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**PROFESSIONAL CHANGES AND NEW CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD OF
INTERNATIONAL AID.
THE CASE OF A PROFESSIONAL MASTER ON EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION¹**

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Abstract

The international scenario seems today characterized by an increasingly level of tensions and widespread conflicts, some of which have taken the shape of real humanitarian emergencies, especially the war in Syria, among the worst in the last decades.

Global political change and cultural transformations across the world occur at many levels.

On the one hand, national borders and social boundaries are increasingly blurred and constantly (re)drawn as result of the civil wars and massive migration flows. To this regard, the increase in the number of asylum-seekers in EU Member States over the past two decades has become deeply connected with the rise of exclusionary forms of ethnocentrism and populism.

On the other hand, the terrorist movements and the political instability in both the Middle East and African countries have made more difficult for vulnerable people achieve inclusion and peace. Growing forms of inequality, generated by a globalization process, have often neglected a fragile balance between the local and global processes, especially in the poorest countries, informing the conservative trends of many Western democracies.

The global changing scenario have forced the humanitarian and aid organizations to frame new agendas and re-think the traditional approaches in pursuing stability and promoting inclusion around the world. Indeed, there is an urgent need for professional changes in the way the international community face humanitarian crisis and violations of human rights.

Engaged with this issue, Italy finds itself in the strategic position to overcome the inadequacy of European responses to the making of development policies as well as solutions facing the growing arrival of refugees and migrants crossing the European borders. To this regard, the new Italian Law 125/2014 can be seen as part of a broader international policy, which resists and contrasts the new populism that animates Europe, supporting inclusive policies.

The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, even if still processing its model, finds a crucial opportunity to build a renewed approach of cooperation where the Italian universities, among the other institutions, can make their contribution in the field of development and humanitarian aid, opening the “Third Mission” to a development-oriented international effort, as the United Nations Agenda 2030 states.

The University of Bologna 2016-2018 Strategic Plan has included the international cooperation actions under the Third Mission, placing them within the Goal 17 of Agenda 2030, that is to

¹Notwithstanding that the contribution is the result of an observation and shared preparation process, we must note that the conclusions were looked after both authors while paragraphs 2, 4, 4.2 were written by Arianna Taddei and paragraphs 1, 3 and 4.1 were written by Federica Tarabusi.

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strengthen “the means of implementation” and renew the global partnership for sustainable development.

In order to achieve these goals, the Department of Education Sciences aims both to become increasingly involved in the international cooperation projects (such as, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East) and to promote the training activities addressed to the experts engaging with the educational issues.

Within this background, the paper aims to introduce the training experience of a new Professional Master – which was planned thanks to a past successful experience - in order to discuss the new challenges that these professionals have to face in the changing global scenario.

If, on the one hand, the educational dimension includes a wider social function, becoming strategic to all the actions aimed at pursuing human development, on the other hand, the interweaving of the above-mentioned processes makes more difficult the negotiation of shared meanings to which the professionals refer to practice in the field. Among the other, we can observe the difficulty to link emergency humanitarian action to a more organic frame of development interventions. In socio-educational sector, in particular, this tension between emergency and development could fall into naive *assistentialism*, “paternalistic” attitudes, or takes the shape of an explicit or implicit “cultural colonialism” informing the international interventions.

Within this frame, the Professional Master “International Cooperation and educational inclusion: new professional challenges” will address its effort in training new professional profiles engaged with the humanitarian aid and international development fields as well as a wide range of multicultural reception policies (at the local and national level) towards migrants, children of foreign origins, refugees and asylum seekers.

For this reason, the Department has decided to link the training experience to a research activities aimed at explore more in depth the skills and methodologies addressed to such specific professional profile.

Complementing the Master, the empirical research will aim, firstly, to collect interviews with some privilege witnesses. In particular, people involved will be practitioners, experts, project managers from non-governmental organizations, international organizations multilateral and bilateral agencies, non-profit associations, social cooperatives, local or national agencies committed to contrast socio-educational marginality as well as to the governance of migration and forced migration.

Moreover, the research will also be a way to monitor the developing of the Professional Master, showing lights and shadows of this post-graduate experiences.

Finally, it will understand if and how the training activities, and their inter-disciplinary background on the topic of educational inclusion - from pedagogical issues to socio-anthropological knowledges - are in line with the complexity of the contexts where the students shall work in the future.

