Matrix for the quality assessment of university service-learning projects

Indicators of Good Practices of Service-Learning University

Star

The goal of the Matrix is to specify the essential and secondary indicators needed to develop good practices in university service-learning (USL). A protocol is established to carry out its assessment. Dimensions and phases indicators of a project are specified, as well as the agents or people involved in it.

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This tool has been developed with the funding from
REFERENCIA DEL PROYECTO/AEI/10.13039/501100011033.

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Madrid 25th february 2023

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The proliferation of innovative experiences in university education has been confirmed in different forums, as well as the evidences of their impact in research. However, the available tools are limited when trying to address the quality assessment of university service-learning (SL) projects.
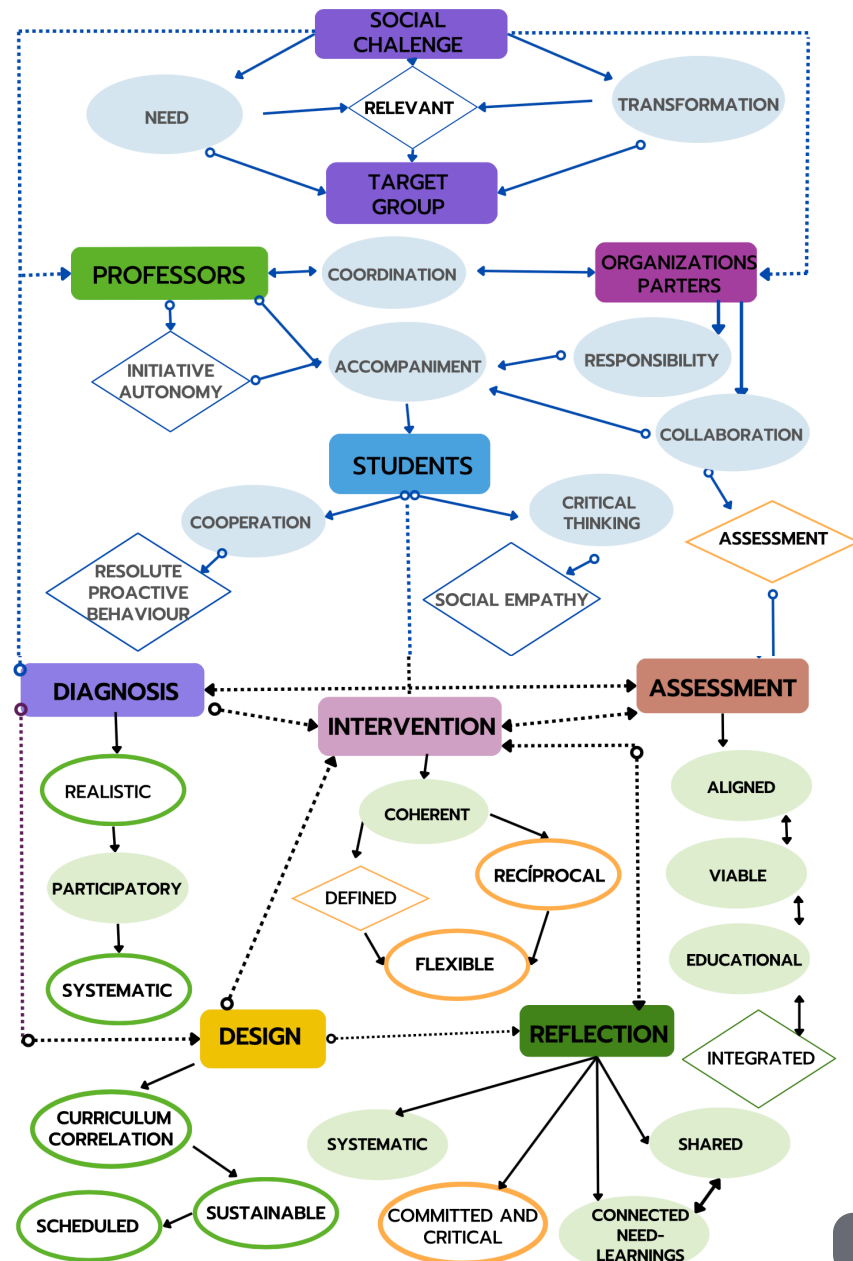
We present a tool for the evaluation of your SL projects.

