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**Capacity development for emancipatory social change**  
**Reimagining university learning and teaching for critical development practitioners**

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## Capacity development for emancipatory social change

### Reimagining university learning and teaching for critical development practitioners

#### **Abstract**

Our proposal focuses on a theoretical framework intended to characterize and understand capacity development processes oriented towards the promotion of a critical development practice, an approach that faces the tensions between reformist and critical views of development management. This is what we call capacity development for emancipatory social change.

From this viewpoint, we explore a postgraduate university programme in development management offered by the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (Spain), with a twofold aim: Firstly, to carry out an inquiry of the programme as a capacity development process in the training of critical development practitioners; secondly, to discuss the suitability of the framework for understanding similar capacity development processes.

**Keywords:** Capacity development, development management, critical practice, university education.

#### **1. Exploring capacity development for a critical development practice**

Managerialism in development management (DM) has been characterized by an underpinning rational-modernist ideology and a blind faith in scientific and rational knowledge, based on the logic of cause-and-effect (Gulrajani, 2010). Development issues and problems are thus reduced to aseptic, technical and managerial ones, handled by experts (Wallace *et al.*, 2007). Planners and managers are attributed a perfect hegemony over other development actors (Mosse, 2005). Practices, based on linear planning techniques, aim at particular imagined and idealised points of arrival that can be achieved through logical, rational and causal steps, in order to efficiently 'deliver' development (Mowles *et al.*, 2008; Quarles *et al.*, 2003; Gasper, 2000). These practices have de-humanizing effects on the lives of those impinged upon, such as workers, beneficiaries or other stakeholders (Dar and Cooke, 2008). From this perspective, which prevails in the aid system, capacity development processes must be able to provide technical instruments which enable experts to offer solutions, through policies and practices, in order to attain those results which most effectively contribute to development aims (Clarke and Oswald, 2010).

Among those who share this perspective, however, there are many whom we might call 'reformists', who accept the underpinning ideas and methods of the managerialist approach, but with a reformist agenda. They do so 'either by emphasising the progressive nature of those who would become development managers, or by offering participative and "bottom up" modalities as a way of mitigating managerialism's worst effects' (Mowles, 2010:150). Thomas (1996; 2007), considered a paradigm of this trend, contends that DM should above all promote the values of development and the interests of the powerless. Nevertheless, Thomas 'assumed

that the new pro-poor end could be achieved using the existing mainstream means' (McCourt and Gulrajani, 2010:83). These 'reformist' visions of DM have been accompanied by a new debate on the ways of understanding and promoting capacity development, which does not necessarily rule out the usual tools but rather places values and ideas of the social changes we pursue at the heart of the question (Clarke and Oswald, 2010).

Another group of authors 'shares the pro-poor orientation but believes that it will inevitably be distorted by the very means to promote it' (McCourt and Gulrajani, 2010:83). DM is inescapably managerial and it inevitably reinforces power relations, as 'managers' interests are aligned with an underlying political and economic interest which is contrary to the interests of poor people' (Fine and Jomo, 2006, in McCourt and Gulrajani, 2010:83). For scholars who share this perspective, inspired by Foucault (1980 and 2002), capacity development is understood as 'a discourse concealing an agenda of power', it being nothing more than 'a political technology of neoliberal governance' (Clarke and Oswald, 2010:3).

We sympathize with these critiques and share their general thrust. We agree with Mowles (2010), however, that it is difficult to move beyond some of the concepts that are taken for granted in mainstream DM, and that these concepts leave room for political contestation and critical engagement. This radical criticism can be incorporated into the search of a non-managerialist practice of development (Gulrajani, 2010), in line with the final purpose of social justice and directed towards what Clarke and Oswald (2010) call 'emancipatory social change'. This is what we call a 'critical development practice'.