Thanks to the contribution of the main Italian institutional actors, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the AICS, both the research and the Master can be seen as a significant arena to strengthen the synergy between the practical and the theoretical-political dimension of the international cooperation, providing to the universities a leading role in training new professionals in such field.

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Introduction

Today, the international scenario seems to be characterised by crucial political and cultural changes, as well as increasing levels of tension and conflicts that seem to take form in actual humanitarian emergencies.

This scenario suggests to different types of organisations that operate in the fields of both humanitarian and development aid not only to re-consider traditional agendas and approaches, but also seek professional and competences that are ever more capable of interpreting political and contemporary social phenomena while creating planning skills in line with changes of the aid contexts.

By including international development aid in the Third Mission, the strategic plan of the University of Bologna (2016-2018) offers a major scenario that is significant in the preparation of innovative proposals that can help prepare new professionals to work in very complex contexts.

The article discusses the role of universities in taking on these challenges while contributing in the training of professionals committed to development aid work both in Italy and abroad. In particular, much emphasis is put on the professional Master proposal "International Cooperation and Educational Inclusion: New Professional Challenges", promoted by the Department of Educational Studies of the University of Bologna, aimed at training experts in the field of social and educational inclusion. In this context, the Master embraces different potential professional and work contexts that range from development policies, humanitarian aid and international cooperation in a multi-cultural setting and hospitality policies aimed at minors and vulnerable persons nationwide.

The last goal of the contribution is to consider qualitative social research as a decisive instrument to build in a procedural and contextual manner sustainability and effectiveness of the educational proposal. To that end, it was decided to accompany the educational course with a brief empirical survey aimed at reconstructing the perspective and positions of certain privileged participants who work in major professional and institutional contexts of reference (such as NGOs, humanitarian aid organisations, development agencies, social private services).

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The considerations deriving in terms of critical points and strengths of the projects and social-educational interventions and professional competencies will therefore allow the gathering of major elements not only in the analysis of new professional figures required in aid contexts, but also in the preparation of educational courses from a top-down system to ensure consistency between needs expressed by the territory and agencies committed to social & educational inclusion.

The university and international cooperation

Today, international cooperation in its founding documentation² proves to have reached a high level of cultural and political maturity: it no longer shifts within the colonialist boundaries that at times have accompanied its initial actions and recognises as central point, concepts of dignity, ownership and local empowerment that contribute to guarantee a true cooperation. Based on this theoretical conquest, at a historical level, the cooperation is based on a framework full of contradictions, already declared internationally. Adversely, its works shift into a context that continues to be inspired by neo-liberalist logics, ruled by technical & economic approaches filled with dominant cultures and economies. In this context, logics in the cooperation for development aid struggle to take root and be recognised in state budgets. Still adversely, the rise of populist commotion in nearly all nations (aimed at defending the identities and local privileges at any costs, deaf in the fact of needs for intercultural dialogue and social and economic justice issues) led many to form an international cooperation as welfare intervention, aimed not at resolving issues, but simply at mitigating the consequences. Positively speaking, awareness is growing on the fact that the radical assumption of an international cooperation perspective capable of strictly follow the local development phases can prevent a future characterised by imbalance, conflict and ultimately war.

In this context, the university cooperation undergoes the same conflicts. Its development in the past years was based on an inter-university cooperation primarily directed at favouring scientific development. The logics of said development inevitably risk rewarding alliances among strong branches, the affirmation of a dominating culture in international rankings, the obtainment of maximum profit from cooperating activities. In this perspective, universities risk shifting towards

² See, among the others: OECD (2011), *Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration*, (available online: http://www.oecd.org/document/1/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_48725569_1_1_1_1,00.html – Paris; OECD (2008), *Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action* (available online: http://www.oecd.org/document/19/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_43554003_1_1_1_1,00.html - <http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhl4/>); ONU (2015), *Agenda 2030*, (available online: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>).

