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Lecciones sobre comunicación, desarrollo y evaluación desde un punto de vista freiriano
Lessons on communication, development, and evaluation from a Freirean perspective

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Resumen. Paulo Freire sigue siendo una matriz teórica especialmente fecunda para el campo de la CDCS (Comunicación para el Desarrollo y el Cambio Social) y para la evaluación de las prácticas comunicativas de investigadores y organizaciones sociales. En este artículo tomamos cinco conceptos claves especialmente relevantes de la obra de Freire (*error, proceso, praxis, comunidad, curiosidad)* para ponerlos en discusión con otras tantas tendencias comunicativas dominantes en el campo. Desde estas premisas, el artículo extrae algunas lecciones aprendidas a partir de un proyecto de investigación sobre estas temáticas implementado en el contexto español, poniéndolas en discusión con otras investigaciones internacionales similares.

Palabras clave: Freire, Comunicación y Desarrollo; Comunicación y Cambio Social; Evaluación en Comunicación

Abstract. Paulo Freire continues to be a particularly fecund source for the field of communication for development and social change (CDSC) and for evaluating the communication practices of researchers and social organisations. In this paper, we discuss five key concepts (error, process, praxis, community, and curiosity) especially relevant to Freire's work in relation to other dominant communication processes. From these premises, the intention here is to draw lessons from research on these topics in Spain by comparing it with other similar international initiatives.

Keywords: Freire; communication and development; communication and social change; evaluation in communication

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Introduction

Educators seldom become celebrities for the public at large. Even less so when, as in the case of Paulo Freire, their ideas and approaches go against the status quo. However, within the relative influence that social researchers and educators can achieve, Freire is doubtless one of those who, since the last third of the twentieth century, have had the greatest impact on groups of people and institutions dedicated to research and social intervention from critical perspectives.

Specifically in the field of communication for development and social change (hereinafter, CDSC), Freire's proposals have been fundamental for promoting participatory or transformative models (Gumucio and Tufte 2006; Servaes 2002; Waisbord 2001). By the same token, in the field of evaluation his approaches have served as inspiration for authors such as Patton (2017) and Quarry and Ramírez (2009), among others, in their quest for dialogical, critical, and participatory models.

The legacy of the life and oeuvre of Freire includes a long list of concepts around which the books written by him and about him have revolved.[1] Notwithstanding the fact that he is not an author specifically associated with the field of communication, his writings had a strong impact on it from the start, given the significant parallels that can be drawn between his model of liberating education and an also liberating communication model. Based on previous research on the key concepts of Freire's oeuvre (Gadotti 2006) and their application to assessment and development for communication as a benchmark (Patton 2017; Waisbord 2001; Wilkins, Tufte and Obregon 2014) this paper focuses on the following five concepts: (1) the role of error in learning; (2) the value of the process more than that of the product; (3) the transformative praxis of reality; (4) the role of the community and the communal in social change; and (5) the importance of curiosity in research.

We have questioned (in Freirean terminology, we could say that we have problematised)[2] five concepts, along with a similar number of currently dominant trends in the communication initiatives promoted by numerous national and international development cooperation agencies: (1) the experience of success or good practices versus error as a key moment of learning; (2) the shift from the leading role of the process to the centrality of the campaign; (3) emphasis on the change in individual behaviour, instead of praxis; (4) the displacement of the community and the communal by the connected individualism of the citizenry; and, lastly, (5) substituting Freirean epistemological curiosity with the mechanical repetition of obsolete research formulas.