Specifically, we consider that this kind of practice is possible if practitioners take into consideration the complex and political nature of development processes, embedded in power relations and shaped by political interests and influences (Mowles *et al.*, 2008; Pettit, 2010; McCourt, 2008). This requires political engagement, taking a position – a position which is always problematic- on processes of contestation, and commitment with partners with whom we share common values and a compromise with social transformation (Eyben, 2005). This entails discovering and challenging power together, as well as contesting development discourse and the modernisation project whenever they sustain power asymmetries, hierarchies and inequality (Townley, 2001; Mosse, 2005). This means building confidence and consistent relationships with our partners (Eyben, 2005), while we constantly redefine what we do and the sense of what we do together (Mowles *et al.*, 2008, Simpson and Gill, 2007). All this is not aimed at more "effective" planning, but at re-politicisation of all aspects of DM (Gulrajani, 2010). From this point of view, capacities for navigating complexity and for engaging with power and politics become central for development practitioners. Relationships and the generation and constant revision of ideas of change are also central as drivers of the process of capacity development for a critical practice.

This perspective calls for a practice able to respond fluidly to changing and highly complex realities (Kaplan, 2010), generating new ways of thinking and a productive exploration of alternatives for action, also within existing mainstream concepts and tools. This practice has to be creative and self-critical (Kaplan, 1999), receptive, contingent, sensitive, flexible and reflective (Escobar, 2008), informed by what we constantly learn together (Mowles *et al.*, 2008). Pursuant to the foregoing, the capacity of continuous learning and adaptation becomes

also central. Furthermore, practitioners are permanently involved in individual and collective processes of experiential, intellectual and emotional learning.

This position is challenging and subject to tensions, requiring a compromise between a reformist perspective of DM and a critical stance. It is also problematic, as the criticism that might be directed to critical development studies on the grounds of being a new sort of colonizing discourse (Dar and Cooke, 2008) may also be addressed to critical development practice. It is always possible, even with well-intended actions and engagement, to reproduce power relations that perpetuate under-development (Gulrajani, 2010). This is why ideas such as adaptation, learning, reflection and self-critique are so important in our approach, as well as engaging with power and politics in a way that does not reproduce hierarchies and domination.

This view of development practice requires a different manner of understanding and promoting capacity development. Following Clarke and Oswald (2010), this different manner can be called 'capacity development for emancipatory social change', and may be characterized by considering several key questions: What capacities are most needed for a practice that can contribute to emancipatory social change? How are the processes of capacity development going to take place from this perspective? How can these processes be promoted and supported?

Starting from these questions, we will draw on the thoughts of different authors who have reflected on the idea of 'capacities for change' (*IDS Bulletin*, 41 [3]). This discussion will serve to construct a framework with which to understand and direct capacity development processes in the light of critical development practice.

From this framework, we will explore a particular capacity development process, a postgraduate programme in development management, the *Máster en Políticas y Procesos de Desarrollo* (MPPD, Master in Development Policies and Processes), offered by the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (UPV), in Spain.

This exploration has two aims: First, to carry out an inquiry of the MPPD as a capacity development process in the training of students as critical development practitioners; second, to discuss the suitability of the framework for understanding similar capacity development processes.

The selection of this particular case study is justified by two main reasons. Firstly, the case is relevant for going into the practical and theoretical tensions between DM perspectives we referred to above: The Master moves in an academic, social and policy context full of constraints and conflicting demands, visions and approaches.

Secondly, our framework can introduce new elements to understand and reflect on learning processes in postgraduate development programs that try 'to meet new demands and challenges in rapidly changing and increasingly complex arenas' (Johnson and Thomas, 2007:39), going beyond traditional approaches to higher education, and gaining an insight into it through reflections on capacity development processes in other contexts (as NGOs or social movements).

In addition to the challenging position of what we have called a critical development practice, we are also aware of the gap that may exist between this concept and the capacity development framework we propose. It poses a constraint for the aims of the present research, which has to be considered part of a work in progress. The challenge for further research is to progressively fill in this gap, and the discussion in this paper also aims at contributing to this purpose.

