University of Groningen

Youth Transition, Agricultural Education and Employment in Uganda

Jjuuko, Robert

DOI:
[10.33612/diss.192191164](https://doi.org/10.33612/diss.192191164)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2021

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Jjuuko, R. (2021). *Youth Transition, Agricultural Education and Employment in Uganda: Freeing Individual Agency*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. University of Groningen.
<https://doi.org/10.33612/diss.192191164>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

**Youth Transition, Agricultural Education and Employment in Uganda:
Freeing Individual Agency**

**Robert Jjuuko
Njeru 2021**

Colophon

Front cover design

Emmanuel Mugisha

English language edit

Angela Rwabose Kintu

Dutch Summary

Jim Lo-A-Njoe

© Robert Jjuuko 2021

Published by: Globalisation Studies Groningen, University of Groningen

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying or recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without prior written permission from the copyright owner.

university of
 groningen

Youth Transition, Agricultural Education and Employment in Uganda

Freeing Individual Agency

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. C. Wijmenga
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on

Thursday 4 November 2021 at 12.45 hours

by

Robert Doubt Jjuuko

born on 20 February 1970
in Mokono, Uganda

Supervisor

Prof. J.J.M. Zeelen

Co-supervisor

Dr. C. Tukundane

Assessment committee

Prof. A.E.M.G. Minnaert

Prof. V. Wedekind

Prof. S. Allais

Preface

This thesis presents my research work, in partnership with a number of very talented and immensely resourceful social actors, on youth education-employment transition in Uganda from 2016 to 2021. It is no exaggeration to state that pursuing this PhD programme has delivered countless personal learnings; and remains the greatest opportunity for meaningful reflections on what matters most in my life endeavours yesterday, today and tomorrow. In this journey, I have even realised how my ever increasing passion for the theme of youth education and work, which was actually a build-up from my earlier research and practical work is driven by my own lived experience of non-linear youth transition. I am very grateful that this study has greatly contributed to my paradigm shift with not only the analytical tools to reflect on my motivation for undertaking this study but also the epistemological curiosity to interrogate my own claims and societal conceptualisations of young people and the conditions that shape their transitions.

In this PhD journey, I have experienced the essence of an empowering supervision and mentorship approach no matter the level of academic or study trajectory. My two great promoters, Prof Jacques Zeelen and Dr Cuthbert Tukundane have done an exceedingly great thing for me in this journey – they have accompanied me so well. I have no words to express the sense of deep connection, friendship and *thinking-freedom* that I have derived from being mentored by two great scholars who respectfully deal with each other's independent opinions. On several occasions while in Groningen, Jacques' deeds and words of kindness were enough to teach me how a University Professor can exercise his or her discretion to contribute to the social and emotional well-being of his students.

Walking this PhD journey has helped to deepen my recognition of the immense value of using the diverse knowledge, skills and emotional resources of my close family members and friends. Pinpointing how I benefited from the photography, videography, typing and reading skills of my children Gloria Linda Ndagire, Reagan Jjuuko and John Kyeswa without mentioning the ever soothing emotional and social climate that was jointly created by Brenda Naluwaga, Efrance Nabweteme, Mable Nakisozi, Azed Kikobe, Juliet Namutebi and Herbert Sserwadda would be a grave omission. My mother, Maama Ssefoloza Nansamba's signature prayer *Mama Bikira Maria Akulembere* (May Mother Mary Lead Your Way) on every single moment of my departure from home for the several PhD study visits in and outside of Uganda continue to ring bells of hope and courage in my mind. The whole story of the supportive emotional and social climate that I have enjoyed in this journey would be incomplete if I forget to acknowledge with joy the contribution of my special friend and partner, Maria-Goreth Nandago.

The essence and skill of creating and nurturing communities or teams to optimise action research principles is my other great learning from the empirical phase of this PhD trajectory. Drawing on the expertise in participatory approaches and adult learning methodologies of my three very dependable research associates - Saul Tumwine, Joel

Bwana and Maria-Goreth Nandago, we were able to create a vibrant community of *practitioner researchers* at one of the AET institutions which we later named expanded action research team (ERT). Saul's role in this very challenging but crucial step of our action research pathway is highly appreciated. With pleasure, I acknowledge the sacrifices, commitment and dedication of the action research team¹ led by Mr. Enoch Kayongo and Dr. Namusoke Margaret. I also acknowledge one of the administrators of the AET institution, Mr. Kisolo Lule who was very instrumental especially at the initial stages in making it possible to gain entry and access to the social actors.

Building and sustaining social relationships is clearly not only an integral part of the practices and virtues of a meaningful PhD research experience but a dependable resource with vivid multiplier effects. My initial connection with Prof Jacques Zeelen, one of the most prominent partners in this PhD project was only possible through Marit Blaak. The beautiful connection that Marit made was based on the good professional relationship that we had developed while working on some aspects of adult education in Uganda - a field we both have a shared passion for. The good relationship that Marit had built with Dr Cuthbert in their other engagements as co-lifelong learners made it very easy for both of them to support me in preparing the research proposal for admission and NFP scholarship. I am aware that my original connection with Marit could perhaps have not been possible, if my old colleague and friend- Prof George Openjuru, had not inspired her for some professional engagement at our umbrella network for adult education.

This relationship was foundational and indeed productive in terms of the eventual successful admission and attainment of the Netherlands Fellowship Programme (NFP) scholarship. The encouraging remarks and feedback of Ms. Marit Blaak and Mr Frank Elsdijk from the lifelong learning section at the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences were timely and essential for refining the winning proposal. I strongly feel that the excellent support of Ms Esme Bakker and Mr Wiebe Zijlstra (the Office of the University staff in charge of NFP) has some link to the foundational social relationship mentioned above. Relatedly Prof Jacques Zeelen' outstanding social engagement and relationship building attributes were instrumental in connecting me with resourceful individuals and organisations here in Uganda, the Netherlands and elsewhere. Of course, it is not possible to exhaust the list of fruits of the social connections *with his partner*, Ms. Julia Swierstra and their children – Jesse and Nina that makes their home an intellectual lab for mingling every day stories of hope

¹ The action research team (ERT) comprised of 28 members namely, Dr. Namusoke Margaret, Mr. Abigaba Enoch Kayongo, Ms. Masibo Winnie Oculi, Mr. Acema Alfred, Mr. Emusugut George, Mr. Kiggundu Wilson, Ms. Apio Sharon Ibedo, Ms. Beatrice Okinyal, Mr. Kulumba Samuel, Ms. Nakawuka Florence (RIP), Ms. Nnabbanja Eve, Mr. Saul Tumwine, Ms. Asudo Esther Milcah, Ms. Atukunda Robinah, Dr. Badru Muyanja, Mr. Ekoot Leonard, Mr. Kiprop Fred Sikuku, Dr. Lukenku Benard, Ms. Nabateesa Shakirah, Ms. Nassaka Dorothy, Mr. Otim Andrew Amos, Mr. Tokuma Alfred, Mr. Wilfred Byaruhanga, Ms. Maria Goreth Nandago, Mr. Joel Bwana, Mr. William Kalema Kuteesa, Mr. Kanyike Fred, and Mr. Yasiima Fred.

and social justice struggles from Uganda, South Africa, the Netherlands, and from many corners of the world.

I have learnt how every relationship and social space can be an opportunity to interrogate certain aspects of one's PhD research topic depending on the extent to which one is able to exercise his lifelong learning skills and attributes. In my case, among the several examples include the connection with Rotary Groningen Oost which earned me the opportunity to interact with the Dutch people about societal conceptualisations of young people. This relationship which was steered by Rotarian Nicolette generated more benefits in form of basic funding by the Club to 'our youth learning festival model' (YLF) in Uganda. This support contributed to the enabling environment to explore the model's potential for stimulating young people to 'enjoy the joy of learning'. I am very grateful for the Club members' generosity towards not only the YLF but also our passion-driven ICTSkills4Youth Work Research Initiative². It is also appropriate to mention with gratitude that it is Ms. Geerte Dijkstra from our Youth Education Network (YEW) who connected me to Rotarian Nicolette.

The Youth Education and Work Network (YEW) was another powerful illustrator of social bonds as drivers of learning productivity. YEW, a social learning enabling infrastructure for all sorts of professionals and practitioners, created excellent social space for me to mingle and interact with very resourceful and talented individuals who later became good friends, associates and partners in the entire PhD trajectory. Some of the very fine human beings who came into my life through mainly the YEW include Ms Maaïke Smulders, Dr Josje Van der Linden, Ms. Nathalie Beekman, Dr. Victor Friedman, Dr. Peace Tumuheki, Dr. Alice Wabule, Mr. Frank Elsdijk, and Dr. Ben Boog. Apart from the social support that I continued to receive from many of them, I remember with gratitude the intellectual conversations around action research complexities and applicability of capabilities approach and related paradigms in our shared mission for social justice, emancipation and inclusion.

The induction effect of the YEW activities was crucial for my smooth integration into the working and learning practices of the Globalisation Studies Groningen (GSG). GSG, an inter-faculty and interdisciplinary institute that spans the entire University of Groningen, was another monumental space for group learning about several topics of great relevance to the PhD theme. With Ms. Inger Smid and Ms. Cobie Jeanne Poppinga, my regular officemates, we developed a very strong collegial relationship that allowed us to collectively explore and interrogate the theory and practice of workplace learning. Our warm relationship extended the boundaries of engagement which prompted Inger and Cob Jeanne to kick-start the charity scheme of mobilising used laptops from friends and colleagues in Groningen towards our ICTs4Youth Work Initiative in Uganda. I mention with happiness the efficiency of Mr. Jarno Hoving at handling all my logistical and material needs throughout my affiliation at GSG. Dr. Pieter Boule's very thoughtful comments on my initial introductory chapters were so impactful that they helped me to affirm the use of 'deficit

² The ICTSkills4Youth Work Research Initiative is an integrated research and training passion-driven community intervention designed, borne out of this PhD, to further explore the usability and applicability of a work-based teaching and learning model in Uganda's context.

narratives’ as a key vocabulary in this thesis. The relaxed ambience of GSG was indeed a driver of intellectual productivity; and the assuring smile and gesture of friendliness by GSG senior scholars especially Prof Tjalling Halbertsma and Dr Pieter Boele would always make me feel at home and created in me a sense of being accepted and recognised. The shared working space with Ms. Viet Marloes at GSG, and the logistical support she offered especially during the last year of the PhD were equally replenishing and timely.

My PhD study experience has indeed presented to me many examples that illustrate the educative value of building social relationships. Here I highlight the tremendous learning and emotional support derived from my network of Dutch agri-educators that was co-created by Ms. Marjon Nissien. Marjon was introduced to me by Prof Jacques Zeelen at the beginning of the PhD project in 2016; and she gracefully integrated me into her family. She also made deliberate steps to connect me to a number of very interesting MBO/VMBO professional actors with a passion to promote better teaching of agriculture in Uganda. This offered me a window into the fraternity of professionals with a connection to Edukans’ Exchange programme which taught me additional lessons about practice-based teacher’s professional development. These connections were a *gateway* into the Terra VMBO/VMBO institutions which sharpened my understanding of internships under the Dutch VET system. I am so grateful to each of these dozens of professionals who, beyond allowing me to learn from their rich experiences, continuously offered me their time for a meal and drink together. Harry and Birgit continue to support the mobilisation of used laptops for our ICT Skills4Youth Work Identity Initiative, for that I am greatly indebted.

The qualitative research principles offered me the required leeway for valuing relationships and individual human experiences which paid out so well in my engagement with AET students, VTI tutors in Northern Uganda, AYEI actors, employers and workplace supervisors in the different locations in Eastern and Central Uganda. Many of these research participants allowed me to have with them follow-up open interview sessions, and informal conversations about all sorts of things that they deemed necessary for a fair account of their agriculture education and work experiences. I remember with gratitude the deep and intensive discussions that we had with the Northern Uganda VTI tutors at Ave Maria Vocational Institute in Lira.

Finally, I point out the immense contribution of AEC community College in Uganda particularly in helping me to reflect more intentionally about my engagement in the design and delivery of education and training solutions for youth and adults. I do treasure the history of a solid social relationship that I enjoy while serving our community together with my good friends, Robert Nsubuga, Crespo Senyonga, Esther Kirumira and Florence Walubo. With them and a host of other volunteers and part-time staff, I feel blessed to have a dependable team and social space to continually explore possibilities of providing meaningful learning and work options for the socially disadvantaged young people and adults in our community.

Overall the power of building and nurturing social relationships with the several individuals singled out here and the many others that I could not mention were fundamental in making it possible for me to yield this intellectual harvest that you are now

reading *'Youth transition, agricultural education and employment in Uganda: Freeing individual agency'*.

Table of Contents

Preface	i
Table of Contents	vii
Chapter 1 General Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background	1
1.3 Research problem	4
1.4 Study purpose and significance	6
1.5 Conceptual and methodological choices	6
1.6 Study implementation and structure of the thesis	8
1.7 Study context	9
Chapter 2 Youth, education-employment transitions in SSA	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Youth conceptualisations	11
2.2.1 Chronological definition of youth	12
2.2.2 Sociological definitions of youth	13
2.2.3 Youth as resource, social problem	14
2.3 Young people's voice and participation	16
2.4 Societal changes and youth transitions	17
2.5 Societal changes and work for young people	18
2.6 Difficult employment transition of educated youth	19
2.7 Education under pressure	21
2.7.1 Vocational Education and Training (VET)	22
2.7.2 Agricultural Education and Training (AET)	23
2.7.3 New efforts to harness AET labour market outcomes	25
2.8 Active labour market policies and youth employment	26
2.9 Takeaways	28
Chapter 3 Theoretical and methodological framework	29
3.1 Theoretical underpinnings: education-employment transitions	29
3.1.1 Agency and youth transitions	30
3.1.2 Applying the capabilities approach and socio-ecological model	30
3.1.3 Agricultural education and youth transitions	36
3.2 Study design	41
3.3 Qualitative research ideals	41

3.3.1	Case study bolstered by action research	42
3.3.2	Study process and data analysis	45
3.3.3	Ethical considerations	49
Chapter 4 Agri-youth employment interventions in Uganda		51
4.1	Introduction	51
4.2	Background and method	51
4.3	Findings	52
4.3.1	Nature and purpose of AYEIs	53
4.3.2	AYEIs' coverage and demographic targeting	55
4.3.3	Stakeholders' perceptions of constraints to youth in agriculture	56
4.3.4	AYEI components and activities	58
4.3.5	Partnership implementation approach	60
4.4	Further analysis and takeaways	61
4.4.1	AYEIs Project-based programming	61
4.4.2	Active role of youths in the AYEIs	62
4.4.3	Greater focus on NEETs	62
4.4.4	Use of work-based training models	62
4.4.5	The AYEIs' youth development rhythm and employability logic	63
4.4.6	Enhancing youth social capital for business	63
4.5	Concluding remark	64
Chapter 5 Agri-education and work pathways for young people		67
5.1	Introduction	67
5.2	Background: study participants and methods	67
5.3	Findings	70
5.3.1	Young peoples' vision of the future, and self-concept	70
5.3.2	Agri-education and work pathways: decisional influences	73
5.3.3	Agri-education practice: social actors' experiences	81
5.3.4	Labour force entry and career development	102
5.4	Further analysis and discussion	108
5.4.1	Young people's positive envisioning and navigational stance	109
5.4.2	Young people's aspirations, agri-education and work pathways	109
5.4.3	Students' multiple identities across the transition domains	110
5.4.4	Career interest and vocational guidance	111
5.4.5	Theory and practice integration	112
5.4.6	Social relations and learning environments	113
5.4.7	Adapting curriculum to new socio-economic realities	114
5.4.8	Students' engagement amid a domineering teaching tradition	115
5.4.9	Labour force entry; confining social arrangements	116
Chapter 6 Transforming agri-education practice		117
6.1	Introduction	117

6.2	Negotiating entry and nurturing communicative space	118
6.2.1	Introductory interactions with decision makers	119
6.2.2	Action research coordination and communication structure	119
6.2.3	Building a shared understanding of the research design	122
6.3	Exploring agri-education practice of case study AET institution	125
6.3.1	Gathering contextual data to deepen understanding	126
6.3.2	State of agri-education practice	126
6.4	Exploring and enacting change options	128
6.4.1	Exploring and shaping change motives	130
6.4.2	Defining desired change	132
6.5	Improvements to vocational placements and guidance enacted	144
6.5.1	Benchmarks of good practice developed	144
6.5.2	The harvest, steps to institutionalise good practice	146
6.6	Reflections on the action research process and outcomes	151
6.6.1	Change supporting conditions	151
6.6.2	Time scarcity dilemma: the most prevalent difficulty	153
6.6.3	Resources and autonomy to enact change elusive	154
6.6.4	Faithfulness to action research virtues sometimes thwarted	155
6.6.5	Outsider positionality, research team's mediating role	156

Chapter 7	Conclusions and implications	159
------------------	-------------------------------------	------------

7.1	Introduction	159
7.2	Conclusions	161
7.2.1	Determinants of young people's pursuit of AET pathways	161
7.2.2	AET as driver of youth transition: tussle of hope and promise	162
7.2.3	Lopsided repetitive curriculum reforms	163
7.2.4	Burdensome employment and career opportunities	164
7.2.5	Young people's navigational stance	164
7.2.6	Educators' latent agency and craftsmanship	165
7.2.7	Change possibilities and enabling environment	166
7.3	Contribution and implications of the study	166
7.3.1	Theoretical implications	166
7.3.2	Practice and policy implications	167
7.3.3	Research implication and considerations for the future	173
7.3.4	Final comment	173

References	175
-------------------	------------

Summary	199
----------------	------------

Samenvatting	207
---------------------	------------

About the author	217
-------------------------	------------

Abbreviations and acronyms

AET	Agricultural Education and Training
AFDB	African Development Bank
ALM	Active Labour Market
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
AR	Action Research
AS4Y	Agri Skills 4 You
AYEIs	Agri-Youth Employment Interventions
BTVET	Business Technical Vocational Education and Training
CBET	Competence based education and training
CLUSA	Cooperative League of USAID in Uganda
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DYNAMIC	Driving Youth Led New Agribusiness Microenterprises
ERT	Expanded Action Research Team
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HoD	Department Heads
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IYF	International Youth Foundation
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
MFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NCA	National Certificate in Agriculture
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
NCHE	National Council of Higher Education
NEET	Youth not in employment, education or training
NEIDA	Network of Educational Innovation for Development in Africa
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPA	National Planning Authority
NYSEA	National Strategy for Employment in Agriculture
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SKY	Skilling Youth for Employment in Agriculture
SSA	Sub Saharan Africa
STRYDE	Strengthening Rural Youth Development through Enterprises
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training

UACE	Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education
UBTEB	Uganda Business Technical Examination Board
UCE	Uganda Certificate of Education
UMA	Uganda Manufacturers Association
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UPPET	Universal Post Primary Education and Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDP	Uganda Skills Development Project
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas
VTI	Vocational Training Institute
YEN	Youth Employment Network
YETA	Youth Empowerment through Agriculture
YLA	Youth Leadership for Agriculture
YLP	Youth Livelihood Programme
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1 General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Whether it is a case of young people finding or creating meaningful agricultural employment themselves, or educators preparing them to effectively navigate the confining education and labour market settings, individual agency stands out prominently. Whether in relatively wealthier economies in Europe and North America or in a poor sub-Saharan African (SSA) country like Uganda, the innate volition and freedom of every single individual to be and do the things he or she has reason to value is paramount, particularly from a human development paradigm (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009; Sen, 1999; Fukuda-Parr, 2003). Freeing and nurturing the individual agency of young Ugandans to choose and pursue agricultural education and work aspirations along the constricting pathways enacted as part of ‘societal canalisation’ (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019), is a core element of this thesis. The agency freedom and professional autonomy of frontline education social actors – especially agriculture educators – to be able to practise craftsmanship, democracy and associated transformative approaches to better prepare young people to navigate their education and career trajectories is equally core. The topical issue of youth transition from full-time education to working in the agriculture and food industry poses intrinsic and instrumental value for individual wellbeing and societal transformation. While this seems to be widely acknowledged, I argue that mainstream youth education-work transition research, policy and programming are yet to optimise the individual agency of the youth and frontline social actors.

This study is an in-depth examination of personal and contextual influences on young people’s agricultural education-employment transitions, as well as an exploration of how to improve transition processes for optimising young people’s learning and labour market outcomes. In this chapter, I set the discourse with an overview of the narratives relating to youth education and employment transitions, followed by a statement of the research problem. A glimpse of the study context precedes the theoretical and methodological choices made to firmly anchor the study into a transformative tradition.

1.2 Background

Millions of young people around the world still face enormous difficulties in their transition to become productive workers and flourishing citizens, despite decades of national and

global interventions and pronouncements for increased youth skills development and decent work (Cieslik, Barford, & Vira, 2021; UNESCO, 2012; World Bank, 2006). Worldwide, 13% of the 429 million young workers are reported to be experiencing the harsh impact of income poverty (ILO, 2019). Obviously, the situation is not any better in Africa, where the number of poor working youth has increased by as much as 80% since 1991 (Marjanovic Dragan, 2016). In 2018, the African Development Bank indicated that:

Of the 420 million youth aged between 15 and 35 in Africa today, the majority are unemployed, have insecure jobs or are in casual employment (African Development Bank, 2018, p3).

Moreover, the statistical portrayal of decreasing youth unemployment is misleading in the majority of African countries (Filmer & Fox, 2014). As eloquently argued by the 2011 State of African Youth Report:

The apparent low and decreasing unemployment rates should not be construed to imply that labour market conditions for young people are favourable. Because of factors such as low economic growth and lack of growth in labour-intensive sectors ... there is generally inadequate job creation in Africa. In consequence, many young Africans have little say in their choice of jobs. They mostly end up in the informal sector, and are less likely to be in wage or self-employment ... In the informal sector, young people are more likely to work longer hours under intermittent and insecure work arrangements, characterized by low productivity and meagre earnings (African Union, 2011, p14).

In Uganda, the country's Bureau of Statistics reported that by 2016, 71% of young people were in vulnerable employment, with the majority undertaking all sorts of auxiliary roles in the food and agriculture industry. Indeed, few young men and women are engaged in meaningful and productive agricultural work.

The reality of the troubles that young people encounter in finding employment received the renewed attention of national and international development policy in the early 2000s (O'higgins, 2001). The formation of the youth employment network (YEN) by the World Bank, ILO, UN and other development partners was among the key highlights of the global interventions to deal with the cross-cutting issues that affect youths worldwide (World Bank, 2013). At the time, *youth bulge* was part of the mantra of the discourse on transition and employment of the rapidly growing young population in the global South (Sommers, 2011; Urdal, 2004).

The divergent narratives of the forces behind this global phenomenon and how society is responding generate various theoretical and policy arguments. The role of

education and training systems becomes topical in the quest to smoothen young people's transition. At the same time there are endemic concerns relating to the intrinsic and instrumental purpose of education, in addition to access and quality dilemmas. The arguments for what works and doesn't in improving young people's education-employment transition reignite questions about the relationship between the education and labour systems. Amidst the presuppositions and arguments, the role and voice of young people and other social actors at micro levels of education and labour policy implementation is often muted. In addition, and most importantly for educationists and other professionals in youth development work, the phenomenon revives the debate about societal youth conceptualisations and how to deal with young people's life, education and work interests and aspirations as shaped by the numerous ecological, technological and societal changes.

At national and global level, the intentions to facilitate youth education-employment transitions is driven by diverse motives to promote certain socio-cultural, political and economic interests (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2014). These interests tend to shape and legitimise dominant conceptualisations of young people's needs and transition challenges. Such entrenched understandings, which we may call 'deficit paradigms or discourses' that breed 'defective narratives', inevitably have the potential to influence youth research, policy and practice (Aikman et al, 2016). This is why one often finds representations of young people as 'resources', 'agents' or 'assets' (ILO, 2015). Other conceptualisations portray young people as a difficult lot that can potentially cause trouble not only to themselves but also to the entire society (Hardgrove, Boyden, Dornan, & Pells, 2014). Many narratives portray young people as a problematic population group that must be 'handled' to save the world from the risks of insecurity, war and terrorism (Bersaglio, Enns, & Kepe, 2015; Urdal, 2004; Urdal & Hoelscher, 2009).

The manifestations of these representations at different levels are diverse, but often converge in their description of young people as beings with the potential to either redeem or destroy their destiny. The persistence of deficit paradigms that, for instance, hold young people accountable and responsible for their social situations, is not uncommon in every society despite some progressive social research and policy engagements (Freeman, 1993; Perullo, 2005; Seekings, 2006). Later in the thesis, I come back to the discussion on the impact of historical and socio-cultural processes in shaping the social role and position of young people in society. When influential social actors in families, schools and other social institutions attempt to explain the difficulties young people face in their education-employment journeys, one or more of the following stereotypes are applied:

- Young people are lazy;
- Young people dislike dirty work;
- Young people are impatient;
- Young people have short-term goals, and driven by quick pleasures;
- Young people are too dependent; they are not self-directive;

Young people can find work in the villages but they crave for urban life.

As communities everywhere confront the dynamic social, demographic, climatic and technological challenges, such deficit assumptions often find their way into the design of education-work transition programmes for young people. Apparently, despite the exponential societal changes as further heightened by globalisation and technological revolution, most influential social actors seem to be stuck in the paradigm of standardised transitions. This potentially limits their capacity to deal with youth 'waithood' (Honwana, 2012). From a western perspective, Dwyer and Wyn illustrate this point in their observation that significant social and economic changes 'have introduced elements of uncertainty, unpredictability and risk into the lives of this new generation, which their parents and others from previous generations often find difficult to explain or understand' (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001, p1). Without due recognition of the social structures and wider institutional contexts that frame youth thoughts and actions, some social actors have a tendency of blaming young people for not doing enough to find some work. In Uganda, for instance, as the search to mitigate escalating youth unemployment picks momentum, so do the notions of young people's negative attitude towards agricultural work and other so-called blue-collar jobs (Ahaibwe, Mbowe, & Lwanga, 2013). Of course, this is not an unusual theme in the development architecture of developing countries whose development policy is often focused on transforming agriculture to promote food security and employment creation (Zorya, Kshirsagar, Gautam, Odwongo, & Sebudde, 2012).

Generally, the challenge of difficult youth transitions is yet to be matched with the required knowledge base, motivation and capacity to support young people on their desired life trajectories amidst the confining social and institutional arrangements. My own motivation for this study is largely attributable to the compelling topic of understanding how to enhance Ugandan young people's participation in agriculture as a sector of meaningful career opportunities. This study launched me into a consistent thinking and reflection enterprise on the ideals that underlie the policies and programmes for promoting youth participation in agricultural education and work. As I discuss elsewhere in this thesis, this study has greatly contributed to my paradigm shift with a consequential zeal to pose questions about what I claim to know about young people and the conditions that shape their agricultural education and work aspirations.

1.3 Research problem

While increased youth participation in agriculture could yield better youth labour market outcomes, existing support systems do not measure up to the challenge (Kibwika, Okiror, & Birungi-Kyazze, 2010; Metelerkamp, Drimie, & Biggs, 2019). Empirical studies and literature reviews delineate a set of interrelated constraining factors, such as young people's low interest in agriculture work, which is exacerbated by their limited access to quality agriculture education and production resources like land and finance (Garcia & Fares, 2008;

Leavy & Smith, 2010; Leavy & Hossain, 2014; Mwangi, Agunga, & Garforth, 2003; Rammolai, 2009). Most related research and policy studies mainly engage key informants from communities, government and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and are not known for engaging frontline social actors such as students and educators in the formal AET sub sector. Often, young people are represented by the category of the so-called youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and those in high school. Findings from these limited scope and analyses are often used to inform the design and delivery of policies and support programmes by state and non-state actors.

Research into formal AET in Uganda and similar contexts consistently faults the sub-sector for poor learning and labour market outcomes. Findings point to a complex interplay of organisational and infrastructural constraints that AET institutions face in their function to prepare and engage young people for work in the food and agriculture industry (Chakeredza et al., 2008; Wallace, 1997). While some findings point to flaws within the larger operating environment, including macroeconomic policies and welfare systems, blaming individual social actors in AET institutions is often implied (Spielman, Ekboir, Davis, & Ochieng, 2008; Sumberg, Anyidoho, & Chasukwa, 2015). Indeed, skewed narratives and deficit paradigms permeate the analysis and conclusion by some studies. It is imperative that AET researchers do not only generate data about young people's negative perception of agriculture and the structural constraints facing AET. They ought to deepen their scrutiny of what happens before, during and after young people's stay in AET institutions, and how the institutions nurture or stifle students' agency and career aspirations.

However, one finds a few small-scale qualitative studies that potentially offer a positive encounter to the deficit narratives. These studies show evidence of students and graduates who view agriculture as a sector of meaningful career growth and development (Metelerkamp et al., 2019; Shayo, 2020; Tadele & Gella, 2012; Okiror & Otabang, 2015). This string of studies is apparently characterised by less empowering research approaches which undercut the required deeper engagement of the frontline social actors to better understand the forces and conditions that shape young people's education-employment transitions. Moreover, the hierarchical structure of educational settings potentially stifles not only the interactions among and between the insider social actors themselves, it also poses a challenge to 'outsider' researchers. Generally, the avenues for effective communication and working relations are structurally constrained by rules, regulations, sanctions and a set of unwritten norms, which prescribe acceptable behaviour and conduct.

It is regrettable that there is little research that focuses on how young people navigate the social and institutional conditions that shape their education-work transitions. It is the young people and other frontline social actors who know best what it means to be, think, and act under such conditions. The apparent scarcity of in-depth data and knowledge derived from a deeper engagement of frontline social actors, particularly the educators, students, graduates and industry actors, is equally regrettable because it is that sort of

evidence that is required to inform youth agriculture education-work transition theory, policy and practise.

1.4 Study purpose and significance

This study aimed at an in-depth examination of personal and contextual influences on young people's agricultural education-employment transitions, and an exploration of how to improve transition processes for optimising learning and labour market outcomes of young people. The two interrelated questions that guided the research are:

- How do socio-economic conditions and institutional settings shape Ugandan young people's agricultural education-employment transitions?
- How can improvement interventions be made to enhance agricultural education processes for optimising Ugandan young people's learning and labour market outcomes?

This study contributes to building a knowledge base on how young people transit through AET into the world of work. It does so by engaging young people and frontline social actors to explore better approaches and positive paradigms in improving youth education and employment interventions. Policy makers and other decision makers in education and labour markets at different levels need empirical evidence of what young people think about their participation and the value they attach to it for their present and future lives. The perceptions and experiences of educators and other social actors regarding teaching-learning processes, and how they view and value their role and position in the education-employment transition programmes, is what macro and meso decision-makers need to optimise innovations and educational policy reforms.

Overall, this study intends to contribute to practice, policy and research on how education systems prepare young people to confront the ever-changing world of work. The study further aims to contribute to the field of youth education-work transition through promoting positive youth conceptualisations and challenging deficit paradigms to foster the agency of young people and those social actors that shape youth agricultural education-employment trajectories.

1.5 Conceptual and methodological choices

Youth as a stage in life is a time when young people experience rapid biological, psychological and emotional changes amidst social expectations for them to take on adulthood roles and responsibilities across a set of life domains. The main social markers of transitions include completion of education in preparation for work, labour-force entry,

marriage, parenthood and exercising citizenship. It is generally agreed that education plays a greater role in aiding the transition to employment, and this achievement has a significant multiplier effect on the rest of the transition domains – thus the social premium placed on youth education and employment. Relatedly, the title of this thesis – ‘Youth transition, agricultural education and employment in Uganda’ – denotes the recognition of the decisive role of education and employment in enhancing the whole spectrum of young people’s journey to adulthood. Further, it is a recognition of the misnomer of looking at the youth education-work transition in a linear way, yet this particular transition is intertwined with other life transition domains.

The empirical focus of the study is on exploring the youth education-employment transition nexus, with particular attention to transition processes and outcomes. Of course, this is not in complete negation of the other life transitions, as further discussed in chapters two and three. Transition processes are collectives of actions in young people’s movement through education and related capacity-building experiences to the world of work (Atchoarena, 2000; Raffe, 2008; Wyn & Dwyer, 1999). In this context, they encompass such processes created by youth employment programmes and formal AET institutions. The transition processes also include movements into the world of work that young people make with the use of attained educational qualifications. The transition outcomes are seen in young people’s participation in all the dimensions of the world of work, including job statuses, conditions and earnings. The loose interchangeable use of ‘work’ and ‘employment’ is to bridge notions of employability and working as a valuable functioning. This is not to yield to one-sided employability logic that potentially trivialises the intrinsic value of work as viewed from a humanistic perspective (England & Harpaz, 1990; ILO, 2008; Sen, 1975; UNDP, 2015).

Navigating transition processes and attaining related outcomes is a relational social phenomenon. That is why I chose to draw on social theories of learning and action. I employ relevant socio-constructivist epistemologies in the study, and therefore draw from theory and research on learning and working as participation in social-cultural practice (Dewey, 1963; Kolb & Kolb, 2009; Mezirow, 2006). In recognition of the active role of young people and frontline social actors, especially educators, in enacting transition processes, I use the notion of agency as espoused by the agency-focused capabilities approach, the social-ecological development perspective to youth transition, and the emancipatory paradigm of learning and working (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, & Paloniemi, 2013; Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019). In dealing with quality issues and concerns in education-work transition processes, I complement the study’s conceptual framework with theoretical ideals of craftsmanship and vocational pedagogy (Lucas & Spencer, 2016; Sennett, 2008).

The empirical dimensions of this study from its inception in 2016 until the conclusion of the interventionist phase in 2019 unfolded through intentional relationship building and interactive encounters that fostered the participation of frontline social actors

(Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2001). I engaged a range of social actors mainly at the practice level, from agri-youth employment interventions (AEIs), to agriculture education and training (AET) institutions, and agro enterprises through a range of qualitative research approaches and methods. I used a case study approach to derive a thick description of the agricultural education processes (Creswell, 2003; Stake, 1995). Informed by action research ideals and principles, I facilitated the establishment of a communicative space augmented by creation of a community of social actors at the case study AET institutions. I undertook collaborative inquiry to better understand and act on the social and institutional influences on transitional processes and outcomes (Boog, Slagter, & Zeelen, 2008).

1.6 Study implementation and structure of the thesis

The study implementation evolved in three distinct but related phases during the four years. With the preliminary insights drawn from an indicative literature review complemented by my experiential knowledge of youth education and work theory and practice, I conducted the orientation phase from February to July 2016. This first phase was helpful in deriving an overview of Uganda's agriculture-based youth employment terrain. Thereafter I explored the frontline education social actors' perceptions and experiences of institutionalised AET at seven vocational training institutes (VTIs) and one tertiary AET institution from October 2016 to October 2017. The interventionist phase, which involved a deeper engagement with stakeholders to understand and transform agri-education practise, was conducted from November 2017 until June 2019 at the case study AET institution.

The thesis is organised under seven chapters. This chapter on general introduction is followed by chapter two on the synthesis of issues and trends in the youth education-employment landscape across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The chapter identifies and examines youth conceptualisations, the debates about youth voice and participation, increasing de-standardised youth transitions, difficult youth employment transitions and education-based responses. Also, the chapter deals with active labour market programmes in recognition of the increasing interest in their role in promoting youth employment.

Chapter three presents the theoretical and methodological framework for the study. The choice to use the capabilities approach and integrated socio-ecological developmental model of agency is explained and justified. The capabilities approach's revolutionary conceptualisation of development as freedom suits this study's strategic focus on agency of social actors in youth education-employment transition. In this chapter, I make the argument for freeing and enhancing individual agency of young people and the frontline social actors who ought to accompany them on their education-employment journeys. The use of the social constructivist learning paradigm in framing the discussion, analysis and scrutiny of agricultural education and training (AET) is outlined. The section on methodological choices provides the justification of the study's interpretive paradigm in

shaping the integrated research design constructed on qualitative case study and action research principles.

In chapter four I present findings about the agri-focused youth employment programmes as generated during the orientation phase, while chapter five deals with findings from the second phase of the study. The chapter presents a detailed account of stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of agricultural education practice by selected VTIs and the tertiary AET institution. Also, this chapter captures young people's vision of the future, as well as the decisional influences on their pursuit of agricultural education and employment pathways. I also present the young people's labour force entry imaginations and realities, as well as their career development ambitions. Chapter six provides findings of the third phase of the study, which involved a deeper engagement with social actors of the case study AET institution using action research principles and methods. This , more intensive and lengthy phase attempted to respond, with practical interventions, to some of the issues and concerns that were identified among the major obstacles to young people's better learning and labour market outcomes. The last chapter sums up analysis and interpretation of the findings, and connects the same to the integrated theoretical framework while drawing pertinent research, policy and practice implications.

1.7 Study context

Uganda is located astride the equator with an area of 241,550.7 sq.km. It is a landlocked East African country bordering Tanzania to the South, Rwanda to the southwest, South Sudan to the north, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west and Kenya to the east. With 34.6 million persons in 2014 and an annual population growth rate of 3.2 per cent, Uganda is considered to be among the world's youngest populations. According to the 2012 census and subsequent projections, young people aged 18-30 years constitute 22.5% of the population (UBoS, 2016b). The 2016/17 national household survey estimated the country's working age population at over 19 million (UBoS, 2019).

Uganda is continually portrayed as a country of endowed natural resources and favourable climate with a potential to attain a middle-income status within 30 years as proclaimed by the Government's vision 2040 (GoU, 2013). Economically, the country is struggling to build its small industrial sector amidst unstable policy frameworks anchored in the so-called private sector-led development model inherited from the failed structural adjustment regime of the 1990s (Kingston, Irikana, Dienye, & Kingston, 2011). The reported GDP per capita growth from USD 844 in the fiscal year 2011/12 to USD 878 in 2018/19 (National Planning Authority, 2020) means little to the general well-being of the majority of Ugandans. The country is still a long way from expanding choices for its entire people to live a dignified life. The national household survey of 2016/2017 indicated that the proportion of Ugandans living below the poverty line increased to 21.4% (10 million) with huge regional disparities defined by rural and urban poverty characteristics (UBoS, 2019). There are also

increasing local and global concerns over poor governance and weak democratic practices characterized by high levels of corruption, dysfunctional public institutions and declining rule of law (Asimwe, 2013; Baldwin, 2009; Office of the Prime Minister, 2012; Tangri & Mwenda, 2008).

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the twin challenge of employment creation and harnessing youth labour market transition makes agricultural productivity a mantra of Uganda's political economy discourse. Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the economy, second to the trade and services sector, and contributing 24 percent to GDP during the fiscal year 2018/2019 (UBoS, 2020). Relatedly, agro-industrialisation is one of the key development programmes earmarked by the third 5-year national development plan 2020-2025 to increase commercialisation and competitiveness of agricultural production. This is within the framework of sustainable development goals (SDGs) 2 and 9 and the overall national aspirations of attaining a middle-income status. Against the backdrop of the policy pronouncements that favour agriculture productivity, real financing by Government is minimal, declining to less than 3.5% of the 2020/21 national budget and far below the recommended 10% as expressed in the Maputo Declaration on Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group, 2020; FAO, 2015).

Chapter 2 Youth, education-employment transitions in SSA

2.1 Introduction

Young people are a treasure to families and nations, and their successful transition is a matter of local and global concern (United Nations, 2007). The state and wellbeing of youth mirrors the nature of social systems. It reveals how enabling or confining the social institutions of communities and nations are (Durham, 2000). Smooth transitions of young people, particularly their entry into the world of work, remains a real challenge that constantly attracts and generates policy, research and theoretical arguments about the role and influence of education and labour market systems. Amidst the arguments, the changes and forces behind the structural and institutional determinants of young people's lives persist in varying dimensions across the globe.

In this chapter, while drawing from international literature with a focus on African and Ugandan context, I make a brief discussion of these technological and societal changes in the context of their impact on youth transitions. I set out the discussion with a glimpse into societal youth conceptualisations. In recognition of youth resilience and adaptive capabilities in navigating confining structures to find their life paths, I bring into context the arguments about young people's voices and participation. The impact of technological and societal changes on work and working contexts is discussed to contextualise the difficulties young people face in their movement into and through education settings to the world of work. The section on the pressure that society exerts on education systems to effectively prepare youth for work, as well the difficulties involved in facilitating youth employment transitions, is preceded with insights that influence this study's theoretical and methodological frame of reference.

2.2 Youth conceptualisations

A critical look at youth conceptualisations is helpful in understanding how individuals and institutions with power and authority relate and deal with young people. Conceptualisations communicate assumptions about entitlements, protection, obligations and responsibilities of young people in the context of time, space and purpose. In the discussions about young people's access to education and work opportunities, I illustrate how such representations potentially perpetuate disparities and exclusion. In the literature on youth conceptualisations, one derives two major interrelated dimensions. One is the

relative tension between chronological and sociological definitions, and the other is about youth as either a resource to build and exploit or a social problem to manage.

2.2.1 Chronological definition of youth

Chronological definitions take youth as a stage in life ‘that can be tied to specific age ranges’ (Furlong, 2013, p1). The population group in the age cohort of 15-35 is what most national governments and development agencies define as young people. Of course, there are variations in regard to the lower and upper ceilings where some countries including Uganda legislate the lower age ceiling at 18, relative to the United Nations’ 15-24 age bracket as well as World Bank’s and the African Union’ 15-35 age range (African Union, 2011; United Nations, 2010). However, inconsistencies and tensions are not uncommon, particularly when the policy decisions to guide and regulate youth programmes and services are framed to meet particular interests.

Age definitions can turn into complex policy issues when social actors are confronted with decisional dilemmas relating to young people’s access to work and education opportunities. In Uganda, for instance, whereas the national youth council act of 1993 decrees 18-30 age brackets for eligibility to exercise political rights, other sections of the youth policy regime place the lower age ceiling at 12. The Ministry of Gender justifies the child youth ambivalence with the argument that youth and child are mutually inclusive at some stage of their lives, so their welfare and protection can be derived from the same conceptualisation (MGLSD, 2001). In the same breadth, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics argues for the ‘inclusion of young adolescents (14-17) in national youth policies in conformity with the labour market definition of working age population, and to allow early participation by young people’ (UBoS, 2016a, p58).

The child-youth ambivalence plays out even at household levels as families arbitrarily make decisions that affect the lives of young people on the basis of what suits the circumstances, regardless of age prescriptions. In Uganda and similar contexts, the onset of some conventional social markers of progression from childhood to youth or adulthood often leads to adverse consequences on the educational affordances and other forms of protection and social services by the different social institutions, and in varying dimensions as influenced by gender stereotypes. It is evident that the sexuality manifestations among young girls, which is often characterised by unprotected sex and eventual pregnancies, many times results into being denied the opportunities to access education and training opportunities. Apparently, conventional social markers such as sexuality, marriage and working are more significant in distinguishing youth from childhood (Hardgrove et al., 2014) than the age statistics. Moreover, delayed or accelerated realisation often conflicts with social expectations, thus exacerbating the tension. This makes sociological understanding of youth a pertinent element of this thesis.

2.2.2 Sociological definitions of youth

Broadening the understanding of youth beyond statistical definitions is a natural response in recognition of the social realities of growing up to become an adult. Variations on the rallying elements within the sociological youth discourse notwithstanding, there is agreement that youth is a phase of transition (Abbink, 2005; Hogan & Astone, 1986). This phase signifies the transition from a dependent personality, reminiscent of childhood, to a more autonomous adulthood status. Theoretical opinions about the nature and meaning of this transition are subtle and less oppositional. For instance, while Bastien and Holmarsdottir call it a liminal phase in life, Andy Furlong refers to it as an intermediary phase that stands between childhood and adulthood (Bastien & Holmarsdottir, 2015; Furlong, 2013)

There are also arguments against a transitory emphasis, because societal changes are not only distorting social transition calendars, but they are continuously elongating the phase. Already, over half a century ago, youth scholars observed that the youth phase had been moved later in the life course (Musgrave, 1967). As observed by Jon Abbink, ‘some people who are well into their thirties have not completed their education, have no job, and are not in a position to raise a family’ (Abbink, 2005, p6). Connectedly, there is a line of thinking that argues for defining youth from ‘now and future’ perspectives. Social being and social becoming constitute the main conceptual tools in this argument (Gough, Langevang, & Owusu, 2013). This apparent radical argument is about extending youth as a position in movement within a larger social structure defined by the constant struggle for influence and authority (Christiansen, Utas, Vigh, & Ungruhe, 2007).

It is generally agreeable that youth transitions are no longer linear. Notions and concepts such as de-standardised, protracted, accelerated, delayed transitions or waitthood are coined to illustrate how societal changes distort periods and ages at which transitions across different life domains would be expected to happen (Honwana, 2014; Walther, 2006). Predictions of when and how young people, for instance, enter work from school and from family home to independent living with a spouse in a different village or city are no longer feasible.

Manifestations of nonlinear transitions are not uncommon in rich and poor economies though with varied ramifications on society and the young people themselves. There are incidences of young people assuming social, reproductive and economic roles either long before or after expected social deadlines. Often youth have double or triple statuses as children, husbands, wives, students and temporary workers. By 2015, ‘fifteen percent of Ugandan youth at school were engaged in employment’ (UBoS, 2016a, p2). Contextual manifestations and implications of changing youth transitions are among the central elements of this thesis.

2.2.3 Youth as resource, social problem

A deficit perspective that takes youth as a social problem to manage at times juxtaposes youth as a resource (Resnick & Thurlow, 2015). On one side of the continuum is the positive youth paradigm that views young people as capable and indeed with the potential of being good and resourceful to their own lives, families and wider communities. This presupposes the focus on talents, strengths, interests and future potential of young people (Damon, 2004). This worldview recognises the fact that young people possess a certain level of agency, which they can exercise to actively negotiate and influence their life journeys amid the structural barriers and societal canalizations. The conceptualisation of youth as an asset is prevalent in local and international literature on youth policies and interventions. For instance, the United Nations states that ‘young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation’ (United Nations, 2010, p10). The Commonwealth Secretariat argues that youth are ‘an essential resource for sustainable development and poverty eradication’ (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2007, p4). In its Vision 2040 policy document, the Government of Uganda states that with a youthful population ‘the country is blessed with the potential for an abundant and cheap labour force that can drive the envisaged growth and transformation’ (National Planning Authority, 2013, p51). Of course, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the interests and intentions that underlie the seemingly positive portrayal of youth need critical consideration.

At different levels of society, social actors including parents, educators and employers often make positive statements that clearly communicate their conviction about youth potential. When things seem to be going fine, one often hears statements such as best hope, real heritage, leaders of tomorrow, and agents of change. For instance, a youth situational analysis in Uganda by the International Youth Foundation (IYF) in 2010 revealed how some employers perceive Ugandan youth as:

More productive and flexible than adults; less expensive to hire; ambitious, motivated and creative; less prone to corruption; and willing to give back to the community. (IYF, 2011, P9)

However, the positive representations of youth often come with strong undertones that question the autonomy and potential of young people to lead a healthy and productive life. This gives rise to the notion of youth as a problematic phase in life. Conceptualising youth as a social problem is increasingly becoming a highly contested perspective. This rather negative representation is among others, based on the assumption that young people can easily ruin their lives and that of others if society does not take appropriate measures. ‘Youth are perceived in terms of incapacities and inabilities, and it is assumed that adult intervention is essential for their proper development’ (Kurth-Schai, 1988, p115). Portrayal

of youth as a social problem to manage is indeed a deficit paradigm because of the undue focus on risk factors associated with growing up (Piper & Piper, 2000). Strong opinions that young people are vulnerable and prone to alcohol, drug abuse, prostitution and all sorts of risky behaviour potentially distorts the decisions and actions of parents, educators, employers and influential social actors.

The deficit portrayal of youth often plays out prominently when things are not going right from the perspectives of influential social actors. Apparently most Ugandan parents, educators and political leaders alike, often label young people as lazy, impatient and driven by quick easy options, among other deficit social descriptors. In the face of the current tough economic times and dwindling work opportunities, unemployed educated youth are increasingly framed as a population group that is not interested in the so-called dirty work like agriculture, but is instead swayed by the leisure of urban life (for a recent related remark by one of Uganda's powerful social actors, see Mugisha, 2021).

Further, when young people object or even act differently in a manner that some scholars call transformational resistance (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), influential social actors interpret it as a product of enticement or bad influence and manipulation. The assumption is that young people are yet to mature enough to decide and act on their own interests. In very highly hierarchical societies such as Uganda, it is not uncommon to misunderstand youth assertiveness and legitimate demands. This is why it is necessary, for instance, to take a critical look at the views of participating employers in the IYF study who said that youth demand higher salaries, are stubborn and provocative (IYF, 2011). Such assumptions are not uncommon in moments of tensions between students and administrators of education institutions. Often times, administrators respond with all sorts of threats, sanctions and skewed narratives when students protest against injustices and inefficiencies such as arbitrary tuition regimes, inadequate welfare facilities, and poor teaching and assessment systems. For instance when Makerere University students protested tuition increment in 2019, one of the top university administrators was reported to have claimed that the protest was spearheaded by students with political ambitions. According to a government-run newspaper, the administrator said 'this usually happens during October and November because most of the students are yearning for power and want to be remembered when they contest in February' (Tumwine, 2019).

The topical debate of positive and negative representations of youth is not only theoretically complex but a real programming puzzle for decision makers at local and global levels. For instance, a number of education and employment policy pronouncements in the wake of the burgeoning youth populations in the developing world and Africa in particular are caught up in this mix (Corrigan, 2016). Global leaders, including those in the UN system, are reported to echo messages that strongly imply the argument that if good education and employment solutions are not made available to young people, they can easily engage in actions that can potentially hurt global peace, security and harmony (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2014). The duality of resource and problem perspectives permeates official documents of

national governments, particularly in the context of youth employment challenges. For instance, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics in its 2015 youth transition survey report reiterates the official rhetoric that ‘unemployment among youth is a major national concern becoming a social and economic threat’ (UBoS, 2016a, p2). Against the backdrop of deficit paradigms, the arguments to mainstream youth agency become topical.

2.3 Young people’s voice and participation

Concerns over the limited space that social actors provide young people features prominently in the literature on youth research, policy and practice. Generally, the concerns are mainly rooted in social justice and human rights paradigms that recognise the democratic value of participation (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006). The agitation for youth participation is presented as part of an empowerment agenda to offset the shortfalls that are associated with policies and programmes that assign a passive position to young people. One of the most outstanding global policy endorsements of the crusade to give young people their voice is the 2007 World Bank Development Report titled *Development and the Next Generation* (World Bank, 2006).

The report argues for listening to young people, and it uses the concept of client power to make the point that young people should be allowed to exercise their freedom of choice. A review of related literature yields a couple of interesting themes that clearly communicate the attention that youth policy actors and researchers attach to mainstreaming youth perspectives in decisions and actions that affect their current and future lives. The list below gives a clue of the convergent perspectives in the literature on redressing the past flaws, but also the thoughts and attempts to get young people from the periphery.

New research - new voices: youth at the margins (Bastien & Holmarsdottir, 2015)

Highly affected, rarely considered (Heaven & Tubridy, 2003)

Be seen be heard - youth participation in development (United Nations, 2007)

Youth participatory action research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008)

Youth-led research and development (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003)

Around the world, particularly in the global South, there are model youth development programmes, which employ diverse participatory approaches in a range of sectors including education and economic empowerment. One characteristic nature of such interventions is their reliance on donations and grants from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international aid organisations and corporate philanthropists. The other is that they operate outside mainstream public education and labour market structures (Ozer & Wright, 2012). They also have a track record of engaging youths who are considered most vulnerable, the majority of whom are the so-called NEETs. The use of participatory approaches in

mainstream education and training institutions is not evident in the literature. Understandably, scholars from the critical and emancipatory tradition take issue with discourses which use the notion of youth voice as a strategy to perpetuate false generosity and to promote certain interests, aims and targets. Relatedly scholars with political economy lenses challenge the whole *youth as resource* discourse as sheer rhetoric and a global capitalist project for reproducing a generation of consumers and workers in the service of neo-liberal interests (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2008). This scepticism rightly generates a useful critical debate about conceptualising participation from either an instrumentalist or emancipatory perspective, which fundamentally impacts programme approaches and processes.

Under the chapter on theoretical framework and elsewhere in this thesis, I come back to the discussion about young people's voice and participation. For now, let me make a brief switch to the concept of positive youth development. Youth development scholars and practitioners take a positive vision of youth, and argue for a focus on young people's agency while building and harnessing their social, moral, emotional, physical and cognitive capabilities to navigate their life trajectories within the ever-changing world (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Damon, 2004). The concept of positive youth development is a useful launch point for my consideration of the societal and ecological changes that impact not only the social institutions that structure young people's work-education transitions but directly impact their aspirations and life paths.

2.4 Societal changes and youth transitions

The influence of societal changes and globalisation on the personal identity and aspirations of young people is an issue of pertinent interest to this study. It is widely acknowledged that today's young people, unlike their parents and grandparents, are growing in a rapidly changing world (Assaad & Krafft, 2014; Heinz, 2009). Moreover, the changing ways of life in response to consequences of demographic shifts, degradation of natural resources, and other socio-economic forces affect young people's personality development in varying dimensions. While positive social changes potentially contribute to youth positive growth and transition, the reverse distorts their orientation to learn, work and full citizenship. Research on education and social integration in conflict and post-conflict countries in Africa and elsewhere provides clues about how hazardous environments can distort the life paths of young people (Angucia, 2010). For instance, based on their vast research experience in Uganda, Amone-P'Olak and others observe that war-affected youths often have to endure post-war environmental stressors, depression, stigma, poor community relations, restlessness, and irritability to navigate Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways (Amone-P'Olak, Schnelker, & Van der Bent, 2016).

Demographic changes like migration and immigration often trigger young peoples' tendencies and urge to travel in search of opportunities (Ramos, 2019; Van Blerk, 2008).