In this paper, these five key Freirean concepts and their opposites are analysed to learn a number of lessons from the project EvalComDev (Evaluation of Communication for Development

and Social Change),[3] which during four years has served to map CDSC in Spain. To this end, methodological triangulation was employed: (1) a (quantitative and qualitative) bibliometric analysis of communication, development, and social change in papers published in Spain's top journals (between the year 2000 and 2015); (2) a historiographical analysis to identify the main actors and stages in the institutionalisation of the field in the Spanish context; and (3) four highly relevant case studies representing particularly well the characteristics of CDSC in Spain: the community radio station Onda Color, the institute for development research IEPALA, the non-governmental, academic, and activist network Foro Comunicación, Educación y Ciudadanía, and the communication activism and expert Facebook group #Comunicambio. Likewise, the empirical results of our work (Author 2018, 2019) are contrasted with those of similar international research, such as the studies performed by Lennie and Tacchi (2011, 2013) on the assessment of communication and development programmes implemented by several UN organisations and international bodies including UNICEF, and by Ramírez (2017), on two initiatives for assessing development programmes promoted by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada.

Putting things into context

CDSC is suitable for framing the communicative reflection and action of solidarity organisations in contexts more coherent with the social goals championed by them and which allow us to identify the strategic role of communication in the process of transforming reality. In line with Enghel (2011), we believe that Communication for Development (Servaes 2003) and Communication for Social Change (Gumucio 2001; Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte 2006) constitute different approaches that can serve to designate and characterise a field relating to the role of communication in the strategic efforts to overcome collective social challenges and to advance toward greater social justice.

The field of CDSC has had, and still has, an unequal development in different geographical contexts. This diversity can also be seen in the field of research. Thus, there are authors who establish the following four interlinked communication for development approaches used by United Nations organisations: (1) behaviour change communication (BCC); (2) communication for social change (CFSC); (3) communication for advocacy; and (4) strengthening an enabling media and communications environment (McCall et. al. 2010, cited in Lennie and Tacchi 2011, 9). From another complementary perspective, Servaes and Lie (2015) establish the following disciplines and sub-disciplines in the field of CDSC: (1) strategic communication and participatory communication; (2) crisis communication and risk communication; (3) (development) journalism and international communication; and (4) online media and Internet studies. On the other hand, for most of what is

known as the "Global South", participatory research has formed an integral part of communication for development since the 1960s, even before Freire's oeuvre reached Africa and Asia.

According to Manyozo (2006, 80-83) the field itself emerged in the Global South, in areas such as Latin America, India and the Philippines, largely as result of local efforts aimed at tackling issues of underdevelopment. In this sense and by way of example, mention should go to the pioneering work of Nora Quebral, the driving force behind Los Baños School of Development Communication (University of the Philippines) (Manyozo 2006, 80-83), Radio Sutatenza (Colombia) and the Bolivian miners' radio stations, experiences described in *Making Waves. Stories of Participatory Communication for Social Change* (Gumucio 2001).

In the specific case of Latin America, Freire's emancipatory proposal can be seen, from a historical perspective, as a continuation of the approaches defended by Liberation Theology, since its conferences in Medellin (Colombia, 1968) and Puebla (Mexico, 1979) up until the present day. And, going back to the Spanish colonisation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it is possible to detect continuities between Freire and the movement led by the Dominican friar Bartolome de las Casas (1484-1566) in defence of the human dignity of the indigenous population as regards social justice.

With respect to the field of CDSC in Spain, as from the 1980s a process of institutionalisation got underway, after a long period of neglect and marginalisation (Author 2016). In the past 40 years, CDSC has gone through three major stages. After an initial stage of neglect and marginalisation (during the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s), it entered a stage of emergence (from the mid-1990s to 2002), followed by a stage of institutionalization and implosion (from 2003 to date). In Spain, CDSC has, on the one hand, a track record in the academic field, in which researchers addressing these topics (Author 2015; Barranquero 2017) have shown gradually more interest in this theoretical approach. On the other, CDSC has gained popularity with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movements working from a social justice perspective both in Spain and in areas of the Global South.[4]

The role of error

Following this contextualisation, we will now develop the analysis described in the introduction on the basis of the key concepts appearing in Freire's oeuvre.