## 2. Theoretical framework: Capacity development for emancipatory social change

From our perspective, the process of capacity development is a continuous and endogenous one which takes place in individuals and groups (Ubels *et al.*, 2010). Capacities for critical development practice emerge constantly as a result of this process (Kaplan, 2010; Fowler, 2007). Building on the contributions of different researchers, we have identified these relevant capacities for a critical development practice as *navigating complexity, understanding and engaging with power* and the *capacity for continuous learning and adaptation*.

These endogenous processes are driven by *comprehensive* (experiential, emotional, intellectual) *learning experiences*, by constant *questioning, redefinition and development of values and visions of social change*, as well as by *relationships*. We consider these as the three ‘drivers’ of capacity development (Clarke and Oswald, 2010).

These processes can be promoted and supported exogenously through a variety of different methods (Ubels *et al.*, 2010; Clarke and Oswald, 2010), such as critical reflection and experiential learning methods, depending on the context and on individuals and groups.

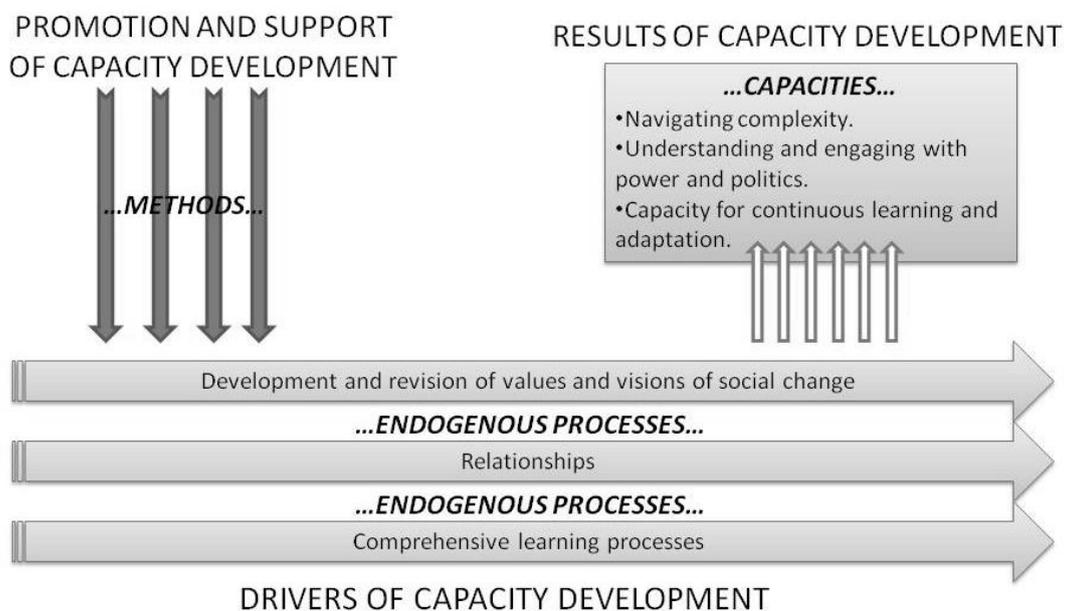


Figure 1. Process of capacity development for emancipatory social change.

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Starting with capacities, we consider that for a critical development practice individuals and organizations should recognize and understand the implications of working with processes

which are always unpredictable, emergent and turbulent. This means ‘being able to operate within the inherent complexity and unpredictability of social systems’ (Woodhill, 2010:53), and being able to ‘better grapple with complexity – not to be able to master it, but to be able to act thoughtfully and purposefully within it’ (Ortiz Aragon, 2010:39). It entails ‘a changing of cultural assumptions about how the world works and what we should do about it’ (Ortiz Aragon, 2010:41) which, according to Woodhill (2010:55) ‘is as much about attitudes and mindsets as it is to do with any practical tools’.

