

# RETHINKING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE. INQUIRY INTO A POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME

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**ABSTRACT:** Our proposal focuses on a theoretical framework intended to characterise 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: first, to carry out an inquiry of the programme as a capacity development process in the training of critical development practitioners and second, to discuss the suitability of the framework for understanding similar capacity development processes. Copyright © 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

**Keywords:** capacity development; development management; critical practice; university education

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## 1 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN THE DEBATE AROUND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Managerialism in development management (DM) has been characterised by an underpinning rational-modernist ideology and a blind faith in scientific and rational knowledge (Gulrajani, 2010). Development issues and problems are thus reduced to aseptic, technical,

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This study forms part of the research project *La movilización social como dimensión estratégica de la educación para el desarrollo: Estudio de experiencias desde una perspectiva N/S en el marco de la ciudadanía global y del enfoque basado en derechos*, funded in 2011 by the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation (AECID) in its call for research projects in development studies (11-CAP2-0995). The translation of this article was funded by UPV, Spain.

and managerial ones (Wallace *et al.*, 2007). Practices, based on planning techniques managed by experts, aim at particular imagined and idealised points of arrival that can be achieved through logical steps to efficiently ‘deliver’ development (Gasper, 2000; Quarles *et al.*, 2003; Mosse, 2005; Mowles *et al.*, 2008). From this perspective, which prevails in the aid system, capacity development processes must be able to provide technical instruments that enable experts to offer solutions to attain those results that most effectively contribute to development aims (Clarke and Oswald, 2010).

Amongst those who share this perspective, however, there has always existed conceptual and methodological discussion (Clarke and Oswald, 2010). Many of the commentators and management training institutions, whom we might call reformists, have accepted the underpinning ideas of the managerialist approach but have tried to introduce a reformist agenda. They have done so ‘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 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; it inevitably reinforces power relations (Fine and Jomo, 2006, in McCourt and Gulrajani, 2010), and has dehumanising effects on the lives of workers, beneficiaries, or other stakeholders (Dar and Cooke, 2008). For scholars who share this perspective, inspired by Foucault (1980, 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 sympathise 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 nonmanagerialist practice of development (Gulrajani, 2010), directed towards what Clarke and Oswald (2010) called ‘emancipatory social change’. This emancipatory change is a political process of continuous challenge of asymmetries of power, hierarchies, and inequality, including the contestation of development discourse and the modernisation project whenever they sustain them (Townley, 2001; Mosse, 2005).

Specifically, we consider that this kind of practice is possible if practitioners take into consideration the complex nature of development processes, embedded in power relations and shaped by political interests and influences (McCourt, 2008; Mowles *et al.*, 2008; Pettit, 2010). This requires political engagement, taking a position—a position that is always problematic—on processes of contestation and commitment to partners with whom we share the goal of social transformation (Eyben, 2005). This entails discovering and challenging power together while we build confidence and consistent relationships with the people we work with (Eyben, 2005), and we constantly redefine what we do and the sense of what we do together (Simpson and Gill, 2007, Mowles *et al.*, 2008). All this is not aimed at more ‘effective’ planning, but at repoliticisation 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 colonising 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 underdevelopment (Gulrajani, 2010). This is why ideas such as confidence, adaptation, learning, reflection, and self-critique are so important in our approach.

This view of development practice requires a different manner of understanding and promoting capacity development. This different manner can be called ‘capacity development for emancipatory social change’ (Clarke and Oswald, 2010). In the next section, we will develop a theoretical framework on this idea, drawing on the reflections of different authors (especially in *IDS Bulletin*, 41 [3]) on capacity development processes. This theoretical work will be guided by several key questions posed by Clarke and Oswald (2010): 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?

The framework will be the instrument to analyse a particular capacity development process, a postgraduate programme in DM, 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 and second, to discuss the suitability of the framework for understanding similar capacity development processes.

The design of the MPPD was not particularly driven by the ideas of ‘capacity development for emancipatory social change’, and it is not specifically oriented to train ‘critical development practitioners’. However, the selection of this particular case study is relevant because the MPPD is a postgraduate development programme that tries ‘to meet new demands and challenges in rapidly changing and increasingly complex arenas’ (Johnson and Thomas, 2007: 39), in an academic, social, and policy context full of constraints and conflicting demands. The MPPD also tries to go beyond traditional approaches to higher education and gain an insight into it through reflections on capacity development processes in other spaces [as nongovernment organisations (NGOs) or social movements]. Given all these, our framework and analysis can introduce new and relevant reflections for the people running the MPPD or similar postgraduate programmes.

In addition to the challenging position of the idea of ‘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 article also aims at contributing to this purpose.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL CHANGE

Building on the contributions of different researchers, we have identified several capacities for a critical development practice, which are *navigating complexity*, *understanding and engaging with power*, and the *capacity for continuous learning and adaptation*.

These capacities emerge constantly as a result of a continuous and endogenous process, which takes place in individuals and groups (Fowler, 2007; Kaplan, 2010, Ubels *et al.*, 2010). These processes are driven by *comprehensive learning experiences* (experiential, emotional, and intellectual experiences); by constant *questioning, redefinition, and development of values and visions of social change*, and 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 (Clarke and Oswald, 2010; Ubels *et al.*, 2010), such as critical reflection and experiential learning methods, depending on the context and on individuals and groups (Figure 1).