Vulnerabilities arising from poverty, hunger and related social problems in deprived communities upset development of human values among the youth which leads to contradictions in their quest to forge flourishing relationships with peers and significant others (Hardgrove et al., 2014). In addition to local social conditions, the ever-increasing connection of the world affect young people's identity formation in very diverse ways. Globalisation of culture powered by the enormous creative industry affect youth lifestyles in very fundamental dimensions. Music, sports, art and cinema as fuelled by digitalisation and communication technologies, including radio, television, smartphones and social media, increasingly affect youth desires, aspirations and preferences. Taste, fashion, design and style are key defining concepts in youth conversations and practices everywhere, including in some of the remotest villages in Uganda and similar contexts.

Youth is a stage that is often associated with being most receptive and susceptible to risks of unfiltered global culture. As observed by Heaven and Tubridy, youth are seen as the part of the society that is most 'likely to engage in a process of cultural borrowing which disrupt the reproduction of traditional cultural practices, from modes of dress to language, aesthetics and ideologies' (Heaven & Tubridy, 2003, p149). Often, this constitutes a source of tension and conflict with influential social actors in their families and other social institutions, including education and labour contexts. It potentially exacerbates youth stress, anxiety and uncertainties which fundamentally influence their emotions, decisions and actions. The influence of societal changes on young people's education-work transition is of key interest to this thesis.

2.5 Societal changes and work for young people

The high automation of production and related exponential social changes, especially from the 1970s, continuously alter work and working contexts (Casey, 1999). Technological innovations, demographic and economic shifts all combine to affect not only employment creation processes, but also the quantity and quality of required human capabilities. Across the world, the sectors of industry, manufacturing and services generate more jobs than agriculture since the onset of the industrial revolutions. Jobs are increasingly being created and distributed by private and transnational corporate companies. National state institutions are left to a regulatory domain owing to macro-economic structural shifts in favour of neoliberalism and related marketisation policies. In the majority of SSA, public sector jobs dramatically shrunk with the advent of structural adjustment policies in the 1980s, which paved the way for massive restructuring and entrenchment of market-driven macro-economic policies (Cornia & Helleiner, 1994; Geo-Jaja & Mangum, 2001; Kingston et al., 2011).

Related literature points to the consequences of these changes on work organisation, management and value. It is evident that young people are growing up in times when notions of labour specialisation and life career are, for instance, giving way to

multi-tasking and professional boundary crossing (Cochran & Ferrari, 2009; Jagannathan, Ra, & Maclean, 2019; OECD, 1999). An interdisciplinary skill-set embedded with digital, emotional and other relational capabilities is the best preference for current and future labour market demands (Dougherty & Lombardi, 2016). Work tasks can be performed anywhere while being managed and supervised through automated systems. Work conditions are increasingly based on temporary and short-term contractual arrangements. The trend of home-based and remote working has taken a new twist with the onset of lockdowns and related restrictions on physical interactions due to Covid-19.

As widely acknowledged, the impact of technological and societal changes on work manifest differently in rich and poor economies around the world. To illustrate this a little further, let us consider the aspects of employment creation and work conditions in SSA. The creation of quality formal sector jobs in most of SSA is constrained by a complex web of demographic and macroeconomic challenges. Across the entire African continent, only three million formal jobs are created annually against the over ten million youth labour market entrants (African Development Bank, 2018). The insufficient creation of quality jobs by the economy, especially for the youth, is one of the key development challenges identified by Uganda's third national development plan (National Planning Authority, 2020). The prospect of high skilled gainful jobs such as business analysts, academics, teachers, bankers, accountants, marketing specialists, engineers, doctors, advertising professionals and software developers, is still painfully slow. In the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries, agriculture and the informal sector remain the mainstay of labour markets (Brooks, Zorya, Gautam, & Goyal, 2013; Jayne, Yeboah, & Henry, 2017). All the aforementioned combine to complicate labour market transition of young people, including those with some education qualifications.

2.6 Difficult employment transition of educated youth

Associating education attainment with easier youth entry into decent and productive work is increasingly becoming problematic across the world. As dramatically put by David Atchoarena, 'people who used to see education as a passport to employment can no longer take it for granted' (Atchoarena, 2000, p1). Since the 1970s, the global phenomenon of high unemployment rates among educated youth is upsetting social timetables, as the majority cohorts of young graduates face difficult and prolonged transitions. Across the majority of SSA countries, the portion of educated young people who transit to stable and satisfactory employment is persistently negligible (Fares et al., 2005).

While the general topic of youth employment is a matter of global interest, empirical evidence on unemployed educated youth in Africa and Uganda in particular is scanty (Garcia & Fares, 2008). Nonetheless one can derive clues and insights from general studies such as the ILO supported school-to-work transition surveys implemented by 28 low- and middle-income countries including Uganda (Elder & Koné, 2014). Related literature

across the SSA region indicates that the largest share of educated youths remain in-transition while engaging in all sorts of temporary jobs (Betcherman & Khan, 2015; Fares et al., 2005; Soucat, Nzau, Elaheebocus, & Cunha-Duarte, 2013). They engage in self-employment and unpaid family work because they cannot afford not to work at all. Most youth in-transition in Uganda and similar contexts are engaged in vulnerable employment characterised by poor work terms and conditions. For instance, the 2016 Uganda youth transition report indicated that the share of youth with technical or higher professional qualifications that transitioned to stable employment was just 20 per cent (UBoS, 2016a).

To escape from harsh labour conditions at home, a section of educated youth in Uganda and others in similar contexts manoeuvre their way into foreign labour markets. This somewhat trendy labour migration in the 1980s and 90s assumed a terrible dramatic turn from the early 2000s with thousands of young Africans flocking Europe and the Middle East for jobs in the lower echelons of the labour market (Ramos, 2019). Media reports and other commentaries reveal that increasingly, hundreds of educated SSA young men and women relocate to countries such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates to work as domestic servants, drivers and in other odd jobs under very insecure and dehumanising conditions. There are also strong indications that once they get discouraged from unyielding and prolonged job search, a portion of educated youth return to college or university to either upgrade or switch to new study programmes. A small though not insignificant number of educated youths withdraw from the search for work thus remaining dependent personalities on families and friends. The gendered effect of transition manifests by longer and more precarious transition of young women (Elias et al., 2018; Van Blerk, 2008).

Assumptions about the barriers to successful employment transition of educated African youth are yet to be firmly based on empirical investigation, though a couple of related small scale studies are visible in the literature (Broecke, 2013; Pheko & Molefhe, 2017). Of course, this is not to negate the traditional tracer studies by some education and labour market regulatory agencies. Generalisations in the literature point to the interplay of individual limitations, macroeconomic and labour market conditions. Informed actors in the domain of active labour market interventions delineate a list of interrelated features that constrain youth labour market outcomes. The five categories of constraints proposed by the World Bank policy primer provide an interesting framework for understanding young people's difficult transition into the world of work. They include 'job-relevant skills constraints, lack of labour demand, job search constraints, firm start-up constraints, and social constraints' (Cunningham, Sanchez-Puerta, & Wuerml, 2010, p2). In Uganda, the country's national planning authority confirms that 'young people find it hard to get a first job and face many obstacles, ranging from discrimination, marginalisation and poverty' (National Planning Authority, 2015, p52). While it is widely acknowledged that not all the forces that underlie troubled youth labour force entry are located within the education and training domain, this study focuses on the potential role of education as a driver of smooth

transition. However, this is not to signal a negation of other features of effective transition systems or regimes (Raffe, 2011; Walther, 2006).

2.7 Education under pressure

In the literature on difficult employment transitions of educated youth, there are strong claims that education systems are not doing enough to prepare young people with appropriate skills needed by labour markets. Generally, education is faulted for failing to keep pace with technological and societal changes. The pressure is everywhere around the world even in developed economies as education and training systems are racing to meet the 21st Century skill demands and the fourth industrial revolution (Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003).

The challenges of education systems in Africa are often framed in the continent's continued struggle to disengage from colonial education policy legacy. There are claims that education systems in the majority of developing countries including SSA are shaped and influenced by western paradigms and assumptions which are not in tune with current realities (Boukary & Walther, 2016; Watson, 1994). Adapting to the realities of shrunken job opportunities in the public sector is, for instance, one of Uganda's major education policy challenges. It is also argued that education and training systems have for long been designed to supply the diminishing formal employment sector, yet as widely acknowledged, labour markets in the majority of developing countries are characterised by high levels of informality (ILO, 2019).

Educational-based interventions to optimise youth labour market outcomes have aimed to restructure Africa's education systems from the outset of the post-independence era in the 1950s. Reform bells have continuously rung through legislation, policy and development plans under such themes as education for self-reliance, education with production, education and productive work, and vocationalisation of secondary and higher education (Gustafsson, 1985; Ishumi & Maliyamkono, 1995; NEIDA, 1982; Obanya, 1994; Oketch, 2007). Linking education with work contexts for better labour force productivity and social transformation of the continent has always been the mantra of policy rhetoric.

Despite the efforts, African education systems are still a long way from matching labour market realities and other societal changes. It is widely claimed that the continent's education systems and institutions are still struggling to shed off elitist colonial legacy (Allais & Wedekind, 2020; Boukary & Walther, 2016; McGrath et al., 2020; Walker & Hofstetter, 2016). Mainstream education is considered *schoolish*, and universities are sharply criticised and often considered dysfunctional and weak in their function of building the continent's workforce (Kibwika, 2006; Zeelen, 2012). Moreover, the tendencies to undervalue the VET track in favour of higher education are commonplace in the majority of SSA countries. There are claims that the situation cannot be easily reversed owing to the premium that communities and families in Uganda ascribe to university education and 'degree'

certificates (Okinyal, 2012; Tumuheki, 2017). Actually, until now a section of the political class in some African countries are still agitating to turn specialised vocational institutions or colleges into universities. Relatedly, young people's post-secondary education trajectories and the important considerations of how and what to study in preparation for future work life are distorted. The statistical map of Uganda's tertiary education enrolment in recent years affords a good illustration of this trend. In 2017 the national TVET enrolment to 45,153 from 63,2019 in 2016 compared to the tertiary level increase of 258,866 in 2016 from 201,376 in 2013 (UBoS, 2020).

2.7.1 Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Literature abounds with claims that VET systems in the majority of SSA and similar contexts across the world are in a perennial struggle to deliver returns on investments and meeting the somewhat exaggerated expectations. Labour supply and demand mismatch is the mantra in the criticism of the sector for being stuck in a design paradigm which does not fully respond to labour market demands and realities (Gill, Fluitman, & Dar, 2000; Psacharopoulos, 1991; Subrahmanyam, 2013). A synthesis of studies from the 1990s reveals five recurring themes:

- Overbearing influence of western paradigms into VET policy, research and practice as driven by multilateral and bilateral development aid agencies which do have a history of dominance in terms of the sector's infrastructure development, curriculum reforms and human resource capacity building
- Poor perception of VET as an inferior or last resort for socially and academically disadvantaged young people who have completed primary and secondary education
- Tension between balancing the integration of academic and vocational content amidst wide spread tendencies of dichotomising the teaching of theory and practice, as well as the vocationalisation debate
- The challenge to bridge the social and economic aims of VET policy and practise, further problematised by the emerging critical approaches which demand for transformative and emancipatory lenses. This challenge is wider if added to the somewhat exaggerated power of VET in reducing poverty and tackling youth unemployment in the face of failing economies and lopsided social policies
- Weak VET organisation and management constrained by institutional and governance inconsistencies, exacerbated by the peripheral position of the sector within the mainstream public education policy and financing arrangements. (Bennell & Segerstrom, 1998; Johanson & Adams, 2004; King & Palmer, 2007; Lillis & Hogan, 1983; McGrath, 2011; Oketch, 2007; Watson, 1994)

For over a decade, African decision makers through their regional mechanisms have been developing several policy instruments to strengthen and rejuvenate the continent's VET sector (African Union, 2007; African Union, 2018). While several attempts to enhance linkages of systems and social actors so as to address the persistent tension between skill supply and demand are being made, there is limited success. The renewed global interest in TVET as articulated under sustainable development goal four may usher in a new lease of hope for transforming Africa's VET. However, any enthusiasm for a sustainable and systemic change would be farfetched owing to a number of challenges both inside and outside the sub-sector (Allais & Wedekind, 2020). Some scholars are making renewed critique of the defective VET policy reforms which are not reflective of the operating environment and influencing factors linked to the wider economic and socio-historical context (Afeti, 2018; Allais, 2020; Lolwana, 2017; McGrath et al., 2020).

Uganda's reform efforts, which received a legislative boost of an Act of Parliament (BTVET Act) in 2008, are not exceptional (GoU, 2008). I argue that the long-term impact of the country's VET policy reforms is questionable. The legacy of failed attempts is vivid on many counts, not to mention two decades of apparent recycling of policy options which are never tested or tried. For instance, there has been a distressing oscillation between establishing training councils and enacting legal instruments for a national skills training authority on one hand, and introducing a training levy and establishment of a skills training fund on the other. There are pointers from empirical studies and policy reviews which confirm that most of the perennial challenges stubbornly persist (Jjuuko, 2012; Nuwagaba, 2012; Okumu & Bbaale, 2019; Tukundane, 2014). In the Skilling Uganda programme document as well as the background to the new TVET policy provisions, the Ministry of Education acknowledges that the country's VET sector remains underdeveloped, fragmented and characterised by inadequate funding, weak institutional framework, insufficient training approaches, limited linkage with industry, negative perceptions and unfriendly learning environment (MoES, 2012, 2019). Against the backdrop of a weak VET sector, AET with its peculiar challenges is certainly not any better.

2.7.2 Agricultural Education and Training (AET)

Across the SSA region, there are three main formal agricultural education and training (AET) options (Muwaniki, 2019; Shayo, 2020; Vandenbosch, 2006). The first option, in the majority of countries, is provision of agricultural education as a vocational subject within general education at secondary education level. This AET option is mainly to stimulate career interest of young people though there are public aspirations and claims of labour market outcomes in some countries (Hulela & Miller, 2003; Mukembo, 2017). The second option is for secondary school completers who, on the basis of academic or social considerations, pursue foundational vocational and professional training courses in agriculture at certificate level. The third pathway is diploma and degree agricultural study

programmes at tertiary and higher education level. The second and third options are designed to prepare students for occupations at different levels in the food and agriculture industry.

A perusal of Uganda's system of education is useful to reveal the location of AET therein. The system has a structure of seven years of primary education, six years of secondary education (divided into 4 years of lower secondary and two years of upper secondary), and 2 to 5 years of post-secondary education (UBoS, 2017). Under the new thematic curriculum for lower secondary education, agriculture and food related themes are covered under technology and enterprise learning (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2016). The country has about 20 vocational institutes, which provide AET courses for lower secondary education completers. Young Ugandans who successfully complete upper secondary education have the possibility of enrolling for a diploma in either animal science, forestry or crop science at a dozen AET specialised institutions (MoES, 2019; UGAPRIVI, 2017). They also have a chance to enrol for an agriculture-related course at one of the eleven universities, which offer undergraduate academic study programmes in specialised fields such as agribusiness, veterinary medicine, agri-entrepreneurship, agricultural mechanisation, and food science.

Similar to the general VET sector, Africa's AET is equally constrained. Under the following three aspects, I sum up some of the chronic constraints and challenges that characterise AET across the majority of SSA (Cletzer, Rudd, Westfall-Rudd, & Drape, 2016; Hawkins, 2021; Maguire, 2012; Rivera, 2006; Wallace, 1997; World Bank, 2007):

- Shrunken or stagnant public budget allocations to AET exacerbated by lack of financial investment from the private sector and other stakeholders
- Incoherent policy frameworks often leading to territorial scrambles amongst ministries and departments in charge of forestry, agriculture, cooperatives, livestock, wildlife and education. This creates inconsistencies in staff development and deployment
- Out-dated curricula and pedagogical practices that are not adapted to changing skills demands as driven by ecological, social and technological changes

AET is additionally confronted by the general challenge of perceived low status of agricultural occupations, which are predominantly in the informal sector. Indeed, as indicated in chapter 1, the notion of young people's poor perception of agriculture features prominently in related literature. The African Union's planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD) sums up the perception challenge and the resultant poor enrolment of students for agriculture-related courses:

In Africa, agriculture is still perceived as a path to poverty, and the dream of any farmer's family to keep their children away from its limitations that they have badly experienced. Not surprisingly, agriculture enrolments, both in terms of total number and quality of students, show declining shares at all post-secondary levels. Most students who are enrolled in agricultural programmes in Africa are not doing it by choice but because of their poor grades that prevent them from accessing the other options. (African Union, 2015, p12)

AET is challenged to overturn the trend by improving access, quality and attractiveness (Hawkins, 2021; Rammolai, 2009; Walker, & Hofstetter, 2016). However, the narrative that young people are not interested in agricultural education and work begs a certain level of critical scrutiny that takes into consideration the structural determinants of youth decisions. Poor perception narratives have for a while overshadowed and influenced youth in agriculture programming, policymaking and research. Moreover, as argued under chapter one, a closer look at some findings by a couple of related small qualitative studies in Uganda and similar contexts reveals that quite a number of young Africans still gear-up for careers in agriculture. Chapter 5 of this thesis presents findings on the experiences and aspirations of agriculture students and graduates.

2.7.3 New efforts to harness AET labour market outcomes

African AET decision makers want the sub-sector to serve the dual purpose of economic growth and social transformation through outcome-based delivery models for increased youth employment (African Union, 2015; World Bank, 2007). Curriculum reviews based on competence-based principles are being undertaken, not only to change or introduce new study programmes and content, but also to adapt AET to current and future needs of the food and agriculture industry.

In Uganda, tertiary AET institutions and related university faculties have in the last ten years introduced specialised diploma and degree courses such as agribusiness, agri-entrepreneurship, extension services, horticulture, floriculture, nutrition and dietetics in a bid to produce students with specific occupational competencies. New attempts to entrench specific occupational competence-development include the introduction of modularised training within the framework of Uganda Skills Development Programme (World Bank, 2015). The theme of business management is increasingly being used to rename and rebrand agricultural study programmes to denote the sub-sector's business and market orientation trends.

Entrepreneurship as a subject is integrated in almost all the new and old study programmes such as animal husbandry, crop production and general agriculture. The argument for embedding entrepreneurship education into the curriculum is to enable

students to create their own employment upon graduation. Indeed, the notion of ‘building job creators not job seekers’ is increasingly becoming a catchphrase in mission statements and promotional materials of private and public AET institutions. My own review of related curriculum documents, prospectus, course leaflets and brochures confirmed this phenomena. Decision makers seem to be overzealous about the role of practical or hands-on training in addressing concerns that the AET graduates do not possess adequate practical competencies that are needed by employers. Over a decade ago the Ministry of Education argued for more emphasis on practical work in order to produce graduates with hands-on experience who can competently engage in gainful farming activities on their own. Consequently, the Ministry justified the inclusion of farm practices, special projects and outreaches as additional course units onto the curricula for national diploma courses in agriculture and related fields. Work placements of 4-12 weeks with labels such as industrial training, industrial attachments, fieldwork or internships, became a common pedagogical add-on by almost all AET institutions that offer certificate and diploma courses (UBTEB, 2015). This study’s empirical contribution to the discourse of harnessing AET learning and labour market outcomes is presented under chapter five and six.

2.8 Active labour market policies and youth employment

Active labour market policies (ALMP) are public policy instruments which most governments across the world use to intervene directly to enhance the integration of unemployed and underemployed youth into the labour market (Kluve et al., 2017; Martin & Grubb, 2001). OECD offers a pragmatic definition of ALMPs, which encompasses:

All social expenditure (other than education) which is aimed at the improvement of the beneficiaries’ prospect of finding gainful employment or to otherwise increase their earnings capacity. This category includes spending on public employment services and administration, labour market training, special programmes for youth when in transition from school to work, labour market programmes to provide or promote employment for unemployed and other persons (excluding young and disabled persons) and special programmes for the disabled. (OECD, 2007, p15)

The dominant ALM interventions in most of the developing countries include activities relating to:

- Making labour markets work better for young people by focusing on counselling and job search skills, wage subsidies, public works programmes, and anti-discrimination legislation;

- Improving chances for young entrepreneurs through start-up capital provision and entrepreneurship education for self-employment and job creation;
- Intermediary support services for overseas employment of young people;
- Youth employment affirmative action framework (Betcherman, Dar, & Olivas, 2004; Betcherman & Khan, 2015).

Unlike welfare-inclined states in Europe and elsewhere, Uganda and the majority of SSA countries do not have explicit official policy for social protection of young men and women without work opportunities or those in vulnerable employment (Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2019; Niall, 2017). Instead, there is a variety of youth employment programmes run by state and non-state actors which provide start-up capital, skills development and entrepreneurship support. Examples of state-run ALM interventions include the youth capital venture fund in the Ministry of Finance, and the youth opportunities programme implemented by the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund in the Prime Minister's Office (Ahaibwe & Kasirye, 2015; International Alert, 2013). There is increasing policy interest in employment brokering by profit-oriented agencies, which are not primarily concerned with meaningful youth labour market transition. By the end of 2009, the MGLSD had licensed 11 external employment recruitment agencies, and many more are operational (MGLSD, 2011).

There are also small-scale youth labour transition schemes such as entrepreneurship and career support projects being implemented by NGOs and the private sector players. Examples include the internship programme for 2,000 graduates which was implemented from 2015 until 2017 by Uganda Manufacturers Association with support from the African Development Bank (Uganda Manufacturers Association, 2015). Another example is the 5-year World Bank-funded Skills Development Facility coordinated by the Private Sector Foundation (Private Sector Foundation Uganda, 2018). Chapter 5 presents the empirical findings on ALM programmes for harnessing Ugandan young people's engagement in agriculture-related enterprises.

Apparently the political push and donor interest into ALM interventions in Uganda and similar contexts is evident in the media and public domain. There are claims of positive results of ALM programmes in reversing the effects of youth unemployment; and helping young people to secure wage employment or create own enterprises (Kluve et al., 2016). But ALM interventions are typically project-based without structural arrangements for continuity to address the wicked problem of poor labour transition of educated and uneducated young people. There are also concerns relating to the long-term impact of ALM interventions towards social transformation and youth flourishing. Of course, the limitations that are linked to distortions in broader social policies and business environment are partly to blame. Indeed, international and national studies have not found credible evidence of long-term youth labour market outcomes from start-ups and entrepreneurship

support interventions in Uganda and similar context (Ahaibwe & Kasirye, 2015; Martin & Grubb, 2001; McKenzie, 2017; Meth, 2010).

2.9 Takeaways

From the youth education-employment transition landscape, I derive a couple of insights which influence the theoretical, methodological, and empirical dimensions of this study. First, contextual youth conceptualisations denote entitlement as well as responsibilities that impact the extent to which young people navigate their education and work pathways. Youth transitions are increasingly becoming destandardised, with contextual variations characterised by accelerations, stagnations, and overlaps across the domains of education, work, family, and full citizenship. Youth employment transitions are not only becoming increasingly prolonged, but also stressful owing to the exponential technological, ecological, and societal changes that continuously alter work and working contexts.

Second, efforts to facilitate and ease youth labour force entry through a variety of active labour market interventions, including skills development, are constrained by several social and structural factors. Indeed, as widely acknowledged, there are questions relating to the long-term impact of youth employment programmes owing to their limited linkages to the broader demand-side dynamics including labour market inequalities and lopsided business environments. General VET and AET across SSA are struggling to meet individual and societal expectations of quicker labour market transition of young graduates. AET reform efforts in Uganda are too far from resolving the longstanding institutional, organisational, technical, and logistical challenges. One of the remarkable phenomena of past and present efforts to reform AET systems of the majority SSA countries is the heavy financial and ideological influence of bilateral and multilateral agencies. Apparently, there is limited engagement of local stakeholders in educational change discourses and policy actions. The democratic participation of students, educators and other frontline social actors in AET institutions is therefore given due focus by this study.

Chapter 3 Theoretical and methodological framework

Studying youth transition to understand and contribute to the flourishing of young people in their current and emergent identities as students and future workers necessitates a frame of reference drawn from empowering philosophical and epistemological traditions that optimise the agentic participation of social actors. In this chapter, I glean pertinent concepts as drawn from relevant human development and learning theoretical frameworks which guided the conceptualisation and implementation of the study. I present the case of a practice-oriented research paradigm which informed the methodological choices we³ made while engaging the social actors to understand and contribute to the improvement of youth transition processes and outcomes.

3.1 Theoretical underpinnings: education-employment transitions

This study acknowledges the sociological conceptualisation of youth transition as a life journey of several non-age-graded linear milestones involving completion of schooling and training, labour-force entry, family formation and full citizenship (Furlong, 2009). In chapters 1 and 2, the pertinent conceptualisations are discussed; however, it is imperative to clarify the focus on education-employment transition. In the same vein, I clarify the use of a hyphen to join the two words 'education-employment' to signal the nexus of the two transitions as illustrated by literature on the overlaps and extended or prolonged transitions.

As implied by (Raffe, 2008), studying youth education-employment transitions can be pursued with a focus on distinct or integrated aspects at micro, meso and macro levels to understand and interpret the inherent institutional and structural arrangements that influence transition processes and outcomes. This study focuses on individual transition processes and outcomes of young people, with particular interest in the two domains of education and employment. It pays attention to agriculture education practice and youth employment interventions in Uganda. Education processes and outcomes include content, methods and attained competencies. Employment transition processes and outcomes

³ The use of 'we' here and elsewhere is to signify the collaborative nature of the research design particularly the interventionist action research phase. The use of 'I' is mainly to connote my role as principal researcher and author of this thesis.

include searching, creating, finding and retaining meaningful work or decent employment opportunities.

The movements that young people make through agricultural education and related employment programmes to work in the agriculture and food industry, just like the journeys into other sectors, are shaped by multiple social and institutional conditions. Moreover, as widely expounded in the youth transition literature, the influencing conditions for failed or successful transitions are broader than education and training systems (Schoon & Bynner, 2019). Indeed, the influencing conditions are broader than active labour market policies within which the existing agri-based youth employment interventions are conceived. Accordingly, a better understanding of social and institutional conditions as determined, negotiated, perpetuated or even normalised by the different social actors demands a blend of social learning and action theoretical tools to frame the inquiry.

3.1.1 Agency and youth transitions

Dealing with structure and the set of social relations that engender or constrain successful youth transitions is highly dependent on the agentic role and empowerment of key social actors. I argue for the centrality of agency in the school-to-work transition on the account of the required active role of young people in navigating the opportunities and constraints presented by social world (Raffe, 2003). I also argue for the agency of other frontline social actors, particularly the educators, who directly influence youth transition processes and outcomes (Rigby, Woulfin, & März, 2016; Van der Linden, 2016).

I acknowledge that structure potentially enhances and diminishes agency, and as Deneulin eloquently clarifies, 'human agency and freedom cannot be thought of independently of structure' (Deneulin, 2008, p120). The well-known impact of social arrangements on the flourishing of individuals, as discussed under chapter two in respect to youth transition processes and outcomes, informs my choice for a deeper focus on the agentic accounts and actions of social actors. Agency as conceptualised and applied by school-to-work transition researchers and transformative human development scholars denotes a set of interrelated aspects, including capacity for goal choice, planning and pursuit, as well as attributes of self-esteem, confidence, self-determination, volition, autonomy, ambition and versatility of individuals. From a school-to work transition perspective, Wyn and White topicalise 'the exercise of free will and conscious action' in their proposition of how agency manifests (White & Wyn, 1998, p315).

3.1.2 Applying the capabilities approach and socio-ecological model

I draw the theoretical underpinnings of agency from the capabilities approach and integrative social-ecological developmental model of agency to frame this study. The capabilities approach's revolutionary shift from the traditional economic measure of

development to the conceptualisation of development as freedom⁴ suits the study's strategic focus on agency of social actors in dealing with social and institutional arrangements that ultimately shape young people's education-employment transitions. The agency-focused capabilities approach as enriched and expounded by several human development scholars is particularly appropriate (Deneulin & Shahani, 2009). As Alkire and Deneulin argue, 'one of the central goals of human development is enabling people to become agents in their own lives and in their communities' (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009, p27). While the two concepts of capabilities and functionings that, respectively, connote opportunities and valued doings or beings gained more popularity in recent decades, the potential of agency in its own right is comparatively less pronounced.

Functionings are being and doing activities that people value and have reason to value ... [they, for instance, include] being nourished, literate [educated] and employed ... capabilities are the freedom to enjoy valuable functions. (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009, p32)

I contend that talking about capabilities and functionings within the larger discourse of human flourishing is incomplete without addressing the question of who decides and what role do individuals have in creating the social forces which influence their well-being. The idea of people as active agents in the social world, captured by the concept of agency, is of particular relevance. Agency refers to 'a person's ability to pursue and realise goals that she [he] values and has reason to value' (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009, p37). The freedom and power of individual decisional making, and acting on their decisions is a key consideration within the agency discourse. In the capabilities approach lens, people as agents individually or collectively 'decide and achieve their goals – whether altruistic or not – in the world, and as agents they have more or less freedom and power to exercise their agency' (Crocker & Robeyns, 2010, p62). Agency freedom, from this viewpoint, therefore becomes a significant conceptual tool in framing related aspects of this study. Agency freedom is about the enabling conditions that individuals (frontline education social actors) need to exercise their human agency.

A section of key scholars of the capabilities approach strongly argue and advance the plurality of the notion of agency beyond individual power and control to act and bring about change, but also the capability and freedom to act effectively as a member of a community or society (Hart, 2012; Robeyns, 2005). This counters the claims amongst some

⁴ Amartya Sen, the contemporary thought leader of the capability approach, in his book on Development as Freedom, argues that 'development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy... but freedoms depend also on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements, for example, facilities for education... [and that] development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom' (Sen, 1999, p1).

quarters that often argue that Sen's capability approach is individualistic and rather less applicable in discourses of collective agency and social change. The claims that the approach promotes an individualistic pursuance of life goals of flourishing are further countered by an extended argument that views Sen's consideration of ethical individualism as a concern for what happens to every single individual in a society, but not a negation of the fact that individuals are indeed social beings. Some critical scholars in the education field often question the adequacy of Sen's analysis in addressing the epistemic deficiencies of education systems which perpetuate the status quo including injustices, exclusion and instrumentalism (Hart, 2012; Unterhalter, 2008). However, the effective application of the notions of agency and freedom in education is what it means to espouse critical pedagogies and transformative approaches for social actors to create and engage in learning processes that they have reason to value, and that can deliver social change outcomes and individual human flourishing (Angus, Golding, Foley, & Lavender, 2013).

The integrative social-ecological developmental model of agency as proposed by Schoon and Heckhausen is a useful complementary approach for the exploration and analysis of the influence of social conditions in the education-employment transition trajectories of young people. The model postulates a framework to discuss and engage with:

The multi-dimensional conceptualisation of the notion of agency as intentional action and action regulation; the societal conditions that shape the opportunities for individual agency during the school-to-work transition; the conditions under which individual agency can overcome societal constraints; and the conditions under which agency can be most effective. (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019, p137)

The propounders acknowledge the relational nature and social embeddedness of agency and the influence of multiple proximal and distal circumstances. The models' framing of individual agency as the capability to set goals, plan their pursuit and attainment in the future, and allow decisions and actions to be guided by goal pursuit appeals to this study's spirit of fostering individual agency of young people. Another relevant element from the model is the stipulation of the aspects of agency comprising:

Expectancy, control perceptions, goal selection and goal setting, intention, volition and goal disengagement, control striving, action regulation, disengagement, and goal adjustment that develop during adolescence and young adulthood. (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019, p137)

The model supports the analysis to understand the influence of family context, education settings and other societal conditions on the possibilities for young people to navigate their education and employment transitions. It offers the framework to reimagine the

appropriate conditions and opportunities to enhance the personal agency of young people for pursuit of their education and work aspirations.

Generally, both the capabilities approach and the socio-ecological model of agency converge in recognising the agentic role of human beings in co-creating their life paths in whatever social domain they occupy, whether as students, workers or educators. The evident use of the concept of agency in this thesis demonstrates the potential complementarity of the two approaches. The contemporary work of numerous transformative education authors and scholars who subscribe to the emancipatory location of individual freedom, choice and entitlements within the larger agenda of education for social, economic and ecological justice inspired the entire study (Hart, 2012; McGrath, Powell, Alla-Mensah, Hilal, & Suart, 2020; O'Sullivan, 2001; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

Valuing agency of social actors

Crocker and Robeyns provide an informative and adequate exploration of Sen's thesis of the value of individual and collective agency in deciding and acting to achieve individual and collective wellbeing (Crocker & Robeyns, 2010). This thesis argues for the recognition and valuing of the agency of frontline education social actors who directly influence young people's agricultural education and labour market outcomes. The core argument is also about affording agency freedom to social actors to exercise their personal agency and professional autonomy to interpret and counter the enormous societal changes and realities that impact young people's transition processes and outcomes. The impact of these changes on young people's way of life as discussed in chapter two pose significant challenges to the role and capabilities of social actors, particularly the educators. The argument is to renew the debate about the key role of educators, and to reverse de-professionalisation trends at different levels of education and training (Frostenson, 2015; Stromquist, 2018).

Based on her empirical work, Alice Wabule confirms the subordinate position of educators in Uganda:

Strict control and suppression of African teachers under the missionary rule limited opportunities for them to participate in making important decisions... Little has been done since independence to actually empower and motivate teachers to work as autonomous professionals. (Wabule, 2017, p235)

The argument is also about creating social space, competences and possibilities for frontline education actors to navigate policy and institutional impediments in embracing inclusive and transformative education approaches and experiences. Educators and other frontline actors need democratic spaces to collaborate and participate actively in discussions and actions towards educational change. The participation and empowerment of educators and

other frontline social actors in making decisions that affect their work cannot be overemphasized. As Alkire and Deneulin rightly observe, ‘in the reform of an education system, human development perspectives would consider and try to draw upon the agency of children, parents and teachers’ (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009, p30). The educators also need sound humanistic philosophical bases and cognitive autonomy to espouse empowering and transformative education practices by adapting a critical pedagogical paradigm (Freire, 1972). Transformative education practices entail democratising schools, colleges and universities for the educators and the learners to exercise the freedom to think and reflect, and to imagine alternatives while inside and outside education settings.

Educators’ professional agency is about the latitude to determine and nurture educative experiences of appropriate content, pedagogy and resources for young people to develop the required agency for successful education-employment transition. It extends to promoting active citizenship by facilitating learners to understand and reflect on injustices and inequality in education settings and work contexts. It is also about exercising the agency to deal with the pressure of employability logic or productivist paradigm which, as eloquently challenged by McGrath and others, often over-legitimise instrumentalistic curriculum approaches, thus subordinating the transformative and emancipatory value of education (McGrath & Powell, 2015; McGrath et al., 2020). Overall, educators need agency freedom to reclaim their professional autonomy and integrity amidst the escalating tensions arising from the interplay of socio, political and economic forces that constantly define their role and status.

The agency that education social actors need to navigate the confining structures that limit their potential to design and deliver real educative agricultural education experiences is what actors in workplaces and those in youth employment programmes need to deal with related institutional and structural barriers. To be able to provide optimal condition for young people to learn and work, social actors in the labour market, as well as those in AET institutions and AYEIs, need an enabling environment. While labour market actors ought to claim a normative framework to deal with contradictions and socio-cultural, AYEI actors need the same to counter the pressure associated with project deadlines, targets and indicators which make their interventions susceptible to tokenism and participation.

Agency for young people to take some control

Transition experiences are dependent on individual decision-making but are also largely shaped by opportunities and constraints presented by the socio-historical context and economic conditions. (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009, p3)

This observation by Schoon and Silbereisen helps to appreciate the reality that talking about youth agency is not to perpetuate the utopia of independent functioning, as if to ignore the influence of social structure. The argument is about the ability of young people to take some 'control of and give direction' to their education-work trajectories (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p135). The debate about balancing agency enhancement guidance and support for young people provides important pointers for educators and other social actors. It is recognisable that young people, given their limited past life experiences, need quality support and guidance to make informed decisions about their personal, education and work lives. The skepticism about their agency utility should, however, be no excuse to deny young people the opportunities and support that they need to gradually take control of their lifelong project of *living, learning and working*. The thing to do is to determine 'which sorts of socio-structural, cultural, and social-psychological contexts are more conducive to developing the different modes of agency' (Emirbayer & Mische cited by Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p138).

Learning to be, one of the four pillars of education for the 21st Century, is of direct relevance here in light of its focus on developing one's personality and ability to act with growing autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility (Delors, 1996). Whether engagement in education or work contexts, individual agency determines the outcome of such life encounters and social engagements (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019). As well argued by Stephen Billett, individual agency 'determines how individuals engage in work practice; [moreover] superficial engagement in workplace activities leads to shallow outcomes' (Billett, 2002b, p3). From a social constructivist view of education as social practice, agency and active learning are interlinked because education is as an enabler and it helps people to develop their capacities for agentic action (Eteläpelto et al., 2013).

Supporting young people to take some control of their lives is to recognise the idea that the quality of their past, current and future decisions is a negotiated product that depends largely on their agency to navigate confining social structure. Related literature abounds with research-based arguments in favour of promoting the agentic role of young people in dealing with complex decisions relating to their education and work aspirations, expectations and uncertainties. For instance, as rightly argued by several scholars, educational decision-making is a dynamic process which is strongly influenced by gender, culture, ethnicity, social backgrounds and institutional factors (Fuller & MacFadyen, 2012; Heinz, 2009). In chapter two on trends and issues, the discussion about the transition difficulties of young people in light of exponential societal, and demographic changes illustrates the relevance of the notion of agency. Here I state two threads of justification that I discern from the scholarly arguments that pronounce the theme of agency and its dimensional utility in relation to youth transitions processes and outcomes.

First is about young people's motivation and interest in pursuing education and work trajectories amidst conditions that constrain or enhance agency. Motivation, as widely acknowledged, shapes young peoples' learning attitudes and actions; emotional and social well-being; overall academic performance; and their long-term pursuit of life, work and

learning aspirations (Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Schulz, 2019; Minnaert, 1999; Rozendaal, Minnaert, & Boekaerts, 2003). Of relevance to the topic of motivation and agency is the notion of student engagement, which I view as a process input as well as an indicator of the educators' efforts to promote learners' interest, enjoyment and effort. Student engagement is a positive contributor to the learning process while, 'agency as a component of student engagement contributes considerably to the understanding of how students really engage themselves in learning activities' (Reeve cited in Montenegro, 2017, p118). The theme of motivation is particularly relevant in this study owing to the numerous claims about how young people are not interested in certain education and work opportunities. Indeed, the discourse about how educators can support students' agentic engagement is particularly relevant (Reeve & Shin, 2020). In chapter 1 and 2 of this thesis, I discuss such deficit narratives, which portray young people as passive participants in their own lives.

Second is the demonstrated and latent resilience of young people in navigating their social, education and work lives in the face of the obstacles that they encounter within families, communities, schools and other social spaces. Maintaining an inherent sense of being actively involved in shaping own lives, and maintaining a sense of agency amidst failures, setbacks and disappointments is the life reality of millions of young people in Uganda and elsewhere. Relatedly, in defense of youth transformational resistance, a section of scholars from a social justice and critical pedagogical tradition argues that 'young people have the capacity and agency to analyze their social context ... to challenge and resist the forces impeding their possibilities for liberation' (Camarota & Fine, 2008, p6).

3.1.3 Agricultural education and youth transitions

AET and VET in general can enhance young people's agency, personal development and successful transition into the world of work. However, confining structures often offset this potential. As discussed under chapter two, studies and evaluations continuously fault and challenge the capacity of VET in Uganda and similar contexts to prepare students for self or paid employment. It is against this background that the argument to reclaim the educative power of agricultural education practice to support young people's employment transition is stronger in this study.

Agri-education from a social constructivist paradigm

Viewing education as a social practice provides sound epistemological and theoretical basis to frame the inquiry into Uganda's agricultural education and its contribution to youth employment transitions. Social constructivist perspectives focus on the 'interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge' (Palincsar, 1998, p345). Social constructivists acknowledge and recognise the influence of social and cultural factors on individual cognition, and the critical role of social relations as well as the interaction between and among learners. From this view point, I argue that education social

actors should support and guide young people to become active and reflective learners to achieve deep learning, not only for occupational or employment purposes but to take control of their entire life course (Heinz, 2009). The socio-constructivist framework provides a good standpoint to think, imagine and act towards optimising the educative potential of agri-education practice.

Drawing from the work of key human development and learning theorists including John Dewey⁵, Lev Vygotsky⁶ and Paulo Freire⁷, I glean relevant concepts to construct a framework for understanding, and exploring ways to improve education processes and outcomes. Dewey's theory of experience and freedom in education and his emphasis on education as life itself justifies the argument to democratise and contextualise agricultural education practice to address current and future education and work aspirations of young people (Sweet, 2013). In line with his caution against assuming that mere doing or participation in social experience is in itself educative (Baker, Robinson, & Kolb, 2012; Sikandar, 2016), it is imperative that education social actors have the required professional capabilities and agency freedom to optimise young people's learning from curriculum experience. Connectedly, the remarkable work on situated learning and communities of practice by Lave and Wenger offers insights for optimising learning from all contexts, be they education or work locations (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This strengthens the argument for educators and other social actors to promote agentic engagement for young people in their identity formation and learning project of becoming and belonging to a community of agricultural professionals.

Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist argument in defence of the value of socio-cultural contexts in which teaching and learning takes place is of great relevance in fostering the educative potential of social and physical environments at AET institutions. Vygotsky's concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a very helpful theoretical tool to assess and structure the needed scaffolding for learners to proceed to the next levels of understanding and performance (Trif, 2015). Operationalising ZPD in the implementation

⁵ John Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism and social-cultural situated education theorisation in his work on 'experience and education' in 1938, which continues to influence current thinking on experiential learning as rooted in social constructivism paradigm, offered appropriate pillars for building this study's frame of reference (Dewey, 1963).

⁶ Vygotsky [outstanding contemporary social constructivist] is most closely associated with social constructivism which sees learning not as an individual process, but as a social and cultural process which happens through social interaction and dialogue (Scales, 2013, p92).

⁷ Paulo Freire's rejection of banking education and his thesis for freedom, democracy, conscientisation and emancipatory education, particularly in one of his most famous writings '*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*' is an inspiration to this study (Freire, 1972).

of work placements, for instance, can yield better education and labour market outcomes (Almajed, Skinner, Peterson, & Winning, 2016; Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2009).

Paulo Freire's view of education from its emancipatory and liberating dimensions is a source of additional inspiration for this study. Freire's critical pedagogy offers the inspiration to promote the active role of education social actors and rethinking the relationship between educators and learners in the social process of knowledge production and application (Freire, 1972). Critical pedagogy is about reconstructing the influence and position of educators from transmitters of facts, information and knowledge to facilitators with professional autonomy and pedagogical competence to create meaningful and empowering experiences that harness students' agency. Educators of this calibre not only derive personal enrichment and fulfilment; they effectively harness students' technical and relational competencies to face the realities of life, study and work aspirations.

Overall, I draw relevant concepts of participation, interaction, collaboration from the social constructivist perspectives to frame the argument for an appropriate vocational pedagogy. I integrate the concepts of agency, freedom, justice and democracy to strengthen the discussion and argument for an inclusive and transformative agricultural education practice. Transformative learning approaches are particularly essential to build personal and professional agency of social actors to critically reflect on, and challenge the unequal social and power relations that constantly drive social and institutional barriers to learning and students' achievement (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1996). I complement this analytical framework with craftsmanship ideals to situate and discuss the role of social actors in dealing with quality dilemmas of agri-education practice (Sennett, 2008).

Vocational pedagogy and craftsmanship⁸

Optimising the interconnectedness of pedagogy and craftsmanship can effectively contribute to the potential of AET in connecting young people to decent work in the agriculture and food industry. Since good pedagogy develops craftsmanship, educators with real craftsmanship can easily espouse good pedagogy (Berger, 2003; Lucas & Spencer, 2016). The enormous challenge to build motivated and qualified graduates that are required by the ever-changing world of work makes the interconnectedness of vocational pedagogy and craftsmanship a strategic element within the domains of education and work. The agricultural world of work needs workers who are not only able to do their job well, but also love it. An AET system that is devoid of craftsmanship in its vocational pedagogy can hardly meet the sector's current and future labour demands. This thesis argues for a

⁸ The sub section on vocational pedagogy and craftsmanship is an edited extract from an article titled 'Exploring agricultural vocational pedagogy in Uganda: students' experiences' published by the International Journal of Training Research (Jjuuko, Tukundane, & Zeelen, 2019). The article draws on findings from this study.

craftsmanship-informed vocational pedagogy to develop the young craftsmen and women that possess the required knowledge, skills and attributes.

Craftsmanship can be understood as a skill, a state of mind, a composite of attributes or a way of life based on doing well whatever one does. Contemporary thought considers craftsmanship to be a skill beyond making something manually. It includes technical proficiency governed by deep cognitive engagement and doing (Chan, 2014). As a mind-set and composite of attributes, craftsmanship is about the pleasure, pride, patience, integrity, sensibility, commitment and dedication that constitute and drive the desire for excellence in whatever a worker undertakes to do. As a way of life, it is also about personal identity derived from learning to become, and internalising the values, principles, roles, responsibilities and tacit knowledge associated with one's occupation and profession (Kunneman, 2013; Meal & Timmons, 2012). Craftsmanship names 'an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake' (Sennett, 2008, p8). Good work or quality-driven work as a value and principle is critical in all endeavors, be they vocational occupations such as carpentry, farming, health care and engineering or professional service sectors such as teaching, tourism, insurance and law. The proposition to include craftsmanship on the list of generic outcomes of vocational education is thus a plausible argument (Lucas, Spencer, & Claxton, 2012).

As Richard Sennett argues, every one of us has the potential that allows us to become good craftsmen and women, but motivation and aspiration as shaped by 'social conditions take people along different paths in their lives' (Sennett, 2008, p241). This perspective fits into an agreeable argument to take forward a bold proposition by several scholars such as Berger (2003) to construct meaningful vocational pedagogies for building craftsmanship among students. This also necessitates a craftsmanship-embedded vocational pedagogy, which embraces teaching and learning as a social practice. The notion of education as a social process presupposes alternative conceptualisation of the purpose, process and outcome of education. The position of educators and students and the relationship between these principal actors, as well as the entire educational setting, ought to be conceived from a socio-cultural perspective.

It is imperative for educators to draw relevant ideas and concepts from social theories of learning that legitimise the tradition of linking education with every day social applications (Guile & Griffiths, 2001; Kolb & Kolb, 2009) to inform their pedagogical decisions and practices. Approaching pedagogy as a social practice beyond mere transmission of knowledge is to embed craftsmanship for optimising education processes and outcomes. With meaningful vocational pedagogy, teaching and learning encounters ought to unfold as mutual interactions and learning spaces for both educators and students. An operational definition of vocational pedagogy offered by Lucas et al (2012), captures the centrality of art and craft in creating interactive learning spaces for developing working competence. The definition captures the centrality of competence, motivation and value systems of educators in creating meaningful learning experiences.

Educators operating within a framework of meaningful vocational pedagogy need to recognise learners' autonomy and to promote their agentic engagement (Ecclestone, Biesta, & Hughes, 2009; Montenegro, 2017; Reeve, 2013). Such good educators strive to create conducive learning spaces for students to feel good about themselves and develop a positive self-concept (Smith & Yasukawa, 2017). They embrace critical pedagogy and problem-solving approaches to foster students' sense of self-control, critical awareness, power of imagination and overall motivation for learning (Freire, 1972). Such approaches enhance students' human qualities and dispositions that they need to navigate their learning and career transitions (Osborne, Houston, & Toman, 2007). Meaningful vocational pedagogies within the framework of social learning uphold the superiority of cooperation over competition to enable the students to unleash their potential, and to optimise their participation in collaborative learning (Almajed, Skinner, Peterson, & Winning, 2016; Rué, 2016). Authoritarian educators who perpetuate domineering institutional culture and competition-driven assessment regimes stifle the students' unlimited cooperation capacities as social beings.

A meaningful vocational pedagogy as a social practice integrates a multiplicity of teaching-learning approaches that connect theoretical and cognitive learning with practice to enhance vocational interests, career maturity and working competence. Meaningful vocational pedagogies that build craftsmanship combine working and learning (Armatas & Papadopoulos, 2013; Streumer & Kho, 2006). They circumvent the dangers of separating the head and hand from the heart (Brühlmeier, 2010). A pedagogy that recognises the intimate connection between head, hand and heart resonates with Richard Sennett's argument that separation results into poor understanding and expression of skills and performance (Sennett, 2008).

Vocational pedagogy cannot be anchored in a traditional dichotomy of theory and practical sessions because, as argued by Barnett (2006), its task is to face both ways to theory and the workplaces as the basis for their integration in vocational practice. The separation of theory and practice, which denies vocational students access to disciplinary knowledge, is culpable in diminishing their agency to convert attained capabilities to claim and secure more functionings (Wheelahan, 2009; Tikly, 2013). It is also guilty for the failure to contribute to the desired parity of esteem for vocational and academic oriented study programmes.

Work-related learning approaches provide authentic and real-world experiences that should not alienate students from the realities of desired occupations and professional practice. Creative ways of ensuring authentic learning experiences range from transferring teaching from college or university campus to work places. However, this ought not to be a rule because work-related learning activities through participatory learning techniques such as problem-based learning can effectively immerse students into active and authentic learning (Burke, Marks-Maran, Ooms, Webb, & Cooper, 2009). Relatedly, reorienting VET institutions to operate as workplaces or enterprises can offer real life learning experiences

beyond the ivory-tower mentality that characterises current education practice. For instance, an agricultural college can operate as a farm or an agribusiness enterprise. Similarly, a catering and hospitality institution can simultaneously run as a hotel in a manner that gives precedence to the teaching-learning function.

Off-campus work related learning strategies such as work placements offer students the opportunity to learn from within the industry. They connect students with practitioners and experts in their fields of study (Dockery, Koshy, & Stromback, 2005; Guthrie, Harris, Simons, & Karmel, 2009; Onstenk & Blokhuis, 2007). Learning by doing and learning to become as core aspects of off-campus work related learning build students' craftsmanship through belonging to a community of practice, which enhances their acquaintance with a relevant workplace culture (Colley, James, Diment, & Tedder, 2003). As well argued by Etienne Wenger, we learn through belonging to something and in doing so, learn the practices, norms, values and understandings of the community to which we belong (Wenger, 1998). Of course, it is imperative to recognise that one of the fundamental determinants of effective work-related learning is quality support and guidance provided by professionals and practitioners with the required art and craft for vocational pedagogy (Billett, 2000; Billett, 2002a; Billett, 2003).

3.2 Study design

This study design evolved through a blending of qualitative methods, procedures and techniques that facilitate deep and intentional interactions with social actors to understand the social phenomena, while contributing to the promotion of social justice, equality, freedom and emancipation. The methodological choices, as explained in this section, are based on the recognition of individuals as active participants in their social world.

3.3 Qualitative research ideals

We employed a qualitative research methodology, which offered a useful methodological framework to engage and interact with the social actors to understand their interpretation of transition processes and outcomes. Built on the ideals of interpretive and critical paradigms, the study offered a suitable epistemological basis not only to understand the world of education and employment transitions of young people from the perspectives of individual actors, but also to engage together in an empowering and democratic process to promote individual freedoms (Cohen et al., 2007). The blending of interpretive and critical ideals fits the dual aim of understanding and transforming transition processes; and the focus on individual actors within a larger agenda of understanding and promoting their role in the social world of youth transitions.

At the core of the qualitative nature of this study is the standpoint to discover subjectivity through seeking to understand and share the feelings and experiences of social actors, and to appreciate the motives and drives that underlie their intentions and actions (Krauss, 2005). Creswell delineates an agreeable list of qualitative research features, arguing that the approach:

Enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual or place to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants... uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic... the qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study. This introspection and acknowledgement of biases, values and interests (reflexivity) typifies qualitative research today. (Creswell, 2003, p181-182)

Other than attempting to emulate the positivist preoccupation for objectivity and generalisability (Flyvbjerg, 2001), this study optimised quality and rigour of the empirical processes and outcomes through the triangulation of data sources and techniques, member check and collective data analysis (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).

3.3.1 Case study bolstered by action research

We used a case study, which, as observed by Rule and Vaughn, affords itself to combination with other research approaches, and its versatility merits the complementary nature of action research (Rule & John, 2011). The choice of case study style helped to provide an appropriate methodological framework for in-depth analysis, interpretation and portrayal of the social world of youth transitions. The application of the case study approach in this study is premised on Robert Stake's formulation of a case as:

A special something to be studied, a student, a classroom, a committee, a program, perhaps, but not a problem, a relationship, or a theme. The case to be studied probably has problems and relationships, and the report of the case is likely to have a theme, but the case is an entity. The case, in some ways, has a unique life. It is something that we do not sufficiently understand and want to; therefore, we do a case study. (Stake, 1995, p133)

Case study permits researchers to develop and present an in-depth view of a particular situation, event or entity (Rule & John, 2011). Within the approach's multi-perspective possibilities, this study considered not only the voice and perspectives of individual young people, but also the views of the other social actors and the interactions between them. Inspired by Bent Flyvbjerg's defence of case study against some of the common

misunderstandings, this study used the approach in its legitimate status, while optimising its potential which allowed better understanding of agri-education practice in line with the research questions (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Action research's inherent iterative approach supported the combined practical, change-seeking and emancipatory interests of this study (Boog, 2003; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Susman & Evered, 1978). Indeed, action research's interventionist character turned out to be a real fit for purpose particularly given the required collaborative inquiry and change-seeking nature of the second research objective of this study. Ben Boog, among other action research scholars, makes a convincing argument about the emancipatory power of the approach:

Action is designed to improve the researched subjects' capacities to solve problems, develop skills (including professional skills), increase their chances of self-determination, and to have more influence on the functioning and decision-making processes of organisations and institutions from the context in which they act. (Boog, 2003, p426)

Action research is about ordinary people generating knowledge in addressing social issues and concerns through a democratic process (Park, 2006). In the context of the premium accorded to the concept of agency by this study, it is noteworthy to restate Victor Friedman's informed observation that the belief in the malleability of the social world and the agency of individuals is what led Kurt Lewin⁹ to call for action research (Friedman, 2011). Most definitions of action research borrow concepts and notions that relate to creating, understanding and practising democracy. Actually, one can conveniently define action research as knowledge of, by and for the people through researching and acting to address social problems. Reason and Bradbury illustrates this longstanding trend:

Action research, is as a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes... It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p1)

⁹ Kurt Lewin is credited as one of the most outstanding pioneering action researchers. He 'provided the details of how to develop social relationships of groups and between groups to sustain communication and co-operation... was particularly concerned to raise the self-esteem of minority groups, to help them seek independence, equality, and co-operation' (Adelman, 1993, p7).