Processes of social change are not neutral; they are of a political nature and becoming part of them entails discovering, questioning and confronting authority and power, as well as uncovering and challenging power asymmetries that perpetuate underdevelopment. Therefore, there is a need for ‘the ability to understand power relations and situate oneself within them, but also to then strategise about how to engage with those power relations, either to challenge them or use them to one’s advantage’ (Pettit, 2010 in Clarke and Oswald, 2010:6), including the dynamics of the exercise of power that the aid system generates (Harvey and Langdon, 2010). We should consider the multiple ways – visible, hidden, and invisible (Gaventa, 2005) – in which power becomes apparent, including ‘personal and professional dynamics of power’ (Pettit, 2010:27), and how power ‘affects’ us and ‘transects’ us (Harvey and Langdon, 2010:81,), in order to avoid the reproduction of power relations that perpetuate underdevelopment. This understanding of power is crucial in order to engage politically with transformative processes of change around us (Woodhill, 2010).

Crucial to any critical development practice is the *capacity for continuous learning and adaptation*. This can be an individual capacity or the capacity of a group (Senge, 2006), including the capacity to recognize the value and potential of collaborative learning, as well as promoting and facilitating this (Woodhill, 2010). Such learning can occur in unpredictable and informal ways (Harvey and Langdon, 2010), and it is always embedded in the conditions of the particular individual or group.

As regards the ‘drivers’ of the endogenous process of capacity development, firstly we believe that the capacities for a critical development practice emerge alongside the constant generation and revision of *values and visions of social change*. Reflection, exchange and collective generation of values and ideas give rise to learning dynamics. These enable us to navigate, engage, manage and learn throughout the process of change, and allow us to generate ‘our social world by applying socially derived categories of judgement’ (Ortiz Aragon, 2010:42), thereby providing our activities with meaning (Pitpit and Baser, 2010:61). These values and ideas, along with expectations, intentions and visions are uncovered during action and reflection (Mowles *et al.*, 2008), simultaneously bringing into question one’s own assumptions and beliefs (Ortiz Aragon, 2010; Woodhill, 2010). This process occurs at an individual level and also at a group level, as the relations and interactions within it and with the external world are continually recreated (Ortiz Aragon, 2010).

Secondly, the capacity development process also emerges out of *relationships*. This is a dynamic process, with different levels of aggregation, in different formal and informal spaces (e.g. organizations, families, society, etc.), and always embedded in particular contexts, where political, social, economic and cultural factors are at work (Margaret, 2010). The processes occurring within groups are also subject to complex power dynamics, in which conflicts arise,

as well as negotiation dynamics (Harvey and Langdon, 2010). The different settings may facilitate or inhibit the capacity development processes (Margaret, 2010).

As we mentioned above, the process of capacity development for emancipatory social change is a *comprehensive learning process*. We should take into account the specificity of this driver as we have to emphasize the wide-ranging process of learning for emancipatory social change. This relates to the interiorisation of new concepts, to the development of new analytical capacities and the creation of new meanings, to experiential learning based on one's own experiences and motivations, to reflection and self-criticism and the questioning of one's own values, assumptions, orthodoxies and existing norms, which are at the foundations of social inequality (Pettit, 2006, 2010). It is a creative process with intellectual and emotional components, including the understanding of oneself (Woodhill, 2010).

Finally, according to our model, this endogenous process can be promoted and supported through very diverse pedagogical methods and approaches. Various authors have provided specific examples (Pearson, 2010; Pettit, 2010; Ortiz Aragon, 2010; Jackson, 2010; Soal, 2010; Fisher, 2010), ranging from learning through personal experience to 'creative' methods which appeal to the emotions and the use of the body. In general, the processes of capacity development considered in these examples occur in contexts which are very different from those of university teaching, although they can be relevant for approaching higher education methods and learning processes, beyond traditional approaches to university education. In this study we focus on the specific methods employed in the MPPD, analysing how they may contribute to the process of capacity development for emancipatory social change.