Going into a deeper explanation of these concepts, and starting with capacities needed for a critical development practice, we consider that individuals and organisations should recognise and understand the implications of working with processes that are always unpredictable, emergent, and turbulent. This means being able to ‘better grapple with

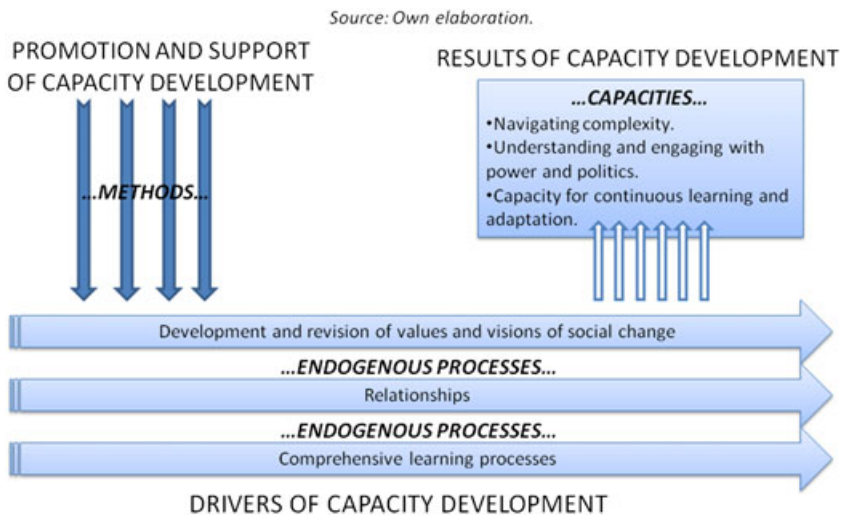


Figure 1. Process of capacity development for emancipatory social change

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’ (Ortiz Aragon, 2010: 41) that, according to Woodhill (2010: 55), ‘is as much about attitudes and mindsets as it is to do with any practical tools’.

A critical practice needs also to assume that processes of social change are not neutral; they are of a political nature, and becoming part of them with transformative aims entails discovering, questioning, and confronting authority and power. Therefore, there is a need for ‘the ability to understand power relations and situate oneself within them’ (Pettit, 2010 in Clarke and Oswald, 2010: 6), including the dynamics 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), to avoid the reproduction of power relations that perpetuate underdevelopment.

Crucial to any critical development practice is also 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 recognise 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, first 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 and learn throughout the process of change, uncovering our intentions and expectations (Mowles *et al.*, 2008) and providing our activities with meaning (Pitpit and Baser, 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).

Second, the capacity development process also emerges out of *relationships*. This is a dynamic process, in different formal and informal spaces, 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 (Mowles *et al.*, 2008; Harvey and Langdon, 2010). The different settings may facilitate or inhibit the capacity development process (Margaret, 2010).

As we mentioned earlier, 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 emphasise the wide-ranging process of learning for emancipatory change. This relates to the interiorisation and generation of new concepts and meanings, to the development of new analytical capacities, to experiential learning based on one’s own experiences and motivations, to 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 (Fisher, 2010; Jackson, 2010; Ortiz Aragon, 2010; Pearson, 2010; Pettit, 2010; Soal, 2010), ranging from learning through personal experience to ‘creative’ methods

that appeal to the emotions and the use of the body. In general, the processes of capacity development considered in these examples occur in contexts that 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 that university students should acquire. As in the rest of Europe, the Spanish university system is also immersed in a process characterised by academic managerialism (Amaral *et al.*, 2003).

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

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>

In 2006, two participatory workshops took place to design the curriculum and teaching methodology for the MPPD. Most of the development organisations invited and some university staff demanded technical–instrumental training in ‘useful’ tools for raising public funds and manage projects, whereas some organisations 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 4 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 2½ 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

<sup>1</sup>Spanish aid system is characterised 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 that affect the aid system in Valencia can be read in world-class newspapers such as *El País*.

<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.).



follows, in the form of an internship in a development institution (16 ECTS, for at least 4 months). This experience is the basis for a research study, synthesised in the master's final dissertation (5 ECTS).

#### 4 METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for this study consisted of undertaking semistructured interviews of 13 students who have completed the MPPD training process. Of these, three had finished 3 months before the interview; four, 9 months before; and six, 14 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 and their internship reports.

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 organisations 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 interview 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 amongst 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 article.

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

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<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 the following: 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 as follows: Do you think you are more able to recognise 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 recognise 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?

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



organisations 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 that 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 that 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 organisations 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, visualised 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 realised 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 that last 2½ 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, etc.), 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 (Jackson, 2010; Pearson, 2010; Pettit, 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 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 much 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 organisational ones.

Methods that 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 article 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 limited by the academic context (university procedures, learning approaches of some teachers, etc.). Big changes within this difficult context are still needed to move towards a teaching approach that 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 amongst results, drivers, and methods are more complex than what the framework presupposes. 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 because students continuously reinterpret the experiences and attitudes they bring. These processes were not clearly considered within the framework or 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 rationale 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 that is specifically ‘critical’. Elements in the framework should be reconsidered 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 (e.g. students’ critical ideas about the aid system and the reorientation of their daily work that it entailed) and what is not (e.g. 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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