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Additional Information

Chapter 6

Fostering a reparative international development cooperation system: Transformative learning in a master's degree in development cooperation

Carlos Delgado-Caro, Carola Calabuig-Tormo, and Marta Maicas-Pérez

Introduction

The international development cooperation system includes a set of actors, policies, agendas, instruments and actions that have had, since its formation in the mid-twentieth century, an interest in eradicating poverty and inequality in the world through targeted financial flows aimed at promoting 'development.' These aspirations, which arise from the community of donor countries with the greatest relative wealth at the time and driven by diverse interests (Gulrajani & Calleja, 2021), have projected an idea of justice anchored in humanism with a universalist vocation from the perspective and viewpoint of the West (Sriprakash et al., 2020).

In this chapter, we explore the potential to foster an alternative view of development, more inclusive, using the case of the master's degree in development cooperation of the Universitat Politècnica de València (MDC-UPV) in Spain. We examine two educational proposals: action learning (AL), and external internships (EI). The relationship between transformative and restorative learning due to the expansion of capabilities in the students of the MDC-UPV can be a first step to inclusive forms of development. Mezirow's theory (1990, 1997, 2003, 2006) can find in the capability approach (Sen, 1999, 2009; Nussbaum, 2001) a proposal to re-evaluate the results of these learning processes and expand their impact. Thus, the experience produces 'some stability' to 'survive disorientation,' as Lange (2004: 122) claims,

and allows future development cooperation professionals to imagine and create a restorative future in this field (Sriprakash, 2022).

We first present the current landscape of the development cooperation system and the MDC-UPV. In the next section, we describe the theoretical framework built for this case with the elements that link reparative futures, the capability approach, and transformative learning. It is followed by a section describing the pedagogical proposals (AL and EI) and the methodology. Then, the learning outcomes, the expanded capabilities, and their effect as restorative learning are discussed. Finally, the main conclusions are provided.

The development cooperation system

Given the absence of voice and participation, the cooperation system has evolved over the last 70 years towards greater consideration, at least in rhetoric, of the 'recipients' of aid in policy dialogue and concrete actions. The aid effectiveness agenda has contributed to this by attempting to overcome the numerous malfunctions identified in the system: the atomisation of interventions, lack of partner leadership, lack of aid predictability, questionable impact, the existence of donor interests, etc. (Eyben, 2015; Riddell, 2014; Unceta et al., 2021).

Although these attempts have resolved some shortcomings, they have avoided issues that we consider essential from a truly transformative social and environmental justice approach. One of the main criticisms is the managerialist and technocratic approach that permeates the guidelines and actions (Shutt, 2015). These criticisms highlight the absence of a political approach in the cooperation system, essential to fight the root causes that generate exclusion, poverty and inequality. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as guidelines approved by the international community are criticised for overlooking issues such

as redistribution of power (Spangenberg, 2017). From this perspective, top-down projects and policies and system managerialism (among other elements) have deliberately denied the existence of various forms of domination in the past, such as colonialism and racism, in pursuit of a vision and understanding of development that, in turn, consciously or unconsciously, continues to reproduce them. As Sriprakash et al. (2020: 4) point out, the policies, projects and practices of the aid system have been based on intellectual theories with an imperialist and racialised teleological matrix based on a partial understanding of the world that has understood that change and evolution should be inspired by European modernity.

The system has also been questioned for decades due to the incoherence of implementing development cooperation policies that correct or solve the problems. Some authors point out that the same countries and societies of the Global North are producing the situation they want to solve with their modus operandi within the framework of a dominant capitalist and developmentalist model (Belda-Miquel et al., 2019). We are talking about models of production and consumption that generate exclusion, dispossession, plundering, violation of rights, pollution, environmental damage, reinforcement of patriarchal, racist and xenophobic structures, etc.

These criticisms, connected to the previous ones, are ultimately intended to highlight the ontological source of the issue: the notion of progress from an anthropocentric viewpoint. Its form of expansion has been the multiple labels of the concept of development and the capitalist model for the economy (Recio Andreu, 2021). As Recio Andreu expressed, capitalist societies have a foundational history of colonialism and accumulation that is inevitably present in international development cooperation. In this sense, and based on a strong critique, terms such as ‘anti-cooperation’ (Llistar Bosch, 2009) or ‘post-development

cooperation' have been proposed, which move from understanding the cooperation system as useless and counterproductive to deconstructing the imaginary and unlearning the traditional North–South and unsustainable ways of understanding cooperation in line with proposals of a de-growth nature (Marcellesi, 2012).

Concerning what we want to present in this chapter, to put it in dialogue with a concrete experience developed in higher education, we would agree with all the criticisms that identify the predominant apolitical character of the traditional development cooperation system (Carothers & de Gramont, 2013). We agree with the views that recognise the existence of multiple power relations and oppressions resulting from the Western supremacy that has dominated (and continues to dominate) this system. However, we believe that it is not enough only to recognise these injustices (social, environmental, epistemological), rather we need to move towards a truly reparative international development cooperation system that repairs in an exercise of true healing. This would involve changes in discourses and practices of a multi-level, transdisciplinary and multi-actor nature, especially including the educational and pedagogical dimension, as proposed by Sriprakash et al. (2020).