+info

Matrix for the quality assessment of university service-learning projects

USL MATRIX

FINALITY

THIS TOOL TRIES TO GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF USL PROJECTS AND TO SPECIFY DIFFERENT POINTS TO IMPROVE.

PROTOCOL

The fact that USL projects are constructed in the reality itself (along with the involved people, in coherence with the educational programs in which they are framed and aligned with the detected needs) requires the ability to admit a certain degree of flexibility and adaptation. Thus, the **idiosyncrasy of USL projects** requires flexible tools to assess their quality keeping in mind the **diversity of the action contexts**.

The application of the USL Matrix will allow for a comprehensive exploration of each of the dimensions and indicators which form a USL project, in relation to the participating **AGENTS** and to the **PHASES** of a program.

To collect information about the reality of the projects, the phases of a USL project and the involved agents will be especially reviewed. In doing so, the level of achievement of the project indicators and the dimensions that define each indicator will be determined. Lastly, a series of questions will be proposed to guide the process of analysis and reflection about the quality of the assessed project.

As final result, an in-depth description of the project's quality will be obtained and also information about potential improvements.

USL MATRIX

STRUCTURE

The Matrix structure for the quality assessment of USL projects is founded on two pillars:
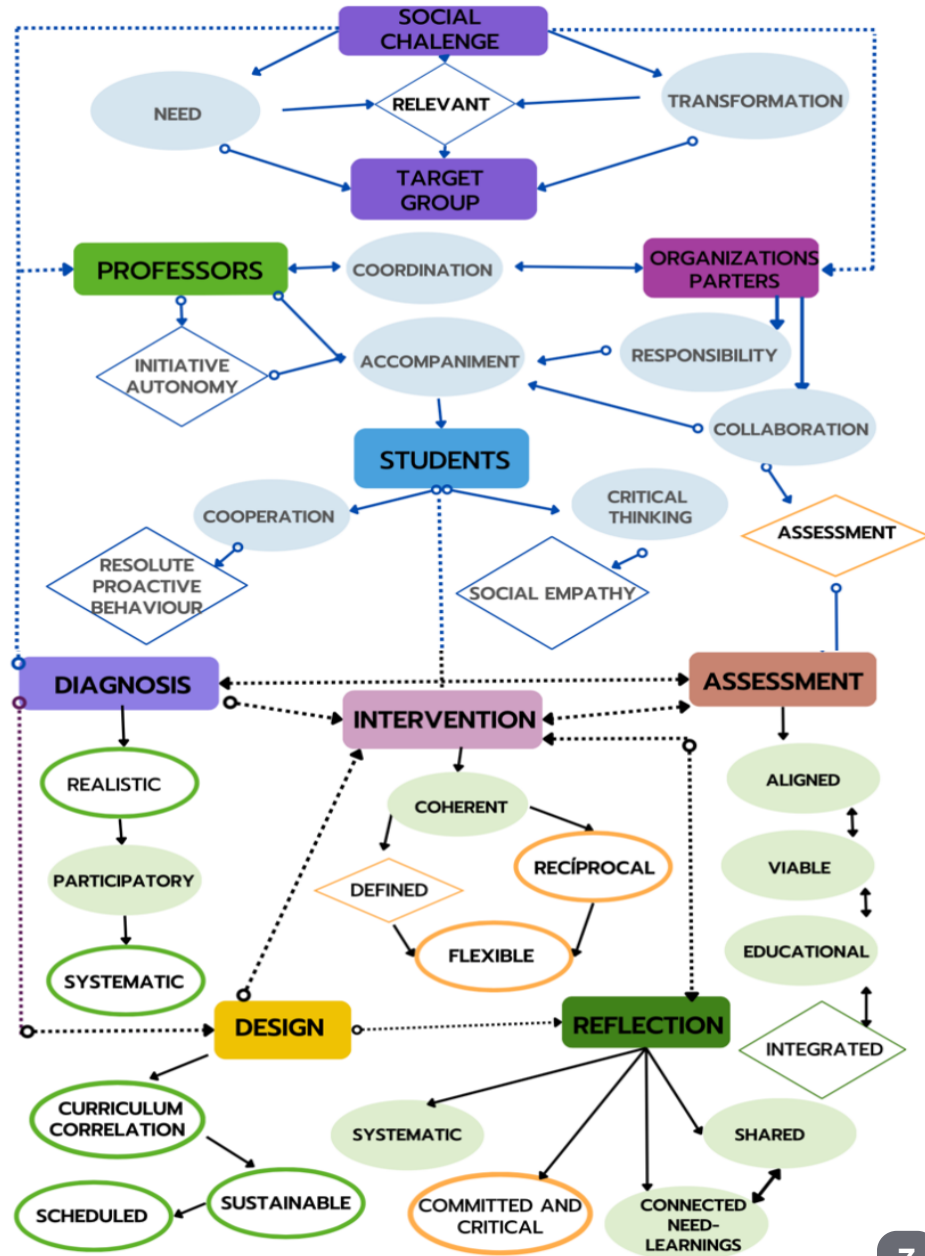
1) **AGENTS** or people involved in the USL projects. The social challenge is acknowledged with an analysis of the needs (problems) in order to guide potential transformations (or improvements). This information is based on opinions expressed by the **members of the group** and taking into account the importance of increasing people's quality of life and improving the environment. This social challenge must be aligned with the actions of **professors** and **socio-educational organizations**. In a collaborative and responsible way, these actions must be coordinated so that **students** are accompanied and their autonomy and initiative are fostered. Students, with a cooperative attitude and critical thinking, will develop a pro-active behavior and social empathy.