What visibility and importance is usually given to error in research and social intervention projects? In the main, errors are circumvented or kept under wraps in those projects that fall into the category that Freire calls the banking or persuasive model (Kaplún 1986). But errors are also inconvenient for projects undertaken from a critical perspective. In their final reports, it is fairly

unusual for research teams to disclose their own errors for fear that this attack of sincerity may undermine their authority and lead to the cancelation of future projects.

In light of this trend, we are currently witnessing a boom in good practices and the quest for those initiatives that are considered to be successful. Of course, the validity of these successful benchmark initiatives is not being questioned here. Although it is indeed true that, on many occasions, such practices have been idealised, disassociated from the materiality and ambiguity of the processes that have given rise to them, ignoring their criteria and preconceptions. We believe, as with Enghel (2017, 13), that the critical debate on the issue of success in research on CDSC should lead to a quest for alternatives that surmount the demands imposed by international bodies and national and international funding agencies in terms of approach and evaluation.

On the other hand, there are disciplines, such as medicine, that learn from their errors, namely, researching on the sick, which is wrong. They learn through trial and error. Unlike medicine, communication is not a clinical discipline. Would a hospital for healthy people be practical? It seems like a contradiction in its own terms. For almost the same can be said of communication research when it hinges on idealised good practices and on excessively forced success stories. One of the consequences of the non-clinical nature of research, as noted by Servaes (2016), is that it means "*that we have very low utility to society at large*".

What does Freire have to say about this matter? Throughout his work, there is a conscious effort to assume error, failure, and ignorance in the process of learning and liberation. One of the many references in this respect can be found in *El grito manso* [*The Meek Cry*] (Freire 2003, 57) where he remarks,

> "One of the good qualities of a teacher is to show students that ignorance is the departure
> point of wisdom, that being mistaken is not a sin. Error is a moment in the quest for
> knowledge. It is exactly mistakes that allow us to learn."

This is not a defence of mechanically implemented trial and error, but rather the awareness of errors as unavoidable moments in the research, learning, or communication process.

As to evaluation, for researchers it is easier to allude to the errors of others than to their own. Exceptionally, Kylie Hutchinson (2018) ponders on sincerity and, with a good dose of humour, on the errors of evaluators in her book *Evaluation Failures: 22 Tales of Mistakes Made and Lessons Learned*. "*There's no success like failure,*" Patton (2018, 5) remarks in the book's forward from a perspective aligned with the Freirean approaches to error. What are the common errors of evaluators? For this author, they include, for example,

> design issues, data collection problems, political dynamics, difficult relationships, contextual
> complexities, turnover of key people, delays, communications issues, data access problems,
> weak administrative arrangements, incorrect assumptions, tough negotiations, diverse

perspectives, cross-cultural misunderstandings, conflicting agendas in commissioning

evaluations and lack of program capacity (Patton 2018, 2).

We have made several of these mistakes in our own research project. For instance, we have noted that the project per se and the creation of the research team were both highly complex, giving rise to a wide range of theoretical perspectives that, at times, ceased to be enriching and stimulating to become a handicap and a problem. By the same token, the institutional logics imposed by the funding body, without us having the chance to negotiate the terms and conditions, made it impossible to run the project at a more leisurely pace. Probably now, after its conclusion, the mistakes made and, subsequently, the lessons learned, we would be in a better position to undertake it. In retrospect, it would need to be redesigned so as to fine tune it, reducing the number of researchers and assuming those more viable objectives and results in the complex and precarious institutional conditions with which it is necessary to cope.

Therefore, the first lesson that we have learned is that error and failure are part and parcel of the research process and lifecycle. From a Freirean perspective, this is not something that should be feared or concealed, but rather a catalysing moment of the project and research process, with a huge potential for making it more realistic and for consolidating the team through reflection and the joint quest for solutions.

The value of the process versus the campaign

The word "process" is one of the Gordian knots around which several of the key ideas in Freire's thinking revolve. The conception of the world as something that is not given, but rather "is being", the path from naïve awareness towards authentic *concientizaçao*, the promotion of a real literacy or the transformation of the world, are aspects of the Freirean terminological constellation that ineluctably incorporate the idea of process.