Peter Reason makes it a little more explicit:

Action research is a participative and democratic process that seeks to do research with, for, and by people; to redress the balance of power in knowledge creation; and to do this in an educative manner that increases participants' capacity to engage in inquiring lives. (Reason, 2006, p188)

Embedded in the evolution and practice of action research is a set of principles often referred to as features or characteristics. These include collaboration, participation, shared responsibility, ownership, oneness, critical inquiry, emergent, multiple perspectives and practical purpose (McNiff, 2017; Boog, Preece, Slagter, & Zeelen, 2008). The choice and application of these principles is highly dependent on the positionality of the researcher (Louis & Bartunek, 1992). In my positionality as an outsider researcher working collaboratively with the social actors at the case study AET institution, the choice of some six features delineated by Cohen et al (2007), proved appropriate (see table 1 for details).

Action research's growing popularity comes with additions of names and terms to suit particular knowledge needs and demands to address practical and emancipatory interests in a range of disciplines and professions. The outstanding strands of action research include participatory action research, feminist participatory action research, educational action research, practitioner action research and practice-based action research (McNiff, 2017; Zeelen et al., 2008). Owing to my outsider-researcher positionality, as well as the requirements of an academic study of this type, an exclusive adoption of a particular model of action research was untenable but an eclectic approach sufficed. I drew relevant participative and collaborative elements, which are core in creating a social space that befits the client infrastructure of the study (Susman & Evered, 1978).

Table 1: Applicable action research principles in this study	
Principles	Application
<i>Context-specific</i>	Case study AET institution as the social and institutional context.
<i>Participants as researchers</i>	Research discussions and activities unfolded with participation of students, lecturers and administrators as co-researchers and participants, not as respondents.
<i>Reflection on practice</i>	Conversation and communicative spaces provided moments for individual and collective reflections not only on the research and individual actions, but the wider field of agricultural education practice as well.

<i>Interventionist – leading to solution of ‘real’ problems and meeting ‘real’ needs</i>	Practical actions and strategies identified and implemented to contribute to the transformation of agricultural education practice of the case study AET institution.
<i>Collaborative/ stakeholder research</i>	Students, lecturers and administrators of the case study AET institution engaged in a collaborative inquiry to understand and improve education processes and outcomes.
<i>Promoting praxis and equality</i>	Participatory and empowering tools and techniques used to facilitate critical analysis and engagement of social context to expose and deal with barriers to effective agriculture education practice.

Adapted from (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

3.3.2 Study process and data analysis

The study unfolded under three interrelated but distinct phases. In this subsection, I deal with the process and procedure used to select study sites and participants. With the preliminary insights drawn from an indicative literature review as complemented by my experiential knowledge in youth education and work, I conducted the first (orientation) phase between February and July 2016. I engaged 11 key informants¹⁰ from eight agri-youth employment interventions (AYEIs) in Kampala, Uganda’s capital city. All the AYEIs that met the selection criterion as indicated in text box 1 had a traceable engagement in youth employment work and a focus on supporting young people to engage in some form of agricultural work.

The second phase that took place from October 2016 to October 2017, explored young people’s experience in the pursuit of formal agriculture education pathways into the food and agriculture industry. The data gathering exercise involved 114 AET frontline social actors of seven vocational training institutes (VTIs) from the Northern Uganda districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Lira, and one tertiary AET institution located in Central Uganda. The decision to engage Northern Uganda students and educators was mainly informed by the findings of the orientation phase, which indicated that the majority of AYEIs were targeting young people from the region. This targeting choice is attributable to the general trend of supporting the region to recover from the consequences of protracted war and civil strife in the 1990s.

¹⁰ Details on participants’ characteristics, sampling and data collection techniques are provided under section 4.2 of chapter 4 on agri youth employment interventions in Uganda.

Text box 1: Selection criterion for the agri-youth employment interventions (AYEIs)

1. Explicit targeting of young people
2. Focus on agriculture as the main or one of the core sectors
3. Geographical coverage of at least 3 districts in more than 2 regions of Uganda
4. Managed by organisations or agencies with at least 3 years of history in youth development work
5. Evidence of financial means to implement claimed vision and mission of promoting youth employment

The interventionist and most extensive phase, which involved a deeper engagement with stakeholders¹¹, was conducted at a case study AET institution from November 2017 until June 2019. Text box 2 presents the case study selection criteria. Some elements of phase two and three were to some extent interlinked, particularly in connection with data gathering activities.

Text box 2: Case study selection criteria

1. National character in terms of enrollment and staffing
2. Tertiary level agricultural education and training service delivery
3. Professional specialisation in agricultural education and training
4. Owned, governed and financed through public policy and legislation
5. History of at least 10 years AET service delivery
6. Enrolls post-secondary school completers

The majority of AYEI actors were purposefully selected on the basis of information obtained through document reviews, while a couple of them were included through a snow-ball sampling technique (Flick, 2009). Key informants' interviews were appropriately used to suit the calibre, busy schedules and circumstances of the directors and managers of AYEIs, but also the purpose of the study phase. Observing some of the AYEI activities and the review of progress reports and related documents offered an opportunity for triangulation.

During the second phase, the Northern Uganda AET educators were also purposefully selected and accessed through my social network of friends and colleagues in VET and youth employment work. Together with one of my three research associates, we engaged the educators through a 2-day reflection workshop in which a profile of each of them and that of their AET institutions was developed. The research associate, assisted by

¹¹ Owing to the emergent nature of action research, several stakeholders were identified and engaged as and when needed. Background information on these stakeholders, as well the details of the methods and techniques that were used to engage them, are appropriately provided under the different sections of chapter 6 on transforming agricultural education practice.

two tutors who were part of the reflection workshop, conducted the semi-structured interview sessions. The research associate recorded and transcribed voice data generated from the interview and workshop sessions for Northern Uganda VTI students and educators.

The engagement of lecturers, administrators, students, graduates and other stakeholders during the interventionist phase followed a mixture of typical qualitative data gathering techniques and the very iterative nature of action research. The participants were purposefully selected on the basis of qualifications, role and positions, except the graduates and students whose inclusion criterion was mainly year and programme of study. Individual in-depth and open interview sessions with social actors of the case study AET institution were conducted throughout the entire period. Conversational workshops for students were separately held using a variety of participatory learning tools with the twin objective of gathering data and supporting young people to harness their life, study and career aspirations. Observations, photography, videography, document review, informal conversations and the research team's capacity building sessions and regular meetings generated the anticipated rich data in line with the research design.

In conformity with the ethos of action research, a communicative space was established and nurtured to harness communication, relationship building and interactions (Boog, Slagter, & Zeelen, 2008). Building relationships and human links is central because as relationships develop, understanding deepens thus widening ownership and commitment to the action research process and outcome including data management (Wicks & Reason, 2009). Chapter six presents the full account of how the communicative space was established. The study employed a variety of participatory learning and analysis techniques to deepen the participants' capacity and commitment to plan and manage change interventions (Friedman & Rothman, 2015; Rothman, 2012).

I facilitated the formation of a research team that steered the entire action research process. The team, which we later renamed expanded action research team (ERT), was instrumental in my negotiating into the social world of educators, administrators and students. It offered the platform to collaboratively cycle through a spiral of planning, action, and reflection steps (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). It greatly contributed to enhancement of the team members' capacity, motivation, and commitment to better understanding of the current situation and enactment of change options. It further offered the mechanism for dealing with the undue influence that would inevitably arise from my outsider positionality as an academic researcher.

Data analysis

The interrelated nature of the three phases of the study merited several layers of data organisation and analysis with a blend of interpretive practices that fit this type of integrated research design (Andriessen, 2008). The entire data management process was anchored on three aspects. First is iterative design that allowed the flexibility for gathered data to inform and prompt further gathering of data (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). This

extended to building theory of action as dictated by the action research cycles of plan, act, observe, reflect and fact finding on action of actions. The second aspect involved keeping the participatory and collaborative spirit to enhance data quality and trustworthiness. This was achieved through consistently capturing, cleaning, labelling and storing data sets on all activities (deeds and words) as they unfolded during the research process. It specifically involved:

- Espousing democratic principles and practices during the research team's regular planning meetings, reviews and capacity enhancement sessions
- Using digital and print media to keep stakeholders informed of key decisions and actions to harness voluntary monitoring and feedback
- Creating deliberate conversational spaces such as validation meetings to explicitly seek feedback from a wider spectrum of stakeholders including top administrators and managers (Creswell, 2003).

The third aspect involved adherence to the tradition of qualitative data analysis which provided a framework for immersion into gathered data to identify and interpret the experiences, perceptions and motivations of the social actors thereby deriving an empirical understanding of their interactions in shaping transition process and outcomes.

The writing of this thesis is a product of a consistent qualitative data analysis approach drawn from the values that underline the four generic steps namely, data coding, theme establishment, category structuring and data interpretation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). I adopted an integrated coding strategy to allow a careful balancing of inductive and deductive elements in dealing with themes and ideas informed by the frame of reference as well as the emergent patterns from gathered data (Patton, 1980; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Taking this path is informed by my recognition of the inevitable influence of both elements in qualitative data analysis. As argued by Hennink and others:

Qualitative data analysis involves the interplay between induction and deduction... for example, some codes may be derived from topics on the research instruments as derived from the conceptual framework of the study, while other codes are developed by directly reading the data themselves (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p210).

I used the coding function of Atlas.ti (Friese, 2014), which greatly helped to revisit, organise and scrutinise the huge data sets generated at the different iterative stages of the entire research process.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

Overall, familiarity and adherence to the five principles of good academic teaching and research under the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice was key. The five principles (honesty and scrupulousness, reliability, verifiability, impartiality, independence and responsibility) reflect the national and international best practices of good academic teaching and research (Association of Universities in the Netherlands, 2012).

While undertaking all the different research phases, I strove to ensure faithfulness to the values and principles of participants' informed consent, acceptance, privacy and protection (Cohen et al., 2007). These provided the bedrock of benchmarks that guided the entire interactions with and among the study participants. I wrote to all the key decision makers in the training institutions, AYEIs, placement companies, government departments and NGOs to seek acceptance and permission to access the social actors. We engaged the frontline social actors only after obtaining their own consent in addition to the decision makers' permission.

We made available a consent confirmation form for whoever participated in the research activities, especially the interview sessions, workshops and meetings. We respectfully approached the participants while recognising their physiological and sociological status, needs and aspiration. This proved very essential in dealing with the demands of action research that places a high degree of commitment and responsibility on the research participants (Boog et al., 2008). We sought their consent in regard to their convenient time, venue and duration of the interview sessions and other social learning events. We ensured confidentiality and protection of participants' identity mainly by using pseudonyms and other labels while gathering and organising data. However, confidentiality during the interventionist phase was situational because, as widely acknowledged, action research is a public enterprise in many respects. It was always standard practice to seek permission for taking pictures and recording interviews and related events.

In this chapter, I have set out the theoretical underpinnings of the study by highlighting the key concepts drawn from the capabilities approach and socio-ecological model of agency. The theoretical threads that connect agricultural education and youth transition are articulated using a socio-constructivist lens. The methodological choice of an interpretative qualitative research approach is articulated while justifying the use of case study as bolstered by action research principles. In the next data chapters (4, 5 & 6), I describe our empirical efforts to give a voice to the social actors to not only reflect on their interpretations of the social world, but to seek out ways of harnessing young people's participation in agricultural education and work.

Chapter 4 Agri-youth employment interventions in Uganda

4.1 Introduction

I conceived the study towards the end of 2015 against the backdrop of the debates to lodge youth development and employment within the sustainable development goals and targets on food security, decent work, education and skills development (United Nations, 2015). Highly motivated to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomena in Uganda, I set out to familiarise myself with the general landscape of youth in agriculture, and existing interventions to promote agricultural employment. This orientation exercise constituted the first part of the three empirical phases of the study as elaborated under chapter three. This chapter presents the findings on the key features of eight active labour market programmes that are focusing on promoting young people's engagement in agricultural work.

4.2 Background and method

The main question for the orientation phase was: What are the key features of agri-focused youth employment interventions in Uganda? The phase employed a combination of purposeful sampling methods including criterion, snowball and emergent strategies (Patton, 2002; Suri, 2011). I held qualitative open-ended interview sessions with 12 key actors from the eight AYEIs which met the selection criterion presented under chapter three (see table 3 for the list of AYEIs). While two of the interventions were in full implementation stages by the time of orientation, five were undertaking preparatory activities and one was still in its inception stage. As indicated in table 2, all the key actors except one were occupying top and mid-level management positions by the time of the interviews. The open-ended interviews focused on four main aspects namely, AYEIs' core aim, purpose and objectives; AYEIs' geographical and demographic focus; AYEIs' programme approaches, strategies and activities; and key actors' perceptions of youth engagement in agriculture. I complemented the primary data with the review of related programme documents, including brochures, leaflets, progress reports, online posts and updates.

In addition, I held unstructured conversations with over fifty implementation staff from one of the interventions, which permitted me the opportunity to participate in a series of planning meetings, workshops and seminars. For instance, I played an active role in designing a baseline survey of existing VTI institutions in one of programme areas. I also

took part in the induction workshop of thirty-two youth researchers who were recruited to identify participants for the project activities in Northern Uganda.

Table 2. Key actors consulted				
No.	Pseudonym	Sex	Job Level	AYEI
1	Bija	M	Top management	Youth Livelihood Project (YLP)
2	Baga	M	Mid management	Youth Livelihood Project (YLP)
3	Muga	F	Top management	Strengthening Rural Youth Development through Enterprise (STRYDE)
4	Awani	M	Mid management	Driving Youth-Led New Agribusiness and Micro-enterprise (DYNAMIC)
5	Oundo	F	Mid management	DYNAMIC
6	Kaga	M	Mid management	Youth Empowerment through Agriculture (YETA)
7	Buku	F	Clerical	Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity (YLA)
8	Tana	M	Top management	National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture (NSYEA) / FAO Uganda
9	Atiku	M	Top management	Agri Skills 4 You (AS4Y)
10	Anabu	M	Top management	National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture (NSYEA)
11	Sumu	M	Top management	Skilling Youth for Employment in Agriculture (SKY)
12	Sula	M	Mid management	SKY

4.3 Findings

The orientation phase yielded qualitative data on key features of the eight AYEIs. The features are presented under five headings namely, nature and focus of AYEIs; AYEIs' geographical coverage and demographic targeting; stakeholders' perceptions of constraints to youth engagement in agriculture; AYEIs' components and activities; and AYEIs' working in partnership approach. The key features are further analysed and discussed in the context of the study's frame of reference, which helps to illustrate the justification of the choice to

rethink the study objectives and the eventual decision to focus on institutionalised training and preparation of young people for work in the food and agriculture industry.

4.3.1 Nature and purpose of AYEIs

As indicated in table 3, all the eight YEIs, except one (YLP) are implemented by NGOs and funded by international development agencies. All the implementing organisations have a history of regular engagements in mega and inter-country development initiatives, which are anchored into the global poverty eradication architecture. The aims and objectives of the AYEIs are tuned to rural development, youth livelihoods, relief, and recovery missions. For instance, AS4Y's work in Kitgum was designed within broader perspectives to shift the communities from relief to recovery. Indeed, the geographical focus on Northern Uganda and Karamoja is linked to the strategy of addressing post-conflict social deprivations.

The notion of *active youth participation* was evident – even the names of two of the interventions contain the phrase *youth-led*. The youth empowerment rhetoric is prevalent in the project documents of the majority of the AYEIs. Examples of such statements that capture the perspective of youth as active agents in promoting agricultural productivity include the following:

If youth are enabled to take advantage of profitable supply and demand opportunities along agriculture market chains and recognised as key actors by agriculture stakeholders then their participation in agriculture would increase. (DYNAMIC)

Once these young people are recognised and given room to bring about their ideas at an early age, they can progress to incubate them and eventually inspire a new agricultural age. (NSYEA)

Table 3: Basic data on the agri-youth employment interventions (AYEIs)

AYEI	Conception, implementation and funding background	Geographical and age-group focus
Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP)	State-conceived and financed; implemented through government structures	National (112 districts)
Youth Empowerment through Agriculture (YETA)	Consortium spearheaded by Cooperative League of USAID in Uganda (CLUSA Uganda); funded by MasterCard Foundation	4 Districts: Dokolo, Kiryandongo, Kole and Masindi
Strengthening Rural Youth Development	Developed by TECHNOSERVE Uganda; supported by MasterCard	5 Districts: Mukono, Kayunga,

through Enterprises (STRYDE)	Foundation	Mityana, Gulu and Nwoya
Driving Youth-Led New Agribusiness Microenterprises (DYNAMIC)	Consortium of International NGOs (Restless Development, GOAL, Mercy Corps and VSO) supported by MasterCard Foundation	9 Districts: Abim, Kaabong, Agogo, Lira, Gulu, Lamwo, Kitgum, Pader
Youth Leadership for Agriculture (YLA)	Managed by Feed the Future Uganda; supported by USAID and Chemonics International	NRD on geographical coverage
Decent Rural Employment - National Strategy for Employment in Agriculture (NSYEA)	FAO Uganda working with Ministry of Agriculture (MAAIF)	National
Agricultural Skills for You (AS4Y)	ZOA Uganda	Arua, Koboko, Moyo, Nebbi and Zombo
Skilling Youth for Employment in Agriculture (SKY) (2015-2020)	Conceived by AVSI Foundation; funded by Netherlands Embassy	22 districts Lake Kyoga, Elgon, Lake Victoria Crescent, and South Western Uganda

The state-run YLP topicalise active youth participation and according to one of the YLP stakeholders, young people participate in the entire planning and implementation process of the programme. Relatedly, there is an empowerment rhythm that is embedded in the AYEIs' strategy of organising the youth into groups, networks and associations. For instance, according to Tana, the Government of Uganda planned to revitalise the National Agricultural Youth Forum for the smooth implementation of NSYEA.

With regard to sector focus, seven of the eight YEIs focus explicitly on promoting youth engagement in agribusiness; only YLP does not have a specific strategic focus on promoting youth participation in agribusiness. However, a closer look at YLP operational documents indicates that a good number of its beneficiaries were receiving financial support to start agriculture-related enterprises. Indeed, all the example investment options for the programme's component on livelihood support relate to agriculture (see text box three).

Text box 3: Some investment options for livelihoods support components

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dairy production ▪ High value crops ▪ Poultry/egg production ▪ Piggery ▪ Improved goats ▪ Aquaculture/integrated farming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Labour saving technologies ▪ Apiary honey production ▪ Agro forestry/tree propagation ▪ Post-harvest handling ▪ Value addition & marketing ▪ Produce Buying and Selling
---	--

Source: YLP project document 2014

4.3.2 AYEIs' coverage and demographic targeting

Apart from YLP and NSYEA that had a national coverage, the majority of the AYEIs have a concentration in specific districts particularly in Northern Uganda, Karamoja and West Nile. DYNAMIC seems to be outstanding in its focus on Karamoja in addition to the Acholi and Lango districts. SKY's strategy of working with training institutions makes its presence in Eastern, Central and Western Uganda visible in schools and BTNET institutions. It is only STRYDE's Agribusiness programme which engages young people in a couple of central Uganda districts.

Apart from YLA, whose minimum target age is 10 years, and YLP, whose minimum is 18, the lower age target for the rest of the AYEIs is 14 and 15 as presented in table.

Table 4: YEIs beneficiaries

AYEI	Beneficiaries (Target/Reached)
YLP	Cumulative total of 165,278 youth (18-35) reported to have received start-up grants by April 2018
DYNAMIC	125,260 youth (15-24) to be reached by project end-date 2020
STRYDE	Targeted 5,000 rural youth (18-30) by 2015
YLA	Targeting 350,000 youth (10-35) by 2020.
NSYEA	Targeting youth (14-17) especially 'school dropouts' effective 2017 for 5 years
YETA	Targeting to reach 26,250 at-risk and unemployed/underemployed youth by 2020
SKY	Targeting over 8,000 (14-35) by project end date 2020
AS4Y	Related data not captured

The majority of the AYEIs target youths who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Most of these so-called NEETs are early school leavers. Targeting rural and peri-urban poor youth seems to be a top priority for all the AYEIs. Neither the reviewed documents nor the key actors indicated that the AYEIs target unemployed educated youth

with formal agricultural qualifications. However, one of the YLP key actors said that the programme has an open eligibility policy to reach out to all youth population groups, which potentially offers the inclusion possibility for unemployed young graduates. In addition to education and location, as well as skill deficit characteristics, the findings reveal quite a number of marginalisation and vulnerability indicators. These further define the target beneficiaries or participants. These include early school leavers, street youths, young parents, youth with disabilities, and youth living with HIV. YLP is explicit in its gender-affirmative policy requirement of 30 per cent of grant recipients being female youth.

One of key actors raised concern about the plight of out-of-school unemployed youth in the 14-17 age bracket:

While several efforts are targeting youth from the ages of 18 and above, their counterparts in the age bracket of 14-17 who are neither working nor in school are not targeted by any employment-oriented intervention.
(Tana)

This seemingly minority opinion is indeed a huge challenge to youth education and work policies because young people in the said category assume several social roles. They are reported to be assuming adult roles, including engagement in agricultural work, yet they are assumed to be children by Ugandan laws and labour market policies.

4.3.3 Stakeholders' perceptions of constraints to youth in agriculture

The 34 youths recruited by one of the AYEIs to identify the target beneficiaries pointed out a set of social, economic and ecological factors which constrain effective youth participation in agriculture (see text box 4). While the views of this group of young professionals converge with commonplace perceptions, they point to a few more aspects which are not always pronounced in typical youth agri-promotional discourses. In addition to skills related barriers and limited access to production and market resources, they mentioned effects of climate change and insecurity. With regard to insecurity, for example, they identified the challenge of cattle raiding in Karamoja. This is a pointer to the rampant theft of livestock and crops in other parts of the country, which mainstream discourses never pronounce. It is also remarkable that only a small minority of the group mentioned the dispositional barrier of poor perception towards agricultural work.

Text box 4: Young professionals' views of constraints to youth participation in agriculture

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shortage of agricultural land ▪ Shortage of agricultural inputs such as seeds, hoes, chemicals, oxen ploughs, agricultural mechanizations tools ▪ Ignorance such as poor seed selections ▪ Price fluctuations ▪ Limited market ▪ Soil infertility ▪ Pests and diseases ▪ Poor storage facilities. ▪ Poor climatic conditions (floods, landslides and prolonged droughts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Price fluctuation in agricultural products ▪ Transport problems to the market ▪ Government policies like taxes ▪ Alcoholism ▪ High prices of agricultural inputs ▪ Inadequate knowledge on agriculture ▪ Have no control over land ▪ Poor perception of agriculture by other people ▪ Inadequate extension services ▪ Security threats (e.g. cattle raiding)
--	---

While the AEIs' narratives are not in contradiction with the views of the young professionals, their emphasis on dispositional factors is stronger. The majority of the key actors who are in charge of the AEIs share the view that not many young people are willing to plunge their work life in agriculture. Some of the common explanations are, for instance, well gleaned by DYNAMIC in its desk review of related literature. It is framed that youth dislike agriculture because it requires hard manual labour, dirty, unprofitable, associated with delayed returns and highly prone to failure. It is further claimed that young people resent agriculture as business because it is connected with subsistence living, not modernised, and associated with using traditional tools. There was a minority divergent opinion in regard to the idea that young people are not generally interested in agriculture because the sector is associated with manual labour or dirty work. In arguing her case, Muga stated:

I disagree with the thinking that youth are not in agriculture because they dislike labour intensive activities. My view is that young people resent agriculture mainly because of delayed returns. Young people need to engage in activities that yield quick returns. It is useful to think of quick-maturing agricultural activities. (Muga)

She further argues that there is evidence of many young people who invest their labour and time in comparatively highly labour-intensive and even risky activities so long as they perceive these to be profitable across all parameters in their frame of reference. This view is not dissimilar to that of another key actor from a state-run AYEI, who observes that 'youth

are inclined to horticulture and poultry because they require less labour but also yield quick results'. (Atiku).

4.3.4 AYEI components and activities

The majority of the interventions are a typical hybrid of elements of supply and demand approaches to promoting youth employment. Within the supply side category, the tilt towards increasing the employability of young people through skills development is evident. Entrepreneurship promotion is the most notable line of approach in addressing the demand side constraints. The least mentioned activity is employment intermediary support services for young people.

Skills development based on non-formal learning principles is vivid across the entire spectrum of AYEIs' intentions and work. The key actors explained and justified the need to respond to the skills deficit amongst young people. According to the social actors, the different descriptors of required youth skills include marketable vocational skills; market-driven technical skills; workforce readiness skills; agri-business skills; entrepreneurship and life skills. The social actors used the phrase *practical or hands-on training* to indicate their conviction about the need to connect skills development with work realities. According to the key actors, there were vivid attempts to use work-based teaching and learning models such as apprenticeships by the majority of the AYEIs. Most of the AYEIs were inclined to using existing resources and facilities to deliver on the skills development mandate. They were engaging agri-enterprises and experienced industry actors, as well as vocational training institutions (VTIs) to fulfil the objective of providing non-formal AET services.

Most of the AYEIs were using the strategy of contracting agri-entrepreneurs and other industry specialists to train, coach and mentor the identified young people. The ZOA Uganda project staff explained that the most inspiring agro-entrepreneurs in the region had been approached to act as mentors to young farmers. He further clarified that during the 8-12 weeks of apprenticeships, the local model farmers transfer practical skills in horticulture, small livestock production and bookkeeping. The AYEIs work with VTIs to design and deliver short hands-on training packages which are tailored to serve the local labour market demands. A couple of AYEIs were reported to use promotional events such as job fairs and competitions to stimulate business thinking, creativity and imagination.

The skills training events mainly focused on agribusiness and related entrepreneurship skills. There was marginal attention to primary production activities, except for a few examples from the Agriskills-for-You by ZOA Uganda. The inclusion of life skills is mentioned in some of the AYEIs' project documents, though not so much as compared to the pronounced emphasis accorded to agri-technical skills. YETA is one of the minority examples with their attempt to incorporate content on sexuality and reproductive

health. According to the project documents, YETA planned to engage specialised NGOs such as Youth Alive Uganda and Reproductive Health Uganda in this regard.

The AYEIs that had high school youth as part of their target population were making two direct contributions in their institution-based strategy to stimulate students' interest in agricultural education and work pathways. They planned to introduce school-to-work transition activities such as career guidance into the education and training activities of schools and BTNET institutions. Some of the AYEIs reported that they support schools and BTNET institutions to promote school gardens, agriculture clubs, as well as sports. For instance, SKY set out to use basketball and agricultural clubs in six selected schools with the aim of influencing the students' attitudes towards agriculture and agribusiness.

Supporting young people for better agri-entrepreneurship and self-employment is the second dominant strategy used by the AYEIs. Most of the interventions indicated that they were implementing either single or a combination of activities (see table 5). Entrepreneurship support involved putting in place mechanisms to promote young people's access to start-up capital, business information and advice, as well as coaching and mentorship. In addition, the interventions were implementing all sorts of promotional events to demonstrate the good side of agriculture, including the numerous career options it can potentially offer to young people. Some of the innovative events included agricultural career exhibitions such as 'Agrikool' by YLA and 'Youth Champions' by FAO Uganda.

Table 5: Common entrepreneurship support services		
No	Type of support	AYEI
1	Provide start-up support in form of financial grants and farm implements	YLP, STRYDE
2	Linkage with financial services	DYNAMIC
3	Link to agribusinesses, model farmers and producer organisations	DYNAMIC, SKY
4	Facilitate access to and use of weather, market and inputs information services	DYNAMIC, SKY

Explicit support for young people to find wage employment was the least mentioned activity, though two of the key informants mentioned some kind of employment intermediary support services. A review of project documents yielded some evidence in this regard, but only two of the eight interventions indicated that they were implementing related activities. DYNAMIC was designed to use the approach of *making markets work for the poor (M4P)* so as to support young people to engage meaningfully as employees in the agri labour market. SKY set out to work with job brokers to profile the labour needs of the food and agriculture industry.

4.3.5 Partnership implementation approach

The partnership orientation approach of the AYEIs was to work through consortia and engagement of relevant development players such as knowledge and financial institutions. The majority of the interventions were being managed through a consortia approach with distinct roles for each partner. For instance, in the DYNAMIC consortium, GOAL provides project leadership and management while VSO takes the lead in market-oriented skills development.

Partnerships with actors outside the consortia were evident. The AYEIs were reportedly contracting specialised institutions to provide a variety of services. DYNAMIC and ZOA Uganda, for instance, were partnering with banks and producer organisations. SKY was equally active in its partnership with agri-entrepreneurs. The YETA Consortium was designed to draw on a network of Producer Organisations (POs) and Youth Associations (YAs) as an avenue to train, mentor, and provide work opportunities for the youth. YLP and NYSEA were designed to rely on line Ministries (MGLSD & MAAIF) and local government departments at different levels.

As indicated elsewhere in the chapter, engaging and collaborating with VET institutions and knowledge institutions such as universities and professional agencies was a common strategy mentioned by most of the AYEIs. The professional and academic engagements are designed to ultimately contribute to better learning and labour market outcomes through improving curriculum decisions and practices. For instance, the University-TVET engagement arrangement by DYNAMIC set out to contribute to improvement of pedagogical skills and practices of VET educators. According to ZOA Uganda, the academic studies undertaken in partnership with universities were designed to inform curriculum decisions to address the diverse needs and constraints identified by farmers in different agro-ecological zones. In the same vein, there were reports of knowledge exchange partnerships involving national and international institutions. For example, SKY set out to engage professional agencies and VET colleges and Universities of Applied Science from the Netherlands to promote knowledge transfer and exchange on vocational pedagogy.

Policy analysis and advocacy was noticeable in the work approaches of FAO Uganda and SKY. Through a working arrangement involving government departments led by the Ministry of Agriculture, and coordinated by the National Planning Authority, FAO Uganda supported a study of Uganda labour laws in the context of agricultural productivity and youth employment. Perhaps, the launch of the Youth Employment in Agriculture Plan in 2017 could be credited to the research and policy engagement involving FAO Uganda. SKY set out to organise policy-related seminars and dialogues on a range of pertinent issues including revitalisation of agriculture labour market information systems. The intervention also planned to engage the Ministry of Education and Sports in the formation processes of Skilling Uganda Authority and the Agriculture Sector Skills Council.

Generally, there is no evidence of inter-consortium partnership and collaborations. Partnerships between non-state interventions and mainstream State-run youth employment programmes such as YLP were not evident. Similarly, there was no noticeable strategic engagement between the AYEIs and the key private sector agencies such as the Federation of Uganda Employers, Uganda Manufacturers Association and the Private Sector Foundation. This study did not find evidence of functional inter-ministerial linkages involving the Ministries of Agriculture, Finance, Education, Labour and Youth Affairs in the framework of promoting youth development and employment.

4.4 Further analysis and takeaways

I reiterate that the orientation phase of this study, and indeed this discussion, is not evaluative at all. The phase was designed to provide *first hand* understanding of the landscape of agriculture-related youth employment programmes in the country. The analysis identified pertinent issues and insights for the next phases of the study as presented in the following six subsections.

4.4.1 AYEIs Project-based programming

Typical of most ALM programmes, the AYEIs are project-oriented with short timelines and limited geographical as well as population coverage characterised by marginal multi-sectoral partnerships that suit the country's youth employment challenge (Tukundane & Blaak, 2010). Not even the state-sponsored interventions were anchored in long-term financing framework and sectoral linkages across the public and private sector. The AYEIs' efforts to address labour market barriers to young people's prospects of creating agribusiness and self-employment seemed to operate within a narrow perspective which is not reflective of the wider structural impediments to decent employment for young people.

Relatedly, the findings which indicate that most of the AYEIs (except YLP and NYSEA) were being implemented by international NGOs and financed by foreign aid agencies confirms one of the longstanding concerns about the difficulties to derive systemic improvements of youth transition systems in the global South (see related discussion elsewhere in this thesis). There were recognisable attempts by some of the AYEIs to link and collaborate with existing local structures and processes with the hope that good practices would be routinised, scaled-up and replicated, but the history of youth employment programmes in Uganda and similar contexts reveals weakness in the uptake of lessons and gains from concluded efforts (National Planning Authority, 2015). However, the positive elements from the work of AYEIs inspired this study's engagement with institutionalised AET, and stimulated reflective thinking about a systems approach to tackling youth unemployment.

4.4.2 Active role of youths in the AYEIs

The intentions to put young people in the lead of things were fairly articulated by the majority of the AYEIs. These good intentions signalled the AYEIs' recognition of the agentic role of young people in their own transition to work. These findings strengthen the relevance of the notion of agency as theoretically argued under chapter three and elsewhere in this thesis. However, questions about the extent to which youth voice and participation features in the decisions and actions of the interventions could hardly be answered. It is imperative that influential social actors create enabling environments for young people to feel serious about their voices, and that their voices be taken seriously. Youth development scholars and practitioners argue for deeper engagement of young people, for instance, in resource budgeting and accountability processes. As widely accepted, consultations on what to do or provide, which do not include dialogue on how and why, do not constitute meaningful participation (Pretty, Guijt, Thompson, & Scoones, 1995; Tumuheki, 2017).

4.4.3 Greater focus on NEETs

AYEIs' targeting of rural and semi-urban youths who are not in employment, education or training speaks well to discourse on social justice and equity, and moreso in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goal number four (United Nations, 2015). However, one wonders why unemployed educated youth with agricultural qualifications are not part of the priority focus by all the AYEIs save YLP, which to some extent has a small window for unemployed young graduates. Perhaps the inclusion of unemployed agricultural graduates would contribute to fast-tracking the transformation of the sector.

Relatedly, the emphasis on agribusiness and entrepreneurship seems to endorse the narrative that youth generally dislike agriculture because it is dirty and doesn't yield quick returns, and therefore orienting them to off-farm enterprises is a better choice. Indeed, there is little emphasis on primary agricultural production. This is likely to create a risk of building far more agricultural traders than farmers or producers in a country where subsistence and smallholder farming are still dominant.

4.4.4 Use of work-based training models

The use of work-based training models responds well to the topical arguments to connect agricultural skills training and work contexts to accelerate practical competence and transferable skills development for better labour market outcomes. With the use of work-based training approaches such as work placements, some of the AYEIs set out to engage agri entrepreneurs and enterprises for purposes of securing on-the-job training

opportunities for young people. Such initiatives offer young people the opportunity to tap into practical technical expertise and tacit knowledge through participation in authentic work activities and educative interactions with experienced industry actors and customers.

Scholars who view education and training as social practice strongly argue for such approaches that scaffold and socialise novices into fields of speciality such as farming (see related discourse in chapter 2 and elsewhere in this thesis). Situating non-formal agricultural skills training into locations where production, processing, distribution and marketing of agricultural products takes place is to act faithfully to the underlying assumptions of social learning theories and experiential learning principles. This good intention of using work-based training approaches by some of the AYEIs offers the empirical basis to argue for the exploration of effective ways to engage experienced industry actors in the labour market, and it offers good insights for replication by formal AET institutions.

4.4.5 The AYEIs' youth development rhythm and employability logic

The inclusion of youth sexual and reproductive health themes into some the AYEIs' approaches revealed a recognition of the need to give commensurate priority to different physical, social and emotional well-being needs of young people; this resonates well with the positive youth development paradigm. Moreover, young people's life needs and concerns of today and tomorrow matter equally. This signals the recognition of the simultaneous aspirations and needs of young people across several life domains as theoretically discussed in chapter three. This very important notion of young people's simultaneous identity construction is illuminated by the empirical findings under chapter five and further revisited in the analysis under chapter six.

On the other hand, the AYEIs' strategy to develop and nurture young people's motivation and capabilities to become agri entrepreneurs in line with the dominant employability paradigm is evident. Most of AYEIs were attempting to address labour market barriers to young people's employment through skills and entrepreneurship development. However, there was no visible emphasis on critical skills and capabilities for young people to understand and challenge macro-economic and related labour market dynamics that structure agricultural opportunities and challenges. Moreover the widely acknowledged questions about the self-employment and entrepreneurship hype as an effective response to the youth employment challenge were not raised by any of the social actors in this study.

4.4.6 Enhancing youth social capital for business

Notwithstanding the aforementioned debate about the suitability of the strategy of self-employment and entrepreneurship promotion, the AYEIs' strategy to support young people to accumulate social capital by connecting them with agri-entrepreneurs and other resourceful industry actors potentially helps to remove barriers to enterprise creation,

growth and development. From a human development and capability perspective, building social capital for removing barriers and opening up range of agribusiness opportunities for youth is in itself a plausible action of agency enhancement (Migheli, 2011; DeJaeghere, 2017).

As Wakkee and others observe, social capital is core in helping individuals to take advantage of conversion factors such as agri markets, trade information, financial services and attained entrepreneurship skills (Wakkee, Hoestenberghe, & Mwasalwiba, 2018). Actually, if one is to think of ways of ensuring that the participating youth continue working in the agri-sector beyond the duration of the AYEIs, the ability to continually nurture their social capital by maintaining ties and relationships with key industry actors ought to be one of the sustainability strategies. This could be in addition to maintaining the groupings, associations and clubs created during the implementation process, because they can potentially enhance collective or individual agency. Individual and collective agency are important elements of the discussion in this thesis (see chapter two and seven).

4.5 Concluding remark

The orientation phase findings showed a wave of youth employment interventions that are designed to fast track rural and semi-urban youth's active participation in the agricultural world of work. Operating within the active labour market (ALM) paradigm, all the seven AYEIs were targeting NEETs through short-term non-formal skills training and entrepreneurship support. Unemployed educated young graduates' chance of accessing agricultural employment support is only possible through competing for the state-run YLP grants, which are dispensed through a pluralist approach of targeting all unemployed Uganda youth aged between 18 to 30 years. The findings reveal AYEIs' attempt to address skill constraints, productive resource accessibility obstacles, and market barriers to young people's agricultural self-employment.

The AYEIs' focus on directing young people into agribusiness and related off-farm enterprises for quick returns was evident. This is apparently not only driven by the narrative that young people dislike agriculture. The AYEIs are also motivated by the zeal to entrench the employability logic. With a project-based programming tradition, it was evident that establishing long-term partnerships and collaborations with state institutions and agencies does not matter enough. Relatedly, the interventions were struggling to embrace the notions of youth voice and participation amidst their own programme targets and indicators. Whereas it is clear that the AYEIs are focused on rapid agricultural productivity and taming youth unemployment, their indecisiveness on supporting young people to pursue agricultural career trajectories other than target workers or agro traders is evident.

Actually, it is my realisation of this implicit strategy by AYEIs to create traders whose long-term stay in agribusiness is highly fragile that partly informed the choice to reframe the second and third phases of this study to focus on institutionalised preparation

of young people for the business of agriculture. I argue that the long-term growth and transformation of the agriculture and food industry is safer in the hands of craftsmen and women who dare to take farming as their vocation, career and identity. I further argue that institutionalised AET is the most strategic approach to building the required cadre of professionals.

Chapter 5 Agri-education and work pathways for young people

5.1 Introduction

Based on the indicative literature review outcome and the insights drawn from the analysis of the findings on agricultural youth employment interventions (AYEIs), I chose to explore how Ugandan young people are prepared by formal agricultural education and training (AET) for entry into the world of work. Accordingly, this chapter presents findings on how young people navigate established pathways from high school to AET in pursuit of vocational qualifications, occupation and other life aspirations. Data on the influence of personal and social conditions on young people's agricultural education and work aspirations are also presented.

The chapter is organised under three main sections. The first section provides background information on the study methods and participants to supplement the methodological account in chapter three. Section two presents the key findings under three sub sections namely: young peoples' vision of the future, decisional influences on agricultural education and work pathways, and stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of agricultural education practice. In the last section, I discuss the findings within the context of the research purpose and the general education-to-work transition discourse.

5.2 Background: study participants and methods

As explained under chapter three, the second phase of the study engaged 114 participants in the categories of students, graduates, educators and administrators (see table 6 for details). These were selected on the basis of their practical knowledge and lived experiences as frontline social actors in agricultural education and training. The study engaged eight students who were pursuing a 2-year certificate course in agriculture at seven vocational training institutes (VTIs). Another set of 52 students was pursuing two-year certificate and diploma courses in four fields of agriculture at a tertiary AET institution¹². The 23 graduates of the tertiary AET institution had completed their study programmes between 2010 and 2016.

While nine educators are instructors from seven VTIs, their 20 counterparts are lecturers at the tertiary AET institution. In addition, to their routine teaching duties, eight

¹² Selected case study site for the interventionist action research phase of the study.

of the tertiary AET educators were undertaking administrative responsibilities in the capacity of department heads. One of the VTI educators was serving as acting deputy principal at the time of our research engagements. From the tertiary AET institution, three more staff members holding administrative and management positions participated in the study.

Table 6: Study participants					
Category	Basic characteristics	M	F	Total	Method
VTI students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19-23 age bracket Pursuing national certificate in agriculture examined by Uganda Business and Technical Examination Board (UBTEB) 	4	3	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual interviews
VTI tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained agriculturalists with diploma qualifications in crop & animal production and agro forestry Hold diploma qualifications in technical teacher education Recruited and remunerated through the staffing arrangements of the Ministry of Education 	6	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-day workshop
Tertiary AET students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20-30 age bracket Pursuing certificate and diploma courses in animal husbandry, crop husbandry, agribusiness, human nutrition & dietetics and horticulture under the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) framework 	30	22	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops Individual & group interviews

Tertiary AET graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 25-30 age bracket ▪ Attained certificate and diploma qualifications in in animal production, nutrition & dietetics and crop production 	16	7	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In-depth interview sessions
Tertiary AET lecturers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Had minimum qualifications of bachelor's degree in different agricultural fields. ▪ Majority had participated in short pedagogical professional training events ▪ Some had post-graduate qualifications in agri fields of study ▪ Appointed and remunerated under Ministry of Agriculture terms and conditions 	11	9	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshops ▪ Meetings ▪ In-depth interviews
Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Had post-graduate qualifications in agricultural fields ▪ Working under Ministry of Agriculture terms and conditions 	3	0	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshops ▪ Meetings

As table 6 indicates, the phase involved the use of qualitative interview techniques. During the workshops and meetings, we¹³ used a series of participatory learning and communication techniques such as case study, paired interviews, think-write-share and buzz groups to deepen individual and collective reflection. In addition to empirical data, the study phase involved a review and analysis of pertinent documents, mainly: information leaflets, students' internship reports, curriculum materials, project briefings and reports on enrolment and staffing. Simple observation, photography and videography were used to generate complementary data.

¹³ The use of 'we' in chapters 5, 6 & 6 is to acknowledge the role of my research associates and co-researchers from the case study AET institution. I use 'I' in reference to my role and capacity as the author and principal researcher.

5.3 Findings

I present the key findings under three subsections. First is young peoples' vision of the future, and self-concept. Second are data on decisional influences on young people's agricultural education and work pathways. The stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of agricultural education practice are presented under the third section.

5.3.1 Young peoples' vision of the future, and self-concept

Young people not only visualise good life, they have a positive view of who they are, and high aspirations to live a good life. The inquiry into their personal life domain as well as social, family and work aspirations reveals that most students have a great sense of optimism about the future. They are very hopeful and confident that they will realise their dream identities as successful parents, workers and active citizens.

All students – with the exception of one who did not express the wish to get married – said they desire to form monogamous marriages and small families. Young people's awareness of the need to connect family size aspirations with economic implications was evident. A tertiary AET certificate student with such family size economic considerations stated that 'I want to have a happily married family of which the size will depend on the level of my finance'. The majority of students infuse religious values in their imagination of desired heterogeneous marriage and harmonious family lives. For instance, a tertiary AET diploma student in this category said that:

I want to have a better family, which everyone can admire... like God fearing family with two children, [and to be] a loving and caring father.

In their explicit desire for good marriages, female students expressed dreams of being influential women, but also caring mothers married to responsible husbands. Two tertiary AET diploma students explicate such desires:

I want to be a powerful woman with twins and one more hence three children... also [with] a loving, caring and hardworking husband. (Female floriculture student)

Successful woman in some three years from now with a very handsome dark skinned tall husband who is wealthy enough to take care of my four adorable handsome and beautiful kids and me. (Female floriculture student)

With regard to desired social roles, the majority of young people view their future as active community members. In their narrations, they expressed the desire for social cohesion and the urge to contribute to community welfare. For example, a female tertiary animal science student said 'I want to maintain good relationship within myself and [the] community around me'. Similarly, a human nutrition graduate stated that:

After getting the degrees, I have a plan of creating an organisation, which offers services that meet 75% of the community needs. Like through partnering, we could go to schools, and educate people so that they also change their livelihoods. (Human nutrition graduate)

On work aspirations, the ambition for high status jobs is evident, and the desire for what they deem to be good and prestigious job positions is remarkable. Young people dream of becoming veterinary doctors, great and famous farmers, veterinary consultants and managing directors of their own agro enterprises. While a significant majority of the students' aspirations of being successful entrepreneurs is the base for their financial life, the convergence in the wish for high status occupations is evident. More details on young peoples' dream jobs and career dreams are presented in the section on labour force entry and career aspirations.

Owing to the significance of self-concept in young people's participation in education experiences, we sought to understand what kind of students they think they are; and under what conditions do they learn well. The majority of the students describe themselves as good, hardworking, purposeful and responsible scholars who are committed to their studies. Three quotations illustrate the students' self-perception and assessment of their character:

I am principled; I am determined to succeed; I am focused on achieving my future targets/goals; hard working and self-respecting; curious and cooperative; God-fearing. (Female second-year crop science student)

I am a very content student; hard working student; determined to achieve what I want; focussed on my course; a person who is always willing to cooperate with others. (Female second crop science student)

I am a hard-working student and I want to work hard and get second-class upper and create good relationship with my friends. (Second year animal science student)

Most of the students explained why they are committed to their studies, while giving a range of reasons such as good relationship with educators, confidence about the utility of their choice of AET course, the cordial relationships with fellow students, and good grades.

One student in the category of those who pay their own tuition fees talks about his increasing interest and commitment:

Because I cater for my tuition and know why I am here, I have gained a lot and still gaining up to the end of the course. In addition, I have gained enough entrepreneurship skills... which I got from this great institution. As per now, I am a creative, productive, adaptive, visionary, committed and self-sacrificing young man. (Male general agriculture student)

A couple of students said they felt changed after enrolment for the AET courses, attributing the change to the realisation of the potential of the course. One of the tertiary students in this category said:

I am now a hard-working student; I can now do self-employment as a student who underwent agricultural training and love to work now... a student who has seen the future of life with agriculture. (Female general agriculture student)

Her animal science counterpart explains one of the new strategies that have helped her to concentrate and learn better:

I am a reformed student totally and principled one. I reduced on friendship making, relatives and in-laws. I have limited time with me; I am more determined than before. (Female animal science student)

Almost all students said that they learn best through group methods, including working and relating with fellow students and educators. In this category is a female agribusiness student who said that 'the best way of learning is to form groups ... you can form a discussion group which involves in sharing views and in answering questions'. However, most of the students were quick to state the complementary role of other ways of learning, such as consulting their lecturers and doing practical things. A small minority¹⁴ of students who do not prefer group study methods indicated preference for solitary reading combined with writing and pictorial learning techniques.

¹⁴ The use of *minority* and related descriptions such as *small*, *significant* and *majority* is not synonymous with their use in reporting quantitative research results. I use them in the context of qualitative nature of this study and on the basis of the number of participants in the study.

5.3.2 Agri-education and work pathways: decisional influences

The inquiry into the forces and conditions behind the pursuit of agricultural education courses by young people revealed the interplay of personal, social and education institutional influences. Let's start with the data on how young people's personal considerations for agricultural education and work pathways emerged.

Personal decisional influence

Students and graduates mentioned four main personal considerations for entry into AET and pursuit of related work aspirations. These are passion; desire for social responsibility and societal recognition; expectation of easy labour force entry and self-belief of cognitive abilities. Among the number of young people who attribute their choice of AET to passion, is one floriculture student who said:

I loved flowers and compound designing which motivated me to go for floriculture... at our town Nansana there was beautiful houses with different styles of designs [with flowers] which interest me. (Male tertiary floriculture student)

The thinking that the attainment of agricultural qualifications would open up possibilities for contributing to local and national development was mentioned as the basic consideration by a couple of students. In this category, there are two crop science tertiary students who anticipate being agents of change in their communities. As part of the justification for the decision to join AET, one of them said:

Basing on the history of my region (Northern Uganda) and the fact that agriculture is the major economic activity, and how I would be an agent of change in the agricultural sector.

The other remarked:

I chose this crop production course because at our place we have been facing challenges of soil infertility, pests and diseases. So I took this course to get more knowledge and I go back to help my people in the village.

Their VTI counterpart with a vision of using his agriculture credentials to create employment for others in his community said 'I want to make use of the skills got from here to increase on food production and create job opportunities for others'. Awareness of the potential and

need to use technology to change the face of agriculture featured among the considerations by one of the VTI students.

Agriculture is the backbone of the country where by for a country to sustain it must engage in agriculture... That is why I was motivated. Also, technology is changing. There's other ways of doing agriculture so if you stick at home and you think you know agriculture, you are just there... these days technology is changing and if you continue with your traditional skills others will be going ahead. So I want to learn these new technologies as I supplement with these cultural ones. If you have learned and you are putting into practice the new technologies and skills, other people will learn from you and that creates a difference between you and the person who has not gone for training.

The desire for social recognition is a major consideration by some students, especially those who were pursuing animal science courses. This category of young people feel good about their dream jobs owing to the associated social status and prestige.

Being called a doctor, it sounds good to me and I admired being called such. As I had some experience in animal health and I always wanted playing around and learning how they behave... I am proud of it. (Male tertiary animal science student)

Because I enjoy the life of the vet doctors, farm managers and meat inspectors in the field, and how they [veterinary doctors] work with the people out there so I want to become like them. (Female tertiary animal science student)

The findings reveal that a significant minority of students considered the AET options based on personal belief about cognitive ability, prior knowledge and academic performance. One of the VTI students who mentioned the fear to navigate upper secondary academic rigour said that 'I feared I could not balance A level papers [UACE] so I preferred doing a course in agriculture after my UCE'. Citing talent as the main driver of his interest, a tertiary crop science student claimed that 'I am also talented in farming because when I decide to grow any crop, they yield'. The young people who indicated that their unexpected good UCE performance motivated them to consider AET include two tertiary students who said:

My UCE results were of surprise and inspiration to me when I discovered that agric was my best-done subject despite the fact that I had dropped it for one term while in senior three. This made me join [this institution] since I had love and ability to perform in agriculture. (Female animal science student)

I performed best in agriculture subject among all [UCE] subjects and I told my agriculture teacher that after S.4 I was to branch for a course. He advised me to go and join an agricultural institution. (Male crop science student)

Closer to the considerations based on academic performance is a blatant revelation by one of the tertiary students who attributed his eventual enrolment for AET course to some kind of fate. She categorically stated:

I enrolled for my current course because it is all about love of adventure for me to do the course I am doing. I even enrolled for agriculture course because I had no other course I could do. (Tertiary female crop science student)

Self-assessment based on sex as a determining factor of the ability to upgrade for animal science course featured in the considerations of one female VTI student who said 'I like diploma in crop husbandry because crop is easy. I feel animal husbandry is a little hard for ladies'.

The desire to start working immediately on completion of AET, and the perception that AET qualifications provides an easier route to work is a major consideration by a vast majority of students. One tertiary AET student who shares this view argued that:

Agriculture is a large sector because every person needs it in order to survive, that is to say there is a lot of employment and more so I can create my own business after here and make money. (Tertiary female floriculture student)

A VTI student who thinks that there is little competition for available agricultural work opportunities since not many young people are interested in agriculture reasoned that:

I am interested in taking agricultural course because someone who has undertaken agricultural course has opportunity of getting job opportunities since this is a course, which at first was not admired by so many people. Now we have chances of getting jobs like working with the NGOs. Also, it provides self-employment, in case you fail to get a job, you can start and manage your own farm. (VTI female student)

One of the tertiary AET students who like a small minority of students who witnessed a rise in job offers for AET graduates by NGOs in Northern Uganda said:

I was still young but used to see very many NGOs supplying food to the people and advising people to go agricultural and there was many jobs given by NGOs in the agricultural fields and a lot of money. Therefore, I started having interest and admiring. (Tertiary female floriculture student)

A VTI student who strongly feels that undertaking AET is a dependable launch pad for engaging in multiple economic activities narratives how he opted for the course against other options at the time:

Actually, I had three options, I wanted to join accounting but I have seen, I have been comparing accounting if I have a level like certificate, I will be competing with people with diploma, degree and others will be having masters. Therefore, I said no, this would not fit. I thought of joining motor vehicle mechanics/technology then I found that if you are to compare Uganda and other countries like Japan, we don't have the industry that manufacture vehicles. Even if I study and become an engineer of motor vehicle, I will not get that job. So what made me to choose agriculture is that with agriculture I can do my own job and I earn my money. Like I can start a small farm of two dairy cattle and other things, I can earn money out of that if though I am not employed anywhere. Therefore, I can do many things in agriculture, which will earn for me a living. That is why I choose agriculture because I have seen that even though I do not get a job, I have something to do with myself. (VTI male student)

Closely related to the perception about the employability utility of agricultural qualifications is the thinking that doing the course opens up more opportunities for upgrading and career development. A VTI student with very strong ambitions to upgrade immediately on completion of the certificate course argued that:

When you complete this certificate level, when you are moving to the diploma, it has many sub courses, branches from which you can choose your best preferred. (VTI student)

Family location and socio-cultural familiarity featured in a few young people's personal considerations for particular AET institutions. For instance, one VTI student holding proximity considerations said that:

The school is close to home, I can ride my bicycle to come and manage my crops here for example the project work... I can come back and manage it. (VTI student)

Fears to join a new social and cultural environment in the event of enrolling at a distant institution away from the family location featured among the considerations of a couple of VTI students who wish to upgrade on completion of their certificate studies. For instance, one with communication related fears to join an institution where there is likelihood of using English as the medium of instruction without a possibility of switching to a familiar language said 'I can understand best if certain things are explained in my local language'. Another one who anticipates difficulties in forming new social relationships in a distant cultural-geographical area said:

Since primary I have been studying from within my area. So, I will be going to new places and the social relationship will be a challenge. Here I have been able to get an old girl or old boy but where I will be going now I might not get anybody I know. (VTI student)

While passion, aptitude, sense of citizenship responsibility, desire for social recognition, and perceived employability utility of AET credentials influence education and work aspirations of young people, the impact of family, social and institutional conditions is evident. Let's turn to the influence of family and social context.