2) **PHASES** of a USL project. It starts with a participatory **diagnosis,** specifically realistic and systematic. The goal is to elaborate a design with a curriculum correlation. The **design** should also be a sustainable and scheduled one. At the same time, the intervention should be coherent, reciprocal, defined and flexible, and it should foster a systematic, committed, connected and shared **reflection**. The **assessment** of the project's process should be an aligned, viable, educational and integrated one.

The project's **minimum quality** requirements should be established, specifying which indicators are the essential ones. The maximum quality levels will also be established, determining a set of secondary indicators that are not required, but which contribute to reach an extra quality level in the USL project.

Matrix for the quality assessment of university service-learning projects

Matrix for the quality assessment of university service-learning projects

AGENTS

SOCIAL CHALENGE

NEED

RELEVANT

TRANSFORMATION

TARGET GROUP

PROFESSORS

COORDINATION

ORGANIZATIONS PARTERS

INITIATIVE AUTONOMY

ACCOMPANIMENT

RESPONSIBILITY

COLLABORATION

STUDENTS

COOPERATION

CRITICAL THINKING

ASSESSMENT

RESOLUTE PROACTIVE BEHAVIOUR

SOCIAL EMPATHY
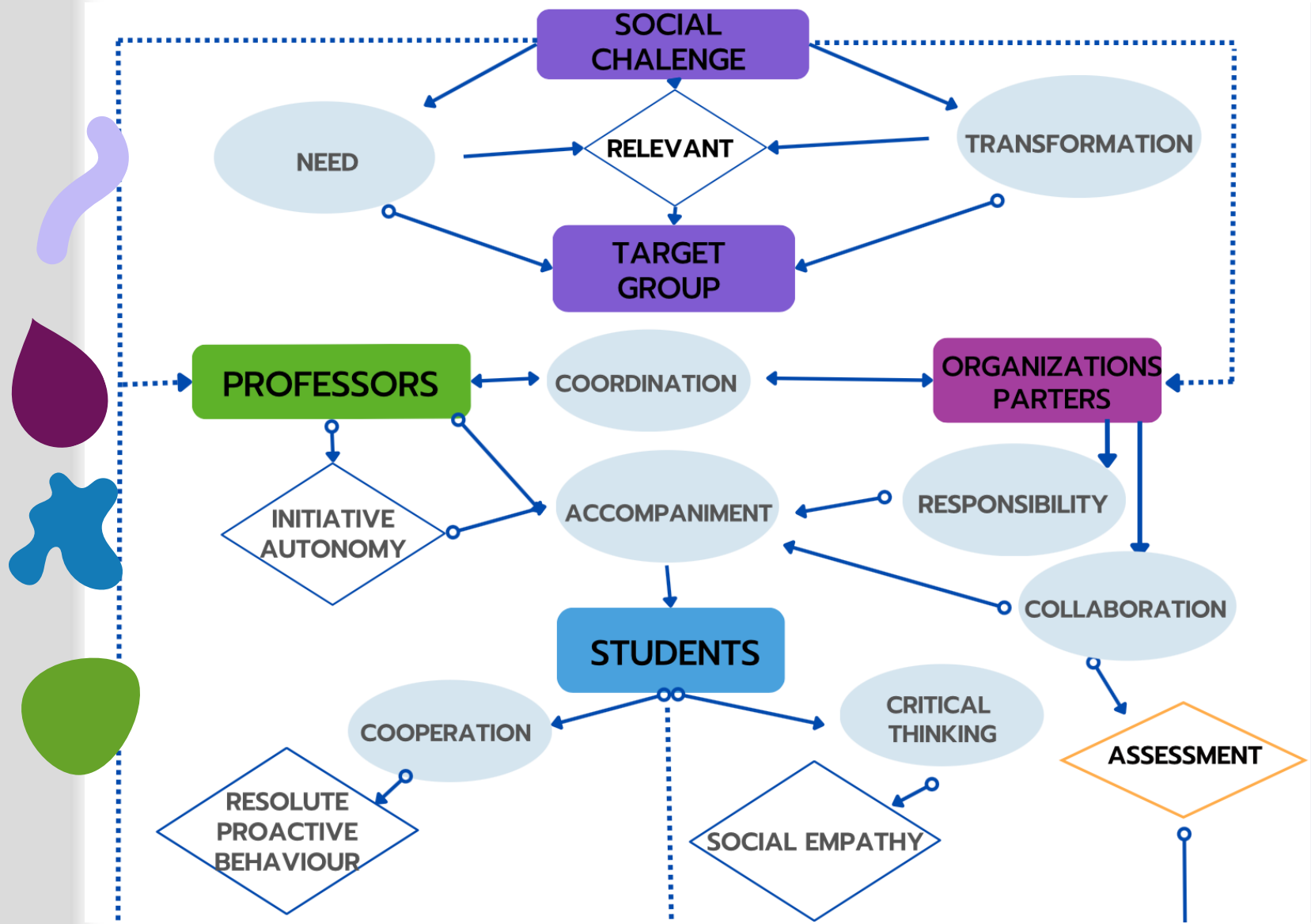
SOCIAL CHALLENGE/TARGET GROUP

Indicators

01 NEED (E)

02 TRANSFORMATION (E)

03 RELEVANT (S)

a) There is a felt, real and specific cause as starting point (which is the purpose to be worked on).
b) The origin of the work is a vulnerable group or a social need (environment, violence, gender, etc.).

a) The service or project contributes to have a critical view about the injustices and inequalities (it modifies consciences, discourses, acts and material structures).
b) The service or project fosters change in the environment and social improvements.

The carried out service implies a really meaningful experience and will enrich everybody participating.

Questions

1) Is the detected need or challenge justified and contextualized in the target group?
2) Does the cause-starting point allow for the intervention to link learning and service in a bidirectional way?
3) Is it easy to have access to the target group with the detected need?
4) Are instruments and moments specified so that the students are able to detect the needs or to carry out a diagnosis for the group?

1) Why is the transformation necessary?
2) How is it thought that this transformation will happen?
3) Is this transformation viable taking into account the duration of the project?