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being subject to evaluation processes that link their economic survival to immediate results measured pursuant to guidelines that exclusively follow disciplinary logics and hence insufficiently related to actual needs of the cooperation for development. For example, the manual for the assessment of the third mission of Italian universities adopted by ANVUR in February 2015 particularly identifies eight categories to be evaluated, including public engagement actions (ANVUR, 2015). It is no coincidence that any reference to international cooperation is omitted within these categories, even based on the reasoning that the relapse of the university's projects on the territory is normally identified in the immediate surrounding territories. Not necessary against the inter-university cooperating methods quoted so far, but at this point we must emphasize the parallel reasons of a cooperation intervention that can involve the universities in development aid projects not only focused on mere scientific research, but also aimed at favouring the dissemination of know-how and construction in individual areas in the ability to produce knowledge independently by carefully recognising local needs. Involvement by universities to cooperation projects for development must necessarily need to deal with the opportunity to build alliances not only with other universities, but also with institutions and speakers of the civil society in Italy and abroad; in particular, with the system of the participants who are capable of planning and acting locally over a long period of time and continuative within the scope of a perspective to integrate scientific competencies with economic, political and local cultural competencies. With this in mind, the opportunity for universities to obtain direct loans from AICS seem of great importance as envisaged in article 24 of Law 125/2014 and at the same time a need is evident for said possibility not to be used to load universities with tasks and duties that can be recognised to other subjects of the cooperation, including for example NGOs.

Even if still defining its own model, the Italian Agency for Cooperation for Development is an essential opportunity to create a renewed approach for cooperation where different institution entities and others, including Italian universities, may have the opportunity to provide their own specific contribution. This in particular to qualify the cooperation interventions and at the same time open the third university mission to internationalization aimed at development in the direction laid down by the Agenda 2030 of the United Nations.

The University of Bologna included specific goals to strengthen international cooperation in its strategic plan 2016-2018 within the scope of the third mission while placing them within the objective 17 of the Agenda 2030 "Strengthen Implementation Resources and Renovate the Global

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Partnership for Sustainable Development". Taking on responsibility in training practitioners who are involved in international cooperation projects is included within the scope of this objective. Said responsibility must concern not only professional training of those who intend to participate to development aid projects internationally. In fact, in reality the creation of academic competencies must also be required for those who working on cooperation projects set out and managed in Italy. It is evident that the general situation in our country finds internationalisation not only in the willingness to take action in remote regions, but also in every place where there is tension and conflict between different cultures, residents and migrants, including parts of societies with needs and motivations that are rival between them. What are the professional competences required for those who intend to take part in the cooperation for development in Italy and abroad?

The Master: challenges and proposals

Within the scope of the above framework, the Department of Educational Studies intends to pursue the objectives of the strategic plan of the University of Bologna by strengthening its own presence in international cooperation projects (in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East) as well as by investing on training for the aid practitioner working in the field of social educational inclusion.

In this respect, a proposal of a professional Master was recently formulated which is rooted on a training course that in the past was successfully focused on educational cooperation. Despite being positioned within a continuity process with past experience, the new proposal of the Master, entitled "Cooperation and Educational Inclusion: New Professional Challenges" was drafted based on local and global transformations that have recently involved the aid contexts. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the professional Master is intended as a concrete and proper answer to "educational challenges" in development aid and international cooperation, as well as changes that characterise contemporary scenarios: from the pressing migrant waves to new political and social "emergencies", from widespread forms of instability and conflict to increasing inequality caused by cultural, ethnic, social and gender diversity. By targeting graduates with different backgrounds, the masters is aimed at developing professional skills for involvement in the humanitarian aid and development field, as well as in providing local and national answers that the hospitality system intends to provide to minors, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable people. For these reasons, we propose investing in the training of future cooperating people, professionals in the

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development and humanitarian aid fields with specific competences in educational inclusion, as well as experts who work in different agencies and organisations responsible for dealing with hardships and marginality or in the field of migration and forced migration.

If, on the hand, the educational dimension assumes a more broader social function by becoming strategic and transversal for all types of interventions that propose the promotion of human development, from the other hand, experiences are multiplied, as well as researches that put educational inclusion in the central point of aid policies and cooperation interventions made nationally and internationally (Tarabusi, 2008; Taddei 2017).

In spite of this, we know there are signals and critical issues in the field that suggest the importance of investing more on training those involved in projects and social & educational processes.

First of all, the above changes and dynamics make the implementation of negotiation and construction processes of shared meanings by those working on the field even more complex and emphasize the need to link the emergency humanitarian action with decisions and systematic interventions for development aid.