The UPV master's degree in development cooperation

The MDC-UPV is an official two-year master's degree offered by the Universitat Politècnica de València since 2010. In this way, it has a previous trajectory of more than a decade of training in the field. Over all these years, it has been characterised by applying a critical vision of the orthodox cooperation system. Its contents, structure and methodologies are based on environmental and social justice ideals and innovative teaching-learning methodologies. The MDC-UPV is aimed at people from different backgrounds and geographical origins who wish to focus their field of work or academic discipline on

development cooperation and human and sustainable development processes. In this sense, the student body is characterised by its intergenerational, cultural and multidisciplinary diversity (Leivas et al., 2019), although the teaching staff is not. It should be noted that its gestation and evolution over the years have resulted from participatory reflections involving not only the teaching staff, but also the students themselves and organisations in the sector (Boni et al., 2017). Some of its fundamental pillars are participation, the local–global vision, the critical vision with a will to transform, and the care approach.

As Delgado et al. (2022) describe, during the first year, students learn and reflect on global inequalities, discuss orthodox development theories, learn about approaches such as the capability approach, and understand the development cooperation system and its controversies. In the second part of the first year, students learn approaches, methodologies and techniques for research, project management and planning development processes. During this semester, AL takes place, moving the classrooms to the neighbourhood during the last weeks of the semester. In the second year, students carry out their internships (international or local) and complete their thesis.

The MDC-UPV aims to contribute to the development of practitioners who are capable of being agents of change in their environment and at an international level. This transformative approach is based on reflective practice (Eyben, 2014) and the so-called critical practice (Pellicer-Sifres et al., 2015), especially in the non-formal and informal learning spaces. Furthermore, beyond providing specialised training in the management of development cooperation projects (in which it is valued for its particular expertise), the MDC-UPV is recognised for its critical approach to the notion of development and the international cooperation system, highlighting the root causes of injustice and inequality. Over time, the

MDC-UPV has progressively incorporated a decolonial perspective, together with a strong sustainability perspective, a sense of social and environmental justice and a rights-based approach, among other elements. In this way, the MDC-UPV confronts many tensions, given the managerialist and bureaucratised context in which it is inserted, both at the university level and with regard to Valencian cooperation (Belda-Miguel et al., 2019). There are also internal tensions due to the different conceptual frameworks that exist, both in the teaching staff and the students (Pellicer et al., 2019).

Regarding the authors of this chapter, Carlos Delgado and Marta Maicas have themselves been students on the MDC-UPV, as well as teacher collaborators, and in the case of Marta, assisting with the work in the technical secretariat. Carola Calabuig has been a teacher at MDC-UPV since its inception and has been its academic director since 2016. We would like to highlight the authors' relationship with the MDC-UPV and the development cooperation sector in the Valencian and Spanish territory to make visible their involvement. What is expressed in this analysis cannot deny the subjectivity, possible biases, and emotional involvement inherent to the study. However, this relationship also shows the involvement and commitment of the authors to take a self-critical look, recognise the starting points, unlearn where necessary and rethink the contents and pedagogical approaches of the MDC-UPV from a transformative approach.

Theoretical framework

Reparative futures

The concept of reparation has been widely discussed. Many scholars and activists have written extensively about reparation in various fields, including history, law, sociology and political science. Reparation refers to making amends for harm or damage caused to someone

or a group of people, restoring justice and addressing historical injustices and inequalities. The aim of reparations is to acknowledge and address past harms, promote reconciliation and healing, and prevent future injustices. However, while reparation might be seen as backwards looking in its attention to past and present injustice, it is also approached as a reconstructive future-facing agenda (Táíwò, 2022 in Sriprakash, 2022). Indeed, reparations trouble the idea that we have to go on as we have (Sriprakash, 2022).

The term 'reparative futures' is especially relevant in the context of social justice and equity. It implies that, instead of simply trying to prevent or remedy existing problems, efforts should be made to create a future that addresses the root causes of problems and promotes justice and equity. Various feminist, queer and postcolonial historiographic projects have sought to return and rethink elided subjectivities, histories and possibilities for our understanding of the past (Chambers-Letson, 2006).

In the UNESCO report, *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education* (2021), it was established that cooperation and solidarity are crucial axes that will shape education in the future. The report outlines the principles of pedagogies based on cooperation and solidarity, which must be rooted in non-discrimination, respect for diversity, and reparative justice. These pedagogies should be participatory, collaborative, interdisciplinary and intercultural in order to promote lifelong learning.

Sriprakash et al. (2020: 2) suggest that reparative futures can be a 'generative basis for knowledge and learning not only in formal educational institutions, but in community organisations, workplaces and in all sites of cultural exchange.' They highlight the need to acknowledge and seek justice for enduring racial and colonial histories. They argue for the

importance of historical thinking in shaping future-oriented policies in education and propose that critical practices of historical thinking and anti-racist education are foundational to imagining and realising just futures. Sriprakash (2022) points out that reparations is a yet under-researched orientation to justice in education. Following the work of critical theorists and transitional justice scholars, she stated that reparative futures of education 'should approach reparations as a broader political agenda for collective justice' (2022: 6). She explores the material, epistemic and pedagogic approaches to reparations in education. To do so, she has proposed the articulation of reparative pedagogies concerning material and epistemic reparation. Reparative pedagogies refer to teaching approaches that aim to acknowledge and address the wounds, injuries and suffering experienced by individuals or groups, while recognising the historical context of violence, oppression and social injustice (Zembylas, 2017). These pedagogies strive to avoid the pitfall of sentimentalism and instead provide a framework for healing and meaningful transformation.