Influence of family and social network

Young people's explanations of how families and social networks influence the decisions to pursue an AET course and at particular institutions reveal the role of inspiration and direct advice. A small minority of students indicated that earlier engagement in family farming livelihood activities influenced their aspirations for agricultural education and work. For instance, a second-year VTI student with a childhood farming background said 'I come from a family that is engaged in farming and myself I am a good farmer. From age 12, up to now, I am a farmer'. His counterpart with a similar background seems to like agriculture because

farming was the only livelihood for his family. The female tertiary general agriculture student said 'I love farming because I come from a peasant family and it is the only source of money'.

A small minority of students and graduates indicated that they picked the inspiration from their parents who are agricultural professionals. Typical narrations by tertiary AET students in this category include:

I was trained from home since my mum is agricultural officer in Lira. It has encouraged me to become agricultural extension worker in future as I see other people as agricultural officer. (Female general agriculture student)

After my A-level during vacation, I used to take time and go to our farm and my father is a vet doctor. So as he used to do his work I admired and thought about it. (Male animal science student)

A significant majority of young people said that they received advice and persuasion from significant persons and peers in their social network of relatives and friends. Some indicated that they were convinced about how pursuing AET would increase their employability opportunities. In this category is a tertiary AET student who received such advice from a parent:

My father always told me that it is very easy to get a job if you are an agriculturalist so he influenced me too and I liked things to do with farming and so on. (Female crop science student)

Another tertiary student who was advised by a friend stated that:

My friends told me the importance of doing agriculture as a business, which can improve the standard of living for both the country and me. (Female agribusiness student)

Relatedly, the decisions on what institutions to join are highly influenced by significant others, friends and peers as revealed by one of the VTI students who said 'I just heard of it [institute] from a friend with whom we discussed about the courses and I found that they offer agriculture [at this institution]'. In the proceeding section, I present more evidence on how families and others in social networks influence the decisions relating to what AET provider institutions to join.

Dealing with the influence of family, friends and significant others in the decisions of what and from where to study is in a way shaped by young people's high school

experience. Young peoples' ideas and thoughts about career and job aspirations begin to emerge and make more sense during high school life. In the next subsection, I present the young people's experience of high school and its influence on the eventual decision to pursue agricultural education and work pathways.

Influence of high school experience

Most young people shared experiences of how the high school curriculum activities and general learning environment influenced their agricultural education and work aspirations. All the students and graduates who participated in the study said that they studied agriculture as a subject at high school. A vast majority said that they sat for agriculture at their lower secondary (UCE) and upper secondary (UACE) final examinations, unlike a very small minority who studied agriculture only during the initial years of UCE. As explained elsewhere in this thesis, in Uganda, agriculture becomes an elective subject in the last years of UCE, which students have an option to drop in favour of other optional subjects.

With regard to the attitude towards agriculture, a small category of students and graduates indicated that they liked the subject while at high school. It is remarkable that a couple of young people in this category attribute their interest to family influence as revealed by a VTI student who said:

Because we used to do farming at home although on a small scale, even at school I used to love the subject and I had that motive of knowing more about agriculture to do it as a vocation. (VTI student)

Similarly, good academic performance in the subject is mentioned by some students as one of the major sources of motivation for studying agriculture. One of the VTI students in this category explained:

Agriculture used to favour me so much because I could absorb it very fast. I could even do examinations minus reading.

On the efforts by high schools to promote students' interest in agriculture, students mentioned a series of activities and schemes including school gardens, seminars, study trips and guest lectures by community resource persons with experiential agricultural knowledge. On the impact of school gardens, one VTI student testified that:

The school could organise practical lessons for us; we had an agricultural farm, which often supplemented our meals and diet. The school could also organise seminars where we could visit other schools.

The influence of study tours and trips stands out prominently in the testimonies of a significant majority of students and graduates. One of the VTI students narrated:

They would take us for trade shows and that made me move to different places under the agriculture department. In the process I have seen interesting things like one time I saw a bunch of banana which was very big and long and I got interested and motivated to do such things on my own. From the trade shows in Jinja, I have been able to see good machines that have been made to support agriculture. Those are some of the factors that have made me join agriculture. (VTI student)

A small number of students mentioned that the resource persons and model farmers that were invited as guest educators inspired them. One of the VTI students in this category gave a testimony of how a prominent farmer in the community worked with his high school to promote students' interest in agriculture:

Hon. Oryem used to take us to his farms; our school was near his farms and I have been seeing how much he is getting from the farms. I was also motivated by the way he has planted pines and when you ask him he tells you after ten years I will be getting millions of shillings. So this motivated me. So, the field visits to his farms motivated me a lot. (VTI student)

Most students mentioned the influence of direct encouragement and inspiration by individual high school teachers. Four such testimonies offer a powerful illustration of the positive influence of teachers' actions and conduct on the motivation and aspiration of students:

I liked my teacher of agriculture and since I liked him, it motivated me to join agricultural school ... [and] at the same time my teacher ... used to tell me the benefits of doing agricultural courses and they give examples like the vet doctors, meat inspectors and farm managers. They also went to that extent of telling me that they earn a lot of money in that profession so it motivated me. (Tertiary female animal science student)

We had a very good teacher that teacher had finished a diploma in agriculture, he was a veterinary officer and he used to motivate us. He used to make us do practicals. He was our role model. (VTI student)

My teacher influenced me in senior one. He told me that I could do many things if I do agriculture. That I can never run short of money after school or even when you are at school you can be making money and that is what I am doing even at the moment. By then he was injecting animals and was getting money from it, at times he could call me and we go out with him to help him. The school at Lira Town College brought a veterinary doctor and came and talked to us. (VTI student)

I was encouraged by my agriculture teacher to do agriculture course because I was doing well in agric. I did agric in O-level and A-level so I got encouraged because I passed. (Tertiary male crop science student)

There are also minority voices by students and graduates who said their former high schools never implemented any deliberate curriculum activities to motivate them apart from delivering the routine classroom agricultural lessons.

5.3.3 Agri-education practice: social actors' experiences

The findings on how the social actors [students, graduates and educators] view and experience the delivery of AET services are presented under five headings namely eligibility and enrolment of students; young people's experience of agricultural education process; educators' and administrators' perception of young people; curriculum reforms; and educators' reflection on their work and role.

Eligibility, uptake and enrolment for AET courses

I present the findings from the inquiry into how young people enrol and join AET institutions under two themes namely eligibility and uptake, and enrolment information and advice. Let's start with admission eligibility and uptake on the basis of academic and economic background. Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) is the minimum academic requirement for direct admission to a certificate course in agriculture. The majority of the VTI students had second grade UCE qualifications, a grade descriptor for medium academic performers. None of the VTI had a first grade UCE qualification.

To be admitted for a diploma course in agriculture, candidates must possess a Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) or its equivalent. Almost all tertiary diploma students had obtained only one principal pass in biology, agriculture or food and nutrition. One notable exception was a degree holder who said that 'after finishing my bachelor's degree my parents saw a vacuum of veterinary doctors in our community so they asked me to join and I did so'.

The findings suggest the limited uptake of vocational and tertiary AET pathways by UCE and UACE high academic achievers. Some of the students and graduates revealed that

their childhood ambitions to pursue university degree programmes were thwarted by failure to attain the minimum admission requirements. One of the graduates who opted for a certificate course after failing to join a university veterinary degree course narrated:

Yes, I had a desire to become a veterinary doctor... but when I got to senior two, things became a bit hard, since I was always out of school, physics started seeming hard for me and mathematics [also]... when I was in S6, like I said there was no money, I wasn't regular in school and so my performance was resultantly poor at A level. My results would not enable me to do veterinary medicine at university direct. I got out of school for some time, till when some pastor told me I could get enrolled... on certificate since my O level results were good, and later diploma up to the level I want... I did my certificate in 2010 and 2011 I went for diploma and completed in 2012. (Tertiary AET animal science graduate)

His crop science counterpart stated that 'the certificate course acts as my short cut to go to my best goal – doing diploma in crop and then upgrade up to bachelors in crop management'. Another tertiary AET graduate who failed to attain the required two UACE principal passes to enrol for a university degree said 'I had hoped to pass highly and go for a degree in veterinary medicine, but results did not allow so had to go for the diploma'. Overall, young people's pursuit of certificate and diploma AET courses as second option was evident.

UCE and UACE grades do have a fundamental implication within the dynamic processes of accessing public financing for tertiary and higher education. Candidates with relatively good UCE and UACE grades in the subjects of agriculture, biology as well as food and nutrition stand a chance of being considered for public sponsorship at the government-run AET institutions. This category of candidates can apply for government sponsorship only through the national joint admission processes by filling an application form at the time of sitting the respective UCE or UACE final examinations. Failing to apply for government sponsorship on completion of high school locks out interested candidates even if they score the required minimum UCE or UACE grades. The only option for such candidates is to apply under the private sponsorship scheme. The proportion of such students at the tertiary AET institution were significantly higher in comparison to those at the VTIs.

While government-sponsored students are officially expected to receive the training at no cost, some students said that they pay an annual internship fee of UGX50,000 (\$15) in addition to the cost of accommodation and other scholastic requirements. Private-sponsored students at a tertiary AET institution pay an annual amount in the range of \$500 to \$1,000 for certificate and diploma study programmes respectively. The majority of the private-sponsored students said that their parents and guardians do make the required payments. However, there is a significant minority of young people who said that they

contribute to their education financing with earnings from their own income generating activities such as photography, brick making, piggery and related small scale farming activities.

Enrolment information, advice and support

The study sought to understand how prospective students get to know about available agricultural education options and providing institutions; and what kind of support do they receive as they seek enrolment. A vast majority of the students and graduates said that they received information and advice from families, friends, high school mates and former teachers. One of the VTI students whose earlier interest to join a particular institution was changed on the advice of his mother revealed that:

My mother is a board member here and she told me that I come and do my certificate here because earlier in 2016 I applied for Arapai [in] Busitema and they admitted me but the problem was with the money. So I changed my mind that I should come and do my certificate from here. It is therefore relatively cheaper in terms of tuition. Another reason is that the school is near my home.

His counterpart from another VTI who was persuaded by a cousin remarked that:

I have been hearing about [this institute] but I had never stepped in it before. So, I was having my brother from my clan, he joined here in 2015 and he is the one who convinced me to come. (VTI student)

A tertiary student who was influenced by a former teacher said:

At first I did not know [this institution] but I wanted an agricultural course so my S.4 teacher told me about it so I had to come for a vacancy. (Female general agriculture student)

The findings reveal how in the majority cases young people do not have full information about AET institutions. Decisions are based on hearsay and scanty details driven by considerations of proximity, affordability and perceived popularity as revealed by the following four quotes:

I grew up from here and so after my O level I was told by my parents to join [this institution] since they think it is the best in agriculture [education]. (Tertiary female general agriculture student)

[This institution] was the preference... was interested in and that is what the parents were willing to pay. They could afford. Did not check other institutions (Tertiary human nutrition graduate)

It is one of the biggest agricultural institutions in Uganda, I felt I will be very okay here and I will do well then easily admitted for work. (Tertiary female animal science student)

It is the best institution around the world... [and] by God's mercy through connections with the former student and with the help of my dad. (Tertiary female animal science student)

The findings show that the AET institutions do not have formal career guidance mechanisms to support applying and enrolled students to make informed decisions about course options and study strategies. However, a significant number of students and graduates mentioned having benefited from the intermittent discretionary career guidance and support services by some individual educators. Two tertiary AET lecturers corroborate the students and graduates on the lack of institutionalised career guidance and support arrangements:

As an individual I do, the way I have been doing it... I go to class, [during] those introductions, you try to find out [from new entrants] how did you come here? Are you comfortable being here? If you were not here where else would you be? How did you select [this institution]? That first week, that orientation week we go through such questions generalised and it helps you know their interests and the ability to even do such a course so that you know where to start. We usually do that. I want to say that this practice is around maybe about 40% lecturers are doing it but at least someone cannot say it is not around. It could be institutionalised but not communicated. (Human nutrition lecturer)

A few of us do; in class, they can write on papers what they think about the course. Some of them can tell you that this course is for my dad me I want to be a secretary. We ask the how they came to do this course, they give answers on the papers... you can laugh. I have ever asked them, you see TechnoServe has taught us how to get answers from them... there is no [institutional] policy, some people do not talk to these students, me I just feel love for them, I can get information from them, me and some few others. When you are too strict, they hate you. Me I counsel them, generally during my sessions, I have like 10 minutes counselling them then I start teaching. (Animal science lecturer)

Young people's experience of agricultural education process

The data on what students and graduates feel and think about the education process at the different AET institutions is presented under five themes namely physical and social environment; preference and perception of course content; teaching-learning practice; educators' conduct and performance; and administrators' conduct and performance. The themes emerge from the analysis of young people's descriptive statements of what they like and dislike as well as the most important things they want done differently at the AET institutions.

Physical and social learning environment

Young people find the quality and quantity of physical infrastructure at their AET institutions to be unsatisfactory. Most of the students and graduates converge in their poor rating of health and welfare facilities. They argued that the big student population overwhelms the available facilities. They complained about poor feeding, insufficient hygiene and sanitation in the kitchen, bathrooms and dormitories. For instance, one of the VTI students who is unhappy about the existing health care arrangements complained that:

Health facilities are absent, we have no school nurse... if the school had a nurse, we would not be moving out for medication. Moreover, they limit the number of times you visit the nurse because we pay ten thousand [Uganda shillings] for medical facilities. (VTI student)

Tertiary AET students, unlike their VTI counterparts, complained sharply about congested dormitories and crowded study rooms. One of the tertiary students in this category who argued that crowded lecture rooms impact the quality of teaching said 'we are too many in class and the lecturer stands in front yet behind people do not get anything'.

On social climate, some students and graduates appreciate the positive social relations at the AET institutions. VTI students in this category, attribute the good social relationships to students' discipline and good performance of some educators. Good students' leadership was cited as one of contributing factors to positive social climate. The opportunities to associate and relate in pursuit of leisure, religious and cultural aims featured prominently in the positive rating of the social environment by some tertiary AET students. For instance, in appreciating the freedom of faith, one of the tertiary students observed that 'everyone has a right to choose any religion of your choice' (Female general agriculture student). However, a couple of students contest the logic of freedom as a basis for positive rating of the social environment at the tertiary AET institution. They think that the freedom is excessive and counter-productive. One tertiary AET student in this category spoke against he described as 'dancing every Saturday, which makes students to fight, drinking and misuse properties'.

A significant majority of tertiary AET students and graduates mentioned experiences of social discomfort resulting from repeated strikes and demonstrations, and the poor functioning of ethnic-based student associations. There were dozens of signposts belonging to different ethnic student associations displayed along the campus main entry and walkway. Students, graduates, educators and other stakeholders raised numerous complaints relating to tribalistic tendencies, particularly during election campaigns for student leadership positions.

Studying together at the same campus with students of lower or poor general education background was also mentioned among the causes of social animosity. A couple of VTI students said that they do not like to study at the same campus with their counterparts who studied at polytechnics and farm schools before joining the VTIs. One student who feels that their 'right status' is distorted by being mixed with polytechnic and farm school graduates argued that 'we are categorised under UPPET... sometimes they take us who are studying NCA under those people [from polytechnics and farm schools]'. Another VTI student who feels that being mixed or studying together with farm school graduates causes teaching-learning challenges suggested that:

At least if they can separate the NCAs – those who are doing the national certificate from the juniors (primary seven level) at least it will be easy because people's understanding varies. (VTI student)

There were also reports of social tension between certificate and diploma students at the tertiary AET institution. One victim of this social animosity, a male animal science student, said 'there is segregation in hostels whereby those of diploma students do not want to sleep with those of certificate'.

Preference and perception of learning content

The study sought to understand young people's preference as well as their perception of the learning content delivered under the different AET study programmes. The findings reveal three defining factors of the attitudes towards certain course units. First is the perception that students hold about the extent to which the content is connected to the desired profession, work or employment prospects. A vast majority of tertiary AET students who indicated special interest in certain course units attribute it to content relevance. One of such contented male animal science students cited 'anatomy and physiology, animal health, veterinary pharmacology and toxicology because they contain whatever I want in my profession'. Most of the students who pointed out some course units that they do not like think that such courses are not in any way connected to their study programmes. A dissatisfied animal science student observed that 'functional English is not suitable to be as module... because everyone has done that in high school'. Another crop science student resents animal science course units, arguing that:

All units about animal [husbandry, I don't like them] because my first choice was crop production I don't need animal and they include selection and breeding, pasture management, livestock, small ruminants etc. (Female crop science student)

One tertiary AET animal science graduate who thinks that the course units are too many and others are irrelevant, remarked that:

The courses were too many yet some of them were not very necessary. E.g. if your focus is on animal [science] and they force you to learn crop... Land surveying was not very relevant for the animal focused students.

Similarly, a tertiary AET student who thinks that some of the course units are irrelevant said:

There are some course units which are irrelevant. For instance, I was taught land surveying which I do not know how it helps me. In addition to that was also home economics, I found them not relevant to the course that I was pursuing. (Male animal science graduate)

One other remarkable testimony is from a floriculture student who resents the course, revealing that:

I did it [floriculture] just to make me have a certificate because when I came I wanted nutrition but they said I should have a certificate but I didn't like floriculture because it does not have diploma and flower farms are few. (Female floriculture student)

While some students think that certain course units are completely irrelevant to their specialised study programmes, there is a small minority with a divergent view. For example, one general agriculture male student who values animal science course units observed that:

For us who do general agriculture, vital modules such as selection and breeding of livestock and management of various livestock should be not only for animal students, but combined such that agriculture students go home with diverse knowledge.

The second defining factor is the quality of teaching. Some of the students who said that they like or dislike certain course units attribute it to the quality of teaching styles and

methods. A second-year animal science student in the category of those who appreciate both the course units and teaching style of a particular lecturer observed that:

Communication, home economics, anatomy and physiology, animal nutrition, farm economics, functional English are my favourite course units... because the lecturers concerned best suit them hence motivating even my attention and interest and above [all] these units are practically [relevant in] daily undertakings. (Female animal science student)

The third factor is the 'hard to understand' course content. A couple of students said that they dislike certain course units which, according to them, are either too complex to understand or require hard work to comprehend. One example in this category includes a crop science student who said that he does not like 'pasture management, farm planning and structures, selection and breeding and principles of agriculture because they are hard'. Similarly, a diploma agri extension student who dislikes the appropriate technology course unit remarked that 'I have failed to understand the module because it contains sericulture which is very hard to practice and manage'. Relatedly, a second-year crop science who finds challenges in coping with the demands of pursuing an optional entrepreneurial related course unit said that he does not like 'TechnoServe because it takes a lot of time and involves a lot of research'. (Male general agriculture student)

Teaching-learning practice

Findings about young people's perspectives on the teaching-learning practice are organised under two aspects, namely the dominant teaching approach and practical skills development. According to all students and graduates, lecture is the most widely used method of teaching. While the majority of students and graduates positively rate the use of lecture, some differ. Tertiary AET students and graduates who are not satisfied about the mode of teaching blame the lecturers over poor delivery techniques and excessive use of handouts¹⁵. One of the graduates who narrated his experience of poor teaching said:

Some [lecturers] come and start telling stories whereby you do not see any relationships with what you are studying at the time... most lecturers send notes and at some point one comes up later to try explaining them, nothing more than that. (Tertiary AET animal science graduate)

¹⁵ Handout refers to a printout/ photocopy/ paper containing reading content covering a specific topic deemed necessary by the lecturer/speaker to complement the lecture/presentation. It is issued out either before the lecture/presentation or at the end.

During a stakeholders' workshop to validate the exploratory findings at the tertiary AET institution, one of the student leaders amplified the concerns about poor use of the lecture method:

I personally would like to know what is lecturing... we have had many arguments. Someone [lecturer] comes to class with a book of 150 pages and then he teaches it within four weeks and finishes up all? So the lecturer leaves class when students are not conversant with what he/she has taught... when we complain, you find someone saying ... that is all about lecturing... So when we students have not understood but you think because you are a lecturer, and lecturers do not do much elaboration... what is that? So I suggest that lecturers who are marathoning through the syllabus [should improve] to make us understand. (Tertiary AET student leader)

The majority of young people strongly think that the AET institutions are not doing enough about practical skills development. It is widely claimed that teaching is not practice-oriented owing to excessive classroom instruction without a connection to the realities of agricultural work. According to current and former students, the demonstration method is the most common way that educators illustrate and connect theory to reality. One of the graduates shared his experience of a demonstration session:

The teacher brings pictures for those diseases we do not know or have at the farm, some cases we would find out from the abattoir... the sick animals would be assembled and then we would visit and find the cattle. For castration, the lecturer would explain the process with all the necessary instruments. Then do practical using the animal either brought by lecturer or found at the farm. (Female animal science graduate)

One of the students in the category of those who are critical about the manner in which practical lessons are inadequately designed and delivered revealed that:

The way practicals are given is not so appropriate in my course because a few people get hands on work... for example, one single animal is given for an experiment on castration to a class of 137 members. (Tertiary female animal science student)

A VTI student claimed that 'we do practicals only in exam time'. Relatedly, a tertiary AET student said that 'we study about flowers but we have never planted one, though we meet them on trips and also during industrial training'. Several students made claims of selective

practical teaching where some course units are not prioritised due to lack of qualified personnel and materials. A VTI student, for instance, revealed that:

Although they are giving us practicals, it is not in all areas. For example, artificial insemination we have not covered it yet we are supposed to. We don't have the personnel.

The absence of physical facilities was added to the listed of obstacles by another VTI student who emphatically stated that:

We do not have laboratory for doing practicals. When I tried asking, the DOS [director of studies] told me they have some equipment but they lack the laboratory room.

Relatedly, a couple of students fault the AET institutions for not being production oriented. One of the tertiary students who share this view capitalised on the challenge of poor feeding to criticise his institution. He insinuated that it was a mockery for it to call itself an agricultural training institution when it could not grow a banana plantation to supplement the students' meals. His male VTI counterpart argued that 'if the school provided projects, we wouldn't be buying meals, meat, fish, rice, chicken from town... we would be reducing on the cost'.

Some of the students and graduates recognise the other attempts to teach agriculture practically by the AET institutions. They mentioned farm practice, life project and industrial training as some of the common strategies employed by the different educators. They explained how, as a routine, each student is allocated a portion to grow and raise a production project, in addition to pursuing farm practice as a requirement. Corroborating other study participants and secondary sources, they explained that AET institutions attach students to farms and related agriculture-based establishments for a mandatory industrial training period of at least 4 weeks within the curriculum structure and calendar of each study programme.

On effectiveness and performance of these work-based learning strategies, students and graduates alike mentioned several obstacles. They decried poor preparation, limited supervision and guidance by the educators. Typical claims that farm practice and related practical teaching strategies are not educative include that of a tertiary male animal science graduate who remarked:

But in farm practice one may not learn that much because most of the students take it as a punishment. Because with farm practice, it is in the sense that all new students regardless of course in the first semester have to wake up in the morning to go to the garden to dig. No one would wake

you up, but you would do so by yourself. Because they always told us that it would carry marks.

The young people's poor rating of the design and delivery of work-based learning-teaching strategies by the AET institutions is not in contradiction with the views of other stakeholders, including the educators themselves. The analysis of aggregated experiences and perceptions of industrial training programmes by the case study AET institution under chapter six affords further clarity of the poor design and delivery of work-based course units.

Educators' conduct and practice

Findings reveal a contrast of opinion between positive and negative rating of educators' conduct and practice. While most of the students, especially those from the VTIs, speak positively about their educators, a significant minority in this category are also quick to point out the weaknesses of others. The few students and graduates who unreservedly appreciate the entire teaching staff include a VTI student who said:

Actually, one thing that always makes me happy is the way these teachers talk, because if a teacher is teaching you and doesn't give you a word of encouragement, you as a student will not have interest in that particular thing or subject. So, the way the teachers of [name withheld] talk to the students is pleasing and you are sure at the end of the course you will have learnt something. The teachers offer us the best training, they give us detailed content unlike in secondary school. For instance, for the nursery bed preparation, they will explain well from the beginning to the end. I have been motivated to plant cabbages and onions out of the nursery bed we prepared and it came out well.

Similarly, a tertiary AET human nutrition graduate testified that:

Our lecturers did their best. Actually, lecturers were my friends especially [name of lecturer withheld]. He would not only lecture, but could also advise. He also used to give us life skills, like we should not only rely on the profession.

Several testimonies of the tertiary AET students who positively rate some lecturers, but have concerns about others, include a male animal science student who said:

Some lecturers are social and approachable though there are those who pretend not to have time for students at all.

As revealed by the following three quotations, a significant minority of tertiary AET students and graduates who negatively rate the lecturers mentioned all sorts of weakness ranging from absenteeism, tribalism, sale of lecture notes, poor teaching styles, inappropriate use of local language and mismanagement of examination results:

Nepotism was a big problem at the [institution]. Lecturers used to award marks unlawfully to students and they would triumph over us. Lecturers also were irregular. (Tertiary AET human nutrition graduate)

Other [lecturers] are irresponsible and lack etiquette and self-respect. Others are unfair and tribalistic. (Female crop science student)

My thought is that some of the few lecturers have to go for [training in] teaching profession because the way they lecture is not professional. (Male crop science student)

The lecturers present themselves poorly and at times use their local language to express themselves not minding that not all the students understand [it]... (Female animal science student)

Administrators' conduct and practice

A small minority of students think that the administrators are doing a good job. The few positive ratings of the administrators include a second-year tertiary certificate student who remarked that 'they manage both the students and the lecturers well because they provide all that is needed for the [institution]'. His first-year certificate counterpart said that 'I think administrators do their thing fairly and so far, I have no problem with them'.

Most students negatively rate the conduct and performance of administrators. They fault the administrators' management styles. For instance, the analysis of the following five statements reveals the students' view that the administrators are not working together, and are elusive, tribalistic, autocratic and corrupt:

I think the administrators are not cooperative and every one does things in the way he/she feels like just to show power over others. (Year 1 male animal science student)

They do not have proper methods of hearing what is needed by the students. (Year 1 male agribusiness student)

They are very corrupt and not fair, very rude. (Year 1 female general agriculture student)

They make themselves very busy whereby we end up leaving the [institution] without even knowing them. (Year 1 female floriculture student)

Administrators are enclosed with tribalism; dictators and they do not consult students on various amendments. (Year 1 female animal science student)

Remarkably, one of the VTI students who recognises the importance of student organisations in the management of education institutions accused the administrators of devaluing student leaders. He remarked that ‘student leaders are not much valued and students’ concerns are not attended to by the administration’ (VTI student).

Educators’ and administrators’ perception of young people

AET service delivery actors are generally pessimistic about young people’s ability to direct their decisions and actions within the multiple emerging life roles. Two forms of perception are discernible from the descriptive statements that educators make about young people. First, a vast majority believe that most young people including enrolled students do not like agriculture, hate work and that their way of life is urban and money-oriented. A statement by one of the educators at the tertiary AET institution is representative of this general perception:

Some of them (students) are very lazy, when they realize that the white-collar jobs they want are not there. They do not want to do things themselves, they want someone else to do... Whenever you tell them there is a job somewhere, they will first ask you madam how much are they paying, the ‘how much’ question is very common with them. I do not know how we shall build resilience in them when they are always asking how much... the money culture is much here. (Tertiary AET lecturer in the animal science department)

The perception that young people are not interested in agricultural education featured prominently during the research validation workshop in 2017 at the tertiary AET institution, when a sizeable group of educators and administrators argued that ‘some students come to the [institution] as a last resort as evidenced by late registration’. In the same workshop, participants were emphatic in their justification that young people hate work, arguing that ‘some students hate activity-based modules such as farm practice and workshop because of grease, pasture management and handling hoes’. Most of the educators and administrators attribute the perceived marginal interest in agricultural education and work to family background and social context. They strongly think that families and society do

not provide the required supportive environment. Typical arguments in this strand include reasoning by one of the lecturers who blames it on illiteracy and ignorance of families:

Illiteracy among some family members [they are] ignorant about importance of agriculture... they are not very sure about trends in agriculture since they are not exposed. Culture of hard work is not common to all family members and society, it is common to use copy and paste: if all of the family members are lawyers, you also educate yours to become lawyers. (Tertiary lecturer from extension department)

However, as indicated in the subsection on the influence of family and social network, none of the students and graduates in this study expressed such a view of negative influence by the families.

Second, educators hold the view that students are young, relatively immature and have little sense of personal responsibility. They think that the students are not able to judge the consequence and impact of their decisions and actions. A dozen educators explained how the students get diverted from their study and academic obligations by engaging in social roles that are culturally considered a preserve of independent mature adults. A male VTI tutor who blames young people for failure to manage peer influence argued that:

Students are influenced by friends and forget academics and start gambling, betting, drinking, going to discos, stealing and dodging lessons. Then when they fail to pass, go back home and harass their parents.

Another male VTI educator who undertakes an additional responsibility as training supervisor emphasised that 'young people are not focused, lack ambition, have excitement without concentration'. A tertiary crop science lecturer who faults young people's sexuality and reproductive health choices said:

One big social issue I see here is courtship. When people come here, they start building relationships and those relationships actually we do not have control over them, most of the time it is dark, you do not know how they are moving, you only know by the number of pregnancy cases. Then others will do abortion and all that, so those issues come... So relationships is one of the huge problems, we are even hearing of people coming from [neighbouring town] to pick people and that is probably why the [institution] decided that all the female students must sleep here.

His agricultural extension counterpart who adds engagements in students' leadership election campaigns and leisure activities on the list of 'unbecoming behaviour' of young people remarked:

They get committed to so many other duties like those that they engage in campaigns; they start up small businesses... we still have students that are heavily driven by peers here - even those who came not knowing how to dance will learn how to dance, in [this institution] we dance all the time! When they get comfortable in those dances, they are the elders; they pick up so many related behaviours including relationships, drinking, and many behaviours that come with misguided friendship.

The thinking that students lack the maturity and social competence to make good decisions and take appropriate actions is combined with the embedded perception that young people do not like agricultural education and work to frame the pedagogical stance of most educators. However, while the majority of educators share this deficit paradigm there is a significant minority who seek to approach the students from a positive perspective. A tertiary human nutrition lecturer in this category argues that:

I think we need to develop more methods that are student engaging, we need to give them more time... than imposing things on them that they end up forgetting. We need to realise that we are at a level that we are teaching mature people; they have an experience, some of them are even older than some of us.

Curriculum reforms

The findings reveal a trail of curriculum reform efforts for over a decade. According to empirical data and secondary sources, there are five main strands of efforts to reform and innovate curricula in response to new and old ecological, socio-economic and labour market realities. First is the change of course titles and introduction of new study programmes, particularly at tertiary AET. As early as 2010, the Ministry of Education had revised the curriculum and changed the titles of study programmes, replacing 'husbandry' with 'production and management' to entrench the message for integrating the teaching of management skills. While the curricula for AET study programmes offered by VTIs are still general with students pursuing combined national certificate in agriculture (NCA), more and more specialised programmes are being introduced at tertiary AET. For instance, the tertiary AET institution is offering courses in agribusiness, crop production, animal

production, horticulture, human nutrition & dietetics nutrition at both certificate and diploma levels.

Secondly, there is a continuing addition of new course units and topics under the broader framework of modularised curricula. Let me cite just two interventions in this regard. The tertiary AET educators said that around 2015 UNICEF sponsored a curriculum review initiative which sought to integrate nutrition, demographic, and food security content in the crop and animal science study programmes offered by the institution. In 2019, the World Bank-sponsored curriculum review under the USDP introduced a number of course units in addition to entrenching the notion of 'business management'. Each of the study programmes under USDP contains a number of overlapping course units. According to the 2019 Ministry of Education TVET curriculum materials published within the framework of USDP, the course units include business development and management; ICT and literacy; product marketing and selling; management of farm infrastructure, tools and machinery; waste management; post-harvest management; applied accounting and taxation; agricultural extension; climate change and environment management; workplace ethics, employment skills and communication; record keeping; gender equity and environmental best practices. The curriculum for the national certificate in agriculture has been reviewed a couple of times since the enactment of the BTvet Act in 2008, which repealed UNEB's mandate to assess vocational training programmes. The VTI educators said the most recent review of the curriculum in 2019 saw the renaming and confirmation of four modules namely life skills (formerly functional English), real life project, entrepreneurship and functional mathematics.

Third is the introduction of competence-based education and training (CBET) and modularised curriculum delivery approaches. The VTI educators said that the earlier intentions to modularise AET in 2012 are stronger in the 2020 national certificate in agricultural education curriculum for VTIs and farm institutions, which was revised by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC). The tertiary AET educators indicated that for a number of years several capacity building processes have been undertaken to introduce and entrench CBET at the institution. The latest curriculum reviews under the World Bank-funded USDP introduced the concept of commodity-based study programmes starting with livestock production and business management; crop production and business management and agri-processing and business management. Validated by a national stakeholders' workshop held on 24th May, 2019, the three modularised programmes at certificate and diploma levels focus on selected agricultural commodities. According to most tertiary AET stakeholders, the intentions are to deliver the modularised commodity-based programmes at UBTEB-registered VTIs and in parallel with NCHE accredited study programmes at tertiary AET institutions.

Introduction of standalone non-accredited course units to develop students' life and livelihood skills is the fourth strand of reform efforts. The tertiary AET stakeholders revealed that for a couple of years, selected students undertake optional lectures and

sessions which cover topics such as personal effectiveness, personal finance, professional effectiveness, entrepreneurship and business planning. While assessments are done to support the learning process, credits from such course units do not count in the mainstream assessment and certification structure of the AET institution. A significant minority of students and lecturers spoke highly of the usefulness of such a training programme, which is implemented by TechnoServe, a non-government initiative funded by the MasterCard Foundation. However, concerns over the challenges to institutionalise the standalone course units were raised by a couple of lecturers. One of the lecturers explicated the opportunities and challenges facing the implementation of Technoserve:

There is a programme for TechnoServe, which is trying to bring on board a number of social aspects. How it is yet appreciated on both the students and educators' side is something that is not good, but I think we shall improve. It is not mainstreamed, there are specific sessions but I think if all lecturers were given chance to participate. The majority have not yet appreciated what it brings on table but we see a good trend that many are starting to give it chance... we think that with time we shall be getting a bigger number because the [institution] realises the need for that and even the bosses realised that it is vital and now it has been running. Some students are being pulled to pay for it on top of their tuition. That way it is getting into the system... but finally we shall have programmes that can deliver it concurrently. (Human nutrition lecturer)

Fifth is the universalisation of work placements in response to the general concern that most of the AET students and graduates do not possess the practical competencies required by the agriculture and food industry. Delivered under the label of industrial training or internships by VTIs and tertiary AET institutions, work placements are mandatory course units which contribute to the overall assessment and grading of students' academic achievement.

Curriculum reforms and reviews are generally conceived and promoted by national policy makers and bureaucrats in government ministries and development agencies with funding from external sources. Apparently, the review processes follow a top-down approach as implied by one of the tertiary AET educators who remarked that:

Curriculum is under constant review based on the employers' needs, based on the needs of the supporter of the curriculum review process, e.g. one donor insisted on value addition. (Animal science lecturer)

The findings reveal that micro level administrators and educators are consulted and inducted through curriculum review workshops, seminars and meetings to contribute to

already decided ideological, philosophical and methodological paradigms. A couple of educators have concerns over the suitability and feasibility of some of the revised curricula directives. During a research workshop in April 2017, the VTI tutors faulted the Ministry of Education on one of the new curriculum directives to conduct work-based learning experiences in farms outside the VTIs without providing the required budget and support. They argued that:

The new curriculum [of 2012] is good, the problem is from the Ministry, which does not cater for the financing of some components of the curriculum like internship. Under the old curriculum, students would do projects under the supervision of their instructors. In the new curriculum internship, students go to private farms, zonal research centres... the blame should be on government, which did not train instructors on the new curriculum. (Workshop report, 25th April, 2017)

One of the tertiary AET lecturers shared his dissatisfaction about the manner in which lecturers are involved in the curriculum review processes. He thinks that the processes do not create adequate space for generation and use of the lecturers' experiences and practical knowledge. He observed that lecturers were involved after the core decisions had been made:

Some targets had been decided... this was something [commodity-based study programmes] that came with the project and we just had to do it. There is tendency that the one above decides what he/she thinks and pushes it down whether it works or not. (Tertiary AET human nutrition lecturer)

Educators' reflection on their work and role

The findings reveal that most of the educators are concerned about their work, but feel constrained to play their rightful role of preparing young people for the world of work. According to the majority of tertiary AET lecturers, being appreciated by students and the perceived possibility for personal and professional development is the main source of their motivation and commitment. In this category is a female animal science lecturer, who remarked:

Yeah, I can say I am fired up. My greatest motivation is not money. The students who tell me I am a good teacher, this makes me stay around because I am still building my career.

Her counterpart from the human nutrition department, who is motivated by the good feeling of being part of what he considers to be the right profession and at an institution with a potential to excel, said:

I am fired up and driven by the future of this [institution]... it gives me a future too. Because I know, the job I have is the right job. I have to make it better. I have to do it. I must go on studying... That one factor makes me know I am in the right position... My field is still virgin and everyone needs to see that it is something we need, so, I know that as people realise it is needed, then we have more impact, we have a good future and the [institution] has a good future.

Most educators, including those who expressed commitment to their job, mention the challenge of inadequate financial means to meet personal needs. One of the blatant statements in this strand was made by a tertiary agribusiness lecturer:

My biggest problem is sometimes lack of motivation when it comes to money. The financial constraint to make work and life easy is still an issue on my side.

Relatedly his human nutrition counterpart complained about the manner in which financial incentives are determined and distributed:

Sometimes you feel the fire, other days you feel ahh... Most especially when they motivate people who have not done work and they leave you people who have done work on the ground, I feel bad. It is a general situation that majority people are not 100% motivated. There is for example a job we do of supervising students at the farm and someone claims he has paid us when he has not. We supervise students' plots like I said they are many students and imagine you do the supervision and you are not paid a coin. So people have now pulled out of supervision. You find that the casual labourers there are the ones getting the money. People who do the work don't get it. So some management issues are impacting pedagogy.

Most of the educators expressed awareness of the state of education practice and how actors in the labour market and the general public perceive their graduates. For instance, one of the tertiary AET lecturers described the current education practice as poor, and attributed the limited performance to a number of challenges relating to supply and use of human, material and physical resources. He revealed that:

Materials are inadequate, finances for practicals are delayed, inadequate infrastructures, staffing gaps, inadequate research facilities like adequate Internet facilities. Some learners are not bothered. (Crop science lecturer)

His counterpart from the extension department who commented about the stakeholder's perception of the quality of the graduates observed that:

Some people complain that our graduates are not up to date with the current market trends, mainly because of the lack of adequate information about what the market demands. However, we are trying to address this.

A significant minority of educators expressed personal belief about limited pedagogical and theoretical competence to optimise quality teaching and learning. During the stakeholders' validation workshop at the tertiary AET institution, a couple of lecturers indicated that they are trained to be agricultural professionals and practitioners, but not agricultural teachers. Connectedly, while expressing his frustration about the lack of opportunity to address his current knowledge in a specialised field, a lecturer from the crop science department revealed that:

I am good in small ruminants and pasture management. I feel bad that I am not an inseminator. I know everything – anatomy, but I don't have that skill, I don't have that certificate, ever since I joined here, they keep saying you will go, you will go but I have never gone to train as an inseminator myself but I am the one teaching it. There is no inseminator here, none of us is an inseminator and yet the course takes two weeks only and the cost is UGX1.500.000 (\$429). I have requested every year but nothing, and our students are not gaining properly because I am not there properly. I feel I am lacking something small.

It is evident that most of the educators recognise the need to do things differently but feel constrained. One of the VTI educators with additional responsibility of acting deputy principal argued that:

What makes instructors not to be able to create change is poor administration and management, indifference and corruption of some managers, poor financial management, and lack of financial support from the school administrators.

Similarly, a tertiary AET educator cited limited opportunities for participation in decision-making and implementation of improvement strategies due to overloading of responsibilities on a few staff members.

I think if I had power, not all the responsibilities would be put on the heads of department because they do everything and these are people who are too busy. Some things go unseen because someone is not around. Some heads of department do everything, you find that if someone teaches a certain course, it is the HOD to take students to the trip because there is something there. They have many responsibilities that they cannot fulfil. If you are not in good books with your HOD, you can never get anything. Curriculum development should be participatory in that each one does what they are good at. There is need for all of us to accept that I can do this part and another one does this. We are paid according to the load, so people keep their load because they do not want to lose their pay. (Animal science lecturer)

There are more critical silent voices about certain aspects that affect teaching and learning. For instance, it was clear that the majority of educators were deeply concerned about student recruitment procedures. For instance, during a research workshop for Northern Uganda educators, the VTI instructors overwhelmingly argued that:

The 'criterion of selecting these youth when enrolling them... we should find out where their interests are. Those who are already practising agriculture [should be prioritised]. We need to sensitize them when enrolling and they are here. (Workshop report, 24-25 April, 2017)

One of the tertiary AET lecturers who thinks that the institution's current student enrolment policy is weak expressed the frustration of teaching students that are not assessed and guided:

I think the process followed to enrol students should also be tabled for discussion. It is annoying when you teach students that you do not know how they ended up in your class. The challenge is today, they come to class because they are being forced, and time is going to come when it will be your initiative as a lecturer to keep them in class. So how do you keep them in class when you do not know how they ended up in class? (Human nutrition lecturer)

5.3.4 Labour force entry and career development

In this subsection, I present findings on the aspirations, imaginations and experiences of young people's labour force entry and skills upgrading for career enhancement and employability prospects.

Finding work: aspirations and realities

As reported elsewhere in this chapter, a vast majority of students and graduates expressed very high ambitions for prestigious jobs in the agriculture and food industry. They hold ambitions to seize high status occupations including middle level career positions such as district agricultural extension worker and veterinary doctor, which are known to be a preserve of bachelor degree graduates. However, there is a significant minority who demonstrate a reasonable awareness of the corresponding occupations and job openings. For instance, one VTI student in this category said 'I want to do [farming] practices like poultry, planting of cabbages, onions and other vegetables which will earn me money'.

The findings reveal a strong anticipation to use social networks to access and secure job opportunities. These four quotations illustrate the students' strong belief in the potential of being connected by friends, parents and other relatives:

I will talk to my aunt who is the head of agricultural engineer officer to talk to one of her members who is the engineer officer to help me get a job. (Tertiary AET student) If I complete and get the diploma, I will contact my friends and get closer to them to get connections. (VTI student)

I am hopeful that my friend who is working helps me get to my desired job. (Tertiary AET student)

My father [will] connect to the company manager to ask for a job since he is a driver in the company. (Tertiary AET student)

In contrast to the inclination by majority of students to use friends and relatives as a job search strategy, one tertiary AET student, who plans to approach a government agency to seek for a job, said 'I also want to write a letter for voluntary work with NGRIC so that one day I become a farm manager in government farms'.

Awareness of the likely barriers to desired occupations and jobs is evident among the students. Being disadvantaged because of sex, age and other social considerations as exacerbated by nepotism and favouritism featured among the most feared barriers. One of the VTI students who foresees this dilemma said:

Favouritism in job interviews, as men tend to give women... there might be age considerations and they fail to give me because I am young and have no experience.

A significant minority of current students hope to create their own enterprises but are pessimistic owing to the anticipated difficulty to secure the required inputs. They also expressed anxiety over climate, business and trade uncertainties. One of the VTI students in this category singled out the challenges of 'unfavourable climate, pests and diseases, and lack of customers'. Some proactive students said that they plan to first seek wage employment to be able to generate start-up capital for their own enterprises. For example, a tertiary AET student in this category said:

First [I will] attain a job on any private farm or as a government worker, get money that I can save to obtain capital for opening up the drug shop. This is also possible if [I] upgrade my academic career to the trading license.

Other students hope that they will receive start-up capital and support from their parents, siblings and others in their social network. Two students who think that seeking salaried employment is a good strategy of raising start-up capital said:

I will be doing some work on horticulture specifically vegetable growing... or the case of capital, I will borrow from dad, the land we have and I will buy the seeds. (VTI student)

I expected to work as a service provider at our sub county ... I plan to open up my drug shop but still with my brother's effort. (Tertiary student)

A minority of students explained that they already have their small agricultural activities and that they will focus on those upon graduation.

Graduates navigate difficult labour environments

The graduates' experiences of finding work are organised under three aspects, namely time taken to get work, the nature of work and how they got it. The majority of graduates indicated that they secured some form of work within six months of graduation. In this category, there are those who directly got involved in self-employment. A tertiary AET animal science graduate who continued with the informal jobs that he was already doing while studying narrates:

When I finished school, I got my farmers as clients, they were around 70, because I had a drug shop where they always found me. It was a friend's drug shop because he was illiterate, so he could ask me to be around especially when officials would come around. So this drug shop became a sort of connection point.

His counterpart with a similar experience of working while studying shared his experience of starting an enterprise on a family land with the support of parents:

While at the [institution] I started a piggery farm that helped me a lot. The farm is still continuing though not as vibrant. The farm is on my father's land, and we were co-managing the project with dad but this did not work out well. I lost interest. Now I am on my own land and I plan to re-establish soon.

Another group of graduates who found something to do shortly after graduation are engaged in unpaid or voluntary work. A tertiary AET human nutrition graduate who was working at a hospital on voluntary basis said he worked from Tuesday to Thursday every week 'they don't pay us... we just get breakfast, milk usually'. A significant minority of graduates who had not yet secured any form of work at the time of the study said that they were still engaging in livelihood activities; and as part of their continuing reliance on family economic structure.

Of all the graduates who indicated they are involved in some form of wage employment, only one reported acquiring a stable job as an assistant agricultural officer with Uganda Prison Services. The rest are working on temporary terms with NGOs and small-scale private enterprises. Almost all the graduates in this category complained about difficult labour conditions, especially poor pay. One other generic characteristic of their non-structured jobs is the multiplicity of tasks involving general skills not only in agriculture but a series of humanity and social science fields. A tertiary AET animal science graduate illustrates the scenario of engagement in work tasks outside his qualifications and speciality:

Since I finished my diploma, I have been doing demonstration garden at home and I teach them from there. I basically offer advisory services. I have often been contracted to do such services, for instance one that I have just completed has been about data collection and I earlier worked on a coffee farm... we could just germinate the coffee seeds to seedlings and we were authorised suppliers of UCDA who would buy those seedlings and they distribute them to their farmers, but I would also follow up and act as an extension worker. But I was also a manager and nursery bed operator.

A tertiary AET human nutrition graduate said that since graduation he had engaged only in clerical contract jobs, including his current part-time assignment as a social activist with an NGO involved in social accountability and advocacy. His counterpart who did his internship from a hospital setting, said:

‘Where I work now, it’s a health centre... I do nursing aid there. I learnt several things in the hospital, like testing pregnancy, HIV, and others’.

The significant minority of graduates who indicated that they are engaged in own agri enterprises reported all sorts of setbacks ranging from difficulty to secure start-up capital to volatile commodity markets. They expressed several fears including unfair competition, unpredictable rainfall and habitual fluctuations of prices for agricultural products. However, there is one promising agri-entrepreneur who runs a farm supply outlet worth over \$3,000 alongside the provision of related agro services. He narrates his journey of numerous work engagements and relationships forming a good ground for the flourishing of his entrepreneurship spirit:

I had an advantage of the [institution] being near our home so even before I qualified was already practicing in the village. That helped me earn even before qualifying. I would move around the village making connections. After a while I got employed by [name withheld] estate; a farm with 4,000 goats and 3,000 cows... the earning was small 250,000 [\$71] monthly, serving as veterinary assistant in 2013... after one year I resigned the job went back to my hometown started writing a booklet on farming. I am now partly employed at [name withheld] dairy farm as a veterinary doctor earning 700,000 [\$200] monthly, visiting the farm for 2 hours per day. I also visited different farms depending on need – 6 poultry farms and 2 livestock farm. My routine duties include advising farmers, treating animals, prevention against disease, immunising animals, and training students on industrial training. I also act as a link for students to internship placements. (Tertiary AET animal science graduate)

The findings reveal that almost all the graduates actively search for work, and they make intentional steps to create social networks that link them to job openings. Apart from a small minority who mentioned radio and newspapers as their main source of information on work opportunities, most of the working graduates said they were linked to work opportunities through informal networks of friends and teachers. Two of the graduates who were connected by their former lecturers said:

Madam [Lecturer's name withheld] connected me to my first employment, as a learning instructor at vocational farm school and I spent a full year with them. (Human nutrition graduate)

[Lecturer's name withheld] called me and connected me to a lady who wanted to establish a rabbit farm and needed a diploma holder. I talked to the lady and later she took me up on a rabbit farm that had around 500 animals. I was working as a field assistant up to 2016. (Animal science graduate)

Two other graduates said that their prospective employers contacted and informed them of the job openings.

Most of the graduates who attempted to make formal job applications and subsequently appeared for interviews shared their frustration about the whole process. On the basis of what he experienced, one of them thinks that without a good connection, it is not easy to get a job in Uganda.

Because every place I have applied for a job, if they are not interested, they will say 'we shall call you' ... so what I can say about jobs in Uganda, they are not easy especially when you don't have any connection. Because I reached a time when I had resorted to sitting home for a while, but when a friend of mine called me and asked me to go with him to [name of organisation withheld] to see the hospital coordinator, the coordinator told me I keep there as I go on searching. (Human nutrition graduate)

His counterpart with double experience of messed up interviews said that:

I started on the search for jobs from 2013-2014, I would read adverts from newspapers and apply, I would be called whenever I applied, but there were issues that always challenged. There was a time I went for an interview and while on the panel, the executive director mentioned that they could employ me. But later I didn't get the job. There was [another] time I went for an interview and I was interviewed at 11:43 pm at some farm in Kampiringisa in Mpigi. They needed an extension worker but I was interviewed from the Ministry of Agriculture. I could answer questions to panellists who were sleeping/dosing. From that point I hate searching for jobs because that time I reached home in Wobulenzi at around 01:30 Am. I also found it hard with corrupt actions in various offices. (Animal science graduate)

Career interest and development ambitions

While students and graduates alike express very high career interests and job ambitions, their marginal knowledge of the agricultural world of work and feasible career development paths is evident. Some of the students could hardly articulate the attained occupational skills and competencies. Most of the students said that they plan to upgrade immediately on completion of their current study programmes. While some students in this category expressed awareness of available further training and upgrading avenues, others were only struggling to find the right information. In this category is an example of a VTI student who had to seek out a driver's advice on the suitable provider of further education and training. He said 'because I have been investigating between [name of institution withheld] and other universities... I asked the driver for UBTEB and he told me that for diploma courses is better'.

The majority of the VTI students who are pursuing the national certificate of agriculture course prefer to upgrade in animal science related courses. They view upgrading in animal production as the surest stepping stone to securing good income opportunities upon graduation. Regarding justification of the manageability of animal production one of the students in this category said he will pursue a diploma in animal science 'because with it you can start your own farm and manage it without depending on others in form of expertise. Animal husbandry doesn't require a lot of land like crop husbandry'. A few other VTI students are ambitious to the extent of considering further upgrading in veterinary medicine immediately after completing the diploma course. For instance, a second-year VTI student said:

I would like to do veterinary medicine after a diploma in animal husbandry because I want to know more about artificial insemination and because animal husbandry is more marketable and all seasons round.

Amidst the vivid interest to upgrade and the high expectations, young people's awareness of the constraints and uncertainties that they will soon encounter is evident. They make statements that reveal a sense of indecision, uncertainty and dilemma in regard to when and how to access suitable upgrading opportunities. One of those whose hopes lie in the financial preparedness of their relatives said:

If my uncle and mum access the money, I will go immediately but if they don't then I will have to stay for some time. If the opportunity is there, I will go. (VTI student)

While most current students hope that their parents and elder siblings will meet the cost for further training, a small category think and hope they find some alternative ways of getting the required financial resources from own small enterprises, part-time work and

through other means. One of those who hope to rely on earnings from their small businesses said:

I have begun my own project of poultry rearing. Although I have left it under my mother, so I will have the money to go direct for animal husbandry for diploma I will have raised at least some money. (VTI student)

His counterpart with some kind of salaried employment remarked:

Being an instructor will help me get monthly salary to be able to help my family; it is also possible to get a monthly salary so you can get a loan to help in your business. (VTI student)

Another VTI student who is looking at the option of seeking sponsorship opportunities said 'I will also be going to the professionals like the district vet officer to ask for assistance'.