CDSC as a participatory process (Waisbord 2001, 5), inspired, among others, by Freire's theories (Tufte and Mefalopulos 2009), appears as one of the obligatory references for researchers in the field. In point of fact, this element—the centrality of communication as a participatory process of transformative reality—serves to differentiate between strands in development communication (Waisbord, op. cit.) or between its different stages, following the classification proposed by Servaes (2003). The first stage (1945-1965) was characterised by dissemination practices based on behavioural and functionalist models and developed at major US development foundations targeting the "undeveloped" world. In this stage, the communication logic of the campaign was one of the principal tools employed. In contrast, in the successive stages of CDSC (dependence, multiplicity) it was the communication processes promoted by social movements that

took centre stage, especially through the so-called "community media", which can be regarded as a paradigmatic example of participatory communication for development (Author 2013).

The process versus the campaign is one of the many theoretical and practical tensional stresses traversing the field of CDSC. The emphasis on the logic of the conventional communication campaign to achieve behavioural changes in the short term, for the purpose of obtaining easily measurable results, by and large in exclusively quantitative terms, in order to be able to justify the effectiveness of a project to the funding bodies and the public at large, clashes with the corresponding parameters of the process' logic: long-term changes that are difficult to measure and only then with the necessary intervention of qualitative approaches. Be that as it may, the idea is not so much to tackle a dualistic and simplistic dilemma (process versus campaign), but to find the way of redeploying certain types of campaigns in communication logics characterised by the momentum of communication and social transformation processes.

Applying these ideas in the field of evaluation, Patton suggests that the evaluation process should be reframed in the wider process of critique and transformation of society, with a view to raising the awareness of individuals and changing the relations of power in favour of those who have the least (Patton 2017, 66). Something that, as has been seen, goes beyond the limited expectations with which conventional communication campaigns tend to be designed.

In our project, we detected that tension between process and campaign at several levels. Bearing in mind the triple methodological strategy that we implemented, we were able to verify that campaign rationales had a greater presence in the bibliometric analyses than in the case studies. Namely, a peculiarity of the field of CDSC in Spain with respect to global trends in other countries refers precisely to how specific researchers resort to terms and concepts inherent to conventional advertising and marketing when talking about CDSC, which, for them, only formally appears to be grounded in the keys of the process inspired by Freire. On the contrary, the process as a central element was particularly relevant in the four case studies performed (Author 2019).

So, the second lesson that we have learned points to the need to recuperate the logic of social transformation processes within CDSC, at a historical moment when both international development cooperation institutions, including the vast majority of NGOs, tend to underscore the importance of launching high-impact campaigns in the short term.

Praxis versus change in individual behaviour

Closely connected with the previous term, the word "praxis" plays a central role in Freire's oeuvre. As with other Freirean terms, the discussion of its many meanings is beyond the scope of this work. In the dictionary dedicated to Freire (2015), Ricardo Rossato (2015, 407) suggests that

"praxis has become a socio-historical product inherent to the conscious man who makes his presence in the world a way of acting on it (…) praxis assumes a historical dimension that seeks to understand mankind and the world in a permanent process of transformation (…)".

Freire (1978, 29) himself would say, in one of the multiple references to praxis in his writings, that there should not be "any separation between thinking, language, and objective reality. Whereby the reading of a text requires the 'reading' of the social context to which it is referring". Freirean praxis not only refers to the inextricable connection between theory and action, but also points to a specific type of action. It is this last meaning that we would like to underscore at this point, insofar as that, according to Freire, praxis denotes a triple level at which that social transformation or change manifests itself: change in social macro-structures, change in micro-spaces (community, local), and personal change.