Sriprakash et al. (2019) point out that international development, together with education, continues to fail to substantively engage with the production and effects of racial domination across its domains of research, policy and practice. They suggest that racism is often ignored or erased in teaching and research in favour of technocratic approaches to development, which not only overlook the sector's historical connections to systems of racial domination, but also perpetuate unequal outcomes along racial lines. In addition, they argue that the dominant discourse of contemporary educational development, framed as the 'global learning crisis,' operates as a racial project by legitimising and reinforcing certain responses to the crisis.

Finally, we highlight the non-neutrality of education and development which can reproduce various systems of domination, as pointed to by intersectional studies, including racism, patriarchy, classism and colonialism. Understanding that these systems are co-constitutive, it is crucial to recognise and address them by approaching reparations as a broader political agenda for collective justice in education and human development.

In conclusion, the concept of reparative futures is essential in shaping a just and equitable future. Efforts should be made to acknowledge and address past and present injustices, promote healing and reconciliation, and prevent future injustices. This requires a participatory, collaborative, interdisciplinary and intercultural approach to education that is grounded in non-discrimination, respect for diversity, and reparative justice. Reparative pedagogies play a crucial role in this approach, aiming to acknowledge and address wounds, injuries and suffering while recognising the historical context of violence, oppression and social injustice.

Capability approach for human development

The capability approach (Nussbaum, 2001; Sen, 2009) is a normative framework introduced by the economist, Amartya Sen, and expanded by the philosopher, Martha Nussbaum. From a multi-dimensional perspective, it can help to conceptualise human well-being, justice and development. It has mainly been used in fields such as development, economic analysis, social policy, and political philosophy, but it is versatile for using in other areas, such as education (Boni et al., 2010; Leivas et al., 2020; Mtawa & Nkhoma, 2020; Walker, 2012, 2019; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007); policy (Bonvin & Orton, 2009; Laruffa, 2020); and sustainability (Kronlid & Lotz-Sisitka, 2014; Pelenc & Ballet, 2015). Thus, its application

goes from philosophical and theoretical contributions to practical applications in empirical cases (Robeyns, 2005).

The central concept of the approach is capabilities, understood as ‘what people are capable of doing or being in an effective way’ and what, ‘upon reflection, they value’ (Robeyns, 2005: 94). Nussbaum (2001: 33) affirms that ‘justice takes priority in social reflection.’ Within this definition is the essence of the meaning of capabilities and the way they arose. First, it must be something that the person is capable of doing or being effectively; that is, the capacity to do or be must be able to be completed with an action or state in the context to which the person belongs (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2001). Furthermore, it must be something upon which the person has reflected. This reflection requires that people have been able to dedicate time to think about it both individually and collectively through democratic dialogue (Sen, 2009). This implies that adaptive preferences (yearnings, desires, preferences from conformity and boredom) cannot be considered capabilities. After the reflection, it must be something that the person values as something positive for her or others, but without causing harm or injury (Sen, 1999). Capabilities are, therefore, the real opportunities to do or to be what a person or group values: the freedom of well-being.

Capabilities are converted into functionings when they are accomplished as achieved well-being. In this way, both are the ends of well-being, differentiating them from the means used to achieve them, even if the distinction can be diffuse (Robeyns, 2005). Finally, the capability approach emphasises conversion factors as the elements that facilitate or hinder the transformation from means to ends, so it understands capabilities contextually (Sen, 1999). Agency completes the framework as the dynamic concept referring to the actions needed to

obtain means, unblock conversion factors, and foster capabilities and functionings (Figure 6.1).

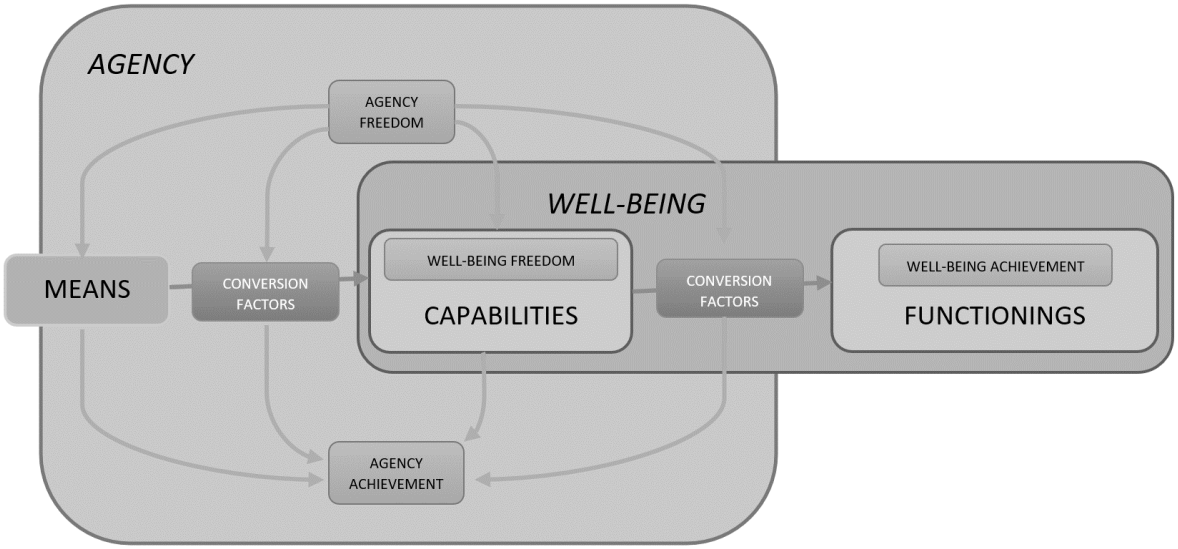

Figure 6.1: Capability approach

Source: Authors, based on Robeyns (2005)