Secondly, it seems necessary to overcome the classical logics of traditional cooperation based on the so-called "top-down approaches" and on paradigms of positivist imprint that have not seldom interpreted social phenomena through a strict causal determinism (Stirrat, 2000) and produce imperialist practices and neocolonial logics over time (Escobar 1991). As previously mentioned, even affirmation of a scene of new political models does not seem to have cleared development processes from the emergence of new "populisms" (Olivier de Sardan, 1995) that translate into aid practices detached from social contexts and concrete needs of local populations. To that end, plenty of literature on the international field has outlined how even behind bottom-up participation approaches, welfare and paternalist logics can be hidden that more or less consciously encourage dependency while reproducing asymmetry and obstructing the establishment of processes towards self-determination of vulnerable people and groups (Gardner and Lewis 1996; Zantotelli and Lenzi-Grillini, 2008).

Last but not least, the abilities and expertise of practitioners, who find themselves dealing with more variable complexities, can favour or compromise the success and the sustainability of the interventions. For this purpose, some experiences suggest the need to have a greater impact in the preparation of professionals who work in the educational field by enhancing the social &

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educational contents and theoretical interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as critical methodological instruments aimed at understanding cooperation contexts and new political and cultural phenomena. When considering this scenario, the educational proposal of the professional Master extends around the core of competencies that are put as possible answers to several of these critical situations. From one part by providing and consolidating the training of future professionals on theoretical know-how and interdisciplinary approaches needed to operate in contexts and processes directed at educational inclusion and on the other by stimulating and emphasizing opportunities for discussion and learning that help convert theoretical aspects (educational, technical, legal and socio-anthropological) into project solutions to deal with concrete challenges posed by the current society and international communities.

Research: voices and insights by participants on the field

The quality research process being presented is currently undergoing an assessment phase to come up with a first overview, even if not exhaustive, of the current professional context on the cooperation to which the master intends to contribute through the training of competent operators for both theoretical and technical knowledge on which to develop the professional profile of the aid practitioner.

The contents provided hereafter were subject to observations and analysis based on the interviews conducted to six privileged witnesses, representatives of the international cooperation and hospitality sector in Italy. The interview was conducted following a semi-structure method by leaving the possibility to researchers to discuss along with those being interviewed several major subjects based on the institutional role, professional interests and competencies of the participant.

The agenda was based on three main themes of questions regarding:

- the major changes that characterised the context of the international cooperation or hospitality in Italy in the past ten years;
- the main competences to work within the scope of the cooperation with a view focused on study courses or past professional experiences capable of ensuring more than others a profile of competences appropriate for new challenges posed by the national and international scenario of cooperation, in particular the social & educational sector;

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- the factors that can contribute to the realisation of a quality cooperation intervention while being aware that the subject is very complex, object of a broad and current discussion that cannot be answered at this stage.

The analysis of the interviews gathered will be presented on two levels: the first one intends to offer a macro consideration on the above mentioned main topics while emphasising the strengths and critical factors of the current scenario in the cooperation and competencies requested to operators in Italy and abroad; the second level of analysis discuss the topic on competences even further regarding those involved in the field of aid cooperation, particularly in the educational sector of the Central American region. This is also interesting because the Department of Educational Studies of the University of Bologna in the past ten years constantly intervened in the area by developing a major university cooperation experience in development aid policies.

New scenarios, new professionalism: first reports from the field

When talking with the first privileged witnesses it seems clear that the changes of aid contexts and global scenarios, as described above, are deeply perceived by those who work in the field.

As outlined by the director of an Italian NGO, for international cooperation, for example, the entry on a scene of new players that are not traditionally included among the "technicians" of development aid seem more evident. Universities, entities and research institutions stand out among these thanks to Law 125/2014 by making available expertise, material and professional resources while contributing to lessening a certain (only in part physiological) dose of uncertainty and ambiguity in planning, implementing and evaluating the interventions.

On the other side, the inclusion of other subjects that are part of the profit sector, such as businesses, make creating and negotiating shared goals are even more complex for those who work by following participatory development aid logics of empowerment and community. Besides rhetorical aspects of the partnership it seems clear that the different agencies and professionals for development aid, as well as the multiple key players who operate in the uneven, diversified system of hospitality in Italy may not always count on converging interests, approaches and actions that develop within a common territory. In the words of one of our participants, it seems evident that the "challenge today (is) to put together goals among key players who are so different".