In addition to the anticipated financial economic constraints to further skills building and career enhancement, a significant minority of young people express fears of the difficulties to navigate other social life aspirations and expectations such as family formation. A female VTI student is, for instance, worried about being lured into marriage if she fails to quickly embark on further training:

It requires a lot of money for upgrading. As a youth, I might get astray and you hear that I am married. Relatives and friends might discourage me.

Her male counterpart, who is not sure whether his girlfriend will agree to delay a marriage commitment, remarked:

Not getting tuition, limited field exposure due to limited finances, relationship challenges... girlfriend might want to get married at the wrong time.

5.4 Further analysis and discussion

I situate the analysis of the findings within the youth education-work transition discourse with a focus on the opportunities and constraints presented by social and institutional contexts.

5.4.1 Young people's positive envisioning and navigational stance

Young people's aspirations and ambitions while trusting the utility of agricultural qualifications as launch pads for good life were evident. Young people's definition of good life includes happy marriages, quality parenthood, meaningful social relations and gainful employment in the sector. The high aspirations and ambition exhibited by all the participating young people, including those who indicated that they come from poor families, challenges the generalisation that poor socio-economic backgrounds diminish the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004; Baillergeau & Duyvendak, 2019; Boateng & Löwe, 2018). Perhaps a consideration of the role of media and related information and communication technologies in shaping the aspirations and ambitions of today's young people, as expounded in chapter two, is necessary in challenging such generalisations.

Further, the findings indicate the tendency towards too high aspirations by most young people, which may not be easily realisable. However, much as they seemed not to be fully aware of how much they will have to invest in realising their aspirations, most of the young people in this study had a sense of the influence of social structure and associated constraints. They are not naive; they fully acknowledge the barriers and constraints associated with finding meaningful work. Many of them shared different ways they would explore alternative routes to achieve their education and work aspirations.

The young people's innate resources such as ambition and self-confidence seemed to be powerful drivers of their motivation and the creativity to explore alternative ways of navigating agricultural education and work pathways. Such manifestations of agency include intentional choices such as raising financial resources through part-time work to ensure that they complete their AET study programmes, and building social capital for accessing employment opportunities. This study not only corroborates related findings and scholarly arguments that confirm young people's agency and resilience in navigating structural barriers, but offers great hope that with appropriate support systems educated young people can stay and work in the agricultural sector on successful completion of their studies.

5.4.2 Young people's aspirations, agri-education and work pathways

This study strengthens the established argument about how young people's aspirations evolve from the interplay of social conditions and institutional contexts. It is evident that the pursuit of agricultural education and work pathways is a product of interplay of personal interest and influence of family, friends, high school experience and the wider environment. This evidence prompts a reconsideration of the general assertions about how young people do not aspire to work in the agricultural sector (Leavy & Smith, 2010; Leavy & Hossain, 2014). Actually, this study did not even find evidence that young people from subsistence

farming families do not look up to agricultural careers because of the fear that it will trap them into intergenerational poverty, as claimed by some sections of the literature.

Within the limitations of existing social and institutional contexts, young people look up agriculture as a sector of opportunity and a good majority of them demonstrated volition and motivation to pursue agri career paths and employment options. Most of the young people in this study expressed the aspirations to stay in the agricultural sector. Much as their appetite for big money or prestigious job positions was vivid they did not appear overzealous for urban lifestyles as generally claimed. The findings challenge dominant perception narratives about youth interest and participation in agriculture. It is imperative to clarify what category of young people are assumed to not consider agriculture as a sector of prospective employment. Lumping up all the categories such as so-called NEETs, AET students and agriculture graduates to draw practice, policy and research conclusions would be misleading.

It is evident that academic grade restrictions and financial difficulty determines and constrains the extent to which young people can follow their agriculture education and career aspirations. This study elucidates experiences of how young people are compelled to pursue AET certificate and diploma study programmes upon completion of UCE, instead of their childhood dreams for a university degree course. This resonates with the observation that every society establishes pathways for the education-employment transition of its young generation with embedded opportunities and constraints as imposed by historical context and social institutions (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019).

This study demonstrates some of the circumstances under which young people's agency is most effective. The way most of the young people find their way into agriculture education-work pathways is one such circumstance. It is evident that the decisions on when, where and what study is highly dependent on the complex interplay of personal interest and the influence of family, friends and education social actors within highly hierarchical contexts. Much as the decisions are not directly in line with their earlier aspirations, young people exercise personal agency in redirecting their efforts in pursuit of available options and navigating the opportunities and constraints presented by AET institutions and labour markets. Evidently, they refocus on goals that are attainable and disengage from rather unrealistic ambitions; but of course they retain the hope that they will at some point in life realise their long-term aspirations for prestigious agri-jobs upon attainment of higher education qualifications.

5.4.3 Students' multiple identities across the transition domains

Findings corroborate theoretical arguments and empirical evidence on the multiple and overlapping roles of young people, which strongly challenge linear transition paradigms as elaborated in chapters two and three. The theoretical debate about societal canalizations, misplaced age-graded transition expectations, and rule-governed education institutions is

of particular relevance for one to derive a deeper sense of this finding (Heckhausen & Buchmann, 2019). The findings confirm contemporary evidence-based conclusions on the different realities of young people's life journeys as shaped by socio-economic context, and more so their precarious situations in poor economies with weak education and labour market arrangements. Quite a significant number of young people who participated in this study are not restricted to a single identity as students. They juggle a multiplicity of roles and responsibilities as workers in a variety of low paid jobs and informal occupations. Some are already in love relationships and on the verge of family formation. Quite a number demonstrated zeal for engagement in the student leadership politics of AET institutions and participation in social development of their communities as active citizens.

It is evident that these multiple identities are a source of tension and conflict between students and the social actors at AET institutions, where rules and regulations are based on cultural beliefs and social norms of age-appropriate behaviour, timing and sequencing of social roles. The nature of these other identities apart from the student status presupposes a degree of autonomy and self-directing behaviour that contradicts the expected rule-governed behaviour as enforced by educators and other social actors who enjoy absolute authority and power inside and outside the classroom. It is also not surprising that educators and administrators seek to control and impose disciplinary measures in suppressing young people's sexuality manifestations. Students' inclinations for social identity formation and demands for better welfare and hygiene facilities are often trivialised. Of course, the practice of suppressing autonomous feelings and tendencies of self-directed behaviour can yield short-term positive results in terms of grade scores, but can potentially constrain young people's individual agency enhancement, which is a critical factor in their transition from education to employment and active citizenship.

5.4.4 Career interest and vocational guidance

The evidence illuminates how the impactful role of individual teachers and practice-based learning projects such as school gardens can motivate high school students to consider pursuing agricultural education and work pathways on completion of the secondary education cycle. The students' testimonies of how industry resource persons and other guest speakers influenced their learning motivation and work aspirations strengthens the argument for education and training systems to engage industry actors such as model farmers from the communities around the AET institutions. This offers credence for arguments in favour of productive partnerships in creating skills ecosystems that not only integrate contextual factors, but allow each single actor within and from the outside formal education institutions to play a complementary role (Freer, 2015; Vandenbosch, 2006; Wallace, 1997; Wallace, 2007; Wedekind & Mutereko, 2016).

On the other hand, however, the findings illuminate the absence of routine educational and career guidance arrangements for high school students, leading to

somewhat random career choices. It is noteworthy that the AET social actors did not mention high *dropout* of enrolled students among the challenges, one of the common negative consequences of random career choices. However, this may be attributable to the extra-ordinary resilience and ability of enrolled students to stay on course despite weak secondary education background, though factors such as lack of alternatives cannot be totally eliminated.

It is evident that on completion of high school, young people are confronted with all sorts of unverified advice and opinions about suitable AET institutions and course options. The failure by the AET institutions to provide students with appropriate information and guidance for them to realistically imagine further education and employment prospects is also evident. Most young people are clearly confused about employment or job prospects in relation to corresponding agricultural qualifications to be attained on completion of their AET courses. All these confirm the noticeable absence of career guidance and support for prospective and enrolled students across the entire spectrum of education and training system in Uganda and similar SSA contexts (Bregman & Bryner, 2002; Hoppers et al., 2008; Mastercard Foundation, 2020).

The failure to prioritise career guidance and student support denies young people access to quality guidance to reflect on their ambitions and personal resources in the context of existing opportunities and constraints, so as to direct their efforts in more meaningful ways. Moreover, as observed by Schroom and Heckhausen, 'unrealistic ambitions can harm individuals by promoting inappropriate persistence and overconfidence' (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019, p144). It is obvious that most agriculture students need support to adjust their pre-vocational and tertiary AET goals in a realistic manner. Building career competencies of students for better career planning, effective study, exploration of the world of work and enhanced awareness of further education opportunities enhances motivation and commitment to pursue their agri-education and career paths (Meijers, Kuijpers, & Gundy, 2013; Watts & Sultana, 2004).

5.4.5 Theory and practice integration

It is evident that teaching and learning at all the AET institutions takes place mainly inside the classroom, with the educators explaining disciplinary knowledge to the students. Excessive classroom instruction with little or no connection with reality violates ideal vocational pedagogy that puts a premium on teaching the head to think and imagine while preparing the hand to perform (Sennett, 2012). Moreover, the teaching of the heart to assimilate the values and ethics that define *doings* and *thinkings* needs to be undertaken in unison. Craftsmanship attributes and abilities could be built by a pedagogy that concurrently links theory and practice (Berger, 2003).

The findings also mirror the complexities involved in connecting theory and practice at education institutions and workplaces, which as observed by (Layton, 1984), is

easier said than done. On-campus theory-practice integration is characterised by the separation of teaching the principles while inside the classroom and then transferring the teaching of procedures to the field. The narrations on the delivery of farm practice and demonstrations illustrate this trend. Besides the limited didactical competencies and poor supply of resource materials, the findings apparently corroborate Jeanne Gamble's informed observation regarding the restrictive nature of calendars and timetables, which do not allow flexibility for educators in educational institutions to concurrently teach theory and practice (Gamble, 2003).

The complaints about the weak or marginal link between theory and practice reflect the longstanding challenges that the AET subsector and the general VET and higher education systems in SSA and similar contexts have been grappling with for decades. Some of the specific design and delivery obstacles that confront internships – as illuminated in chapter five and the related section under chapter six – confirm the widely held opinion about the structural bottlenecks to delivery of work placements not only in SSA, but also in relatively developed education markets in relatively resourced countries in Europe (Akomaning, Voogt, & Pieters, 2011).

Ineffective work-related teaching strategies such as defective work placements or internships contradict the ideals of combining learning and work to enhance learning outcomes and work readiness. Internships, and any other off-campus strategies which subordinate learning outcomes to mere workplace presence, erode the work-related learning approach's potential to develop and nurture craftsmanship (Holdaway, Johnson, Ratsoy, & Friesen, 1994). John Dewey's standpoint against assuming that mere doing or participation in social experience is in itself educative is a good point of reference in the decisions to teach agriculture practically and placing students at workplaces (Dewey, 1963; Sweet, 2013). For instance, students' learning at workplaces can be optimised by enhancing their active participation in communities of practice at host institutions to benefit from quality supervision and guidance by experienced industry actors (Wenger, 1998). Generally, prudent design and delivery of work-related learning experience ought to be a real partnership with full and active engagement of workplace actors, industry leaders, employers and the AET institution social actors under mutually agreed partnership arrangements (Mukembo, 2017; Rubenstein, 2014). Drawing insights from the interventionist phase of this, I come back to the discourse of theory and practice integration under chapter six on transforming agri-education practice.

5.4.6 Social relations and learning environments

It is evident that the social learning environment at most of the AET institutions, especially the case study, is threatened by four factors: tensions over well-being facilities for students; tribalistic tendencies across the board; mistrust of educators and administrators and latent conflict arising from students' diversity on account of ethnic and educational background.

These factors diminish opportunities for social learning, yet social relations are critical elements in building effective learning environments and students' outcomes – particularly in the social constructivist framework as discussed in chapter two and elsewhere in this thesis. For instance, as the findings show, cordial and warm relationship between students and educators were the main drivers of students' interest and motivations and the reverse is equally evident. Educators whom students trust and consider to be committed, competent and concerned about their teaching duties appear to have productive educator-learner relationships.

Educators whom students perceive to be below expectations in terms of competence and integrity, can hardly nurture a cordial relationship as required by effective vocational pedagogy. As emphasised by Lucas et al., 2012, the place of the educator in vocational pedagogy is critical because their decisions and practices greatly influence how much craftsmanship students can develop. When students feel that the educators are wanting in their conduct and performance, it affects trust and undermines opportunities for relationship building and interactive learning. Mutual interactions with and among students through effective communication, as nurtured by the educators' ethical conduct, good actions and work habits is crucial. This is what makes the moral, technical, theoretical and pedagogical competence of educators the core of meaningful vocational pedagogy.

The findings further elucidate how diversity potentially breeds discrimination, leading to a hostile social climate, yet student diversity can be a great opportunity for cultural integration, cohesion and unity for better learning outcomes. Social diversity-inspired tensions at the AET institutions potentially undermine student-student interactions. The findings challenge a neutral and laissez-faire stance towards students' groupings that are based on districts or regions of origin, ethnicity and religion. Education social actors are challenged to rethink their perception of students' social diversity to embrace elements of social inclusion in curriculum and pedagogical decisions and actions.

5.4.7 Adapting curriculum to new socio-economic realities

The findings abundantly demonstrate the recurring curriculum reform attempts to address the so-called supply and demand mismatch between agricultural education and labour markets. The shift to anchor AET into a productivist paradigm is evident. The three aspects that characterise the reforms are permeability of the employability logic, infusion of entrepreneurship content and entrenchment of outcome-based teaching approaches. The vivid over-emphasis of economic and market interests is one of my two principle concerns in this regard. The reform efforts seem to ignore the inherent challenge for 21st Century education policy makers to make the right balance between instrumentalist and emancipatory aims of education. It is clear, as discussed in chapter two of this thesis, that the exponential societal and technological changes do require capabilities beyond the skills and competence for mere production and consumption of goods and services. The

challenges that come with these societal changes demand additional skills and attributes for active citizenship to enhance ecological balance, peace and justice. In order to match the changes, young people need lifelong learning attributes and capabilities to live and flourish (Zeelen, 2015).

The second concern relates to authentic participation of frontline social actors in reforms. It is evident that old concerns relating to the limited engagement and participation of frontline actors in VET reform efforts are not adequately addressed. The evidence on how the reform processes are conceived by staff and consultants from development partners or donors, and driven by state bureaucrats, suggests a limited understanding and acknowledgement of a history of failed attempts to redeem the sector's systemic challenges. This notorious practice of putting frontline actors at the periphery of decision making in the curriculum reform processes seem to partially account for the limited improvement of AET processes and outcomes. This offers credence to the argument that curriculum reforms do not lead to automatic educational changes and positive pedagogical outcomes (Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Kibwika, 2006).

5.4.8 Students' engagement amid a domineering teaching tradition

While there are a few educators who perceive students positively and consequently seek to engage them as active agents, the majority are stuck in their perception of students as immature and less self-directing. Accordingly, harnessing students' engagement and active participation is a discretionary practice, rather than an established culture. As if to ignore the realities of young people's emerging quest for autonomy and demonstrated capacity to undertake some 'adult' roles such as working, the majority of educators are less enthusiastic to embrace students' engagement and pedagogical practices that foster capacity for self-direction and personal responsibility. Yet promoting student engagement and active participation stimulates and nurtures motivation, as well as fostering personal agency and individual responsibility for better outcomes.

It is also evident that although most of the students said that they learn better through collaboration and interacting with peers and educators, lecture is the dominant method of teaching at all the AET institutions, and it is poorly used. The dominant agriculture education practice is at odds with renewed theoretical and policy arguments to promote students' agency. Indeed, teaching monologues characterised by poor use of lecture have no place in a vocational pedagogy paradigm that seeks to turn students and educators into co-partners in knowledge production and use. Agricultural students and educators as co-learners ought to operate within social spaces that promote learning as social participation. Qualities and attributes of craftsmanship can be developed when students' agency is fostered and their motivation to develop craftsmanship is nurtured (Sennett, 2008). Monologues contradict the essence of empowering pedagogies which aim at building the skills and attributes that students need to learn, not only to belong and become, but also to

work in the ever-changing life and work dynamics (Colley et al., 2003). Moreover, even the most effective lectures need to be supplemented by dialogic encounters to build young people's critical consciousness (Freire, 1972).

5.4.9 Labour force entry; confining social arrangements

It is evident that AET institutions do not have institutionalised arrangements for accompanying agriculture graduates on their journey into the world of work. Apart from the discretionary practice of individual educators, graduates are neither formally linked to employment opportunities nor traced to establish their occupation mobility and career development. This mirrors one of the endemic challenges facing the majority of sub-Saharan African education systems in their attempts to prepare young people for complex and dynamic labour markets (Zeelen, Van der Linden, Nampota, & Ngabirano, 2010).

The escalation of social barriers to youth employment, such as corrupt recruitment processes exacerbated by discrimination and favouritism, which further disadvantage young people, symbolises the huge distortions within the employment sector that constrain young people's agency. Combined with the evident vulnerable employment conditions for the few entrants, it is apparent that even motivated educated young agriculturalists are likely to stay longer in transition owing to labour market irregularities as framed by the overall economic environment.

However, the few examples of graduates who to a certain extent found some employment demonstrate the level of persistence, volition and effort that they invested. They exhibited self-directedness in optimising social capital and other individual resources to establish themselves in the agriculture sector through necessity-driven entrepreneurship or salaried employment. This resonates well with the proposition that individual agency can overcome social constraints (Schoon & Heckhausen, 2019). Connectedly, this study strengthens the argument for the valuable combination and deployment of technical and non-academic skills within the framework of connecting young people to the world of work. Additionally, there is evidence of boundary crossing as exhibited by the minority cases of graduates whose current work demands a variety of other skills beyond their animal or crop science speciality such as management and leadership competencies. This evidence helps to validate broadened or integrated curricula trends, and challenges tendencies for early or premature recruitment of young people into narrower agricultural career paths.

Chapter 6 Transforming agri-education practice

6.1 Introduction

Under chapter five, I present the findings from the second phase of the study focusing on young peoples' agricultural education and work pathways. This chapter deals with findings from the interventionist research phase of the study, which involved a deeper engagement with social actors of one case study tertiary AET institution using action research principles and methods. This phase mostly attempted to answer the second research question: How can improvements be made to enhance agricultural education processes for optimising young people's learning and labour market outcomes? The phase was characterised by a collaborative inquiry into current agri-education practise, and an exploration of change possibilities in addition to a deliberate strategy to implement some mutually agreed change actions.

In chapter three on the theoretical and methodological framework, I make the justification for the choice of case study research design bolstered by an action research approach. In the same chapter, I present the argument for the interventionist research methodology underlined by the principles of participation, democracy and collaborative inquiry. The study's theoretical and philosophical stance to unleash the agency of social actors in understanding and transforming their social world is among the main sources of attraction to action research. I explained the criterion for the selection of the case tertiary AET institution, as well as the choice to focus on institutionalised preparation of young people for the food and agriculture sector (see chapter 4 for the evidence that informed the reframing of the study purpose and objectives).

This chapter is organised under five sections. The first section describes our experience of creating and nurturing a communicative space for productive relationships. This is followed by an explanation of the engagements to further explore the existing agri-education practice of the case study institution. The third section describes how the process to explore, prioritise and implement change possibilities unfolded. This is followed by an explanation of the change actions undertaken towards improved agri-education practice which unfolded through the established action research infrastructure. The reflections and learnings drawn from the action research process constitute the last section of this chapter.

6.2 Negotiating entry and nurturing communicative space

My positionality as an outsider-researcher necessitated considerable preparation to negotiate access to the case study AET institution for establishing durable research relationships and communication links with social actors (Wicks & Reason, 2009). Negotiating access involved seeking social actors' acceptance to consider and discuss issues and concerns relating to youth participation in agricultural education and work.

With a facilitator identity and acting less as a traditional academic researcher, I inspired the creation of a communicative space underlined by open, unconstrained, non-hierarchical, collegial and informal relationships (Coghlan, 2004). While aware of contextual hindrances to optimal participation, commitment and ownership of action research processes and outcomes, I undertook the burden to create not only a functional communicative space, but also a functioning communication practice. As illustrated by Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon (2014), the power of communicative practice is exemplified in the core purpose of collaborative inquiry that yields communicative action, the bedrock of action research. From this viewpoint, it imperative to take cognisance of the value of communicative space while taking heed of the caution against narrations and enactments of superficial participation arenas or mockery public spheres. Peter Grootenboer and others present an adequate reformulation of the plausible description of the notions of communicative action and communicative space:

Communicative action is what happens when people stop to consider what is happening in their situation, and strive for intersubjective agreement about the language and ideas they use, mutual understanding of one another's perspectives, and unforced consensus about what to do. Communicative action happens when a group collectively creates a communicative space in which all are free to express their points of view. The group also agrees to be disciplined about being inclusive in order to open up a public sphere. Public spheres are actual networks of communication amongst participants who volunteer to participate in changing practices that create a sense of unease – a legitimization of deficit or crisis. Participants construct public spheres to create conditions to open communicative space in order to engage in communication action. (Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves, & Choy, 2017, p17)

Together with the frontline social actors, we worked to nurture this communicative space through the enactment and usage of a versatile communication structure created from an intersection of learning and communication methods and tools (see text box 5).

6.2.1 Introductory interactions with decision makers

The initial step to gain entry into the case study arena was through physical visits to introduce the research to the top administrators of the selected AET institution. On my second visit I met one of them, who, upon reading the introductory letter and research leaflet pinpointed the aspect of institutional weakness of the TVET sector and the challenges that AET institutions face in preparing students for the world of work. In addition to permitting me good audience, the administrator offered to inform the key stakeholders.

Two weeks later, I was invited to deliver a 30-minute introductory presentation during one of the regular meetings of department heads (HoDs) held on 21st August, 2016. While raising a number of pertinent issues, the HoDs welcomed the idea of conducting a research project at the institution. The collective concern of most of the participating HoDs was over three issues namely, students' learning success, curriculum relevance and tracing graduates' employability. Two of the participants commented on the timeliness and usefulness of the research:

The research has come in the right time when the institution is doing a curriculum review... the research will enhance the review process. (PT1)

The research will tackle the challenge of not knowing what the alumni are doing. (PT2)

The HoDs raised a number of methodological and logistical concerns and expectations. For instance, one asked whether the research would extend to other institutions. Others wondered and hoped that financial resources would be available and provided to finance participation in the research activities. At the end of the meeting, the HoDs unanimously decided that an inaugural workshop would be conducted to discuss all related matters. In the proceeding subsections, I describe how we dealt with the emergent concerns and expectations during and after the inaugural workshop.

6.2.2 Action research coordination and communication structure

Having been granted access I strove, in accordance with action research virtues, to establish a strong foundation of trust and relationship for negotiating expectations; collaboratively decide on the role of stakeholders; democratically discuss issues and concerns; and to collectively reflect, learn and act (Wilmsen, 2008). In text box 5, I outline the techniques and tools used to deepen and nurture the required communicative space.

One of the important decisions by the inaugural workshop, which we held on 5th October, 2016, was to put in place a coordination mechanism in form of an action research team. This took immediate effect, and all the participating 12 HoDs and lecturers

volunteered to be part of the team. The two research associates that I had enrolled became team members by default. The team unanimously selected one of the heads of department to serve as coordinator with the responsibility to link the team with top administrators of the institution. The inaugural workshop further decided to mobilise all other members of staff to join the research process. Later, during the third workshop, an additional leadership position of chairperson was created, and a lecturer from the human nutrition department was elected to serve in that capacity. In the subsequent planning meeting, the research team decided to assign one other member to serve as deputy chairperson to circumvent a leadership vacuum that could arise in case both the chairperson and coordinator were unavailable.

The research team's emergent role and expansion

On a routine basis, the research team planned, implemented and evaluated a range of research activities. Working through regular monthly meetings, workshops and a variety of learning tools and communication media as indicated in text box 5, the team expanded and flourished. It's evolving nature and emergent role in broadening the participation and engagement of more social actors is evident. Indeed, during the third workshop, the coordinator challenged members about the need to engage students in the research process. This prompted a reconsideration of one of the arguments in the previous interactions in which some of the participants insisted that 'the research should not be about the youth; it should be with the youth and by the youth' (Workshop report 19 Oct 2016). In her successful persuasion of fellow administrators and lecturers, the coordinator argued that 'not having the youth who are in the centre of the very problem ... we might get many assumptions other than the real information from them'. This raised the debate about how to engage not only the students but the graduates as well. One of the HoDs proposed that at some point, students should take part in the discussions, including the research team workshops and meetings. Other participants proposed that we engage the students through questionnaires but this was countered with a reminder on the principles and values of action research. In conclusion, the majority of the participants agreed that the students and the alumni be represented on the research committee (team) so as to have their views heard.

In order to enhance data credibility and to harness collaborative inquiry, we developed an integrated communication strategy, which combined physical events, print and digital media. We produced and disseminated posters, leaflets, banners and info graphics to promote the exploratory findings. In November 2017, we produced the maiden issue of our research newsletter designed to keep the stakeholders abreast. Earlier in April 2017, we had conducted a *research lunch hour* to supplement the one-on-one interactions with the students, lecturers and administrators who were not part of the research team. The research lunch hour targeted all teaching and non-academic staff of the case study institution in their usual dining hall. We transformed the dining hall into a gallery with

relevant information materials displayed on the walls and screening of research journey video clips. Most of the staff members verbally expressed great enthusiasm and appreciation of the research; some wrote their positive comments in the book provided for the purpose by the research team.

The stakeholders' validation workshop, which we eventually held on 18th October, 2017 after intensive consultations to renegotiate permission that had been suspended by one of the top administrators, helped to expand the research team with new members. Out of the 54 participants, twelve in the categories of governing council members, lecturers and students volunteered to join the research team. Consequently, we renamed it *expanded action research team* (ERT). Amidst a range of personal, organisational and logistical challenges, the majority of the ERT members persevered until the end of the research period. However, the enthusiasm of a few others faded and they fell off the track along the way. We were constrained to invest enough to ensure a sustained participation of everyone.

Text box 5: Methods and tools used to nurture communicative space

Relationships building encounters such as:

- Lunch hour research moments to catch up with entire staff when they assemble for lunch in the institution dining hall
- Luncheons away from the premises of the case study institution to share and deepen the bond with key stakeholders among the research team members
- Outings including leisure moments over a drink in the neighboring leisure joints to engage directly with staff members who were not part of the research team

Traditional and social media such as:

- Group emailing and WhatsApp for constant and instant communication amongst the research team members
- Bulk short message (SMS) texting to regularly inform research team and other staff members of the case AET institution
- Newsletter, blogs, banners, info graphics, posters and leaflets to constantly inform case institution stakeholders and partners, and to simulate informed discussions, actions and feedback

Blended learning and communication events and techniques

- Regular meetings to ensure democratic decision making on all matters relating to the research process
- Interactive workshops to explore and debate research issues, build capacity, gather and scrutinize data
- Action evaluation to move the research process to action planning and implementation stages
- Case study, *think-write-share*, paired interviewing, buzz groups, diagramming and other visualisation tools to deepen individual and collective exploration and understanding of the research problem and study design

- Joint visits to agro enterprises and related institutions to learn, benchmark and connect with industry actors

6.2.3 Building a shared understanding of the research design

With the above learning and communication methods and tools, we were able to build and nurture a shared understanding of the research problem and the action research approach. In the beginning we encountered some tension and resistance in our efforts to build the required commitment and ownership of the research process.

First, the argument about the participatory and change-seeking nature of action research did not easily appeal to the entire research team and the rest of the social actors. Most of them could hardly imagine that mere participation in the action research activities would directly contribute to change at the case study institution. The claimed potential of the approach to contribute to change seemed to be at odds with some of the stakeholders' expectations. For instance, during one of the introductory workshops in 2016, two participants wondered how a small research of a few individuals can make an impact:

For me I feel that... if we are going to... solve the problem [of youth employment and participation in agriculture]... that all of us may seem to have understood, I feel it is an enormous job and I do not know if we can manage to solve this problem. (PT1)

One thing that is not clear is, that is deeply in my mind, I am just wondering how this is going to be achieved by just a few people. (PT2)

Some stakeholders strongly argued that the engagement of a small number of individuals could not constitute a research population sample that is representative of the social reality. They questioned the scientific foundations of the research design. For instance, a pair of lecturers harbouring such concerns expressed uncertainty about the generalisability of the findings:

In addition to the sample question, we had the fear that, will the sample be enough to represent the whole country? (PT4)

A similar pessimistic voice was from a positivist research perspective. The concerned participant said:

I am still finding it very unclear about the dependent and independent variables; I am still failing to get them clearly. (PT3)

Other stakeholders felt that providing students equal space to participate in the research and to be represented on the research team was untenable. Later, as indicated in the preceding subsection, this scepticism reduced.

Second, the divergent opinions about young people, and their interest in pursuing agriculture education and work pathways was a real source of unending arguments. The stakeholders' initial arguments were reminiscent of the deficit portrayal of young people as passive actors in their life and education journeys. In chapter five, under the section on educators' perception of young people, findings that reveal such conceptualisations are presented.

Third, the frontline social actors' apparent heavy workload often exacerbated their indecision to take active role in the research activities. When we explored each research team members' fears at part of our initial team building exercises, the fear of limited time featured prominently. Moreover, some HoDs on the research team were reluctant to be active agents, in preference for taking part as participants or gatekeepers (Crowhurst & Kennedy-macfoy, 2013). Others were less keen to directly engage in the search for ways of improving agri-education practice. There was, however, a category of a few highly motivated HoDs who were keener in undertaking all the research tasks, from coordination to gathering evidence.

Keeping the research team's methodological alertness

It became very clear from the onset that formation of the research team could serve the intended purpose only when the social actors would dare to reflect and deal with their scepticism relating to the methodological practicability of the study. It was also apparent that not enough conceptualisation and acknowledgement of the research problem had been achieved. Using a series of exercises and games, we were able to uncover and deal with the team members' expectations, hopes and fears. In the same way, we enhanced interpersonal relationships and team spirit to counter apparent mistrust, suspicion and a generally poor social environment at the case study institution.

On doubts about methodological suitability of action research, we conducted several social learning events to build the team members' capacity to evaluate and distinguish social science research methods. During some of the learning and reflection sessions, we invited experienced researchers and academics with evident experience of using action research to further widen the team members' frame of reference. One remarkable outcome from one of such learning events happened in a workshop on 19th October, 2016, when the team developed a checklist of 'good' and 'bad' research, which greatly assisted in illustrating the suitability of the action research approach. The checklist resulted from a collective synthesis of the output generated by paired interview and buzz group sessions. The sessions engaged the participants into personal reflections of what in

their own professional experience constitutes worthwhile research. As indicated in text box 6, the participants already had their own conceptualisation of *valuable* research.

Text box 6: Good research checklist

Good research:

- Should addresses the problems in society
- Should contribute knowledge to other researches that have been done before
- Should be able to disseminate findings to users
- Is done by knowledgeable persons
- Should have resources including finance, human and time for better outcomes

Checklist developed by research team in a workshop held on 05 October 2016

In the subsequent workshops and related social learning events, meetings and related interactions, deliberate efforts were made to check and nurture the team's understanding and commitment to the research process. For instance, with the use of 8 shapes (diamond, rectangle, circle, star, triangle, oval, square and heart) during a workshop on 20th April, 2017, we were able to appraise how each team member felt about the progress at the time. Self-discovery of some aspects of emergent nature of action research is evident in the statements by one of the participants who chose the 'diamond' shape to express their new experiences of the research process:

The research started narrow and unclear especially in terms of themes and areas to address ... then widened to cover so many areas but it is again reshaped to cover a few themes... we shall build detail on the few identified themes. But in building detail, the themes will have to cover all ideas at the start of the research. (PT1)

The team members who chose the 'heart' shape to communicate their feelings about the research reveal some degree of emotional connection to the research process:

The topic [research] calls for passion for someone to be involved. (PT13)

The research is done out of love and charity and passion. (PT4)

Would love it if the research addresses the challenges. (PT5)

Generally, a balance of opinions and arguments was always possible, owing to the intense use of participatory methods that allowed the members to listen, learn, and get inspiration through team spirit. Moreover, the insider voices of lecturers with prior awareness of the methodological strength of action research enriched the negotiations and discussions.

6.3 Exploring agri-education practice of case study AET institution

What is wrong with our system? What is wrong with us? And...
what is wrong with our students? (Animal science lecturer)

This quote from one of the ERT members during a research workshop on 19th October, 2016 affords a good description of how less knowledgeable some team members felt at this particular stage in our action research process. With the shared conceptualisation of the research design and consensus about the topicality of young people's agricultural education-work transition, the immediate priority was to enhance the team's understanding and appreciation of the research problem.

In a research workshop held on 5th October, 2016, we used a case study as a discussion and reflection technique (Pretty, Guijt, Thompson, & Scoones, 1995) to illustrate the difficult school-to-work transition of a typical young AET graduate in Uganda. Basing on the outcome of the case study analysis, we developed a taxonomy of influences to illustrate the personal, social, and institutional determinants of young people's education and work intentions and actions. This resulted into a broader discussion of the situation of young people and their participation in agricultural education and work. Some alternative explanations to the over-emphasis on personal determinants began to emerge. As indicated in chapter five, the educators and administrators began to stretch the arguments on influencing factors to include the role of families, peers, and high school experience.

The debate on the factors and circumstances that influence young people's pursuit of agricultural work trajectories later focused on the role of AET. The team explored what they knew about the performance of the case study institution. The strengths and pitfalls of the existing practice were identified and scrutinised to a point when the team members realised that they know little about certain things. They agreed that they did not know enough about the conditions and circumstances that are shaping the students' performance and achievement. It is during this workshop that the above opening quote was made by one of the female ERT members. She wondered about how much the team knew about the current agri-education practice and the contextual determinants of the institutions' position and performance. Another team member indicated that she was not sure about the influence of media, especially social media, on the character of students. This realisation compelled the team to generate more contextual data by engaging more stakeholders. While the research team debated and acknowledged the influence of policy and institutional arrangements on agri-education practice, it was deemed necessary to prioritise the exploration of concerns with direct pedagogical dimensions.

6.3.1 Gathering contextual data to deepen understanding

The team prioritised engagement with students, graduates and lecturers through a series of interview and workshop sessions to generate contextual data on the state of agriculture education practice. We conducted four separate workshop series in which we engaged 55 current students using group interviews, paired interviews, buzz groups and think-write-share technique. As indicated under chapter 5, the workshops were designed and conducted with a dual purpose of generating evidence and offering young people the opportunity to undertake self-assessment and to envision their desired future. In order to stimulate the students to share their experiences of the current education practice, we guided them through individual and group reflections to focus on four aspects namely: learning motivations, methods of teaching, learning content, and career support. We asked each one of them to reflect on what they value most in relation to the course units, the way they are taught and the entire social and physical environment. We also asked them to write down what they wanted done differently for better performance.

We engaged 23 graduates through open interview sessions held in different locations in central Uganda. On the interview guide were 10 items of reflections on their tertiary education life and the way they were prepared for the world of work. To complement data from regular workshops and meetings with the educators and administrators, we conducted individual open interviews with four lecturers. The open interviews focused on their experiences and perceptions in relation to curriculum development, teaching and learning, assessment and grading, work-related teaching strategies, motivation and professional development, as well as areas for improvement. A combined use of the other methods of document review, photography and observation yielded useful data, which we organised and subjected to a participatory scrutiny and validation during a stakeholders' workshop on 18th October, 2017.

6.3.2 State of agri-education practice

Gathered data revealed how the interplay of limited relational, professional, and institutional capacity undermined the performance of this relatively well-established institution in terms of infrastructure and reputation. Under chapter five I present a detailed account of the state of agriculture education practice at the AET institutions as derived from experiences and perceptions of frontline social actors of the seven VTIs and the case study AET institution. Also, in the article on 'Exploring agricultural vocational pedagogy in Uganda: Students' experiences' published by the International Journal of Training Research (Jjuuko, Tukundane, & Zeelen, 2019), the experiences are used to strengthen the arguments for a craftsmanship embedded vocational pedagogy in Uganda and similar contexts.

For emphasis and clarity, let me restate six elements that characterise the education practice of the case study AET institution to further illustrate the basis for seeking

improvements. First is about the application and use of lecture as the dominant teaching-learning method. The majority of students, graduates and some lecturers find it wanting and ineffective.

Secondly, there is the issue of theory and practice integration, which almost all the study participants acknowledge to be necessary and very important, but poorly implemented at the case study institution. A significant majority of students and graduates maintained that the current teaching practice was characterised by excessive theory – a phrase they use to mean classroom instruction without a connection to reality.

Third is about the application of work-related learning strategies, particularly study trips, farm practice and industrial training. It is evident that attempts to teach agriculture practically are frustrated by limited supply of materials, unmotivated students, and inadequate supervision among other challenges. In subsection 6.4.2 on enhancing internship design and delivery, I present aggregated findings on the state of industrial training from the perspectives of all the stakeholders – students, graduates, lecturers, and workplace supervisors. We used the evidence to contextualise the arguments in our article ‘Reclaiming the educative power of vocational placements: experiences from agriculture education practice in Uganda’ published by the International Journal of Training and Development.

Fourth is the absence of an explicit strategy to support students to develop and harness the required learning motivation and agri-career development competencies. The discretionary vocational guidance and entrepreneurship development schemes that, according to the participants in this study, are provided by some individual lecturers and with support of some NGOs are typically ad hoc in nature, without institutionalisation prospects.

The fifth element is learner-educator relationship, which on one hand is characterised by mistrust, as most students are sceptical about the conduct, commitment, integrity, and didactical competence of the lecturers. On the other hand, the lecturers are pessimistic about the students’ maturity, interest, and responsibility for their life and study trajectories. Possibilities for optimal student-student relationships and interactions are undermined by animosity arising from poorly managed social diversity.

Sixth is about the learning assessment system, which is characterised by examinations, tests and assignments on the basis of what has been taught within a predetermined curriculum activities. Assessment evidence is used mainly for grading and certification purposes. While attempts to embrace practical teaching were mentioned by most of the study participants, there was no evidence of prudent assessment procedures for practical skills development.

As indicated elsewhere in this thesis, while the research team acknowledged the influence of limited policy and governance infrastructure on the existing agri-education practice, it was deemed feasible to focus the exploratory data gathering on pedagogical dimensions. However, on the basis of gathered data we could discern how the institution

is grappling with numerous obstacles to optimum performance. As partially indicated under chapter five, the evidence revealed that the organisational and institutional performance of the case study institution was constrained by bureaucratic tendencies, apparent resistance to change, ethnically-driven social tensions, absenteeism coupled with laxity of some frontline social actors, and problematic conduct of some students. In line with the research design, we subjected these exploratory findings to a validation by a cross section of stakeholders.

6.4 Exploring and enacting change options

During the validation workshop held on 18th October, 2017, the debate to tackle the identified challenges gained momentum. Several stakeholders, especially the governing council representatives, were quick to point out that some of the identified issues and problems were already being addressed. A couple of stakeholders expressed disappointment about the persistent misconduct of some students, lecturer absenteeism and the generally poor interpersonal relationships at the institution. The governing council representatives pledged to use the exploratory findings to inform their engagements with the rest of the council members for expedited decisions and actions.

The validation workshop was indeed a great opportunity that we used to harness the participants' interest into the search for the most pressing issues which influence learning and labour market outcomes. We encouraged every single participant to individually think, identify and write at least three important issues that matter most and that should be addressed urgently. We posed two interrelated instructive statements: (i) choose and rank three concerns and issues which matter most to you (ii) what actions should be undertaken to cause change. The 26 participants who volunteered to undertake individual reflection on the desired change contributed very useful insights. The synthesis of their views further revealed the seriousness and intensity of five interrelated challenges, namely apparent disconnect between teaching of theory and practice, limited students career guidance, weak teaching practices of some lecturers, misconduct of some social actors, and poor social environment. In respect to the challenge of teaching of agriculture practically, one of the participants argued that 'practical work teaches better than theoretical work'. Relatedly, another stated that 'the fact that lecturers only give lectures and not practical skills, this to me affects quality of output'. On limited guidance and support to enhance students' achievement, one participant contended:

There is no stipulated career guidance programme; this is a big issue because students ought to actually know what they are supposed to do and after the course. (PT16)

On the negative consequences of poor social environment amongst social actors, three quotes are noteworthy:

Lack of team spirit among administrators due to tribalism and this makes access and smooth running of some issues difficult. (PT1)

Tribalism among students and staff affect interpersonal relations and team building. (P14)

Unprofessionalism among teaching staff who indulge in acts like tribalism, fraud, selling of handouts and general conflict of interest. (PT17)

These and all the other views generated throughout the validation workshop were subjected to further exploration and analysis during our subsequent regular ERT workshops and meetings.

Developing theory of action

Using action evaluation and programme theory principles (Rogers, Petrosino, Huebner, & Hacsí, 2000; Rothman, 1997) we embarked on the process of developing our theory of action. Theory of action or programme theory in this context means our description of desired change as well as the interventions and strategies. Action evaluation, as argued by Jay Rothman, is useful for defining, promoting and assessing success of good work of good people who work together (Rothman, 2012). Friedman and Rothman convincingly posit that action evaluation helps to promote team building, and ‘provides a structured process and skills for helping people set goals in ways that build shared identity and internal commitment’ (Friedman & Rothman, 2015, p88). Indeed, as suggested in related literature, deploying the three action evaluation questions of ‘what, why and how’ proved very useful and appropriate.

The attraction to programme theory and action evaluation is their shared fundamental principles with action research and less of the narrower perception of evaluation as ‘primarily ex post facto and evaluative, or judgmental, in nature’ (Rothman, 1997, p121). Rothman observes that in its formative aspects, evaluation may be a powerful vehicle for forming clear and agreed-upon goals. Proponents of action evaluation are, in

¹⁶ The numbering is used in the quest to conceal the identity of the participants in the validation workshop, in line with standard research ethical practice.

particular, very firm in their arguments that the method is helpful in generating useful practical knowledge of how and what to change.

Our process of developing the theory of action started with a baseline survey involving the application of the three principal questions, namely *what*, *how* and *why*. We challenged each participant to individually think and write down his or her responses to the three questions. I organised the data in respect of each of the three principal questions under three separate folders. In the subsequent workshop on 22nd November, 2017, we subjected the data to individual and group analysis. In the next part of this section, I present the outcome of the analysis starting with the ‘why’ responses followed by ‘what’ and ‘how’.

6.4.1 Exploring and shaping change motives

I personally care passionately about success and teaching-learning change because once all these things are put into consideration, it helps both the lecturers and the students to have a conducive [...] atmosphere which favours the lecturers and students and at least there will be good improvement in terms of the students being produced i.e. the students will be having more skills and hands-on than they have theory and this will help take the name of the [institution] and also standards of the students in terms of competing for jobs. (Second year female crop science student)

This opening quote is testimony to the revealing statements by each of the ERT members on the source of their motivation and commitment to the change-seeking action research phase. Most students were keen to continue engaging in the action research process owing to the value that they anticipated to gain from their participation. In this category is a second-year human nutrition student who felt motivated owing to the prospects of being heard. She openly remarked that ‘*I have a chance of saying my problems and are listened to, and solved*’. The trust that the process would ultimately tackle the constraints to effective learning and entry into meaningful agricultural work was another significant source of many students’ motivation. One of the voices in this direction is by a second year male human nutrition student who observed that ‘It will make our tuition to be utilised very well if the lecturers attend... so we should be able to learn more’. Apparently, the sense of personal responsibility to contribute to a better social environment for own benefit and the wider community was also was a source of motivation for a couple of students. One such related statement is by a female human nutrition student:

As a student and student leader [...] I am driven to care deeply about everybody’s future and life after campus and mind about how much competition we shall have in the struggle for employment.

The sense of personal responsibility to contribute to quality agri-education practice and better learning outcomes was vivid in the justifications to embrace change by a couple of educators. A human nutrition lecturer in this category indicated that with improved performance, they would be able to:

Produce students that are highly competitive, able to rise to the challenge and very knowledgeable... Such students will be the future of Uganda considering that our economy is agriculturally based.

The realisation that the existing situation could not afford them the required resources and opportunities to improve students learning and employment outcomes was a shared source of most educators' commitment to the research process. For instance, one male agri extension lecturer who thought that the study would lead to improved supply of educational resources and facilities argued that:

As an educator, it is imperative that I churn out students who are able to succeed in our tough economy. A successful student to me is one who is able to notice opportunities around them and rise up to the challenge, in other words one who is versatile. In order to produce such a student at the end of the course, I need to have all the requirements in place, for instance the teaching labs that are well equipped, a computer lab with good Wi-Fi network, etc. This will enable me reach my full potential as an educator and as such my students will be able to get the best from me.

While expressing the confidence and trust that engaging in the change process would lead to improved educators' professional capacity to perform better and inspire students and educators, she remarked that:

Those students look up to us the educators to shape them for the world out there; we should be empowered to do just that.

It is evident that educators who were intrinsically motivated and committed to teaching as a vocation within its inherent moral, social and economic utility felt connected to the action research change-seeking phase. A male crop production lecturer reasoned that his motivation to further engage in the research to cause change was 'because we are accountable to the lives of these learners'. His female animal science counterpart stated that:

I [take] pride in using my position to cause effective change in people's lives, which can be better facilitated if there is change in the status quo.

Being part of the social process to contribute to transforming agri-education practice at the case study institution was another source of motivation for a sizeable category of both students and lecturers. The statements that reveal this social connection and moral obligation to support the transformation process include:

Have the [institution] as an incubation centre for a number of innovations and businesses by students, staff and community... to better the [institution] image... to influence other institutions in training agriculture students to embrace similar change. (Agriculture extension lecturer)

This shall improve on the image of the [institution] to produce highly skilled extension workers, leaving a good legacy of my professional work. (Human nutrition lecturer)

Essentially dealing with the 'why' question provided a great opportunity to clarify motivations for change and to further a sense of ownership and commitment to the change process and outcomes. Consequently, taking forward the conversation on the 'what' and 'how' questions seemed easier and smoother owing to the renewed interest and commitment.

6.4.2 Defining desired change

The collaborative analysis of responses to the question of what goals each individual ERT member had for the desired change process yielded nine goals:

- Lecturers motivated and enjoying their work
- More collaboration with industry
- Curriculum and teaching changed
- Attitudes of students, educators and administrators changed
- Effective leadership, administration and governance
- Open communication and better interpersonal relationships
- Improved practical teaching and learning
- Timely supply of resources and materials
- A tribalism-free social environment

The same analysis of the responses to the question of how the goals would be accomplished generated thirteen themes (see text box 7).

Text Box 7: Suggested themes for improving agri-education practice

- Practical skills development
- Curriculum relevance, coherence and suitability
- Industrial training
- Supply and utilisation of resource materials and facilities
- Leadership and management practices
- Career support and guidance
- Staff behavior and conduct
- Lecturers' competence and performance
- Student-lecturer relationships
- Welfare of students and lecturers
- Student background, enrollment and motivation
- Student voices in governance and administration
- Teaching-learning methods and practices

We subjected these themes to a prioritisation scrutiny in consideration of the opportunities and constraints presented by the operating environment, as well as the limitations set by the research design and purpose. We specifically challenged ourselves by addressing the question: *considering our research focus, what three core change themes should the ERT prioritise for the change engagement plan?* Owing to time constraints and related logistical challenges, it was not possible to subject our choices to the full rigour of force field analysis as earlier planned. Nevertheless, the ensued dialogue and open conversations yielded the consensus to undertake improvements under three interrelated core themes namely, industrial training¹⁷, practical skills development and career guidance.

During the subsequent workshop held on 21st February, 2018, we put the three change themes under deeper scrutiny for better decision making on the appropriate steps forward. While revisiting the exploratory findings as further distilled during earlier workshops and meetings, we generated a synthesis of the core concerns under each of the three themes (see text box 8 for details).

¹⁷ Industrial Training is the case study AET Institution's formal label for the component of the certificate and diploma course structure during which students are placed in off-campus workplaces for supervised agricultural experience. From here on in the rest of thesis, I interchangeably use the terms internship, vocational placements or work placement instead of industrial training to refer to organised learning at workplaces as part of the agriculture course curriculum.

Text Box 8: Change themes and concerns

Theme 1: Enhancing internship

- Informal and ineffective relationship between the AET institution and internship host institutions
- Students' assessment results and feedback not shared or used to enhance learning and vocational development
- Big number of internship students vis-à-vis known and available internship placements
- Inappropriate internship duration and timing
- Internship placements not properly identified and vetted
- Supervision not properly done
- Problematic financing of students' internship

Theme 2: Strengthening practical teaching of agriculture

- Limited integration of theory and practice in the teaching-learning practices of educators
- Students' negative attitudes towards practice-oriented course units such as farm practice
- Inadequate preparation, support and guidance by educators

Theme 3: Rationalising career support and guidance

- Lack of students' career guidance during recruitment and after enrolment
- Absence of counseling desks, departments and offices in charge of student career guidance
- There is no vibrant alumni association to link and connect students and graduates
- Busy schedule mind-set among some educators and administrators

In the midst of the zeal to fast track the implementation of improvements within the limits of the research, we focused on internship enhancement. As indicated elsewhere in this chapter, the internship enhancement engagements yielded a set of multiplier effects. Indeed, some engagements directly contributed to improved guidance of students and practical teaching. Congruent with our firm conviction about the effectiveness of an evidence-based approach to improving agri-education practice, we explored the stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the existing industrial training scheme.

Stakeholder's experiences and perceptions of work placements

The research associates and I embarked on a deeper exploration of the stakeholders' views and perceptions of the industrial training scheme of the case study AET institution. We mainly used qualitative data gathering techniques including interviews and review of documents such as previous students' placement reports, prospectus and brochures, as well as the proceedings of ERT workshops and meetings. We conducted open-ended

interview sessions with 10 industry actors. Four of the industry actors are experienced agri-entrepreneurs, the rest are employees with more than five years of practical experience in the fields of horticulture, crop and animal production. The majority of the industry actors had supervised the case study institution's students on placements in their agri-related enterprises or organisations. In addition to the open-ended interview sessions and online engagements with 23 graduates, we re-engaged 10 current students through in-depth interview sessions. The analysis of the aggregated stakeholders' experiences and perceptions is presented under five headings namely, preparation of students for work placements, students' work engagement, tracking students' workplace performance, supervision and support approach, assessment of performance, and value of work placements.

Preparation of students for work placements

The case study institution conducts briefing sessions to prepare students for placements. From the account of the institution stakeholders, it is apparent that the briefings take place prior to sending the students to the workplaces. Close to 400 students attend a briefing session that normally lasts about 3-5 hours. A second-year crop production student shares his experience about the duration, focus, and nature of the briefing sessions.

It was a one-day meeting... it took us like three hours. There were two facilitators [lecturers]... actually they were from extension department. They briefed us how it should be conducted, how it should be run, and they also gave us the logbooks to ease our noting... they also prepared us on how to come up with report after the work. They took us through the research report and proposal as a module, preparing us for the industrial training. (Student)

One of the case study institution administrators shared his thoughts about how the institution prepares students for the placements. Just like other stakeholders, he pointed out that the current practice is inadequate.

Our practice, I must say personally is not good enough in that we do not have a culture of attaching students to mentors or several students to supervisors much earlier. Early enough before students prepare to go for internships [...] we do not have a culture of having a rigorous preparation before we release students to get internships. Somehow, we hold a briefing, which is a short assembly but not adequate though. (Administrator)

Workplace supervisors induct and orient students during the initial stages of the placements, and this often takes place through group meetings involving interns from other education institutions. A livestock workplace supervisor explains:

Reaching the centres, they find the senior farm manager who then does orientation, on that very day... you talk about the organisation, the establishment of the farm, and you look at the operational units, sit and group them, then draft working plans, on a weekly basis. (Workplace supervisor)

His crop production counterpart explains that his farm undertakes regular orientation of at least 2 days during which they create opportunities for the students to express their expectations:

Day one they are reporting... you provide and organise dormitories, give them the necessary working gears, and they register in the data forms, because we need to have registered students, and then we do orientations... It is usually two to three days, and we do presentations, and also do farm tours. We also share expectations, where they tell us their expectations as we also tell them what our expectations are as well as communicating what our rules and regulations are... But at times we ask them, "You are going to be here for ten weeks, what do you expect?" So they will tell this, and that, so you list down what they say and at times you tell them maybe we shall not meet that. It is an interactive session. (Workplace supervisor)

Overall, the findings indicate that while the institution conducts short briefing sessions to ready the students for placements, different host organisations have their own different orientation procedures. Industry and the case study institution stakeholders converge in their opinion about the limited coordination between the institution and workplace stakeholders.

Students' work engagement

The host organisations determine work activities and tasks for students. The majority of work activities are within the routine production schedules of host organisations. Two of the workplace supervisors share their experience of how they determine what activities to assign students:

I just equally distribute them to different sections in the agriculture department... and while there, they are assigned roles on different tasks

depending on what is available. Students don't usually come with particular learning needs... So for me when the students come, I have to make a schedule and then dispatch them to the various sections for example... horticulture, agronomy, but there those who like some bit of mechanization, I place them under mechanics for some longer time, but I make sure they rotate. (Agro-industry workplace supervisor)

Being a practical training... we have where we say this is where you have to start from... with starting we always say, we have to start with the preparation of the soil. I have all the departments, which have this area to do next... soil preparation, irrigation, crop protection [etc.] until the end... and... depending on how the person needs the type of the training; [we] look at where it is most important depending on academic background. (Floriculture workplace supervisor)

All the workplace supervisors who participated in the study acknowledge the lack of a formal mechanism for coordinating with the institution staff in determining work activities and tasks for students. One agro-industry supervisor talked about his discretionary practice of making occasional consultations with lecturers for the case of agricultural mechanisation students. He explained that:

Apart from the institutions that are training tractor operators and drivers... So we go into some understanding with some people [some of those institutions)... they indicate the tasks which they want their students to engage in. Then for us here, we know the skills best for employment.