1) What are the proposals so that the experience is a meaningful and enriching one for all involved people?

AGENT

ORGANIZATIONS (PARTNERS)

Indicators

01 RESPONSIBILITY (E)

a) The organization commits itself to the collaboration with and guidance of the projects.
b) It facilitates an optimal development of the project.

02 COLLABORATION (E)

a) Alliances are specified through actions (collaboration agreements, initial and/or regular meetings/interviews with organizations). These will help in the process of reaching agreements among the involved agents in the experience-project.

03 ASSESSMENT (S)

a) Organizations or the people representing them will participate in the assessment process of the experience-project.
b) This can be done on an individual or collegiate level, along with other organizations/agencies.

Questions

1) Is the organization willing to participate with a level of involvement that will allow for the project to be carried out?
2) What is the role and function expected from the organization in terms of leadership in the project?

1) Will the actions of the project allow for the possibility of establishing further links beyond it?
2) Will the project's design allow for the expansion of the project's duration so that lasting alliances can be generated?
3) Is there any specific collaboration agreement between the university and the organization for the development of the project?
4) Will the agreements assumed by the organization to collaborate and guide the project be specified?

1) Will there be ways so that organizations will be able to participate in the assessment in an effective way?
2) Will the assessment procedures, techniques and instruments allow for the organization to participate in the assessment?

AGENT

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STUDENTS

Indicators

01 COOPERATION (E)

02 CRITICAL THINKING (E)

03 RESOLUTE/PROACTIVE BEHAVIAOUR (S)

04 SOCIAL EMPATHY (S)

COOPERATION (E)	CRITICAL THINKING (E)	RESOLUTE/PROACTIVE BEHAVIAOUR (S)	SOCIAL EMPATHY (S)
a) They contribute, along with the rest of the involved participants, to the design, application, assessment and reflection. b) They participate in the project in an autonomous and coordinated way, along with the rest of the people involved in the project.	a) Students analyze and assess the reality in different moments-actions and with different agents. b) Students reason in a clear, precise and justified way. c) Students make adequate decisions in unexpected situations.	a) Students participate in the project with initiative and assuming personal responsibility. b) Students make decisions in unexpected situations with the goal of adapting to the needs that may arise. c) Students become promoters and responsible for the project.	a) Students show respect towards the differences and become aware of the value of their contribution to the community they belong to. b) Students understand and answer to emotional messages from the people they work with/for in this solidarity service.

Questions

1) Does the design have parts and spaces where students will be able to participate in it? 2) Is the teaching team taking into account strategies to foster active participation in all the project's moments?	1) Is the project's design articulated in a way so that students can be included in its development? 2) Have situations been created (searched or scheduled) so that students will analyze and adjust their answer to the moment of taking specific measures?	1) Is students' heterogeneity taken into account along with the different levels of motivation when planning for the project? 2) Is the intervention adapted to the students' educational needs so that they are ready to react in an autonomous way when difficulties arise? 3) Does the project's design foster responsibility in students so that they feel important in the project and wanting to promote it?	1) Does the project place students in a role in which they must involve themselves in a way so that their empathy is stimulated? 2) Does the project allow the students to experience a real interaction with the group (from a detected social challenge) offering an emotional answer adjusted to the project? 3) Do students understand the reality on which the project is taking place?

AGENT

PROFESSORS

Indicators

01 COORDINATION (E)

02 ACCOMPANIMENT (E)

03 INITIATIVE-AUTONOMY (S)

a) It fosters communication and mediation among the organizations involved in the project.
b) It allows for the creation of action networks in which to work with all the agents (students, professors, groups and organizations) and within the community.
c) It fosters trust relationships with the institution.

a) It means a support and orientation for students during the development of the project.
b) It works as a guide in the learning and scheduled actions.
c) It facilitates personal and academic development.

a) It contributes to create a situation that will facilitate the decision-making process for students in the proposal development.
b) It fosters a proactive and collaborative attitude in students (in their relationship with agents and organizations).
c) It helps students to assume responsibilities in an autonomous way in regard to the project.