Transformative and restorative learning

The theory of transformative learning has its roots in adult learning literature. Freire's emancipatory education and individualistic approaches have been a key influence. In the early 1990s, Jack Mezirow integrated elements of constructivist, humanist and critical social theory into transformative learning theory. In this theory, learning is a continuous process of meaning making – intentional, incidental or assimilative – influenced and fed by previous beliefs, context, communication and decisions. For Mezirow (2012), learning involves interpreting and deciding the meaning we attribute to lived experiences, in a cultural context, through a language (in a broad sense), and being involved in a rational and emotional process. This process is transformative when it is focused on changing 'our acquired frames of reference to make them more inclusive, judicious, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective, so that they can generate beliefs and opinions that are more truthful or justified

to guide action' (Mezirow, 2012: 76). Frames of reference are the mental structures from which we give lived experiences meaning, and conscious or unconscious, they are (re)formed based on cultural paradigms and intersubjective influences received throughout life. They are responsible for different interpretations of reality in different dimensions (social, ethical, epistemic, philosophical, psychological and aesthetic) (Cranton & Taylor, 2012).

A key element for transformative learning is prior learning, representing the background, previous experiences, predisposition, and expectations regarding transformative learning. However, there is not an extensive literature that goes deeply into how people's culture and mindsets condition the experience of a transformative learning process (Taylor & Snyder, 2012), although there are some exceptions (Maher & Tetreault, 1994; Cranton, 2000). The importance of developing a critical awareness of one's expectations is a necessary condition for starting a transformative learning process, with prior learning as the basis on which frames of reference are built (Mezirow, 2012).

Also, a critical reflection on one's own expectations is required and Mezirow proposed a first step, which he called the disorienting dilemma. This concept, as a trigger, has traditionally been linked to traumatic experiences (Magro & Polyzoi, 2009; Merriam & Ntseane, 2008), but it can also arise from pleasurable emotional experiences (Tisdell, 2008). Thus, the disorienting dilemma is subjective and contextual and can happen individually or collectively. Dilemmas can take place spontaneously, but in an educational context, they have pedagogical potential. The educator can design favourable situations for them, although previously generating a safe and trusting environment with and among students (Taylor & Elias, 2012). The exposition to a dilemma does not necessarily have the same effect on every student (Taylor, 2000), nor does it have to be applicable in all contexts (Ntseane, 2012). The

educator must balance between the advantages of breaking with frames of reference and the potential harm produced by the cognitive dissonance provoked (Johnson-Bailey, 2012). Some pedagogical strategies with this potential are cross-cultural experiences that arise in internships abroad, where cultural shock and a rethinking of one's views and values may take place (Kasworm & Bowles, 2012).

Finally, the idea of restorative learning and 'how restorative and transformative learning together constitute an important pedagogy for sustainability education that can revitalise citizen action' (Lange, 2004: 122) is proposed in sustainability education. As noted earlier, Lange (2004) argues that a measure of stability is needed to cope with disorientation. Thus, after the disorienting process, Lange (2004: 122) claims in her work that stability 'aided a deeper transformation that went beyond individual understandings and lifestyle to socially responsible involvement in the community as active citizens.' Lange and Solarz (2017) link restorative learning with ideas such as radical relatability, the moral self, and solidarity. First, they argue that the experience of radical relatedness allows going beyond epistemological change (how we think about the world) to ontological change (how we are in the world). In addition, the relationship and dialogue with others become a mechanism for building (and restoring) the moral self after the internal ethical and moral conflict that can provoke a disorienting dilemma with others. Finally, they emphasise that restoring values from restorative relationships favours the critique of the dominant culture and promotes the basis for solidarity flourishing. In this transformative and restorative approach, the educational aim of the MDC-UPV is framed, especially through active methodologies such as AL and EI.

Methodology

As we explained, these two pedagogical proposals constitute the case studies to be analysed. AL methodology is part of the first-year, second-semester module, Development Processes. During two or three weeks, MDC-UPV students go to a neighbourhood in the city of Valencia to live a professional experience in a real context close to the university and, in the last editions, some residents come to the classroom with the students weeks before. Students contact and collaborate with local entities and the theoretical and methodological topics studied during the first year are put into practice. This praxis encourages reflection and critical thinking.

As part of the educational innovation proposal of the MDC-UPV, Leivas et al. (2020) describe AL and propose how it contributes to expanding capabilities for epistemic liberation. With its sources in the work of Mike Pedler (Pedler et al., 2012 in Leivas et al., 2020), AL is an action-oriented approach to research and learning, so it is conceived as a philosophy of doing rather than a set of techniques or practices. In this way, AL is the learning process of trying to solve complex problems in a specific reality. AL shares with action research the cyclical vision of the learning process in which experimentation, reflection and learning feed back into each other throughout the process.