These three levels, in relation to Freirean social change, are also present in the field of CDSC in the works of many authors taking a participatory or critical approach to the subject. In the introduction to *Communication for Social Change Anthology: Historical and Contemporary Readings by Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte* (2006, 20, emphasis added), a book also edited by the two authors, there is a clear reference to this issue:

"Social change can be sustained if *individuals* and *communities* affected own the means, content, and methods of communication. Communication for social change is horizontal and strengthens *community bonds* by amplifying the voices of the people who are poorest (…). The results of the communication for social change process *go beyond individual behaviour* and consider the influence of social norms, values, current policies, culture, and the overall development context."

Nowadays, however, the communication strategies of international development agencies are far removed from this Freirean vision of praxis and the multiple levels of transformation involved in social change. The dominant social marketing and corporate communication approaches end up, in practice, focusing on a change in individual behaviour, which at best also affects the behaviour of primary groups, such as the family or local organisations. On the contrary, the objective of socio-political transformation, viz. of those institutions, regulations, values, and rules that perpetuate social inequalities and power imbalances, seems to have disappeared from the horizon of expectations.

The "social change" label is occasionally applied to communication proposals that, in practice, propose few transformations, if any at all, pertaining to social justice. This was detected at the different levels of analysis of our research project. For instance, in the study of Spanish academic production in this regard, we discovered that CDSC had been addressed by some Spanish researchers in connection with very un-Freirean theoretical frameworks, such as Walter Lipmann's conservative vision of public relations (Author 2018).

Likewise, in one of the studies performed on a social media group of communicators and activists called "#Comunicambio",[5] we found that, on the basis of the analysis of several of its experiences, it was possible to deduce conceptions of CDSC that were not only different, but sometimes diverged from the Freirean concept, as well (Author 2019). Although the core members of this group alluded to concepts aligned with the triple level of Freirean practice, this was not always the case with the texts posted on this virtual platform by other members of #Comunicambio. The juxtaposition of diverging experiences without any ensuing debate hinders the correct decoding and filtering of those that are truly emancipating (in a Freirean sense) by the users of this non-expert CDSC forum.

Therefore, the third lesson that we have learned, relating to the concept of praxis, is the need to consider simultaneously three dimensions of social change susceptible to being promoted in CDSC projects: individual change, change at micro-levels, and change at macro-, institutional or structural levels. At the same time, praxis refers to the emancipatory orientation of our practices as a useful self-assessment criterion, more than to technological discussions (on social change or other concepts) that perhaps do not result in practices or processes that truly transform reality.

The community and the communal versus connected individualism

Freire's famous remark, "*No one knows everything and no one knows nothing; no one educates anyone, no one educates himself alone, people educate each other, mediated by the world,*" refers to the central role played by the community and the communal in his thinking. Given his Brazilian origins, Freire departs from a non-Western imaginary when conceiving the indivisible links between people and the communities to which they belong. In dominant Western thinking, deriving from modernity, in contrast, this is understood as being closely related to the process of individualisation, with its advantages and drawbacks, alike.[6] Even in the Western perspective noted above, in itself restrictive with regard to the conceptions of community, the theoretical work of authors like Bauman (2001) alludes to a "liquidity" or dissolution of the social and community bonds that, until recently, united individuals with the social system and their environment of reference.

"Community" is a particularly awkward term for contemporary Western thinking. In the domain of CDSC, it has been pondered and debated on fairly insistently. For example, Downing (2010) has developed some interesting reflections on the polysemy and ambiguities of the term "community" applied to the communication promoted by social movements. By the same token, in Latin American communication thought the issue of community communication has been studied exhaustively and referentially since the 1960s up until the present day (see, for instance, a historical reconstruction of this Latin American process in Peruzzo 2008).

It is no coincidence that "community media" is one of the terms employed to refer to an unescapable experience in the field of CDSC, as observed above. Other European authors, albeit with a global vision of the field, have developed interesting conceptual approaches to the community media phenomenon (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2007, 220) that make it possible to group together different experiences in the media-centric/social-centric and in the essentialist/relationalist core. Finally, Manyozo (2017) picks up on the centrality that communities have in the process of discussing development issues with them.