Questions

1) What tasks are assigned to each part/member of the project?
2) In which way will the communication and organization be articulated at the different moments of the project?
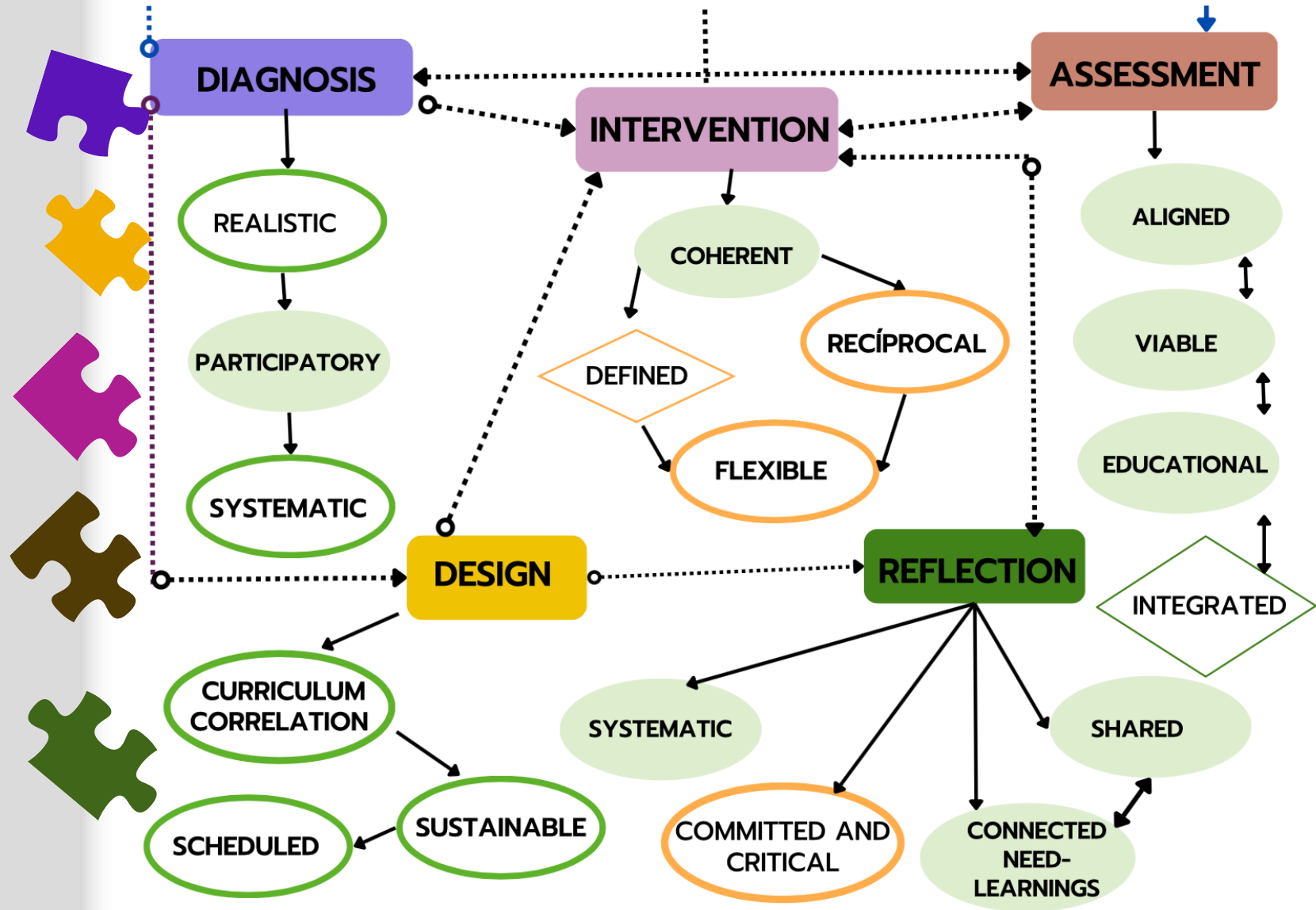3) Is there an internal work and follow-up plan?