At some workplaces, students attend routine classroom lectures. The practice by such host institutions is to operate curricula with course titles and content similar to those offered at the case study institution.

Our system we use here is intensive integrated sustainable agriculture. So our curriculum is in that line. So, we train them animal husbandry, crop husbandry, how we manage those simple ailments, the appropriate technology, how can you do it as business, so that at least there is hands on what is from the university. (Workplace supervisor)

Lecturers and administrators generally expect the workplace supervisors to determine and assign work tasks to students. One of the animal production lecturers emphatically states that '*industry actors have a role to provide students with what to do*'. The lecturers corroborate the workplace supervisors about the lack of a mechanism for a shared

responsibility to determine work activities for students. Quite a number of students share experiences of engagement in peripheral or insufficient work routines owing to a number of climate change-related conditions and organisational challenges:

There was too much sunshine that some of the activities could not to go on well. (Student)

Lack of enough tools such as hoes, tools for spraying crops. (Student)

Industrial training is normally done during dry periods (seasons) which limits [us] from having wide experiences. (Student)

Inadequate exposure to the field activities, for example we only did mulching of bananas most of the time. (Student)

Poor planning for the activities on the farm by the farm staff members. (Student)

It is generally evident that students on placements do not engage in relevant and educative work activities and tasks, which undermines one of the fundamentals of internships.

Tracking students' performance

Students are required to maintain a log of their daily work activities. This constitutes the basis and evidence they use to compile weekly logs as well as the final placement report. Students have to follow a particular template of worksheets, which the institution stakeholders commonly refer to as a logbook. It contains four mandatory sections namely activities done & purpose, lessons & skills learnt from the activities done, relevance of the work activities to their professional growth, and workplace supervisor's comments.

The case study institution supervisors are expected to coordinate with their workplace counterparts to ensure that students maintain a logbook of daily work activities. The students are required to bring the logs to the attention of workplace supervisors for comment and guidance once every week. The lecturers have a duty to inspect the logbooks during their supervision visits. One of the lecturers explains that '*the students fill in a logbook on a daily basis, which the institution supervisor reviews when he or she visits the student*'. Some workplace supervisors devise their alternative ways of tracking students' work engagements as explained by one of them:

The student fills what has been learning for the whole week... then at the end of the week it is taken to the immediate supervisor for review and then they are brought here to my office every Monday by students themselves... [The assessment forms] must be signed by their respective supervisors.

...then for me, I have to endorse as Training Manager. At the end of the programme, they are supposed to use these summarised reports to write their final internship reports. Some institutions even have to come with their logbooks. (Agro-industry workplace supervisor)

The effective use of logbooks is highly constrained. First as indicated in the next section on supervision and support, the lecturers are not always able to visit the students on a regular basis as designed to provide prompt feedback and guidance to the students. Second, the majority of the experienced workplace supervisors are too busy to offer direct feedback to individual students.

Supervision and support approach

While workplace supervisors are expected to offer daily and constant guidance, their case study institution counterparts are required to make occasional supervisory visits to check on the students and provide on-site support and guidance. According to institution stakeholders, the lecturers are required to visit the student twice, though on many occasions it happens once, and there are instances of no visits at all. The stakeholders converge in their observation that the supervisory visits by lecturers often delay. When the lecturers visit the students, they provide support through individual and group meetings. The majority of graduates and current students reveal that such meetings last a maximum of two hours depending on the number of students and other logistical considerations.

The case study institution administrators assign supervisory roles to lecturers based on logistical convenience rather than their professional qualifications. They often assign more than 15 students to a single lecturer. Some of the institution stakeholders argue that this leads to a mismatch in terms of the required technical capacity and appropriate guidance. At workplaces, students are organised into workgroups or teams to ease supervision owing to the big numbers.

They [students] are given schedules according to the groups. The groups are made rotational. The schedule is determined at the beginning of the training. All units have a supervisor. In moments when there is an officer that is absent... I make sure that I supervise. In the poultry areas, all the time they have to do the tasks with a supervisor... because there is daily observation of the birds. For dairy, you can do it once and they get used for example breeding, feeding, since they are just routines. But piggery and poultry you have to be there always, there are many tasks like for instance collecting eggs. (Livestock workplace supervisor)

In the majority of cases, workplace supervisors assign their junior staff to work directly with the student teams. In some other instances, they organise students to work in groups on

their own. Some students say that such supervisors return to their regular workstations in offices or elsewhere outside the premises of the host organisation. This is common for crop and animal production where majority workplace supervisors do not physically work in the fields.

Generally, the stakeholders are not satisfied about the quality of supervision and guidance. The majority of students converge in their complaint about inadequate supervision.

Less supervision given to students by the [institution] whereby problems always happen on industry training organisations to students and no one at the [institution] follows-up. (Student)

Since most of the workers who are employed [by the host organisation] are not educated, [it was not possible to be guided into relevant work tasks]. (Student)

Poor supervision by concerned persons, which bring lack of concentration... lack of proper guidance by attendants. (Student)

Workplace supervisors, just like their case study institution counterparts, acknowledge the challenge of limited resources and work placements against the huge number of eligible students across the country.

Assessment of students' performance

Findings on the assessment of vocational placements reveal three key aspects. First is the purpose of assessment, which according to case study institution stakeholders, is mainly to satisfy certification and grading requirements for the award of final vocational qualifications. It is also evident that the majority of the workplace supervisors take assessment just as a routine that involves the filling of an evaluation form at the end of the placement. One exception is the practice of an agro-industry workplace supervisor who undertakes an initial assessment of students to determine their learning needs and needed support.

For me when these people come, I have an assessment form... the one I base on to give you a place. I deploy them into various departments depending on the profession... to make sure that they are working, I once in a while go there abruptly and investigate... the supervisor that I give an assessment form where the student fills what he/ she has been learning for the whole week, the challenges faced, lessons learnt, the skills acquired. Then at the end of the week, it's taken to the immediate

supervisor for review and then they are brought here to my office every Monday by students themselves that they must be signed by their respective supervisors. Then for me, I have to endorse as Training Manager. (Agro-industry workplace supervisor)

Second is the structure of assessment that comprises students' placement report, visiting case study institution supervisors' report, and workplace supervisors' evaluation form. The assessment checklist ideally focuses on attendance, logbook completeness and the students' knowledgeability, as well as the ability to articulate the work tasks undertaken during the placement. According to a couple of institution stakeholders, there is limited adherence to the use of assessment checklist and evaluation form. The students' placement report is increasingly becoming the only basis for determining performance and learning achievement. The report-writing guide prescribes five mandatory chapters or sections, including description of the host organisation, activities undertaken, skills attained, and recommendations.

Third is stakeholders' role in the assessment process. The case study institution expects the workplace supervisors to administer the evaluations forms and to involve the students in the assessment. Workplace supervisors submit the assessment outcome under sealed envelopes to the case study institution supervisors. Students are required to compile and submit the placement reports to the institution staff in charge of vocational placements. In turn, the staff assigns and distributes 5-10 reports to individual lecturers for marking and grading. One of the lecturers explains that 'the students submit the reports to the heads of department who in turn distributes to the rest of the lecturers for assessment'. Some case study institution stakeholders are concerned about the whole process of marking and assessment, including the quality and authenticity of students' placement reports. Another lecturer observes that 'the students [often] duplicate reports... reproduce reports of those who finished long time ago'.

Value of work placements

With varying reasons, all the stakeholders acknowledge and appreciate the value of vocational placements. From their individual perspectives but also as position holders, workplace supervisors share their experiences and perceptions about the value of vocational placements. For instance, to illustrate how he personally feels motivated and satisfied to support students even if it is not part of his job description, a workplace supervisor from the agro-industry sector said:

And you see there is no extra pay. They [my bosses] do not assess me in regards to how many students I catered for in the internship programme. It is about how many workers I have trained. To me I just do it because I am a Ugandan and I do it out of heart. (Livestock workplace supervisor)

He even argues for a policy to institutionalise vocational placements because according to him some of the institutions are 'ill-facilitating' the students and that 'they just give them a lot of theory, so internship is a platform to practice theories'. His counterpart from the livestock sector gives a detailed description of how the negative attitude of his workmates does not deter him from offering his support to students:

But some staff are not cooperative maybe because of lack of incentives or something else; to have a student and train, guide, equip until you produce someone who can go somewhere. So I find a problem that all universities do call me, even students themselves refer others to me. I had my boss, []... But he could hardly sit in office, once again, I was caught as in charge but at times I could find challenges really answering those questions yet you have your superior. So they are not interested, because there are two people: there is that oriented person, and that money minded person. So in the event really, on the other side I think you may not get what you wanted. But the good thing with me, that's not my practice. I actually am happy when I produce results, when I produce someone like me.
(Workplace supervisor)

Some workplace supervisors further explain that vocational placements are useful opportunities for their organisations to not only promote their products, but also to deliver on social corporate responsibility mandates. One of them is categorical:

It is marketing of course, we make ourselves known very much... It is also one way of identifying our potential future employees... because if we see someone behaving professionally, being organised, then we take note. When we wish to recruit, those are the people we first give attention. Then also, when those students are here, they provide some labour. When they are here, they work, can do compost, and apply chemicals like in horticulture. (Mixed farming workplace supervisor)

Other workplace supervisors appreciate the feedback that the students offer as part of the placement reports. A couple of workplace supervisors argue that placements serve as a mechanism for identifying and obtaining labour, which one of them describes as cheap.

It is also one way of identifying our potential future employees... because if we see someone behaving professionally; being organised, then we take note. When we wish to recruit, those are the people we first give attention. Then also, when those students are here, they provide some labour.
(Floriculture workplace supervisor)

Because for us we have a list of those students that we identify as 'cream'. If I want a doctor, I go to our list and we make calls. So and so, did you get a job? And they say, yes or I do not have, then we say, go there or come. (Livestock workplace supervisor)

Sometimes we would retain good students, because of the skills they have got. Being a business, we need cheap labour. That is why on our staff, educated staff is limited, but we use more of the casual labour... So we thought that when we do internship, these are learned people, and when they come here for three months, first you get labour, and we thought that at least we would be saving some money. In fact, being a business entity, in other places they pay interns a fee, but here we do not pay them instead they pay us. (Mixed farming workplace supervisor)

Lecturers and administrators justify the usefulness of vocational placements. In one of the research meetings, they collectively argued that vocational placements bridge the gap between theory and practice. They explained that vocational placements help students gain experience and confidence, and give students a broader look at agriculture that facilitates mind-set change. A number of lecturers are convinced that vocational placements not only supplement the meagre training resources at the institution, but also enable the students to establish connections and relationships with prospective employers.

Through practicum [vocational placements]... [the students] are able to understand whether this plant is resistant or not. [They] could go to the industry... they are able to get those skills that those people need and... eventually they can be employed in those farms. So, through such arrangements with the industries, I think many students could be brought on board. (Lecturer)

Students and graduates concur in justifying the vocational placements as valuable opportunities to deepen understanding, and to link theory and practice (see quotes below).

Industrial training is good [because you are able] to appreciate and internalise what is taught in theory, especially in animal diseases. (Graduate)

I acquired more skills and knowledge about many cases in animals and how to handle them successfully... it also enabled me to be confident. (Student)

Generally, while the findings revealed that stakeholders are making attempts and indeed value work placements, they are grappling with challenges relating to preparation of students for placements, supervision, guidance and assessment stand in the way to educative work placements.

6.5 Improvements to vocational placements and guidance enacted

Complementing the insights drawn from the analysis of the findings on stakeholders' experiences and perceptions, we undertook a joint inquiry and search for more practical knowledge on good practices to further inform our action choices for better vocational placements and guidance. The joint inquiry team comprised of the author, research associates, lecturers and the students. We made joint exposure visits to two internship schemes. One of them is a unique one-year community practice component of a rural development bachelors' study programme offered by a social transformation-oriented university located in Western Uganda. The other is an urban-based agro enterprise, which runs a three months internship scheme for students from several universities and VET institutions across the country. The internship scheme was, at the time of this study, a beneficiary of the World Bank-supported skills development facility managed by the Private Sector Foundation Uganda.

Further, I supported this process with the review of local and international literature on workplace learning in the context of VET (Bahl & Dietzen, 2019; Mikkonen, Pylväs, Rintala, Nokelainen, & Postareff, 2017). The review generated useful insights that helped the ERT members to widen their imagination and appreciate the contemporary discourses on connecting theory and practice through work placements. I also drew the attention of the ERT to relevant elements from a couple of VET systems that infuse work placements and career guidance into curriculum activities such as the Dutch VMBO/MBO¹⁸ model. I gleaned these elements from my simple observation and field notes from a series of one-on-one consultations that I held with five VET teachers and 2 administrators during the familiarisation visits that I made to some Dutch VET institutions between 2016 and 2017.

6.5.1 Benchmarks of good practice developed

On the basis of this combined knowledge base derived from the experienced actors' perspectives, and as enriched by the literature review outcome, the ERT developed

¹⁸ MBO is an integrated system of secondary vocational education in the Netherlands which brought the formerly separate systems of school-based VET and apprenticeship into one system (Onstenk & Blokhuis, 2007)

benchmarks or standards of good quality internship (see text box 9 for the list of benchmarks). The benchmarks serve as standards of good practice in the context of the case study AET institution, and also reflect the anticipated changes or outcomes. The elaborated framework, which we labelled *internship model*, stipulates the outputs and elements under each benchmark. While the elements specify the particular activities or actions, the outputs are a description of the immediate achievements derivable from the inputs and resources invested in the creating the desired change as captured by the benchmarks.

Text box 9: Benchmarks of good internship practice

Effective internship governance

- Internship management and coordination mechanism established
- Internship guidelines developed and in use

Quality internship placements

- Database of vetted host institutions that meet set criteria in place
- Communication procedure developed and in use

Effective AET institution-industry relations

- Memoranda of understanding with internship host institutions and individuals in place
- A platform for regular interaction between institution and industry actors established

Appropriate timing and duration

- Work placements done for a reasonable duration and at appropriate stages of the institution course structure with connection to food and agricultural production patterns at host institution

Empowering supervision and support

- Internship supervision and mentorship standards established and upheld
- Framework for mentors' conduct and focus internalised, and guides practice and conduct
- Internship resource materials available and utilised

Effective assessment and grading

- Framework for participatory assessment in use
- Functional mechanism of sharing Internship experiences established and implemented

We developed a handbook to guide and facilitate the effective implementation of the model. The collaborative process of developing the handbook involved the research team working in groups on particular tools namely (i) internship calendar, (ii) ToR for internship committee, (iii) ToR for internship coordinator, (iv) student internship workbook, (v) host institutions' ranking matrix & vetting guide, (vi) mentor's guide, (vii) MoU template, (viii) internship monitoring indicators, and (ix) action researcher's note book. The research

associates and I provided constant professional guidance to the groups through a variety of communication media including phone meetings, WhatsApp and emailing.

On 23rd May, 2018, we formally presented the internship model to the top management team in a briefing meeting chaired by the principal. The meeting agreed to a partial implementation and piloting of the model to ascertain the feasibility of each of the proposed elements. On 30th May, 2018, we held a planning meeting to assess the implementation possibilities against the existing institutional, logistical and organisational preparedness. In view of the existing organisational and logistical realities, we took the following steps in the context of the routine July-August 2018 work placements for diploma students.

- Provided all interested lecturers with a ranking matrix and score guide to collect data for informing the development of a database for vetted institutions that can offer quality placements.
- The 12 ERT members who volunteered to participate in the piloting of the model sought to try out all the elements to the extent possible.
- ERT members engaged host institutions and students as assigned to them through the routine procedure by the office in charge of placements.
- Advocated for each ERT member to be allocated not more than 10 students to allow optimal time for undertaking a range of tasks as prescribed under the benchmark on empowering supervision and support.

6.5.2 The harvest, steps to institutionalise good practice

In line with our implementation strategy, the ERT members used a reflection tool to document their actions and observations, indicating what worked and did not, as well as the reasons behind all the happenings. In a subsequent workshop on 17th October, 2018, we undertook a collaborative review of the pilot implementation of the model. While we realised the piloting process could not follow the planned framework and schedule to yield all the expected outcomes, we also identified positive attainments.

Towards a database of quality placements and better relationships

Most of the lecturers used the vetting and score guide thus generating valuable input for developing a database of vetted internship host partner agri-institutions and enterprises. Some inspiring and courageous voices on what went well in respect to vetting of host institutions include that of a female animal science lecturer who observed that:

The vetting of the institutions... was a good thing because, I did not realise how important it was until I got to a place, they had sent me to two places,

but it was actually the same place... in our [old] database we are sending students to two different places yet it's the same place.

The new way of approaching workplace stakeholders, especially the supervisors, yielded better indications and possibilities for institutionalised relationships and partnerships with industry actors. A number of ERT members reported that indeed several host institutions were much willing to discuss and explore the opportunities for increased formalised linkages. For instance, one of the ERT reported, that:

The institution agreed on signing a memorandum of understanding in future because currently most equipment and nutrition unit is not available. (Human nutrition lecturer)

From supervisor to mentor identity

On my part as supervisor now transitioning to mentor, it is still a learning process. Students do not know how to deal with mentors. They still approach us as supervisors with a lot of fear and trying hard to impress... We need a little patience plus pushing in order to allow some adjust and the rest to change and embrace the new way of doing things for the better. We should not get discouraged but rather keep making baby steps until we reach our goal. (Horticulture lecturer)

This opening quote from one of the ERT members is communicative of the lecturers' emergent realisation and volition to shift away from a supervision mentality to mentorship for better guidance of the students. Other testimonies indicate the appreciation of being *mentors* rather than *supervisors*:

I received six students which I realised is a manageable number for the one-on-one sessions ... I spent ample time with the students... the interaction was very telling. (Horticulture lecturer)

The one-on-one mentorship has already started at... and it was amazing. Each workplace supervisor is attached to a maximum of three students and it was lovely. (Agriculture economics lecturer)

These quotes further communicate the cumulative change in professional practice partly arising from the learnings gained through participating in the different action activities, including the implementation of the internship model pilot phase. Indeed, the ERT

continually argued for a paradigm shift from supervision as control and ensuring compliance to empowering supervision and support.

To further accelerate the nurturing of mentoring skills and attributes, we organised a workshop on 4th July, 2018. This mentoring workshop was designed and delivered through a partnership involving Mentor Coach Empower Uganda (MCE) and Restless Development – both NGOs with considerable practise expertise in positive youth development, transition and career guidance interventions. One of the research associates with profound experience in the use of participatory learning methods, together with the ERT team leaders, provided the required methodological leadership and social climate. This well attended and fruitful workshop focused on four themes namely, internship theory and practice, mentoring and mentorship in internships, mentoring skills and attributes, and internship resource materials and tools. One of the testimonies that closely attributes the emergent mentor identity to participation in the research include:

The mentoring bit of it. I remember that workshop about mentorship versus supervision, so it helped me improve so now I can proudly say I am a mentor I have gone beyond just supervising them at least I go ahead to mentor them and we keep that interaction going. (Female animal science lecturer)

Vivid personal empowerment

The analysis of field data and oral testimonies by most of the ERT members reveals a great sense of personal empowerment, reflexivity and increased individual responsibility accumulated from participating in the action research process. Within this context is a related testimony by one of the students on the ERT who observed that:

Personally, it [research process] has increased my confidence because the first time were invited, people were asking, ‘eeeh, what is going to happen?’ You begin asking who is also going to attend. But it’s all about you, it’s all about how you perceive things. My mind-set has really changed, I don’t have to begin saying: are you coming for action research? Are you going to be there? I don’t have to think about it that maybe my colleagues are not going to be there, I come on my own which wasn’t possible before. Okay I used to say that, eeeh! Since everyone was saying that lecturers are not good to talk to... I had something in me that, why... because you can’t know how bad someone is before interacting with them. (Student on the ERT)

Several quotes from the numerous self-assessments by the lecturers on how the engagement in the action research activities impacted their personal conduct, professional practice and interpersonal relationships include:

So, what mainly struck me was when we discovered or I discovered students knew us very well. So, through action research it has helped me change the way I conduct myself in class, on the compound of the institution and outside because you discover everywhere you go you will find a [institution name withheld] student. So, action research has helped me change. It has also helped me change the way I present in class sometimes because we had these students say they never wanted to come here, they came because they were forced to. So, when they come to [institution name withheld] like now the last doing... let me do this after all it's the parents who want it. So through action research I have learnt to stand in class and encourage students that what they are doing is good and they can be better persons. It has helped me help them discover their good and discover their worth that they can have better futures once they concentrate on what they are doing. (Female human nutrition lecturer)

You know with upheavals in [case study institution], there are times when I thought this person I may not even talk to but I think with this research team I can talk to everybody... and I think I have also changed the way I am teaching. These days of course, you know in the past it would be those theories. You go you even dictate and so on and so forth. These days it's usually more interactive, give students work and they go do research and present, which I think is something very interactive. (Female animal science lecturer)

Personally, the research has risen up the need in me to always be keen in whatever I do. Being aware of my environment and myself. Professionally, the research has made me yearn for becoming a better instructor through paying attention to the needs of students. (Female crop science lecturer)

I have learnt to listen effectively to students' voices, to allow students be in charge of the learning process and to strive to be a mentor than a supervisor or master. And has also improved on my listening skills. (Male human nutrition lecturer)

From my experience as a student of [because I am a former student of [institution name withheld] the lectures of majority of the time which were

theories, they are practical, the research has helped me to change my way of instruction and interaction with students to get more practically involved in the ways I am interacting with them. (Male animal science lecturer)

Two of the new entrant lecturers at the time of launching the action research process make revealing comments about how the research shaped their attitude and approach.

It [validation workshop for the exploratory findings] was a wakeup call. Basing on the cry of the students on conduct and pedagogical practice of educators, the points mentioned by the students. I have also changed the way I present in my class... sometime on career guidance and have some practical sessions, help students know themselves that they are the best in their capacity. [Female human nutrition lecturer]

I came to [the case study institution] the time when the research had started. But within a month we had a validation... was it a feedback workshop! ... when I heard the comments of the students that in a way focused me and like it was a reminder that you are here but this is what students think about the lecturers, so steer-clear to some of these things... to me it was an opportunity to deliver well because the research spoke to me when I had just come in and it was giving me voices from the people I was going to serve. And now onwards I would make sure that at least all my lectures have some bit of career guidance. If I have two hours can take of some 15 minutes to do career guidance... and some practical approach much as I am teaching a business course. (Female human nutrition lecturer)

Activism to institutionalise good practice

While the ERT attained some improvements in a number of interrelated aspects of agri-education practice at the case study AET institution, a set of coordination, communication and financial difficulties stifled the team members' motivation and preparedness to unleash their full potential. Moreover, the encountered difficulties made clear the impact of weak institutional leadership and management as uncovered by the exploratory findings and further confirmed by the subsequent cycles of reflections. However, the ensuing debate on structural impediments to effective implementation of desired improvements consolidated the call and urge to plug the tried elements of good practice and benchmarks into the policy and governance infrastructure of the institution. It invoked earlier sentiments to infuse the benchmarks into the World Bank-funded Uganda Skills Development Project (USDP), which

for some time has been dealing with similar issues and concerns at the case study AET institutions and others elsewhere in the country.

With the activism of individual ERT members, we engaged the head of the case study AET institution and the Dalhousie University representatives in charge of USDP interventions to argue for the institutionalisation of the research outputs and incomes. Consequently, the decision to integrate the relevant internship benchmarks (effective governance, industry relations and empowering supervision) into the plans to establish an industry liaison unit and advisory board was made during in a joint advocacy-oriented meeting held on 14th May, 2019. Further, the head of the institution pledged to present the internship innovation and its financial implications to the governing council for approval during the fiscal year 2019/2020. While it would be naïve to assume that despite the huge structural impediments that were experienced during the research process, the pledge and exhibited activism of the ERT were a definite assurance for sustainable change actions, the hope for a continued conversation and agitation for better agri-education practice is not far-fetched.

6.6 Reflections on the action research process and outcomes

The rewarding process of engaging social actors of the case study AET institution to improve education practice for better student outcomes uncovered the opportunities and challenges that underline educational change. I present my reflections based on the experience of applying some action research principles and techniques in initiating and enacting a couple of improvements to optimise agricultural education processes and outcomes. I use the voices of the participants to further contextualise and legitimise my reflections.

6.6.1 Change supporting conditions

Our change-seeking actions focused on specific issues and concerns as presented under the preceding sections. We relied on the empowering and emergent nature of action research to generate the conditions for supporting change efforts because we did not explicitly focus on changing ineffective policies and structures, which Michael Fullan calls ‘wrong drivers for whole system reform’ (Fullan, 2016a, p539). We witnessed the *feel-good* effect of the established communicative space. The resultant sense of ownership of the change process improved relationships, commitment, teamwork, and motivation for social learning, and action became evident. One related expressive testimony was made during a regular reflection workshop, when one of the ERT members remarked that she was energised to contribute to change by ‘being part of a growing and encouraging team... action research has helped me to grow and have a healthy relationship’.

On a number of occasions, we witnessed the multiplier effect of adhering to the participatory virtues of action research when co-researchers and those outside the research infrastructure began to talk and act in ways that clearly indicated a realisation of the need for change. The first occasion was during the exploratory stage of action research phase when, as observed by Cammarota & Fine (2008), the exploratory findings became launching pads for ideas and debate for change. By the time of the stakeholders' workshop that validated the findings in 2018, the change debate on discriminatory tendencies had gained momentum, which compelled some administrators to pronounce themselves on the matter. For instance, one of the decision makers on the governing council revealed that:

This is an issue [tribalism] that has been to council so many times. But I must say, and I must assure you that we know the source very, very well... Of course, tribalism is defined differently according to one's understanding, but there is a level where it is too much and it indeed indicates real tribalism... it is good it has come up also here but I am only giving you an assurance that it is going to be over. (Governing council member)

In the subsequent weeks, we also witnessed the removal of signposts for the ethnic-based student organisations, which, according to most of the stakeholders, had diverted from the mission of unity in diversity and instead promoted discrimination and ethnic tensions.

The motivation and energy to advocate for change were more evident when most ERT members steadily sought to influence and take some control over the decisions and actions relating to teaching and learning. For instance, they successfully argued for the integration of some elements of the internship model into the plans to create an industry liaison office, which among others involved the establishment of the industry advisory board for education and industry actors. The emergent social solidarity transformed the ERT into some sort of 'enclave' (Friedman, 2011), which gradually attempted to act as a challenger to the established organisational culture. The ERT members became clear in their quest for change of the agri-education practice at the case study institution.

Changed educators' perception, as well as enhanced motivation and empowerment, yielded some pedagogical dividends. Reminiscent to the view that by taking action to change situations one is personally changed in the process (Marx in Susman & Evered, 1978), ERT members reported that on a number of occasions they acted differently in their pedagogical responsibilities as a result of intentional reflexive thoughts on their own practices. For instance, during the final action research review meetings, one of them stated:

I am proud because when I see the changes which have happened in... I am always very proud to associate myself to having caused these changes,

especially when we had the validation workshop, I remember I participated a lot, and from that day we have caused serious changes, no more selling of notes, most of those things, and I think I am proud of being a cause to that change. (Crop science lecturer)

Overall, the action research processes contributed to the generation of some of the conditions under which, as argued by educational change authors such as Fullan (2016), people become motivated to change. However, it is evident that durable whole system improvements of agricultural education practice would be more feasible through a simultaneous focus on all the critical components of the system and enhanced interrelationships (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Indeed, our action research corroborates the evidence-based premium that (Ndaruhutse, Jones, & Riggall, 2019) accord to systems thinking in dealing with chronic impediments to optimisation of educational change. On many occasions during the change enacting engagements, the interconnectedness of all the issues and challenges identified during the exploratory stage and further distilled by the subsequent reflection cycles made plain the need for a systems approach to educational change. In this thread of whole system approach to improvement, I argue that it is key to foster the agency of fine social actors to influence institutional and organisational culture for ensuring systemic change.

6.6.2 Time scarcity dilemma: the most prevalent difficulty

Sustaining the full participation of all frontline social actors in the processes of identifying and tackling challenges to effective agri-education practice was arguably one of the most prevalent difficulties experienced throughout the entire action research enterprise. Most of the educators and administrators would repeatedly express the anxiety to find enough time to fully engage in the research activities, and they could hardly concentrate on their pedagogical routines. They were evidently, on a routine basis, juggling direct pedagogical duties with participation in all sorts of tasks and assignments such as consultative curriculum review workshops, capacity building events, staff meetings, ceremonies for dignitaries and organising study trips or sports days. On the list of these many curricular and non-curricular time-consuming engagements is the educators' search for alternative ways of supplementing their meagre financial earnings. Moreover, they seemingly do not grasp the cause and remedy to their 'always-busy' tendencies against the backdrop of repeated concerns over poor performance and marginal outcomes.

The reality of frontline education social actors' time use and scarcity dilemma corroborates earlier reflections on related collaborative research in Uganda (Tukundane, 2015; Wabule, 2017). It is also a mirror of the increasing trend of educational institutions becoming beehives of activities by all sorts of actors including government departments, NGOs, donor agencies, business enterprises and cultural institutions. In effect, this study

supports considerations to strategically situate social actors' time use and accountability within the discourses on resource management for improving agri-education practice. Further, the study points to the complex position of AET educators against the pressure for time resulting from competing tasks that originate from different power centres.

6.6.3 Resources and autonomy to enact change elusive

This study elucidated the relevance of the notion that change is resource-hungry and the plausible thesis for agentic role of local actors in educational change (Fullan & Miles, 1992). While the action research process yielded the participation dividends of motivation, knowledge, and commitment to change by the frontline actors, particularly those on the ERT, the time constraint dilemma combined with insufficient supply of management, logistical and material resources to undermine progress. The availability of token logistical, financial and material resources from the recurrent budget of the case study institution and from the World Bank-supported project at the time offered a transient possibility to implement some curriculum improvement actions relating to the delivery of practice-based agricultural education in partnership with industry actors.

However, it is evident that transforming agricultural education practice can hardly be sustained amidst resource scarcity. Good resourcing practice to meet the financial cost of change efforts, in addition to building the psychosocial resources such as motivation and commitment, is clearly an integral element of educational change. Also, this study revealed that all financial, material and psychosocial resources combined without ample time hardly contribute to sustainable educational change. As well argued by Fullan and Miles, 'change is learning' and learning is a process that requires good time for actors to accumulate the capacity to embrace change and its accompanying anxiety, difficulties and uncertainties (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p749). Boog (2003) argues that time is needed to develop the required technical, professional and relational skills and attributes to pursue change.

The interventionist phase of this study illuminated the centrality of frontline education social actors' autonomy and authority to initiate and implement change in an institution whose cultural practice is embedded in hierarchical power relations underlined by different macro, meso and micro power centres. Throughout this phase, and as presented elsewhere in the thesis, it is evident that most educators and administrators individually hold intentions to do things differently but are suppressed by confining policy and institutional arrangements. The ERT members always argued that the research process would be more impactful if they had the power to make things happen. During the final review workshop on 2nd May, 2019, one of the ERT members reiterated this position. According to him, the ERT's performance in respect to implementation of the internship model was slightly below average:

45% is what I would give [to our performance in regard to piloting the internship model]. And this just because we have had restrictions on how far we can go in achieving, but it would most likely be higher than that if all the powers were all in our hands. (Animal science lecturer)

Apparently even the top administrators of the case study AET institution would wish to cause change, but are seemingly not able to initiate and manage it owing to limited command of authority to mobilise and deploy resources. It is evident that administrators as individuals would recognise that things were not moving in the right direction but they lacked the means to direct or push for change actions. The administrators have limited influence over financing and investment decisions for improving agri-education practice. Top bureaucrats in the ministries of agriculture and education, through the Governing Council enjoy the privilege and authority to conceive and sanction resources for routine curriculum activities and change efforts. One may wonder how the practice of having frontline educators and administrators represented on the Governing Council constitutes authentic and democratic participation of local actors in making the decisions to resource educational change.

6.6.4 Faithfulness to action research virtues sometimes thwarted

Amidst the good intentions and resolve to undertake the study phase using action research, realities at the case study AET institution could not allow full faithfulness to all the approach's participatory and democratic ethos. This should not be surprising because as observed by Van der Linden and Zeelen 'due to difficulties entering the field, logistical obstacles and time constraints', optimum application of all elements of action research and exhaustive pursuit of its ideal spiral character is easier said than done (Van der Linden & Zeelen, 2008, p195). It was not possible to undertake full cycles of reflection, learning and action in respect of the three themes as earlier anticipated.

The ambition to ensure full and equal participation of social actors in the different cycles of the action and reflection could not be realised. The social actors' time scarcity dilemma combined with culturally embedded change-resisting practices – such as the habitual subordination of lecturers' voices in decision making – to undermine full participation. The empowerment and participation zeal of the ERT members seemed to fade on occasions of interface with top decision makers on matters that seemed to fundamentally challenge existing systems and practices. So entrenched are the subordination feelings amongst some social actors that, for instance, permission to act on anything would be expected to come from top management. Many expressed the feeling that any challenge to established practice would, for instance, easily trigger subtle disciplinary sanctions. According to most lecturers, one of the common sanctions was being

deprived of the opportunity to be delegated with duties or responsibilities that are considered to be attractive with some financial incentive.

Such feelings as compounded by social forces inside and outside the AET institution were often vivid in restraining individual agency enhancement. Further, the latent mistrust and damaged social relationships fuelled by ethnically driven tensions, corruption accusations and general poor leadership could easily frustrate individual and collective empowerment (Boog, 2003) to flourish and expand the horizons of change for better agri-education practice. A larger change infrastructure was needed to renew, enhance and sustain interpersonal relationships amongst the social actors, but it could not be established by our action research enterprise.

The frustration encountered in the attempts to optimise students' full participation in the different action research stages is one of my hardest experiences in the entire study owing to the centrality of the theme on student agency. The structured nature of curricula and restrictive teaching-learning practice at the case study institution could not afford students the required time and motivation for meaningful participation in all the key action research stages. While the ERT made consistent efforts to avoid token participation (Wilmsen, 2008), the domineering institutional culture foiled the enthusiasm to fully optimise students' voice and participation.

6.6.5 Outsider positionality, research team's mediating role

My outsider identity and its influencing nature, which of course could lead to prejudiced decisions and actions, were ably brought under scrutiny and check by the expanded research team (ERT). The team, which gradually and steadily transformed itself into a driving machine of the action research project, served as a platform for not only negotiating interests, expectations and assumptions but also conceiving change options. It provided the required collective stewardship for change. Clearly the ERT served beyond being a feedback mechanism (Boog et al., 2008; Tukundane, 2014). Indeed the ERT served as a linkage and negotiation platform for change possibilities, but also as a learning platform for enhancing collective capacity building.

The team's mediating role played out prominently during moments of apparent institutional politics (Coghlan & Shani, 2008), which I could not have fully comprehended had I operated as a solitary researcher. For instance, when one of the top administrators of the case study institution objected to our plan to conduct a validation workshop in 2017, the ERT was instrumental in renegotiating permission, thus averting the looming threat to the opened conversation space. Further, the process of designing and piloting the internship model relied heavily on the team's enhanced empowerment and motivation to navigate inherent institutional and relationship power dynamics. This capacity emerged from the intersection of experiential knowledge and insights from the insider co-researchers and the outsider perspectives of the research associates and myself as principal

researcher, thus illuminating the strategic potential of 'outsiders in collaboration with insiders' positionality in action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p31).

Chapter 7 Conclusions and implications

7.1 Introduction

This study is an in-depth examination of personal and contextual influences on Ugandan young people's education-employment transitions, with a focus on agriculture, and an exploration of how to improve transition processes for optimising young people's learning and labour market outcomes. Limited young people's education-employment transition is a critical issue with far reaching implications, as variedly elucidated by research, policy studies and key global development blueprints particularly since the early 2000s. In chapter two, I point out the pertinent issues and trends while discussing how the exponential social, ecological and technological changes escalate the global reality of difficult youth transitions. This study is premised on the understanding that SSA's high population growth combines with perennial macroeconomic structural bottlenecks to further strain the already weak education system and poor performing employment sector to complicate young people's access to meaningful education and decent work opportunities. Relatedly, as pointed out elsewhere in this thesis, the escalating limited youth transition in SSA presents leeway for some actors in the public sector, business, philanthropy and the academia to make all sorts of propositions and claims of how to enhance young people's education-employment transitions. One such proposition is that while increased youth engagement in agriculture may lead to better labour market outcomes, the young people's poor perception of the sector stifles the effectiveness of related policy and practice.

The inception of this study as informed by my earlier research and engagements in youth education and work got immersed into this discourse of agriculture as a driver of employment for African young people. Initially, I was less critical of the associated deficit narratives that, for instance, young people seem not to possess the volition for personal development and that they are not willing to plunge their education and work life into agriculture. This study has, however, positively influenced my conceptualisation of young people and their potential to contribute to individual and social change. It has consequently strengthened my argument against certain claims and deficit narratives that often misrepresent and conceal the agency of young people. This study evolved under three phases namely, the orientation phase with an empirical focus on 7 agricultural youth employment interventions (AYEIs); exploration of personal, social and institutional influences on young people's pursuit of agricultural education and work pathways; and the interventionist action research phase which sought to transform agricultural education practice at a case study AET institution. The orientation phase findings confirmed some

insights that I had drawn from the indicative literature review. For instance, the review had revealed that most youth employment promotion interventions use project-based approaches, which are deficient of the required institutional arrangements to prepare young people for sustained engagement in agriculture as a sector of meaningful career paths. Further, neither the orientation study phase nor the indicative literature review yielded credible evidence of a deliberate practical intervention or social inquiry that is anchored into a long-term framework for promoting meaningful youth engagement in Uganda's agriculture and food industry. It is against this background that I made a choice to focus on formal AET delivery during the second phase of the study. This phase involved the engagement of social actors (AET educators, administrators and students) from seven vocational training institutes and one tertiary AET institution.

The indicative literature review had also confirmed that research and evaluative studies on formal AET predominantly generate descriptive data about the structural constraints that institutions face in their function to prepare young talents for work in the sector. Studies on youth interest in AET apparently focus less on what happens when young people enter into AET institutions, and how they navigate the difficult education and work pathways. Moreover, such studies rarely engage frontline AET social actors in the search for ways of improving agri-education processes and outcomes. Accordingly, I made a choice to directly engage and interact with frontline social actors of the case study AET institution in searching and enacting change actions for better student learning and labour market outcomes. Throughout the entire research process, I aimed to transcend structural accounts and capture agentic accounts to understand and unleash individual motivation and personal reflections of frontline social actors.

Aware of the overbearing social arrangements that shape youth transition, I constructed an integrated transformative theoretical and methodological framework. The framework is built on the concepts of agency, freedom, capabilities and emancipation drawn from the capabilities approach, socio-ecological model of agency and social constructivist learning epistemologies. The theoretical ideals of craftsmanship and vocational pedagogy support the analysis of quality issues and concerns as they relate to agri-education practice.

The study purpose and research questions fit firmly in an interpretive paradigm of understanding human actions from the standpoint of knowledge as personal, subjective and unique. The qualitative mode of inquiry afforded the tools of interacting with key stakeholders from the AYEIs and AET institutions in their natural environment, while paying attention to their meanings and interpretations of reality. The qualitative case study's versatility and compatibility with other research approaches afforded a meaningful application of action research principles in pursuit of our practice-oriented social inquiry for appropriate ways of improving agri-education practice.

7.2 Conclusions

In this section, I draw conclusions from the synthesis of the findings in chapters four, five and six. I present the conclusions under seven headings as informed by the study's frame of reference and the research questions.

7.2.1 Determinants of young people's pursuit of AET pathways

The interplay of passion, aptitude, sense of citizenship responsibility, desire for social recognition, and perceived employment utility of agricultural qualifications in influencing young people's consideration to pursue AET is evident. While a small minority of students and graduates attribute their interest in agriculture to sheer passion, the vast majority's motivation is driven by outcome expectations and absence of possible alternatives. Personal belief is also mentioned by a couple of students and graduates as a determinant of the consideration for AET pathway.

The findings confirm the impactful influence of families, high school and social network of friends and significant others in shaping the decisions of when to study, what AET course to pursue and at what institution. It is evident that all the students and graduates were introduced to agriculture as a subject within the high school curriculum framework. The majority of young people attribute the positive influence of high school to three main sources namely, encouragement by teachers, study tours and school gardens. A few students mentioned food preparation related activities as a source of motivation. Farming background of families was mentioned as a positive influence by a small minority of students and graduates. Inspiration and instructive advice from family members features prominently in the majority of young people's narration of how the decisions on what AET institution and course to join were made.

While a small minority of young people said that pursuing AET was a predetermined preference, a significant majority described the decision as an alternative after failing to attain the required academic grade to join university. A couple of students and graduates in this category said that they had childhood dreams to pursue university degree programmes in animal and crop science on completion of UACE. In fact, none of the students and graduates who participated in this study had attained the required UACE grade to pursue a degree study programme in agriculture or veterinary medicine. Perceived AET institution affordability, reputation and proximity combine to influence decisions on what AET institution to join. According to this study, such information and advice is provided to young people by parents, teachers, peers and significant others in the social network of friends and relatives. None of the participants in this study mentioned a single experience of organised advice by high schools or even the AET institutions, thus confirming the endemic shortage of institutionalised educational and vocational guidance before, during and after enrolment of students.

7.2.2 AET as driver of youth transition: tussle of hope and promise

Findings indicate that while lower and tertiary AET seemed never to have been a first option for majority of current and former students, the perceived potential as a driver of quick transition to employment is a source of hope for all young people. Parents, friends and significant others conceive it as a promising educational and career path for young people. However, the findings on the perceptions and experiences of young people and educators reveal a struggling AET sub sector, barely delivering on hope and promise.

A vast majority of young people poorly perceive and rates the learning environments at AET institutions. They converge in their poor rating of physical facilities and social climate characterised by general negligence of their health and social-emotional wellbeing. There are contrasting opinions about the quality and adequacy of learning content, with a significant minority of students and graduates dismissing some course units as useless. While a small minority of young people speak positively of the frontline social actors, the rest of the students and graduates, especially those from the tertiary AET institution, fault the conduct and competence of some educators and administrators mainly on grounds of absenteeism, tribalism, corruption or favouritism, and poor interpersonal relationships. However, it is remarkable that there are some students and graduates who fondly speak about the cordial and very productive relationships with individual educators.

The majority of educators are generally pessimistic about young people's ability to direct their decisions and actions within their emerging multiple identities. The findings reveal that the perception that young people are generally not interested in agriculture is so strong that, educators often ignore the reality that enrolled students are in the process of transition with new identity formation aspirations. It is evident that the majority of educators think that students are not able to judge the consequences of their decisions and actions. Such educators strongly feel that students get diverted from study and academic obligations by engaging in social roles including sexual relations that are culturally considered a preserve of mature adults. This deficit narrative that young people lack the maturity and social competence for making good decisions and for taking appropriate actions is further illuminated by the educators' arguments in favour of measures to control student decisions and conduct. However, there are voices of a small minority of educators who view students from a positive perspective.

In addition to social relationship challenges between and among the social actors, there are huge pedagogical challenges. Teaching is mostly characterised by ineffective use of the lecture method. In response to the perennial concern that agri-education practice is not practice-oriented, work placements are now universalised and being offered as mandatory course units at all levels of AET service delivery. However, all the participants in this study converge in their opinion that the current design and delivery of practice-oriented course units is below expectations, owing to shortage of resources and institutional

infrastructure. Further, the educators agree with students about the dearth of educational and vocational guidance services.

7.2.3 Lopsided repetitive curriculum reforms

The findings reveal a trail of curriculum reform efforts for over a decade in an effort to respond to the changing labour market realities. According to most educators, AET curriculum is subjected to repeated reviews leading to change or merger of study programmes and introduction of new course units mainly to embrace the employment logic. The shift to competence-based approach is the mantra of curriculum policy reform amid claims of huge implementation challenges. The unending AET curriculum reviews are already channelling young people into particular agri-work pathways in the name of fast tracking young people's agriculture employment. There is, for instance, a move to promote early specialisation by introducing narrower commodity-based study programmes at the case study tertiary AET institution. Pushing young people into early or premature specialisation is potentially linked to deficit narratives of AET as a 'machine' to meet current labour needs of the sector at the expense of building young workers' theoretical and knowledge foundations for driving their current and future learning, as well as working lives.

Literature review and empirical evidence point to spontaneous career guidance schemes and ad hoc innovations. Apparently, such schemes are neither mainstreamed into regular teaching calendars, nor institutionally sanctioned. The haphazard universalisation of vocational placements across the entire VET sector without commensurate quantity and quality of work experiences being generated by the economy demonstrates a limited appreciation of the required synergy between and amongst the sectors of education, labour and the economy. The findings are useful in illustrating the plausible arguments in the youth transition literature which point to related dilemma and tensions arising from poor institutional and policy linkages that characterise weak transition regimes (Raffe, 2008; Schoon & Bynner, 2019; Walther, 2006).

The findings show limited participation of frontline AET social actors in conceptualising and determining curriculum and policy reforms. Bureaucrats, managers and technocrats in government ministries and departments drive the reform agenda. Moreover, most of the reform activities are highly dependent on development aid, which potentially increases the risk of policy borrowing and keeping the subsector in a cycle of inconsequential changes (Allais & Wedekind, 2020; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2016). The danger of basing reform decisions on limited understanding of what matters is apparent. While government agencies and development partners are bent on curriculum reviews including multiplication or merging of course units, the findings revealed a greater need to focus on improving governance and management of AET institutions. Indeed, harnessing social learning environments, promoting transformative pedagogical practices, restoring educators' motivation, prioritising students' socio-emotional wellbeing, and timely supply

of quality teaching resources would constitute the priority list if the voices of frontline social actors would be taken seriously.

7.2.4 Burdensome employment and career opportunities

Findings reveal that while the vast majority of graduates got some kind of work in the food and agriculture industry within six months of graduation, only a minority are engaged in somewhat stable employment. The majority are trapped in insecure employment as part-time wage earners and volunteers, and others are struggling to establish their own farm enterprises amidst a host of difficulties including shortage of production resources (see related literature and discussion elsewhere in this thesis).

The findings about young people's work and career imaginations indicate high ambitions for prestigious jobs and professional positions within the food and agriculture industry. The zeal and high aspirations by students and graduates to immediately enrol for further training confirmed the widely prevalent phenomenon of young people's attempts to navigate the precarious labour markets by seeking to secure more credentials to desired jobs (see related discussion under chapter two). Evidence of young people's fears in obtaining work and opportunities for career enhancement confirms the known unethical conduct of some labour market actors, volatile economy and limited access to required resources to convert agri-qualifications into valued beings and doings. The reliance on social network of friends and relatives in seeking and gaining access to work, whether through salaried or self-employment, is evident, which reinforces the topicality of social capital in the reconceptualisation of youth transition (Campbell & Erbstein, 2012; DeJaeghere, 2017).

7.2.5 Young people's navigational stance

The findings indicate how the social and institutional constraints as presented in this thesis frustrate young people, but it is also evident that their ambition, determination and volition to navigate established pathways in pursuit of their aspirations is not about to wither. In their simultaneous style of constructing multiple identities, which is typical to all human behaviour (Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Schulz, 2010), most young people are on track in making good use of their alternative options to pursue AET certificate and diploma courses. This is at odds with expected growth and development trajectories, because as illuminated by this study, most education social actors seem not to approve students' choice to invest their time and energy in multiple domains. Indeed, the existing education-work pathways are still inclined to linear transition paradigms much as some of the young people in this study demonstrate the potential of their individual agency to circumvent associated obstacles, and to reimagine alternative futures.

While hoping for formal jobs, most young people demonstrate intentional attempts to create self-employment opportunities. The findings reveal how students and

graduates alike recognise the power of social networks in searching for and creating work amid unregulated labour markets and a volatile economy. Graduates in insecure employment and those without any employment status demonstrate ambition and resilience to move on. Generally, all students and graduates expressed a positive outlook to the future as agricultural practitioners. This study offers credence to the 'navigation' metaphor as used to illustrate young people's active role in light of the opportunities and constraints in their education-work journeys (Raffe, 2003). On the other hand, it is apparent that while young people demonstrate the zeal and willingness to engage the adapted AET goals and agri-career aspirations, the AET institutions are yet to rise to the challenge. Apparently, they are not positioned to support the students to shift from 'idealistic aspirations to realistic aspirations' (Baillergeau, Duyvendak, & Abdallah, 2015). The evident lack of coherent vocational and career guidance services at the AET institutions is a complex phenomenon across the globe, and as argued by Helmut Zelloth, the 'neglected interface and relationship' between VET and career guidance requires home-grown solutions (Zelloth, 2014, p274). This study offers a basis for confirming the claims that Uganda's education system and others in similar contexts are ill prepared to expand young people's agency to navigate barriers to labour market transition. Indeed as observed by Metelerkamp and others, while young people seem to be ready to overturn the perception narratives, the institutions are lagging behind (Metelerkamp et al., 2019). They are generally not ready to transcend the old deficit narratives about youth aspirations, volition and uptake of certain education and work pathways, particularly those that are tuned to agriculture.

7.2.6 Educators' latent agency and craftsmanship

The findings on how educators perceive and experience their work indicate that the majority seem to be concerned about the need to do certain things differently despite the poor working environment. Most educators complained about inadequate financial means to meet personal needs owing to meagre remuneration against the ever-escalating cost of living. They also decried poor leadership and management styles, which do not provide them with the opportunity to participate fully in making the decisions that affect the performance of their AET institutions.

However, while the operating and social environment is not good enough, some educators seemed to love their work. Being appreciated by their students was mentioned as one of the main sources of motivation and commitment to doing a good job. This strengthens the ideals in Richard Sennett's work on craftsmanship which strongly suggests that all human beings have the potential for doing good quality work and becoming craftsmen/women depending on their motivations and aspirations as shaped by social conditions (Sennett, 2008). It was evident that the educators miss the opportunities to exercise the freedom to think, decide and act in ways that they have reason to value. The

limited autonomy of Ugandan VET institutions, as revealed by this study in confirmation of related policy reviews (MoES, 2012), creates a social environment which further constrains personal initiative for better agri-education practice.

7.2.7 Change possibilities and enabling environment

The interventionist research phase at the case study AET institution illuminated real possibilities to transform agri-education practice, but it is evident that change of cultural practices and policy shifts are key to institutionalisation and systemic change (Weber, 2008; Stoll, 2006). Despite the social learning dividends of motivations, local knowledge enhancement and improved relationships among the ERT members, it became abundantly clear that transforming agri-education practice needed a stable enabling environment created by micro and macro structures and social actors (Fullan, 2016b). Connectedly, the limited commitment and ownership of standalone ad hoc curriculum innovations at the case study AET institution confirmed the widely acknowledged scepticism about the elusive impact of such schemes and innovations which are not institutionalised (Adelman & Taylor, 2003).

7.3 Contribution and implications of the study

7.3.1 Theoretical implications

This study shows the value of young people's individual agency in navigating education-work transition pathways; and how their attempts to overcome structural barriers rely heavily on cooperation and collaboration with other actors in the social system. This potentially strengthens the argument that topicalises the notion of social agency in the conceptualisations of the capabilities approach and the socio-ecological model of agency in the context of youth transition. Relatedly, the study shows how attaining agri qualifications increases young people's access to employment opportunities; however, seizing real functionings such as decent work apparently needed one's social capital to navigate a set of structural barriers in the world of work. Moreover, while social capital somehow features in the capabilities approach literature, its theorisation needs further reconfiguration within the discourse of conversion factors. This would offer additional theoretical arguments to counter criticism that the approach seems to promote individualism (Deneulin, 2008; Robeyns, 2005; Tumuheki, 2017).

Further, the study legitimises my hitherto subtle attention to the criticism that the capabilities approach superficially deals with the epistemic deficiencies of education systems. The inspiration to advance the approach's normative and theoretical underpinnings of emancipatory education is stronger. Relatedly, the empirical justification

of the crosscutting emancipatory and democratic virtues of the three approaches that formed this study's frame of reference is clear. It is evident that a composite of conceptual tools derivable from the capabilities approach, socio-ecological model of agency and social constructivist learning can inform and shape a truly transformative youth education-work transition theory of action for Uganda and similar contexts.

Relatedly, this study offers credence to linking the notion of aspirations and the capacity to aspire into the debates around the capabilities approach and its influence in thinking about a reframed purpose of education, career development and vocational guidance (Powell, 2012; Robertson, 2015). The capacity to aspire is, as widely acknowledged, conditioned by social influences; indeed young people from poor socio-economic contexts may at times get constrained by contextual circumstances to dream big (Appadurai, 2004; Prodonovich, Perry, & Taggart, 2014). However, this study challenges the generalisation that may potentially label socially disadvantaged young people as low aspirants (Leavy & Smith, 2010; Sinclair, McKendrick, & Scott, 2010). The examples of students and graduates who are apparently not deterred by their poor family backgrounds and restrictive education settings to aspire for a good life underlined by prestigious agri-careers is testimony to their inherent agentic potential against less supportive social arrangements.

The findings inspire the emergent paradigm to rethink dominant conceptualisations of young people's capacity to aspire in the context of enabling or confining education environments (Baillergeau & Duyvendak, 2017). A broadened understanding of the world view of today's young people, and the role of technological changes and globalised lifestyles that directly impact their thinkings and doings, ought to constitute one of the important considerations for rethinking the theorisation of young people's aspirations. Connectedly, reconceptualising students' aspirations and motivations ought to be structured within a larger transformative agenda for meaningful AET. A meaningful AET and empowering vocational pedagogy, which not only fosters aspirational capabilities of students but enhances their human agency to reimagine alternative futures, is equally constitutive of a contextual reconceptualisation of young people's capacity to aspire (Dejeaghere, 2018; Powell, 2012).