With these considerations we gradually draw away from an abstract, romantic aid and cooperation vision by been more aware of the market logics and competition, asymmetries of powers and logics

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marked by conflict between different key players that may influence the cooperation interventions and own daily tasks:

"In my opinion a project manager today cannot be aware of how power hierarchies can have an effect on aid relations....logics of control that regulate dealings with the donor, partners, etc must be known. A rhetorical vision of cooperation and a too romantic version of cooperating work seem not to be in line with reality.... because then you clash with another world... made of own rules and competition"

(Directors of an Italian NGO)

It is interesting to note how the narrations of those interviewed approach critical considerations of experts that in the literature of international development aid have disputed reified and monolithic visions of aid projects (Olivier de Sardan, 2008; Mosse, 2004; Tarabusi, 2008). How in said studies, the intervention aid is in fact understood by those operating in the field as a social and political reality where multiple representation systems intersect where groups and organisations interact, negotiate resources, meanings and diverging interests within an area forged by multiple power asymmetries.

The approach to an aid relationship with empowerment logic is framed by many interviewees within this complex network of social and institutional key players as one of the factors that is significantly capable of having an impact on the sustainability of the intervention. In this respect, a social operator who works in the hospitality field in Italy has outlined among the strengths of the implemented projects the ability to produce and use "the network", it being understood as a series of relations and actions that are created thanks to the variety of key players in the territory who mobilise and interface to take action on specific cases or interventions. The ability to produce a major change for the user, capable of not reproducing asymmetries and dependence, but rather implementing its independence and self-determination, seems highly correlated to resources and potential that are put into effect in this network.

Likewise, for those working in aid cooperation abroad, the layout of partnership relations is the first card to play in order to prevent difficulties in the implementation of an intervention and hence have an effect on sustainability. In both cases, the construction of certain working settings for group

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discussion are considered significant to develop the practitioner's professional reflexivity, intended as critical ability to question own work practices (can be about discussions that are produced during local encounters in international projects or within a territorial team for the supervision of a case).

According to a person interviewed, another major dimension is represented by social innovation, namely the possibility that the international cooperation - understood not as transfer of models, but as co-planned development aid - can be capable of setting off those challenges in "beneficiary" countries that can be depicted as more innovative in their own contents or origin (for example, in terms of educational methods, educational orientations, etc).

Lastly but not least, specially for the non-government sector, the topic of advocacy is ever more important, understood as the capacity to promote a political process aimed at having an impact on educational policies, the distribution of material and symbolic resources within political, economic and social systems of specific local contexts. It is diriment from this point of view to overcome a welfare approach that can qualify the aid cooperation as mere disposition of services capable of producing an instant change, but very insignificant over a long period, to mobilise broader material and symbolic resources that can engage effective transformation processes with a broader range.

If from side, empowerment, the ability to make networks and advocacy seemed as major innovative drives for a projecting action and from the other side, the effectiveness of an intervention cannot be disconnected from professionalism and preparation of individual operators who are found in the field. In fact, participants have reasserted how the implementation and realisation practices of interventions require strong expertise and professionalism, in addition to subjective skills and new abilities that can move us once again away from a romantic and abstract vision of "making aid cooperation".

For those working on the humanitarian field in Italy and those involved in development aid cooperation abroad it is not easy to set limits and hierarchize a wide range of competences, know-how, abilities that are equally crucial for professionals in the field. A hospitality operator explains:

"To a certain extent, we need a little eclecticism.. not in the sense of being all-around experts, but in the sense of not having to be.....let's say, well prepared on legal and regulatory aspects and not know anything about education and cultural aspects ... or have absolutely no idea about the managerial-administrative plan... we need for that practitioner to clearly know what are laws in order to first of all

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understand the legal conditions of a migrant and minor, but also to have strong knowledge on social and educational processes.. one who knows how to understand the phenomena, but also know what is a budget..."

(hospitality operator in Italy)

Even those working in cooperation abroad reassert how important is been able to count on a "versatile" professional capable of dealing with different matters. Just as the case of cooperation in Italy, empathetic and interpersonal abilities result from a factor that can make a difference, despite depending on the subjectivity of the operator rather than his/her experience or academic background.

The managerial competencies of a practitioner were however particularly stressed for development aid cooperation abroad. In addition to knowing how to devise and write by "actively listening" and reading the aid context, it seems crucial to know how to "manage", learn how the transfer of resources work, as well as the management of a project. As stated by an interviewed person:

"If operators did not work the season or worked in the profit sector, they have no idea how to manage financing. The educational contents are important but great part of the project is also made up of accounts, contracts, negotiations, budgets, etc."

