performance of the analyse competences by animators. The two main ones for its professional performance are: “to invigorate and mobilise participants” and “problem solving skills”. Referring to the improvement demands, they usually meet the requirements, which may be related to the awareness of the continuous improvement. In this sense, they state that: “analyse and understand social contexts” and “coordinate project agents” need to be improved.

The age is an important factor for professional competence performance, because it shows differences between the stated groups. However, some competences show huge differences like: “analyse and understand contexts” and “dominate teamwork methods and techniques”. These results reveal the performed functions on their daily basis and define the professional performance identity of the animator.

This research has revealed that animators on the middle age group need to improve. This is understandable because the youngest had access to university studies and the older segment has a large working experience.

The confirmatory factor analysis has stated that the initial classification of the fields related to professional activities are now four. So, there is a good identification within planning and methodological competences. However, the competence generic has been divided into: generic and a new one called transversal competence. The results show that the final segmentation would be: planning, methodological, generic and transversal competences. All related to the sociocultural field.

On the other hand, from the qualitative study it can be deduced that sociocultural animators are concerned to achieve more professional visibility and an important status in society. At the same time, they are aware that due to the economic crisis, social welfare is undergoing an inflection process.

Mainly based on the sociocultural animator performance, the results provide interesting advices that will produce educational proposals related to professional performance.

From this research we know that professionals, in contact with a daily practice, are a compulsory source for consultation, to define the competences needed for their duties development. Theoretical education enriched with daily performance helps to legitimize a profession that works in complex contexts which requires animators to constantly redefine their duties.

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Notes

¹ Superior Technician for Sociocultural Education



² Superior Technician for Sociocultural and Touristic Animation

Spanish regulation

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