7.3.2 Practice and policy implications

The contribution and implication of the study findings on policy and practice interventions to enhance opportunities and tackle constraints to smooth young people's agricultural education-employment transitions are diverse. From the education and training perspectives, I discern interrelated aspects under three themes namely rethinking perception; democratising agri-education practice; and rationalising AET transformation. The fourth theme relates to macro and wider policy arrangements to leverage AET as a driver of young people's transition into the agricultural world of work.

Rethink perceptions; accompany young people

The study provides empirical justification for rethinking the dominant understandings of young people, their perception of agriculture and uptake of vocational AET pathways. In general terms, the findings of this study sufficiently support my argument against the over emphasis on the so-called mindset change of young people. Staying mute on the dire need to change and transform VET institutions and the social actors therein to be able to make appropriate choices in accompanying students in pursuit of their education and work aspirations is one of the greatest tragedies of mainstream education policy and practice in Uganda and similar contexts. First, the findings confirm that young people, just like all human beings, simultaneously invest effort and time in pursuit of multiple activities across the domains of education, work and other life facets (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009). This challenges dominant education policy and practice, which assume that students are only pursuing education at a time. There is a great need for a new approach, which recognises the reality of students' multiple identity constructions (Stokes & Wyn, 2007) and seeks to support them to balance and effectively deal with the associated pressure and uncertainties instead of seeking to control and suppress their divergent life aspirations. The young people's quest for multiple identity constructions could be a launch pad for AET to embrace experiential learning and transformative pedagogies in preparing them to navigate the obstacles to successful transition in the agriculture and food industry (Baker & Robinson, 2016; Rubenstein, 2014; Baker et al., 2012; Baldock & Murphrey, 2020; Ochan, 2012). Indeed, the evidence of young people's multiple identities, such as part-time workers, smallholder farmers or novice agri-entrepreneurs further challenges dominant agri-education practice to allow the flexibility of integrating and using the experiential knowledge that they come with into learning spaces. Experiential learning principles and tools would make great references for the enterprise of transforming agri-education practice. Appropriate application of practice-oriented teaching approaches such as inquiry based learning and project method which effectively connect education and agriculture experiences would be useful in redefining AET pedagogy (Wells et al., 2015).

Second and relatedly, trusting young people the way they are and with what they bring into the social practice of education would constitute one of the core attributes in building the required *educative* learning environments. Mutual trust from both ends – educators and students – is a core pillar built by both parties, though the educators ought to be held accountable in their duty to ensure quality social climate and mutual learning relationships. Student-educator relationships are as important as student-student relationships in optimising social learning. It is therefore imperative that the students' mistrust of educators, as illuminated by the findings, ought to be dealt with decisively because it poses a huge hindrance to forging the required learning environment. Relatedly, students' social diversity on account of ethnicity, religion, general secondary education background and other social characteristics needs to be framed from a deeper understanding of how diversity can either foster or diminish opportunities for better

education processes and outcomes. Taking care of the physical and social climate at AET institutions in the framework of enhancing conducive and safe learning environments as underpinned by the social learning principles of participation, collaboration and interaction presupposes a shift of cultural and professional paradigm of education practitioners and policy makers.

Third, the study reinforces the urgent need for policy and practice to recognise young people's agency in relation to their reproductive health, social and emotional wellbeing in shaping learning environments and outcomes (Damon, 2004; Gavin, Catalano, & Markham, 2010; Hampshire, Porter, Mashiri, Maponya, & Dube, 2011; Kok et al., 2021). As illuminated by the findings, perceiving students as immature personalities who must either postpone or forgo inherent physiological and psychological needs and wants can be counterproductive. Young people's sexuality manifestations and demands for better feeding, decent dormitories and adequate sanitary facilities should be dealt with dutifully and with due recognition of their rights as human beings. The plausible argument by John Dewey that education ought to be life itself other than the over-emphasis on preparation for future roles has a pertinent relevance in dealing with current and everyday life experiences of young people (Dewey, 1963).

Fourth, the evident students' sense of responsibility and commitment to their AET courses despite earlier ambitions for direct entry into university for degree study programmes is a solid justification to transcend perception narratives. Consequently, frontline social actors ought to focus on building and nurturing young people's career competencies and maturity (Kuijpers, 2016). Educators who are stuck in the deficit narratives of young people's poor perception of agriculture and VET pathways apparently remind students of the unpleasant past of failed attempts instead of accompanying them in their new directional pursuit of agricultural qualifications and becoming agriculture professionals. The frontline AET social actors should seek to expand students' agency to not only pursue current education pathways, but also to reimagine alternative and complementary education and work futures.

Democratise education practice; embrace craftsmanship

To conceptualise young people as responsible and active agents in their agricultural education-work trajectories, and to be able to accompany them on their life journeys, fundamentally requires an epistemological awareness to embrace and champion the democratic underpinnings of education practice. Democratising education practice in the context of promoting youth agriculture education-work transition, presupposes adaptation of a critical and transformative approach that embraces active global citizenship and education for sustainable development to enable the students to exercise the freedom to think and act with a deep sense of social and ecological justice (O'Sullivan, 2001).

Moreover, the required paradigm shift ought to be broader and situated within a framework of reclaiming the emancipatory value of education without negating appropriate

technical and professional content to match labour market demands. Striking the emancipatory and instrumental balance presupposes the adoption of a meaningful vocational pedagogy built on social constructivist learning principles and craftsmanship virtues. Such pedagogy has the potential of inculcating quality as a virtue amongst educators and students. Indeed, immersing vocational pedagogy in a craftsmanship regime has the potential to significantly contribute to the enhancement of quality of agri-education processes, and the optimisation of young people's learning and labour market outcomes, once educators strive to create and nurture productive pedagogical conditions and social relations.

A craftsmanship-embedded vocational pedagogy has great potential to ensure a combined teaching of theory and practice to avoid the danger of dichotomising theoretical knowledge and practical skills development. It enhances thoughtful and productive use of work-related teaching models such as apprenticeships and internships. In this connection, I restate some of the arguments in an article titled 'Reclaiming the educative power of vocational placements: Experiences from agriculture education practice in Uganda'¹⁹. Informed by this study's empirical evidence, the article advances a set of contextual propositions to foster the educative power of work experiences, which are delivered by AET institutions.

The propositions include building stakeholders' communities of practice to generate the required knowledge, time, energy, motivation and free will for better preparation, supervision, support and guidance of students. Enhanced partnerships, solidarity and social relations through established communities of practice can offer the platforms to deal with the challenges that arise from combining unconnected aspects of education and work contexts. Empowering support and guidance can potentially raise the required students' motivation and effort to develop and pursue valuable learning goals. To embed social constructivist ideals in the practice of vocational placements is to espouse a practical teaching-learning approach within a wider perspective of connecting young people's education and work aspirations. (Jjuuko, Tukundane, & Zeelen, 2021, p13-14)

Rationalise AET reform processes

Reviewed literature and empirical findings indicate that apparently the on-going AET reforms need more democratic ingredients, particularly in terms of widening space for meaningful participation of frontline education social actors. It is imperative that the change

¹⁹ The article is published by the International Journal of Training and Development Vol 25 Issue 2

and transformation process of AET be undertaken in a democratic and participatory manner to engender the agentic role of all social actors. A broadened strategic engagement of lecturers, students, graduates, industry actors and community members who have a legitimate interest in the functioning of AET institutions is the way to popularise and democratise educational change. There is a need for urgent attention to the apparent limited commitment and ownership of educational change processes by *most frontline social actors* as revealed from the perceptions and experiences of educators from the VTIs and case study AET institution. As Michael Fullan correctly argues, implementing successful educational change hinges on the full engagement of the whole spectrum of actors (Fullan, 2016a). The findings expose the risks associated with the current trend of state bureaucrats and development professionals from donor agencies and NGOs taking the lead in conceptualising VET reforms. The practice of managed participation (Pretty, 1995; Wilmsen, 2008) through myriad consultative or capacity building events for education social actors to be able to implement curriculum reforms, such as adapting a competence-based approach to teaching, can hardly lead to sustainable improvements.

Educational change decision makers should aim to revive and harness the professional autonomy of educators, administrators and other frontline social actors to conceive and try out innovations. Educators need to feel a sense of self-determination and empowerment, and vividly see possibilities for them to exercise their talent and will in deciding and enacting changes on what to teach and how to teach. The multiplier effect of democratising AET transformation processes is confirmed by our action research experience at the case study AET institution, when most educators on the ERT developed the will and motivation to change their own professional practice and the wider institutional culture as we collaboratively sought change options.

Wider policy implications and recommendations

Based on the insights drawn from the empirical dimensions of this study, combined with my experiential knowledge, I embrace the argument that promoting successful young people's agricultural education-work transitions is indeed a multi-sectoral encounter that ought to be situated in a system-thinking paradigm. This study inspires support for the evident emerging AET ecosystem powered by partnerships and collaborations being enacted by some students, graduates, educators and other frontline social actors in families, communities and industry. However, the study also illustrates how the official AET policy and practice is inconsistent with contemporary VET ecosystem conceptualisations (Finegold, 1999; Wheelahan, Buchanan & Yu, 2015). Mindful of the strategic utility of whole system improvement framed within an agricultural education and training ecosystem, I urge policy makers in Uganda and similar contexts to consider:

- Building effective, transparent and accountable multi-sectoral partnerships to link policy making in the sectors of education and training, labour and employment, social protection, youth development and agricultural industrialisation.
- Maintaining and defending the role and mandate of state institutions to ensure careful balancing of social and economic aims while pursuing education and training reforms, so as to promote transformative learning and decent employment in tune with international commitments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Integrating agri-oriented active labour market policies and programmes for young people into sustainable structures and systems to offset the risks associated with project-based programming that characterise the current design and delivery of AYEIs. The targeting of so-called NEETs is a plausible equity enhancement strategy, but connecting them to skills training interventions that are conceived and delivered within a lifelong learning framework could check the potential negative effect of locking them into short-term agribusiness and skilling schemes.
- De-escalating repetitive AET policy reforms and curriculum reviews to allow evidence-based improvements built on the intersection of expert knowledge and practical experience of social actors in AET institutions and industry players.
- Localising educational change processes to optimise the participation of local actors for better exploration, identification and implementation of mutually agreed reform options that local actors have reason to value and champion. This would entail moving frontline social actors to decision making arenas to cultivate and enhance the much-needed sense of ownership for change processes and outcomes. The agenda for localising educational change would yield better outcomes once accompanied by the reversal of the short-termism and project-based programming that characterise NGO work and development aid. This is not to say that government interventions are free of these leanings, as they have gained more inroads into public policy.
- Democratising the management of AET institutions by creating mechanisms and avenues for accountable and transparent distribution of resources, roles and duties with active participation of all frontline social actors. The role and influencing power of the NCHE and UBTEB agencies, as well as the parallel mandates of the Ministry of Education and the one in charge of Agriculture, needs to be streamlined. It is also imperative that decision-making mandates of AET institution managers and administrators are removed from the armchairs of political and technical bureaucrats in ministries and national state agencies.
- Institutionalising appropriate career development throughout the entire education system and spectrum so as to develop informed interest and choice of education and career pathways. Relatedly, mainstreaming vocational guidance at AET institutions would contribute to building a dependable cadre of craftsmen and women that the agriculture and food industry urgently needs. Moreover, establishing employment and career support centres for recent agriculture graduates to facilitate salaried job search,

enterprise creation and career enhancement would add value to realising the ultimate goal of putting the business of agriculture into the hands of professionals.

- Using practice-based approaches to strengthen the educators' theoretical and professional capacity to identify and interpret the social, ecological and technological changes that continuously shape young people's education-work transitions. Strengthened educators' competences would yield better outcomes once accompanied with commensurate efforts to harness their welfare, while inculcating into them the craftsmanship ethos of love for good work.

7.3.3 Research implication and considerations for the future

This study demonstrates the impact of deficit narratives of young people's volition and motivation to pursue agri-education and work pathways. To a reasonable extent, the study offers insights on how to initiate and enact micro-level change options for better transition processes and outcomes, however, further research is required to generate the needed knowledge for optimising young people's education-work transitions. First, further research is needed to explore the potential, opportunities and challenges associated with a systems approach to fostering the professional autonomy and personal agency of social actors, especially agriculture educators, in Uganda's highly hierarchical education system, which potentially poses more structural barriers to exercising freedom, democracy and self-determination.

Second is the need to study how the socio-cultural diversity of educators, administrators and students potentially fosters or diminishes the quality of learning environments. This study has exposed the hitherto silent voices on cultural diversity as a driver of the poor interpersonal relationship and social climate at the participating AET institutions. Finally, is the need to explore the efficacy of particular action research models to potentially harness systemic agri-education transformation, while balancing theory and practice.

7.3.4 Final comment

This study reveals young people's unprecedented resilience and volition to pursue and advance their education-work pathways despite experiences of thwarted aspirations. The motivation and determination of the majority of the students and graduates to navigate social and institutional barriers to access work and career enhancement opportunities are clear. The study shows how some social actors' interest and willingness to support young people to pursue their education-work pathways is neither institutionally recognised nor enhanced. Moreover, despite the confining social arrangements such as the constricting AET institutional environments, the latent agency of social actors is vivid. Relatedly, while the interventionist phase of the study yielded ample evidence into the difficulties to cause

AET system improvements, it delivered incredible insights for making change possible. This study challenges the deficit paradigms which apparently frame individuals (the students and educators) as authors of dysfunctional AET institutions and related poor labour market outcomes. Such deficit discourses often fail to account for the influence of demand side factors in the wider economic, political and cultural context. Accordingly, the argument is to free and nurture the individual agency of Ugandan young people to choose and pursue valuable agri-education and work aspirations amid the entrenched societal canalizations. The agency freedom and professional autonomy of frontline social actors, especially the AET educators, to practice craftsmanship, democracy and associated transformative approaches is an equally key core argument.

Finally, I restate the claim that worrying about the negative influence of dispositional factors, including assumed lack of interest in agriculture education and work as key drivers of limited youth labour market transition, is indeed only one side of the coin (Jjuuko, Tukundane, & Zeelen, 2019). On the other side should be the great concern about how AET institutions and the entire agriculture industry are structured to support the agentic participation of young people. The absence of institutionalised craftsmanship virtues and transformative agri-education practices is exacerbated by the endemic dearth of VET educators' incentive enhancement and professional development interventions. Transforming education systems and AET institutions in the framework of prioritising learners' voice and the frontline social actors' agency is critical in fostering young people's agricultural education-work transitions in Uganda and similar contexts.

References

- Abbink, G. J. (2005). Being young in Africa: The politics of despair and renewal. In J. Abbink, & I. Kessel Van (Eds.), *Vanguard or vandals: Youth, politics and conflict in Africa* (pp. 1-34). Boston: Brill.
- Adelman, H., & Taylor, L. (2003). On sustainability of project innovations as systemic change. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 14(1), 1-25.
- Afeti, G. (2018). Revitalising technical and vocational education and training in Africa: Issues outstanding. *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training*, 1(1), xi-xviii.
- African Development Bank. (2018). *Jobs for the youth Africa: Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa*. Busan: African Development Bank Group.
- African Union. (2007). *Strategy to revitalize technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Africa: Final draft*. Addis Ababa: African Union.
- African Union. (2011). *Status of the African youth report 2011*. Addis Ababa: African Union.
- African Union. (2015). Agricultural education and skills improvement framework (AESIF) 2015-2025. Retrieved from <https://www.nepad.org/publication/agricultural-education-and-skills-improvement-framework> on April 4, 2017.
- African Union. (2018). *Continental strategy for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to foster youth employment*. Addis Ababa: African Union.
- Ahaibwe, G., & Kasirye, I. (2015). *Creating youth employment through entrepreneurship financing: The Uganda youth venture capital fund*. Kampala: Economic Policy Research Centre.
- Ahaibwe, G., Mbowa, S., & Lwanga, M. M. (2013). *Youth engagement in agriculture in Uganda: Challenges and prospects*. Kampala: Economic Policy Research Centre.
- Aikman, S., Robinson-Pant, A., McGrath, S., Jere, C. M., Cheffy, I., Themelis, S., & Rogers, A. (2016). Challenging deficit discourses in international education and development. *Null*, 46(2), 314-334.
- Akomaning, E., Voogt, J. M., & Pieters, J. M. (2011). Internship in vocational education and training: Stakeholders' perceptions of its organisation. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 63(4), 575-592.
- Alkire, S., & Deneulin, S. (2009). A normative framework for development. In S. Deneulin, & L. Shahan (Eds.), *An introduction to the human development and capability approach: Freedom and agency* (pp. 1-21). London: International Development Research Centre.
- Allais, S. (2020). Skills for industrialisation in sub-Saharan African countries: Why is systemic reform of technical and vocational systems so persistently unsuccessful? *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*. (ahead-of-print), 1-19.

- Allais, S., & Wedekind, V. (2020). Targets, TVET and transformation: In A. Wulff (Ed.), *Grading goal four: Tensions, threats, and opportunities in the sustainable development goal on quality education* (pp. 322-338). Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Almajed, A., Skinner, V., Peterson, R., & Winning, T. (2016). Collaborative learning: Students' perspectives on how learning happens. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 10(2), 9.
- Amone-P'Olak, K., Schnelker, C., & Van der Bent, S. (2016). Rethinking education and training of war-affected youth in post conflict situations. In M. Blaak, C. Tukundane, J. Van der Linden & F. Elsdijk (Eds.), *Exploring new pathways for craftsmanship in a globalised world* (pp. 91-105). Groningen: Globalisation Studies Groningen.
- Andriessen, D. (2008). Combining design-based research and action research to test management solutions. In B. Boog, J. Preece, M. Slagter & J. Zeelen (Eds.), *Towards quality improvement of action research* (pp. 125-134) Brill Sense.
- Angucia, M. (2010). *Broken citizenship. Formerly abducted children and their reintegration in Northern Uganda*. PhD Thesis. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- Angus, L., Golding, B., Foley, A., & Lavender, P. (2013). Promoting 'learner voice' in VET: Developing democratic, transformative possibilities or further entrenching the status quo? *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 65(4), 560-574.
- Appadurai, A. (2004). The capacity to aspire: Culture and the terms of recognition. *Culture and Public Action*, 59, 62-63.
- Armatas, C., & Papadopoulos, T. (2013). Approaches to work-integrated learning and engaging industry in vocational ICT courses: Evaluation of an Australian pilot program. *International Journal of Training Research*, 11(1), 56-68.
- Asiimwe, G. B. (2013). Of extensive and elusive corruption in Uganda: Neo-patronage, power, and narrow interests. *African Studies Review*, 56(2), 129-144.
- Assaad, R., & Krafft, C. (2014). Youth transitions in Egypt: School, work, and family formation in an era of changing opportunities. *Doha: Silatech*.
- Association of Universities in the Netherlands. (2012). *The Netherlands code of conduct for scientific practice: Principles of good scientific teaching and research*. Amsterdam: Association of Universities in the Netherlands.
- Atchoarena, D. (Ed.). (2000). *The transition of youth from school to work: Issues and policies*. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Bahl, A., & Dietzen, A. (Eds.). (2019). *Work-based learning as a pathway to competence-based education: A UNEVOC network contribution*. Bonn: Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training.
- Baillergeau, E., & Duyvendak, J. W. (2017). The capability to aspire of young people in disadvantaged circumstances. In H. Otto, E. Valerie, J. Bonvin & R. Atzmüller (Eds.), *Empowering young people in disempowering times* (pp. 262-273). London: Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Baillergeau, E., Duyvendak, J. W., & Abdallah, S. (2015). Heading towards a desirable future: Aspirations, commitments and the capability to aspire of young Europeans. *Open Citizenship*, 6(1), 12-23.
- Baker, M. A., Robinson, J. S., & Kolb, D. A. (2012). Aligning Kolb's experiential learning theory with a comprehensive agricultural education model. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 53(4), 1-16.
- Baker, M. A., & Robinson, J. S. (2016). The effects of Kolb's experiential learning model on successful intelligence in secondary agriculture students. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 57(3), 129-144.
- Baldock, K., & Murphrey, T. P. (2020). Secondary students' perceptions of inquiry-based learning in the agriculture classroom. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 61(1), 235-246.
- Baldwin, C. A. (2009). *Combating judicial corruption in Uganda*. Washington: Brookings Global Economy and Development.
- Barnett, M. (2006). Vocational knowledge and vocational pedagogy. In M. Young, & J. Gamble (Eds.), *Knowledge, curriculum and qualifications for south african further education* (pp. 143-157). Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Bastien, S., & Holmarsdottir, H. B. (2015). Growing up global: Towards the critical engagement of youth and youth voices in research to address global wicked problems. In S. Bastien, & H. Holmasdottir B (Eds.), *Youth 'at the margins': Critical perspectives and experiences of engaging youth in research worldwide* (pp. 1-19). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Bennell, P., & Segerstrom, J. (1998). Vocational education and training in developing countries: Has the World Bank got it right? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 18(4), 271-287.
- Benson, P., Scales, P., Hamilton, S., & Sesma, A. (2006). Positive youth development: Theory, research, and applications. In R. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (pp. 894-941). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Berger, R. (2003). *An ethic of excellence: Building a culture of craftsmanship with students*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Bersaglio, B., Enns, C., & Kepe, T. (2015). Youth under construction: The United Nations' representations of youth in the global conversation on the post-2015 development agenda. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne D'Études Du Développement*, 36(1), 57-71.
- Betcherman, G., & Khan, T. (2015). *Youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa: Taking stock of the evidence and knowledge gaps*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre (IDRC).
- Biesta, G., & Tedder, M. (2007). Agency and learning in the lifecourse: Towards an ecological perspective. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 39(2), 132-149.

- Billett, S. (2000). Guided learning at work. *Journal of Workplace Learning: Employee Counselling Today*, 12(7), 272-85.
- Billett, S. (2002a). Toward a workplace pedagogy: Guidance, participation, and engagement. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(1), 27-43.
- Billett, S. (2002b). Workplace pedagogic practices: Co-participation and learning. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 50(4), 457-481.
- Billett, S. (2003). Vocational curriculum and pedagogy: An activity theory perspective. *European Educational Research Journal*, 2(1), 6-21.
- Boateng, E., & Löwe, A. (2018). *Aspirations matter: What young people in Ghana think about work*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Boog, B. (2003). The emancipatory character of action research, its history and the present state of the art. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 13(6), 426-438.
- Boog, B., Preece, J., Slagter, M., & Zeelen, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Towards quality improvement of action research: Developing ethics and standards*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Boog, B., Slagter, M., & Zeelen, J. (2008). Developing ethics and standards in action research. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 17(4).
- Boukary, H., & Walther, R. (2016). *A compendium of African experiences in promoting the implementation of the education and training continuum: A state-of-the art cross-national analysis of policy and practice in 16 countries*. Geneva: NORRAG.
- Bregman, J., & Bryner, K. (2002). *Quality of secondary education in Africa (SEIA)*. Grand Baie: Association for Development in Africa (ADEA).
- Broecke, S. (2013). Tackling graduate unemployment in North Africa through employment subsidies: A look at the SIVP programme in Tunisia. *IZA Journal of Labour Policy*, 2(1), 1-19.
- Brooks, K., Zorya, S., Gautam, A., & Goyal, A. (2013). Agriculture as a sector of opportunity for young people in Africa. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, (6473). Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2274005 on May 15, 2016.
- Brown, P., Hesketh, A., & Williams, S. (2003). Employability in a knowledge-driven economy. *Journal of Education and Work*, 16(2), 107-126.
- Brühlmeier, A. (2010). *Head, heart and hand: Education in the spirit of Pestalozzi*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.
- Burke, L., Marks-Maran, D., Ooms, A., Webb, M., & Cooper, D. (2009). Towards a pedagogy of work-based learning: Perceptions of work-based learning in foundation degrees. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 61(1), 15-33.
- Cammarota, J., & Fine, M. (2008). *Revolutionizing education: Youth participatory action research in motion*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis.
- Campbell, D., & Erbsstein, N. (2012). Engaging youth in community change: Three key implementation principles. *Community Development*, 43(1), 63-79.

- Casey, C. (1999). The changing contexts of work. In D. Boud, & J. Garrick (Eds.), *Understanding learning at work* (pp. 15-28). London: Routledge.
- Chakeredza, S., Temu, A. B., Saka, J., Munthali, D. C., Muir-Leresche, K., Akinnifesi, F. K., Ajayi, O.C., & Sileshi, G. (2008). Tailoring tertiary agricultural education for sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa: Opportunities and challenges. *Scientific Research and Essays*, 3(8), 326-332.
- Chan, S. (2014). Crafting an occupational identity: Learning the precepts of craftsmanship through apprenticeship. *Vocations and Learning*, 7(3), 313-330.
- Checkoway, B., & Gutierrez, L. (2006). Youth participation and community change: An introduction. *Journal of Community Practice*, 14(1-2), 1-9.
- Christiansen, C., Utas, M., Vigh, H. E., & Ungruhe. (2007). Navigating youth, generating adulthood. Social becoming in an African context. *Sociologus*. 57(2), 271.
- Cieslik, K., Barford, A., & Vira, B. (2021). Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in sub-Saharan Africa: Sustainable development target 8.6 missed and reset. *Journal of Youth Studies*. (ahead-of-print), 1-22.
- Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group. (2020). Guide to debating agriculture sector NBFP FY 2020/21. Retrieved from <https://www.csbag.org/download/guide-to-debating-social-development-sector-nbfp-fy2020-21/> on November 10, 2020.
- Cletzer, D. A., Rudd, R., Westfall-Rudd, D., & Drape, T. A. (2016). Agricultural education and training in sub-saharan Africa: A three-step approach to AET institution building. *International Journal of Education*, 8(2), 73-87.
- Cochran, G. R., & Ferrari, T. M. (2009). Preparing youth for the 21st century knowledge economy: Youth programs and workforce preparation. *Afterschool Matters*, 8, 11-25.
- Coghlan, D. (2004). Action research in the academy: Why and whither? Reflections on the changing nature of research. *The Irish Journal of Management*, 25(2).
- Coghlan, D., & Shani, A. B. (2008). Insider action research: The dynamics of developing new capabilities. In P. Reason, & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of action research* (2nd Ed.). (pp. 643-655). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6. Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Colley, H., James, D., Diment, K., & Tedder, M. (2003). Learning as becoming in vocational education and training: Class, gender and the role of vocational habitus. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 55(4), 471-498.
- Commonwealth Secretariat. (2007). *The commonwealth plan of action for youth empowerment 2007-2015*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Cornia, G. A., & Helleiner, G. (Eds.). (1994). *From adjustment to development in Africa: Conflict controversy convergence consensus?* London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Corrigan, T. (2016). What ails the young? Insights into Africa's youth from the African peer review mechanism. Occasional Paper 234. Retrieved from on

- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2 Ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Crocker, D., & Robeyns, I. (2010). Capability and agency. In C. Morris (Ed.), *Amartya Sen* (pp. 60-90). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crowhurst, I., & Kennedy-macfoy, M. (2013). Troubling gatekeepers: Methodological considerations for social research. *Null*, 16(6), 457-462.
- Cunningham, W., Sanchez-Puerta, M. L., & Wuermli, A. (2010). *Active labour market programs for youth: A framework to guide youth employment interventions*. Washington: World Bank.
- Damon, W. (2004). What is positive youth development? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591(1), 13-24.
- Danish Trade Union Development Agency. (2019). *Uganda labour market profile 2019*. Copenhagen: Danish Trade Union Development Agency.
- DeJaeghere, J. (2018). Girls' educational aspirations and agency: Imagining alternative futures through schooling in a low-resourced Tanzanian community. *Critical Studies in Education*, 59(2), 237-255.
- DeJaeghere, J. G. (2017). *Educating entrepreneurial citizens: Neoliberalism and youth livelihoods in Tanzania* London: Routledge.
- Delors, J. (1996). *Learning: The treasure within: Report to UNESCO of the international commission on education for the twenty-first century*. Paris: United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation.
- Deneulin, S. (2008). Beyond individual freedom and agency: Structures of living together in Sen's capability approach to development. In S. Alkire, F. Comim & M. Qizilbash (Eds.), *The capability approach: Concepts, measures and application* (pp. 105-124). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Deneulin, S., & Shahani, L. (Eds.). (2009). *An introduction to the human development and capability approach: Freedom and agency*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.
- Dewey, J. (1963). *Experience and education*. New York: Collier Books.
- Dockery, A. M., Koshy, P., & Stromback, T. (2005). *From school to work: The role of traineeships. A national vocational education and training research and evaluation program report*. Adelaide: Australian Government.
- Dougherty, S. M., & Lombardi, A. R. (2016). From vocational education to career readiness: The ongoing work of linking education and the labour market. *Review of Research in Education*, 40(1), 326-355.
- Durham, D. (2000). Youth and the social imagination in Africa: Introduction to parts 1 and 2. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73(3), 113-120.
- Dwyer, P., & Wyn, J. (2001). *Youth, education and risk: Facing the future*. New York: Routledge.

- Ecclestone, K., Biesta, G., & Hughes, M. (Eds.). (2009). *Transitions in the life course: The role of identity, agency and structure*. London: Routledge.
- Elder, S., & Koné, K. S. (2014). Labour market transitions of young women and men in sub-Saharan Africa (Work4Youth publication series no. 9). Geneva: *International Labour Organization and MasterCard Foundation*.
- Elias, M., Mudege, N. N., Lopez, D. E., Najjar, D., Kandiwa, V., Luis, J. S., Yila, J., Tegbaru, A., Ibrahim, G., Badstue, L. B. (2018). Gendered aspirations and occupations among rural youth, in agriculture and beyond: A cross-regional perspective. *Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Security*, 3(1), 82-107.
- England, G. W., & Harpaz, I. (1990). How working is defined: National contexts and demographic and organizational role influences. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 11(4), 253-266.
- Eteläpelto, A., Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P., & Paloniemi, S. (2013). What is agency? Conceptualising professional agency at work. *Educational Research Review*, 10, 45-65.
- FAO. (2015). Country situation and role of agriculture. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/3/i4915e/i4915e.pdf> on March 17, 2016.
- Fares, J., Guarcello, L., Manacorda, M., Rosati, F., Lyon, S., & Valdivia, C. (2005). *School to work transition in sub-Saharan Africa: An overview*. Tor Vergata: Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Project University of Rome.
- Filmer, D., & Fox, L. (2014). *Youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington: The World Bank.
- Finegold, D. (1999). Creating self-sustaining, high-skill ecosystems. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 15(1), 60-81.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *SAGE qualitative research methods* (pp. 219-245). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, M. (1993). Seeking identity—township youth and social development. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 23(4), 157-166.
- Freer, J., Tiffany. (2015). Modernising agricultural education and training curriculum. Retrieved from <https://www.agrilinks.org/library/modernizing-agricultural-education-and-training-curriculum> on June 17, 2016.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Sheed and Ward.
- Friedman, V. (2011). Revisiting social space: Relational thinking about organizational change. *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 19, 233-257.
- Friedman, V., & Rothman, J. (2015). Action evaluation: An action research practice for the participative definition, monitoring, and assessment of success in social innovation and conflict engagement. In H. Bradbury (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of action research*. (pp. 90-99). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Friese, S. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS. ti* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

- Frostenson, M. (2015). Three forms of professional autonomy: De-professionalisation of teachers in a new light. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 2015(2), 284-64.
- Fry, H., Ketteridge, S., & Marshall, S. (2009). Understanding student learning. In H. Fry, S. Ketteridge & S. Marshall (Eds.), a handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: Enhancing academic practice. London: Routledge.
- Fukuda-Parr, S. (2003). The human development paradigm: Operationalizing Sen's ideas on capabilities. *Feminist Economics*, 9(2-3), 301-317.
- Fullan, M. (2016a). The elusive nature of whole system improvement in education. *Journal of Educational Change*, 17(4), 539-544.
- Fullan, M. (2016b). *The new meaning of educational change* (Fifth edition). London: Routledge Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M., & Miles, M. (1992). Getting reform right: What works and what doesn't. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73(10), 745-752.
- Fuller, C., & MacFadyen, T. (2012). 'What with your grades? 'Students' motivation for and experiences of vocational courses in further education. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 64(1), 87-101.
- Furlong, A. (2013). *Youth studies: An introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Galal, A., & Kanaan, T. (2010). *Financing higher education in Arab countries*. Cairo: Economic Research Forum.
- Gamble, J. (2003). *Curriculum responsiveness in FET colleges*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council Press.
- Garcia, M., & Fares, J. (2008). *Youth in Africa's labour market*. New York: The World Bank.
- Gavin, L. E., Catalano, R. F., & Markham, C. M. (2010). Positive youth development as a strategy to promote adolescent sexual and reproductive health. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 46(3), S1-S6.
- Geo-Jaja, M. A., & Mangum, G. (2001). Structural adjustment as an inadvertent enemy of human development in Africa. *Journal of Black Studies*, 32(1), 30-49.
- Gill, I., Fluitman, F., & Dar, A. (2000). Introduction. In I. Gill, F. Fluitman & A. Dar (Eds.), *Vocational education and training reform: Matching skills to markets and budgets* (pp. 1-22). Washington: Oxford University Press.
- GoU. (2008). *The Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training Act 2008*. Kampala: Government of Uganda.
- GoU. (2013). Uganda vision 2040. Retrieved from <http://www.npa.go.ug/uganda-vision-2040/> on July 15, 2018
- Gough, K., Langevang, T., & Owusu, G. (2013). Youth employment in a globalising world. *International Development Planning Review*, 35(2), 91-102.
- Grootenboer, P., Edwards-Groves, C., & Choy, S. (2017). Practice theory and education: Diversity and contestation. In C. Edwards-Groves, & S. Choy (Eds.), *Practice theory perspectives on pedagogy and education* (pp. 1-21). Singapore: Springer.

- Guile, D., & Griffiths, T. (2001). Learning through work experience. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 113-131.
- Gustafsson, I. (1985). *Zimbabwe foundation for education with production: A follow-up study*. Stockholm: Swedish International Development Authority, Education Division.
- Guthrie, H., Harris, R., Simons, M., & Karmel, T. (2009). Teaching for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Springer-Verlag. Retrieved from <http://vuir.vu.edu.au/21975/> on February 21, 2010.
- Hampshire, K., Porter, G., Mashiri, M., Maponya, G., & Dube, S. (2011). Proposing love on the way to school: Mobility, sexuality and youth transitions in South Africa. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 13(2), 217-231.
- Hardgrove, A., Boyden, J., Dornan, P., & Pells, K. (2014). *Youth vulnerabilities in life course transitions*. New York: UNDP Human Development Report Office.
- Hart, S. (2012). The capability approach and education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 42(3), 275-282.
- Hawkins, R. (2021). *Agricultural technical and vocational education and training (ATVET) in sub-Saharan Africa: Overview within broader agricultural knowledge and innovation systems*. Wageningen: ICRA Foundation.
- Heaven, C., & Tubridy, M. (2003). Global youth culture and youth identity. *Highly Affected, Rarely Considered: The International Youth Parliament Commission's Report on the Impacts of Globalisation on Young People*. Retrieved from <https://www.tigweb.org/action-tools/projects/download/6190/global%20youth%20culture%20and%20identity.pdf> on November 20, 2015.
- Heckhausen, J., & Buchmann, M. (2019). A multi-disciplinary model of life-course canalization and agency. *Current Perspectives on Aging and the Life Cycle*, 41, 100-246.
- Heckhausen, J., Wrosch, C., & Schulz, R. (2010). A motivational theory of life-span development. *Psychological Review*, 117(1), 32.
- Heckhausen, J., Wrosch, C., & Schulz, R. (2019). Agency and motivation in adulthood and old age. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70, 191-217.
- Heinz, W. (2009). Structure and agency in transition research. *Journal of Education and Work*, 22(5), 391-404.
- Hennink, M. M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative research methods*. London: SAGE.
- Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2005). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. Thousand Oaks, London: SAGE.
- Hogan, D. P., & Astone, N. M. (1986). The transition to adulthood. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12(1), 109-130.
- Holdaway, E. A., Johnson, N. A., Ratsoy, E. W., & Friesen, D. (1994). The value of an internship program for beginning teachers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 16(2), 205-221.

- Honwana, A. (2012). *The time of youth: Work, social change, and politics in Africa*. Sterling: Kumarian Press.
- Honwana, A. (2014). Waithood: Youth transitions and social change. In D. Foeken, T. Dietz, L. de Han & L. Johnson (Eds.), *Development and equity: An interdisciplinary exploration by ten scholars from Africa, Asia and Latin America* (pp. 28-40). Leiden: Brill.
- Hoppers, W., Afeti, G., Bregman, J., Kinyanjui, K., Kronner, H., Obeegadoo, S., & Walther, R. (2008). Post-primary education in Africa: Challenges and approaches for expanding learning opportunities. Paper presented at the *ADEA 2008 Biennale on Education in Africa*.
- Hulela, K., & Miller, W. (2003). The development of agricultural education in the education system of Botswana. Paper presented at the *19th Annual Conference of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education Conference*.
- ILO. (2008). Skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development. Paper presented at the *International Labour Conference, 97th Session, 2008*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.
- ILO. (2015). *Global employment trends for youth 2015: Scaling up investments in decent jobs for youth*. (). Geneva: International Labour Organisation.
- ILO. (2019). *World employment and social outlook: Trends 2019*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- International Alert. (2013). *Youth participation in government programmes in Uganda*. London: International Alert.
- Ishumi, A., G., & Maliyamkono, T. L. (1995). Education for self-reliance. In C. Legum, & G. Mmari (Eds.), *Mwalimu: The influence of Nyerere*. (pp. 46-60). London: Britain-Tanzania Society.
- IYF. (2011). Navigating challenges. Charting hope: A cross sector situational analysis on youth in Uganda. International Youth Foundation. Retrieved from <https://iyfglobal.org/library/navigating-challenges-charting-hope-cross-sector-situational-analysis-youth-uganda> on March 6, 2015
- Jagannathan, S., Ra, S., & Maclean, R. (2019). Dominate recent trends impacting on jobs and labour markets: An overview. *International Journal of Training Research*, 17(2019), 1-11.
- Jayne, T., Yeboah, F. K., & Henry, C. (2017). The future of work in African agriculture trends and drivers of change. Geneva: *International Labour Organization*.
- Jjuuko, R. (2012). *Developing vocational skills of youths with incomplete schooling*. Saarbrücken: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG.
- Jjuuko, R., Tukundane, C., & Zeelen, J. (2019). Exploring agricultural vocational pedagogy in Uganda: Students' experiences. *The International Journal of Training Research*, 17(3), 238-251.

- Jjuuko, R., Tukundane, C., & Zeelen, J. (2021). Reclaiming the educative power of vocational placements: Experiences from agriculture education practice in Uganda. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 25(2), 144-159.
- Johanson, R., & Adams, A. (2004). *Skills development in sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington: World Bank.
- Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2014). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. London: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Kibwika, P. (2006). *Learning to make change: Developing innovation competence for recreating the African university of the 21st century*. Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers.
- Kibwika, P., Okiror, J. J., & Birungi-Kyazze, F. (2010). Does agricultural education prepare early school leavers for a career in agriculture? Experiences from Uganda. In J. Zeelen, D. Nampota, J. Van der Linden, & M. Ngabirano (Eds.), *The burden of educational exclusion: Understanding and challenging early school leaving in Africa* (pp. 67-79). Amsterdam: Brill Sense.
- King, K., & Palmer, R. (2007). Skills development and poverty reduction: A state of the art review. *Torino: European Training Foundation*.
- Kingston, C., Irikana, G., Dienye, V., & Kngston, K. (2011). The impacts of the World Bank and IMF structural adjustment programmes on Africa: The case study of Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. *Sacha Journal of Policy and Strategic Studies*, 1(2), 110-130.
- Kluve, J., Puerto, S., Robalino, D., Romero, J. M., Rother, F., Stöterau, J., Witte, M. (2017). *Interventions to improve the labour market outcomes of youth. A systematic review of training, entrepreneurship promotion, employment services and subsidized employment interventions*. Berlin: The Campbell Collaboration.
- Kluve, J., Puerto, S., Robalino, D., Romero, J. M., Rother, F., Stöterau, J., & Witte, M. (2016). Do youth employment programmes improve labour market outcomes? A systematic review. Essen: Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung.
- Kok, M. C., Van Eldik, Z., Kakal, T., Munthali, A., Menon, J. A., Pires, P., Baatsen, P., van der Kwaak, A. (2021). Being dragged into adulthood? Young people's agency concerning sex, relationships and marriage in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. *International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care*, 1-26.
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2009). Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development. In S. Armstrong J, & C. Fukami V (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of management learning, education and development* (pp. 42-68). London: SAGE.
- Krauss, S. E. (2005). Research paradigms and meaning making: A primer. *The Qualitative Report*, 10(4), 758-770.

- Kuijpers, M. (2016). Innovation in education: From diploma to career perspective: Career guidance and teachers' professionalisation for better career development. In M. Blaak, C. Tukundane, J. Linden & F. Elsdijk (Eds.), *Exploring new pathways for craftsmanship in a globalised world* (pp. 71-82). Groningen: Globalisation Studies Groningen.
- Kunneman, H. (2013). Introduction: Craftsmanship and normative professionalisation. In H. Kunneman (Ed.), *Good work: The ethics of craftsmanship*. Amsterdam: SWP publishers.
- Kurth-Schai, R. (1988). The roles of youth in society: A reconceptualization. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcek12/39> on November 12, 2017.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Layton, D. (1984). The secondary school science curriculum and the alternative road. In D. Layton (Ed.), *The alternative road: The rehabilitation of the practical* (pp. 21-35). Leeds: University of Leeds.
- Leavy, J., & Hossain, N. (2014). Who wants to farm? Youth aspirations, opportunities and rising food prices. *IDS Working Papers*, 2014(439), 1-44.
- Leavy, J., & Smith, S. (2010). Future farmers: Youth aspirations, expectations and life choices. *Future Agricultures Discussion Paper*, 13, 1-15. Retrieved from [https://youtheconomicopportunities.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resource/FAC_Discussion_Paper_013%20\(1\).pdf](https://youtheconomicopportunities.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resource/FAC_Discussion_Paper_013%20(1).pdf) on June 13, 2016.
- Lillis, K., & Hogan, D. (1983). Dilemmas of diversification: Problems associated with vocational education in developing countries. *Comparative Education*, 19(1), 89-107.
- Lolwana, P. (2017). Technical and vocational education and training in sub-Saharan Africa: The missing middle in post-school education. In F. Eicker, G. Haseloff & B. Lennartz (Eds.), *Vocational education and training in sub-Saharan Africa: Current situation and development* (pp.11-24). Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Verlag GmbH & Co. KG.
- London, J., Zimmerman, K., & Erbstein, N. (2003). Youth-Led research and evaluation: Tools for youth, organizational, and community development. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2003(98), 33-45.
- Louis, M. R., & Bartunek, J. M. (1992). Insider/outsider research teams: Collaboration across diverse perspectives. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 1(2), 101-110.
- Lucas, B., & Spencer, E. (2016). *A practical guide to craftsmanship: Creating the craftsmen and women Britain needs*. London: City & Guilds.
- Lucas, B., Spencer, E., & Claxton, G. (2012). *How to teach vocational education*. London: City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development.
- Maguire, C. (2012). *Agricultural education and training to support agricultural innovation systems*. New York: World Bank.

- Marjanovic, D. (2016). *Labour market transitions of young women and men the republic of Serbia*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.
- Martin, J., & Grubb, D. (2001). *What works and for whom: A review of OECD countries' experiences with active labour market policies, WP series 2001: 14*. Uppsala: Institute for Labour Market Policy Evaluation.
- MasterCard Foundation. (2020). Secondary education in Africa: Preparing youth for the future of work. Retrieved from <https://mastercardfdn.org/research/secondary-education-in-africa/> on February 25, 2021.
- McGrath, S. (2011). Where to now for vocational education and training in Africa? *International Journal of Training Research*, 9(1-2), 35-48.
- McGrath, S., & Powell, L. (2015). Vocational education and training for human development. In S. McGrath & Gu, Q (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of international education and development* (pp. 296-308). Routledge.doi.org/10.4324/9781315797007
- McGrath, S., Powell, L., Alla-Mensah, J., Hilal, R., & Suart, R. (2020). New VET theories for new times: The critical capabilities approach to vocational education and training and its potential for theorising a transformed and transformational VET. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 1-22. doi:10.1080/13636820.2020.1786440.
- McGrath, S., Ramsarup, P., Zeelen, J., Wedekind, V., Allais, S., Lotz-Sisitka, Monk, D., Openjuru, G., & Russon, J. (2019). Vocational education and training for African development: A literature review. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 72(4), 465-487.
- McKenzie, D. (2017). How effective are active labour market policies in developing countries? a critical review of recent evidence. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 32(2), 127-154.
- McNiff, J. (2017). *Action research: All you need to know*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Meal, A. G., & Timmons, S. J. (2012). Reclaiming craftsmanship in nursing. *Nurse Education Today*, 32(5), 479-481.
- Meijers, F., Kuijpers, M., & Gundy, C. (2013). The relationship between career competencies, career identity, motivation and quality of choice. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 13(1), 47-66.
- Metelerkamp, L., Drimie, S., & Biggs, R. (2019). We're ready, the system's not - youth perspectives on agricultural careers in South Africa. *Agricultural Economics Research, Policy and Practice in Southern Africa*, 58(2), 154-179.
- Meth, C. (2010). *Active labour market policies: Lessons for South Africa?* Durban: School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformative dimensions of adult learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 42(3), 195-197.
- Mezirow, J. (1996). Contemporary paradigms of learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 46(3), 158-172.

- Mezirow, J. (2006). An overview on transformative learning. In J. Crowther & P. Sutherland. *Lifelong Learning: Concepts and Contexts* (pp.24-38). London: Routledge.
- MGLSD. (2001). *The national youth policy: A vision for youth in the 21st century*. Kampala: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
- MGLSD. (2011). *National employment policy for Uganda*. Kampala: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
- Migheli, M. (2011). Capabilities and functionings: The role of social capital for accessing new capabilities. *Review of Political Economy*, 23(1), 133-142.
- Mikkonen, S., Pylväs, L., Rintala, H., Nokelainen, P., & Postareff, L. (2017). Guiding workplace learning in vocational education and training: A literature review. *Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training*, 9(1), 1-22.
- Minnaert, A. (1999). Motivational and emotional components affecting male's and female's self-regulated learning. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 14(4), 525-540.
- MoES. (2012). *Skilling Uganda: BTVET strategic plan: 2012/13 to 2021/2*. Kampala: Ministry of Education and Sports.
- MoES. (2019). *The technical vocational education and training policy (TVET) policy*. Kampala: Ministry of Education and Sports.
- Montenegro, A. (2017). Understanding the concept of student agentic engagement for learning. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 19(1), 117-128.
- Mukembo, S. C. (2017). *Equipping youth with agripreneurship and other valuable life skills by linking secondary agricultural education to communities for improved livelihoods: A comparative analysis of project-based learning in Uganda*. PhD Thesis. Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University.
- Mugisha, C. (2021, April 1,). It is not right for youth to blame the government, yet they are lazy- Museveni. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwj3ZrDsOTxAhWQGBQKHTWRCI4QFnoECAUQAw&url=https%3A%2F%2Fnyilepost.co.ug%2F2021%2F03%2F31%2Fit-is-not-right-for-youth-to-blame-the-government-yet-they-are-lazy-museveni%2F&usq=AOvVaw382_7DmySybMvJmtd43Biv on May 20, 2021
- Musgrave, P. W. (1967). Towards a sociological theory of occupational choice. *The Sociological Review*, 15(1), 33-46.
- Muwaniki, C. (2019). *Vocational education and training curriculum responsiveness to the learning needs of A1 farmers' post-2000 Zimbabwe*. PhD Thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Mwangi, J. G., Agunga, R., & Garforth, C. J. (2003). Improving agricultural extension services through faith-based initiatives: A case of the bahati farmers' project in Kenya. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 10(1), 11-19.

- National Curriculum Development Centre. (2016). *Technology and enterprise learning area: Lower secondary syllabus*. Kampala: National Curriculum Development Centre.
- National Planning Authority. (2013). Uganda vision 2040. Retrieved from <http://www.npa.go.ug/uganda-vision-2040/> on May 7, 2015.
- National Planning Authority. (2015). *Second national development plan (NDPII) 2015/16-2019/20*. Kampala: National Planning Authority.
- National Planning Authority. (2020). *Third national development plan (NDPIII) 2020/21 – 2024/25*. Kampala: National Planning Authority.
- Ndaruhutse, S., Jones, C., & Riggall, A. (2019). Why systems thinking is important for the education sector. (). Reading: Education Development Trust.
- NEIDA. (1982). *Education and productive work in Africa: A regional survey*. Dakar: The Network of Educational Innovation for Development in Africa UNESCO/BREDA.
- Niall, O. (2017). *Rising to the youth employment challenge: New evidence on key policy issues*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2007). Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In Maree Kobus (Ed.), *First steps in research*. (pp. 35-78). Johannesburg: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Nuwagaba, A. (2012). Toward addressing skills development and employment crisis in Uganda: The role of public private partnerships. *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review*, 28(1), 91-116.
- O’Sullivan, E. (2001). *Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21st century* (2nd ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Obanya, P. (1994). *Curriculum reform for educational development in Africa: The role of UNESCO*. Dakar: Dakar Regional Office (BREDA).
- Ochan, M. (2012). *Working with teachers and students at secondary school level to enhance better learning of agriculture through project based learning approach: An action research at Nabiswa secondary school, Uganda*. Høgskolen: Oslo og Akershus.
- OECD. (1999). Preparing youth for the 21st century: The transition from education to the labour market. Proceedings of the *Washington D.C. Conference 23-24 February 1999*. Retrieved from https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/preparing-youth-for-the-21st-century-the-transition-from-education-to-the-labour-market_9789264173422-en on January 13, 2016.
- OECD. (2007). Glossary of statistical terms. Retrieved from <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/download.asp> on May 6, 2016.
- Office of the Prime Minister. (2012). *National policy on public sector monitoring and evaluation final draft 2011*. Kampala: Government of Uganda.
- O'higgins, N. (2001). Youth unemployment and employment policy: A global perspective. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.

- Oketch, M. O. (2007). To vocationalise or not to vocationalise? Perspectives on current trends and issues in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(2), 220-234.
- Okinyal, H. (2012). Reforming the business, technical, vocational education and training (BTNET) sub-sector: Challenges, opportunities and threats. Paper presented at the *Uganda Vice Chancellors' Forum*. November Kampala Uganda.
- Okiror, J., & Otabong, D. (2015). Factors influencing career choice among undergraduate students in an African University context: The case of agriculture students at makerere university, Uganda. *Journal of Dynamics in Agricultural Research* Vol, 2(2), 12-20.
- Okumu, I. M., & Bbaale, E. (2019). Technical and vocational education and training in Uganda: A critical analysis. *Development Policy Review*, 37(6), 735-749.
- Onstenk, J., & Blokhuis, F. (2007). Apprenticeship in the Netherlands: Connecting school- and work-based learning. *Education + Training*, 49(6), 489-499.
- Osborne, M., Houston, M., & Toman, N. (Eds.). (2007). *The pedagogy of lifelong learning: Understanding effective teaching and learning in diverse contexts*. New York: Routledge.
- Ozer, E., & Wright, D. (2012). Beyond school spirit: The effects of youth-led participatory action research in two urban high schools. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 22(2), 267-283.
- Palincsar, A. S. (1998). Social constructivist perspectives on teaching and learning. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49(1), 345-375.
- Park, P. (2006). Knowledge and participatory research. In P. Reason, & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research*. (pp. 83-93). London: SAGE Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3 Ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Perullo, A. (2005). Hooligans and heroes: Youth identity and hip-hop in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Africa Today*, 75-101.
- Pheko, M. M., & Molefhe, K. (2017). Addressing employability challenges: A framework for improving the employability of graduates in Botswana. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 22(4), 455-469.
- Piper, H., & Piper, J. (2000). Disaffected young people as the problem. Mentoring as the solution. Education and work as the goal. *Journal of Education and Work*, 13(1), 77-94.
- Powell, L. (2012). Reimagining the purpose of VET—Expanding the capability to aspire in South African further education and training students. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 32(5), 643-653.
- Pretty, J. (1995). Participatory learning for sustainable agriculture. *World Development*, 23(8), 1247-1263.
- Pretty, J., Guijt, I., Thompson, J., & Scoones, I. (1995). *Participatory learning and action—A trainer's guide*. London: International Institute for Environment and Education.

- Private Sector Foundation Uganda. (2018). Skills development facility. Retrieved from <https://www.psfuganda.org/projects/skills-development-facility.html> on July 27, 2020.
- Prodonovich, S., Perry, L. B., & Taggart, A. (2014). Developing conceptual understandings of the capacity to aspire for higher education. *Issues in Educational Research*, 24(2), 174-189.
- Psacharopoulos, G. (1991). Education and work: The perennial mismatch and ways to solve it. *The Vocational Aspect of Education*, 43(1), 127-132.
- Raffe, D. (2003). Pathways linking education and work: A review of concepts, research, and policy debates. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 6(1), 3-19.
- Raffe, D. (2008). The concept of transition system. *Journal of Education and Work*, 21(4), 277-296.
- Raffe, D. (2011). Cross-national differences in education-work transitions. In L. Manuel (Ed.), *The oxford handbook of lifelong learning* (pp. 312-328) Oxford University Press New York.
- Rammolai, M. (2009). *The image of agriculture education in Botswana*. PhD Thesis, Perth: Murdoch University.
- Ramos, R. (2019). Migration aspirations among youth in the Middle East and North Africa region. *Journal of Geographical Systems*, 21(4), 487-507.
- Reeve, J., & Shin, S. H. (2020). How teachers can support students' agentic engagement. *Theory into Practice*, 59(2), 150-161.
- Reason, P. (2006). Choice and quality in action research practice. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(2), 187-203.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). Introduction: Inquiry and participation in search of a world worthy of human aspiration. In P. Reason, & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. (pp. 1-14). London: Thousand Oaks.
- Resnick, D., & Thurlow, J. (2015). Introduction: African youth at a crossroads. In D. Resnick, & J. Thurlow (Eds.), *African youth and the persistence of marginalization* (pp. 19-38). New York: Routledge.
- Rigby, J. G., Woulfin, S. L., & März, V. (2016). Understanding how structure and agency influence education policy implementation and organizational change. *American Journal of Education*, 122(3), 295-302.
- Rivera, W. (2006). Transforming post-secondary agricultural education and training by design: Solutions for sub-Saharan Africa. Retrieved from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Transforming-post-secondary-agricultural-education-Rivera/1cbb29113d3a79a1151e6a582da2a5cb5ab25006> on March 23, 2015.
- Robeyns, I. (2005). The capability approach: A theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(1), 38-51.