(foreign desk-officer)

Lastly, in the contemporary context, we can see how crucial the ability to document, file and communication can be, namely what is done in the field. To that end, more participants have asserted how the management of social networks and competences on new technologies produce an added value for visibility, networking and hence sustainability and effectiveness of an intervention. This in fact, in a certain sense allows us to overcome the isolation and fragmentation of individual projects so that own actions can be perceived and distinguished for external key persons and work in synergy with other contexts and interventions.

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Voices and perspectives of international aid cooperation

Participants listening have been committed over time to cooperation in the social and educational field in Central America. Each interviewed practitioner has a technical professional profile curved based on experience in the sector, as well as own personal traits. A.M. offers a political reading thanks to its twenty year experience with the Ministry of Salvadorian Education on inclusive policies. M.M. expresses an expert point of view in various public and private institutions in the protection of rights of Disable People Organisations, a woman with disabilities; E.M. is the representative country of an Italian NGO actively engaged in the social & educational sector. The interviews have helped emphasise the strengths and critical conditions of different types of competencies on which to build a profile for the professionals in the field of development aid cooperation while highlighting the potential contribution of academic institutions in the training of said competences and the qualification of the cooperation intervention.

Theoretical competences and reading techniques, analysis of contexts and understanding of needs:

According to Central American participants, the reading competences, analysis of contexts and understanding of needs to be qualified require a methodological approach based on research of sociologic and anthropologic nature that allows for a clear outlook of feasibility conditions at the base of interventions, conditions of which concern social, cultural and political aspects, all fundamental in social and educational programmes. In fact, one of the participants outlined that:

"one of the areas that has been neglected historically in international cooperation interventions was research which can give sustainability to initiatives (...) The realisation of projects must try to seek strategic alliances from the start with universities so that we can continue to do research in parallel to the realisation of the project in order to define criteria, variability and set the limits where to make real difference".

According to the E.M. coordinator of the Italian NGO, an approach for research requires the ability to identify and enhance resources present in the contexts. From a strategic standpoint of those working in the field, this means to integrate the aid cooperation intervention with the work of local

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organisations especially where, like for example in Central America, there is a civil society characterised by a complex, capable organisation. The competence of the aid practitioners becomes that of knowing how to act in the territories by valuing what is happening while facilitating exchange of experiences and methodologies and creating connections between countries.

As for research, the contribution of national and international academic institutions is certainly significant even in terms of alliances between universities of the north and south of the world. A.M. outlines the complementarity of the respective contributions:

"for example, if an alliance is created between a Salvadorian university and a European university to help the Salvadorian government structure educational proposals, the role of the Salvadorian university would be to guarantee the contextualisation process of the proposal with respect to actual needs and know-how already produced locally while the university of the north could contribute especially in terms of a methodological and theoretical framework with which to understand the needs and prepare a proposal".

The practice of understanding needs in the field was adopted for ten years by partner countries and one of the participants (A.M) emphasizes that the international cooperation should not support this "bad practice", in fact: "If research concerns of the main duties of universities, the national and international universities must be responsible for analysing the needs of the territory before preparing and implementing cooperation projects".

In the reading and respective understanding of contexts, all witnesses agree on the fact that sociological and anthropological competences are required even to be able to read and understand the nature of social, cultural and economic differences linked to micro-areas within the same country (Carrino, 2015). One of the interviewed parties (A.M) stated that within the scope of education, we can have persons trained on curricular planning who have good proposals which however do not create in-depth transformations as they are often free from social and cultural factors in the educational context. One error that is highly diffused from a political standpoint according to the participants is to believe that an educational project can be generalised nationwide without considering territorial differences. In particular, the Central American witnesses reassert that "no matter how small a country or region can be, there are major contextual differences.

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Unfortunately, the same aid cooperation still tends to generalise development aid interventions and practices in an indiscriminative manner without properly accounting for contextual differences".