In the case of MDC-UPV, there is a critical vision of AL (Rigg & Trehan, 2012 in Leivas et al., 2020). AL is based on provoking practical learning from action and for action, but the critical component implies an ethical, moral and social justification that must be considered in both the means and the ends of AL. Thus, reflection must occur both at the participants' individual level and as a group in the teams formed during the process.

In the case study, three editions of the AL are included. Two experiences were in the Benicalap neighbourhood (2017 and 2018) and one was in the Na Rovella neighbourhood (2019) with 21, 21 and 18 students enrolled, respectively. The educators' team, together with the organisations, designed and planned the identification of problems in each neighbourhood to be able to offer a proposal that is not only oriented to the students, but also to the needs of the organisations and the neighbourhood. Three internal MDC-UPV publications (Teachers' notebooks) that collected the teams' AL processes in the neighbourhoods formed part of the research work of some MDC-UPV teachers in educational innovation. For this chapter, data were collected from 15 interviews among students, and various academic materials were analysed as individual reflections and logbooks from the students.

The other pedagogical initiative, EI, is part of the curriculum with 10 or 20 credits (250 or 500 hours of dedication depending on the modality) during the second year of the MDC-UPV. Most students travel to other countries and join a local development entity, although some may decide to join an organisation at the local level in Valencia. The aim is to complement the theory and practice of the first year, promoting student reflection through involvement in a real development process. Works such as Sanza's (2021) allow us to understand these internships as an educational space outside the classroom that provides a more critical view of development processes. This experience enables students to learn and practise complexity in development processes, involves them in the political and asymmetrical nature of the power relations, and fosters learning about the collective, values, self-criticism, and the cooperation system's unequal logic. Drawing on data from different sources (Figure 6.2), the next section presents the learning outcomes of these processes and the expansion of capabilities for restorative learning.

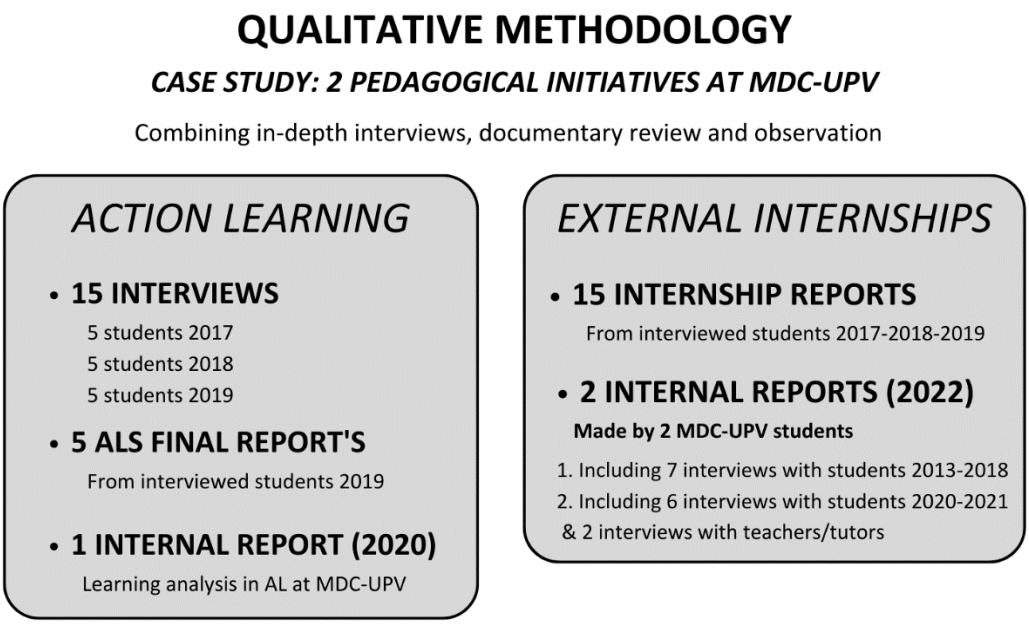

Figure 6.2: Methodology

Source: Authors

Capabilities for restorative learning

Transformative learning: Conditions, process and outcomes

After the AL and EI, students recognise that some learnings are reinforced or resignified, although they also recognised them from other pedagogical moments. What these learning experiences have in common is that they are valued by students with their focus on their professional future in development cooperation. They are categorised into four blocks (Figure 6.3): 1) contents of the master's degree, 2) skills and competencies, 3) reality and context, and 4) experience.