AGENT

1) When designing the project, is students' human capital taken into account along with the relationship to the educational curriculum of the degree?
2) Are learning situations proposed which will facilitate personal and academic development?
3) In which way will the accompaniment of students be done by the different agents (professors, organizations, groups) during the entire process?
4) How will the observation and assessment be carried out to determine whether the personal and academic development actually happen?

1) Is there an internal teaching plan about the role of students in the project and about their responsibilities and active involvement?
2) Is the distribution of responsibilities for students in the different phases (design, implementation and assessment) carried out in a balanced way?
3) What level of autonomy is given to students for their actions within the project?

PHASES

Matrix for the quality assessment of university service-learning projects

DIAGNOSIS
- REALISTIC
- PARTICIPATORY
- SYSTEMATIC

INTERVENTION
- COHERENT
- DEFINED
- RECÍPROCAL
- FLEXIBLE

ASSESSMENT
- ALIGNED
- VIABLE
- EDUCATIONAL
- INTEGRATED

DESIGN
- CURRICULUM CORRELATION
- SUSTAINABLE
- SCHEDULED

REFLECTION
- SYSTEMATIC
- COMMITTED AND CRITICAL
- CONNECTED NEED-LEARNINGS
- SHARED

13

DIAGNOSIS

Indicators

01 — REALISTIC (E)

a) Real needs are identified in order to guide the intervention's design.
b) Current possibilities are taken into account (by the institutions/organizations and by the students-group) to offer an answer to the detected needs/problems.

02 — PARTICIPATORY (E)

There is an opportunity for the involved agents (students-professors-groups-organizations) to make decisions so that they can come together to a conclusion about the diagnosis of the social needs.

03 — SYSTEMATIC (E)

a) It is a planned and organized process.
b) It is carried out from the beginning, in a continuous and permanent way, so that the groups' needs or the problems to be tackled in the project can be detected, as well as the possibilities to offer an answer to them.
c) Different techniques and instruments are used to collect information.

Questions

01

1) Are the needs and possibilities of the group the origin of the diagnosis?
2) Are socio-educational conditions/distinctive features of the organizations taken into account?
3) Are students and professors' possibilities assessed in regard to getting involved in the project and to being able to carry it out?
4) Could the diagnose be extrapolated to other similar contexts?

02

1) Are there actions or moments so that the involved agents may exchange points of view and make a joint assessment about the action proposal?
2) Is the involved agents' voice/opinion (there are specific moments and procedures) taken into account?

03

1) Are the diagnosis elements previously specified in order to answer to the project's challenges?

2) Is there a plan to follow-up the project and the agents' progress in the project (at different phases, about goals, activities, methodology, assessment, participants, resources, etc.)?

PHASE

DESIGN

Indicators

01 — CURRICULUM CORRELATION (E)

a) There is a connection and correlation of the project's design with the educational programs (students' competence development is taken into account).

02 — SUSTAINABLE (E)

a) The project's design is adequate and viable according to the human resources (even in terms of education, preparation and predisposition) and space and material resources, so that the service can be a continuous and durable one.
b) The availability of the target group is taken into account.

03 — SCHEDULED (E)

a) There is a planning for the goals, contents, activities, methodology and assessment.
b) There is an adequate timing so that the diagnosed needs can be met.

Questions

1) Are the teaching plan and the specific elements (competencies, learning results, goals, contents, assessment) aligned with the goals of the project's design?
2) Do students show an adequate competence development to answer to the challenges of the project's design?

1) Are human, time, space and material resources enough and adequate to offer an answer to the project's goals?
2) Are human, space and material resources of quality to offer an answer to the project's goals?
3) Does the project's design take into account the availability of the group (timetables, spaces, resources, etc.) to participate in the project?

1) Is there coherence in the planning of the goals, contents, methodologies and assessment specified from the diagnosis?
2) Is the timing of the actions adequate to the reality and does it take into account the established goals?

PHASE

INTERVENTION

Indicators

01 COHERENT (E)

The intervention is appropriate for the detected needs (target group-service) and for the curriculum learnings.