The multiple nuances of the term "community", applied to the field of CDSC, increase even more, if possible, when the subject of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and virtual social networks is broached. The aforementioned individualist trend yet again emerges in CDSC practices in digital spaces, to the point of rendering communities invisible in the digital communication process, while, to the contrary, excessively over-representing the role of the individual. Therefore, the results obtained by Wellman et al. (2001) in research performed on communication in digital environments nearly two decades ago are still valid. The networked individualism noted by these authors alludes to the hyper-fragmentation of the citizenry's digital participation in which it is isolated individuals who seem to make up, one by one, the digital space. Terms such as "mass self-communication" noted by Castells (2009) point in the same direction. In this context, the question posed by Gerbaudo and Treré (2015, original emphasis) is highly appropriate: "¿*Where is the* 'we' *in citizen digital communication practices*?" This participation of connected individuals conceals our participation, i.e. that of the community.

In this respect, and from an evaluation perspective, Patton (2017, 56–57) suggests that an essential principle of evaluation, stemming from Freire's thinking, denotes that "*consciousness resides in communities of people, not just individuals*" (idem., 56).

Similarly, Ramírez (2017, 37) suggests that communication and evaluation processes require, as a basic element, collaborative and participatory processes on the part of individuals and collectives or the communities to which they belong, for in this way they take ownership of the results, both qualitatively and quantitatively speaking, while also enhancing their capabilities.

What shape did this community dimension take in our research? In relation to the bibliometric mapping of the field, we were able to confirm that in Spain community communication was conspicuous by its absence in communication research in its institutionalisation stage. Only recently, in the twenty-first century, have Spanish researchers begun to incorporate authors like those cited here (Downing, Peruzzo, Tufte, etc.) in their studies. As to case studies, only three of them refer, to a varying degree, to the community and the communal in their communication proposals. This is the case with the IEPALA Research Institute and, to a greater extent, the community radio station Onda Color. In the #Comunicambio digital group, in contrast, it was

possible to observe an overrepresentation of individuals at the expense of a referenced participation of the communities to which they belonged.

This has led us to discover, as the fourth lesson, the importance of giving greater and better visibility to the community dimension of social change driven by communication processes, at a historical time when individualism tends to prevail, especially in Western contexts. The strengthening of community relations and their greater density and articulation, are valuable results for CDSC actions that need to been taken into account more.

Epistemological curiosity versus the mechanical repetition of obsolete research formulas

At first sight, it may seem that the term "curiosity" does not have, in Freire's conceptual universe, the same importance as other concepts, like some of those mentioned above. Furthermore, its appears as though "curiosity" is an excessively lightweight term compared with those like "praxis", "emancipation", and "politicisation". However, a careful and transversal reading of Freire's work allows us to discover the presence and relevance of the term "curiosity", above all as regards its link to the tasks of researchers and research.

The first reference to curiosity can be found in the pedagogy of the question promoted by Freire (1986), in opposition to the pedagogy of the answer inherent to the banking models of education and communication. In *Pedagogy of Autonomy* (1996), naïve curiosity is opposed to epistemological curiosity, drawing a parallel that recalls the differences between and the transition from naive consciousness to critical transitive consciousness. In *Under the Shade of This Mango Tree* (1997), Freire dissects the elements of epistemological curiosity: it is related to the critical posture that dialogue implies and concerned with comprehending the raison d'être of the object that mediates between the subjects of dialogue. It is this epistemological curiosity

> "that leads human beings to be surprised by people, by what they say, by what they seem, when confronted with facts and phenomena, beauty and ugliness. This irrepressible need to explain, to seek the raison d'être of the facts" (Freire 1997, 103).

This quest for the whys and wherefores leads us inexorably to the qualitative dimension of research. And, by the by, to the confirmation that in the critical tradition of CDSC there is a particular interest in implementing research strategies of this type, in which participation (participatory action research, participatory rural appraisal), media ethnography, and other genres in the realm of qualitative research have played a decisive role in the field's tradition.