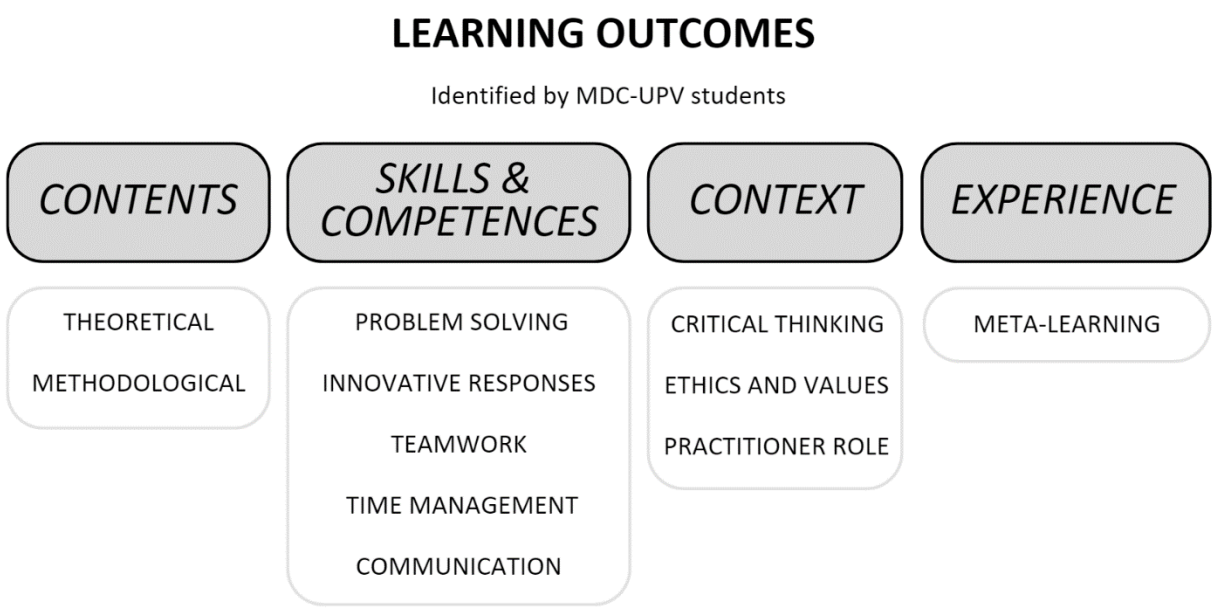

Figure 6.3: Learning outcomes

Source: Authors

The first refers to theoretical knowledge and its application in practice, as well as tools and methodologies. The second comprises cross-cutting elements that complement both the professional and personal life concerning their future as practitioners. They cover problem solving, generating innovative responses to new challenges, teamwork, time management, and communication skills. With the third block, students acquire a broader and more holistic vision of their environment that helps them to apply the previous learning more consciously and contextually through critical thinking, values and ethics, and their role as future professionals. Finally, the last block refers to the student's reflection on their own learning process, as they identify a 'meta-learning' due to the AL and the EI.

Learning in processes such as AL or EI, where emotions, feelings and expectations about people are a part, is conditioned for how students experience them and how they can use the learning outcomes in the future as practitioners. As a first condition, the relationships

established by the students, both among themselves and with the teaching staff, may have an influence that can block or enhance the value students give to these experiences. The contrast between the next two testimonies about participation during the MDC-UPV is particularly striking: 1) ‘We began to lose the spirit of dialogue; it was a moment when we noticed that many people began to keep quiet. That was because of the violent reactions. It was better not to interact. And this began to reduce communication’ (MDC-UPV student – 2018 edition); and 2) ‘Also, in the master you feel very confident to speak and give your opinion, which is also useful when facing a group you don’t know’ (MDC-UPV student – 2019 edition).

However, the reality of the cooperation system that they experience in the EI and in subsequent professional experiences can help them re-evaluate the positive value that they may have given to the MDC-UPV learnings, as expressed by the following student:

> I saw the reality that existed when you go out and face the sector, the real working life. And then, working too . . . And I don’t know if they don’t prepare us or we weren’t given so much information about the negative and what it can be like in real life or simply because I was so ‘in love,’ I hadn’t noticed those details. (MDC-UPV student – 2017 edition)

In addition, it is noted that there is previous learning from past experiences (both outside and inside the MDC-UPV) which defines the students’ expectations regarding AL and EI. Hence, the MDC-UPV seeks to generate participatory spaces in the first year to make their expectations realistic. One student expressed her feelings as follows: ‘I loved it because everything I thought, everything I had inside, I can now sustain with knowledge. What I already felt it should be, it was like supporting with knowledge, with evidence’ (MDC-UPV student – 2017 edition). Even if these spaces may overwhelm some students (e.g., too much

teamwork, in-depth discussions), combining them with the students' background with regard to values and ethics allows them to identify more deeply with the approach of restorative development cooperation.

This approach is promoted by the MDC-UPV through spaces and situations, especially in the informal context, with the potential to generate disorienting dilemmas in students. In this sense, two dilemma situations have been identified in the students: 1) when they face the alternative approaches and values from the MDC-UPV, and 2) when they experience how to apply these approaches in the cooperation system. The first one is positively valued as it encourages critical thinking and values in line with another type of development professional. As the following student stated:

> [I]t has really changed my whole way of understanding the world and seeing it. And it's a bit hard sometimes because it generates a lot of dilemmas or a lot of personal questioning, but for me it's something that everyone should go through. (MDC-UPV student – 2019 edition)

But this positive assessment was also contrasted later since they were aware that, in the cooperation sector, the restorative approach of the MDC-UPV is not the hegemonic one. Some students felt an impact as in the testimony of the following student:

> In the organisations they are in a circle where funding is more important, bureaucracy is more important, and certain behaviours are more important that do not correspond to what we are taught in the master. It's very nice because it makes you aware of what is important. It's very nice because it gives you a critical conscience, but it's a kick in the mouth. (MDC-UPV student – 2017 edition)

In any case, not all dilemma situations are generated during the MDC-UPV, but the students themselves are able to experience them through the interactions they have with other people such as students, teaching staff, staff of the organisations they join, and all kinds of people they meet during these processes.