02 RECIPROCAL (E)

a) The different agents' involvement is shared and sustained in a dialogic way.
b) It is based on the interpersonal relationship richness and on mutual benefit.

03 FLEXIBLE (E)

a) Taking into account the expected planning, the implementation process is reviewed with the collaboration of all the agents.
b) It has a guiding and regulating nature, in case it becomes necessary to make it more flexible and to adapt it to the different situations that may arise.

04 DEFINED (S)

a) It delimits its action nature as teaching project, oriented towards social justice.
b) It is different from other educational practices.

Questions

1) Is the actions' development trying to meet the group's needs?
2) Is the actions' development appropriate to the group's possibilities?
3) Is the actions' development coherent with students' competencies and with professors' contributions?

1) Are there meeting and dialogue-agreement processes between the students and the group?
2) Are co-participation processes established among the involved people (students, professors, organizations and the group)?

1) Do the actions have a flexible nature and adapt to contextual reality as well as to the requests that may arise?
2) The planned or developed actions are likely to be modified or adapted taking into account the needs or demands of the participating agents?

1) Does the project have a clear transformational/change approach in regard to the inequality or injustice conditions in the context in which it is happening?
2) Does the project have its own identity when compared to other educational proposals?
3) Does the project foster social commitment in the involved people?

PHASE

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ASSESSMENT

Indicators

01 ALIGNED (E)

a) Defined and coherent criteria and indicators are used in regard to competencies, contents and planned tasks.

02 VIABLE (E)

a) The tasks and actions are possible.
b) The workload can be assumed by the professors and the students and is in tune with the expected academic performance.

03 EDUCATIONAL (E)

a) It is oriented towards the improvement of the teaching-learning process, with the participation of the involved agents (students, professors, groups and organizations) for the duration of all the project's phases.

04 INTEGRATED (S)

a) The assessment is not an isolated element, but a part of the different learning phases and actions.
b) It gives meaning to the decisions made.

Questions

1) Do the assessment criteria and the progress indicators in the project take into account/relate to the competencies, contents and planned tasks?

1) Are the proposed assessment tasks and actions possible and acceptable?
2) Is the workload derived from the project's development a viable one and can it be assumed by the professors and students?

1) Does the assessment provide information to guide the learning processes and the progress of the agents?

1) Is the assessment integrated in the project's set of actions and phases?
2) Do the assessment actions give meaning and value to the project's actions?

PHASE

REFLECTION

Indicators

01 SYSTEMATIC (E)

a) It is developed in an integrated and cyclical way through the project's different phases and actions.
b) It is done with different agents.
c) A wide range of moments, spaces, activities and instruments are planned to facilitate the reflection about the target implementation and about how the actions are adequate for the outlined needs.

02 COMMITTED AND CRITICAL (E)

a) There is a search for or strengthening of the reflection about the service's critical meaning, its intervention and the personal contributions to the project.
b) The students become involved in critical processes about the service's social dimensions and about their personal commitment to the project and society.

03 SHARED (E)

a) The reflection process is carried out in a shared way among the people participating in the project (students, professors, target group, people in charge of the organizations, etc.).

04 CONNECTED (NEDD-LEARNIGS) (E)

a) A reflection is searched for about the relationship between potentialities (needs-opportunities) of the target group or social challenge and the students' learnings.

Questions

1) Does the reflection take place through the project's different moments and actions?
2) Are all agents involved in the reflection processes?
3) Are clear protocols and specific tasks proposed to guide the reflection process?
4) Are the reflection processes guided and supervised?

1) Are the reflection meaning and its critical nature explained?
2) Are proposals made for reflection processes (individual or collective ones) which imply decision making and are these proposals in support of transformation or improvement of reality?

1) Are the reflection processes shared among the involved people?

1) Are reflection processes taking into account the relationships-connections between the learning meaning and value of the service?

PHASE

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Thanks to the people who have participated in the validation and piloting processes. To students, teachers, groups and entities. To expert people.

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