Technical competences for planning, realisation, monitoring and assessing interventions

The planning, realisation, monitoring and assessment phases of cooperation interventions require overall specific competences developed on two dimensions: one technical and one political. With respect to the first one, the representative of the E.M. Italian NGO emphasizes the importance of being constantly up to date on approaches and methodologies adopted internationally. As for the second one, the two Central American participants outline several risks. In fact, a phenomenon has occurred for many years (progressively decreased) concerning a cooperation created on projects pre-defined by donor countries where local key persons were mostly excluded from the devising process. This type of top-down approach was objectively strengthened by contextual factors as affirmed by one of the witnesses (A.M.), most public and private entities did not develop enough competences for the planning process. To that end, most of those interviewed suggest that a major contribution by universities could be to develop abilities with local universities to prepare projects and participation to international tenders for fund raising. The realisation of projects from a top-down system have often cause misunderstandings between donors and local participants with respect to the methodological approach from a political and cultural meaning of the intervention adopted, in fact A.M. explains that:

"we live in a context with very high acts of violence and therefore projects tackle prevention of violence. 25 million dollars for violence prevention. What does it mean to prevent violence from another country's point of view that does not experience this problem? For example, for an American? For an Italian? For a Central American... we often find ourselves at implementing projects that meet guidelines far off our reality with insufficient social consequences or even negative consequences..."

The participants stated that often approaches have been adopted as well as de-contextualised programmes that have not have any impact on social transformation processes where education certainly assumes a central role even in connection to for example violence prevention. One of the

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participants (A.M) emphasized the concern that in schools often directors are not able to properly deal with teachers and this same difficulty in communication is encountered between political parties. We must develop competences for cultural and social mediation through training programmes and capacity building founded on education on peace and transversal actions to different social contexts (from schools to politics) in order to develop a complex vision of the reality capable of overcoming a perspective of a polarized analysis.

In order to develop a system approach that can tend to integrate existing services while strengthening policies in force, cooperating operators must have the planning and implementation requirements based on an inter-institutional approach, regardless of their specific role. The interviewees emphasize that too often, international cooperation tends to develop projects with the educational, health and employment sector in a completely separately manner without creating any connections that would entail alliances in terms of policies and optimisation of resources of different nature to achieve the goals that have a shared social impact. As outlined by A.M:

"problems are not only in the educational or healthcare system, but they are also social so we must encourage dialogue and cooperate with local institutions. One of the efforts and one of the most important requirements of a cooperation intervention is to promote this synergy because we do not have experience in this area. We are used to planned by sector. The cooperating parties and their organisations come from countries where planning is not segmental. Why is it then that when they come into our countries they propose segmental planning?"

In terms of inclusive education policies, the approach to human rights should be adopted transversally to the planning of different types of actions. One of the interviewees (M.M.) highly claims the need to involve persons with disabilities in cooperating interventions from the preparation phase of the project proposals, as envisaged in article 32 of the Convention on rights of people with disabilities (ONU, 2006; Griffo & Al., 2015; MAECI, 2013) in order to guarantee the inclusion and involvement by everyone so that all stakeholders can have a clear understanding of their duties in the development processes.

More specifically on the realisation phase of the cooperation intervention from a technical point of view, the representative (E.M) of the Italian NGO emphasizes the importance of knowing how to

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work in a team and remotely with participants from the branch in Italy which often adopts points of views and defines priorities that are not always in line with those of the responsible for the implementation of the project on the field: "One thing is to be able to work in the field while it is different to work remotely which implies being able to communicate good, know how to express yourself well and know how to write well. Moreover, the managerial and administrative competences are also certainly fundamental".

One of the processes that has assumed more importance over the years (remove comma) is without doubt monitoring and evaluating. In fact, E.M. affirms that:

"In the current scenario on cooperation there is significant demand by donors not only to prove that what you are doing has an impact, but also that the methodology you are using is evidence based, that what you are doing works and hence I believe that the university has a major role in strengthening the work of NGOs and also the cooperating agencies with respect to all that has to do with the management of knowledge and monitoring. To future operators of the cooperation I would provide major training on monitoring, evaluation and preparation methodologies not only in theory, but I would also bring experts, role play and simulations".