At this point, the students considered both the prior learning and the disorienting dilemmas when reflecting on the AL and EI. The reflection reinforced the value that this learning has for them. This implies that they reflected on the contents of the MDC-UPV both for its instrumental value – 'I found the process itself very gratifying because what it helped me most was to ground and better understand the concepts that had been taught throughout the master and to give meaning to that theory' (MDC-UPV student – 2018 edition) – and for the intrinsic value – 'It goes beyond theoretical knowledge, but becomes a question of ethics, morals, critical thinking. And that is already taken forever' (MDC-UPV student – 2017 edition).

Moreover, this reflection was complemented by the value of this learning on a personal and professional level in relation to self-confidence as well as the ability to make decisions and to give a purpose to their next actions once they finish the master's degree. Finally, for many students, the biggest impact was how they had changed their own perspectives on what it means to work in the field of development cooperation, especially in relation to the importance of interactions with other actors and the uncertainty associated with these processes.

Finally, many of the lessons learned have been implemented, either during the MDC-UPV or in subsequent experiences. Thanks to this, some students recognised that, during their

professional stage, they can generate other types of development processes that put in value traditionally silenced voices, creating spaces for reflection and critical analysis of the context that leads to these situations. However, as this student stated, this is not always easy:

> I remember that it was emphasised that when we went to work in other countries we had to unlearn, we had to get rid of everything that we carry as Westerners: it is very difficult. I try, but it is very difficult. (MDC-UPV student – 2017 edition)

The dilemma between the reality of the labour market forces them to balance the MDC-UPV restorative vision and what the hegemonic cooperation system demands from development professionals, normally more oriented towards project management.

Capabilities

In this section we discuss the capabilities that are expanded due to the learnings, focusing on the value that students give to them concerning their future as cooperation professionals, and the change that it represents in their understanding of reality and the context of development processes.

Based on the learning from the previous section and its transformative potential, the MDC-UPV was identified by the students as a training space where critical thinking is promoted, and it was also valued as something necessary for a cooperation professional. They highlighted the importance of incorporating an ethical and moral dimension to theoretical knowledge, which prevailed in their future actions. Sometimes this influence was unique, as the previous education of many of them was not linked to social issues. Even so, many of them pointed out that, starting to doubt certain frames of reference regarding the cooperation system, can generate a certain idealism about the transformative potential of cooperation. The

development of critical thinking capabilities through AL and EI is fundamental, although it is framed within the general approach of the MDC-UPV and is complemented by other training spaces. An MDC-UPV student in the 2017 group explained:

> Yes, from the master, there is a lot of other learning that goes beyond the AL. I wouldn't sum up the whole master experience in that two-week period, because I think the master is so much more. It is a lot more of critical thinking, a lot more reflection on many issues.

Another from 2018 commented that:

> On a personal level, the master gives you a basis in care matters. You rethink many things in life that you had not considered in other master's degrees, it gives you a critical view of the world, which if I had not taken the master I might not have had.

In addition, there was a direct involvement of the teaching staff who participate in these processes in developing this capability, as well as the spaces for reflection and debate that take place during the MDC-UPV. Incorporating critical approaches and views beyond a hegemonic Eurocentric logic allows students to imagine their professional future in cooperation, taking into account dimensions such as the colonial past. Even so, either in internships or in subsequent professional experiences, many were disillusioned when they came into direct contact with the reality of current cooperation, generating frustration. A 2017 student told us that:

> But also, sometimes being so critical brings certain problems because you can't adapt yourself to any organisation or job. Because there is always this question: why don't we see it this way? And then sometimes that can also create problems for you to be able to

> follow your own path, and then you often end up opening your own path towards what you consider to be the right one.

While a 2018 student added that: ‘It has helped me to increase my critical side. And this has been a big problem, because in the end you don’t agree with anything, you’re always angry. It’s like . . . Shit! Everything is wrong!’

In any case, the critical approach of the MDC-UPV recognises the colonial past of the cooperation system and the Western humanist vision in the foundation of the human development concept. Through the AL and the EI, it encourages students to try in their professional practice not to reproduce the system’s injustices but to change the rules of the game. Eurocentric development categories are challenged by criticising their colonialist and racist character (Sriprakash et al., 2020).

According to Bonwell and Eison (1991), a pedagogy that encourages active learning emphasises that learners explore new attitudes and values. Therefore, another element predisposing to the disorienting dilemma is the contact with people in organisations – both in AL and EI – so that different and more open worldviews are known. These visions provoke a reformulation of values in life and professional ethics about various aspects such as the sustainability of the planet, their work vocation, solidarity, inequality, masculinity, social and political participation, and work ethics. A 2017 student put it this way:

> Each individual person has their own values, ideas, and way of understanding the world, and I think that bringing all that together from different people is always going to be more powerful. That union of thinking, different visions, is something that we learn from each other.

From the 2019 group, one said that:

> The master itself has given me tools to understand – okay, I know it sounds very clichéd but – life in general. And I think it can be applied to any field. Especially the way of working. It's a commitment to other values, to ethics behind the work that I think is useful for any kind of company.

Students who have already had experience in cooperation find dissonance between what they have learned in the MDC-UPV and their professional experience in an organisation. The lack of values in the day-to-day work of companies and non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) endangers students' ethical awareness in the future. In a system that prioritises project management over the quality of the process itself, students are forced to focus on this area to get a better job. A 2019 student explained:

> It is a balance. When you finish the master, you have a holistic post-development vision of social reality. But some time later, you have to look for a job and pay back what I borrowed to do this master's degree, and the discourse changes . . . It's not that now I've become the most capitalist, the principles are there, but the form changes when it comes to looking for a job.