### **3. The MPPD and its context**

The MPPD is run by the Department of Engineering Projects at the UPV. This is a decidedly technical environment, impregnated with a rational and instrumental vision of the capacities which university students should acquire. As in the rest of Europe, the Spanish university system is also immersed in a process characterized by academic managerialism (Amaral *et al*, 2003).

The aid sector in Valencia, as in most Spanish regions, is characterized by largely weak and bureaucratized development organizations with little social support, little culture of self-criticism and reflection and very disconnected from academia (Unceta, 2004). However, we find some notable exceptions of politically engaged, critical and self-critical organizations.

Valencian regional aid policies<sup>1</sup> and bureaucracies almost exclusively promote logical models of development planning and management. The strategies defined by policy makers are, in practice, erratic and volatile, and there is an increasing public scepticism of the aid system<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Spanish aid system is characterized by the weight and importance of regional governments in bilateral aid. Each *comunidad autónoma* (autonomous region) has its own aid development policies and programmes.

<sup>2</sup> Moreover, policy makers have recently been affected by scandals concerning alleged irregularities. Summaries of the scandals which affect the aid system in Valencia can be read in world-class newspapers such as *El País*.

In 2006, two participatory workshops took place in order to design the curriculum and teaching methodology for the MPPD. Most of the development organizations invited and some university staff demanded technical-instrumental training in 'useful' tools for raising public funds and manage projects, while some organizations and most of the university staff involved were more worried about introducing alternative and critical perspectives. The approach that emerged tried to be sensitive to these tensions: Mainstream DM approaches and tools (such as logical models) were incorporated into the curriculum, along with other models of a more progressive slant (participative approaches, or those dealing with power or rights), associated with more reformist perspectives. The overall critical vision would also be present throughout the curriculum. The first MPPD intake was in 2007, and it has been taught for four years.

The structure of the programme aims at facilitating participation by active professionals, combining distance learning with intensive classroom sessions or workshops at UPV, which last two and a half days. The course starts with a period of training consisting of 36 ECTS<sup>3</sup> over two semesters, in which the economic, social and political forces that shape development processes are studied. Development approaches and the aid system are also studied, together with instruments and methodologies for DM. A phase of practical application follows, in the form of an internship in a development institution (16 ECTS, for at least four months). This experience is the basis for a research study, synthesized in the Master's final dissertation (5 ECTS).

#### **4. Methodology**

The methodology employed for this study consisted of undertaking semi-structured interviews of thirteen students who have completed the MPPD training process. Of these, three had finished three months before the interview; four, nine months before; and six, fourteen months before.

A questionnaire to reveal students perceptions was drawn up for these interviews<sup>4</sup>. The information obtained was complemented with an analysis of the students' dissertations, as well as their internship reports.

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<sup>3</sup> The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is the standard unit for comparing the attainment of higher education students across the European Union and other collaborating European countries. 1 ECTS is equivalent to 25-30 hours of learning (autonomous work, classroom attendance, etc.)

<sup>4</sup> The questions covered all the issues identified within the framework. Students were asked about different aspects of the capacities developed and the drivers of the process. Broad questions were asked, supported by more specific ones when necessary. After each question, students were also asked to provide examples and to find a possible relationship of the changes they experienced with particular moments and methods of the MPPD.

For example, regarding *power and politics*, the broad question was: Do you think you are now more able to engage with power and politics at specific times and in different contexts? Some more specific questions were: Do you think you are more able to recognize power structures and power relations, both in specific situations and in more global terms? Do you bear in mind the idea of power when you plan, act, reflect, etc.? Do you think you are more able to recognize and make the most of opportunities to challenge power relations, alone or with the people you work with? Are you more conscious about the way you experience and exercise power, or the way it is exercised over you? After each question, two further questions were posed: Can you describe a particular situation that may illustrate your answer? Can you identify a moment, a process or a particular method of the MPPD that promoted this change?

With this material, we asked ourselves the following questions regarding our framework: Which capacities for a critical development practice have students developed through the MPPD? How did the endogenous process take place? What pedagogical methods and approaches of the MPPD promoted and supported the process?