For purposes of monitoring and evaluating, the documental activities assume strategic importance because it accompanies the processes and allows all involved stakeholders to reflect on the practice and at the same time share actions and methodologies. As clarified by one of the Central American witnesses "I do not refer to documentation of the intervention understood as a historical narration of the project, but as analysis and reflection on practices that have concretized the project". The topic of documentation is particularly significant in educational projects in Italy and abroad because it is a base for educational reflection, essential for the construction of individual and social learning and sharing of practices within a community of professionals. Lastly, as for as any differences on competences for the planning and realisation of emergency interventions with respect to development aid interventions, all witnesses agree on the fact that this boundary today is very faded with respect to several years ago. The emergency was historically linked to crises and required interventions of mid-short term. To that end, E.M., representative of the Italian NGOs, emphasized

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the following: "The problem today is that there more ever more permanent crisis in the world and therefore we cannot work on the emergency without thinking about development and vice versa and it is ever more necessary to develop resilient abilities which means to work on structural causes that lead to the vulnerability of people".

Transversal competences

In view of the opinions gathered, transversal competences assume a significant meaning in the development aid practitioner's profile. Certainly having an academic title is required, but is not enough because an entire series of transversal abilities is needed which cannot always be taught and are often part of personal traits of individuals and other times they need to be cultivated and matured through experience. Among the most significant the following competences are outlined:

- interpersonal skills: empathy expressed through the ability to dialogue, coordinate human resources, work with excluded groups or in situations of serious social vulnerability. These are certainly fundamental competences for those who intend to work in projects aimed at promoting educational and social inclusion.
- process skills: the interest and professional willingness to contribute to development courses of a country; the ability to explore and in part transform areas through an holistic approach that takes into account complex situations, it being understood as one of the main dimensions of cooperation interventions. As outlined by one of the interviewees, it is important for programmes to adopt a co-constructive approach through those who develop, an approach that is participatory and based on promotion and protection of human rights and that can be able to generate widespread awareness within the EU and on social transformations currently in course.
- managerial skills: the main ones concern the use of technologies, knowledge of languages in the contexts where he/she operates, management of data banks, especially for the implementation of monitoring and assessment actions, basic administrative and financial skills.

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Conclusions

By including international aid cooperation in the Third Mission, the strategic plan of the University of Bologna (2016-2018) offers a major scenario to draft innovative educational proposals that propose the training of new professionals to work in contexts characterised by high complexity.

The article discusses the role of the university in taking on these challenges by contributing in the training of professional figures committed to the field of both humanitarian and development aid in Italy and abroad. In particular, it focuses on the professional Master proposal on "International Cooperation and Educational Inclusion: New Professional Challenges", promoted by the Department of Educational Studies of the University of Bologna, focused on the training of expert figures in social & educational inclusion. The new elements of this edition of the professional Master, supported by our experience in university cooperation are represented mainly by the following remarks:

- Overcome a bi-focal vision that has a dichotomous look of the training of aid professionals committed to development aid cooperation in Italy and abroad.
- Adopt an interdisciplinary approach to training
- Put emphasis on a holistic vision of professional and transversal skills of the operator.

In a scenario characterised by significant political, social and institutional changes, it was decided to accompany the professional Master proposal with a quality research aimed at exploring the point of view of certain privileged participants who work in the field of educational cooperation in Italy and abroad (like NGOs, social private services and development aid agencies).

The initial phase of the survey confirms from one part the importance of striving for an versatile training that can put together technical, managerial, political and legal competences with interdisciplinary knowledge aimed at analysing inclusive and educational processes (with special emphasis on the educational and anthropological-social area).

On the other hand, those interviewed urged us to provide future practitioners with methodological instruments that are critical and crucial in understanding needs and local contexts in professional reflexivity on own working practices, in the interpretation of a range of multiple meanings, cultural visions, interests that can intersect in the political arena and in the construction of networks and partnerships.

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Nevertheless, interpersonal skills and the ability to convert theoretical knowledge into concrete planning solutions seem strategical. In this respect, the active educational methodologies (supported by discussions in workshops and lab activities), as well as accompanying the trainee experience are considered factors that cannot be ignored in the high training university course.

Nevertheless, the interviews leave a voice of concern on the quality of aid cooperation processes that are related to the need to consolidate the leading role of institutions and local organisations and their training on competences functional to social and human development within an independent logic and sustainability based on principles of inclusion. Ultimately, the quality of the development aid cooperation interventions depend on many factors, among which without doubt, the quality of professional figures who coordinate specific programmes and define aid policies of individual cooperation agencies.

To conclude, the results of the interviews recognise the university a strategic role in supporting empowerment processes in institutions and in different persons of the civil society thereby strengthening the size of the university third mission; a mission that must enhance the social responsibility of academic institutions in training "competent citizens" to promote a major social transformation.

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