On the contrary, epistemological curiosity appears to oppose the dominant trend in which the main agents and bodies dedicated to cooperation apply research designs focusing on the mechanical repetition of obsolete formulas, despite their questionable utility for gauging and fostering social change.

12

In the intersection between research and CDSC, and in relation to the role of epistemological curiosity and the approach employed here, useful references can be found in the proposal put forward by Lennie and Tacchi (2013). In their CDSC evaluation model, the choice of an *emerging* evaluation design presupposes that the authoresses have opened their curiosity to the desire to be surprised in the very process of research/evaluation. In other sections of their work, they perform a mapping of evaluation and monitoring techniques and perspectives that has become a trending topic in international cooperation agencies. Thus, in their description of the key themes in their United Nations (UN) consultations on challenges in evaluating communication for development, they include the following as common general characteristics: (1) "*funding and other resources such as time for research and evaluation of C4D is a low priority, or inadequate*"; (2) "*low levels of skills, capacity, understanding or awareness of research and evaluation and social change*"; (3) "*lack of capacity to design and implement research and evaluation, and lack of useful indicators or baseline data*"; and (4) "*lack of importance and value given to research and evaluation for C4D*" (Lennie and Tacchi 2013, 78)[7].

In relation to our project, as we have done with the first term (error), there is an invitation to review our own role as researchers in order to determine in what way epistemological curiosity has manifested itself. In the initial design of our research, the need to go beyond the evident, to surmount "*the myopia of the visible*" (Melucci, 1989) was already evident. Without disregarding the contributions of quantitative research methodologies, in our project we gave priority to those techniques that enabled us to delve into the whys and wherefores: historiographical analysis, qualitative bibliometric analysis, and case studies. At a different level, the question of how to gauge the capacity of the communication initiatives studied to bring about social change has awakened our curiosity and has encouraged us to continue on our quest, in spite of the fact that the answers that we have discovered so far have not always matched up to the questions.

Accordingly, the fifth lesson that we have learned involves placing greater importance on Freirean epistemological curiosity. In practical terms, this implies the need to incorporate an emerging design in our research projects, negotiating this issue with the funders, people, and organisations involved, insofar as it is impossible to predetermine, before performing the fieldwork, the validity or suitability of a research design. At another level, as researchers, we value the importance of epistemological curiosity for going beyond the visible and the empirically observable, in order to explore deeper levels of reality.

Conclusions

Freire's thinking and oeuvre are still touchstones for criticising the neoliberal agenda as regards communication and development. The cycle of new inequalities and injustices of global capitalism continue to discover in Freire elements to shape both critique and alternatives.

In this paper, we have identified five practical lessons for the future as a result of discussing four different aspects: (1) the results of the research project EvalComDev; (2) the key concepts of Freire's oeuvre (error, praxis, process, community, and epistemological curiosity); (3) research projects similar to our own in the field of communication, development, and assessment; and (4) the communication and assessment trends currently prevailing in the main international organisations dedicated to these issues.

In short, the five lessons are as follows:

1. The role of error as a catalyst for the project and the research process that can have positive consequences for the team if it helps to review critically its initial orientation.

2. The need to recuperate "process logic" versus "campaign logic" in communication projects. This implies, among other things, considering the medium and long term as basic requirements for observing and measuring changes in reality.

3. The triple level of social change that implies assuming the Freirean concept of praxis. It is a real challenge to implement projects and macro-social change, but this challenge would be totally inviable if that triple level were not present in the theoretical framework, the methodological design, or the horizon of expectations of the research team.

4. The importance of giving greater and better visibility to the community dimension of social change driven by communication and development projects, versus the prevailing tendency to place the spotlight on the changes occurring in the individual dimension.

5. The value of the research team's epistemological curiosity, in order that projects should have an accessible emerging design, based on flexibility and being open to the changes that according to the current reality, the populace, and the circumstances (in general) should be included in the implementation process.