We were aware of the main methodological limitations: the small sample size, the lack of cross-checking with information from other key players who took part in the students' capacity development process (particularly the organizations where they worked) and the limitations of individual interviews to reconstruct collective experiences. Nevertheless, we believe that these limitations do not invalidate this study, as it is definitely exploratory and also inquires into the scope limitations and the potential for further research. This work should be understood as the first part of an ongoing process of research.

## 5. Evidence and discussion

The first idea suggested by the interviews results regarding the theoretical framework concerns the difficulty in clearly setting the categories 'results', 'drivers' and 'methods' apart in the capacity development process, as well as how to place the elements in each different category. Moreover, the relationships among the categories are also more complex than what the framework presupposes. However, the framework was relevant for exploring important issues for the purpose of this paper.

The second general reflection regards attribution, as the answers of many of the interviewees confirmed that it is not possible to attribute the changes in the individual and groups exclusively to the MPPD. Therefore, we construed the evidence to mean that the MPPD process played a key role in the development of capacities.

### 5.1. *The 'results' of capacity development: The capacities for a critical development practice*

In light of the opinions of our interviewees, the capacity that most clearly emerged in the students from the MPPD process is *understanding and engaging with power*. The capacities for *navigating complexity*, and for *learning and adaptation*, appear less clearly.

Students perceive that they have achieved a certain level of intellectual interiorisation of power and that they have the tools to manage it: *Power, certainly, because you get tools with which to analyse power and that makes all the difference, it's like a prism which helps you see more clearly. (E3)*

Several students felt that during the MPPD they have developed the ability to perceive and manage power dynamics in particular contexts. For example, speaking about his current action as an activist, one interviewee stated:

*It's no longer about 'let's put pressure [on the local and regional governments] to make them do this', but there are these people with these interests, with these inertias, we have these cards we can play, this legitimacy, this power, let's see what we can do with these tools, how far we can go, what alliances we can make. (E1)*

The interviewees also spoke of the perception and management of own power. For example:

*It's not easy because they are shy, they have no voice (...) But I wasn't asking difficult questions, I was just asking about when she got up, her normal routine (...). That's when I remembered [teacher from the MPPD] because the woman wasn't answering me, so I crouched a little, so that we were at the same height and then she did answer me. (E2)*

The result of 'navigating' complexity is much less clearly appreciable, even if the idea is present in the interviews. Understanding of the concept is generally vague:

*Regarding how change happens, of course, in a very complex way you have to keep looking at this, this and this and when you've got it all, all of a sudden, something else appears which changes everything. (E7)*

*At [local African NGO], as you have to manage the agenda of local people, your own agenda, the dynamics, then what you're dealing with is very complex and you have to know the right time to go to a particular place, when to dig your heels in and say I need such and such a thing and when to understand how things flow. (E1)*

Regarding the result of the *capacity for continuous learning and adaptation*, the interviews did not reveal much evidence in relation to the elements of the theoretical framework. For example, as regards promoting learning processes, only one of the interviewees mentions such a thing happening in his case:

*One of the things you learn on the Master's course is that you have to devote a lot of thought to things, and so promoting those forums [for reflection and learning] within organizations has been something which, for example, I've tried to bring about and the Master's course enabled me to do that, I had that set of tools to facilitate those forums. (E4)*

The other comments only mention (albeit frequently) superficial elements, such as 'raising awareness' amongst family and friends, being more open-minded to new things (*I feel completely open towards anything that may happen or occur in the future (E6)*), or now being better at searching for information (*now I know where to go, where to look (E7)*).

## 5.2. The 'drivers' of capacity development: *The endogenous processes*

We were given answers which justify the statement that during the MPPD period the students were immersed in capacity development processes through the three drivers identified: *The development of values and ideas on change, relationships and comprehensive learning processes*, although to different degrees.