- Rogers, P. J., Petrosino, A., Huebner, T. A., & Hacsí, T. A. (2000). Program theory evaluation: Practice, promise, and problems. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2000(87), 5-13.
- Rothman, J. (1997). Action-evaluation and conflict resolution: In theory and practice. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 15(2), 119-131.
- Rothman, J. (2012). Action evaluation in theory and practice. In J. Rothman (Ed.). *From identity-based conflict to identity-based cooperation* (pp. 125-133). New York, NY: Springer New York.
- Rozendaal, J. S., Minnaert, A., & Boekaerts, M. (2003). Motivation and self-regulated learning in secondary vocational education: Information-processing type and gender differences. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 13(4), 273-289.
- Rubenstein, E. (2014). *Exemplary supervised agricultural experience programs in rural secondary schools*. PhD Thesis, Florida: University of Florida.
- Rué, J. (2016). Reflections on the craftsmanship of teaching: Lesson/learning studies as a cooperative means to enhance professionalism. *Intl Jnl for Less & Lrng Studs*, 5(4), 348-361.
- Rule, P., & John, V. (2011). *Your guide to case study research*. Pretoria: van Schaik
- Schoon, I., & Bynner, J. (2019). Young people and the great recession: Variations in the school-to-work transition in Europe and the United States. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 10(2), 153-173.
- Schoon, I., & Heckhausen, J. (2019). Conceptualizing individual agency in the transition from school to work: A social-ecological developmental perspective. *Adolescent Research Review*, 4(2), 135-148.
- Schoon, I., & Silbereisen, R. K. (2009). Conceptualising school-to-work transitions in context. In I. Schoon, & R. Silbereisen (Eds.), *Transitions from school to work* (pp. 3-29). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seekings, J. (2006). Beyond heroes and villains: The rediscovery of the ordinary in the study of childhood and adolescence in South Africa. *Social Dynamics*, 32(1), 1-20.
- Sen, A. (1975). *Employment, technology and development: A study prepared for the international labour office within the framework of the world employment programme*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom* (1st Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sennett, R. (2008). *The craftsman*. New Haven: Penguin Publishing.
- Sennett, R. (2012). *Together: The rituals, pleasures and politics of cooperation*. London: Yale University Press.
- Shayo, A. H. (2020). *The role of education system in preparing youth for agricultural career decisions and aspirations: Exploring ways to attract more youth to engage in agriculture and agricultural entrepreneurship in Tanzania*. PhD Thesis, Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
- Sikandar, A. (2016). John Dewey and his philosophy of education. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 2(2), 191-201.

- Smith, E., & Yasukawa, K. (2017). What makes a good VET teacher? Views of Australian VET teachers and students. *International Journal of Training Research*, 15(1), 23-40.
- Sommers, M. (2011). Governance, security and culture: Assessing Africa's youth bulge. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 5(2), 292-303.
- Soucat, A., Nzau, G., Elaheebocus, N., & Cunha-Duarte, J. (2013). Accelerating the AfDB's response to the youth unemployment crisis in Africa. *Africa Economic Brief*, 4(1).
- Spielman, D. J., Ekboir, J., Davis, K., & Ochieng, C. M. (2008). An innovation systems perspective on strengthening agricultural education and training in sub-Saharan Africa. *Agricultural Systems*, 98(1), 1-9.
- Srivastava, P., & Hopwood, N. (2009). A practical iterative framework for qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 76-84.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. California: Thousand Oaks.
- Stokes, H., & Wyn, J. (2007). Constructing identities and making careers: Young people's perspectives on work and learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(5), 495-511.
- Stoll, L. (2006). The future of educational change: System thinkers in action: Response to Michael Fullan. *Journal of Educational Change*, 7(3), 123-127.
- Streumer, J. N., & Kho, M. (2006). The world of work-related learning. In J. Streumer N (Ed.), *Work-related learning* (pp. 3-49). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Stromquist, N. (2018). *The global status of teachers and the teaching profession*. Brussels: Education International.
- Subrahmanyam, G. (2013). *Tackling youth unemployment through TVET: Report of the UNESCO-UNEVOC online conference*. Bonn: UNESCO.
- Sukarieh, M., & Tannock, S. (2008). In the best interests of youth or neoliberalism? The World Bank and the new global youth empowerment project. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(3), 301-312.
- Sukarieh, M., & Tannock, S. (2014). *Youth rising? The politics of youth in the global economy*. London: Routledge.
- Sumberg, J., Anyidoho, N. A., & Chasukwa, M. (2015). Young people, agriculture, and employment in rural Africa. In D. Resnick, & J. Thurlow (Eds.), *African youth and the persistence of marginalization* (pp. 129-150). London: Routledge.
- Suri, H. (2011). Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 11(2), 63-75.
- Susman, G. I., & Evered, R. D. (1978). An assessment of the scientific merits of action research. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23(4), 582-603.
- Sweet, R. (2013). Work-based learning: Why? How. In *Revisiting Global Trends in TVET: Reflections on Theory and Practice*. (pp. 164-203). Bonn: United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation.

- Tadele, G., & Gella, A. A. (2012). 'A last resort and often not an option at all': Farming and young people in Ethiopia. *IDS Bulletin*, 43(6), 33-43.
- Tangri, R., & Mwenda, A. M. (2008). Elite corruption and politics in Uganda. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 46(2), 177-194.
- Tikly, L. (2013). Reconceptualising TVET and development: A human capability and social justice approach. *Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice* (pp. 1-39). Bonn: United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation.
- Trif, L. (2015). Training models of social constructivism. Teaching based on developing a scaffold. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 180, 978-983.
- Tukundane, C. (2014). *Education and skills for development: Transforming support programmes for early school leavers in Uganda*. PhD Thesis (Globalisation Studies Groningen), Groningen: University of Groningen.
- Tukundane, C. (2015). Excluded youth and skills training in Uganda. In M. Blaak, C. Tukundane, J. Van der Linden & F. Elsdijk (Eds.), *Exploring new pathways for craftsmanship in a globalised world* (pp. 11-23). Groningen: Globalisation Studies Groningen.
- Tukundane, C., & Blaak, M. (2010). Towards new intervention programmes for early school leavers in Uganda. In J. Zeelen, J. Linden, D. Nampota & M. Ngabirano (Eds.), *The burden of educational exclusion* (pp. 209-224). Rotterdam: Brill.
- Tumuheki, P. (2017). *Lifelong learning in practice: Understanding and enabling meaningful participation of non-traditional students in university education in Uganda*. PhD Thesis (Globalisation Studies Groningen), Groningen: University of Groningen.
- Tumwine, S. (2019, October 23,). Over 30 students arrested as police foils Makerere strike. Retrieved from https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1509109/students-arrested-police-foils-makerere-strike on November 2, 2019.
- UBoS. (2016a). *Labour market transition of young people in Uganda: Highlights of the school-to-work transition survey 2015*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- UBoS. (2016b). *The national population and housing census 2014–main report*. Kampala: Uganda Bureau of Statistics.
- UBoS. (2017). *Education: A means for population transformation*. Kampala: Uganda Bureau of Statistics.
- UBoS. (2019). *2019 statistical abstract*. Kampala: Uganda Bureau of Statistics.
- UBoS. (2020). *2020 statistical abstract*. Kampala: Uganda Bureau of Statistics.
- UBTEB. (2015). *Industrial training guidelines*. Kampala: Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board.
- Uganda Manufacturers Association. (2015). HEST internship project. Retrieved from <https://www.uma.or.ug/multi-media/news-briefs/item/42-2015-09-17-06-31-54> on 27 July 2020.

- UNDP. (2015). *Human developments report 2015: Work for human development*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- UNESCO. (2012). *Youth and skills: Putting education to work: EFA Global monitoring report 2012*. Paris: United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation.
- United Nations. (2007). *World youth report, 2007: Young people's transition to adulthood: Progress and challenges*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations. (2010). *World programme of action for youth*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> on 2 November 2016.
- Urdal, H. (2004). The devil in the demographics: The effect of youth bulges on domestic armed conflict, 1950-2000. *Social Development Papers*, 14. Washington: The World Bank.
- Urdal, H., & Hoelscher, K. (2009). Urban youth bulges and social disorder: An empirical study of Asian and sub-Saharan African cities. Washington: The World Bank.
- Van Blerk, L. (2008). Poverty, migration and sex work: Youth transitions in Ethiopia. *Area*, 40(2), 245-253.
- Van der Linden, J. (2016). *Ensuring meaningful lifelong learning opportunities for groups at risk*. PhD thesis. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- Van der Linden, J., & Zeelen, J. (2008). Action research in Africa: Challenges and perspectives. In B. Boog, J. Preece, M. Slagter & J. Zeelen (Eds.), *Towards quality improvement of action research* (pp. 183-197). Rotterdam: Brill Sense.
- Vandenbosch, T. (2006). Post-primary agricultural education and training in sub-Saharan Africa: Adapting supply to changing demand. *Unpublished Manuscript, World Agroforestry Centre, Nairobi, Kenya*.
- Wabule, A. (2017). *Professional integrity of teachers in Uganda: Practical action strategies*. PhD Thesis (Globalisation Studies Groningen), Groningen: University of Groningen.
- Wakkee, I., Hoestenbergh, K., & Mwasalwiba, E. (2018). Capability, social capital and opportunity-driven graduate entrepreneurship in Tanzania. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 25(4), 554-572.
- Walker, K., & Hofstetter, S. (2016). Study on agricultural technical and vocational education and training (ATVET) in developing countries. Retrieved from https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Agriculture-and-Food-Security/focusareas/Documents/ras_capex_ATVET_Study_2016.pdf on 7 March 2017.
- Walker, M., & Unterhalter, E. (2007). The capability approach: Its potential for work in education. In M. Walker, & E. Unterhalter (Eds.), *Amartya Sen's capability approach and social justice in education* (pp. 1-18). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wallace, I. (1997). Agricultural education at the crossroads: Present dilemmas and possible options for the future in sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 17(1), 27-39.

- Wallace, I. (2007). A framework for revitalisation of rural education and training systems in sub-Saharan Africa: Strengthening the human resource base for food security and sustainable livelihoods. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(5), 581-590.
- Walther, A. (2006). Regimes of youth transitions: Choice, flexibility and security in young people's experiences across different European contexts. *Young*, 14(2), 119-139.
- Watson, K. (1994). Technical and vocational education in developing countries: Western paradigms and comparative methodology. *Comparative Education*, 30(2), 85-97.
- Watts, A. G., & Sultana, R. G. (2004). Career guidance policies in 37 countries: Contrasts and common themes. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 4(2-3), 105-122.
- Weber, E. (Ed.). (2008). *Educational change in South Africa: Reflections on local realities, practices, and reforms*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Wedekind, V., & Mutereko, S. (2016). *Employability and curriculum responsiveness in post-school education and training*. Pretoria: Labour Market Intelligence Partnership.
- Wells, T., Matthews, J., Caudle, L., Lunceford, C., Clement, B., & Anderson, R. (2015). The infusion of inquiry-based learning into school-based agricultural education: A review of literature. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 56(4), 169-181.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wheelahan, L. (2009). The problem with CBT (and why constructivism makes things worse). *Journal of Education and Work*, 22(3), 227-242.
- Wheelahan, L., & Moodie, G. (2016). Global trends in TVET: A framework for social justice. *Brussels: Education International*.
- White, R., & Wyn, J. (1998). Youth agency and social context. *Journal of Sociology*, 34(3), 314-327.
- Whittemore, R., Chase, S. K., & Mandle, C. L. (2001). Validity in qualitative research. *Qual Health Res*, 11(4), 522-537.
- Wicks, P. G., & Reason, P. (2009). Initiating action research: Challenges and paradoxes of opening communicative space. *Action Research*, 7(3), 243-262.
- Wilmsen, C. (2008). Extraction, empowerment, and relationships in the practice of participatory research. In B. Boog, J. Preece, M. Slagter & J. Zeelen (Eds.), *Towards quality improvement of action research* (pp. 135-146). Rotterdam: Brill Sense.
- World Bank. (2006). *World development report 2007: Development and the next generation*. Washington: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2007). *Cultivating knowledge and skills to grow African agriculture: A synthesis of an institutional, regional, and international review*. Washington: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2015). Uganda skills development project. Retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/808711468167070990/pdf/PAD11110PAD0P10010Box391418B0OUO090.pdf> on 31 December 2018

- Wyn, J., & Dwyer, P. (1999). New directions in research on youth in transition. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2(1), 5-21.
- Zeelen, J. (2012). Universities in Africa: Working on excellence for whom? Reflections on teaching, research, and outreach activities at African universities. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 1(2), 157-165.
- Zeelen, J. (2015). *Bowling together. Lifelong learning as a collective challenge in the North and the South*. Groningen: Globalisation Studies Groningen.
- Zeelen, J., Van der Linden, J., Nampota, D., & Ngabirano, M. (2010). Introduction. In J. Zeelen, J. Van der Linden, D. Nampota & M. Ngabirano (Eds.), *The burden of educational exclusion: Understanding and challenging early school leaving in Africa* (pp. 1-13). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Zelloth, H. (2014). Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and career guidance: The interface. In G. Arulmani, A. Baksh, F. Leong & G. Watts (Eds.), *Handbook of career development* (pp. 271-290). New York: Springer.
- Zorya, S., Kshirsagar, V., Gautam, M., Odwongo, W., & Sebudde, R. (2012). *Agriculture for inclusive growth in Uganda*. Washington: World Bank.

Summary

Background and methodology

Millions of young people around the world still face enormous difficulties in their education-employment transitions despite decades of related research and policy interventions. As discussed in Chapters 1 & 2, the reality of the troubles that young Africans encounter in navigating confining social and institutional settings to access meaningful education and decent work attracts all sorts of theoretical arguments, policy assumptions and practical interventions. One such prominent assumption is the idea that increased young people's participation in agricultural education and work has the potential to stem escalating youth unemployment. The related assumption that young people are less keen to plunge their learning and work life in agriculture poses a huge education and labour dilemma across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and similar contexts.

Amid this dilemma are narratives that seem to downplay the influential role of social arrangements that structure not only the education-work trajectories of young people but also the perceptions and practices of agricultural education and labour market social actors. Questionable narratives that often attempt to frame young people as authors of their own troubled transitions are commonplace in a number of related research and in social policy discourses. Moreover, mainstream research and policy reviews in Uganda and similar contexts are known for their traditional focus on macro and meso structures with limited methodological interest in the voices and experiences of individuals whose everyday lives are directly impacted by related education and labour market systems.

It is regrettable that there is little research that focuses on how young people, for instance, navigate the social and institutional conditions which shape their education and work aspirations in the context of exponential societal, ecological and technological changes. The scarcity of in-depth data and knowledge derived from deeper engagement and interactions with micro-level social actors (particularly agriculture students, educators, graduates, and related industry stakeholders) is also regrettable. Accordingly, this study set out to explore Ugandan young people's education-employment transition with a focus on agriculture. Undertaken between 2016 and 2020, the study sought to answer two main questions namely (i) how do socio-economic conditions and institutional settings shape Ugandan young people's agricultural education-employment transitions?, and (ii) how improvements can be made to enhance agricultural education processes for optimising Ugandan young people's learning and labour market outcomes?

Young people's navigation of transition processes and attainment of related outcomes is a relational social phenomenon, just as the social process of accompanying

them on their education-employment transition. That is why I chose to draw on social theories of learning and action. As I explain in Chapter 3, I formulated an integrated transformative theoretical and methodological frame of reference for this study. I use the notion of agency as espoused by the agency-focused capabilities approach, the social-ecological development model of agency and related youth transition literature. In dealing with quality issues and concerns in education-work transition processes, I complement the study's conceptual framework with theoretical ideals of craftsmanship and vocational pedagogy as augmented by socio-constructivist and emancipatory education epistemologies.

The empirical dimensions of this study unfolded through purposeful relationships building and interactive encounters with frontline social actors as active agents using a range of qualitative research methods and techniques (See Chapter 3 for a more detailed description of the emancipatory character of this study). During the orientation phase, I engaged a wide range of social actors who were working in agri-youth employment interventions (AEIs). The next phase explored the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders from agricultural education training (AET) institutions and other industry actors. For the interventionist phase, I used an action research methodology which, among other things, helped to create a community of social actors at the case study AET institution that undertook collaborative inquiry and action for improving agri-education practice.

Study findings, contributions and implications

This study unravels empirical insights for the discourse on young people's education-work transition in Uganda and similar contexts, particularly in regard to eight themes, as follows:

- Active labour market interventions, youth development and employment;
- Social and dispositional determinants of young people's pursuit of agriculture education and work pathways;
- Individual agency for personal and professional flourishing in the context of youth transition theory, policy and practice;
- Troubled vocational education and training (VET) system as a driver of youth labour market transitions into the food and agriculture industry;
- Unending agricultural education and training (AET) reforms, associated challenges and threats;
- Young people's resilience and agency amidst social and institutional constraints to smooth transition;
- Partnerships and skills ecosystems for harnessing young people's education-work transition;
- Potential of action research in empowering education social actors for personal, professional and institutional change.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I present the data and discuss the findings. In Chapter 7, I discuss the significance of the study and its implications. Here I present a summary under eight headings, as follows:

Fast tracking NEETs' agri-employment

The orientation phase findings show a wave of youth employment interventions designed to fast track rural and semi-urban youth's active participation in the agricultural world of work. Operating within the active labour market (ALM) paradigm, all the eight agri-based youth employment interventions (AYEIs) are targeting youths who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) through short-term non-formal skills training and entrepreneurship support. The findings reveal that the AYEIs are making attempts to address skills-related constraints and limited access to productive resources.

Influenced by the 'young people dislike agriculture' narrative and the employability logic, the AYEIs do focus on driving young people into agribusiness and related off-farm enterprises for quick returns. With a project-based programming tradition, the interventions are struggling to embrace the notions of youth voice and participation amidst the confining social and institutional arrangements. While it was clear that AYEIs do focus on rapid agricultural productivity and youth employment, their inability to support young people to pursue agri-career paths was also evident.

Determinants of young people's pursuit of AET

The interplay of passion, aptitude, sense of citizenship responsibility, desire for social recognition and perceived employment utility of agricultural qualifications had a clear influence on young people's interest to pursue AET pathways. While a small minority of students and graduates attributed their interest in agriculture to sheer passion, the vast majority's motivation is driven by outcome expectations and absence of possible alternatives. Personal beliefs were also mentioned by several students and graduates as a determinant of their consideration for an AET pathway.

The findings reveal the considerable influence of families, high school and social networks of friends and significant others in shaping the decisions of when to study, what AET course to pursue and at what institution to do so. It is evident that all the students and graduates were introduced to agriculture as a subject within the framework of the lower secondary education curriculum. The majority of young people attribute the positive influence of high school to two key aspects, namely: (i) inspiration and encouragement by individual teachers, and (ii) participation in study tours, school gardens and related food preparation activities. Family farming background, no matter whether subsistence in nature or otherwise, was mentioned as a positive influence by some students and graduates. Inspiration and instructive advice from family members features prominently in the majority of young people's narrations of how their decisions on what AET institution and course to join were made.

While a small number of young people said that pursuing AET at vocational and tertiary levels was a predetermined preference, the majority described the decision as an alternative after failing to attain the required academic grades to go to a university. A few students and graduates in this category said that they had childhood dreams to pursue university degree programmes in animal and crop science upon completion of the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE).

Perceived affordability of AET institutions, reputation and proximity were combining factors which influenced decisions on what AET institution to join. Such information and advice is provided to young people by parents, individual teachers, peers and significant others within the social network of friends and relatives but not by high schools or even the AET institutions themselves. The shortage of institutionalised guidance and support to students before, during and after enrolment was also evident.

AET as a driver of youth transition: a tussle of hope and promise

Findings indicate that whilst lower and tertiary AET never appears to have been a first option for the majority of current and former students, the perceived potential of this sub-sector as a driver of quick transition to employment is a source of hope for all young people. Parents, friends, educators and significant others perceive it as a promising educational and career path that young people ought to pursue. However, the findings revealed that the AET sub-sector is struggling to deliver on the expressed hope.

A vast majority of young people poorly perceive the learning environments at AET institutions. Their perceptions converge in the poor ratings of physical facilities and social climate which, according to them, is characterised by a general negligence of students' health and social and emotional well-being. Young people generally voiced negative opinions about the quality and adequacy of learning content, with a minority of students and graduates even dismissing some course units as useless. While a small minority of students speak positively of the frontline social actors, the majority, in addition to a couple of graduates (especially those from the tertiary AET institution) fault most of the AET educators and administrators. Key concerns include absenteeism, tribalism, poor theory-practice integration, poor use of the lecture method, poor leadership, and weak interpersonal relationships. However, it is remarkable that there is a meaningful minority of students and graduates who fondly speak about the cordial and very productive relationships with individual educators.

The majority of educators are generally pessimistic about young people's ability to direct their decisions and actions in the context of their emerging multiple identities. The findings reveal that the educators' perception that young people are not interested in agriculture is so strong that at times they seem to forget that enrolled students are in the process of transitioning with new identity aspirations. It is evident that most educators think that students are not able to judge the consequences and impact of their decisions and actions. The deficit paradigm that young people lack the maturity and social competence

for making good decisions and for taking appropriate actions is further illuminated by the educators' arguments about the measures to control student actions and conduct. However, there is a small minority of educators who view their students from a positive perspective, arguing instead for a change of approach.

The findings on how educators perceive their work indicate that the majority seem to be concerned about the need to do certain things differently but most of them feel structurally constrained. Most educators decried poor leadership and management styles of the administrators. They decry the unfreedom to participate fully in all the affairs of the AET institutions. Being appreciated by students and the expectation for personal and professional development is among the main sources of the educators' motivation and commitment to their work.

In addition to the relational challenges between and among the students and lecturers, there are huge pedagogical challenges. Teaching is mostly characterised by ineffective use of the lecture method. All the study participants converge in their complaint about the poor design and delivery of work-based course units, which they attribute to shortage of materials and inadequate guidance. The educators agree with the students about the dearth of student career and vocational guidance services.

Curriculum reviews almost a constant phenomena

The findings reveal a trail of curriculum reform efforts for more than a decade in an effort to respond to the changing work and working contexts. According to most educators, the AET curriculum is subjected to repeated reviews leading to changes to study programmes, including name changes or the introduction of new course units or topics. Notably, there appears to be a preoccupation to embed employability, business and entrepreneurship themes into curriculum documents. There is evident push for early specialisation with young people being lured into narrower study programmes, such as commodity-based study programmes. In response to the longstanding concern that AET is not practice-oriented, work placements have now been universalised and are being offered as mandatory course units at all levels of AET service delivery. The shift to a competence-based approach to AET curriculum design and delivery appears to be the mantra of public education policy discourse.

The findings show limited participation of frontline AET social actors in conceptualising curriculum changes. Bureaucrats, managers and technocrats in government ministries and departments always drive the agenda for curriculum reform. Most of the curriculum reviews and related innovations are highly dependent on development aid provided by donor agencies. The mismatch of thinking on what matters and doesn't in terms of reform investment was apparent. Looking at the current circumstances, it seems that while government ministries and development partners are bent on curriculum reforms and improving physical infrastructure, the findings revealed a greater need to attend to educators' motivation, competence and integrity; students' welfare and social and

emotional wellbeing; conducive social learning environments and timely supply of enough quality educational resources.

Gaining access to employment and career building options

The findings concerning the dreams and realities of young people's quest for employment and career building opportunities indicate high levels of ambition for prestigious jobs and high performing own enterprises. The zeal for immediate enrolment for further training to secure the needed academic credentials for career upward mobility amongst both students and graduates was equally evident.

The findings revealed that while the vast majority of graduates got some kind of work in the food and agriculture industry within six months of graduation, only a minority were engaged in gainful employment. The rest found themselves trapped in insecure employment as part-time wage earners and volunteers. Others were struggling to establish their own agricultural enterprises amidst a host of difficulties including a shortage of productive resources. The reliance on social capital in seeking and gaining access to work opportunities is evident. Current students' fears in obtaining work and career enhancement opportunities are confirmed by all the graduates. In addition, the unethical conduct of labour market actors, a volatile economy, limited access to productive resources and harsh climatic conditions were the most frequently cited negative experiences according to the majority of the interviewed graduates.

Young people's navigational stance

The findings indicate that social and institutional constraints do frustrate young people. However, their ambition and volition to navigate the existing pathways in pursuit of their educational and employment aspirations was clear. In navigating their multiple identities, which the majority of education social actors seem not to approve; most young people are on track in their reframed aspirations to pursue vocational AET options as opposed to earlier ambitions for university pathways. Aware of the difficulties to obtain formal jobs, most young people exhibit intentional attempts to pursue self-employment opportunities. The findings reveal how students and graduates alike recognise the power of social networks in their search for work in unregulated labour markets and a volatile economy. Graduates in insecure employment and those without any employment status demonstrate ambition and resilience to move on. Generally, all students and graduates expressed a positive outlook to the future as practitioners and professionals in the food and agriculture industry.

Researching and transforming AET: possibilities and challenges

The interventionist action research phase of this study involved intensive collaborative inquiry into better ways of teaching agriculture practically, and improving students' learning and labour market outcomes. Chapter 6 presents evidence of the possibilities and challenges associated with attempts made by the action research team to transform agri-education practice through the enactment of a new internship model at the case study AET institution. The change-supporting conditions that emerged from the intensive interactions through social learning events by the action research team include a vivid sense of ownership of the change process and improved interpersonal relationships. Combined with an emergent solidarity amongst team members, this led to increased individual motivation to think and act.

In Chapter 6 I reflect on the difficulties and challenges that stood in the way for the team to contribute to the desired lasting and sustainable transformation of agri-education practice. The educators' time scarcity dilemma combined with limited resources and autonomy for enacting change to constrain the emergent motivation and enthusiasm for change. Faithfulness to the action research principles and values was thwarted by not only the associated methodological and logistical challenges but also the constraining institutional arrangements both within and outside the case study AET institution.

Freeing individual agency

Chapter seven gets back to the findings to further situate the study in the theoretical and methodological discourse as set out in Chapter two. In this concluding chapter, I describe the implications of the study for the theory, policy and practice of agricultural education and training. I argue that optimising Ugandan young people's agriculture education and labour market outcomes demands, among other things, the agentic engagement of both the young people themselves as well as the frontline social actors. Accordingly, freeing and nurturing the individual freedom and agency of Ugandan young people to choose and pursue valued agricultural education and work aspirations along the constricting pathways enacted as part of societal canalisation is a core element of this thesis. An equally central argument of this study is the need for an enabling environment for agency freedom and professional autonomy of frontline education social actors (especially agriculture educators) to practise craftsmanship, democracy and associated transformative approaches for better preparation of young people to navigate their education and career trajectories. The intensive action research engagements during this study have shown that despite the confining social and institutional arrangements, making steps in freeing the agency of students and educators is indeed critical and has the potential to yield positive outcomes.

Samenvatting

Achtergrond en methodologische opzet

Ondanks tientallen jaren van onderwijs- en arbeidsmarktonderzoek en beleidsinterventies, worden wereldwijd nog steeds miljoenen jonge mensen geconfronteerd met grote problemen bij de aansluiting van het door hen genoten onderwijs op de lokale arbeidsmarkt. In hoofdstuk 1 en 2 van dit proefschrift wordt een bonte verzameling van verschillende theoretische argumenten, beleidsaannames en interventies besproken die vaak genoemd worden in reactie op de problemen die jonge Afrikanen ondervinden bij het verkrijgen van toegang tot zinvol onderwijs en daarop aansluitend betekenisvol werk. Een van die beleidsveronderstellingen is dat (toenemende) jeugdwerkloosheid o.a. tegengegaan kan worden door meer jonge mensen op te leiden en voor te bereiden op een loopbaan in de agrarische sector. Echter, een veel voorkomend maatschappelijk dilemma in sub Sahara Afrika (SSA) en soortgelijke contexten is de veronderstelling dat jonge mensen niet enthousiast zouden zijn om zich te scholen voor en te werken in de agrarisch sector. Deze veronderstelling belemmert de praktische vertaling van de hiervoor genoemde beleidsveronderstelling om jeugdwerkloosheid tegen te gaan en vormt daarmee een dilemma voor onderwijshervormers.

Hier komt vaak nog bij dat maatschappelijke en geïnstitutionaliseerde sociale narratieven de aanzienlijke invloed van sociale verwachtingen op de keuzes van jonge mensen aangaande hun onderwijs en professionele loopbaan lijken te bagatelliseren. Het gaat daarbij vaak om twijfelachtige verhalen die de oorzaak van de aansluitingsproblemen vooral neerleggen bij de jonge mensen zelf die deze problemen ervaren. Helaas zijn deze narratieven ook gemeengoed in een deel van het gerelateerde onderzoek, in het sociale discours en ook binnen het overheidsbeleid. Bovendien staan Oeganda en soortgelijke contexten bekend om een onderzoekscultuur en beleidspraktijk die gekenmerkt worden door een traditionele focus op macro- en mesoniveau met slechts beperkte methodologische belangstelling voor de individuele verhalen en ervaringen van mensen. Hierbij gaat het juist om mensen van wie het dagelijks leven rechtstreeks wordt beïnvloed door de inrichting van het onderwijs in hun land en de informele en formele systemen die van invloed zijn op de toegang tot de arbeidsmarkt.

Het valt te betreuren dat er tot nu toe weinig onderzoek is gedaan dat zich richt op de vraag hoe jonge mensen bijvoorbeeld zelf in de praktijk omgaan met de sociale en institutionele condities die van invloed zijn op hun ambities qua opleiding en werk. Hetzelfde geldt voor de mate waarin onderwijs en beleid wel of niet adequaat inspelen op relevante maatschappelijke, ecologische en technologische veranderingen. De schaarste

van kwalitatieve data en diepere inzichten afkomstig uit nauwe betrokkenheid en interactie op microniveau met de verschillende sociale actoren (in het bijzonder landbouwstudenten, docenten, alumni, en aanverwante industriële stakeholders) is eveneens te betreuren. Dienovereenkomstig is deze studie opgezet om te verkennen hoe voor Oegandese jongeren een verbeterde aansluiting gerealiseerd kan worden tussen agrarisch onderwijs en werk, waarbij de focus op werk binnen de landbouwsector ligt. De studie werd uitgevoerd tussen 2016 en 2020. In deze studie staan twee belangrijke vragen centraal. Namelijk:

- (i) Hoe beïnvloeden sociaaleconomische condities en de institutionele systemen Oegandese jonge mensen in hun schoolkeuzes en de mate waarin zij vervolgens aansluiting vinden bij de beroepspraktijk?
- (ii) Hoe en welke verbeteringen kunnen worden ingezet om agrarische onderwijsprocessen te optimaliseren voor Oegandese jongeren, zodat de relatie tussen wat zij in het onderwijs leren beter aansluit op wat de arbeidsmarkt in deze sector van hen vraagt?

De wijze waarop jonge mensen hun weg zoeken en vinden bij de overgang van onderwijs naar arbeidsmarkt en het bereiken van daarmee samenhangende doelstellingen, is een complex interactief en sociaal fenomeen. Hetzelfde geldt voor het sociale proces van begeleiden en coachen van deze jongeren. Daarom wordt in hoofdstuk 3 een conceptueel kader met sociale theorieën van leren en actie uiteengezet. Het concept *agency* wordt daarbij gehanteerd zoals gebruikelijk binnen de *agency-focused capabilities* benadering, het sociaalecologische ontwikkelingsmodel van *agency* en zoals binnen de gerelateerde jeugdtransitie literatuur. Het opgebouwde conceptuele kader van deze studie wordt gecomplementeerd met theoretische benaderingen van vakmanschap en pedagogiek van beroepsonderwijs, zoals gehanteerd door sociaal-constructivisten en binnen de epistemologie van emancipatorisch onderwijs.

De empirische reikwijdte van deze studie kreeg gestalte via het opbouwen van betekenisvolle relaties en middels interactieve sessies met sociale actoren die tevens invulling gaven aan de beoogde verandering. Hierbij werd gebruik gemaakt van verschillende kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethoden en -technieken (zie hoofdstuk 3 voor een meer gedetailleerde beschrijving van het emancipatoire karakter van deze studie).

Tijdens de oriëntatie fase had ik als onderzoeker contact met een breed scala aan maatschappelijke actoren die werkzaam zijn in agrarische jeugdwerkgelegenheid interventies (AEIs). In de volgende fase onderzocht ik de ervaringen en percepties van stakeholders met betrekking tot agrarische onderwijs opleidingen (AET) en andere actoren in deze sector. Voor de interventiefase gebruikte ik de actie-onderzoek methodologie die bijdroeg tot het creëren van een actieve gemeenschap van sociale actoren. Samen met hen verrichtte ik binnen de case studie AET praktijkgericht onderzoek en voerden we verbeteringen door in de agrarische onderwijspraktijk.

Bevindingen en implicaties

Deze studie levert empirische inzichten op in het discours over jonge mensen en hun aansluiting vanuit het Oegandese onderwijs naar de beroepspraktijk. De inzichten komen in acht thema's aan de orde:

- Actieve arbeidsmarkt interventies, jeugdontwikkeling en werkgelegenheid;
- Sociale en dispositionele determinanten van de zoektocht van jonge mensen m.b.t. landbouwonderwijs en agrarische arbeidstrajecten;
- Het stimuleren van individuele regie op persoonlijke- en professionele ontwikkeling in de context van theorie, beleid en studieloopbaan van jongeren;
- Problemen in het beroepsonderwijs (VET) en het onderwijssysteem terwijl dit eigenlijk een aanjager zou moeten zijn voor een soepele overgang van onderwijs naar werk binnen de voedsel- en landbouwsector;
- Voortdurende onderwijshervormingen in het agrarisch onderwijs (AET) en daarmee gerelateerde uitdagingen en bedreigingen;
- Veerkracht en regie van jonge mensen ondanks de sociale en institutionele beperkingen en drempels die een soepele overgang van onderwijs naar beroepspraktijk bemoeilijken;
- Ecosystemen met vormen van samenwerking en ondersteunende vaardigheden die jonge mensen helpen bij de overgang van onderwijs naar werk;
- Het potentieel van actieonderzoek om maatschappelijke actoren in het onderwijs aan te moedigen tot persoonlijke, professionele en institutionele verandering.

In de hoofdstukken 4, 5 en 6 presenteer ik de gegevens en bespreek ik de bevindingen. In hoofdstuk 7 komen de betekenis van het onderzoek en de implicaties voor theorie, beleid en praktijk aan de orde.

Hieronder volgt de samenvatting onder acht kopjes:

Snel volgen van de agrarische werkgelegenheid van NEET 's

De bevindingen uit de oriëntatie fase tonen een golf van jeugd-werkgelegenheidsinterventies die zijn ontworpen om de actieve deelname van jongeren in de agrarische arbeidsmarkt snel te kunnen monitoren. Binnen het actieve arbeidsmarkt (ALM) paradigma, worden alle acht agrarische jeugdwerkgelegenheid interventies (AYEIs) gericht op jongeren die niet aan het werk zijn of onderwijs of training (NEET's) volgen. Centraal staat het op informele wijze verwerven van vaardigheden en ondersteuning bij ondernemerschap. De bevindingen laten zien dat de AYEI's pogingen ondernemen om leerproblemen en beperkingen qua toegang tot productieve hulpbronnen aan te pakken.

Beïnvloed door het narratief van 'jonge mensen hebben geen zin om te werken in de landbouw' en de inzetbaarheidslogica, doen de AYEIs hun best om jonge mensen te (ver)leiden naar de *agribusiness* en verwante *off-farm* ondernemingen. Met een projectgerichte programma traditie hebben de interventies moeite om de stem en de participatie van jongeren een prominente plaats te geven vanwege beperkende sociale en institutionele regelingen. Hoewel al duidelijk was dat AEIs gericht zijn op snelle realisatie van agrarische productiviteit en jeugdwerkgelegenheid, wordt ook hun onvermogen zichtbaar om jonge mensen te ondersteunen bij het vormgeven van een loopbaan in de landbouw.

Determinanten van het streven van jongeren naar Agrarisch onderwijs en training (AET)

Het samenspel van passie, geschiktheid, gevoel van burgerschapsverantwoordelijkheid, het verlangen naar sociale erkenning en de gepercipieerde waarde van agrarische kwalificaties voor werk, had een duidelijke invloed op de mate waarin jonge mensen een loopbaan in de agrarische sector zoeken. Terwijl een kleine minderheid van studenten en afgestudeerden hun interesse in de landbouw toeschreven aan passie voor deze sector, wordt voor de overgrote meerderheid van de studenten de motivatie vooral beïnvloed door de verwachtingen en afwezigheid van mogelijke alternatieven. Persoonlijke overtuigingen werden ook genoemd door een aantal studenten en afgestudeerden als reden om een loopbaan in de agrarische sector (AET) te kiezen.

De bevindingen tonen de grote invloed van de gezinnen, de middelbare school en sociale netwerken van vrienden en partners in de beslissingen over het moment van studeren, welke agrarische cursussen te volgen en bij welke instelling dat te doen. Alle studenten en afgestudeerden maakten kennis met landbouw als een onderwerp binnen het lager secundair onderwijs. De meerderheid van de jonge mensen schrijven de positieve invloed van de middelbare school toe aan twee belangrijke aspecten, te weten: (i) inspiratie en aanmoediging door individuele docenten, en (ii) participatie in studietrips, schooltuinen en activiteiten waarbij voedsel werd bereid. Herkomst uit een agrarische familie, ongeacht een nader omschreven landbouwactiviteit, werd door een aantal studenten en afgestudeerden als een positieve invloed genoemd. Inspiratie en advies van familieleden kwam bij de meerderheid van de jonge mensen terug in hun verhalen over de manier waarop zij tot de keuze kwamen voor een agrarische onderwijsinstelling en hun keuze voor een programma.

Hoewel een klein aantal jongeren aangaf dat het volgen van agrarisch beroeps- en vervolgonderwijs een bewuste keuze was, gaf de meerderheid aan dat dit besluit vooral werd ingegeven door het *niet* bereiken van de vereiste academische voorwaarden om te studeren aan een universiteit. Een paar studenten en afgestudeerden in deze tweede categorie gaven aan dat een universitair diploma in dierkunde en gewaswetenschap hun kinderdroom was, na voltooiing van het Oegandese voorgezette diploma (UACE; Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education).

De gepercipieerde kosten van het studeren aan agrarische instellingen, reputatie en nabijheid van de instelling waren gecombineerde factoren die van invloed waren op de beslissing bij welke agrarische instelling men ging studeren. Informatie en advies over deze aspecten worden verstrekt aan jongeren door hun ouders, individuele leerkrachten, collega's en partners binnen het sociale netwerk van vrienden en familieleden, maar niet door middelbare scholen of zelfs de agrarische instellingen zelf. Het tekort aan geïnstitutionaliseerde begeleiding en ondersteuning aan studenten vóór, tijdens en na de inschrijving was ook opvallend.

Agrarisch onderwijs als een aanjager van de talentontwikkeling van jongeren: een worsteling van hoop en belofte

De bevindingen van deze studie wijzen uit dat, hoewel secundair en tertiair agrarisch onderwijs bijna nooit de eerste keuze was voor de meerderheid van de huidige- en oud-studenten, de beleefde potentie van deze sub-sector als motor van een kansrijke aansluiting op werk voor deze jonge mensen een bron is van hoop. Ouders, vrienden, docenten en partners zien dit als een veelbelovende educatieve- en professionele loopbaan waar jonge mensen naar toe zouden moeten streven. Echter, de bevindingen wijzen uit dat de agrarische onderwijssector moeite heeft om deze hoop van jongeren waar te maken.

Een overgrote meerderheid van de jongeren beschouwt de leeromgeving van de agrarische instellingen als mager. Hun opvattingen worden vertaald in slechte beoordelingen van de fysieke faciliteiten en het sociale klimaat, dat volgens hen wordt gekenmerkt door veronachtzaming van hun gezondheid en sociaal-emotionele welzijn. De jongeren lieten zich over het algemeen negatief uit over de inhoud van het onderwijs dat als niet adequaat en kwalitatief slecht werd beoordeeld. Een minderheid van studenten en afgestudeerden gaf zelfs aan dat een aantal opleidingsonderdelen als volstrekt nutteloos wordt beschouwd. Hoewel een kleine minderheid van de studenten positief sprak over de medewerkers met wie zij te maken hadden gehad, klaagde de meerderheid net als een paar van de afgestudeerden (met name die van de tertiaire agrarische instelling) over het grootste deel van de medewerkers van de onderwijsinstellingen. Hierbij werd gewezen op onder meer ziekteverzuim, tribalisme, slechte integratie van theorie en praktijk, slecht docentschap, slecht leiderschap en zwakke interpersoonlijke contacten. Echter, opmerkelijk genoeg sprak een betekenisvolle minderheid van de studenten en afgestudeerden liefdevol over hun hartelijke en zeer productieve relatie met individuele docenten.

De meerderheid van de docenten is over het algemeen pessimistisch over het vermogen van jongeren om sturing te geven aan hun keuzes en acties in het kader van hun persoonlijke ontwikkeling en vorming van hun ontwikkelende identiteit. De resultaten wijzen uit dat de door opleiders gepercipieerde desinteresse van hun studenten voor landbouw zo groot is, dat zij op momenten lijken te vergeten dat de ingeschreven studenten nog volop in een proces zitten waarin zij hun professionele identiteit en oriëntaties aan het ontwikkelen zijn. Het werd tevens duidelijk dat de meeste opleiders denken dat hun

studenten niet in staat zijn om te oordelen over de gevolgen en de impact van hun eigen beslissingen en acties. Dit 'tekort-paradigma' van onvolwassenheid en sociale incompetentie voor het maken van goede beslissingen en voor het nemen van passende maatregelen, zien we terug in de manier waarop opleiders controle proberen te krijgen en te houden over de acties en gedragingen van hun studenten. Echter, er is een kleine minderheid van de opleiders die hun studenten zien vanuit een positief perspectief. Zij pleiten dan ook voor een andere aanpak.

De bevindingen van de manier waarop opleiders hun werk ervaren, geven enerzijds de indicatie dat de meerderheid beseft dat er een noodzaak is bepaalde dingen anders te doen, maar tevens dat de meesten van hen zich structureel beperkt voelen om hier vorm aan te geven. De meeste opleiders weten dit aan slecht leiderschap en de managementstijl van schoolleiders. Ze spraken zich negatief uit over de onvrijheid die zij ervaren om volwaardig deel te nemen aan tal van zaken in hun school. Gewaardeerd worden door studenten en de mogelijkheid voor ontwikkeling op zowel persoonlijk als professioneel vlak, zijn de belangrijkste bronnen van motivatie en toewijding voor het werk van opleiders.

In aanvulling op de relationele problemen tussen en onder de studenten en docenten, zijn er tevens grote pedagogische uitdagingen. De manier van onderwijzen wordt in de meeste gevallen gekenmerkt door een ondoelmatig en ineffectief didactisch repertoire. Alle respondenten hebben klachten over het slechte ontwerp en de uitvoering van de opleidingsonderdelen, die zij toeschrijven aan een tekort aan materialen en onvoldoende docentbegeleiding. De opleiders zijn het eens met de studenten als het gaat over het gebrek aan studieloopbaanbegeleiding.

Curriculumbeoordelingen bijna een constant fenomeen

De bevindingen laten een spoor van onderwijs- en leerplanvernieuwingen zien waarbij gedurende meer dan een decennium een poging wordt gedaan om in te spelen op de veranderende beroepspraktijk en agrarische werkzaamheden. Volgens de meeste opleiders wordt het agrarisch-curriculum voortdurend onderworpen aan beoordelingen die steeds weer leiden tot wijzigingen in studieprogramma 's, waaronder naamswijzigingen en de introductie van nieuwe cursussen en onderwerpen. Er lijkt met name een preoccupatie te zijn ten opzichte van het opnemen van thema's in het curriculum zoals *employability*, *business* en *entrepreneurship*. Er wordt dan ook duidelijk druk uitgeoefend om studenten vroeg te laten specialiseren waardoor de studenten verleid worden tot een smal, gespecialiseerd studieprogramma, zoals product georiënteerde studie programma's. In reactie op de voortgaande zorg dat het agrarische onderwijs niet voldoende praktijkgericht is, zijn stages recent algemeen ingevoerd als verplicht onderdeel op alle niveaus van het agrarische onderwijs. De verschuiving naar een competentiegerichte opzet van het agrarische curriculumontwerp en -uitvoering lijkt de mantra te zijn geworden van het algemene onderwijsbeleid.

De bevindingen laten een beperkte deelname zien van professionals uit de agrarische beroepspraktijk bij het conceptualiseren van curriculumveranderingen. Bureaucraten, managers en technocraten van ministeries en overheidsdepartementen bepalen de agenda voor de hervorming van de curricula in hoge mate. Het grootste deel van de curriculumbeoordelingen en daaruit voortvloeiende innovaties zijn in hoge mate afhankelijk van ontwikkelingshulp die verstrekt wordt door (buitenlandse) donororganisaties. Het gebrek aan denken over wat werkelijk belangrijk is om te veranderen en wat niet, werd daarmee vooral afhankelijk van deze investeringen. Binnen de huidige omstandigheden lijkt er, terwijl overheden en ontwikkelingspartners zich buigen over de volgende curriculumhervorming en de verbetering van de onderwijsinfrastructuur, een grotere behoefte te zijn aan interventies gericht op: de motivatie, deskundigheid en integriteit van opleiders; het welbevinden en het sociaalemotionele welzijn van studenten; krachtige leeromgevingen en de beschikbaarheid van voldoende kwalitatieve educatieve middelen.

Toegang krijgen tot opties voor werkgelegenheid en loopbaanontwikkeling

De resultaten met betrekking tot de dromen en de zoektocht van jonge mensen naar werk en kansen om loopbaanmogelijkheden te ontwikkelen voor zichzelf, duiden op een grote ambitie gericht op prestigieuze loopbanen en succesvol zelfstandig ondernemerschap. De ijver om zich onmiddellijk in te schrijven voor aanvullende training gericht op de benodigde academische geloofsbrieven voor een succesvolle carrière en opwaartse mobiliteit kwam duidelijk naar voren, zowel onder studenten als afgestudeerden.

Uit de bevindingen bleek dat, hoewel de overgrote meerderheid van de afgestudeerden werk vond in de voeding- en landbouwsector binnen zes maanden na afstuderen, slechts een minderheid in goed betaalde, vaste banen terecht kwam. De rest kwam terecht in onzekere en vaak parttime aanstellingen en vrijwilligerswerk. Anderen hadden grote moeite om hun eigen agrarische onderneming op te zetten en te laten groeien als gevolg van een groot aantal problemen, waaronder een tekort aan financiële middelen. Het beroep op sociaal kapitaal in het zoeken naar en het verkrijgen van toegang tot arbeidskansen is evident. De huidige vrees van studenten inzake het vinden van werk en carrière mogelijkheden wordt bevestigd door alle afgestudeerden. Daarnaast rapporteerde de meerderheid van de ondervraagde afgestudeerden frequent over negatieve ervaringen met onethisch gedrag van actoren op de arbeidsmarkt, de kwetsbare economie, beperkte toegang tot productieve hulpbronnen en zware klimatologische omstandigheden.

Jonge mensen en hun 'can-do' houding

De bevindingen duiden op frustraties bij jongeren over de sociale- en institutionele belemmeringen en moeilijkheden. Echter, de ambitie en de wilskracht om desondanks hun weg te vinden in het najagen van hun aspiraties aangaande onderwijs en loopbaan, springen er duidelijk uit. In de zoektocht en ontwikkeling van hun meervoudige identiteiten

- iets wat de meerderheid van de sociale actoren in het onderwijs niet goed lijkt te keuren - zijn de meeste jonge mensen voortvarend op weg in het nastreven van hun aangepaste aspiraties waarbij zij, in tegenstelling tot hun eerdere universitaire ambitie, kiezen voor beroepsgericht agrarisch onderwijs. Zich bewust van de moeilijkheden bij het verkrijgen van formele banen, laten de meeste jonge mensen dit streven vooral landen in een ondernemende houding. De bevindingen van deze studie laten zien hoe studenten en afgestudeerden de kracht van sociale netwerken begrijpen en benutten in hun zoektocht naar werk in niet-gereguleerde arbeidsmarkten en een kwetsbare economie. Afgestudeerden in onzekere banen als ook jongeren zonder werk, tonen ambitie en veerkracht om verder te gaan. In het algemeen vertoonden alle studenten en afgestudeerden een positieve kijk op de toekomst als uitvoerenden en professionals in de voeding- en landbouwsector.

Onderzoek en transformatie van agrarisch onderwijs (AET): mogelijkheden en uitdagingen

De interventionistische actieonderzoeksfase van deze studie leidde tot intensief gezamenlijk onderzoek naar beter beroepsgericht agrarisch onderwijs, het verbeteren van het leerproces van studenten en een succesvolle aansluiting op de arbeidsmarkt. In hoofdstuk 6 worden de mogelijkheden en de uitdagingen besproken die samenhangen met de pogingen van het actiegerichte onderzoeksteam om agrarisch onderwijs te transformeren door middel van de implementatie van een nieuw stagemodel. Dit vormde de kern van de casestudie binnen het AET-instituut. De ondersteunende voorwaarden voor verandering, die voortkwamen uit de intensieve interacties en tijdens *social learning events* georganiseerd door het actiegerichte onderzoeksteam, resulteerden onder meer in een sterk gevoel van eigenaarschap bij de participanten over het veranderproces en in sterke interpersoonlijke relaties tussen de betrokkenen. In combinatie met een sterk groeiende solidariteit onder teamleden leidde dit tot een verhoogde individuele motivatie om te denken en te handelen.

In hoofdstuk 6 wordt gereflecteerd op de moeilijkheden en uitdagingen waarmee het team werd geconfronteerd in haar wens bij te dragen aan de voortdurende en duurzame transformatie van de agrarische onderwijspraktijk. Het chronisch gebrek aan tijd tijdens het veranderingsproces van de opleiders, in combinatie met de schaarse middelen en de geringe autonomie in het besluiten over verandering, beperkte de groeiende motivatie en het enthousiasme voor verandering. Het vasthouden aan de principes en waarden van actieonderzoek kwam regelmatig sterk onder druk door de beperkende institutionele regelingen binnen en buiten de agrarische instelling waar deze *case study* werd uitgevoerd.

Eigen regie ruimte geven

In hoofdstuk zeven kom ik terug op de bevindingen van het onderzoek om deze te relateren aan het theoretisch en methodologisch kader zoals uiteengezet in hoofdstuk twee. In dit afsluitende hoofdstuk worden de implicaties beschreven van het onderzoek voor theorie, beleid en praktijk van agrarische opleidingen en trainingen in Oeganda. Ik poneer op basis van dit proefschrift dat het optimaliseren van agrarisch onderwijs voor Oegandese jongeren en de bijbehorende arbeidsmarktbehoeften, samen met andere thema's, de directe betrokkenheid van deze jongeren zelf als die van hun opleiders en begeleiders vereist. Daaruit volgt dat het stimuleren van de individuele vrijheid en de regie van Oegandese jongeren om zelf te streven naar betekenisvol agrarisch onderwijs en bijbehorende professionele ambities, een kernelement vormt van de bevindingen in dit proefschrift.

Een andere centrale uitkomst van dit onderzoek is dat het noodzakelijk is om een krachtige leer- en werkomgeving te realiseren die resulteert in een klimaat waarbinnen vrijheid en professionele autonomie van de sociale actoren in het agrarisch onderwijs (met name de agrarische opleiders) leidt tot ruimte voor vakmanschap, democratie en gericht op een betere voorbereiding van jonge mensen om hun weg te vinden in hun onderwijs- en carrière-trajecten. De intensieve actiegerichte participatieve betrokkenheid tijdens dit onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat ondanks beperkende sociale- en institutionele arrangementen, het maken van stappen in het versterken van de regie van studenten en docenten inderdaad een kritische factor is en de potentie vergroot om positieve resultaten mogelijk te maken.

About the author

Robert Jjuuko is a researcher, educationist and development consultant with profound methodological and theoretical expertise in education and training of socially disadvantaged young people and adults. A graduate of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa with a Master of Education (supported by DVV International), he holds a Bachelor of Adult and Community Education Degree from Makerere University, Uganda. The foundation of his adult education lenses are traceable from his more than 5 years' experience as a community adult literacy tutor in Mukono district; and his diploma in adult education course at Taasisi Ya Elimu Ya Watu Wazima (Institute of Adult Education, Dar es Salaam) during the late 1990s. In his more than 15 years as a practicing adult educator, he has actively steered and supported the founding and functioning of a couple of local, national and global civil society institutions for social and ecological justice.

He has university teaching experience in community development, research methodologies, community education and project planning and management. His academic interests include adult education research and practice, youth transition, vocational pedagogy, workplace learning, and action research for individual emancipation and social change. In 2016 he was awarded the Netherlands Fellowship Programme (NFP) scholarship to undertake a PhD study programme at the University of Groningen; and he defended his thesis titled '*Youth transition, agricultural education and employment in Uganda: Freeing individual agency*' on 4 November 2021 at 12.45 CET.