These lessons are the result of an inspirational and provocative interpretation of Freire's oeuvre. Our aim here has not been to domesticate his thinking, but anyone attempting to do so would soon realise that it is a complex task owing to the critical potential of the core concepts of his work, especially when regarded as a whole, as a constellation. But it is also difficult to imagine his oeuvre occupying a relevant place at communication schools, at least in a general and permanent fashion. These are not good times for envisaging such a state of affairs.

Nonetheless, the references to Freire are not the preferential or exclusive reserve of the nostalgic. There is a Freirean connection (Richards, Thomas, and Nair 2001) that allows for connecting current research on CDSC with the Brazilian educator's work, discovering in it a fruitful and very useful theoretical matrix for analysing and transforming current reality. As Raff Carmen (1998, 64) remarked, a year after the death of Freire, his

> "philosophy of the non-philosophers' made the internal organic intellectual, that is to say those members of the powerless groups whether illiterates, women, blacks or disabled, oppressed throughout the world whose conscience and expertise have been raised by active struggle, pivotal to his theory and methodology".

Likewise, the concepts currently emerging in the field of development studies, elaborated from non-Western perspectives, such as the African term *ubuntu*[8] or the Quechua term *sumak kawsay*,[9] possess aspects that go hand in glove with Freire's theoretical perspective. In a broader sense, Dyll (2018) suggests bridging the gap between indigenous and scientific knowledge, in a similar way to the Epistemologies of the South proposed by the Portuguese thinker De Sousa Santos. Echoes of Freire's thinking can also be detected in these initiatives.

What seems certain is that, for us, the Freirean perspective has provided us with very useful clues for critically evaluating our work, learning from our mistakes and driving the evaluation and communication process.

The lessons to be learned through trial and error are by no means restricted to those that we have listed here. But they will doubtless continue to serve as inspiration for delving deeper into this line of research in future projects. Likewise, we trust that these lessons will be useful for other researchers who, in other contexts, can learn from their errors, successes, and quests considered here from a Freirean perspective.

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1   In order to gain a deeper understanding of Paulo Freire's oeuvre and personality, a fundamental reference is the website https://www.paulofreire.org/acervo-paulo-freire, plus the different Paulo Freire Institutes created all over the world.

2   "In his work *Conscientizaçao* [*Conscientization*, t/n], Freire defines the term 'problematisation' as the third step in his literacy method, preceded by thematic research and theming. Problematisation refers to the moment of development of a critical awareness about the subjects under discussion by identifying challenging situations or specific problems involving the lives of the those being made literate" (Freire, *Conscientizaçao*: Sao Paulo, Cortez & Moraes, 1979, 43-44). Mülh, E. H. 2015. Probletizaçao. In *Diccionario Paulo Freire*, p. 413.

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4   For futher information on the context and history of CDSC in Spain, see Marí 2016.
5   See Marí, 2019.

6   By way of example, see Giddens, A. 1991. The Consequences of Modernity. Stanford: Polity and Modernity; 1991.Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age. Stanford. Stanford University Press; Bauman, Z. 1991. Modernity and Ambivalence. Malden, MA: Polity; Adorno, Th. and M. Horkheimer.1972. New York: Herder [Dialectik der Aufklarung, 1944].

7   The research on assessment and communication performed and coordinated by Jo Tacchi has continued where the works cited in this section of our paper left off. A good example are the consultancies carried out by UNICEF, under the mandate of Rafael Obregón as its head of communication (see Noske-Turner, Tacchi, and Pavarala, 2018).

8   *Ubuntu* is a Nguni Bantu term meaning "humanity". Often traslated as "I am because we are", or "humanity towards others", it is also frequently used in a more philosophical sense to mean "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_philosophy.

9   *Sumak kawsay*, *el buen vivir* ("good living"), rooted in the worldview of the Quechua peoples of the Andes, describes a way of doing things that is community-centric, ecologically balanced, and culturally sensitive. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumac_Kawsay#Buen_Vivir