Regarding the *values and ideas on change*, the most frequently expressed opinion is that, during the MPPD, a critical vision of the current approach to aid emerges, generating 'disillusionment' and visions of the aid system as not useful or even a new form of colonialism.

Some interviews have also given hints of the emergence of new values and ideas in the students, directing the actions they take in their daily work (related or unrelated to the practice of development) or as social activists:

*For example, at [a social action NGO], because of the Master's course, along with many other things, we started to work on the issue of political impact and raising social awareness. (E4)*

Some students came up with new elements to reflect upon, even if these ideas were not clearly defined. For example, one student explicitly said:

*I've got more ideas, but (...) I'm not sure if change should be top-down, from the political sphere, from the policies emerging from aid issues, or if change should come from the activism of the general population, from their raised awareness... (E2)*

With regard to *relationships* as a driver of the process, we recorded numerous opinions highlighting their importance within student group, both at formal and informal forums:

*Yes, I think that it was partly at the end of the classes when people would get together and everything came out. (E9)*

These relationships within the group are very positively viewed as facilitators of learning, although several remarks were made about dynamics which could inhibit it. For example:

*Those who are more experienced speak from a stronger position, with more conviction... and I thought about that sometimes... I [had to] sieve through that information because I may be letting myself be influenced. (E2)*

Interviewees often mentioned the importance of other collective spaces where parallel processes occurred, especially in social organizations where students participated. For example:

*One part was the Master's course, there was one with [social action NGO], and there was another that was being here with the group [of MPPD students] (...) so there are lots of group structures that overlap and then, in the end, what is mine is mine, but it has partly been built here. (E1)*

All these spaces (including family environment and circles of friends) were seen as facilitators of the learning process, which does not necessarily mean that students were able to apply their capacities within them.

Finally, concerning *comprehensive learning processes*, many comments were made leading us to believe that many elements of the framework were present.

Some of the comments relate to more intellectual processes, such as the interiorisation of concepts or the questioning of assumptions. Another recurring element was self-reflection, visualized as a widespread feature of the MPPD process.

Experiential aspects of learning were also frequently mentioned, especially with regard to the internship phase. For example:

*The internship was a bit like 'bullfighting' [...] I've had decent training, but not as much as others, and so, you know, dealing with people, the 'bulls', I realized things and learnt a lot in a personal sense. (E6)*

Less frequent mention was made of the purely emotional aspects of the process. Terms mentioned by more than one interviewee were 'exhaustion', 'disillusionment' with the current aid system and the new 'motivation' for a different kind of action to effect change, generally more 'political'. Several interviewees spoke of shedding 'fears':

*When I finished [the period at the UPV] I didn't feel ready at all, but I did the internship (...) and after that I felt that while I was there, I had confronted all my fears and insecurities. (E10)*

### *5.3. Promotion and support of the process of capacity development: The methods*

Students mentioned numerous methods of the MPPD, although it is difficult to say to what extent they promoted and supported the process of capacity development. Nevertheless, we see justification for stating that the different phases of the MPPD (training at the UPV, internship and dissertation) were important in the promotion of capacity development.

As regards the training period at the UPV, methods repeatedly referred to were reading and analysing texts (as a way of promoting the generation of students' own ideas), criticising, self-reflecting and debating. The variety of opinions, along with the diversity of profiles, careers and disciplinary backgrounds of the students, drew much approval, as it promoted learning through relationships and gave rise to new ideas.

The participatory methods trialled during some practical sessions were also mentioned on several occasions. For example:

*The more participatory technical ideas, and how people learn together and can see the different issues in a way which is easy to understand, that really has been a way, which maybe I did know and like, but you can see that there are lot more tools as well. (E1)*

These methods were frequently mentioned as key to the learning occurring later, during the internship, facilitating experiential learning in the process of immersion and participation in specific development processes.

As regards the drafting of the dissertation, positive mention was made of its nature as an element of analytical 'closure' of the MPPD process. The difficulty of this task was also remarked upon several times, however, along with the emotional effort required.