Finally, another relevant aspect is the new knowledge that students acquire thanks to living an experience outside the classroom in real contexts. In the case of AL, the contact with the reality of a neighbourhood in Valencia allows them to get to know their local context (in the case of national students) and to recognise the historical injustices of traditionally excluded urban areas. In the case of EI, the local context they discover refers to a global reality influenced by colonial history. As a 2019 student commented: 'The relationship we

established with such different people is what has marked me the most. To realise that people with very different profiles and contexts or ages and interests can generate such a powerful relationship and find common ground.' Another from the same group added:

> For me, it has been a challenge. Before talking about or taking things you don't like for granted, go out and learn from other worlds and contexts. In that sense, the master itself has pushed me to live this totally changing experience in my life.

Transformative and restorative learning: Towards repairing the international development cooperation system

The learning acquired and the capabilities expanded through the AL and EI let the students be involved in the process of contact with the professional and personal reality similar to that which they will experience when they work in a real context. This contact, which has been added to the situations of joint discussion and reflection they engage in during the rest of the year, is what has allowed them to analyse and evaluate their own frames of reference and to confront their contradictions (Lange, 2012). The alternative system of cooperation offered by the MDC-UPV, more just, more inclusive, decolonial, feminist, anti-racist, etc., allows students not only to deal with their experiences in the AL and EI with critical reflection, but also to act, even if it is emotionally demanding. The acquired capabilities of critical thinking, ethics and values, and context are the basis of restorative learning that enables students to imagine and think about a different system of cooperation in which they are agents of change, both personally and professionally (Lange, 2009).

Despite all of the above and the mechanisms and spaces of possibility that the MDC-UPV provides to foster transformative and restorative learning, we identified some challenges in reinforcing the MDC-UPV's potential. On the one hand, a greater incorporation of other

epistemologies from the Global South would be advisable to confront the hegemonic Western theoretical approaches, even the more critical ones. On the other hand, from an intercultural approach, we should make more visible in the classroom and informal contexts the views of minorities and excluded people as non-expert knowledge that can establish an equal dialogue with academic knowledge. In addition, we should enhance the voices of the MDC-UPV's students who might experience their own marginalisation and exclusion experiences due to racism, xenophobia or violence that attacks diversity. Recognising these situations as part of coexistence can encourage critical reflection, respect and empathy.

From a pedagogical perspective, MDC-UPV's teachers should be more aware of their role in provoking transformative and restorative learning through promoting reflection and accompanying – even emotionally – when dilemmas and contradictions destabilise students in order to reduce the risk of paralysis. The case studies have shown that students' internal struggles affect formative and professional experiences; however, the role of the teacher as an accompanying person has not been sufficiently explored. Teachers on the programme can be relevant agents throughout the formative stage in the AL, EI and formal learning moments. Finally, based on transformative and restorative learning outcomes, MDC-UPV's teachers and management staff can continue questioning the contents, values and pedagogical methods used.

Conclusion

The MDC-UPV is a learning space that allows its students to acquire learning and expand their professional capabilities thanks to its pedagogical proposals, specifically the AL and EI. After the first year of teaching, these two methodologies allow students to consolidate the main concepts of the MDC-UPV, to promote professional and personal skills and

competencies, to increase their knowledge of professional realities and the contexts in which they work, and to value the experience of development processes as learning spaces. In this way, after finishing the MDC-UPV, students enter the field of development cooperation with a landscape view between the hegemonic vision of cooperation dominated by project management, and a vision that proposes a reparative system, in which the colonial past, as well as other injustices, are taken into account. The balance between the two views allows them to change their frame of reference of the international development cooperation system so that they might be more oriented, as professionals, towards reparative futures.

Owing to the AL and EI, the MDC-UPV is able to ground its approach towards producing a restorative cooperation system, one which considers colonial and racist history so that students can experience a transformative and restorative learning process. It is precisely the combination of theory and practice that enhances the learning and capabilities that students develop during the MDC-UPV. If the first year of the master's degree can be an approximation to the initial and potential epistemological change necessary for a transformative learning process, the two methodologies analysed in this chapter reinforce it. Moreover, thanks to the relationships that develop during these experiences with others, an ontological change becomes possible, which, in turn, enables students to situate themselves in the world of cooperation with a more restorative approach.

The combination of formal and informal learning is responsible for the deep impact of learning and expanded capabilities for students. Through interaction and reflection between theoretical concepts and practical application, the processes help them to see themselves as agents of change in the cooperation sector. In this sense, the MDC-UPV, and specifically the use of active learning methodologies and practices, is a case of transformative and restorative

education in higher education thanks to the multi-dimensional real-context spaces it offers to its students and the relationships they generate. As Lange (2012) asks us: ‘As educators who provide conditions for transformative learning, what kind of reality are we giving birth to through our efforts?’

Through this case, we believe that transformative learning in higher education can play a key role in shaping the kind of professionals we will have in the future. Putting teachers and students, as adult learners, in relation to other people in their reality can increase the possibilities for transformative learning and bring an opportunity to build restorative learning ‘that addresses the contradictions of this historical moment that we enact every day’ (Lange, 2012: 209). With practitioners aware of these contradictions and able to face them, we can start to build a new reparative development cooperation system.

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