The actual way in which the course is structured (autonomous individual and group work followed by intensive classroom and workshop sessions which last two and a half days) seems to have been an important method for the generation of informal learning environments (breaks and meals after classes, meetings for the autonomous group work, etc.).

Finally, it is worth noting that little reference was made to some of the methods put forward by the authors cited earlier: For example, those methods called 'creative' by Pettit (2010) (role-plays, poetry, theatre...), which are aimed at the emotions. These were used only occasionally in the MPPD and the interviewees made no mention of them. Another example is

the use of the student's own experience (Pettit, 2010; Pearson, 2010; Jackson, 2010): Several students made positive mention of the fact that the teaching staff presented issues for discussion through the prism of their own experience, but they make little reference to the teaching staff motivating the discussion via the students' own experience and expectations.

## 6. Concluding remarks

The proposed framework and the analysis of the MPPD have allowed us to explore some important issues, which have been useful in order to provide suggestions to the MPPD, and to continue to seek a coherent framework of capacity development for a critical development practice.

Regarding the MPPD, we perceived limitations on the emergence of capacities for *navigating complexity* and of *learning and adapting*. To strengthen them, it seems that there is still a lot of potential for developing ideas and visions on change as a driver of the capacity development process. More weight and thought should also be given to the strong relational learning which appears to emerge from the MPPD's informal forums, as well as in the parallel environments inhabited by students, particularly the organizational ones.

Methods which receive little consideration in the MPPD should be taken into account. Along with conscious generation of own critical ideas, more attention should be paid to 'creative' and experiential methods. More use could also be made of the experiences and ideas that students bring, connecting them with the new ones that the MPPD provides. Relationships and complex synergies between the analytical, critical, experiential and emotional methods of learning could also be explored and promoted.

In our experience, the fact that students perceive some of the questions raised in this paper as central in their capacity development process (and not others, such as 'efficiency') leads us to believe that MPPD teaching escapes from managerialist approaches. However, we have to rethink whether the aspects brought up are specifically 'critical', as we will see later. Furthermore, although the MPPD uses certain learning methods that go beyond traditional ones in Spanish university education, it is still very limited by the academic context (university procedures, learning approaches of some teachers, etc.). Big changes within this difficult context are still needed in order to move towards a teaching approach which is more coherent with a critical development practice.

As regards the theoretical and methodological framework, many questions emerge for rethinking the model. Evidence shows that relationships among results, drivers and methods are more complex than what the framework proposes. In addition, there is no clear distinction between certain "drivers" and "results", which is particularly clear in the case of "development of values and visions of social change". Some evidence also suggests that feedback and learning cycles exist, since students continuously reinterpret the experiences and attitudes they bring. These processes were not clearly considered within the framework, nor directly addressed in the interviews.

Although the framework considers capacities as being emergent and the capacity development process as being a continuous and endogenous one, evidence shows that the model is not

capturing the complexity of the learning processes. In some aspects, it may be reproducing the linear logic of managerialist approaches. The rational of framework ought to be reviewed and modified, perhaps by introducing —or by deepening— the ideas of learning cycles, loops of learning and experiential learning.

Evidence also suggests that, although students have partially developed those capacities taken into consideration within the framework, it is not as clear whether they have enabled a practice which is specifically 'critical'. Elements in the framework should be reconsidered in order to fill the gap between the framework proposed and the ideas around critical development practice. The analysis of what is specifically critical in what the students affirmed (for example, students' critical ideas about the aid system and the reorientation of their daily work that it entailed) and what is not (for example, continuous learning as "being more open minded") can be useful for this aim. The capacities considered in the framework should be rethought, their definition could be more specific, and other additional capacities should be taken into account.

This discussion points at a profound rethinking of the framework, but it also provides important elements for its modification and to continue reflecting on the key questions posed by Clarke and Oswald (2010). Theoretical work, as well as new information and evidence are needed, which should be partly obtained through the continuation of the study in the near future.

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